

**Whitfield County**  
**Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028**

*Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for  
Whitfield County Including the  
Municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell*

**DRAFT**

*This page is left blank for formatting purposes.*

**DRAFT**

# **Whitfield County**

## **Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028**

*Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for  
Whitfield County Including the  
Municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell*



City of Tunnel Hill



*Prepared for:*  
**Whitfield County**  
**Town of Cohutta**  
**City of Dalton**  
**City of Tunnel Hill**  
**City of Varnell**

*By:*

**n<sup>r</sup>thwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
PLANNING SERVICES

*Northwest Georgia Regional Commission*

*503 W. Waugh Street*

*Dalton Ga, 30721*

*(706) 272-2300*

*This page is left blank for formatting purposes.*

DRAFT



# Table of Contents

ADOPTION RESOLUTIONS .....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	1
HOW TO USE THIS PLAN.....	1
JOINT LAND USE ELEMENT.....	1
USING THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP .....	3
CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS .....	11
Unincorporated Whitfield County Future Development Map .....	55
Town of Cohutta Future Development Map .....	56
City of Dalton Future Development Map.....	57
City of Tunnel Hill Future Development Map.....	58
City of Vannell Future Development Map.....	59
COHUTTA’S FUTURE LAND USE .....	62
RURAL BROADBAND.....	68
HOUSING .....	73
TRANSPORTATION .....	90
POLICY STATEMENTS .....	91
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM.....	98
Unincorporated Whitfield County.....	98
Town of Cohutta .....	110
City of Dalton .....	120
City of Tunnel Hill .....	133
City of Varnell .....	139
APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY VISION SURVEY.....	145
APPENDIX B: POPULAITON AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA .....	158
APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION DOCUMENTATION .....	175

# ADOPTION RESOLUTIONS

DRAFT

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## WHITFIELD COUNTY

<b>Jevin Jensen</b> <i>Chairman, Board of Commissioners</i>		
<b>Barry Robbins</b> Board of Commissioners District 1	<b>John Thomas</b> Board of Commissioners District 2	<b>Robby Staten</b> Board of Commissioners District 3
<b>Greg Jones</b> Board of Commissioners District 4	<b>Blanca Cardona</b> County Clerk	<b>Robert Sivick</b> County Administrator

## TOWN OF COHUTTA

<b>Ron Shinnick</b> Mayor		
<b>Sheila Rose</b> Vice Mayor	<b>Sandy Clayborne</b> Council Woman	<b>Shane Kornberg</b> Councilman
	<b>Pam Shinnick</b> Town Clerk	

## CITY OF DALTON

<b>David Pennington</b> Mayor		
<b>Dennis Mock</b> Councilmember, Ward One		<b>Tyree Goodlett</b> Councilmember, Ward Three
<b>Steve Farrow</b> Councilmember, Ward Four	<b>Bernadette Chattam</b> City Clerk	<b>Andrew Parker</b> City Administrator

## CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

<b>Ken Gowin</b> Mayor		
<b>Jim Griffin</b> Mayor Pro-Tem	<b>Elizabeth Dennis</b> Councilmember	<b>Dennis Hammontree</b> Councilmember
<b>Jamey Middleton</b> Councilmember	<b>Melinda Griffin</b> City Clerk	<b>Blake Griffin</b> City Administrator

## City of Varnell

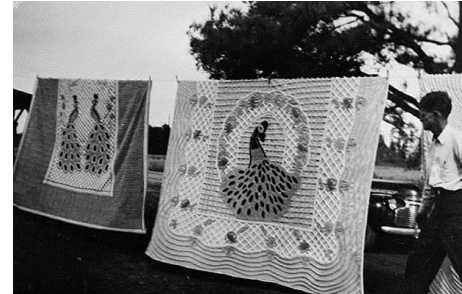
<b>Tom Dickson</b> Mayor		
<b>Bill Caylor</b> Councilmember	<b>Sandy Pangle</b> Councilmember	<b>Pam Garrison</b> City Clerk
<b>Bob Roche</b> Councilmember	<b>Sarah Harrison</b> Councilmember	<b>Richard Lowe</b> Councilmember
		<b>Mike Brown</b> City Manager

# Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

STEERING COMMITTEE		
<b>Jason Mock</b> Dalton-Whitfield Chamber of Commerce President	<b>Kent Benson</b> Whitfield County Engineer	<b>Robert Smalley</b> Whitfield County Attorney
<b>Mark Buckner</b> Dalton Utilities	<b>Terry Miller</b> Dalton City Attorney	<b>Jim Lidderdale</b> Whitfield, Dalton, Varnell Planning Commission, Chairman
<b>Carl Campbell</b> Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority	<b>Dirk Verhoeff</b> Whitfield Solid Waste Authority	<b>Todd Johnson</b> Cohutta Town Attorney
<b>Jacob Bearden</b> Whitfield County Planning Dept.	<b>Jean Price-Garland</b> Whitfield County Zoning Administrator	<b>Brian Chastain</b> Whitfield County Rec. Dept.
<b>Blake Griffin</b> Tunnel Hill City Manager	<b>George Woodward</b> Dalton Housing Authority	<b>Allyson Coker</b> Project Manager, Believe Greater Dalton
<b>Robert Sivick</b> Whitfield County Administrator	<b>Chris Shiflett</b> Whitfield, Dalton, Varnell Planning Commission. Vice-Chairman	<b>Chad Townsend</b> Director, Dalton Public Works
<b>Andrew Parker</b> Dalton City Administrator	<b>Edward O'Brian</b> Chief, Whitfield County Fire Dept.	<b>Todd Pangle</b> Dalton Asst. City Administrator
<b>Ron Shinnick</b> Mayor of Cohutta	<b>Shane Kornberg</b> Cohutta Councilman	<b>Mike Brown</b> Varnell City Manager
STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE		
<b>John Francis</b> Social Services, Ret.	<b>Kevin Harris</b> ArrowStar, LLC	<b>Todd Harrison</b> Hamilton Healthcare
<b>Levi Kilgore</b> Windstream, Ret.	<b>Jackie Killings</b> K&M Technologies	<b>John Lugthart</b> Dalton State College
<b>Yugeily Manriquez</b> Latin American Association	<b>Mark Mixer</b> CEO, Health One Alliance, LLC	<b>Rachel Moffett</b> Dalton State College, Student
<b>Brad Ramsey</b> First National Community Bank	<b>Lisa Callaway Stone</b> Public Health, Ret.	<b>Debian Woods</b> Retired Educator
<b>Elizabeth Dennis</b> Tunnel Hill Councilperson	<b>Larry Harrison</b> Varnell Citizen	<b>Lisa Callaway</b> Citizen
<b>Jonathan Bagley</b> Pheonix Chemical Company		<b>Alisa Basaraba</b> North GA EMC, Vice-President

## INTRODUCTION

Located in the North Georgia Region and part of the Dalton Metropolitan Statistical Area, Whitfield County covers approximately 290 square miles of predominantly rural, yet increasingly suburban landscape in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Considered the “Flooring Capital of the World” due to its well-established flooring industry, Whitfield County includes four municipalities: Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.



Whitfield County and the Municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell have joined together in an effort to meet the challenges ahead, working together with their citizens, elected officials, professional staff, business leaders, property owners and major employers to prepare the *Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028*.

### WHY WE PLAN

Comprehensive planning is an important management tool for promoting a strong, healthy community. A Comprehensive Plan provides a vision, clearly stated and shared by all, that describes the future of the community. It protects private property rights and also encourages and supports economic development. The plan can be used to promote orderly and rational development so that Whitfield County and the Municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell can remain physically attractive and economically viable while preserving important natural and historic resources.

The comprehensive plan provides the tool to become more certain about where development will occur, what it will be like, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met. It provides a tool for the community to achieve the development patterns it desires, such as: traditional neighborhoods, infill development, creating a sense of place, providing transportation alternatives, permitting mixed uses, protecting natural resources and accommodating economic growth.

Planning also helps the County and its municipalities invest their money wisely in infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer, schools, parks and green space, and other facilities to maintain and improve the quality of life for the residents of Whitfield County.

#### Why we plan

- Set a new standard for protecting natural and cultural resources
- Promote desired patterns of Development
- Facilitate economic development
- Accommodate a range of housing and transportation options
- Prioritize capital expenditures
- Enhance quality of life

## PURPOSE

The *Joint Comprehensive Plan* represents the community's vision, goals, policies, key needs and opportunities that the community intends to address, and an action plan highlighting the necessary tools for implementing the comprehensive plan. In addition, it outlines desired development patterns and supporting land uses with a future development map for unincorporated Whitfield County and the cities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

The *Joint Comprehensive Plan* serves the purpose of meeting the intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," as originally established in 1989 and most recently revised in October 2018. Preparation in accordance with these standards is an essential requirement in maintaining status as a Qualified Local Government. State law requires Whitfield County and its municipalities to update their respective comprehensive plans by October 31, 2023. For planning purposes, DCA classifies Whitfield County as an "Advanced" planning level jurisdiction.

This plan updates the *Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan 2019-2023* adopted in 2018 by the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the mayors and city councils of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. Like the 2019 plan, this 2023 update will serve as the official comprehensive plan for unincorporated Whitfield County and the municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

## SCOPE

The *Joint Comprehensive Plan* provides a fine-tuned list of needs and opportunities, future development maps with character areas, narratives on housing and transportation. The plan also contains an implementation program listing strategic capital projects aimed at addressing the community's, previously mentioned, needs and opportunities. For the future development maps, the Land Use narrative presents strategies for implementation of each character area depicted. The Housing narrative highlights the findings from the *Believe Greater Dalton Housing Strategy (2023)*. A Transportation narrative is included which summarizes the Transportation Implementation Program prepared by the Dalton-Whitfield Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The implementation program includes the Community Work Program (CWP) and policy statements intended to guide the County and its municipalities.



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Creating a functional Comprehensive Plan begins with defining a common vision for the future development of the Community. A Community Vision is the overall image of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future. It is the starting point for creating a plan and actions to implement the plan. A successful visioning process requires meaningful participation from a wide range of community stakeholders. Whitfield County residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders contributed to the production of this *Joint Comprehensive Plan*. Due to the participation involved in developing the plan, the *Comprehensive Plan* should generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of Whitfield County and thereby encourage citizens to remain engaged in the development process and ensure that the county and each municipality implement the plan.

## COMMUNITY VISION SURVEY

The stakeholder committee and NWGRC staff determined that a community vision survey would be an effective strategy in gathering input from the general public. NWGRC staff worked with the stakeholder committee to compile a comprehensive survey based on the initial SWOT analysis findings. The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Survey entitled *Whitfield County Community Vision Survey* was uploaded on June 1, 2023, and the survey remained open until it was closed on July 1, 2023. The total number of responses were 1,167 with an 83.4% completion rate (meaning that some surveys were completed with unanswered questions). The survey was translated into English and Spanish versions along with all other notifications. Alchemer was utilized as the survey software provider. The survey was designed to be smartphone and tablet friendly, and the NWGRC website served as the host for the period the survey remained active. With the utilization of the NWGRC website, a direct URL was created ([www.nwgrc.org/whitfieldplan](http://www.nwgrc.org/whitfieldplan)) to the online survey to make it easily accessible for individuals that discovered the survey via flyer or newspaper articles. A QR code was created as well in order to provide convenient access to the survey. The survey was shared numerous ways that ranged from email blasts to city/county governments, school system, Chamber of Commerce, libraries, and other local organizations. Other digital outreach occurred including website links and social media posts throughout the period the survey remained active. Survey flyers were also posted in city and county buildings. Paper copies were made available to the senior center, libraries, and Latin American Association. All paper surveys were manually entered by NWGRC staff into the digital system in order to ensure all surveys were included in the results (see Appendix A). Once the survey results were compiled, they were presented to the stakeholder committee in order to ensure the priorities identified by the steering committee aligned with the general public.





### PUBLIC HEARINGS

The initial public hearing was held at the Whitfield County Courthouse in the City of Dalton on December 19, 2022 as part of the Board of Commissioner's regular business meeting.

The final public hearing was held at Dalton City Hall on September 18, 2023 as part of the Mayor and Council's regular business meeting.

The public hearings were well-attended, and ads were published in the Daily Citizen newspaper to inform Whitfield County citizens about the *Comprehensive Plan* and how to be involved in the process.

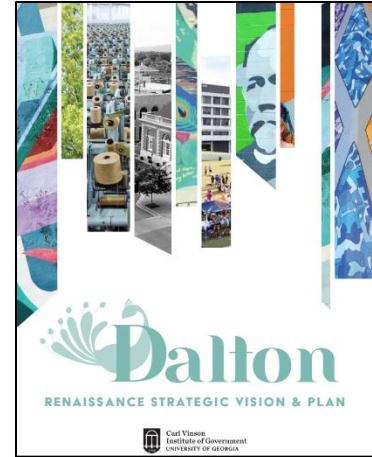
### COLABORATIVE PLANNING

Prior to the official process of the *Comprehensive Plan* update a heavy interest in strategic planning had emerged throughout the community. This sudden interest seemed to arise in the wake of the recent recession that profoundly injured Whitfield's legendary local economy. Since the initial impacts of the recession, a notable recovery within this community altered the mindset of many from that of survival to that of optimism and forward thinking. After a few years of public outreach and research, the Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce began launched a county-wide strategic plan in January 2018 dubbed *Believe Greater Dalton*. The plan was focused on improving the community in six key strategy areas of education, housing, entrepreneurship, economic development, downtown, and community pride. The goals of *Believe's* initial five-year plan were reached in 2021 and *Believe* has since updated their plan with new goals and initiatives for the next five years. Believe Greater Dalton 2.0 will focus on many of the same key strategy areas, but the 2.0 plan created two new key strategies focused on Revitalization, engagement and unity. Believe 2.0 focused heavily on community engagement with a public input survey that generated over 4,500 responses which more than doubled the previous survey's response rate.





Since the initiation of *Believe Greater Dalton* in partnership with the Downtown Dalton Development Authority (DDDA), the community was awarded a Renaissance Strategic Vision and Planning Process grant (RSVP). This process delivered a downtown master plan facilitated by a skilled team of planners from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. The initial public input phase, which consisted of an online survey with over 800 responses, 20+ focus groups, and a town hall community forum, where over 150 people attended. The Downtown Dalton Master Plan was completed in the Fall of 2018.



Whitfield County has also continued to participate with the THRIVE Regional Partnership since it began in 2012. Since 2012, THRIVE has convened diverse partners across the tri-state region to address the complexities of regional growth. Thrive Regional Partnership inspires responsible growth through conversation, connection, and collaboration in the tri-state Chattanooga region. THRIVE convenes stakeholders across the region to ensure that as growth occurs in industry, prosperity, and population, the natural character of the communities is preserved for generations to come. THRIVE's regional footprint includes 16 counties across northeast Alabama, northwest Georgia, and southeast Tennessee. Highlights from the THRIVE Partnership can be found throughout the *Comprehensive Plan*.



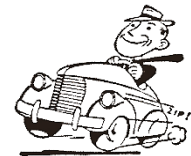
# HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

## JOINT NARRATIVES

The purpose of this plan is to implement a vision for growth and development by guiding and implementing land use and development policy in unincorporated Whitfield County and the cities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. Each jurisdiction addresses each of the elements (described below) in joint sections that focus on each element as it relates to the entire county. This slightly different format from the previous 2008 narrative was chosen in order to reduce unnecessary redundancy to create a more unified and streamlined narrative since the introduction of DCA's 2014 minimum standards.



- **The Land Use Element** of this plan is a joint section including an alphabetical list of character areas for the five jurisdictions utilizing an FDM. The Town of Cohutta's land use element utilizes a Future Land Use Map format while all other jurisdictions utilize a Future Development Map format. Actionable projects committed to land use are found within each individual jurisdiction's Community Work Program (CWP)
- **The Transportation Element** utilizes information found within the Greater Dalton Metropolitan Planning Organization (GDMPO) combined with input from each jurisdiction to identify issues with transportation throughout the county. Actionable projects committed to transportation improvement are found within each individual jurisdiction's Community Work Program (CWP)
- **The Housing Element** identifies issues and opportunities sourced from the *Believe Greater Dalton Housing Strategy* completed in September 2023. Actionable projects committed to housing are found within each individual jurisdiction's Community Work Program (CWP)
- **Policies** are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the comprehensive plan, including achieving the Vision for Future Development and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. Policy statements are identified for each planning element. Due to the interjurisdictional similarity of the policies adopted in the previous Comprehensive Plan this plan will incorporate them into a single joint section in order to reduce unnecessary repetition.



## INDEPENDENT NARRATIVES

These portions of the plan are jurisdictionally specific and therefore require more individualized organization than the joint narratives. Unincorporated Whitfield County as well as the municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell each have independent narratives for the following plan elements:

**Report of Accomplishments** The first step of plan implementation is to conduct a report of accomplishments specific to Whitfield County, Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. The report of accomplishments shows the results of past planning efforts. The status of each work program item can be found here. Since work programs are updated every five years, the items under consideration here are from the period from 2019-2023. The local government officials reviewed the 2019-2023 work programs for their respective governments and noted which projects had been completed. If projects were started but not completed, the “Underway” column was marked, and the estimated year of completion was noted. There is no penalty for postponing or dropping a project since this is a planning document and not a binding legal agreement. However, an explanation is required for postponed or dropped projects. For example, a project may not have been accomplished because voters rejected a ballot measure to fund it. Sometimes an item is dropped because it may have been a new initiative or new mandate several years ago, but over time it has become a routine or function of government. Items marked as underway or postponed are carried forward to the work programs in this current plan, *Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2024-2028*. However, projects noted as “Ongoing,” annual tasks, or policy statements will not be carried forward to the current 2024-2028 Community Work Programs.

**Community Vision/Goals** The purpose of the Community Goals element is to lay out a road map for the community’s future, developed through a very public process of involving community leaders and stakeholders in making key decisions about the future of the community. The community goals are the most important part of the plan, for they identify the community’s direction for the future, and are intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm for the future of the community, thereby leading citizens and leadership to act to ensure that the plan is implemented.

The community vision paints a picture of what Whitfield County desires to become and provides complete descriptions of the development patterns envisioned. Each jurisdiction has an independent vision statement.

**Needs and Opportunities** The methodology for generating the list of needs and opportunities was accomplished via SWOT analyses, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, is a brainstorming exercise designed for stakeholders to reflect on their community’s needs and opportunities. The exercise was carried out by addressing the entire group of stakeholders rather than separating the group by jurisdiction. Stakeholders had been shown a presentation illustrating the current population and economic trends in order to provide each stakeholder with the basis for an informed discussion during the initial stakeholder’s meeting. The SWOT analyses were carried out at the initial joint stakeholder meeting. This discussion was broken down into seven categories, (Economic Development, Housing, Community Facilities and Services, Transportation, Natural/Cultural Resources, Land Use, and Intergovernmental Coordination). Stakeholders addressed each category with the SWOT perspective. The results were collected by the NWGRC planners, and the responses were developed into a list of needs and opportunities. The list of needs and opportunities was then presented to each jurisdiction’s staff and/or elected officials in order to determine which items could be addressed specific to each community. Some

of the more overarching viewpoints discussed during the stakeholder meetings were better addressed via policy statements and other area specific approaches within the character descriptions.

**Community Work Program** The community work programs represent a list of specific tasks that the governments are willing to attempt accomplishing. Developing the work program from needs and opportunities lists helps to lead the residents and managers from general ideas about issues to creating specific tasks to solve them. It is not a contract or binding document, since many items that go on the list are dependent on funding that has not yet been awarded or obtained. Using the possible strategies from the Needs and Opportunities, planners created work program tables. The stakeholders, managers, and other government officials reviewed these work programs. The managers and/or elected officials had final say in the content of the work programs, because they are the officials who run the government. In the tables below, incomplete projects can be found from the previous 2019-2023 work program as well as new projects for the 2024-2028 period. However, as stated previously, any items in the previous work program that would be considered a policy statement or an annual practice such as routine maintenance will not be carried forward in the current 2024-2028 work program as these items are not measurable projects with a clear beginning and end. In the first (left) column one will note the number which references the specific need or opportunity cited previously in the plan. The second column contains a brief description of the project to be carried out, followed by a timeline, an estimated cost, a funding source, and the party responsible for the project's completion.

DRAFT

## JOINT LAND USE ELEMENT

*A comprehensive guide for future development and redevelopment within Whitfield County and its four municipalities*

### Geography

Whitfield County includes the municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell. It also consists of numerous smaller communities that are not incorporated cities but are recognized places in the County. These are addressed by geographic area:

#### UNINCORPORATED WHITFIELD COUNTY

##### **Northside**

The northern portion of the County (north of Dalton city limits/ Dawnville Road area and east of I-75) includes agricultural and lowdensity residential uses east of SR 71/Cleveland Highway, suburban neighborhoods and commercial nodes along SR 71, and the ridges of Rocky Face and Cohutta. Northside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Beaverdale, Cedar Valley, Cohutta Ridge, Hopewell, Norton, Plainview, Pleasant Grove, Prater's Mill, Norton, Rocky Face Ridge, Toonerville and Waring.

##### **Southside**

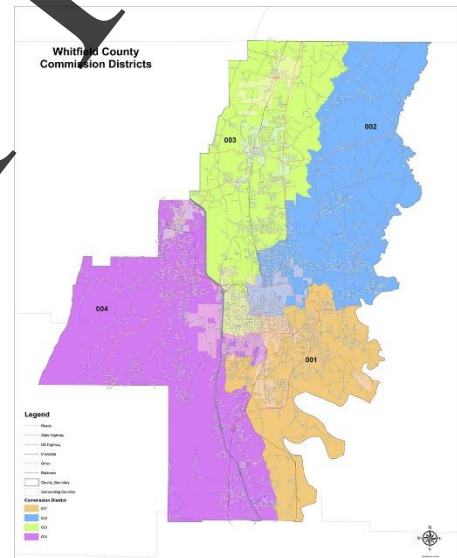
The south side of Whitfield County is located south of the City of Dalton. The area includes portions of the Chattahoochee National Forest located west of I-75, interchange areas at Carbondale and Connector 3 as well as historic rural communities located throughout the area. Southside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Carbondale, Five Springs, Nance Springs, Phelps, River Bend and Tilton.

##### **Westside**

The west side of the County is comprised of the areas west of I-75, including residential areas south of Tunnel Hill, the steep slopes of the Dug Gap Ridge, the Chattahoochee National Forest and the western most portion of the county, and the following communities: Dug Gap Ridge, Gordon Springs, Mill Creek, Mt. Vernon and Trickum.

##### **Eastside**

The eastern portion of Whitfield County includes areas east of the City of Dalton, including a segment of the Dalton Bypass, commercial development along SR 76, higher density residential areas just east of Dalton, and the Dalton Municipal Airport. Eastside Whitfield County includes the following communities: Dawnville, Cedar Ridge and Keith's Mill.



## MUNICIPALITIES

### ***Cohutta***

The town of Cohutta has existed since the 1800's but, it was not incorporated until 1969. Located in north Whitfield County, Cohutta totals approximately 3,000 acres with a population of less than 700. The town is only served by one arterial corridor SR 71 which has been a limiting factor in regard to high intensity development.



### ***Dalton***

The City of Dalton was incorporated in 1847 and is the county seat of Whitfield County. The city encompasses 19.84 square miles and has an estimated population of 33,401 according to the U.S. Census (July 2007). Dalton is served by SR 71, SR 52, U.S. 41, U.S. 76 and Interstate 75, providing access that has contributed to the city becoming a significant regional economic center.



### ***Tunnel Hill***

The City of Tunnel Hill is located west of the northernmost I-75 interchange in Whitfield County. U.S. Census figures for July 2007 estimate a population of 1,249 for the city. Tunnel Hill has a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses inside the city limits, as well as a unique historic resource: the 1850 Western and Atlantic railroad tunnel that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is open to the public, alongside the Tunnel Hill Heritage Center.



### ***Varnell***

The City of Varnell was established in 1835 and has an estimated population of 1,584 based on 2007 U.S. Census figures. Located in northern Whitfield County, south of Cohutta and west of SR 71, Varnell is predominantly residential with commercial uses oriented around the traditional town center and toward SR 71. The City's commercial heritage includes the historic Prater's Mill, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





## LAND USE METHODOLOGY

This land use analysis relied heavily on GIS to identify and map current conditions, with a base map of the county's watersheds and ground water recharge areas sourced from the Northwest Georgia Regional Resource Plan map prefacing the future development maps later in this section. GIS maps illustrating the existing public wastewater service areas were also a useful tool for this process and may also be found prefacing the future development maps. Development of land and provision of services via infrastructure are heavily influenced by the contour of the land which varies greatly throughout Whitfield County's mountainous terrain. Wastewater and drinking water systems optimize downslope flow; land development is less expensive on flat land, a rare commodity in Whitfield County; and central travel corridors often follow ridge lines. Arguably, the most significant challenge for Whitfield County's future, not unlike state and global challenges, is the management of its water. Access to drinking water will not be a limiting factor on the county's growth since public drinking water is available along every public road county-wide. Wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, however, can become costly for new development. Large developments will be limited to areas either currently served or nearby existing wastewater infrastructure where economically prudent connections can occur. Revitalization of blighted or underutilized areas where utilities and other infrastructure already exist is an efficient method to accommodate sustainable growth. Unmanaged development patterns can also worsen traffic and erode natural amenities highly valued among residents. As a result, the following character areas reflect strategies which leverage existing infrastructure and established neighborhoods while accommodating growth in more natural or rural expanses through moderation and character specific approaches. Whitfield County, Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell utilize a future development map while the Town of Cohutta chose a future land use map. Therefore, Cohutta's future land use element will be separate from the other jurisdictions joint narrative.

## USING THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of a Future Development Map that reflects the vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. This vision is expressed in unique "character areas." Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored development strategies are applied to each area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired character for the future. Character areas define areas that presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved, have potential to evolve into unique areas or require special attention because of unique development issues. The following pages present an alphabetized list of character area narratives as well as each jurisdiction's Future Development Map for Whitfield County, Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell respectively. Each character area description includes the following information:



- Development Pattern
- Primary Land Uses
- Implementation Strategies
- Quality Community Objectives

The **development pattern** describes the nature of preferred development in a character area. The description is expressed in terms of characteristics that may include:

- Appropriate building or site design
- Infrastructure required to support development
- Intensity of development
- Type and extent of connectivity between uses, including sidewalk/trail accommodations and street design
- Environmental, scenic, historic or cultural features
- Open space
- Proper land development practices
- Relationship between land uses or character areas
- Traffic mitigation measures
- Availability of, and access to, public spaces or park
- Landscape or buffer treatments
- Alternative approaches to conventional development

The **primary land use** section lists permissible land uses within each character area. This section identifies a recommended land use for each parcel in a character area.

Finally, the **implementation strategies** section identifies the measures the County can take to ensure that the development pattern described by each character area can be implemented. Typical strategies include capital projects, adoption or amendment of regulations, preparation of supplemental plans or studies, implementation of existing studies, and collaboration between entities to achieve a common goal. In addition to the three levels of description above, the **Quality Community Objectives (QCO)** analysis for each Character Area can be found on the following pages. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. These objectives were adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.



## Quality Community Objectives

In addition to the three levels of description above, the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) analysis for each Character Area can be found below. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. The QCOs were adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

<p><b>Regional Identity</b> – Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.</p>	<p><b>Infill Development</b> – Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.</p>
<p><b>Growth Preparedness</b> – Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Environmental Protection</b> – Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.</p>
<p><b>Appropriate Businesses</b> – The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Heritage Preservation</b> – The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.</p>
<p><b>Educational Opportunities</b> – Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.</p>	<p><b>Regional Cooperation</b> – Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.</p>
<p><b>Employment Options</b> – A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.</p>	<p><b>Transportation Alternatives</b> – Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.</p>
<p><b>Open Space Preservation</b> – New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.</p>	<p><b>Housing Opportunities</b> – Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.</p>

<b>Sense of Place</b> – Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.	<b>Traditional Neighborhood</b> – Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.
<b>Regional Solutions</b> – Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.	

The following tables illustrate which QCO's are implemented within each character area for each local government.

DRAFT

# Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

## UNINCORPORATED WHITFIELD COUNTY

Quality Community Objective	Character Areas														
	Preserve	Ridge Conservation	Rural Agricultural Reserve	Rural Residential	Rural Neighborhood Revitalization	Rural Crossroads	Suburban Neighborhood	Emerging Suburban	Rural Corridor	Commercial Corridor	Transition Corridor	Bypass Corridor	Community Activity Center	Regional Activity Center	Interchange
Traditional Neighborhoods								X							
Infill Development							X	X		X	X		X	X	
Sense of Place	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X
Transportation Alternatives						X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional Identity	X	X	X	X	X	X							X	X	X
Heritage Preservation	X	X	X	X	X	X									
Open Space Preservation	X	X	X	X		X		X							
Environmental Protection	X	X						X							X
Growth Preparedness	X	X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Appropriate Business						X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Employment Options						X				X		X	X	X	X
Housing Choices				X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X
Educational Opportunities												X		X	X
Regional Cooperation	X	X													X

## CITY OF DALTON

Quality Community Objective	Character Areas															
	Preserve	Ridge Conservation	Town Neighborhood	Town Neighborhood Revitalization	Suburban Neighborhood	Emerging Suburban	Downtown	Commercial Corridor	Transition Corridor	Bypass Corridor	Community Activity Center	Regional Activity Center	Industrial	Medical District	Dalton State College	Airport
Traditional Neighborhoods			X	X		X	X									
Infill Development			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	
Sense of Place	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	
Transportation Alternatives			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional Identity	X	X	X	X			X				X	X	X	X	X	
Heritage Preservation	X	X	X	X			X								X	
Open Space Preservation	X	X				X								X	X	
Environmental Protection	X	X				X							X			
Growth Preparedness	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Appropriate Business							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Employment Options							X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Housing Choices			X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	
Educational Opportunities										X		X	X	X	X	
Regional Cooperation	X	X											X	X	X	X

## CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

Quality Community Objective	Character Areas								
	Preserve	Ridge Conservation	Town Neighborhood	Suburban Neighborhood	Emerging Suburban	Transition Corridor	Commercial Corridor	Interchange	Community Activity Center
Traditional Neighborhoods			X		X				
Infill Development			X	X	X	X	X		X
Sense of Place	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Transportation Alternatives			X		X	X	X	X	X
Regional Identity	X	X	X						X
Heritage Preservation	X	X	X						
Open Space Preservation	X	X			X				
Environmental Protection	X	X			X				
Growth Preparedness	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Appropriate Business						X	X	X	X
Employment Options							X	X	X
Housing Choices			X	X	X		X	X	X
Educational Opportunities									
Regional Cooperation	X	X						X	

## CITY OF VARNELL

Quality Community Objective	Character Areas						
	Preserve	Ridge Conservation	Town Neighborhood	Suburban Neighborhood	Emerging Suburban	Transition Corridor	Community Activity Center
Traditional Neighborhoods			X		X		
Infill Development			X	X	X	X	X
Sense of Place	X	X	X		X	X	X
Transportation Alternatives			X		X	X	X
Regional Identity	X	X	X				X
Heritage Preservation	X	X	X				
Open Space Preservation	X	X			X		
Environmental Protection	X	X			X		
Growth Preparedness	X	X			X	X	X
Appropriate Business						X	X
Employment Options							X
Housing Choices			X	X	X		X
Educational Opportunities							X
Regional Cooperation	X	X					

# CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The Future Development Map for unincorporated Whitfield County identifies the following twenty-two character areas:

- Airport
- Bypass Corridor
- Commercial Corridor
- Community Activity Center
- Dalton State Corridor
- Downtown
- Emerging Suburban
- Industrial
- Interchange
- Medical District
- Preserve
- Regional Activity Center
- Ridge Conservation
- Rural Agricultural Reserve
- Rural Corridor
- Rural Crossroads
- Rural Neighborhood Revitalization
- Rural Residential
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Town Neighborhood
- Town Neighborhood Revitalization
- Transition Corridor

*\* The majority of parcels are located inside the Dalton city limits.*

A detailed description of the character areas listed above can be found listed alphabetically on the following pages.





## AIRPORT

The Airport character area is composed of those lands in the approach zones around the Dalton Municipal Airport. With the exception of the airport, the character area is currently largely undeveloped and rural with some scattered single-family residential development nearby.

### Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

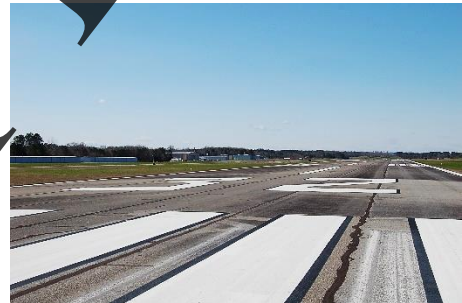
- Limit building heights to avoid conflict with airport operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses including residential land uses, public gathering places (i.e., churches and schools), and any other use that may affect visibility or safe electronic instrument approaches and departures from the airport
- Discourage land uses that may present a potential conflict with future aviation operations
- Discourage encroachment of unsuitable land uses by enforcing regulations
- Promote traditional rural land uses in the surrounding areas

### Implementation Strategies

- *Enforce existing height restrictions*
- *Review rezoning requests to insure compatibility with this character area.*
- *Determine and administer appropriate buffers for noise and safety to accommodate the long-range needs of the airport*
- *Evaluate need for other requirements for new development to address land use compatibility and the mitigation of any impacts that may adversely affect existing or future aviation operations or aviation-related land uses at the airport*



*Maintenance Hangar at Dalton Municipal Airport*



*Runway at Dalton Municipal Airport; Facing Northwest*

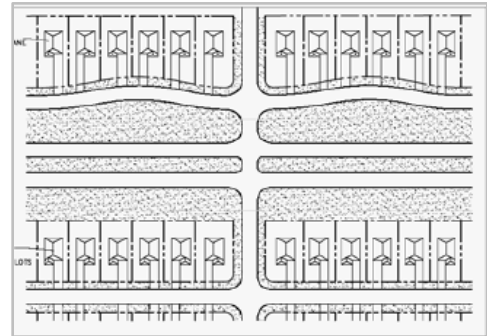


*Aerial Image of Dalton Municipal Airport*



## BYPASS CORRIDOR

The Bypass Corridor character area is land located along the Dalton Bypass. In addition to its transportation function, the Bypass is generating new development activity. This is true of the northern portion, where industrial uses are prevalent and where residential areas north of Dalton continue to expand. Development plans include a 1.2 million square feet mixed use development at Underwood Road (part of the Regional Activity Center character area), to include retail, residential (apartments and senior housing) and flex office space. The project in turn has the potential to spawn additional growth along the Bypass.

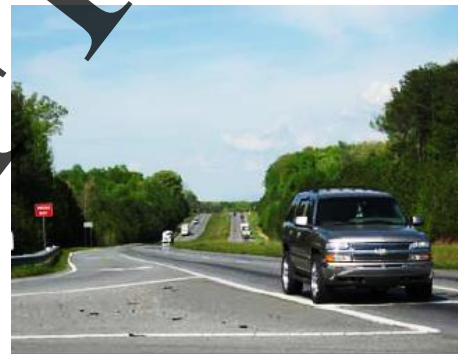


*Access Management is necessary along the Dalton Bypass to allow for development and mitigate traffic congestion*

### **Development Pattern**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Establish a connected street network for new development that links to existing streets
- Include a relatively high-density mix of commercial and retail centers, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types (town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums) that can serve a broad range of incomes, including workforce and senior housing
- Encourage mixed use development with screened parking, landscaping, internal sidewalk and street connectivity, and quality building materials and site design
- Provide strong, walkable connections between different uses
- Connect to nearby networks of greenspace/multi-use trails/bike paths where available
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential areas
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Prohibit billboards and limit business sign height/size to minimize “visual clutter”
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Encourage shared parking among uses
- Discourage strip development
- Maintain traffic flow with access management measures and nodal development



*Dalton Bypass area east of Dalton's city limits*

## Primary Land Uses

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Industrial Warehousing
- Mixed use
- Higher density residential uses

## Implementation Strategies

- Prepare and incorporate into development review a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites
- Recruit businesses that are suitable for the Bypass Corridor character area
- Implement a Bypass Corridor Overlay District to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, materials, landscaping, access management, interparcel access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor
- Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects



Interrupting the unnecessary, and often dangerous, sections of median to replace with trees and grass helps reduce heat, slow traffic, and create a more attractive gateway as seen in this illustration provided by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. This image represents a portion of Waugh Street, but the concept of green medians is recommended for all highway corridors.

## COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The Commercial Corridor character area includes developed land on both sides of a high-volume street or highway that is primarily made up of automobile-oriented strip commercial and office development. It is characterized by single-use, generally one-story buildings that are separated from the street and sidewalk (though they often do not have sidewalks) by parking lots with few shade trees. Commercial Corridors generally have a high degree of traffic congestion; numerous curb cuts, especially in more densely developed areas such as Dalton, minimize the transportation functionality of a corridor. Over time, the Commercial Corridors should redevelop as pedestrian-friendly mixed-use corridors. The Commercial Corridor character area in Tunnel Hill represents the City's main commercial strip along both sides of U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road from the railroad overpass to near Campbell Road.



*Commercial Corridor areas should over-time redevelop as mixed use, pedestrian-friendly communities.*

### Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor (see also Commercial Corridor character area description)
- Provide sidewalks and a more pedestrian-friendly environment by incorporating landscaped buffers between the roadway and sidewalks and placing buildings closer to the street
- Limit signs and billboards
- Increase landscaping along the corridor, including in and along parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, shield parking areas, and improve the appearance of individual sites and the entire corridor
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design related to the building, the site, and signage
- Coordinate land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning



*Redevelopment of Commercial Corridors should strive to create the connected, mixed-use corridor (shown on the bottom) and avoid recreating the existing condition (shown on top)*

- Encourage shared parking among uses

### Development Pattern for Tunnel Hill

- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage. Align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways and inter-parcel access
- Incorporate quality
- Develop and/or redevelop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses that serve the surrounding residential areas
- Residential development should reinforce the corridor's commercial center by locating higher density housing options adjacent to or along the corridor, targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums, which also provides a transition between the character area and surrounding areas
- Include direct connections to the greenspace and trail networks and enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks to streets that intersect with the corridor and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and other destinations, such as the school, post office, the Heritage Center/Tunnel Hill, parks, etc.
- Concentrate commercial development within the Commercial Corridor and avoid as much as possible stretching the corridor outside of the existing boundaries into established residential neighborhoods



Commercial Development along SR 71/Cleveland Highway in Varnel

### Primary Land Uses

- Commercial and retail uses
- Professional offices
- Mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space)
- Civic/Institutional
- Passive and active parks

### Implementation Strategies

- Prepare and adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Commercial Corridor character areas to guide future enhancements
- Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Overlay District to facilitate “greyfield redevelopment” and implement Commercial Corridor character area master plans
- Prepare and adopt a “Big Box” ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for reuse, etc.
- Implement Commercial Corridor overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, materials, landscaping, access management, interparcel access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor
- Adopt mixed use ordinance in Tunnel Hill



## COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER

The Community Activity Center character area typically represents locations at important intersections along major thoroughfares adjacent to Suburban Neighborhood and Emerging Suburban areas. Community Activity Centers serve the daily convenience needs of the surrounding community, generally those neighborhoods within a five-to-10-minute drive. These community focal points include a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians.

Varnell's Community Activity Center area straddles the city boundary at the intersection of SR 71/Cleveland Highway and SR 2/Prater's Mill Road and includes the Varnell Commons shopping center, which includes a grocery store, other retail outparcels. The area also includes undeveloped property.

### Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Develop with a series of interconnected, pedestrian-scale mixed uses that serve the surrounding residential areas
- Residential development should reinforce the center through locating higher density housing options adjacent to the center, targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums, which also provide a transition between the character area and surrounding areas
- Design for each center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with sidewalks between different uses
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Include direct connections to the greenspace and trail networks
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as libraries, neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Concentrate commercial development at major roadway intersections (nodal development) to serve surrounding residential areas
- Discourage strip development



*Development should blend in with surrounding areas and are encouraged to protect existing trees, as shown by this pharmacy in the Grant Park Neighborhood of Atlanta*



*Strip commercial development currently defines the Community Activity Center area in Tunnel Hill*



*Bry-Man's Plaza, an existing Community Activity Center at the intersection of Walnut Avenue and Thornton Avenue*

- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage, align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways
- Provide inter-parcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Incorporate quality signs that are scaled and placed appropriately
- Encourage shared parking among uses

- **Primary Land Uses**

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks



*Varnell's Existing development located in the Community Activity Center is defined by the suburban-style Varnell shopping center shown above*

### Implementation Strategies

- Prepare and adopt a "Big Box" ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for reuse, etc.
- Implement an overlay district or amend land development regulations to direct building placement, design and size, sign placement, materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor
- Prepare and adopt necessary amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- Encourage creation of Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), Community Improvement Districts (CID) or Business Improvement Districts (BID) as a means for financing (including leveraging local funds to receive federal funds) planning and plan implementation improvement projects
- Adopt a Mixed Use Development Overlay District
- Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly
- Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities



*Mixed-Use buildings provide opportunities for retail, office, and residential in the same building, as shown in this example from Seaside, Florida*

## DALTON STATE CORRIDOR

The Dalton State Corridor character area includes the college as well as College Drive. The area is noted most for the college campus, but includes ancillary college uses that are found on-site in a campus-type development or within walking distance or a short drive from the college. Examples include park and recreation facilities, dormitory or multi-family residential uses and supporting commercial. Supporting uses are intended to provide easily accessible services for college employees, students and visitors.

### **Development Patterns**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Provide for the location of institutions of higher learning allowing for the full list of ancillary uses
- Highlight the area in order to focus efforts to provide appropriate transition from adjacent uses as well as provide for opportunities for housing and services nearby
- Promote a pedestrian-scale “college community” where college uses and support services (college, apartments, restaurants, etc.) are connected by a network of sidewalks
- Reduce on-site vehicular use and off-site vehicular trips by providing a mix of compatible services for students, employees and visitors
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding residential areas
- Prohibit encroachment (including parking and light trespass) into the adjacent residential areas
- Retain open space and incorporate landscaping into site design and parking areas.
- Encourage shared parking among uses

### **Primary Land Uses**

- College/university/
- Hospitality/hotels/lodging
- Restaurants
- Retail support (drugstore, services)
- Residential development catering to college staff



*Dalton State College Campus anchors this corridor*



*Multi-Family housing options provide high-density housing opportunities near the college campus*



*Hospitality uses such as hotels and restaurants define the southern portion of this character area.*

- *Mixed use (upper floor office/residential and ground retail)*

### **Implementation Strategies**

- *Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the area sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and to prioritize repair/replacement projects*
- *Prepare a streetscape master plan designed to provide increased opportunities for walking and biking*
- *Encourage the development of additional housing opportunities for students, faculty and staff of the college*



*College Drive is lined on both sides by well-maintained sidewalks that connect the college campus to nearby commercial and office uses*

DRAFT



## DOWNTOWN

The Downtown character area includes Dalton's central business district and is made up of a mixture of uses such as commercial, government, religious, residential and industrial. Goals of the character area include encouraging a mix of uses to create vitality, reinforcing the area's role as a central business district and local activity center, and respecting and promoting the established development pattern of the downtown core. This character area includes the Downtown Dalton Historic District, which is regulated by a design review process and is eligible for building rehabilitation assistance under the Façade Grant Program. Downtown Dalton is supported by an active Main Street Program and Downtown Development Authority and was the focus of the City's 1999 Streetscape Master Plan, 2001 Dalton Quality Growth Resource Team Report (Georgia Department of Community Affairs), and has been a foundational focus throughout the current *Believe Greater Dalton Initiative* with the goal of creating a regional destination downtown with a live, work, play atmosphere.

### **Development Pattern**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Reinforce traditional pedestrian-scaled development patterns, including building placement, lighting, site features, sidewalk use and amenities, traffic patterns, etc.
- Retain and enhance existing building stock with appropriate maintenance and rehabilitation
- Represent a mix of uses that attract residents to the downtown and create vitality
- Serve, and connect to, surrounding neighborhoods
- Protect and encourage historic residential character along Thornton and Glenwood avenues
- Reinforce Downtown as the community focal point of Dalton
- Encourage mixed use development in buildings with underutilized upper floors and with infill opportunities (e.g. residential above ground floor retail)



*Pedestrian friendly streetscapes should be expanded throughout the downtown and downtown fringe areas*



*Downtown Dalton provides for a mix of uses including: retail shops, offices, professional services, and most recently residential*



*All new construction should contribute to the existing historic commercial character*

- Accommodate redevelopment and infill opportunities that respect the traditional development patterns and architectural styles
- Accommodate higher-density residential housing opportunities
- Encourage a creative, visual environment that encourages exploration and attracts patrons such as attractive, changing window displays, public art, and outdoor dining
- Maintain and enhance the area's historic character
- Clearly define road edges / streetscape with zero lot line setback for new building construction
- Promote commercial, civic and leisure functions of downtown and discourage industrial uses



*Dalton's downtown supports multi-story commercial and mixed-use buildings like the historic Hotel Dalton building as pictured above*

### Primary Land Uses

- Retail
- Office
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Multi-Family residential
- Government facilities/services
- Parks



*Improved sidewalks (as pictured above) and new mixed-use buildings are needed in to create a vibrant downtown*

### Implementation Strategies

- Update the historic district design guidelines for downtown Dalton area
- Extend streetscape improvements to reach entire Downtown character area
- Update the zoning ordinance in accordance with desired uses, including mixed-use development
- Continue efforts of Dalton DDA to market downtown, recruit a mix of businesses, and encourage redevelopment where appropriate
- Consider and implement feasible projects listed within the Carl Vinson *Downtown Dalton Master Plan 2018*
- Connect Downtown Dalton to Mt. Rachael and Haig Mill Park via the greenway previously noted within the Dalton Green Hat Plan
- Consider a bike and pedestrian plan to connect Dalton State College to the Mill Line Greenway, thus connecting the college campus to downtown



*Amenities like Burr Park and the Summer Concert Series will continue to create a sense of place in the community and anchor Downtown Dalton as a destination for visitors*

### Transforming Eye Sores to Assets



*Conceptual design courtesy of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government as part of the 2018 Downtown Dalton Revitalization Plan*

Alleyways are an important part of a downtown business's daily functions. Alleyways provide designated back-of-house areas for deliveries and loading zones, waste receptacles and grease traps, as well as public-right-of-way for utilities. They improve a downtown's overall connectivity, linking businesses with rear employee and patron parking lots, and providing short-cuts between destinations. They also serve as great patio and outdoor dining spaces, expanding the number of patrons a downtown business can serve in peak hours. On a beautiful day, patio seating is attractive to patrons, and businesses with outdoor seating options are in high demand. With real monetary benefit for business owners, and improved connectivity and experiences for downtown visitors, properly designed alleyways must be fully considered within a streetscape masterplan.

- Currently several businesses are seeing the benefits of alleyway use. The Dalton Little Theatre's alleyway connects its back parking lot with its front entrance. Perfect Cup Restaurant and Coffee Shop and Cherokee Brewing and Pizza Company are both utilizing their alleyways as large outdoor patio spaces. Though not a true alleyway, Crescent City Tavern has rolled with the punches of a devastating fire, transforming the adjacent former buildings into a patio large enough to provide a concert venue.
- Alleyways are key multi-function spaces for both business owners and patrons, making their appearance that much more important. These areas must be flexible enough to allow vehicular access when needed, while also being safe for pedestrian use, and well-maintained enough for outdoor dining opportunities. By unifying and beautifying waste receptacles and grease pit areas to a small portion of the alleyway, and enhancing the appearance of the building, these spaces can be used to better serve patrons and the public.
- Alleyways must also be maintained when new development comes to Dalton. The pursuit to maximize a developments square footage must be met with the realities of back-of-house services, overall downtown connectivity, and the real monetary value in outdoor dining.



## EMERGING SUBURBAN

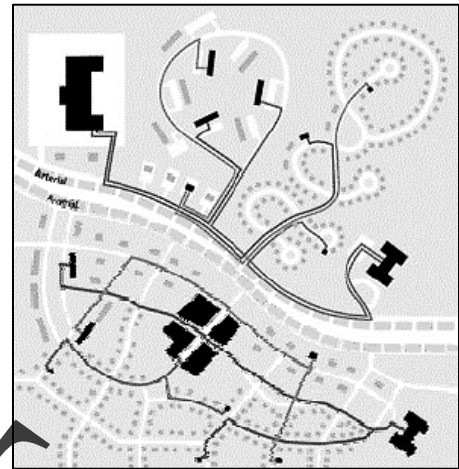
The Emerging Suburban character area covers areas primarily in the unincorporated county east of Dalton, west of I-75 around and south of Tunnel Hill, and along SR 71/Cleveland Highway that have experienced some residential growth and are positioned to accommodate more due to general land use trends in the area or to proximity to existing neighborhoods.

New development should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, a range in housing types and sizes, and traffic calming measures. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated in the Community Activity Center character area. Neighborhood focal points can be created within Emerging Suburban areas by locating schools or community centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. Small-scale, walkable mixed use neighborhood centers can be created within Emerging Suburban areas by locating schools or community centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. Small-scale, walkable mixed use neighborhood centers can be created within Emerging Suburban areas by locating schools or community centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences. In addition, conservation subdivisions should be permitted as a suitable alternative to traditional low-density residential subdivisions in order to protect and maximize open space.

### Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect natural and scenic resources
- Provide connected system of streets within new neighborhoods and to existing neighborhoods where possible, resulting in an expanded/alternate local street network for motorists and emergency vehicles
- Accommodate master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) that blends residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services that are linked in a compact pattern, encourages walking, and minimizes the need for auto trips within a subdivision
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, schools buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible



*The Emerging Suburban character area seeks to encourage the connectivity depicted on the bottom of the diagram and discourage conventional suburban sprawl shown in the top of the diagram*



*Emerging Suburban Area in Westside Whitfield County*



*Undeveloped property in Tunnel Hill designated as Emerging Suburban area*

- Provide adequate open space and active and passive recreation opportunities for area residents
- Limit clearing and grading
- Permit use of conservation subdivisions with the goal of maximizing open space
- Include a variety of housing choices
- Provide sidewalks, street trees and decorative, pedestrian scale lighting
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and street trees
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences
- Protect water quality with appropriate measures for soil and erosion control and groundwater recharge area protection, including Best Management Practices (BMP)



*Pedestrian friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees and homes with front porches are encouraged in the Emerging Suburban Area*

### Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential (net density of 2 dwellings per acre)
- Parks
- Public/institutional

### Implementation Strategies

- Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance
- Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require a connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connections to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- Expand sewer service to include all Emerging Suburban, Suburban Neighborhood and Traditional Neighborhood character areas currently underserved
- Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintains the natural tree canopy as much as possible



*Undeveloped property adjacent to SR 71/Cleveland Highway in Varnell is part of the Emerging Suburban character area*

## INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial character area includes land used in low and high intensity manufacturing, wholesale trade, distribution, assembly, processing, and similar uses that may or may not generate excessive noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics. Most notable in Whitfield County is the carpet industry, which traditionally has been the driving economic force in the area and continues to be a large employer. A goal of this character area is to allow opportunities to expand this base while also accommodating new businesses.

### Development Pattern

- The development pattern should seek to:
- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Prohibit residential uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding residential or rural areas
- Provide access management measures to maintain traffic flow (e.g. shared driveways and interparcel access for similar uses on adjacent properties)
- Incorporate landscaping of parking lots
- Encourage parking lots to incorporate on-site stormwater detention or retention features, such as pervious pavements
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit extensive mass grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent “visual clutter”
- Prevent adverse impacts to natural resources and surrounding population
- Reflect a campus or unified development
- Protect air and water quality
- Address traffic impacts and circulation in site design



*New Industrial development / redevelopment should encourage development of attractive large-scale building footprints that can accommodate the needs of modern manufacturing while incorporating landscaping and attractive site design*



*Industrial Area in south Whitfield County defined by large single-story industrial and warehouse structures*



*Example of modern industrial property near I-75*



## Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Commercial

## Implementation Strategies

- Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites
- Prepare and incorporate into development review a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks



*Entrance to the County's Industrial Park near the Carbondale Interchange*

## Roadway Widening due to Future Industrial Development

There are several roadways that may require widening when large industrial developments are constructed or existing industrial development is expanded. Some of these locations are listed below.

- Carbondale Road Widening (2 to 4 lanes) from Redwine Cove Road to I-75 Interchange
- Old Dixie Highway (2 to 4 lanes) from South Dalton Bypass to Cross Plains Boulevard
- SR 3/South Dixie Road (2 to 4 lanes) from South Dalton Bypass to Cross Plains Boulevard
- South Dalton Bypass from I-75 Interchange to SR 3/South Dixie Road – Add one eastbound lane that would become a right-turn lane drop at SR 3/South Dixie Road.
- South Dalton Bypass (4 to 6 lanes) from I-75 Interchange to SR 3/South Dixie Road including widening of interchange ramps from 1 to 2 lanes.



*Construction site of Hanwa Q Cells, A global manufacturer of solar panels, in Whitfield County's Carbondale industrial park. This company plans to create approximately 500 new jobs.*



## INTERCHANGE

The Interchange character area represents three of the five Whitfield County interchanges locations along I-75: east of Tunnel Hill and south of Dalton (Connector 3 and Carbondale exits are combined into a single Interchange area, as reflected on the Future Development Map). The interchanges are characterized by auto oriented commercial and industrial uses that cater to travelers along I-75 and the nearby industrial workforce. Access to the interstate has allowed industrial uses to flourish in some areas while also providing numerous entry points to the County. As prominent gateways to the County, attention should be paid to permitted signage, the presence of sidewalks and other site or streetscape features that can enhance or detract from the aesthetic and functional qualities of the area.

### Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate diverse, higher-intensity industrial uses and supporting commercial uses
- Limit “interchange commercial” uses
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and surrounding rural or residential areas
- Reflect a campus or unified development
- Provide access management measures such as interparcel access
- Incorporate landscaping of commercial sites/parking lots
- Discourage strip development
- Provide adequate buffers
- Limit visibility of industrial operations/parking from the public right of way
- Limit grading and clearing
- Control signage (height, size, type) to prevent “visual clutter”
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion control and groundwater recharge protection area measures



*Interchange includes a mix of warehouse, industrial and retail uses in buildings with large, one-story footprints. The area is designed to accommodate automobile traffic, but provides few options for walking and biking*



*Interchange area near I-75 interchange is designed for future industrial and business park development*



*The Interchange area located in Tunnel Hill near the intersection of SR 201 and I-75 have developed with metal butler buildings with little design character*

## Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Interstate commercial (gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores)

## Implementation Strategies

- Prepare and incorporate into development review a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- Continue to coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks
- Implement an Interchange Overlay district to regulate building placement, design and size, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the interchange area
- Prepare an Access Management Plan, with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access
- Expand sewer service to include all Interchange areas currently underserved (e.g. west of I-75 including portions of Carbondale and Connector 3 interchange areas)



*Interchange Character Area shown above located at the I-75/Carbondale Road Interchange*



*Industrial uses are included within the Interchange character area, shown above in the southeast quadrant of the I-75/SR201 interchange area*

## MEDICAL DISTRICT

This character area represents the Hamilton Medical Center and ancillary medical center uses that are found on-site in a campus-type development or within walking distance or a short drive from the medical center. Examples include professional medical and dental offices, nursing home facilities, retail pharmacies and restaurants. Supporting uses are intended to provide easily accessible services for hospitals employees, patients and visitors. In addition, the close proximity of this character area to housing provides an opportunity for employees to live and work in the same general area. While the Medical District plays a vital role in the community, it is important to encourage building / site design features and landscape buffers to mitigate the impacts of the Medical District on adjacent residential properties. Likewise, multimodal connections to adjacent neighborhoods should be provided.

### **Development Patterns**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Promote a pedestrian-scale “medical community” where medical uses and support services (Medical Center, restaurants, etc.) are connected by a network of sidewalks
- Accommodate housing that benefits from close proximity to health services (senior housing, nursing home, special needs housing, and guest lodging for families of hospital patients)
- Reduce on-site vehicular use and off-site vehicular trips by providing a mix of compatible services for employees and visitors
- Encourage mixed-use opportunities (e.g. medical offices above ground floor retail)
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and the surrounding residential areas
- Prohibit encroachment (including parking and light trespass) into the adjacent residential areas
- Retain open space and incorporate landscaping into site design and parking areas
- Encourage shared parking among uses
- Discourage parking in the front yard for homes that have been converted to office uses



*Entrance to Hamilton Medical Center, The anchor of the medical District in Dalton*



*Construction of the newest addition to Hamilton Medical Center, The People's Cancer Institute*



*A variety of building styles are found within the Medical District including residential-looking buildings like the one pictured above*

## Primary Land Uses

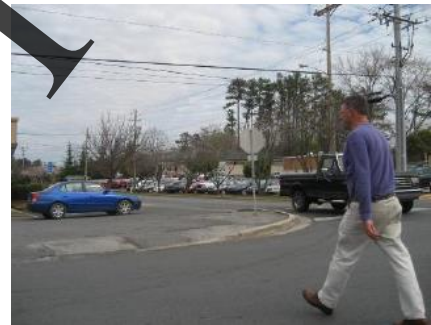
- Hospital or clinic
- Professional medical office
- Retail support (drugstore, restaurant)
- Residential (senior housing, assisted living facility, special needs housing, guest lodging for patients' families)
- Mixed use (upper floor office or residential and ground floor retail)



*Small monument signs as the one shown above shall be used for businesses in this area*

## Implementation Strategies

- Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the area sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and to prioritize repair/replacement projects
- Prepare a Medical District Area Master Plan



*Pedestrian infrastructure in the Medical District, although improved since 2008, provides limited protection for those who chose to walk. More crosswalks, sidewalks, and shared parking arrangements are needed to make walking safer.*



## Preserve

The Preserve character area describes primarily public or privately owned land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and are not suitable for urban or suburban development. Land can be owned outright or subject to conservation easements. This character area includes major parklands, undeveloped natural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas and significant natural features including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, and conservation areas not suitable for development of any kind. The Preserve character area seeks to enhance the significance of these resources and ensure their protection.

### Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Preserve natural resources, habitats, views, and rural/agricultural character
- Protect open space in a linear pattern, typically following the flood plain of river and stream corridors and accommodate greenways
- Maintain a high degree of open space
- Prevent degradation to natural resources in areas that have already developed or have the potential to develop due to existing zoning
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Protect water quality with appropriate stream and reservoir buffers and prohibition of uses that are prone to pollution
- Provide opportunities for passive use recreation and tourism destinations (e.g. canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, etc.) and environmental education
- Utilize Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) as a tool to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

### Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation (for environmentally constrained areas)
- Active recreation (for non-environmentally constrained areas)
- Agriculture



*Mill Creek in west Whitfield County and its floodplain are part of the Preserve character area*



*Public parks, such as the county-owned property adjacent to Valley Point middle and elementary schools, are also part of the Preserve character area*



*Creek and picnic area located in Tunnel Hill Park off G. Vaughn Parkway*

## Implementation Strategies

- Develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, addresses greenway trail crossings of all roads, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and addresses recommendations of the Conasauga River Alliance
- Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross Preserve character areas
- Promote Preserve character areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations
- Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) to protect water quality
- Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners
- Adopt “Part V” Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas in accordance with Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ minimum environmental planning criteria
- Follow BMPs for erosion and sedimentation control, as defined in the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act
- Develop program for administering TDRs



*Wetlands such as the one shown above found adjacent to the Old Dixie Highway corridor south of the Dalton Bypass, are part of the Preserve character area*



*Tunnel Hill Cemetery is another example of the Preserve character area*



*Greenspace adjacent to the Varnell City Hall is part of the Preserve character area*



*Playground equipment at the Varnell Park adjacent to and part of the Preserve character area*

## REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER

Regional Activity Center character area represents a concentration of regionally-marketed commercial and retail centers, office and employment areas, and mixed use development. These areas are characterized by a high degree of access by vehicular traffic, on-site parking, low degree of internal open space; high floor-area-ratio; large tracts of land, campus or unified development. While established Regional Activity Centers are typically single-story suburban shopping centers with minimal office space and housing and limited parking lot landscaping, over time these areas should evolve into mixed use, walkable centers of commerce that attract customers from a regional market and include a variety of housing choices.

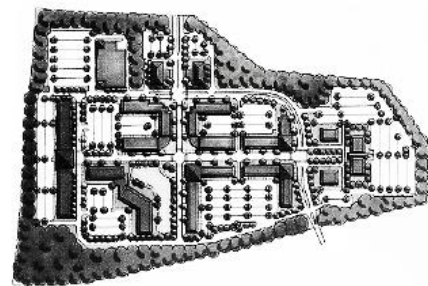
An example of this character area is West Walnut Avenue, located east of I-75. This area, which includes the Dalton Factory Outlet Stores and other commercial uses that benefit from close proximity to the interstate and serve both local residents as well as interstate traffic, is currently a retail center for the county and is a significant gateway to Dalton and surrounding areas. As an important gateway to the county as well as a heavily traveled area, focus should be paid on enhancing mobility and connectivity for cars and pedestrians, as well as the overall aesthetics of the area (streetscape and building/site design).

### ***Desired development patterns***

- Include a relatively high-density mix of retail, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, including multi-family town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums, including affordable and workforce housing
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment by adding sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighboring residential areas and major destinations, such as neighborhood centers, health facilities, commercial clusters, parks, schools, etc.
- Design should be very pedestrian oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses



*Example of appropriate scale and landscaping in the Regional Activity Center shown from the Gerber Village development in Asheville, North Carolina*



*Master plans are an essential part of ensuring that regional mixed-use areas develop as envisioned*



- Include direct connections to nearby networks of greenspace or trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreation purposes
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear
- Provide bike lanes or wide curb lanes and conveniently located (preferably sheltered) bicycle parking at retail/office destinations and in multi-family dwellings to encourage bicycling and provide additional safety
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and are not typical “franchise” or “corporate” architecture
- Provide parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater detention or retention features, such as pervious arrangements in addition to the use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large expanses of paved parking



*Regional Activity Center example of appropriate scale shown from The Avenue of Murfreesboro in Tennessee*

### **Primary Land Uses**

- Commercial (retail and office)
- Multi-family residential
- Mixed-use (including upper story residential)
- Civic/institutional
- Passive and active parks

### **Implementation Strategies**

- *Extend sewer infrastructure to Regional Activity Center character area locations currently without service*
- *Encourage “greyfield redevelopment” of existing underutilized shopping centers with mixed use, walkable development*
- *Prepare and adopt a Mixed Use Development Ordinance to facilitate greyfield redevelopment and implement Regional Activity Center character area master plans*



*Quality commercial development shown here from the Town Center area of Cobb County, Georgia*

## RIDGE CONSERVATION

This area includes the Rocky Face Ridge and Dug Gap Ridge that both parallel I-75, as well as all steep slopes (minimum slope of 25%). Hillside development has the potential to harm the area's natural resources and scenic views due to erosion and the loss of trees. The Ridge Conservation character area is intended to maintain the area's ridgelines, which contribute to the County's unique character and its history, while accommodating low-density residential development with minimal impact on the environment.

### Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and control and groundwater recharge protection area measures
- Preserve historic/cultural resources along ridges
- Incorporate adequate infrastructure for accessibility and for water and fire protection needs
- Protect existing trees
- Protect steep slopes and natural landscape
- Protect scenic views
- Preserve rural character and viewsheds
- Conserve natural features and resources
- Limit impacts of new development on the environment
- Reduce impervious cover
- Utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Encourage low-intensity uses

### Primary Land Uses

- Undeveloped areas left in their natural state
- Passive recreation
- Low-intensity single-family residential
- Forestry/Agricultural

### Implementation Strategies

- Adopt hillside development/steep slope ordinance



*Ridge Conservation is important in order to protect views and the natural areas*



*New residential development atop the ridge in the Ridge Conservation area*



*Dug Gap Road winds through the ridge west of Dalton*

## RURAL AGRICULTURAL RESERVE

The Rural Agricultural Reserve character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural and large-lot residential uses. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural. Housing tends to be scattered across the landscape on very large lots and is typically not in proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or sewer infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community's rural tradition and active farms and maintain its rural, open spaces. These areas lack sewer infrastructure which makes urban and suburban scale development unsuitable.

The Rural Agricultural Reserve character area comprises much of the northeast, southwest and southeast portions of the County, including the following communities: Beaverdale, eastern Hopewell, Norton, Prater's Mill, Gordon Springs, Trickum, River Bend, and portions of Nance Spring and Tilton.

### Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes and adopting local policies promoting the right to farm
- Benefit from use of land conservation tools that may include conservation easements, conservation subdivisions, Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer of Development (TDRs)
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic resources
- Preserve rural character, view sheds, hillsides and other natural features/resources
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways
- Discourage extension of public utilities into these areas (i.e. public sewer)
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover



*Farms on large acreage dominate the countryside in northeast Whitfield County, which is home to the majority of the Rural Agricultural Character Area*



*Conservation subdivisions allow smaller lots in exchange for protecting large areas of open space and are appropriate in Rural/Agricultural areas. These type of developments can be appropriate within the Rural Agricultural Preserve*



- Discourage excessive clearing and grading in order to protect trees, topography and water quality
- Accommodate low-intensity residential uses at a net density of 1 dwelling unit per 25 acres
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion control and groundwater recharge protection area measures

### **Primary Land Uses**

- Agricultural
- Rural residential
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

### **Implementation Strategies**

- *Adopt a policy that discourages extension of public utilities into Rural Agricultural Reserve character areas*
- *Prepare and adopt a Rural Agricultural Reserve zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Agricultural Reserve Character Area*
- *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) for Protecting Water Quality*
- *Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space*
- *Adopt typical street cross-sections and/or development standards for Rural Agricultural Reserve character areas that identify appropriate width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk*
- *Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits by landowners to help preserve viable farmland*
- *Promote the use of Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer of Development (TDRs)*
- *Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks **(for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)***



*Large scale farms operations are found within the Rural Agricultural Character Area*



*Dalton's Downtown Farmer's Market at the Dalton Green*

## RURAL CORRIDOR

The Rural Corridor character area includes sparsely developed or undeveloped public or private land on both sides of a rural arterial with significant natural, scenic or pastoral views that would be disrupted by leap frog, conventional suburban residential development along or near the corridor. Public roadway features, such as signs, roadside erosion control, drainage and materials storage also have a major impact on the scenic quality and character of these corridors. The overall character of the Rural Corridor character areas is similar to Rural Agricultural and Rural Residential areas, but it differs in that pressure for development tends to be greater along corridors. The Rural Corridor character area covers roughly 300 feet of property on each side of Rural Corridors shown on the Future Development Map.

### Development Patterns

The development pattern should seek to:

- Prohibit linear, commercial strip center development and concentrate commercial development at Rural Crossroads nodes
- Enact guidelines for new development that enhance the scenic value of the corridor and address landscaping and architectural design to protect rural scenery, historic resources and prevent unattractive sprawl development/visual clutter along the roadway
- Preserve tree lines and groves adjacent to the corridor
- Consider the use of drainage swales for paved roads in lieu of curb and gutter
- Encourage compatible architectural styles that maintain the regional rural character and do not include franchise or corporate architecture
- Limit parking in front of commercial properties
- Connect to regional networks of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes
- Provide bicycle accommodations
- Institute driveway controls and access management standards to facilitate traffic flow
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources



*Rural Corridor area along SR 53 east of Varnell*



*Rural Corridor area along SR 286/Dawnville Road in east Whitfield County*

- Promote the Cohutta-Chattahoochee Scenic Byway spur to Prater's Mill

### **Primary Land Uses**

- Passive or small active parks
- Agriculture
- Large lot residential

### **Implementation Strategies**

- *Prepare and adopt a Rural Corridor Overlay District*
- *Prepare an Access Management Plan for Rural Corridors with recommendations that include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access*

DRAFT



## RURAL CROSSROADS

The Rural Crossroads character area includes key intersections in small communities in more rural areas of the County, including Cedar Valley, Cedar Ridge, Gordon Springs and Mill Creek. These areas are intended to serve adjacent residential or agricultural areas with limited goods and services concentrated around an intersection rather than spread out in a linear fashion along a roadway. Small scale retail uses, public facilities such as churches, fire stations, post offices and libraries, and agricultural support businesses such as commercial nurseries, farm implement sales and supply stores, farmer's markets and feed and seed stores are appropriate uses in this character area.



*Rural Crossroads area in the Mill Creek Community*

### **Development Pattern**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect rural character
- Provide small-scale commercial opportunities for meeting local needs
- Cluster buildings at the area's center
- Maintain open space surrounding the center
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character rather than "franchise" or "corporate" architecture
- Limit clearing and grading
- Reduce access points along the highway
- Connect to greenways/trail system, wherever possible

### **Primary Land Uses**

- Neighborhood or rural commercial uses
- Civic/institutional (at a rural scale only)
- Passive or active parks

### **Implementation Strategies**

- *Adopt Rural Crossroads Zoning Overlay District that includes minimum standards for commercial building and site design*
- *Widen roadways only when absolutely necessary*



*Site design that place parking in the rear or side of buildings help preserve rural character, while also providing retail and other services for surrounding communities*

### RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

The Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area encompasses the southern portion of the County, east of I-75 on both sides of U.S. 41/Dixie Highway. The character area includes residential uses (primarily low-density residential) as well as undeveloped or agricultural areas. Like the Rural Residential character area, development should respect the community's agricultural tradition and maintain its rural, open spaces, which can be achieved with the use of conservation subdivisions. Unlike the Rural Residential areas, this character area includes opportunities for infill development and community revitalization efforts in more established residential areas.



*Example of the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area in southeast Whitfield County*

#### **Development Patterns**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Stabilize and maintain existing housing stock
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setbacks and style of existing adjacent homes
- Preserve rural character, open spaces, view sheds, natural features/resources and farmland
- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways and utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Limit impacts of new development, including clearing and grading, on the environment
- Accommodate low-intensity uses
- Accommodate rural residential at a net density of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres
- Promote the use of conservation subdivisions
- Connect subdivisions to greenways/trails wherever possible
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion and sedimentation control and groundwater recharge protection area measures

#### **Primary Land Uses**

- Rural residential
- Agricultural

- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

### **Implementation Strategies**

- *Prepare and adopt a new zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area*
- *Prepare revitalization strategy for addressing housing needs identified in the Whitfield County Housing Condition Study for this area*
- *Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space*
- *Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character areas*
- *Adopt typical cross-sections and/or development standards specific to Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character areas that identify*



*Another example of the Rural Neighborhood Revitalization character area in southeast Whitfield County*

DRAFT

## RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The Rural Residential character area includes predominantly rural, undeveloped land that is suited for agricultural, “conservation subdivision” and/or large-lot residential uses. Rural Reserve areas consist of privately owned areas where agricultural uses and low density development are common. These areas are intended and designed to remain rural. Housing tends to be clustered in hamlets or scattered across the landscape and typically not in proximity to major transportation networks, commercial areas, or infrastructure. Development in the area should respect the community’s agricultural tradition and maintain its rural, open spaces.

Lack of sewer infrastructure is common, which makes urban and suburban scale development unsuitable. Conservation subdivisions may be a suitable alternative to large-lot residential uses and an appropriate response to development pressures for neighborhood development in order to maximize existing open space and viewsheds.

Rural Residential character areas are located north of Dalton, east and west of the Emerging Suburban areas (see Emerging Suburban character area description) that parallel SR 71/Cleveland Highway, as well as in the southwestern of the County. The following communities are included in the Rural Residential character area: Cohutta Ridge, western Hopewell, Cedar Valley, Dawnville, Toonerville, Mill Creek, and Carbondale.

### **Development Patterns**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Protect farmland, open space and environmentally-sensitive areas by maintaining large lot sizes or clustering residential development in a design that incorporates significant amounts of open space and natural conservation areas
- Preserve economic function of agriculture, livestock and forestry
- Promote and protect historic and natural resources
- Preserve rural character, view sheds, and natural features/resource



*Rural Residential character area is generally characterized by large-lot residential development*



*Rural Residential area in the Carbondale area of south Whitfield County*



- Preserve natural hydrology and drainage ways and utilize natural features for stormwater management
- Discourage extension of public utilities into these areas (i.e. public water and sewer)
- Carefully design roadway alterations to minimize scenic and environmental impacts
- Minimize impervious cover
- Limit impacts of new development, including clearing and grading, on the environment
- Accommodate low-intensity uses
- Accommodate rural residential with 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres
- Promote the use of conservation subdivisions
- Connect subdivisions to greenways/trails wherever possible
- Protect water quality with appropriate soil erosion controls and groundwater recharge protection measures, including Best Management Practices (BMP)



*Conservation subdivision in south Fulton County, Georgia*

### **Primary Land Uses**

- Agricultural
- Rural residential
- Passive recreation
- Civic uses/Public/Institutional (at rural scale only)

### **Implementation Strategies**

- *Prepare and adopt a Rural Residential zoning district or amend existing zoning districts to meet the minimum lot requirements envisioned by the Rural Residential Character Area*
- *Prepare and adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance that allows for cluster development to preserve rural character, sensitive natural resources and large tracts of permanent green space*
- *Discourage extension of public sewer infrastructure into Rural Residential character areas*
- *Adopt typical street cross-sections and/or development standards for these areas that identify appropriate width and configuration and that require paved roads to use drainage swales in lieu of curb, gutter and sidewalk*
- *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) for Protecting Water Quality*
- *Promote the use of common area drain fields and/or neighborhood-scale sewerage treatment systems to reduce parcel size in areas that must be served by septic tanks (for areas proposing Conservation Subdivisions only)*

## SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Suburban Neighborhood character area describes areas where conventional patterns of post-World War II suburban residential subdivision development have been the dominant pattern. In addition to conventional subdivisions, some multi-family uses are present in this character area. Neighborhoods tend to be characterized by low pedestrian orientation, larger lot sizes, high to moderate degree of building separation, and are predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns (often curvilinear) that include cul-de-sacs.

This character area is typically found in established neighborhoods that surround historic areas and in unincorporated areas where growth has occurred over the last thirty years. Examples can be found surrounding Dalton, Tunnel Hill, north and southwest of Varnell and in the communities of Plainview, Waring, Pleasant Grove, Rocky Face, Mt. Vernon, and Five Springs.

### **Development Pattern**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, setback and style of existing adjacent homes
- Maintain existing tree cover
- Provide safe facilities for pedestrians, school buses, and bicyclists using the road right-of-way
- Incorporate sidewalks, traffic calming improvements and/or increased street interconnections, where appropriate, to improve walkability within existing neighborhoods as well as connectivity to neighboring communities and major destinations, including schools
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into neighborhoods that benefit from close proximity to local shops and services
- Encourage the location of schools, community centers or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences



*Suburban character area near Varnell*



*Example of Suburban Neighborhood development in the Mt. Vernon community of Whitfield County*



*Large lot Suburban Neighborhood character area development on the edge of Tunnel Hill*



## **Primary Land Uses**

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

## **Implementation Strategies**

- *Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan*
- *Prepare and adopt a connector street plan*



*Suburban Neighborhood development in Whitfield County typically has wide lots with a limited pedestrian network, as shown above*



*Suburban Neighborhood character area in north Tunnel Hill*



*Single-family homes on large lots define the character of the Suburban Neighborhood character area in Varnell*

## TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

The Town Neighborhood character area includes residential areas in older parts of the community typically developed prior to World War II. Characteristics include pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, small, regular lots, shallow yards (relative to newer suburban counterparts), less space between buildings, and some mixed-use elements such as small neighborhood businesses. In Dalton, this character area includes the Murray Hill/Thornton Avenue and McCarty subdivisions, which are locally designated historic districts.

This character area is generally near traditional town centers, downtowns or crossroads, and is reflected in established residential areas in Varnell surrounding the East Varnell Street/ Varnell Railroad Street intersection.

### **Development Pattern**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Maintain existing homes and character defining site features (*i.e.* drives, walls, lighting, landscaping, tree cover)
- Promote sensitive building rehabilitation that is in keeping with a building's existing architectural style and scale
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, style and setbacks of existing adjacent homes
- Promote single-family uses
- Increase pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and activity centers
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into the existing development pattern and can benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Maintain existing housing stock and preserve neighborhood character
- Protect historic structures and neighborhoods
- Adhere to locally-adopted design guidelines, where applicable



*Single family home within the Town Neighborhood area located in the Murray Hill/Thornton Avenue Local Historic District*



*Town neighborhood area west of Downtown Dalton that includes the Murray Hill/Thornton Avenue Local Historic District*



*Single family residential home in Tunnel Hill's Town Neighborhood Revitalization area*

## **Primary Land Uses**

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

## **Implementation Strategies**

- Amend the zoning ordinance to include flexible setback provisions for infill development
- Adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance
- Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and prioritize repair/replacement projects
- Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan for the North Georgia Region



*Town Neighborhood near the intersection of Woodland Avenue and Underwood Avenue*



*Historic homes shape the character in the Town Neighborhood character area of Varnell*



## TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

The Town Neighborhood Revitalization includes established neighborhoods north and east of downtown Dalton, including the following neighborhoods: Crown Mill, Fort Hill, East Dalton and Thread Mill. These neighborhoods are historic but have experienced disinvestment and decline due in part to the demolition of residences to accommodate commercial uses, parking areas, apartment buildings and industrial uses. Prevalent zoning of properties for industrial uses further contributes to the neighborhoods' instability and diminishing potential for revitalization. Recent planning efforts, including the City of Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan (2012), Neighborhood Infill Guidelines (2003), Dalton Historic Housing Infill Study (2006), and the Believe Greater Dalton Housing Strategy address these areas and the issues of neighborhood revitalization, opportunities for new growth with infill, and inconsistencies between existing City regulations and desired development for the neighborhoods.

### **Development Pattern**

The development pattern should seek to:

- Support the findings of Dalton's focused studies pertaining to redevelopment and infill opportunities
- Provide opportunities for affordable housing with building rehabilitation and infill construction
- Stabilize and maintain existing housing stock
- Protect residential buildings from demolition
- Accommodate a mix of housing types and sizes with redevelopment, including small-lot single family, townhomes, and live/work units in areas identified in the Urban Redevelopment Plan
- Allow for limited neighborhood commercial uses to serve local residents
- Promote sensitive building rehabilitation that is in keeping with a building's existing architectural style and scale and that of neighboring homes
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale, style and setbacks of existing adjacent homes
- Promote single-family uses



*Town Neighborhood Revitalization area on Underwood Circle in East Dalton*



*Improving walkability by creating more attractive and safe pathways both encourages pedestrian use as well as private land investment and redevelopment. Illustration courtesy of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government.*



*Town Neighborhood Revitalization area in East Dalton*

- Increase pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and downtown Dalton, and between residences and neighborhood commercial uses
- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into the existing development pattern and can benefit from close proximity to downtown goods and services
- Connect to a network of greenways/trails, wherever possible
- Prevent encroachment by commercial and industrial uses

### Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Townhomes
- Mixed use (live/work units)
- Neighborhood commercial (as identified in the City of Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan's concept plans)
- Parks
- Public/institutional

### Implementation Strategies

- Amend the zoning ordinance to support appropriate infill standards, including flexible setback provisions that ensure new construction is compatible with existing development patterns
- Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify substandard facilities and prioritize repair/replacement projects
- Prepare and adopt a policy framework to prevent encroachment of inappropriate automobile-oriented development that would adversely affect the quality of life and public realm
- Prepare and adopt a Greenways Master Plan
- Prepare and adopt development regulations updates to address driveway and parking requirements
- Develop a City-wide vacant site inventory, identify those that are suitable for infill development and implement recommendations of infill studies already completed
- Create a City-wide inventory of buildings suitable for redevelopment
- Encourage the creation of neighborhood associations and neighborhood watch group
- Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities for the North Georgia Region
- Implement recommendations of the City of Dalton Urban Redevelopment Plan for the Crown Mill and East Dalton Neighborhoods



*Before and after photos of a thorough renovation of a historic home in the Crown Mill Village by a local private developer proving that local redevelopment is not only possible but profitable.*



## TRANSITION CORRIDOR

- The Transition Corridor character area represents arterial or collector roads with frontage that generally developed with single family residences that have over the years seen increased traffic and resulting capacity improvements (i.e. road widening). These improvements resulted in increased traffic volume and associated impacts (e.g., noise, increased trash, street widening, etc.) making uses other than single-family residential more attractive. Some corridors are more densely developed with older structures and numerous curb cuts that may provide an opportunity for redevelopment, while others are less developed with a mix of lot sizes and uses, including undeveloped property. Transition Corridors have experienced or have the potential to experience piecemeal zoning changes that over an extended period result in front yard conversions to parking lots, unsightly home to business additions and conversions, and signage out of proportion to the structures. The Transition Corridor seeks to avoid this approach. Frontage properties along Transition Corridors should follow the development pattern described for the adjacent road-fronting character areas. However, upon completion of more detailed corridor master plans, these corridors could accommodate new commercial development concentrated in nodes at important intersections, but should not accommodate strip commercial between nodes. With a master plan, the Transition Corridor could also accommodate higher residential densities along the roadway between nodes, with lower density areas beyond the frontage properties. Master plans along with a zoning overlay are necessary to ensure that change along these corridors occurs in an orderly, comprehensive manner and applies consistent development standards throughout the corridor.
- The Transition Corridor character area includes Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is the only Transition Corridor in the City of Dalton.
- This character area includes all or portions of the major corridors in Varnell – SR 201/Varnell Road, SR 2/Praters Mill Road and SR 71/Cleveland Highway.



*Existing attached housing along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, a five-lane thoroughfare in east Dalton*



*Businesses, such as the one above in north Tunnel Hill on U.S. 41, are an example of the Transition Corridor character area*

In Tunnel Hill, this character area includes portions of U.S. 41/Chattanooga Road north and south of the Commercial Corridor character area.

### **Development Patterns**

The development pattern should seek to:

- With a corridor master plan, cluster commercial and mixed use development at major nodes along the corridor that serve adjacent neighborhoods and provide for walkable, higher intensity housing choices located between nodes
- Accommodate conversion of existing residential uses into office or commercial uses while maintaining the existing building
- Preserve or increase traffic flow by consolidating driveways and encouraging interparcel access
- Limit signs and billboards and display unobtrusive business signs that are appropriately sized and constructed for the area
- Incorporate streetscape enhancements to improve the overall appearance of the corridors
- Depict clear physical boundaries and transitions between the edge of the character area and adjacent character areas, in particularly those that include residential uses
- Landscape parking lots to provide shade, reduce impervious surfaces, improve the appearance of a site, and shield parking areas from public view
- Encourage redevelopment that permits minimal building setbacks, mixed use development, screened parking, and requires quality materials and design (related to the building, the site, and signage)
- Reflect coordinated transportation/land use planning by coordinating land use planning with bike, pedestrian and transit opportunities
- Prevent encroachment of commercial uses into adjacent residential areas
- Better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design with additional site design standards



*New development set back from the street on redeveloping Transition Corridors should protect mature trees where possible and include new landscaping and quality architectural design*



*Residential character remains within the Transitional Corridor area in Tunnel Hill, as shown above along U.S. 41 north of the Community Activity Center*

### Primary Land Uses

- Commercial/retail uses, professional offices, mixed use development (including residential uses above ground-floor retail or office space) and multi-family residential with a corridor master plan
- Single-family residential

### Implementation Strategies

- *Prepare and adopt Corridor/Streetscape Master Plan for Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to guide enhancements*
- *Adopt a Transition Corridor overlay district to regulate building placement and design, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor.*
- *Amend land use regulations to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development*

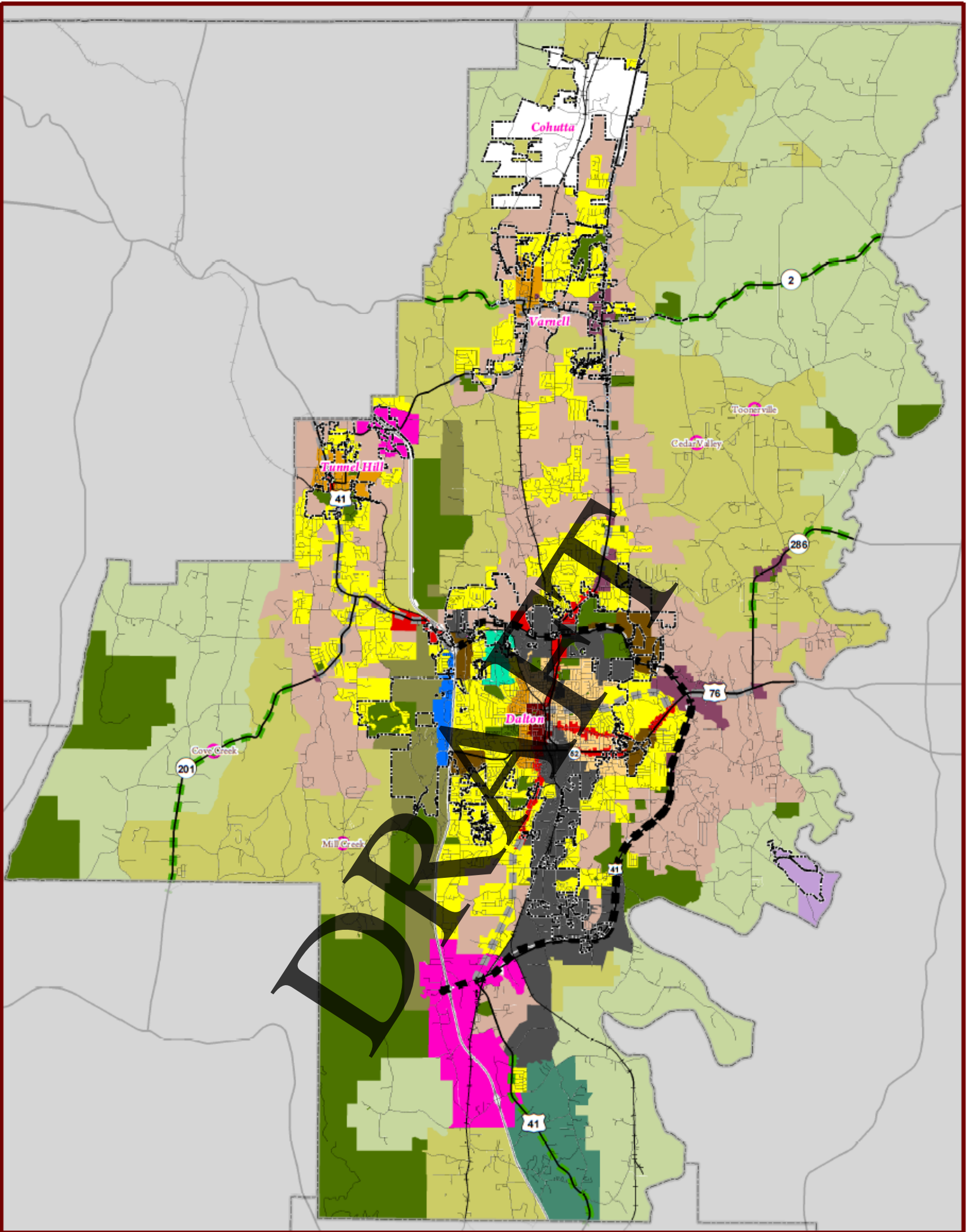


*Transition Corridor in Varnell and adjacent Unincorporated Whitfield County along SR71/Cleveland Highway*

DRAFT



Unincorporated Whitfield County Future Development Map



2023 Future Development Map - Whitfield County

Future Development Character Areas

- Airport
- Industrial
- Interchange
- Medical District
- Commercial Corridor
- Community Activity Center
- Downtown/Town Center
- Dalton State/College Drive
- Emerging Suburban and Exurban Areas

- Preserve
- Regional Activity Center
- Town Neighborhood
- Town Neighborhood Revitalization
- Rural Neighborhood - Revitalization
- Ridge Conservation
- Rural/Agricultural Reserve
- Rural Residential
- Suburban Neighborhood

Future Development Corridors

- Bypass Corridor
- Rural Corridor
- Transition Corridor

1 in = 10,417 feet

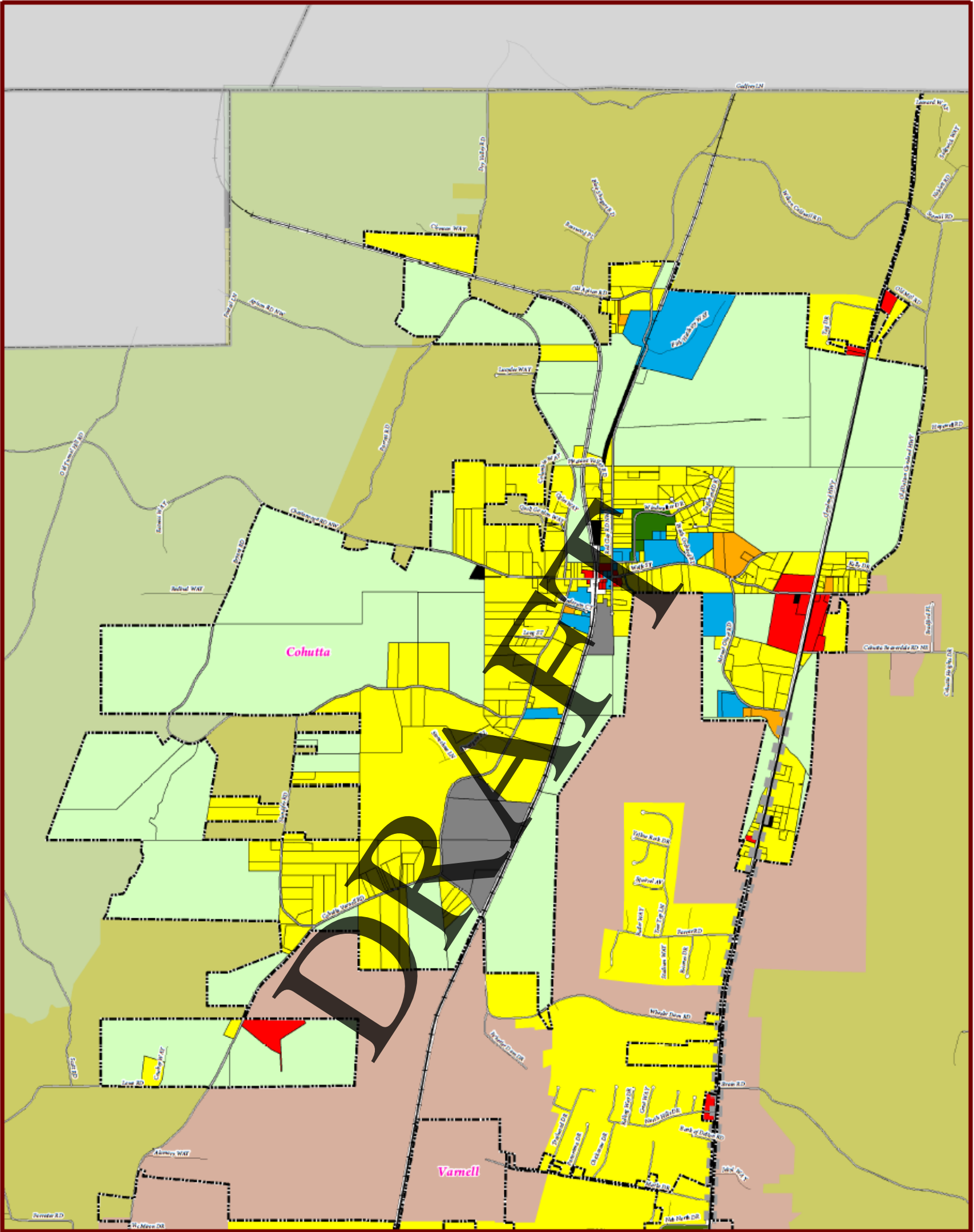


northwest  
GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© September 2023

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

Town of Cohutta Future Development Map



2023 Future Land Use Map - City of Cohutta, Georgia

Cohutta Future Land Use

	Agriculture/Forestry
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Parks/Recreation/Conservation
	Public/Institutional
	Residential - Single Family
	Residential - Multi-Family
	Transportation/Communication/Utilities

Whitfield Co. Future Development Character Areas

	Emerging Suburban and Exurban Areas
	Preserve
	Rural/Agricultural Reserve
	Rural Residential
	Suburban Neighborhood

Whitfield Co. Future Development Corridors

	Transition Corridor
--	---------------------

1 in = 1,975 feet

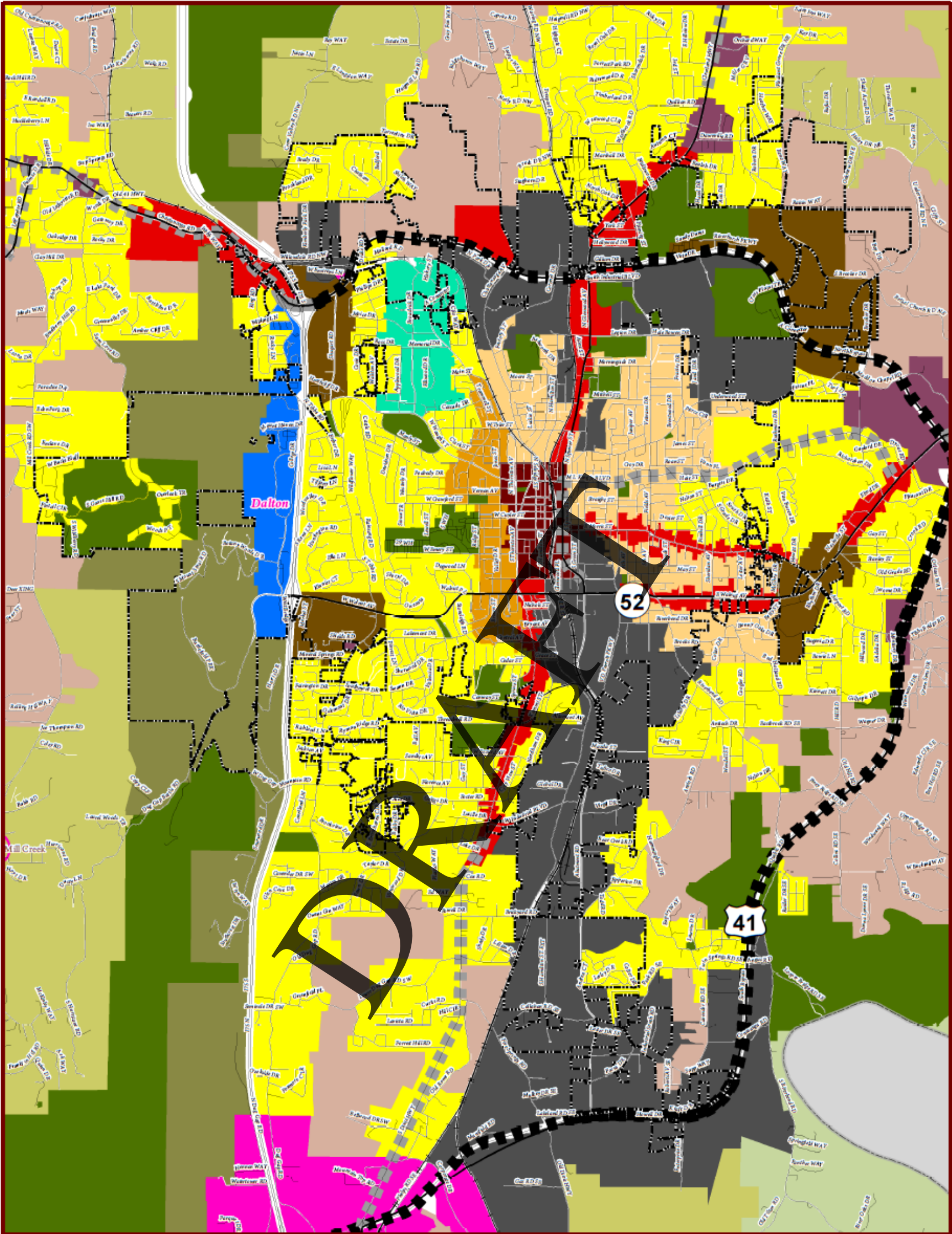
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2023

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.



City of Dalton Future Development Map



2023 Future Development Map - City of Dalton, Georgia

**Future Development Character Areas**

Industrial	Preserve
Interchange	Regional Activity Center
Medical District	Town Neighborhood
Commercial Corridor	Town Neighborhood Revitalization
Community Activity Center	Ridge Conservation
Downtown/Town Center	Rural/Agricultural Reserve
Dalton State/College Drive	Rural Residential
Emerging Suburban and Exurban Areas	Suburban Neighborhood

**Future Development Corridors**

Bypass Corridor
Transition Corridor

1 in = 3,713 feet

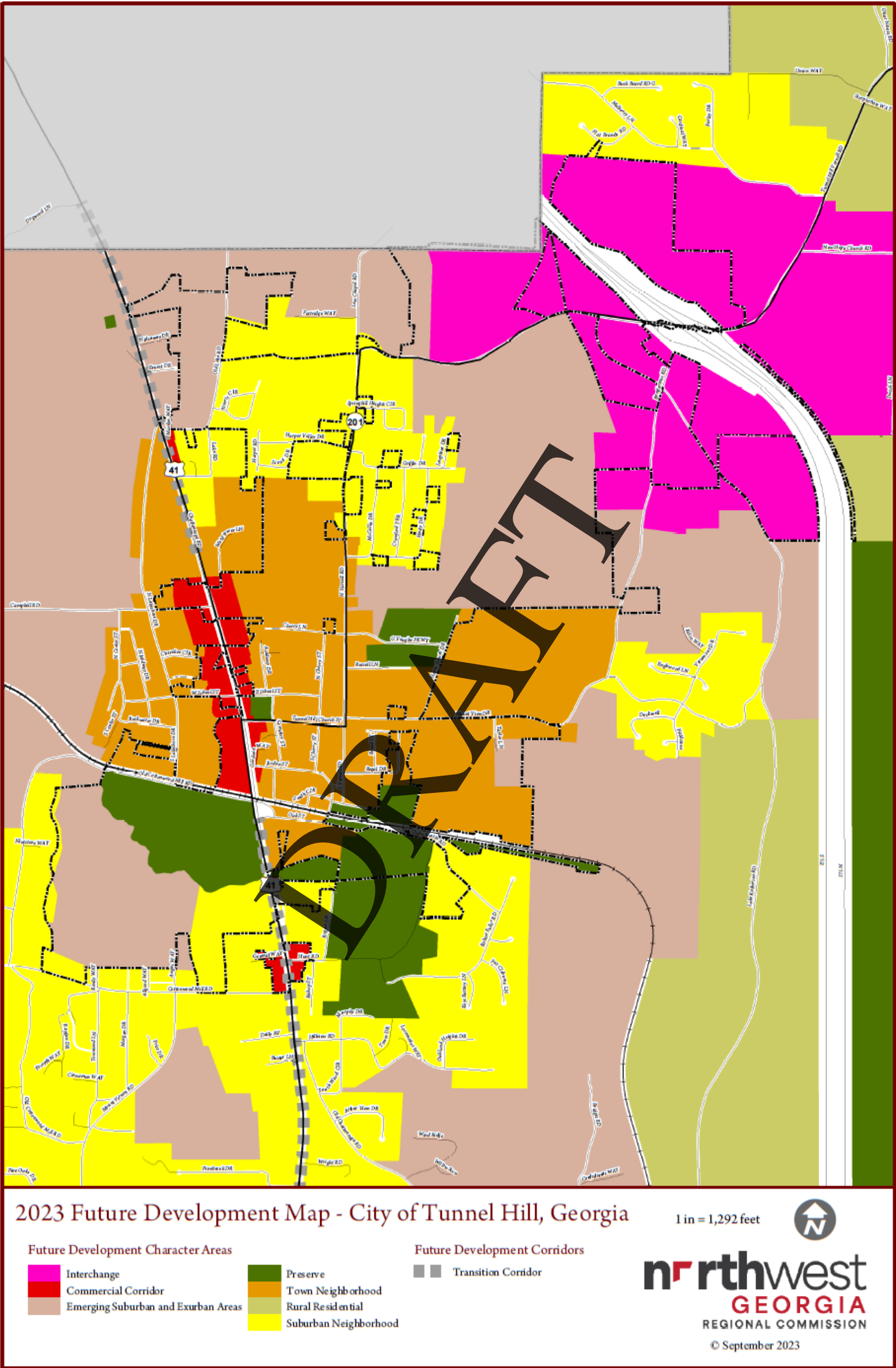
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© September 2023

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

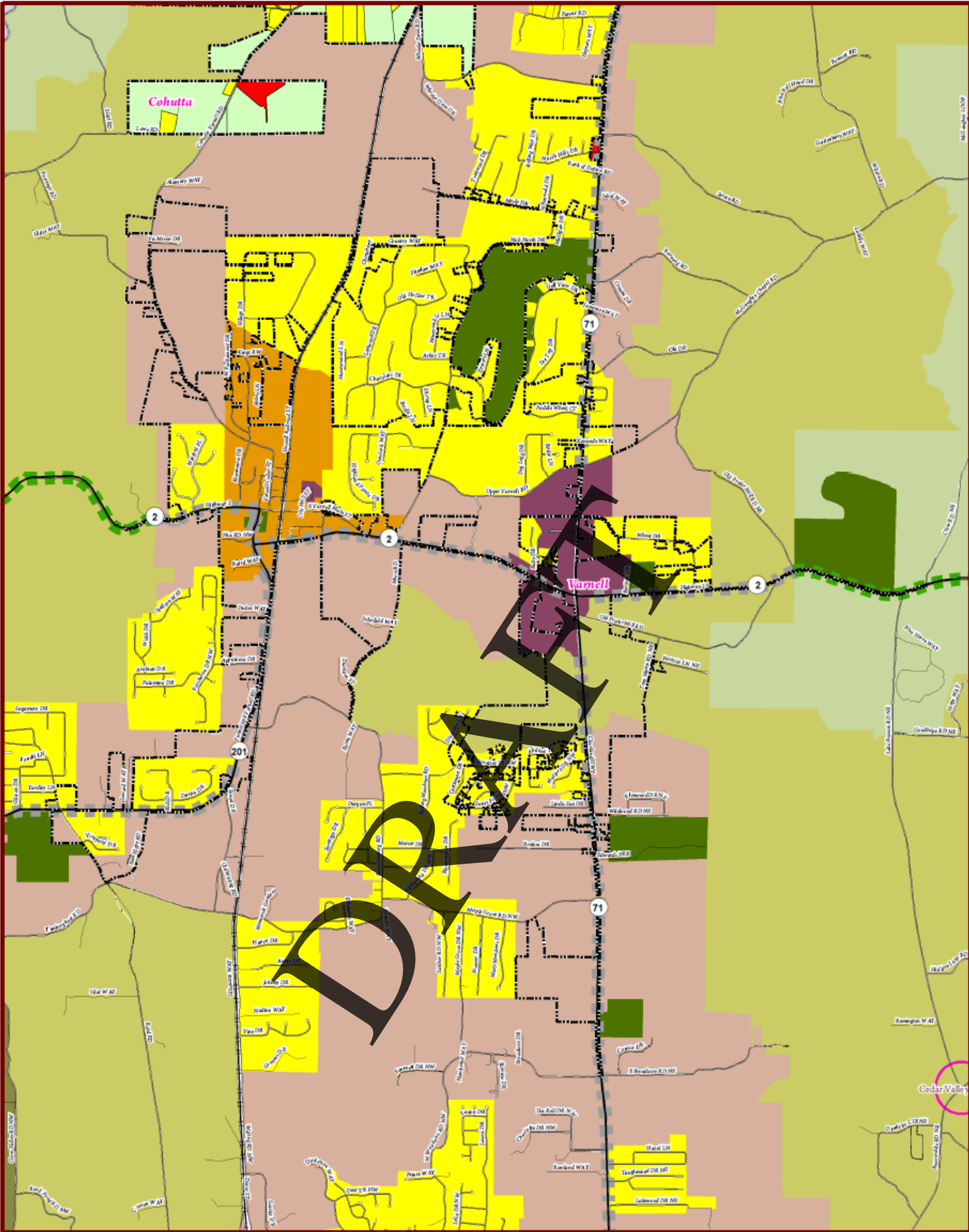


City of Tunnel Hill Future Development Map



This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

City of Vannell Future Development Map



2023 Future Land Use Map - City of Vannell, Georgia

**Cohutta Future Land Use**

	Agriculture/Forestry
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Parks/Recreation/Conservation
	Public/Institutional
	Residential - Single Family
	Transportation/Communication/Utilities

**Whitfield Co. Future Development Character Areas**

	Community Activity Center
	Emerging Suburban and Exurban Areas
	Preserve
	Town Neighborhood
	Ridge Conservation
	Rural/ Agricultural Reserve
	Rural Residential
	Suburban Neighborhood

**Whitfield Co. Future Development Corridors**

	Rural Corridor
	Transition Corridor

1 in = 2,575 feet

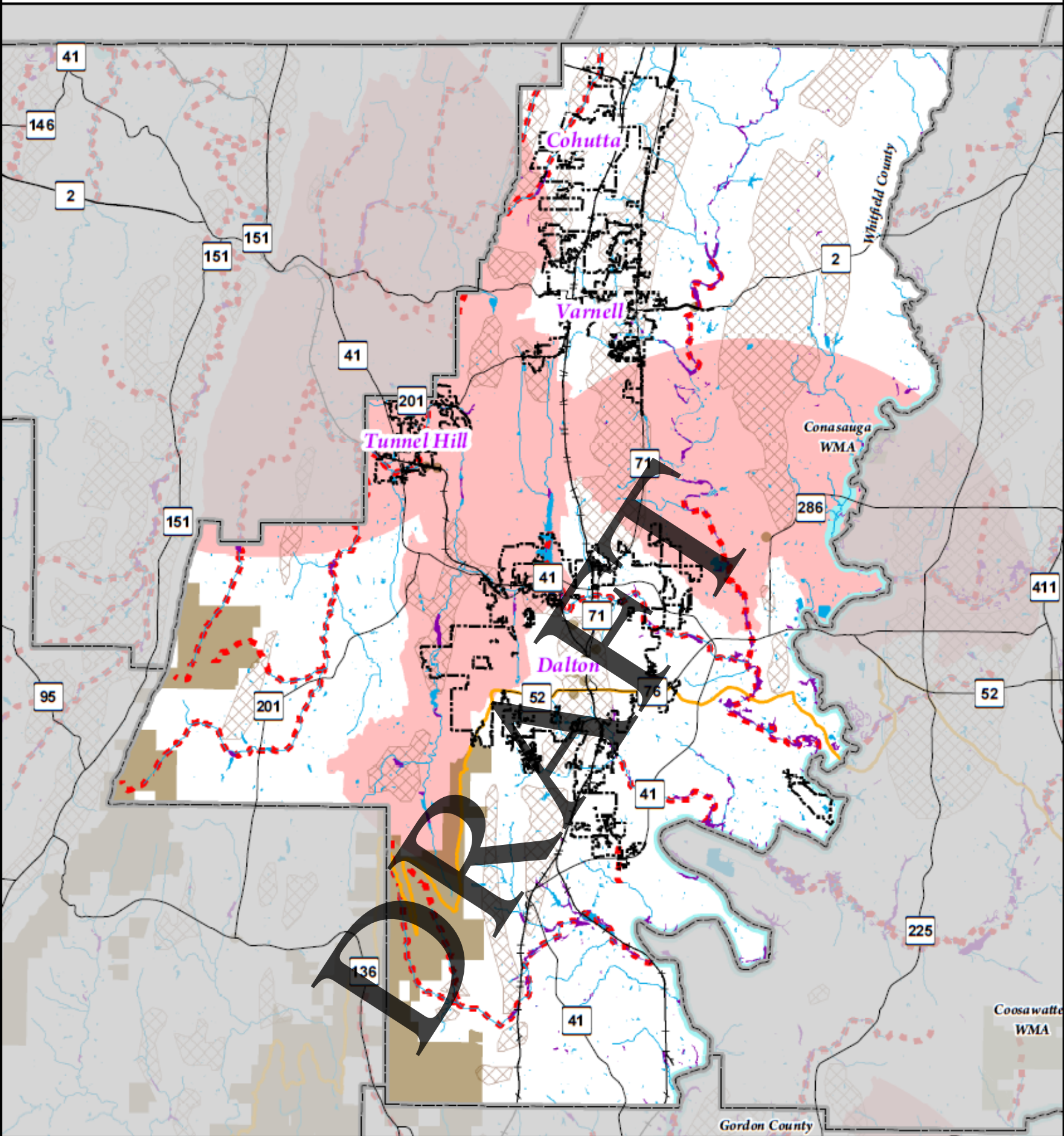
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© September 2023

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.



Whitfield County, Georgia - Environmentally Sensitive Areas + Impaired Streams



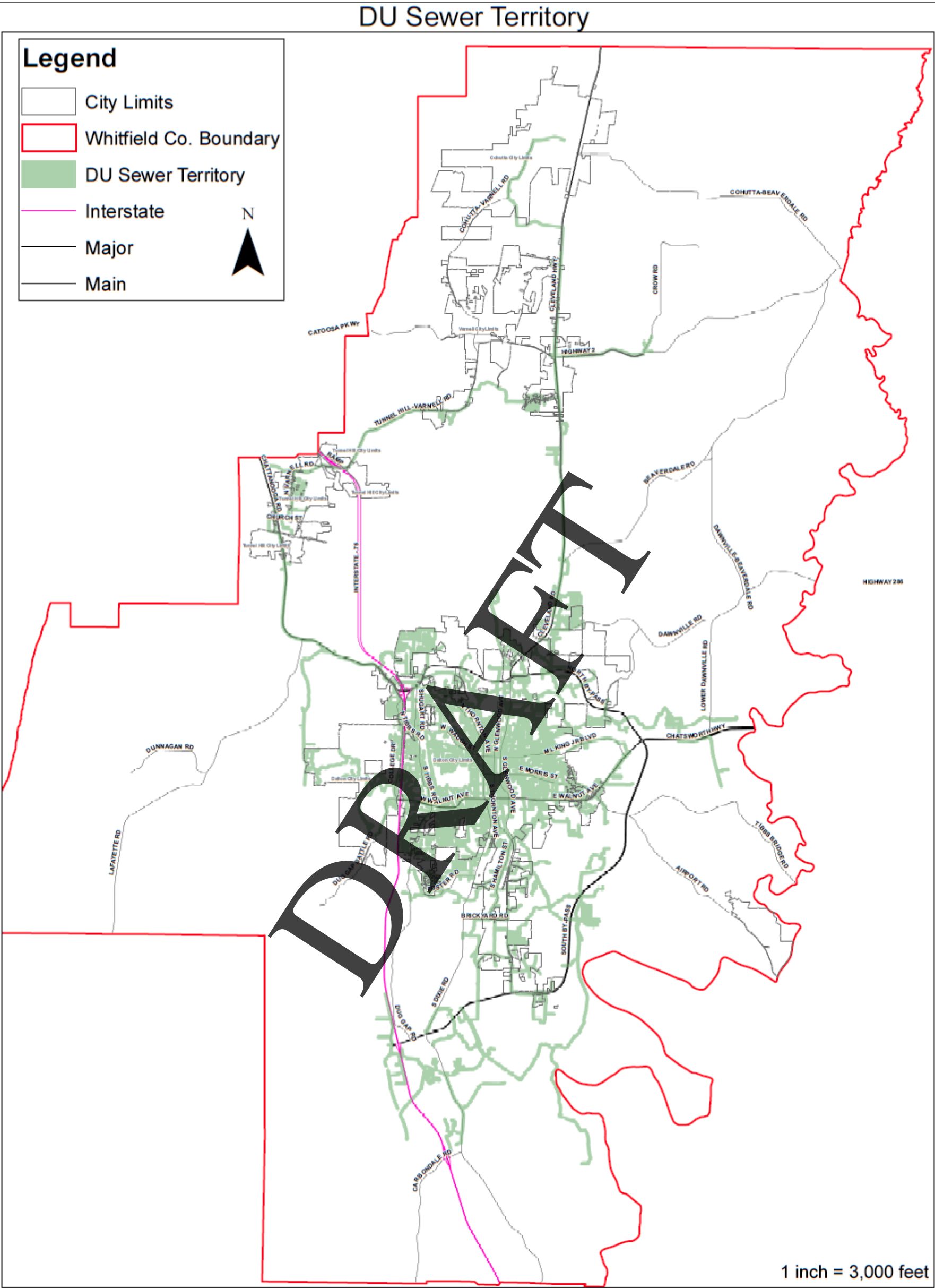
- Impaired Streams
- Perennial Streams
- Pinhoti Trail
- Protected Rivers
- National Register of Historic Places
- Georgia DNR Wildlife Management Areas
- Groundwater Recharge Area
- Lakes & Ponds
- NWI Wetlands
- State Parks / State Historic Sites
- US Forest Service
- Water Supply Watersheds



1 inch = 3 miles

**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION  
© September 2023

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Service, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.





## COHUTTA'S FUTURE LAND USE

### Existing Land Use

Cohutta developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the railroad, so the changing role of the railroad in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Georgia from a passenger and freight delivery system providing a stop at a depot in Cohutta to purely a freight system with no stops in Cohutta left the town isolated from major transportation routes. Besides the railroad tracks themselves, there is very little land dedicated to transportation, communication, and utilities.



*Commercial business in Cohutta along Cleveland Highway (SR 71)*

At one time, the town's rural character and rustic charm allowed it to be a recreational getaway spot. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the railroads provided transportation, people came to Cohutta to relax and bathe in the springs. The existing land use map is shown in Figure 18. The area of the town is now comprised mostly of the two land use categories designated residential and agriculture/forestry, as shown by the existing land use acreage table (Table 3), with 29 percent in the residential-single family category and 58 percent in the Agricultural/Forestry category. Almost all of the housing is single family and much of it is on larger lots. The lot size is affected by the zoning regulations for the town, which were in turn designed to deal with soil types that do not work well for septic systems. A single family dwelling with a well and a septic system requires a 2 acre lot, while single family dwellings with public water and septic require a half acre lot. Since individual septic systems are the only means of treating sewage in town, most lots are sized at a half-acre or more. There are only three areas of multifamily housing on a total of 7 acres, probably because of the septic system limitations. These housing units appear dated and substandard.

There are a few businesses along the Cleveland Highway (Route 71) and in the town center along Wolfe Street. In the town center, empty buildings are evident, due in part to small lots that are inadequate for individual sewage disposal. Business opportunities nearer to work locations outside Cohutta also contribute to building vacancies.

There is very little functioning industry within the town limits. The Pilgrim Chicken Hatchery is the main industry, located on Cohutta-Varnell Road. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century a block plant operated along the rail line just south of the town center on Red Clay Road. The walls of this plant are still visible, a source of post-industrial blight that has given rise to discussions about viable alternatives.

Public facilities include the US Post Office, many churches, the Cohutta Elementary school, and a community building at Shugart Park that can be rented for events. The most notable public facility is the University of Georgia Cohutta Fisheries Center, located north of the town center on Red Clay Road. The station explores cutting-edge developments in fisheries. Cohutta is the only place in Whitfield County where such research is happening. Sturgeon for caviar production is the current focus. Many school groups, scout groups, and others come to the station to learn about biology and aquaculture. A small aquarium is open to the public for viewing fish native to North Georgia, and recreational fisherman are welcome to fish in some of the ponds. The research station property includes a picnic area across Red Clay Road with parking for several cars and a kiosk explaining the history of the area.



*Sturgeon used to study caviar production at Cohutta Fisheries Center*

Shugart Park, in the middle of town, has many amenities, including tennis courts, a walking track, a gazebo, a play structure, baseball fields, a concession stand, the above-mentioned community center, and a large parking area. Nearby recreational facilities include the Red Clay State Historic Park just across the state line in Tennessee. The park entrance is a mile and quarter from the north edge of town. This historically and culturally important park marks the location of the last seat of the Cherokee national government before the removal of the Cherokee Nation to lands in the west in 1838. A trail, or a bike/foot path connection between these two parks could be an asset to the town.

Cohutta Future Land Use categories by area		
	Sq Ft	Acres
Agriculture/Forestry	87066877	1998.78
Commercial	2637191	60.54156
Industrial	3626243	83.24709
Park/Recreation/Conservation	518071.6	11.89329
Public/ <u>Insitutional</u>	5220954	119.8566
Residential Single Family	46231132	1061.321
Residential Multi Family	1051633	24.14217
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	400001.3	9.182767

## Land Use categories:

**Residential, single-family.** The residential land use category is dominated by single family dwellings on lots approximately one acre in size. This land use category makes up 29 percent of the land within Cohutta town limits.



*Single-family residential housing on Cohutta-Varnell Road*

**Residential, multi-family.** Buildings containing two dwelling units or more are located on this land use category. Of all the land use categories in Cohutta, this occupies the least acreage, 0.3 percent of the land within Cohutta town limits.



*Multi-family residential housing on Mount Olivet Drive*

**Commercial.** Land in this category is used for non-industrial businesses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment.



*Retail store, Wolfe Street*

**Industrial.** This category includes land used for manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining and mineral extraction activities, and other similar uses.



*Pilgrim chicken hatchery on Cohutta Varnell Road*

**Public/Institutional.** Public buildings and other facilities owned by the federal, state, or local government fall into this category as well as institutions that are not for profit.



*University of Georgia Cohutta Fisheries Center*

**Transportation/Communication/ Utilities.** Land in this category includes major transportation routes, railroad facilities, radio towers, and power generation plants.



*Norfolk Southern rail lines going north out of Cohutta*



**Parks/Recreation/Conservation.** This land use category includes areas dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. This includes privately or publically owned playgrounds, parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national or state forests, golf courses, and recreation centers.



*Shugart Park at Cohutta Elementary School*

**Agricultural/Forestry.** Land in this category includes fields, pastures, feedlots and farmsteads used for farming, and forest areas used for commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting. This is the largest land use category within Cohutta's town limits.



*Agricultural field and forest on Wolfe Street*



## Future Land Use

When constructing this future land use map, staff consulted the future land use map from the last comprehensive plan (2018) in which Cohutta participated. The future land use map, from the 2018 Joint Comprehensive Plan, is not drastically different from the 2023 future land use map indicating that rates of change are predicted to be gradual in Cohutta. In fact, it varies little from the 2001 plan's future land use map. This supports our predictions for limited change for Cohutta in the next decade.

The acreages in each land use category are shown on [page 59](#). In general, in keeping with the desire to maintain the rural, agricultural aspect of the town, large areas of agricultural land remain within the city limits in this future land use map. There has been, however, a slight decrease in agricultural land in Cohutta over the past 20-years due to individual tracts of land being developed for single-family residential housing.

An area of multifamily residential housing designated on the north side of Wolfe Street near the school was on the 2001 future land use map and is included on this map. The area is deemed a suitable location for multifamily housing, especially now that public sewerage has been expanded into the Cohutta area.

The commercial node at Wolfe Street and the Cleveland Highway is expanded, but not as much as it was in the future land use map of 2001. Current development contrasts with the future land use map of 2001, which carried commercialization further to the east of the Cleveland Highway. That anticipated development did not occur; commercial development remains slow and is predominantly focused on the redevelopment of vacant commercial buildings within the town center.

A slightly larger commercial node where Strain Road enters the Cleveland Highway is shown on the future land use map. More of the core, or "downtown" area of Cohutta has been classified as commercial, including two lots on the west side of the railroad track. A revitalization of Cohutta's town center began in 2019 due to the expansion of public sewerage that was enabled by Appalachian Regional Development funding in order to serve the nearby poultry hatchery. Since the public sewerage expansion, Cohutta's largely vacant and blighted town center has become a target of investment by several local entrepreneurs. Despite the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 Pandemic, Cohutta's town center has continued to revitalize and thrive. While the underlying commercial land use classifications may not change in the town center, the economic and aesthetic of the town center are expected to see continued investment and redevelopment throughout this planning period.

An option for future growth in Cohutta for population as well as land area is available through annexation. History has shaped the town thus far and the one-hundred percent method, where owners of local property specifically request annexation, is the most-used annexation method. Properties generally must touch the existing corporate boundary by at least fifty feet to meet eligibility requirements. Growth southward has the most potential to increase population due to existing subdivisions in that area as well as available land suitable for development. Growth to the northwest could also add area.



# RURAL BROADBAND

## Introduction

Access to high-speed Internet has become a necessity for business and greatly improves the quality of life for residents. In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission set the definition of high-speed internet, or broadband, at 25 megabits per second for download, (downstream) and 3 megabits per second for upload (upstream). The state of Georgia used this definition as a benchmark for high-speed Internet service in Senate Bill 403, which was passed to become the “Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE)” Act in spring 2018. This Act has allowed for the creation of the Broadband Ready Program to help communities bring high speed internet service even to the most rural areas. Whitfield County, Cohutta, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell would like to participate in the Broadband Ready Community program because they see a real need to facilitate better Internet connectivity for all residents, regardless of how remote their homes are. Therefore, this broadband element is being added to the comprehensive plan, and three work program items have been added for each government.

- The first item is a commitment to pass a broadband ordinance covering the process of providing broadband to all residents.
- The second item states that they will participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance, and



*Many students are tasked with homework requiring internet access. For those students living in rural areas internet access is often limited or altogether unavailable*



*In the age of wireless connectivity, invisible to the naked eye, costly physical infrastructure is required to provide reliable, high-speed broadband. This infrastructure primarily consists of buried fiber optic cable as shown above*



### Investment in Unserved Areas

Broadband infrastructure investment decisions are business-case based. They must provide a sustainable and positive ROI for providers to expand into unserved areas. The GBDI planning team partnered with local governments and provider partners on a plan to address unserved areas. Recommended strategies or policies must either lower broadband investment costs or provide financial assistance to broadband in unserved areas so that they can be served and become economically self-sustaining.

### Access to Funding

The capital cost to provide broadband services to all unserved areas in Georgia is estimated at over one billion dollars. The deployment of broadband to unserved areas statewide will require significant access to funding. While a statewide grant program will make an impact to some unserved areas, widescale change could require a broad spectrum of funding incentives and mechanisms. By being designated as a broadband ready community, Whitfield County would have a competitive advantage when seeking broadband infrastructure expansion funding.



*Telecommunications tech working on infrastructure in rural Northwest GA. Photo courtesy of Ellijay Telephone Co.*

### Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships (P3) could play a critical role in bringing sufficient broadband to unserved areas. The legislation currently includes the use of P3 models on GDOT Interstate rights-of-way along Georgia interstates. These partnerships could take a variety of forms and could include coapplying for funding, working with providers to create carrier neutral locations and facilities, providing greater access to rights-of-way, providing incentives to providers to lower costs, or creating efficiencies to accelerate broadband deployment. There are examples in other states where governments and providers have partnered to increase broadband availability, and they will also be evaluated.

### Broadband Model Ordinance

To assist local governments with the process of developing a useful local ordinance to encourage broadband investment and expansion, GBDI worked in collaboration with local governments and providers to develop a model ordinance. The purpose of the model ordinance is to demonstrate that the local

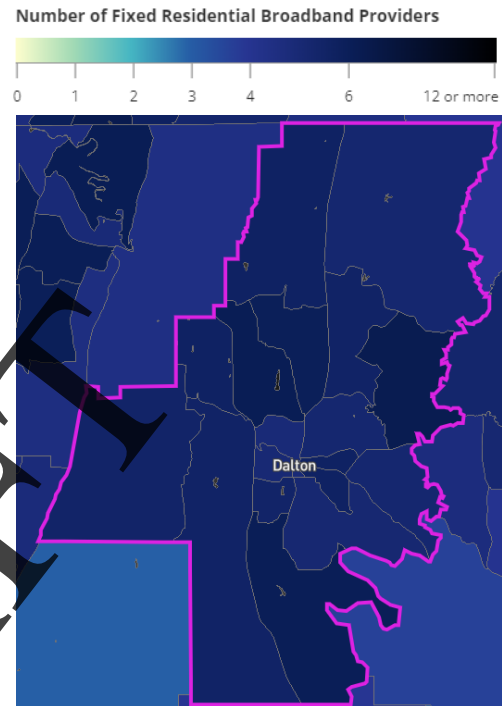
government has taken steps to reduce obstacles to broadband deployment. The model ordinance has already been adopted by several communities in Georgia. Whitfield County and the municipalities of Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell plan to adopt the Broadband Model Ordinance as an action step to ensure that broadband deployment is not hindered in the community.

### Federal Broadband Programs

The USDA Community Connect Program exists to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to eligible applicants that will provide, on a “community-oriented connectivity” basis, broadband service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care, and public safety benefits. The application window is currently open.

The USDA ReConnect Program is designed to bring internet service to parts of rural America that have been traditionally hard to reach by providing grants, loans, or grant/loan combinations to entities seeking to deploy broadband services in unserved or severely underserved regions. Within the USDA ReConnect funding application, projects can be awarded as many as 20 State Activity Points. The Georgia Broadband Office is offering technical assistance to USDA applicants by providing the Georgia Broadband Development Initiative Plan and a letter of support from the Governor.

Both the USDA Community Connect and ReConnect programs base the applicant’s eligibility on several factors including the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) 477 Broadband Map.

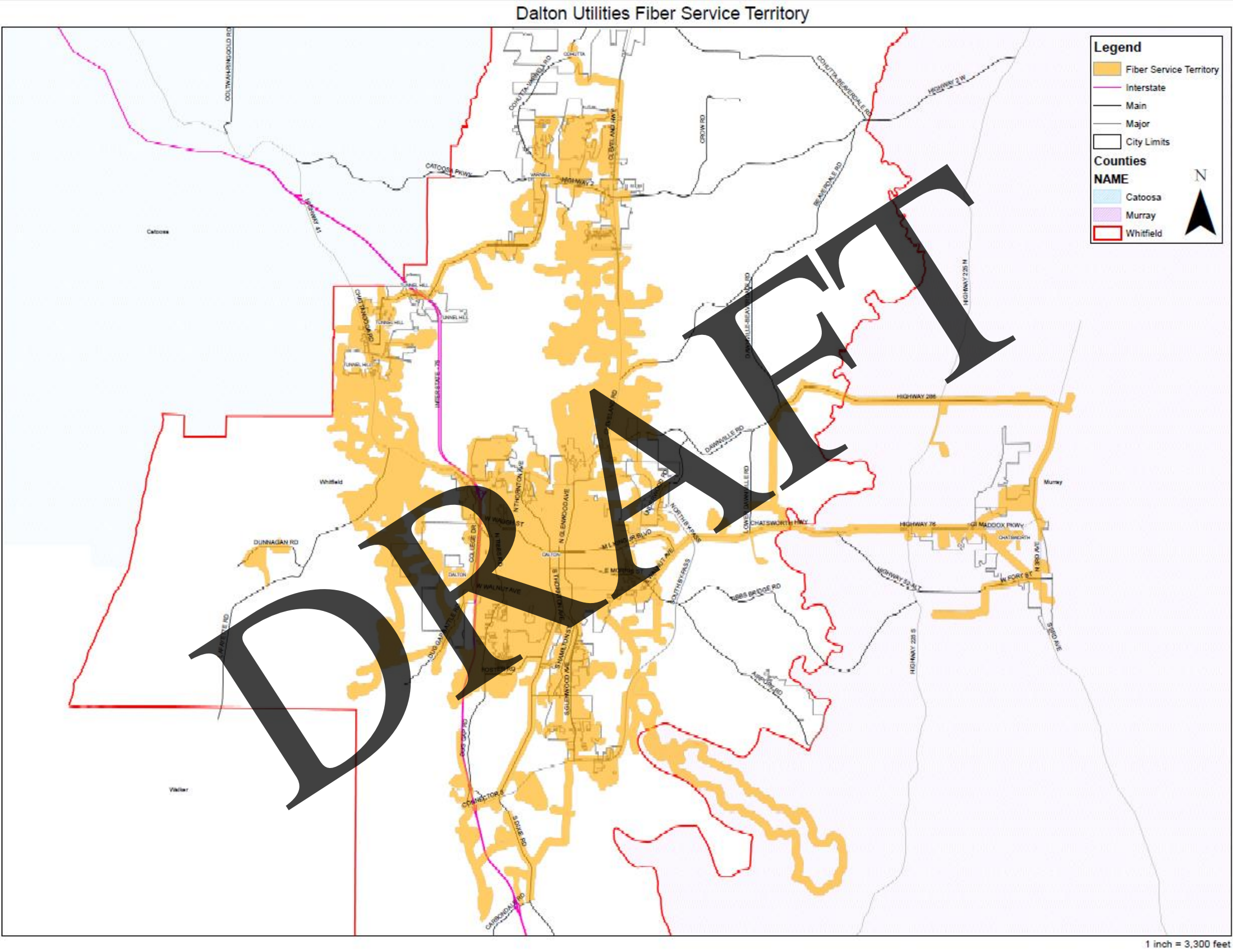


FCC Form 477 Fixed Broadband Deployment Data

### Local Broadband Providers

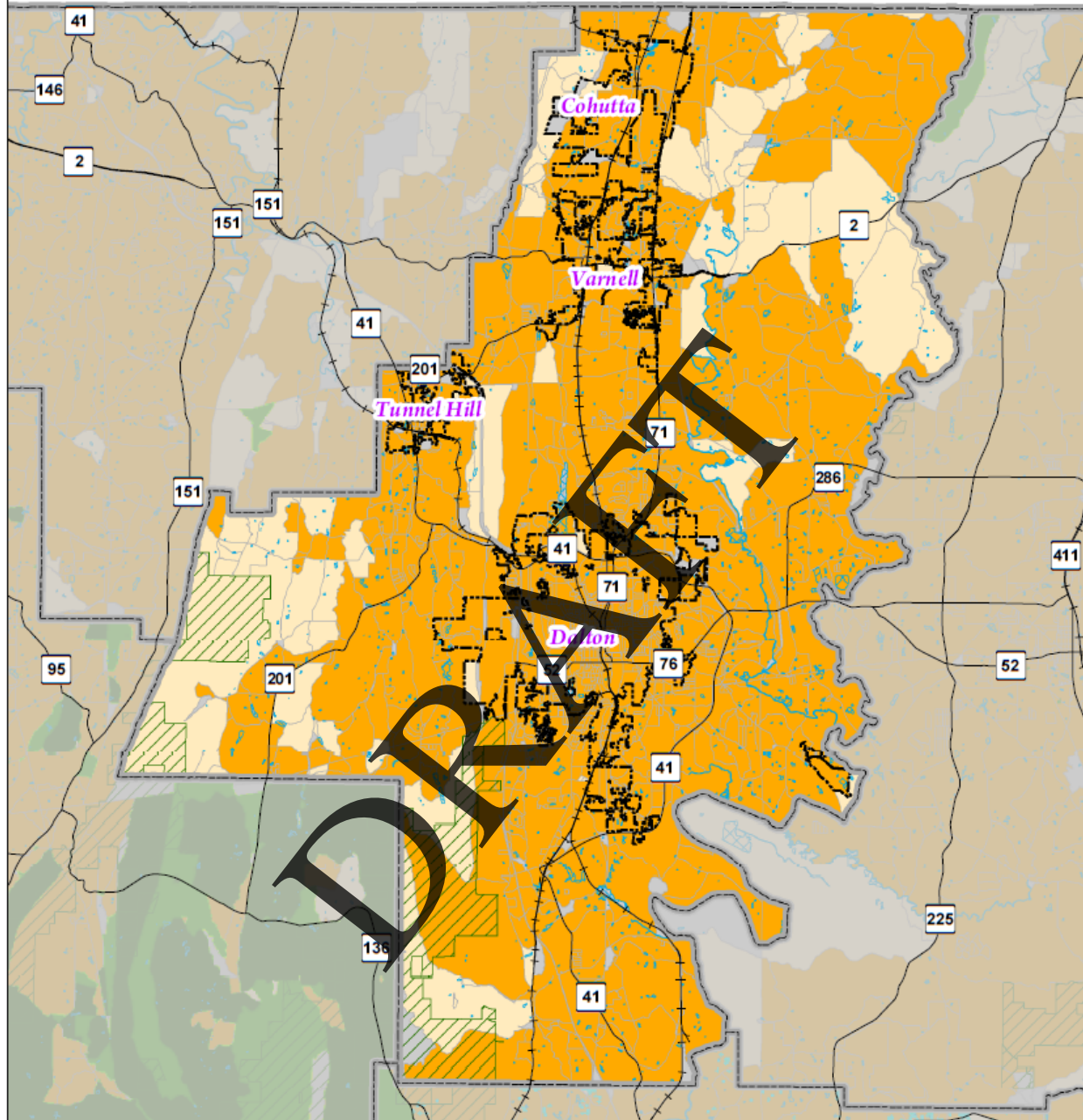
Whitfield County’s primary utility provider, unlike many rural communities, offers high speed broadband along with their other conventional utilities. This broadband network is built on fiber optic infrastructure that is owned and operated by Dalton Utilities Optilink division. While there are other internet providers in Whitfield County, the following map illustrates a common trend related to broadband infrastructure. It is typical for broadband providers to locate their costly infrastructure only where population density is high enough to create a prudent return on investment. Optilink will soon be completing a fiber optic extension to the Town of Cohutta which will be the first existence of high-speed broadband in the rural town and will be available for both public and private use. Dalton Utilities began the practice of burying conduit in concert with sewer expansions several years ago, which enables expeditious deployment of fiberoptic cable when funding is available for future expansion. The following page illustrates the geographic service area related to Optilink’s fiber network, but the Dalton Utilities map does not account for other broadband service providers in Whitfield County.







## Whitfield County, Georgia - Broadband Availability Map



Lakes & Ponds

State Park, US Forest Service and WMAs

GBDI Census Block Status\*

No Locations

Served

Unserved

Broadband Grant Programs

FCC RDOF (Terrestrial)

ARPA Grant Projects

\* Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative (GBDI) data as of June 2023.



1 inch = 3 miles

**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© September 2023

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Wagh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone's feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRG logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

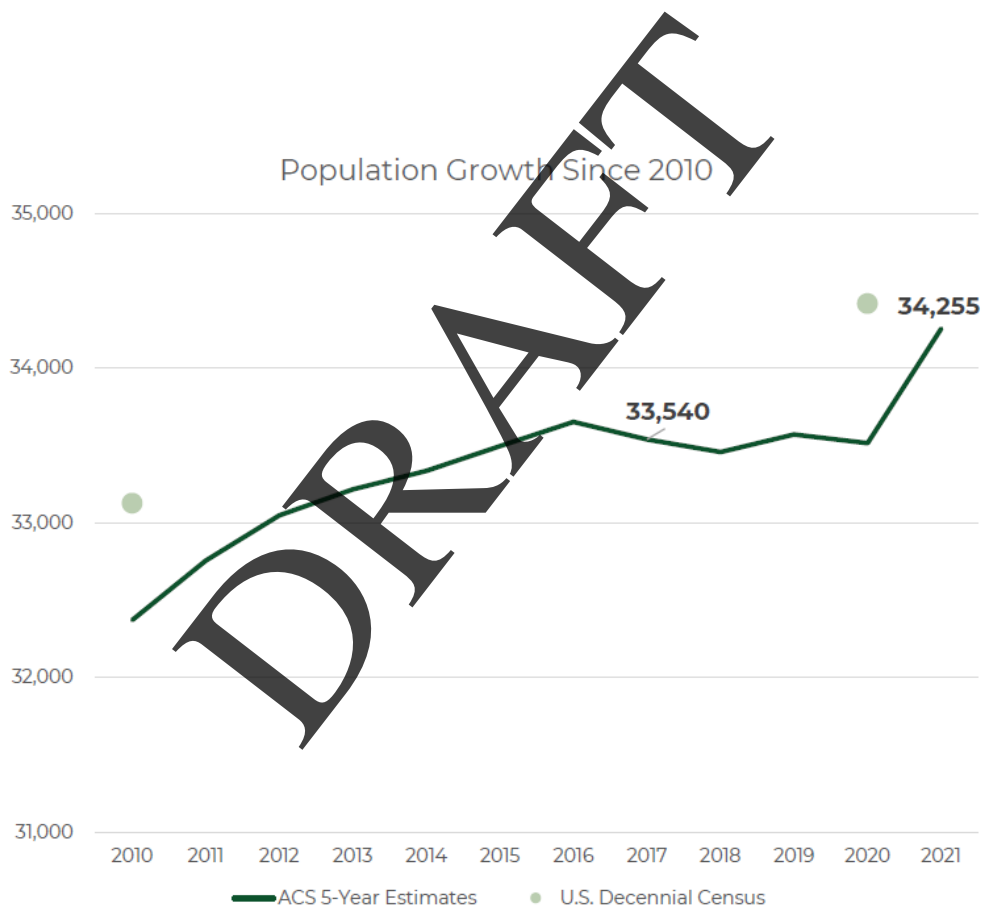
# HOUSING

## Demographic Analysis

### Population Growth

In the years since the last housing study was conducted, Dalton's population grew.

Between 2017 and 2021, Dalton's population grew by over 700 residents.



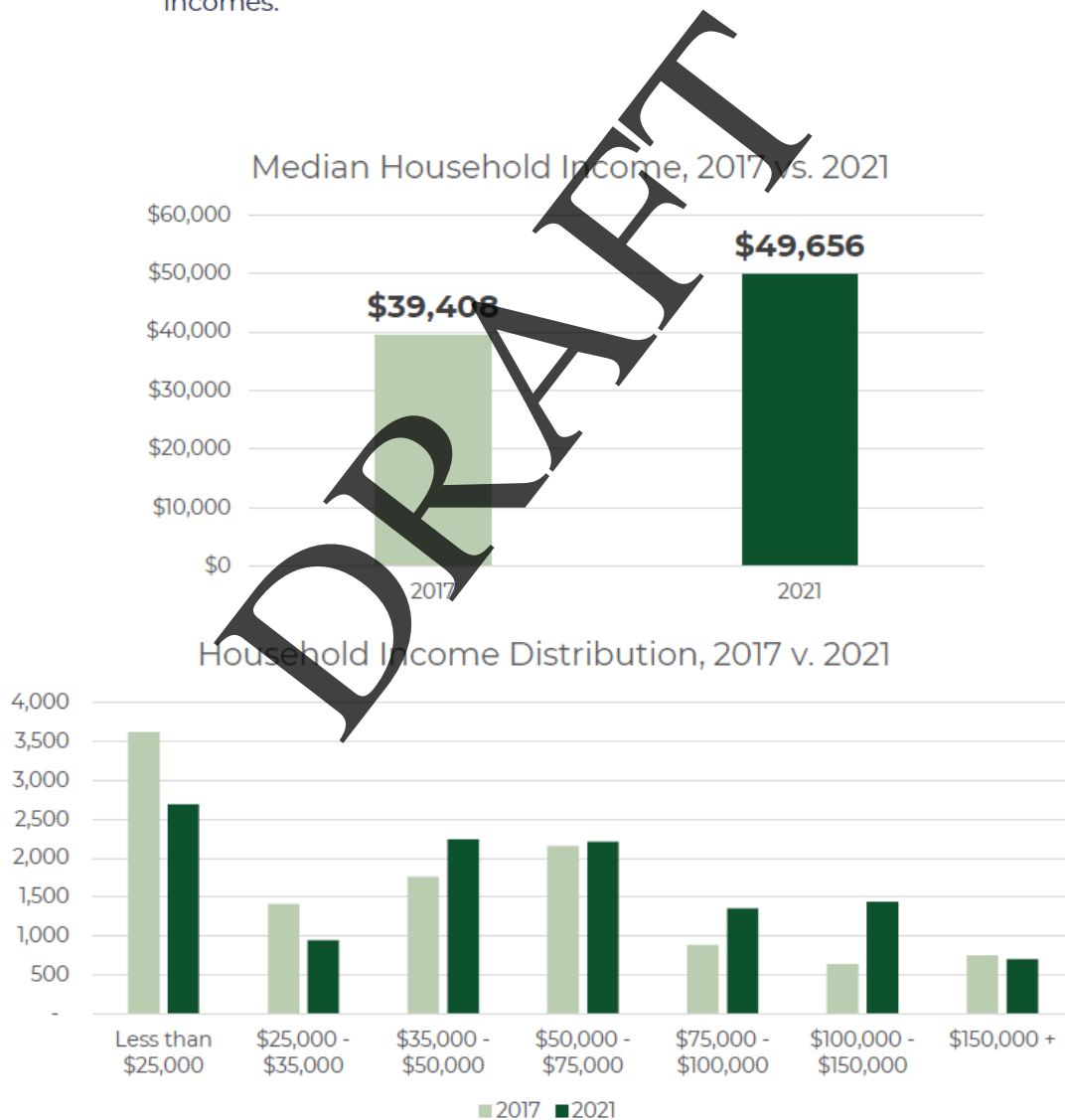
Data Source: U.S. Decennial Census, 2010, 2020, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2017, 2021

# Demographic Analysis

## Household Income

**From 2017 to 2021, Dalton's median household income rose substantially. Dalton's median household income grew by over \$10,000 over a 5-year period.**

The rise in incomes is further evidenced by household income distributions, where the largest gains were in households earning between \$100k and \$150k. The largest declines are in households with the lowest incomes.



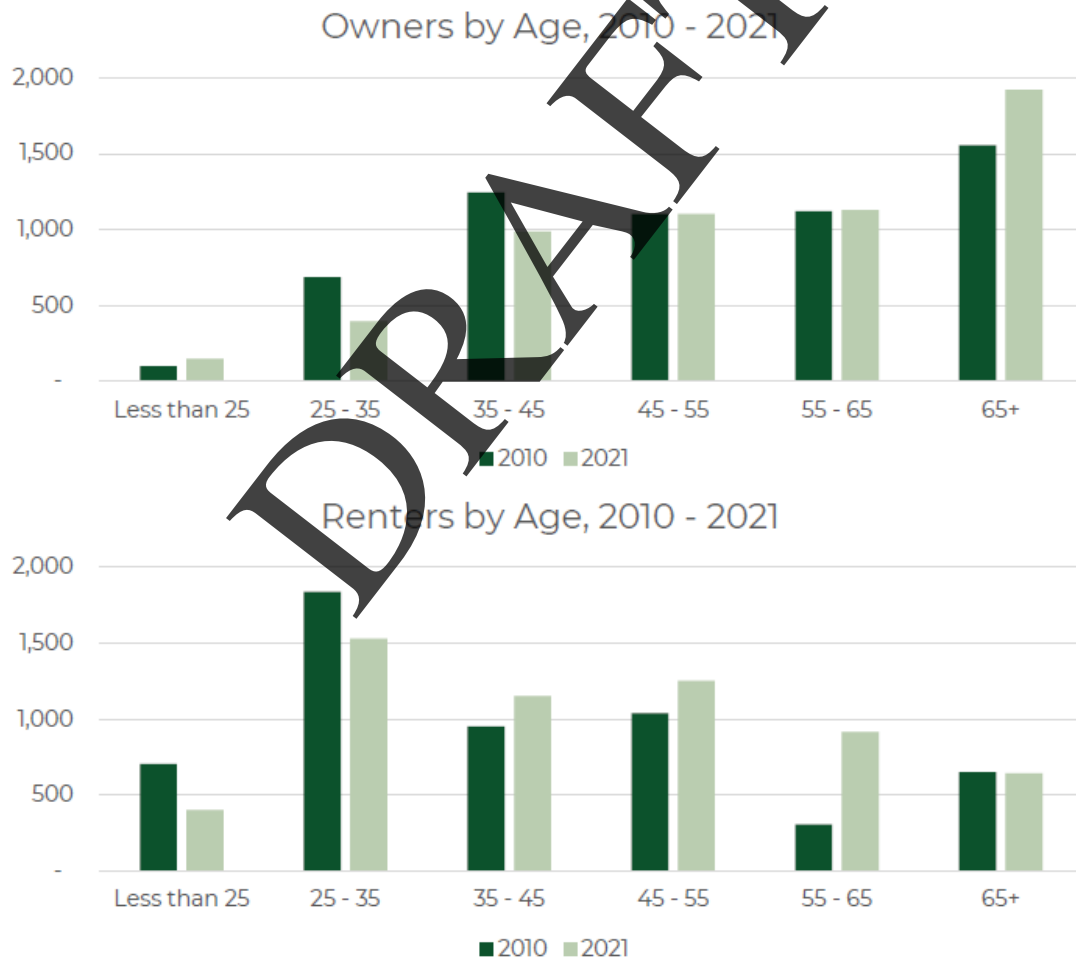
Data Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2017, 2021

# Demographic Analysis

## Tenure by Age

**The only age cohort to experience a net increase in homeownership since 2010 was households older than 65. In all other age groups, homeownership was either stagnant or in decline.**

Among renter households, there was an increase in households between the ages of 35 and 65. The largest increase in rentership was among households between 55 and 65. During this period, rentership decreased among households younger than 35.



Data Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2010, 2021

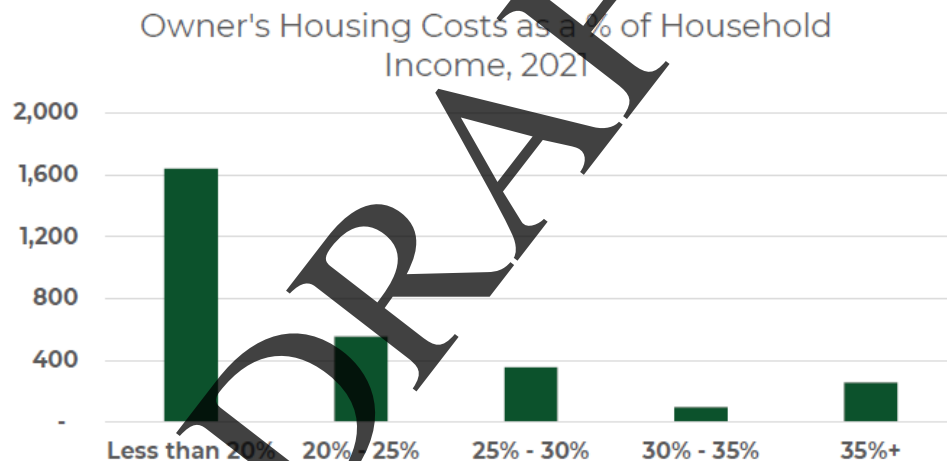


# Demographic Analysis

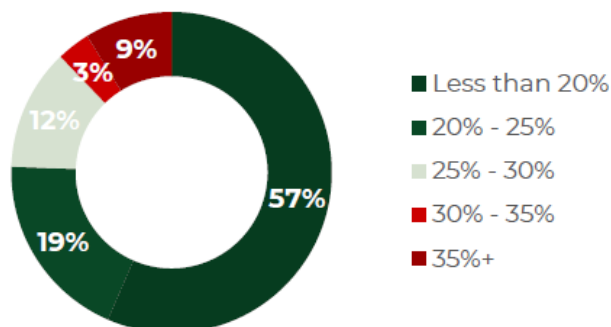
## Cost-Burdened Homeowners

A household is cost-burdened if they spend more than 30% of their income on housing and housing-related expenses and severely cost-burdened if they spend more than 50% of their household income on housing and housing-related expenses. Cost-burden and severe-cost burden contribute to housing instability and ensure that households have less income to spend on other necessities like food, transportation, and medical expenses.

**A majority of homeowners (with a mortgage) in Dalton are well below the cost-burden threshold.** More than half of homeowners in Dalton spend less than 20% of their monthly household income on housing-related expenses.



Owner's Housing Costs as a % of Household Income, 2021



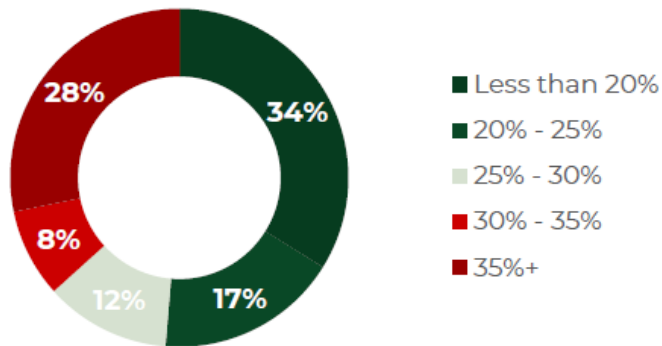
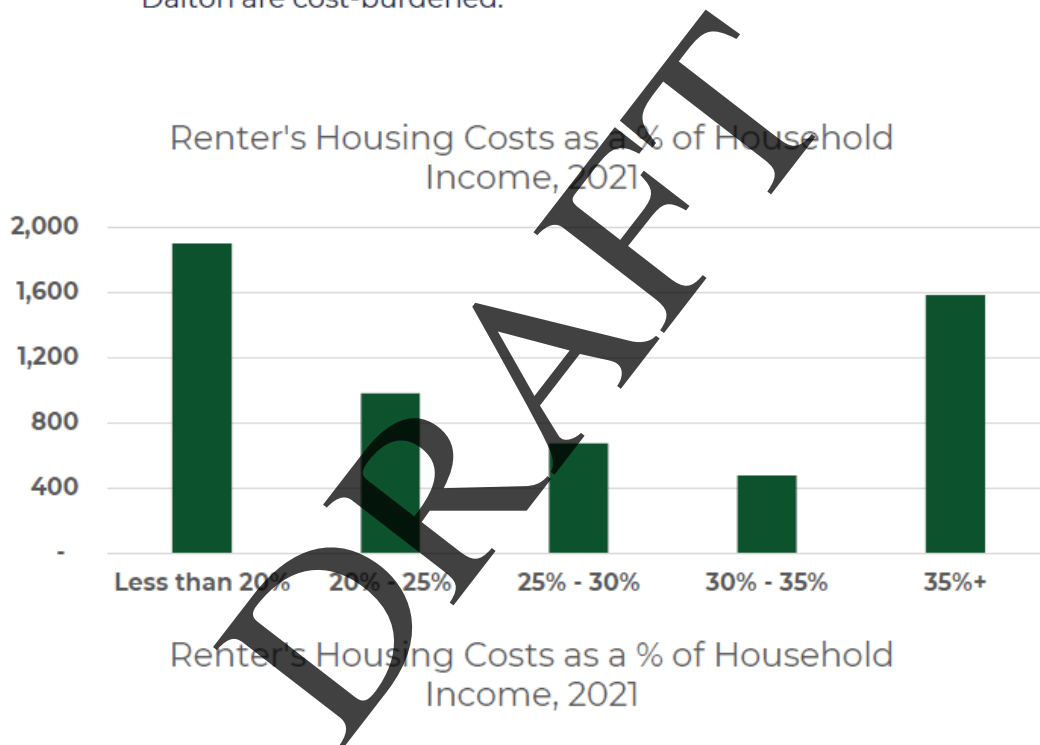
Data Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2017, 2021

# Demographic Analysis

## Cost-Burdened Renters

Cost-burden has many negative impacts on households and affects renters and low- and moderate-income households more severely. Cost-burdened households are more likely to experience housing instability and have higher risks for eviction, homelessness, food insecurity, truancy for school-aged children, and a variety of negative physical and mental health impacts.

More than one out of every three renter households in Dalton are cost-burdened.



Data Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2017, 2021

# Demographic Analysis

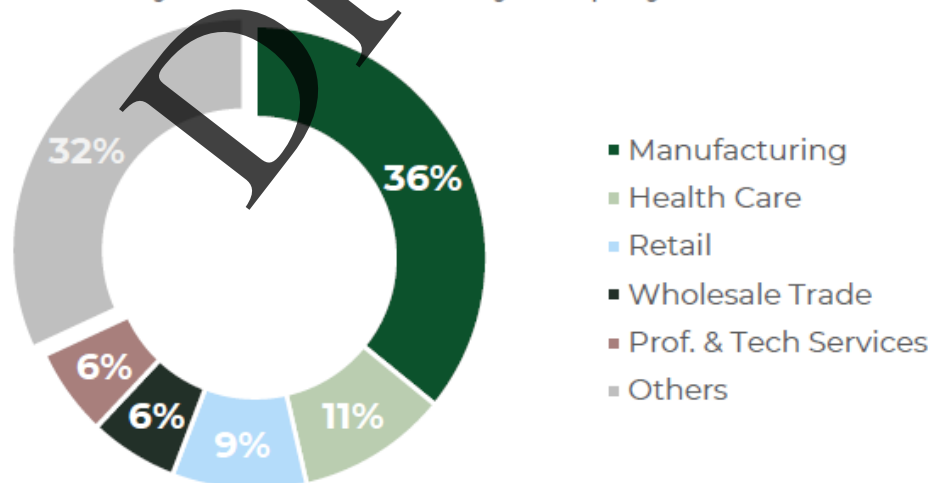
## Employment, Wages, & Housing Cost

The top 5 industries by employee count in Whitfield County represent more than two-thirds of all jobs in the county.

The table below illustrates those top 5 industries, the average wage, how the average wage has changed over the last 5 years, and what the average worker could spend on housing using 30% of their income.

Industry Sector	Avg. Wages	Rent Budget	For-Sale Budget
Manufacturing	\$48,800	\$1,220	\$195,000
Health Care	\$60,600	\$1,510	\$242,000
Retail	\$33,600	\$840	\$134,000
Wholesale Trade	\$56,400	\$1,410	\$225,000
Professional & Tech	\$73,000	\$1,820	\$292,000

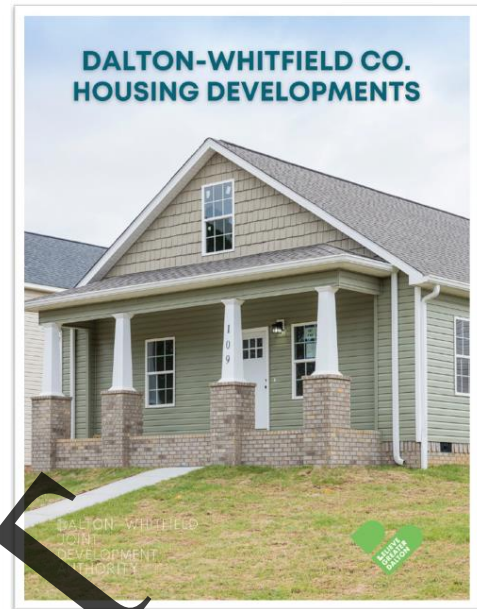
Top 5 Countywide Industries by Employee Count



# Housing Supply Analysis

## Recent Development Analysis

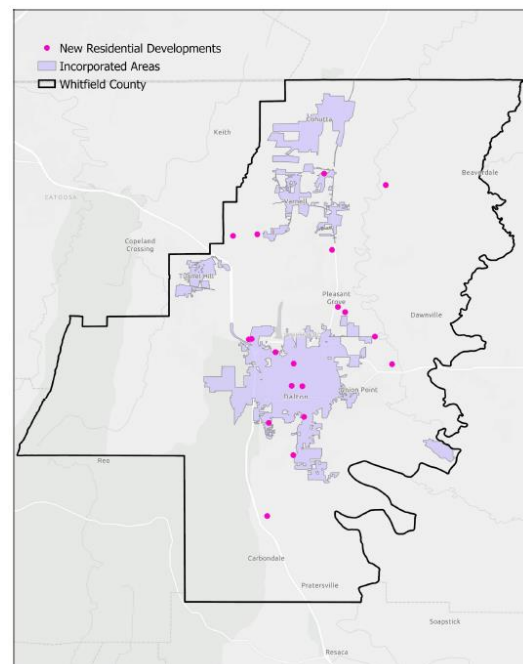
- We analyzed the recent developments using the work from the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority that compiled new housing permits from 2018 to 2021.
- Several trends emerged based on:
  - Location
  - Total permitting numbers
  - Housing Types
  - For Sale vs. Rental
  - Price Points



Data Source: Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority, Believe Greater Dalton, Whitfield County Chamber of Commerce

## Residential Pipeline

- There are nearly 1,300 residential units that have been permitted in Greater Dalton since 2018.
- Most of the development gravitates around the City of Dalton – either around the periphery or dispersed within the city's boundary.
- 21% of the permitted units are located within the incorporated limits of Dalton, the remaining 79% of the units are located in the outlying areas of Whitfield County.
- Many of these residential developments are planned in areas just barely beyond the incorporated limits of the City of Dalton.

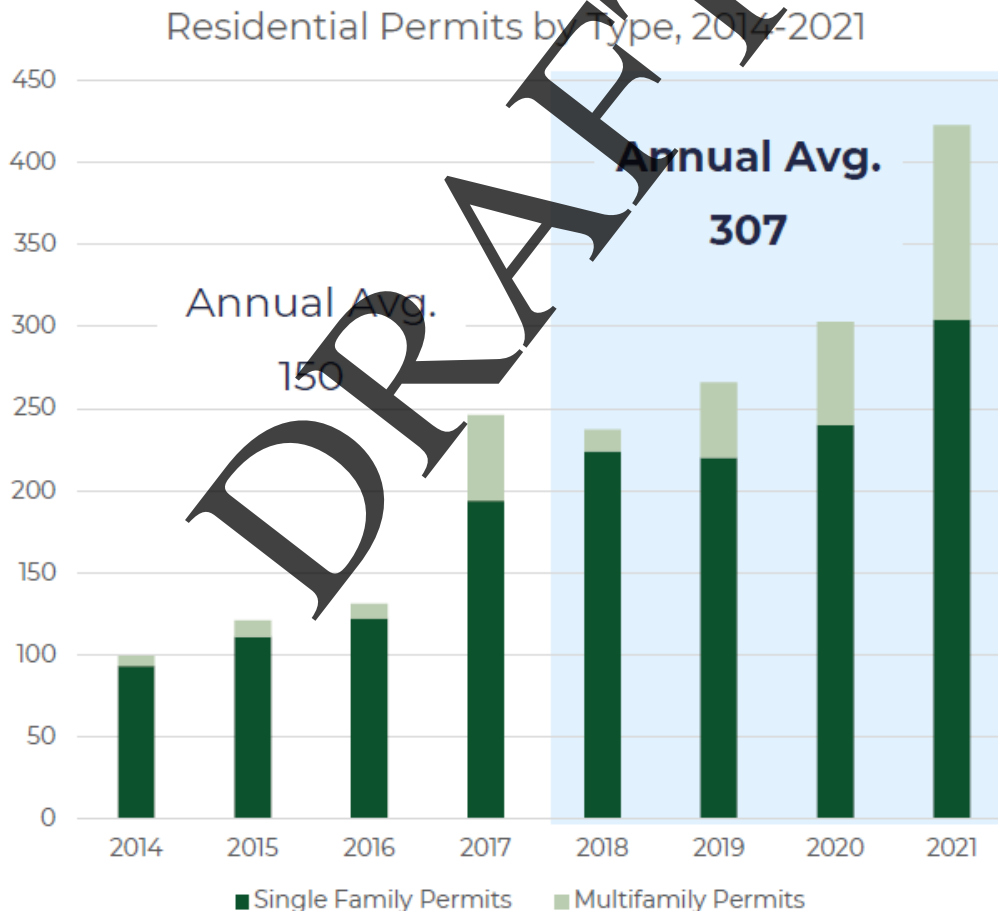




## Housing Supply Analysis

### Permitting

- Total permitting numbers post-2018 have doubled the permitting numbers of the years prior.
- Greater Dalton's permitting has been the most active and robust since the Great Recession.
- The growth in permits is due to a significant increase in both single-family and multifamily developments.

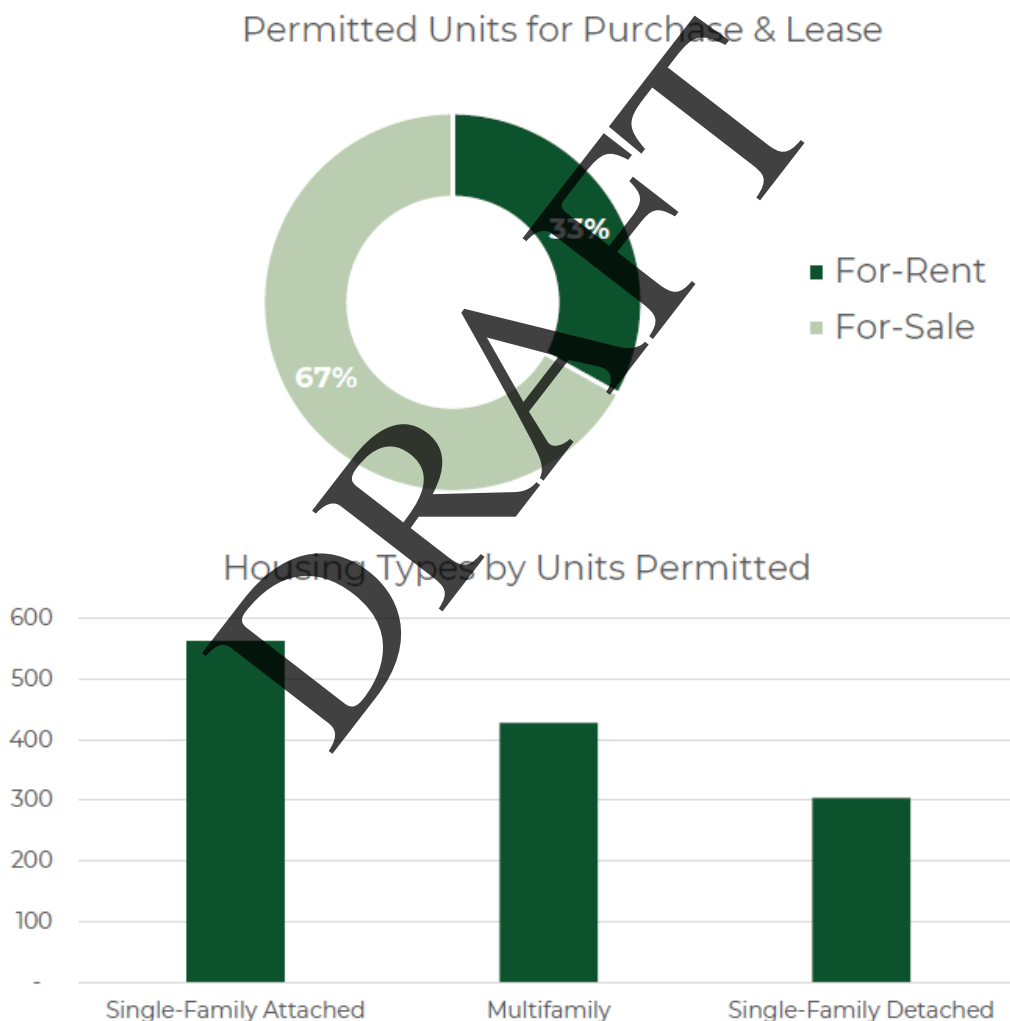


Data Source: Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority, Believe Greater Dalton, Whitfield County Chamber of Commerce

## Housing Supply Analysis

### Housing Types & Tenures

- Based on permitting data, two-thirds of new developments since 2018 have been for sale, while the remaining third have been for rent.
- Single-family attached products have been the most-permitted housing product post-2018.



Data Source: Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority, Believe Greater Dalton, Whitfield County Chamber of Commerce

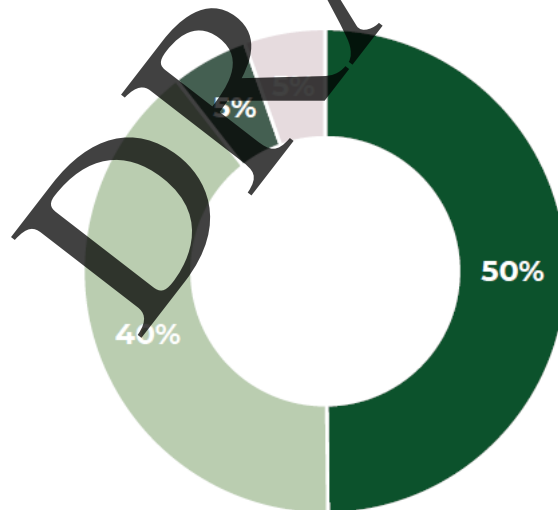
# Housing Supply Analysis

## Housing by Household Income

- Analyzed price data on the developments that have been built and sold/leased since 2018.
- Calculated what a “typical” household would need to earn in order to afford each of the products – using 30% of their household income.

Household Income	Rent Budget	For Sale Budget	Percentage of Units Permitted Post-2018
Less than \$50k	Less than \$1,250	Less than \$175k	0%
\$50k - \$75k	\$1,250 - \$1,875	\$175k - \$260k	50%
\$75k - \$100k	\$1,875 - \$2,500	\$260k - \$350k	40%
\$100k - \$150k	\$2,500 - \$3,750	\$350k - \$525k	5%
\$150k +	\$3,750 +	\$525k +	5%

Percentage of Permitted Units Attainable by Household Income



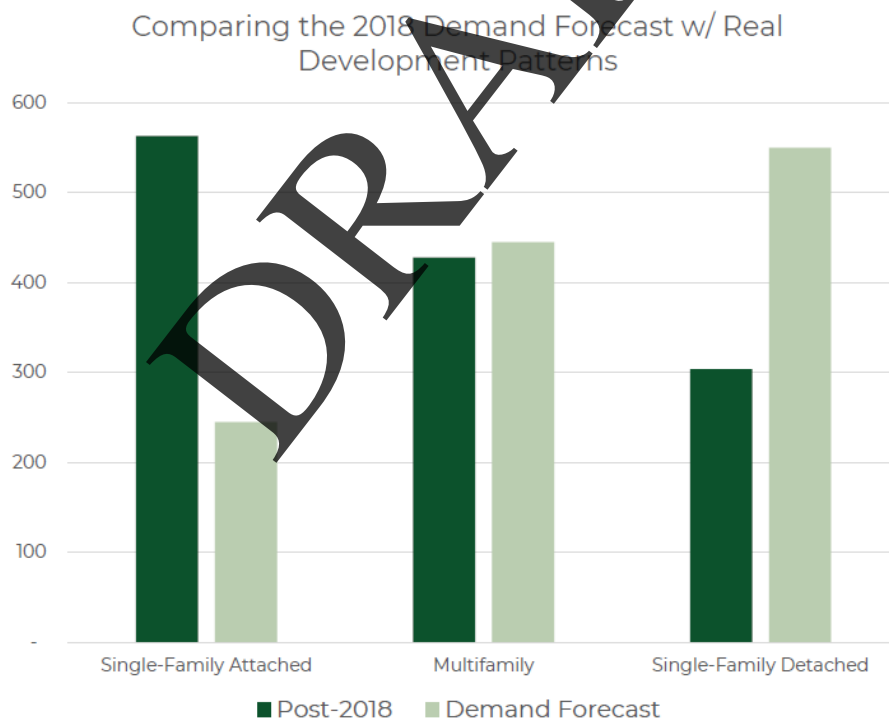
- \$50k - \$75k
- \$75k - \$100,000
- \$100k - \$150k
- \$150k +

Data Source: Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority, Believe Greater Dalton, Whitfield County Chamber of Commerce

## Housing Supply Analysis

### 2018 Housing Demand Retrospect

- “The right home for the right price” – the driving philosophy behind “market segmentation”.
- The 2018 report forecasted that the Greater Dalton housing market could absorb 150-160 new for-sale units and 90-100 new rental units annually between 2019 and 2024. This amounts to 1,200 – 1,300 new housing in 5 years.
- Since the 2018 report, there have been 1,295 new units permitted, according to the JDA’s report.



Data Source: Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority, Believe Greater Dalton, Whitfield County Chamber of Commerce



# Housing Supply Analysis

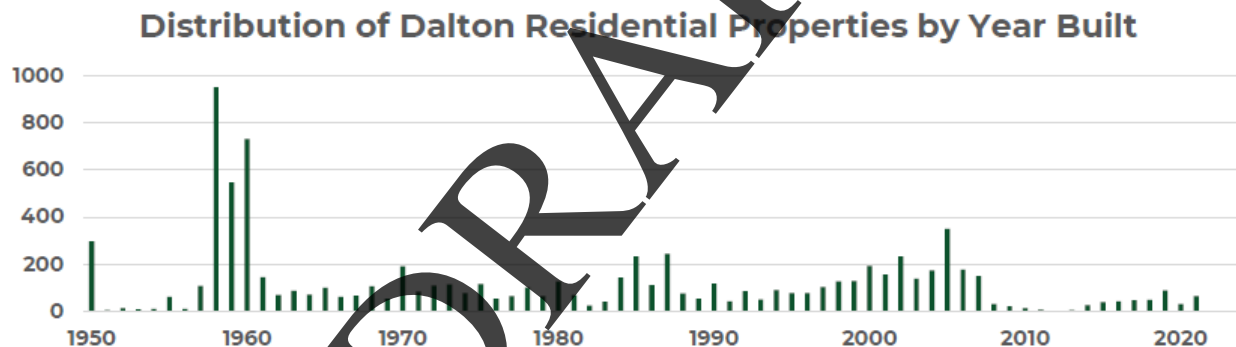
## Historical Development Patterns

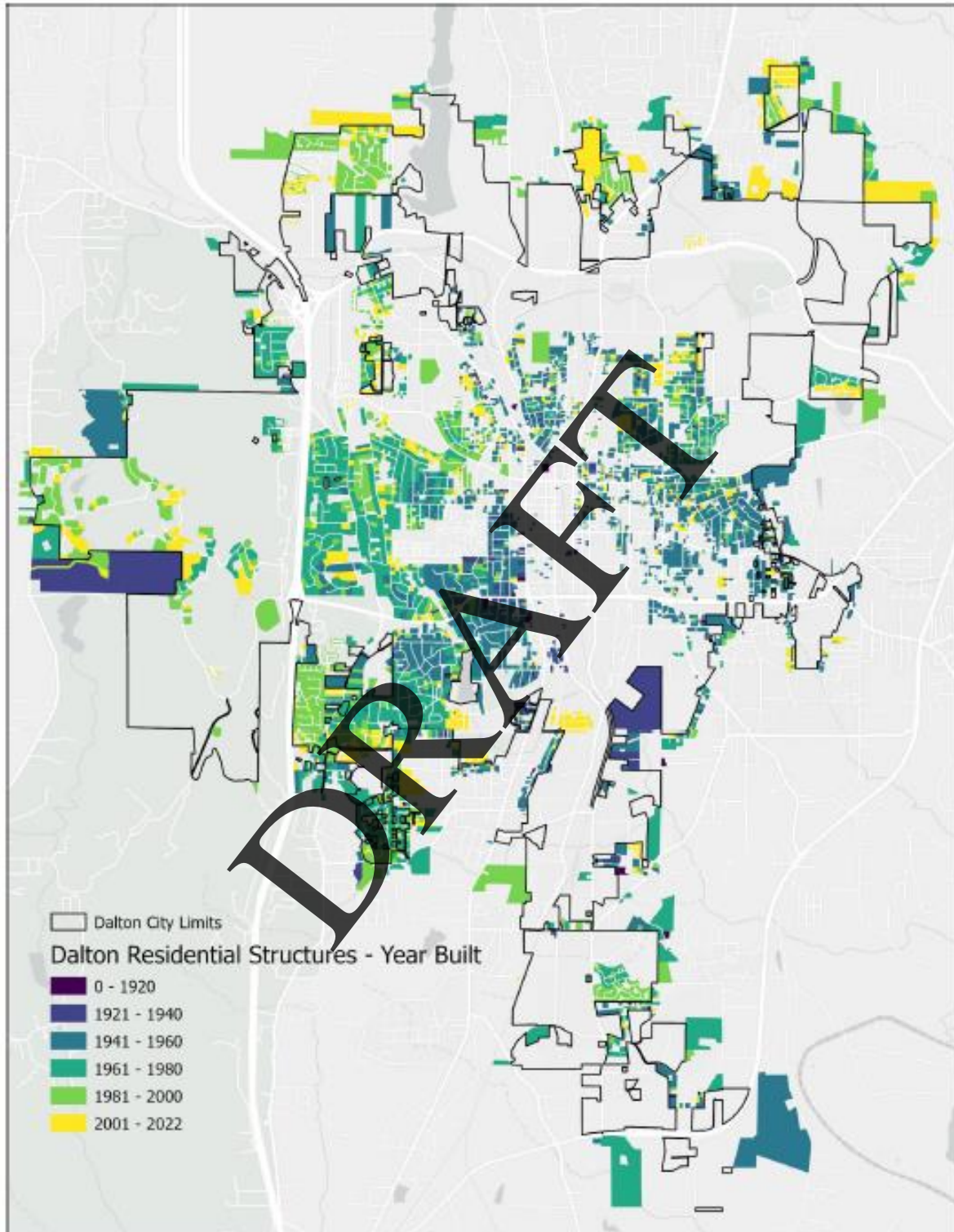
Residential development in the city of Dalton has occurred radially outwards from the downtown area, with the oldest buildings in the city located in downtown Dalton and progressively newer bands of development surrounding the downtown area.

Most of the residential properties in Dalton were constructed in the 1960s, with other noticeable upticks in development in the 1980s and 2000s. This suggests that Dalton's housing stock is quite old, and that in some places there may be a need for replacement or renovation of aging housing units

Many of the newest residential properties in Dalton are not actually in the city of Dalton itself, again suggesting that development in unincorporated portions of the Dalton community are favored due to there being fewer fees, taxes and other costs of development associated with building just outside of the city limits.

### Distribution of Dalton Residential Properties by Year Built





Data Source: Whitfield County GIS Department

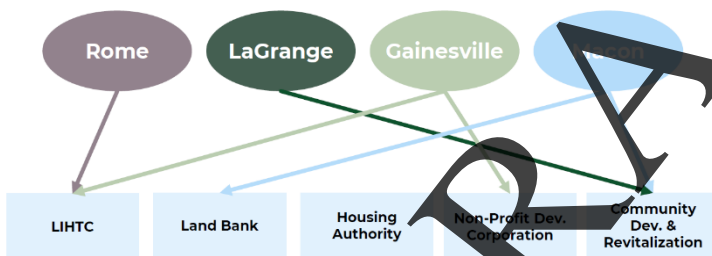
## Comparative Cities Assessment

### Population and Housing Units

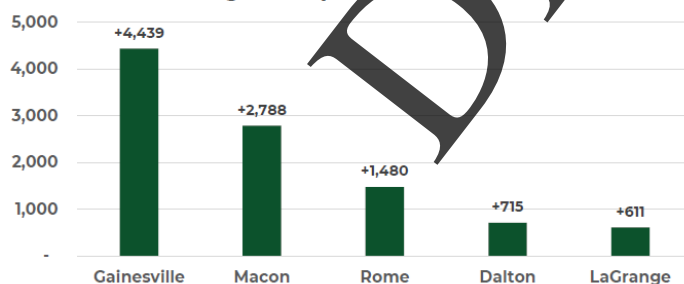
The population of every city in this analysis has increased over the past five years. The city that gained the most new residents was the city of Gainesville, adding nearly 4,500 new residents. Macon and Rome also added on average between 300 and 600 new residents annually between 2017 and 2021. While Dalton and LaGrange both grew in population across this interval, the growth of population in both cities occurred at a slightly slower pace than in the other cities in this analysis, adding on average between 125 and 150 new residents annually.

While all five cities' population grew between 2015 and 2021, the number of housing units in each of the cities also grew, though the rate at which cities added new housing units was not always the same rate at which the cities gained population. LaGrange, for example, added the third highest number of housing units over the five-year period, outstripping their growth in population. All of the other cities in this comparison added fewer units than population, Gainesville and Macon again leading the way, producing 3,079 and 1,477 housing units respectively.

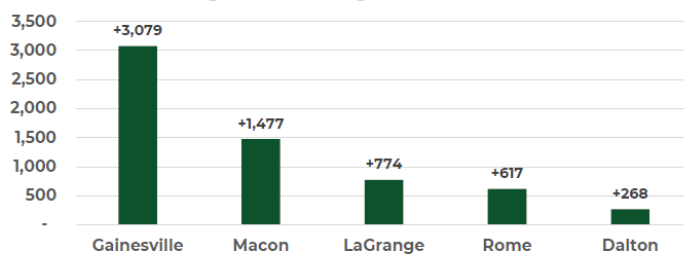
While Dalton's housing unit growth may seem to lag behind the other cities in this comparison, it is important to recognize that Dalton has seen significant growth in housing units just beyond its city limits, which if incorporated into this comparison might place Dalton closer to the third highest producer of housing units among the selected communities.



Change in Population, 2017-2021



Change in Housing Units, 2017-2021



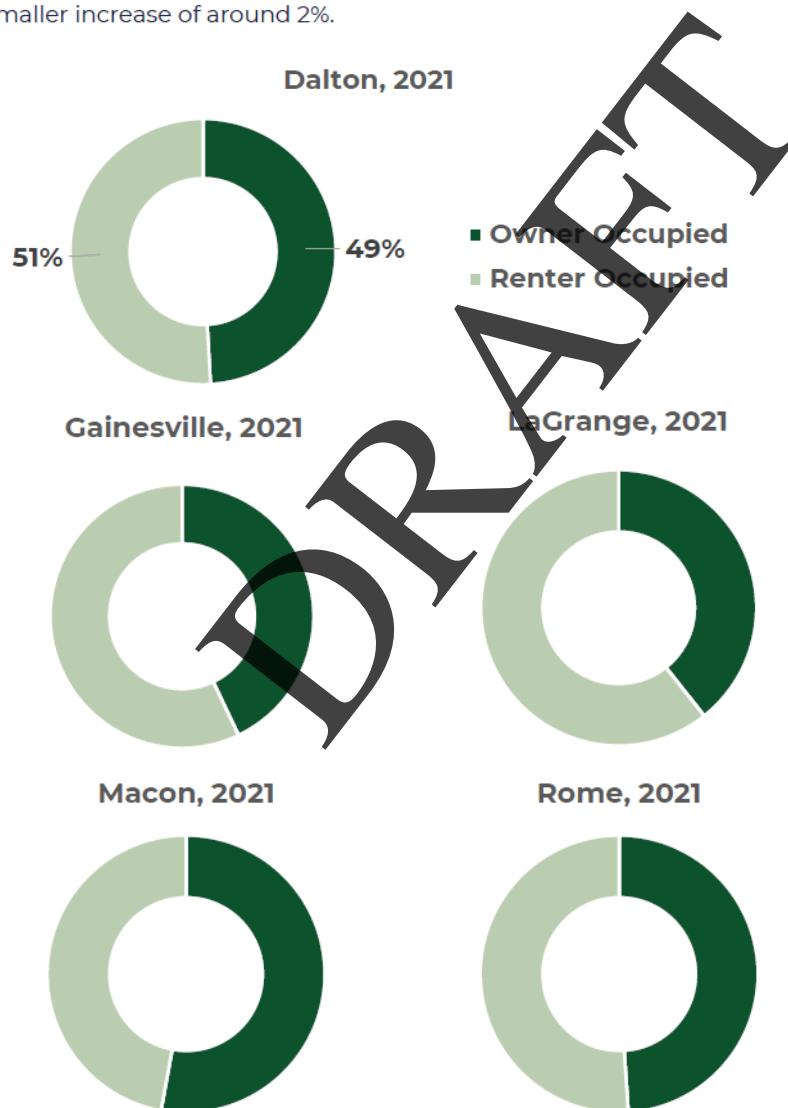
Data Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2017, 2021

# Comparative Cities Assessment

## Tenure

Owner-occupied units have represented around half of all occupied residential units in each of the cities in this comparison, including Dalton. Macon is the one exception, wherein owner-occupied units have typically represented a higher proportion of the city's occupied units. Since 2010, the proportion of owner-occupied units has decreased in every city in this comparison except for Gainesville, which saw a modest increase in its proportion of owner-occupied units between 2010 and 2021.

The proportion of renter-occupied units have increased in all of the cities in this comparison besides Gainesville. The cities of LaGrange, Macon and Rome have all seen around a 6% increase in the proportion of renter-occupied units in each of those cities. The city of Dalton has seen a slightly smaller increase of around 2%.



Data Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates 2021

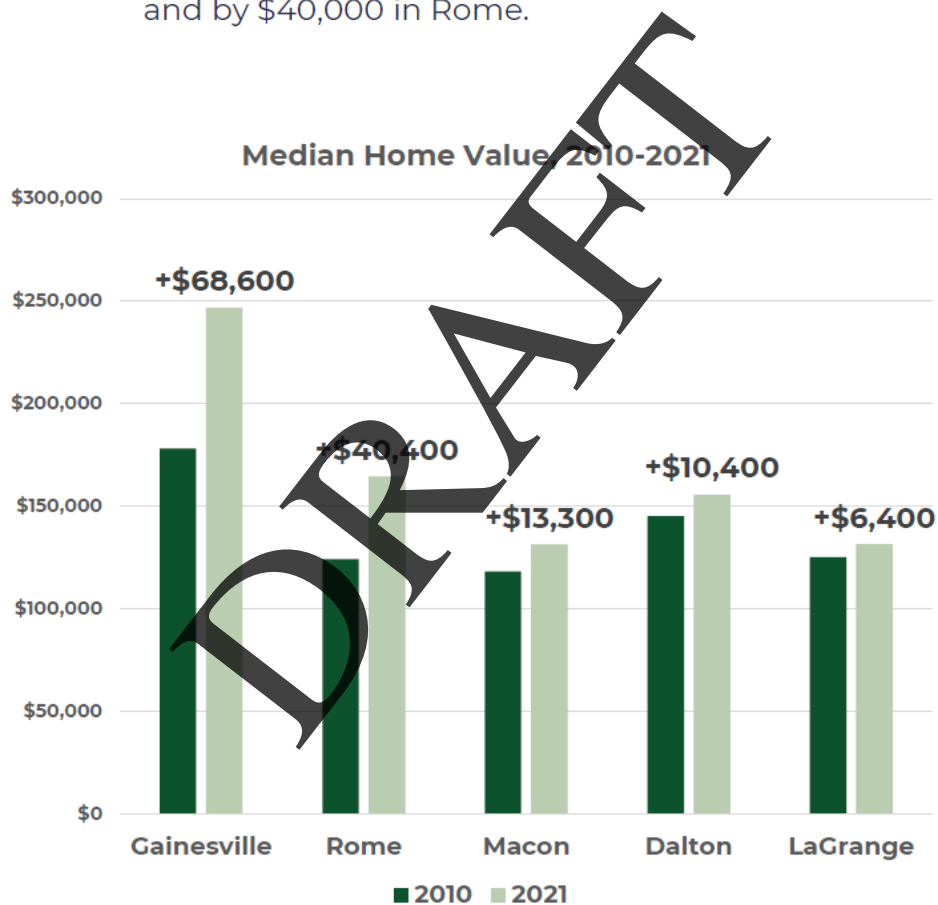


## Median Home Price

Median home values have increased across all the cities in this comparison.

In Dalton, LaGrange and Macon, the increases in median home price have amounted to around \$10,000 between 2010 and 2021.

Gainesville and Rome have seen the most dramatic increases in median home value, increasing by nearly \$70,000 in Gainesville and by \$40,000 in Rome.



Data Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2017, 2021

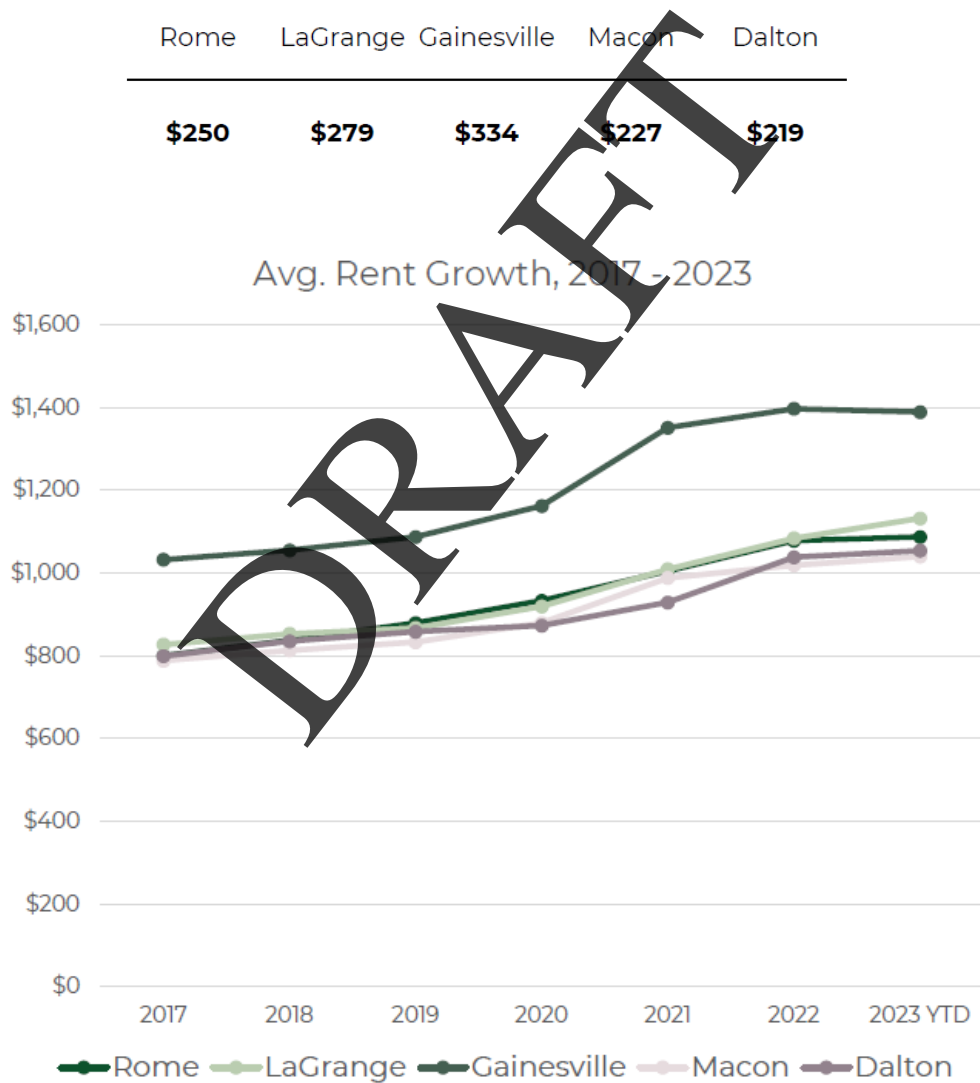
# Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

## Average Rents

Average rents have increased in each of the comparable markets since 2017.

Rome, LaGrange, Macon, and Dalton markets have experienced similar rent growth – between \$220 and \$280.

Gainesville markets experienced the largest rent growth since 2017.



Data Source: CoStar

# TRANSPORTATION

*Presenting a comprehensive transportation narrative for Whitfield County including needs, opportunities, goals and policies*



DRAFT

# POLICY STATEMENTS

## Housing

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.
- Stimulate compatible infill housing development in existing neighborhoods.
- Stabilize existing neighborhoods by supporting and promoting appropriate rehabilitation activities, infill construction, and code enforcement.
- Create housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development and redevelopment of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence (home-ownership).
- Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into attainable owner-occupied housing.
- Support dispersion of assisted housing throughout the community in order to diversify neighborhoods and eliminate pockets of poverty.
- Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating higher-intensity housing types (e.g. condominiums, apartments, etc.) into mixed-use developments that make it easy for residents to walk and bike to stores, services and activity centers.
- Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to facilitate higher density, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood developments with a variety of housing types.
- Promote a range of housing opportunities, including attainable housing, single-family and multi-family options, senior housing, and higher value housing.
- Protect established residential areas from encroachment by non-residential uses and automobile-oriented development.
- Encourage public/private partnerships focused on housing development and redevelopment through the use of Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), grant applications, and support of the Flooring Capital Development Corporation (FCDC).
- Encourage redevelopment of blighted, underdeveloped, or vacant areas surrounding downtown Dalton that can be redeveloped for urban-style residential neighborhoods. Such as: pocket neighborhoods, apartments, mixed-use, and planned unit developments.



### Economic Development

- Support programs for retention, expansion and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements, linkages to existing businesses, and diversification of our economic base.
- Target reinvestment to declining, existing neighborhoods, vacant or underutilized sites or buildings in preference to new economic development projects in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of our community.
- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- Consider access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- Consider impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in our decision making on economic development projects.
- Consider the employment needs and skill levels of our existing population in making decisions on proposed economic development projects
- Carefully consider costs as well as benefits in making decisions on proposed economic development projects.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, with the County's jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority.
- Leverage the County's assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life.
- Encourage the use of public-private mechanisms and private initiatives such as Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), Commercial Improvement Districts (CIDs), and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to finance enhancements along important corridors and growth areas.
- Support workforce development efforts in coordination with local K-12 schools as well as Georgia Northwestern Technical College and Dalton State College to prepare our workforce for expanded opportunities available in a more diverse advanced manufacturing economy.
- Support efforts to market downtown Dalton, to recruit a mix of businesses that generate activity in the downtown and provide local shopping, dining, entertainment and service options, and to encourage appropriate rehabilitation and redevelopment.

### Community Facilities & Services

- Ensure strategic expansions of public infrastructure and utilities are economically prudent in regard to long-term operation and maintenance.
- Protect existing infrastructure investments (*i.e.*, already paid for) by encouraging infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- Ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.
- Guide development within our community to areas that can be effectively served by public utilities and infrastructure.
- Promote extension of public sewer infrastructure to serve existing and future housing development in order to protect surface and ground water quality.
- Foster expansion of sewer services to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned.
- Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure.
- Ensure that capital improvements needed to accommodate future development are provided concurrent with new development.
- Coordinate provision of public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact urban development.
- Use sequential, phased extension of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development to areas immediately contiguous to already developed areas of the community.
- Use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified (in the comprehensive plan) as suitable for such development.
- Seek ways for new growth to pay for itself (in terms of public investment in infrastructure and services to support the development) to the maximum extent possible.
- Invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens, including in areas where growth is planned.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- Support SPLOST as a successful local funding source.
- Utilize Tax Allocation Districts (TAD's) to incentivize investment in strategic areas where new development or re-development has been stagnant

### Transportation

- Make decisions that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Target transportation improvements to support desired development patterns for the community (recognizing that ready availability of transportation creates demand for land development in adjacent areas).
- New and reconstructed roadways will be appropriately designed, using context sensitive design considerations, to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- New and reconstructed roadways will be designed to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.
- Promote connectivity of our road network (such as fostering a grid network of streets, multiple connections between subdivisions).
- Support creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- Encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned public transit options in the community.
- Ensure (through traffic calming and other design considerations) that excessive vehicular traffic will not harm the peaceful nature of our residential neighborhoods.
- Ensure that new development is compatible with existing airport facilities and does not impede its function.
- Coordinate with the MPO to plan for and implement transportation needs.
- Coordinate transportation and land use planning.
- Support local and regional public transit opportunities.
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using context sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using “Complete Street” concepts to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities, parking, bicycle routes, public transit (if applicable) as well as local vehicular circulation.

### Natural & Cultural Resources

- The protection and conservation of our community's resources will play an important role in the decision-making process when making decisions about future growth and development.
- Minimize inefficient land consumption and encourage more compact urban development in order to preserve green open space and natural resource areas.
- Encourage new development to locate in suitable locations in order to protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, or valuable historic, archaeological or cultural resources from encroachment.
- Factor potential impacts on air and water quality in making decisions on new developments and transportation improvements.
- Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from sensitive natural resource areas.
- Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new development.
- Promote low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.
- Ensure that development adjacent to agricultural areas is separated by a buffer in order to protect and preserve the rural viewsheds in this important component of our community.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through protection of ground and surface water sources.
- Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality protection.
- Support minimum state requirements for environmental resource protection and incorporate requirements into the land development review process.
- Protect greenspace and greenway corridors, and expand opportunities for public use with a connected system of greenways and trails.
- Promote the use of mechanisms to preserve greenspace and viable farmland, including grant funds, conservation easements, conservation tax credits, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR).
- Promote natural, cultural and historic areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.
- Whitfield County sits above a vast shale play containing natural gas. Therefore natural gas hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" shall not occur at the expense of the county's natural resources or the health of the community and, appropriate ordinances should be considered to proactively ensure this policy.



### Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances.
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Promote development that features design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community. (Unincorporated *Whitfield County Only*)
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.
- Support appropriate residential and non-residential infill development and redevelopment in ways that complement surrounding areas.
- Encourage mixed-use developments that are human-scale and less auto-oriented.
- Support increases in residential density in areas where community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities can satisfactorily accommodate the increased density.
- Support new land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space.
- Support new land uses that enhance housing options in our community.

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

- Encourage development of a rational network of commercial or mixed use nodes (villages, or activity centers) to meet the service needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip development along major roadways.
- Incorporate land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers (“greyfields”) with walkable, mixed use development.
- Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in existing and emerging community and regional activity centers.

## Intergovernmental Coordination

- Seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection)
- Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions
- Consult other public entities in our area when making decisions that are likely to impact them.
- Provide input to other public entities in our area when they are making decision that are likely to have an impact on our community or our plans for future development.
- Engage in cooperative planning between the local government and local school board in regard to the appropriate location and use of schools as community facilities.
- Coordinate economic development activities, including business recruitment efforts, among the jurisdictions and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority
- Continue to update the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) to remain compliant and ensure the highest level of service in every community
- Continue Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) distribution is fair and equitable for each community

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

From hence forth the plan will focus on individual, rather than joint, needs of each community as previously stated in the *HOW TO USE THIS PLAN* section. Each community will provide a community statement and/or a list of goals, a Report of Accomplishments from the previous 2018-2023 planning period, a list of current Needs and Opportunities, and finally a new Community Work Program for the current 2024-2028 planning period.

## Unincorporated Whitfield County

### VISION STATEMENT

Whitfield County and its cities are a proud and vibrant community that works to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency. We embrace our history while coming together as a community to promote economic growth and development, protect our natural and cultural resources and build a successful future for our children through actions that include:

- Guiding future development with informed land use plans that take into account the protection of our natural resources
- Providing a variety of walkable neighborhoods with sidewalks, greenway trails and bike lanes
- Creating a variety of opportunities for our children, including recreational facilities, historical and educational oriented resources
- An inclusive community that offers a variety of public transportation opportunities for its residents, with special attention given to those disadvantaged by age, income, or special needs
- A community that embraces its history with preservation of historic resources and neighborhoods
- A clean, comfortable, nice, peaceful, family-friendly, and vibrant community
- A community that actively promotes and pursues innovative businesses, while investing in and retaining a high quality of life for our residents.
- A regional university that has attractive programs and an enriching educational environment
- A community rich with neighborhood parks



*Historic preservation will continue to play an important role in Whitfield County's future development*



*Canasauga River is a vital resource to the community both as a recreational asset as well as a public water supply*

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT						
Pass a Broadband Ordinance covering the process of providing broadband access to the citizens of Varnell	2020			2024		
Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance	2020			2024		
Apply for funding through the Broadband Ready Program	2022				X	Funding no longer available
TRANSPORTATION						
Bridges and culvert installation	2020-2023	X				
SR 201 Realignment and improvements from US 41 to I-75 Interchange	2019-2021	X				
Improvements to Old LaFayette Road along SR 201 to SR 3	2023		2024			
Old Tilton Road at Swamp Creek Bridge replacement/upgrades	2023		2024			
South Dixie Highway, W. Industrial Blvd. and Foster Road intersection improvements	2023		2025			



## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Underwood Road, N. Dalton Bypass to Dawnvile Road reconstruction	2023			2025		Other projects took priority
<b>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>						
Pursue greenspace preservation / acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails.	2020		Ongoing			Policy Statement
Implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations.	2020		Ongoing			Policy Statement More specific projects will be included in the 2024-2028 CWP
Grant Farm Park Infrastructure to protect and showcase Civil War archaeological features	2019-2021	X				
Designate the entire Prater's Mill site as a local historic site.	2019				X	Not a priority at this time
Seek National Register designation for the entire Prater's Mill Site	2020				X	Not a priority at this time
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>						
Fire Station Renovations	2020-2023		Spring 2024			Pay Go was just released in Spring of this year.
Quick Response Trucks	2020-2023	X				

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
New Vehicles – Sheriff Dept.	2020-2023	X				
Animal Shelter Renovations	2020-2023	X				
Construct Admin Building & Courthouse Renovations	2020-2023	X				Courthouse renovations complete but new admin building was dropped
Jail Renovations	2020-2023		Ongoing			Jail renovations are a matter of operations and maintenance and will not be included in the new CWP
Construct Fire Station #12	2020-2023	X				
New Fire Engines	2020-2023	X				
Library Upgrades	2020-2023	X				
Construct South Park Pool	2020-2023				X	Pool project was replaced by a new playground
Construct South Park Infrastructure	2020-2023	X				
Construct Westside Community Center	2020-2023		2028			Awaiting funding
Add infrastructure Edwards Park	2020-2023	X				

#### INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Prepare and implement a unified road development ordinance with Whitfield County, Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell.	2020-2022				X	Whitfield County is responsible for all road maintenance except the City of Dalton
---	-----------	--	--	--	---	--

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Gain at least one more municipality in the Unified Zoning Ordinance	2023				X	Not a priority at this time

DRAFT

## Needs and Opportunities

### Economic Development: The need or opportunity is to:

- ED1** Promote and invest into efforts to improve accessibility to high-speed broadband for both commercial and residential users in areas of low population density
- ED2** As the Carbondale Business Park nears capacity, identify investments in additional land for industrial development according to land use and infrastructure plans
- ED3** Greater expansion and diversification of industries and employment opportunities is needed

### Housing: The need or opportunity is to:

- H1** Promote housing opportunities for a diversified array of new housing options and price levels
- H2** Lack of public infrastructure including wastewater currently limits the potential for new housing developments
- H3** Existing housing stock is aging and outdated and is not attracting current buyers
- H4** Whitfield County is a regional leader in industrial and manufacturing employment and there is a great need to provide housing in Whitfield County for all workforce segments, from technicians to high-level management
- H5** Improve infrastructure in underserved portions of the unincorporated county

### Transportation: The need or opportunity is to:

- T1** Address aging transportation infrastructure by refurbishing or replacing road infrastructure, with a focus on bridges with low GDOT sufficiency ratings and intersection improvements
- T2** Improve safety, visibility and accessibility of commercial corridors to reduce conflict points and improve the flow of traffic
- T3** Continue investment in roundabout construction at key intersections to improve safety and traffic flow
- T4** For improved safety of roadways and greater cost-effectiveness, upgrade maintenance equipment
- T5** Additional mobility options including expansion of transit is needed to ensure all Whitfield County residents are able to access needed goods and services



### Natural and Cultural Resources: The need or opportunity is to:

- NC1** Protect and preserve the county's historical assets and landmarks from adverse impacts associated with future growth
- NC2** Expand access to key historic and cultural resources and add amenities to promote good site usage- trails, restrooms, parking- while preventing adverse impacts
- NC3** Capitalize on the county's abundance of intact Civil War battlefields and associated assets, and add amenities and access as needed
- NC4** Preserve natural greenspace
- NC5** There is a need to expand Parks and Recreation offerings, programs, and facilities. This includes adding new parks and fields, adding new features and amenities to existing parks and fields, and adding lighting and safety features within the parks
- NC6** There is a need for an additional community center to serve western Whitfield County
- NC7** Improve active and passive recreation infrastructure

### Community Facilities and Services: The need or opportunity is to:

- CF1** Ensure that public safety departments have the equipment needed to improve the already high level of service throughout the county
- CF2** Continue investing in the county's fire service including renovations, expansion of infrastructure to stations, and equipment for EV needs
- CF2** Ensure residents have access to animal welfare information
- CF4** Address the issues regarding aging public buildings via renovation or reconstruction

### Land Use: The need or opportunity is to:

- LU1** Update ordinances to comply with new requirements and to create more fluidity and easier administration as development steadily increases

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028									
WHITFIELD COUNTY									
Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
	Pass a Broadband Ordinance covering the process of providing broadband access to the citizens of Varnell	X					\$2,000	Legal Fees, General Fund	Community Development
	Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance		X				\$1,000	General Fund	Community Development
	Purchase 50-100 acres of property for future industrial development	X	X	X	X	X	\$1,000,000	JDA Funds	JDA
<b>HOUSING</b>									
	Expand sewer from Cleveland Highway to serve future housing development		X	X			\$1,000,000	CDS Grant Matching Funds	
<b>P</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>								
	Improvements to Old LaFayette Road along SR 201 to SR 3	X					\$3,200,000	LMIG	County Engineer, Public Works
	Old Tilton Road at Swamp Creek Bridge replacement/upgrades	X					\$1,200,000	LMIG	County Engineer, Public Works

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	South Dixie Highway, W. Industrial Blvd. and Foster Road intersection improvements		X				\$1,800,000	LMIG	County Engineer, Public Works
	Underwood Road, N. Dalton Bypass to Dawnville Road reconstruction		X				\$1,200,000	LMIG	County Engineer, Public Works
	Add an additional mowing crew with a new tractor and Mowing Max machine		X	X			\$450,000	SPLOST Additional Salaries	Public Works
	Houston Valley + Mt. Vernon intersection roundabout	X	X				\$1,000,000	SPLOST	Engineering Dept.
	Brine Spray equipment and batch facility	X	X				\$175,000	General Fund	Public Works
	Purchase three new transit busses			X	X		\$350,000	5307 Funds and 10% Match	Transit Dept.
	Construct additional buss storage at bus barn			X	X		\$20,000	5307 Funds and Match	Transit Dept.
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES									

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Praters Mill new restroom facility	X	X				\$80,000	BIL Grant Match	Parks & Rec
	Praters Mill walking track		X	X			\$50,000	BIL Grant Match	Parks & Rec
	80 additional parking spaces at Praters Mill		X	X			\$100,000	BIL Grant Match	Parks & Rec
	Tennis Ball and Pickle ball courts at Edwards Park	X	X				\$1,100,000	SPLOST	Parks & Rec
	LED light retrofit at Edwards Park for walking tracks and parking lot			X			\$1,000,000	SPLOST	Parks & Rec
	Westside Park soccer field and walking track	X					\$2,700,000	SPLOST	Parks & Rec
	Hiking trail at Rocky Face Ridge Battlefield Park and privy	X	X				\$100,000	LWCF + matching funds	Parks & Rec



## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Additional restroom facilities at Rocky Face Ridge Battlefield Park			X	X		\$200,000	SPLOST	Parks & Rec
	Purchase property and Construct Westside Community Center			X	X	X	\$6,000,000	SPLOST	Parks & Rec
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>									
	Fire Station Renovations	X	X				\$550,000	SPLOST	Fire Dept.
	Sewer expansion to fire stations			X	X		\$625,000	SPLOST	Fire Dept.
	Water tender for additional water to suppress electric vehicle fires			X			\$895,000	SPLOST, Fire Fund Grant	Fire Dept.
	Develop and launch an education program aimed at spay and neuter promotion to reduce animal shelter occupancy over time		X	X			\$10,000	Staff Time	Animal Shelter
	Redesign Senior Center parking lot to improve traffic flow	X	X	X			\$10,000	Staff Time Materials	Senior Center Maintenance Dept.
<b>LAND USE</b>									

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### WHITFIELD COUNTY

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Adopt new parking requirements in the Unified Zoning Ordinance	X	X				\$5,000	Staff Time Legal Fees	Planning and Zoning

DRAFT

## Town of Cohutta

### Community Goals

Cohutta is a small town with a big sense of place and a desire to keep track of their rural foundations, close community, and friendly atmosphere as they move into the twenty-first century and face the changes the future may bring. Because they are not a large community, a sense of where they want to go is best described with a series of goals and accompanying policies developed to fit the town's specific needs. The goals cover seven planning categories for managing resources: Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, Natural and Cultural Resources, Community Facilities and Services, Land Use, and Intergovernmental Coordination. These goals and policies reflect the overarching needs and opportunities developed by the stakeholder committee and attending public in the SWOT analysis.



*Previously utilized as the Town Clerk's Office, this building is now home to a gourmet ice cream parlor in the town center*

### Economic Development

#### Goal

Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that broaden employment opportunities and income while minimizing impacts on local infrastructure and our rural environment by ensuring these new investments are appropriately scaled to maintain the character of our small town.

#### Policy

*Desirable businesses provide employment, good income, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings.*

*Business or industry impacts on infrastructure and the environment are serious considerations in our rural community.*

*Business activity nodes are preferable to random locations in the community.*

*Enhance attractiveness and viability of Main Street and the downtown/town center*

## Housing

### Goal

Safe, adequate, and affordable housing should be available for all citizens.

### Policy

*We will work to eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.*

*We will promote quality housing construction and subdivision development and also housing infill among existing lots.*

## Transportation

### Goal

Support and participate in the county-wide transportation planning that can serve residents and enhance area economic development.

### Policy

*The design and construction of new or rebuilt streets, sidewalks and trails can help create efficiency and connectivity in the community.*

*Alternative transportation options, like bicycle and pedestrian systems, including trails and sidewalks, can work in our community and provide physical, social, and economic benefits for local residents.*

*Continue a working relationship with The Greater Dalton MPO.*

## Natural and Cultural Resources

### Goal

Conservation and management of sensitive natural resources can enhance the green spaces that are characteristic of our rural environment.

### Policy

*The protection and conservation of our community's natural resources (trees, terrain, water, and open space) and historic homes, buildings, and sites will play an important role when making decisions about future growth and development.*

*Low impact development that preserves natural topography, existing vegetation, springs, and existing stream courses is a preference in our community.*

*Protection of water supply watersheds, ground water recharge areas, and wetlands are recognized as our responsibility.*

## Community Facilities and Services

### Goal

Provide sufficient facilities to administer governance, maintain public safety, enhance quality of life, and be responsive to local growth and development.

### Policy

*Remain responsive and flexible to potential changes needed in the water and septic/sewer services available to the area.*

*Fire, police, solid waste, and emergency services and facilities are priorities for maintaining public safety and health.*

*Recreation and park facilities and services represent an investment in our quality of life and the social interaction of our population.*

*Maintenance and updates of public facilities, as needed, are visible statements about civic pride, community support, and the desire to be successful.*

## Land Use

### Goal

Maintaining the rural, historic community atmosphere is an important quality of life issue for local residents.

### Policy

*Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's rural, scenic character and historic sense of place.*

*Enhance features that make Cohutta walkable and improve pedestrian access to the core of the community surrounding the school, park, and business services.*

*Low density residential development is supportive of our rural environment.*

*New land uses must support protection of the environment and the preservation or creation of open space, buffers, greenbelts, and trails.*

*Agriculture and forestry remain a viable part of our community.*

*Continue to upgrade and implement the nuisance ordinance.*

*Explore means to buffer incompatible uses where city and county permitted land use conflicts.*

*Zone for assisted living facilities and senior living facilities.*

*Consider scale capability of new commercial development to ensure that said development compliments the existing character of the town.*



## Intergovernmental Coordination

### Goal

Cooperation with other local governments, local agencies, and the State influence and contribute to our success.

### Policy

*Continue joint comprehensive planning efforts with all governments for efficiency and mutual benefits.*

*Update and implement the Comprehensive Plan as a guide for local decision-making.*

*Coordinate with the Whitfield County School Board for mutual use of the school as a community facility.*

*We are receptive to collaboration with other local governments on matters of mutual interest.*

*We are committed to the intent and occasional review and update of the Service Delivery Strategy.*

*Available grants are important to our success and can make our budget more efficient.*

*Continue to add streetlights as the community grows*

DRAFT

# Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

### TOWN of COHUTTA

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT						
Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to extend Optilink infrastructure to the residential and commercial areas of town.	2020		2028			
Pass a Broadband Ordinance covering the process of providing broadband access to the citizens of Cohutta	2020	X				
Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance	2020		2025			
Apply for funding through the Broadband Ready Program	2022				X	Funding no longer available
TRANSPORTATION						
Improve Parking areas in the town center, streetscapes, new striping for on and off-street parking	2023		2026			New light posts installed and striping completed as well as a new crosswalk. Project reworded for streetscape and moved to economic development in new CWP

### NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### TOWN of COHUTTA

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Apply for a National Register Historic District for Andrew's Chapel and associated grounds and structures.	2020				X	Building stabilization and repair takes precedence at this time
Prepare and install interpretive signage for existing historic structures (possibly link with trails and Scenic Byway).	2023		2027			
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES						
Upgrade Garbage Truck	2020		2026			
Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to extend Sewer infrastructure to the residential and commercial areas of town.	2020	X				
Waste containers for residences	2020		2026			
Upgrade lighting along the walking track	2022	X				
Technology hardware and software upgrades for Town Hall and public works	2020	X				
Create a Cohutta Welcome sign	2021		2025			

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

### TOWN of COHUTTA

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Update the town of Cohutta website with links to: 1. Annual recreation and entertainment events in town. 2. Marketing the community to professional offices and other service businesses. 3. Whitfield County Transit for public transportation. 4. Marketing of the Community Center for use. 5. Orientation information for newcomers. 6. Promote the Cohutta-Chattahoochee Scenic Byway.	2021	X				
Prepare and adopt a façade ordinance	2023	X				
Amend subdivision regulations for conservation design criteria.	2023	X				

## Needs and Opportunities

### Economic Development: The need or opportunity is to:

- ED1** There is a need to improve the appearance and connectivity of downtown infrastructure to attract and retain businesses and customers
- ED2** Broadband speeds and availability can be improved through partnerships with providers and participation in Georgia's Broadband Ready program
- ED3** While Cohutta is a small town, resources can still be relatively spread out and not walkable. Improvement in connectivity is needed from recreation assets to central Cohutta

### Natural and Cultural Resources: The need or opportunity is to:

- NR1** Preserve the heritage and history of Cohutta's African-American community
- NR2** The Cohutta-Chattahoochee Scenic Byway is a tourism development tool which can be used to draw visitors and revenues to downtown Cohutta

### Community Facilities and Services: The need or opportunity is to:

- CF1** Additional recreation amenities are needed, as are improvements to existing facilities
- CF2** Investment in solid waste services equipment and vehicles are needed
- CF3** Due to a loss of the previous police station, a new station is needed
- CF4** Signage is needed to provide placemaking and to welcome visitors to Cohutta



## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### TOWN OF COHUTTA

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
	Bury aerial utility lines in the town center and complete streetscape			X	X		\$500,000	SPLOST ARC Grant	Mayor & Council
	Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance	X	X				\$1,000	Staff Time & Legal Fees	Mayor & Council
	Create a master plan to improve and connect recreation assets to the town center		X	X			\$50,000	ARC Grant	Mayor & Council
	Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to extend Optilink fiberoptic network to the residential and commercial areas of the town.	X	X	X	X	X	\$250,000	Grant Funding	Dalton Utilities
<b>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>									
	Andrews Chapel stabilization	X	X	X			\$150,000	SPLOST Grants	Mayor & Council
	Prepare and install interpretive signage for existing historic structures (possibly link with trails and Scenic Byway).			X	X		\$5,000	General Fund	Mayor & Council
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>									

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### TOWN OF COHUTTA

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Tennis and pickle ball courts		X	X			\$80,000	LWCF Grant	Mayor & Council
	Upgrade Garbage Truck			X			\$250,000	SPLOST USDA Grant	Mayor & Council
	Repave walking track	X					\$50,000	General Fund	Whitfield Public Works
	Build or lease new police station	X					\$300,000	SPLOST USDA Grant/loan	Mayor & Council
	Waste containers for residents	X	X	X			\$50,000	General Fund	Mayor and Council
	Create a Cohutta welcome sign		X	X			\$25,000	SPLOST	Mayor and Council

## City of Dalton

### Vision Statement

Dalton shares with the unincorporated Whitfield County community the collective vision for the area while also owning some of its own uniqueness. So, in addition to the collective vision, the City of Dalton has defined its future vision that includes:

- Coordination and efficient use and expansion of the City's public facilities and services
- A community offering a variety of alternative transportation connections such as sidewalks, greenway trails, bike lanes, and multi-use corridors
- A thriving and resilient downtown showcasing numerous historic resources that serves as the business/civic center of the community
- The revitalization of blighted commercial centers and aging industrial areas making way for adaptive reuse and redevelopment to serve the needs of the modern economy
- Preserving the character of established neighborhoods and supporting revitalization efforts to increase housing opportunities and neighborhood stability
- Housing options that meet the needs of the entire community



*Dalton State College's ever-growing degree programs continue to produce a skilled workforce for the community and region*



*Reducing traffic congestion and improving the aesthetics of Dalton's gateway corridors, such as Walnut Ave, continues to be a high priority*

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### CITY OF DALTON

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT						
Conduct an evaluation of the entire permitting process for development of property, make improvements to streamline, and ensure that the process is accessible in many communication mediums	2020-2021	X				
Improve property values and community safety by destruction or remodel of 30 blighted or unsafe structures	2019-2023		2025			The City has made significant progress on blight removal. This project will evolve into the creation of housing improvement zones in the new CWP
HOUSING						
Facilitate development of Mixed-Use locations within the Downtown C-3 District, and areas adjacent to Downtown by amending restrictive ordinances to provide more flexibility while still ensuring public safety and the preservation of the downtown's integrity	2021-2023	X				
TRANSPORTATION						

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

## CITY OF DALTON

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Retrofit all decorative streets with LED fixtures on Hamilton Street, Pentz Street, City Hall and Cemetery	2020	X				
Install curbing/gutter, sidewalks and drainage on North Thornton Avenue from Tyler Street north to Memorial Drive	2020		2025			
Install mast arm signals and pedestrian signals/crosswalks on Thornton Avenue at Crawford, Cuyler, Morris & Emery Streets intersections	2021		2025			
Streetscape work, such as sidewalks, decorative street lights, trees, new drainage, etc. for remaining portions of Cuyler, Pentz and Gordon Streets	2023		2025			
South Thornton Avenue Improvements: Correct drainage issues, add curb/gutter, add sidewalks and update corridor esthetics from Walnut Avenue south to Threadmill Road. Length is: 1.05 Miles	2022		2028			
Gordon Street Bridge structural repairs and upgrades construction phase	2020-2021	X				
East Morris St. Improvements: Correct drainage issues, add curb/gutter, add sidewalks and update corridor esthetics from Walnut Ave. to Fredrick St. Length is 2.5 miles	2023		2027			Fredrick to Grimes St. complete. Green St. to Fredrick St. and Grimes St. to Walnut Ave. remain



## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### CITY OF DALTON

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES						
Facilitate the sale of the historic Dalton Depot into private ownership and ensure its renovation as a historic landmark and commercial space	2020	X				
Restoration of the West Hill Cemetery Chapel	2020	X				
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES						
Renovate John Davis Recreation and community center as rec dept. headquarters and multi-use community center	2021-2022		2024			
Construct walking/bike path between Crown Mill Area and Haig Mill Park	2020		2028			Phase 1 complete
Conduct engineering and survey work for trail connection between Crown Mill Area and Heritage Point Park	2021-2022			2030		Other projects have taken priority. This project, while desired, will not be revisited until 2030
Increase hangar lease space at Dalton Airport by 16 t-hangers, and 4 large hangars	2020-2023		2025			
Acquire property and construct joint public safety training center along abutment rd. adjacent to fire station #2	2021-2023		2027			

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### CITY OF DALTON

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Construct new City Fire Station (move Station #2) Use existing Station #2 as part of the new public safety training center	2023		2026			
Develop walking path/signage for safe pedestrian and bike travel from East Dalton to Downtown via Gordon Street Bridge. (See 2018 UGA Downtown Master plan for concepts)	2021-2022				X	Issues with traffic flow resulting from the conversion
Riverwater Drinking Water Treatment Plant Overhaul consisting of a new chemical feed system, new raw water intake structure and pumping station and will construct a new filter building to utilize pressurized membrane filters to replace traditional filter media filtration.	2019-2021	X				
<b>LAND USE</b>						
Annex properties necessary to place Haig Mill Lake Park within corporate limits of Dalton	2020-2021		2024			
Determine a residential/commercial ratio for urban dwellings in Downtown C-3 District	2022	X				

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### CITY OF DALTON

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Evaluate property tracts within the C-3 District and identify candidate locations for 100% residential dwellings as recommended in the Greater Dalton Housing Strategy	2019-2021		2024			Reworded in new CWP: The Planning Department is developing an Urban PUD to address this issue
Create and adopt design guidelines for multi-family housing development within the city to ensure new multi-family structures are of a quality to meet the city's housing needs and promote sustainable development	2022		2024			
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>						
Work with the UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government to complete the downtown master plan	2019	X				
Work with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) to complete two of the four properties in the city	2020	X				
Work with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) to develop the remaining two properties in the city after funding is made available from the previous sales	2021-2023		2028			

## Needs and Opportunities

### Economic Development: The need or opportunity is to:

- ED1** Blight and neglect of residential properties are negatively affecting housing conditions and opportunity for reinvestment
- ED2** Dalton's historic location on two railroad tracks has also led to noise concerns that can be disruptive to the downtown visitor experience

### Housing: The need or opportunity is to:

- H1** To continue to address and improve housing conditions using redevelopment tools including local and state resources, an updated Urban Redevelopment Plan is needed

### Transportation: The need or opportunity is to:

- T1** Increasing development, pervious surfaces, and transportation demands call for additional investment in street infrastructure, including sidewalks, curb and gutter, and drainage, to address stormwater, signalization, and pedestrian mobility needs
- T2** Additional investments are also needed in streetscape design, esthetics, and amenities to ensure safe, accessible, attractive connectivity to retail, community services, and parks
- T3** Pedestrian and bicycle connections are needed to link key recreation resources
- T4** Additional mobility options are needed to ensure all Dalton residents are able to access needed goods and services
- T5** Stormwater demands are increasing, and additional resources are required to address identified needs to improve stormwater infrastructure

### Natural and Cultural Resources: The need or opportunity is to:

- NR1** Maintaining cemeteries serves a critical community and heritage function
- NR2** To identify recreation needs and allocate resources to serve all Dalton residents, a new parks and recreation master plan is needed
- NR3** There is an increasing need for public resources for mental health

### Community Facilities and Services: The need or opportunity is to:

- CF1** Community-facing and internal office and meeting space needs are growing and can be met by upgrading existing facilities for reuse
- CF2** Improvements in airport capacities and services are required to meet changing needs
- CF3** Renovate and reuse existing facilities and add new facilities as needed to meet public safety training requirements
- CF4** Add fire stations and services necessary to maintain and improve level of fire service
- CF5** There is a need to expand recreational offerings and facilities to serve the growing City population. This includes adding new parks, adding new features, courts, and amenities to existing parks and fields, and adding connectivity within the parks

### Land Use: The need or opportunity is to:

- LU1** To better serve Dalton residents, bring additional land into City to meet expanding recreation needs
- LU2** Additional planning and land use tools are needed to incentivize redevelopment in key areas
- LU3** Additional planning and land use tools are needed to ensure equitable and high-quality multi-family housing product

### Intergovernmental Coordination: The need or opportunity is to:

- IG1** Continue the Neighborhood Stabilization Program to redevelop remaining properties



## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### CITY OF DALTON

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
	Creation of housing improvement districts to address blight and incentivize reinvestment		X				\$5,000	General Fund	Code Enforcement
	Downtown Railroad quiet zone		X	X			\$2,500,000	SPLOST Grant Funds	City Administrator
<b>HOUSING</b>									
	Update the City's Urban Revitalization Plan	X	X				\$5,000	Staff Time	NWGRC, Housing Authority, Planning and Zoning
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>									
	Install curbing/gutter, sidewalks and drainage on North Thornton Avenue from Tyler Street north to Memorial Drive		X				\$250,000	SPLOST	Public Works
	Install mast arm signals and pedestrian signals/crosswalks on Thornton Avenue at Crawford, Cuyler, Morris & Emery Streets intersections		X				\$350,000	2019 SPLOST & General Fund	Public Works Street & Traffic Divisions

# Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

## COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

### CITY OF DALTON

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Streetscape work, such as sidewalks, decorative streetlights, trees, new drainage, etc. for remaining portions of Cuyler, Pentz and Gordon Streets		X				\$2,500,000	SPLOST BIL Grant for Cuyler St.	Public Works Street Division
	South Thornton Avenue Improvements: Correct drainage issues, add curb/gutter, add sidewalks and update corridor esthetics from Walnut Avenue south to Threadmill Road. Length is: 1.05 Miles					X	\$2,000,000	SPLOST	Public Works
	East Morris St. Improvements: Correct drainage issues, add curb/gutter, add sidewalks and update corridor esthetics from Green St. to Fredrick St. and Grimes St. to Walnut Ave.				X		\$2,000,000	SPLOST	Public Works
	Construct walking/bike path between Crown Mill Area and Haig Mill Park	X	X	X	X	X	\$4,500,000	SPLOST & Gen Fund, RTP	Mayor and Council
	Micro On-Demand Transit Study		X				\$20,000	Federal 5307 funds	MPO
	Construct new sidewalks along N. Thornton Ave. from Tyler St. to the hospital campus			X	X	X	\$4,000,000	SPLOST ARC	Public Works
	Implement Arcadis stormwater management plan including level 1A pipe lining, Bridgewater Apartments flood storage, Olivia Dr. Acquisition and flood zone restoration, Westerly Heights detention ponds, Tar Creek detention ponds, Threadmill Rd.	X	X	X	X	X	\$16,660,000	SPLOST General Fund	Public Works

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### CITY OF DALTON

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	improvements, Broadview Terrence flood storage, and stream bank restoration								
<b>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>									
	West Hill Cemetery Master Plan		X				\$50,000	General Fund	City Administrator
	Parks and Rec Master Plan			X			\$130,000	ARC Grant, Matching Funds	Parks and Rec
	Launch Mental Health Program		X						Police Department
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>									
	Renovate John Davis Recreation and community center as rec dept. headquarters and multi-use community center	X					\$3,000,000	SPLOST & Gen Fund	Parks and Rec
	Increase hangar lease space at Dalton Airport by 16 t-hangers, and 4 large hangars	X	X				\$1,500,000	SPLOST & Gen Fund	Airport

# Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

## COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

### CITY OF DALTON

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Acquire property and construct joint public safety training center along abutment rd. adjacent to fire station #2		X	X	X		\$2,500,000	SPLOST	Police and Fire Departments
	Construct new City Fire Station (move Station #2) Use existing Station #2 as part of the new public safety training center	X	X	X			\$5,500,000	General Fund Public Safety Grant	Fire Department
	Standard of Cover Fire Service	X					\$30,000	Fire Dept. Budget	Fire Department
	Heritage Point Park Improvements: Walking trails, shade structures, pedestrian bridges, lights and fencing		X	X			\$3,750,000	Federal Grant, SPLOST	Parks and Rec
	Create 12-15 new Pickleball courts at Al Rollins and James Brown Park to reduce long wait time at the 6 existing courts			X	X		\$3,500,000	SPLOST LWCF	Parks and Rec
	New ADA accessible dog park near Broadus-Durkan Complex or Heritage Point Soccer Complex			X	X		\$300,000	SPLOST LWCF	Parks and Rec
	James Brown Park walking path and pedestrian bridges to connect the parks features		X	X			\$500,000	SPLOST LWCF	Parks and Rec
LAND USE									

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### CITY OF DALTON

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Annex properties necessary to place Haig Mill Lake Park within corporate limits of Dalton	X					\$5,000	Staff Time	Asst. City Administrator
	Develop an Urban PUD to create more opportunities for urban redevelopment	X					\$5,000	Staff Time Legal Fees	Planning & Zoning Department
	Create and adopt design guidelines for multi-family housing development within the city to ensure new multi-family structures are of a quality to meet the city's housing needs and promote sustainable development	X					\$5,000	Staff Time Legal Fees	Planning & Zoning Department
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>									
	Work with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) to develop the remaining two properties in the city after funding is made available from the previous sales	X	X	X	X	X	\$1,000	Staff Time	NWGRC Housing Authority



## City of Tunnel Hill

### Vision Statement

Tunnel Hill shares with Whitfield County the collective vision for the County while also owning some of its own uniqueness. So, in addition to the collective vision, the City of Tunnel Hill has defined its future vision that includes:

- A community that provides for a variety of opportunities to live and work in Tunnel Hill
- A community that preserves its historic resources, neighborhoods and unique character
- Future development that supports and preserves its rural and natural setting while also providing for traditional neighborhood development patterns
- Preserving manufacturing jobs while also creating new commercial opportunities



*Historic Tunnel continues to be a focal point of the city and an attraction for both history and railroad buffs*



*Industrial growth and development are possible in the city's Interchange character area provided that public sewer capacity is adequate*

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT						
Sewer Expansion: Jordan St to Main St	2020	X				
Sewer Expansion: Harry Griffin Park	2021	X				
Sewer Expansion: Springhill Drive	2022	X				
Pass a Broadband Ordinance covering the process of providing broadband access to the citizens of Tunnel Hill	2020		2024			
Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance	2020		2025			
Apply for funding through the Broadband Ready Program	2022				X	Funding no longer available
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES						
Historic Train Depot Rehabilitation	2020	X				
Adopt GA DNR “Part V” Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas.	2019				X	City is focused on increasing sewer accessibility as a means to address ground and surface water quality
LAND USE						

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require inter-parcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path systems with new development.	2021	X				

## Needs and Opportunities

### Economic Development: The need or opportunity is to:

- ED1** Promote and invest into efforts to improve accessibility to high speed broadband for both commercial and residential users in areas of low population density
- ED2** Broadband speeds and availability can be improved through partnerships with providers and participation in Georgia's Broadband Ready program.

### Transportation: The need or opportunity is to:

- T1** To improve walkability and connectivity throughout town, and to parks and key community features, additional sidewalks are needed.

### Community Facilities and Services: The need or opportunity is to:

- CF1** As community interest in racquet sports increases, improvements are needed to aging courts.
- CF2** Park safety improvements are needed to support continued and increased usage.
- CF3** Expanding public sewer availability would provide additional opportunities for business and housing in the vicinity

### Land Use: The need or opportunity is to:

- LU1** Improve usability and access to land use tools.

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
	Pass a Broadband Ordinance covering the process of providing broadband access to the citizens of Tunnel Hill	X					\$1,000	Staff time Legal Fees	City Manager NWGRC
	Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance		X				\$1,000	Staff time Legal Fees	City Manager NWGRC
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>									
	Varnell Road sidewalks from Spring Hill Drive to Main Street.	X	X				\$50,000	SPLOST General Fund	City Manager
	Sidewalks from Cherry Street to School Street				X	X	\$75,000	SPLOST General Fund	City Manager
	Sidewalks connecting Tunnel Hill Depot to Main St.			X	X		\$30,000	SPLOST General Fund	City Manager
	Sidewalks connecting School Street to 41 Highway				X	X	\$50,000	SPLOST General Fund	City Manager
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>									



# Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

## COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

### CITY OF TUNNEL HILL

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Tennis and Pickleball court rehabilitation and redesign			X	X		\$75,000	LWCF Matching Funds	City Manager
	City Park fencing		X	X			\$25,000	LWCF Matching Funds	City Manager
	Sewer expansion to Regal Drive	X	X				\$100,000	SPLOST Grant Funds	City Manager
	Sewer Expansion to Mt. View Drive		X	X			\$750,000	SPLOST Grant Funds	City Manager
	Sewer Expansion to Bonifacious Road				X	X	\$1,000,000	SPLOST Grant Funds	City Manager
	Sewer expansion to Old Lake Road			X	X		\$400,000	SPLOST Grant Funds	City Manager
<b>LAND USE</b>									
	Digitize the City Zoning Map	X					\$50	General Funds	NWGRC City Manager

## City of Varnell

### Vision Statement

Like Tunnel Hill and the other cities in Whitfield County, Varnell has identified its future vision that buildings on the collective county vision. Varnell's community vision includes:

- A community where development is guided by land use plans take into account existing/proposed utility infrastructure and the protection of watersheds
- A community offering a variety of neighborhood connections such as sidewalks, greenway trails and bike lanes
- A clean and aesthetically appealing community
- Providing cultural activities and educational opportunities to both residents and tourists visiting the area
- Development that is tied to the historic and rural character of the area



*Sidewalks and greenway connections will continue to improve Varnell's walkability and improve access to some of the city's natural and cultural assets*



*Undeveloped land still exists within Varnell's city limits creating opportunities for new development*

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### CITY OF VARNELL

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT						
Pay off capitalization debt	2020	X				
Pass a Broadband Ordinance covering the process of providing broadband access to the citizens of Varnell	2020	X				
Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program, with its adopted ordinance	2020		2024			
Apply for funding through the Broadband Ready Program	2022				X	No funding available
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES						
Replace maintenance building	2021				X	Lack of funds
Add dog park	2020			X		
Renovate ball field area	2021			X		
Improve playground at peacock alley	2021		X			
Add sidewalks to springs area to connect the Main Street picnic shelter to the road behind the community center	2021			X		
Pave spring parking lot	2022				X	Stormwater runoff issues

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2019-2023

#### CITY OF VARNELL

WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY	YEAR	STATUS				Explanation if postponed or dropped
		Complete	Underway; Projected Completion Date	Postponed	Dropped	
Sanitation truck to replace existing model	2023	X				
Identify new park land for small neighborhood parks in Emerging Suburban areas along with green space preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails.	2021				X	Other park projects have taken priority
Add parking cover for city vehicles	2020				X	Will be achieved by new maintenance and police building
<b>LAND USE</b>						
Land acquisition of two remaining lots adjacent to existing city property on main street for future expansion	2021			2025		
Add additional facilities to track area such as a splash pad and pavilion large enough for approximately 100 guests	2021			2028		
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>						
PURCHASE 5 POLICE CAR/EQUIPMENT	2020-2023		2024			

## Needs and Opportunities

### Economic Development: The need or opportunity is to:

- ED1** Broadband speeds and availability can be improved through partnerships with providers and participation in Georgia's Broadband Ready program

### Community Facilities and Services: The need or opportunity is to:

- CF1** There is a need to expand recreational offerings and facilities to serve the growing City population. This includes adding new parks, renovating and improving equipment and facilities at existing parks, fields, and playgrounds, and adding facilities to existing parks
- CF2** A new public safety and maintenance building is needed due to the city's growth. The city will also add new police vehicles and equipment in phases over the next five year period
- CF3** The city's solid waste services are expanding and new vehicles are needed
- CF4** Expansion of wastewater service to serve new areas is needed
- CF5** To improve walkability and connectivity to parks and community facilities, additional sidewalks are needed
- CF6** Expansion of city facilities is needed to support future needs



## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### CITY OF VARNELL

Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>									
	Adopt the Broadband Ready Community Program ordinance	X					\$1,000	Legal Fees and staff time	City Manager
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>									
	Varnell Park	X	X	X	X	X	\$1,500,000	SPLOST Grants	City Manager
	New maintenance and police operations building			X	X		\$600,000	SPLOST	Public Works
	New Garbage Truck					X	\$450,000	General Fund	City Manager
	Add two police cars to account for city growth				X	X	\$130,000	General Fund	Police Dept.
	Marla Drive sewer expansion		X	X			\$300,000	SPLOST Grant	City Manager
	Playground equipment expansion at City Hall Park	X	X	X			\$50,000	SPLOST	City Manager

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

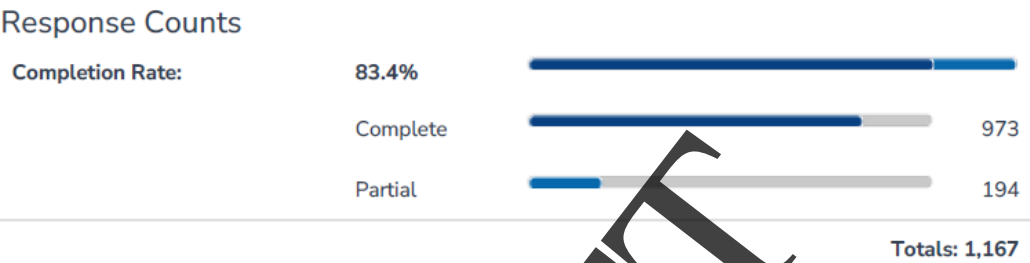
### COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM, 2024-2028

#### CITY OF VARNELL

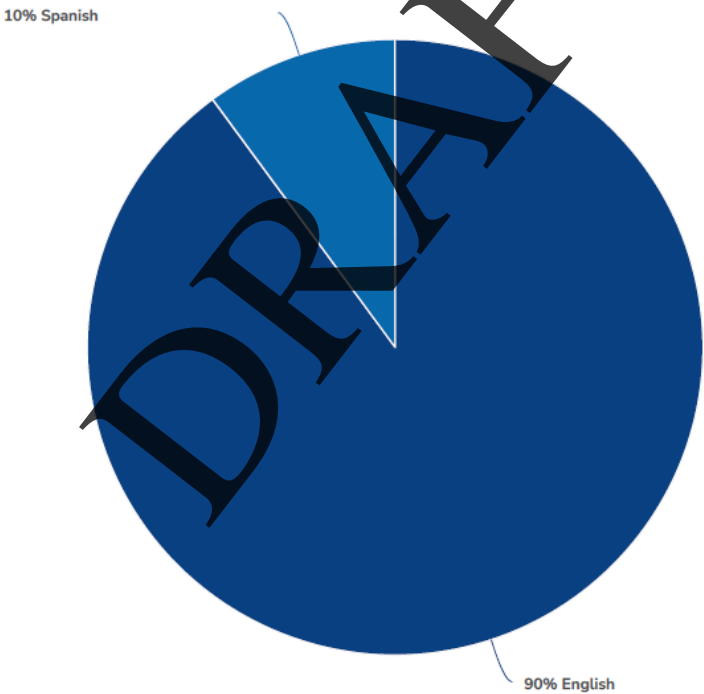
Need/ Opportunity Code:	Activity Description	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Cost Estimate	Funding Source	Responsible Party
	Add dog park	X	X				\$20,000	LWCF SPLOST	City Manager
	Renovate ball field area	X	X	X			\$250,000	SPLOST LWCF	City Manager
	Improve playground equipment at peacock alley	X	X				\$100,000	SPLOST LWCF	City Manager
	Add sidewalks to springs area to connect the Main Street picnic shelter to the road behind the community center		X	X			\$30,000	SPLOST RTP	City Manager
	Land acquisition of two remaining lots adjacent to existing city property on main street for future expansion			X			\$250,000	SPLOST	City Manager
	Add additional facilities to track area such as a splash pad and pavilion large enough for approximately 100 guests				X	X	\$100,000	SPLOST	City Manager
	Purchase 5 police cars+equipment	X					\$60,000	SPLOST General Fund	Police Dept.

# APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY VISION SURVEY

## Report for Whitfield County Community Vision Survey



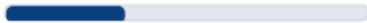
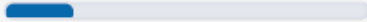
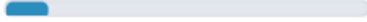
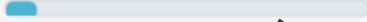
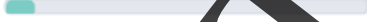
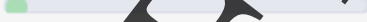
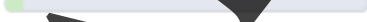
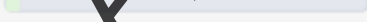
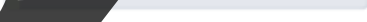
1. Which language?



Value	Percent	Responses
English	89.9%	1,043
Spanish	10.1%	117
Totals: 1,160		


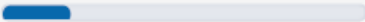
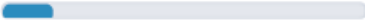
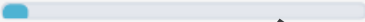
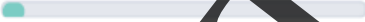
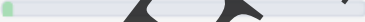
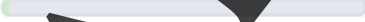
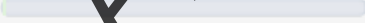
## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

2. Which community best describes where you live? (Check only one)

Value	Percent	Responses
City of Dalton	33.1% 	320
North Whitfield County	19.2% 	186
South Whitfield County	11.5% 	111
Another county; List Other County	9.4% 	91
West Whitfield County	8.1% 	78
City of Varnell	6.2% 	60
City of Tunnel Hill	5.3% 	51
Town of Cohutta	3.8% 	37
East Whitfield County	3.5% 	34

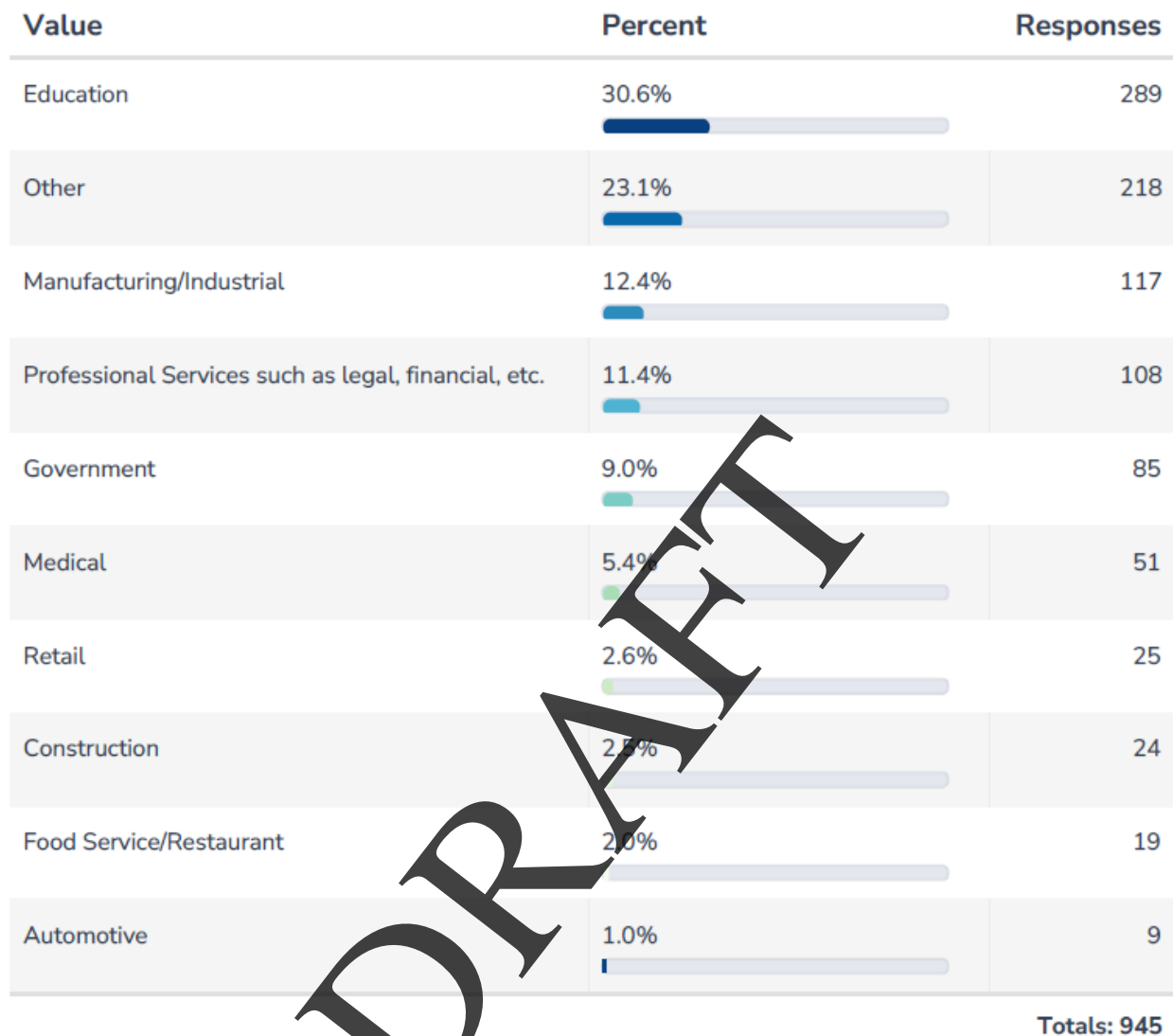
Totals: 968

## 3. In what community do you work? (Check only one)

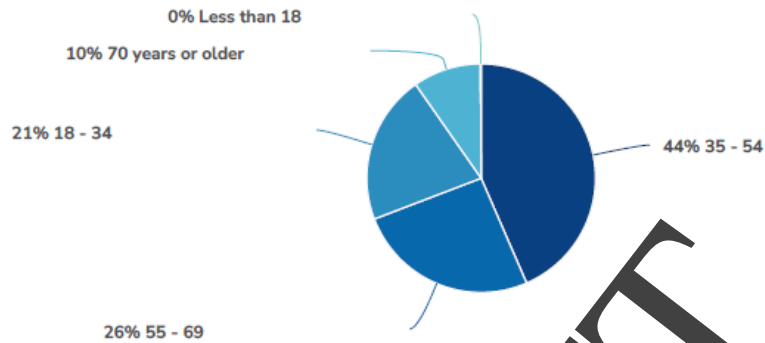
Value	Percent	Responses
City of Dalton	48.1% 	464
Unincorporated Whitfield County	19.1% 	184
Retired or otherwise not working	13.7% 	132
Work from home	6.6% 	64
Another county; List other county	5.8% 	56
City of Varnell	3.4% 	33
City of Tunnel Hill	1.9% 	18
Town of Cohutta	1.3% 	13
		<b>Totals: 964</b>



## 4. What best describes your employment?

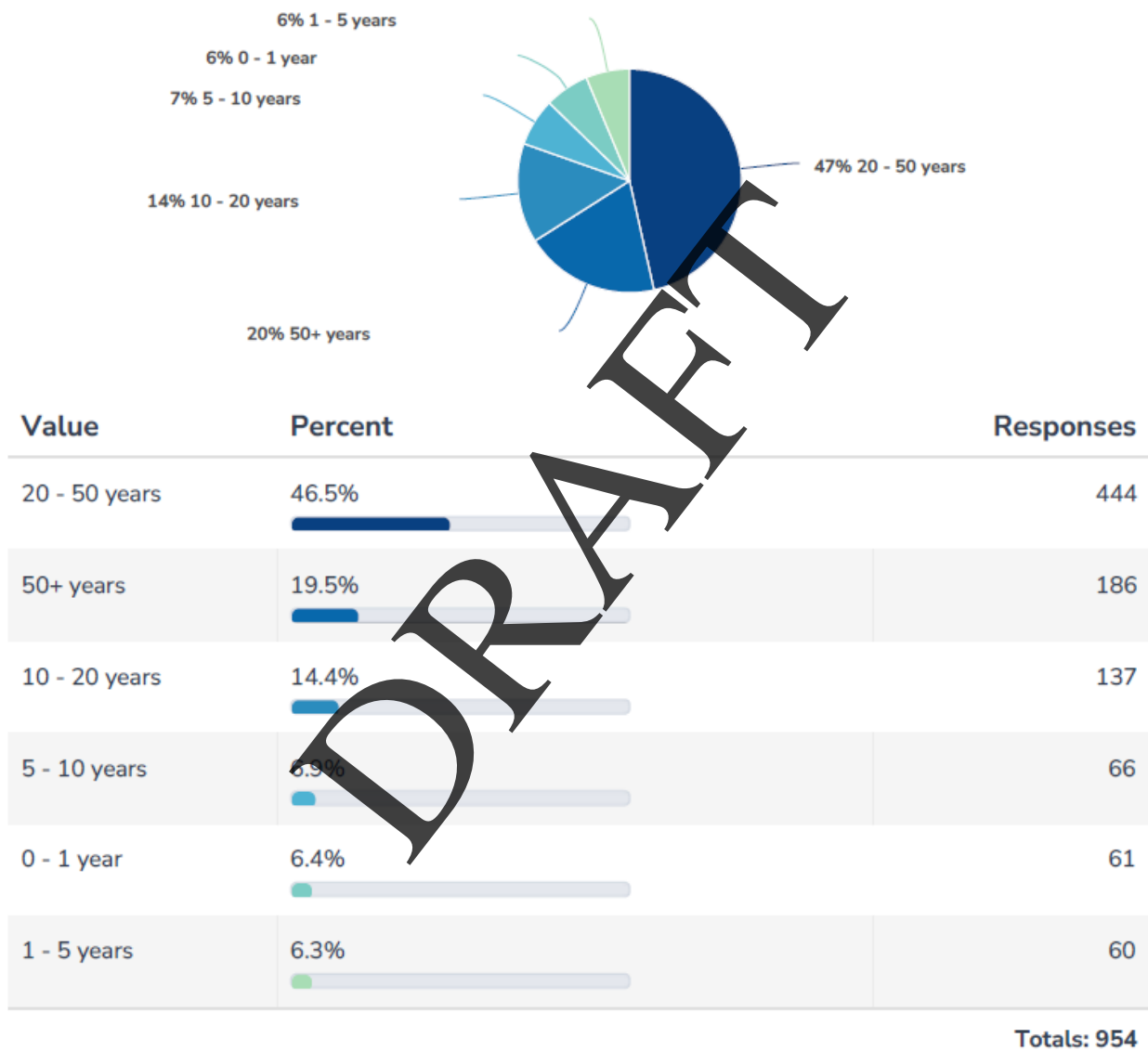


5. What is your age? (Check only one)


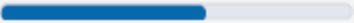


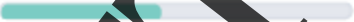
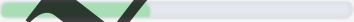

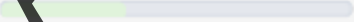
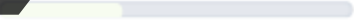
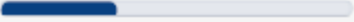
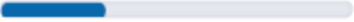
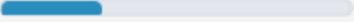
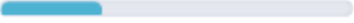
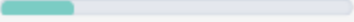
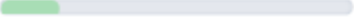
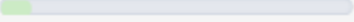


Value	Percent	Responses
35 - 54	43.5%	420
55 - 69	25.7%	248
18 - 34	21.1%	204
70 years or older	9.6%	93
Less than 18	0.1%	1
		Totals: 966

## 6. How long have you lived in Whitfield County? (Check only one)



7. What do you like about Whitfield County (including the cities)? (Check all that apply)

Value	Percent	Responses
Small town atmosphere	64.2% 	614
Local businesses and restaurants	59.4% 	568
Scenic views and natural wildlife assets	51.4% 	491
Friendly and helpful neighbors	48.2% 	461
Public schools and libraries	46.0% 	440
Good EMS, fire and police protection	43.2% 	413
Outdoor activities (fishing, hiking, paddling, etc.)	42.9% 	410
Access to hospital facilities	35.9% 	343
Cultural diversity	35.1% 	336
Accessible public buildings and parks	32.6% 	312
Many neighborhood churches	30.4% 	291
Lots of active recreation (sports-related)	28.8% 	275
Educational opportunities (post high school)	28.7% 	274
Career opportunities	20.5% 	196
Philanthropy	16.8% 	161
Variety of housing choices	8.9% 	85

## 8. What don't you like about Whitfield County (including the cities)? (Check all that apply)

Value	Percent	Responses
Blight and unkept properties	43.2%	412
Not enough housing options	37.9%	361
Lack of entertainment for all ages	37.3%	355
Not enough major retail stores	35.3%	336
Limited public transportation	32.0%	305
Young professionals leaving	30.8%	294
Lack of sidewalks/bike lanes	29.1%	277
Lack of job diversity	25.8%	246
Poor access to high-speed internet broadband	25.8%	246
Not enough good jobs	23.9%	228
Not enough local stores and restaurants	23.7%	226
Too much litter	23.5%	224
Loss of scenic views and natural areas to growth	23.3%	222
Lack of growth	22.6%	215
Concerns over local schools	20.6%	196
Lack of public sewer	19.8%	189
Too much development	18.4%	175
Lack of diversity in community involvement	16.6%	158
Too much traffic	16.5%	157
Inadequate public services	10.4%	99



9. What types of management actions would you support for future development? (Check all that apply)

Value	Percent	Responses
Agricultural and forest conservation	50.7%	464
Provide sidewalks/bike lanes	44.7%	409
Limiting mountain slope development	30.1%	275
Stronger land use regulations/zoning	28.9%	264
Limiting development in floodplains	24.0%	220
Lower density in planned rural areas	23.9%	219
Requiring stream buffers	21.0%	200
Acquisition of land for public uses	21.5%	197
Growth limitation boundaries	18.0%	165
Higher density in planned city areas	15.5%	142
Limiting total annual development	13.9%	127
None	11.0%	101
Higher density in planned rural areas	8.2%	75

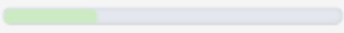

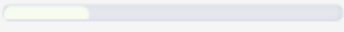
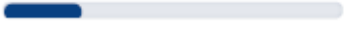

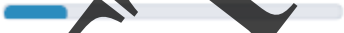
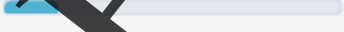
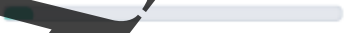
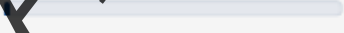
10. What type of housing are you interested in seeing developed in your community? (Check all that apply)

Value	Percent	Responses
Workforce/affordable housing	53.4%	505
More housing catering to the needs of retirees and /or seniors	38.4%	363
Owner-occupied homes with large lots	36.2%	342
More rental housing options	24.6%	233
Townhouses/Condos	23.8%	225
Assisted living/long-term care facilities	21.9%	199
High-end housing developments	16.1%	152
Large planned subdivisions	15.8%	149
More apartments	14.2%	134
None	13.2%	125

### 11. What types of projects would you support to make Whitfield County better place? (Check all that apply)

Value	Percent	Responses
Improvements to transportation infrastructure such as: roads, intersections, street lighting, etc.	50.2%	478
Removal of blighted buildings for new development	49.5%	472
Invest in beautifying highways such as Walnut Avenue, Glenwood Avenue, and Cleveland Highway	46.6%	444
Invest into the downtowns to preserve historic landmarks, improve walkability, increase parking, etc.	44.7%	426
Projects aimed at improving education	43.2%	412
Protect more scenic open spaces and woodlands	42.9%	409
Increase and improve public water and sewer infrastructure	42.0%	400
Improve high speed internet broadband access throughout county	39.8%	379
Preserve more farms & agricultural land	39.6%	377
Better access to behavioral health treatment	39.5%	376
Recruit more local businesses	39.2%	374
Improvements in public parks such as: parking, trails, signs, and other amenities	35.6%	339
More sidewalks and bike lanes	34.3%	327
Increase outdoor recreation	32.9%	314
Recruit more commercial retail and dining businesses	30.7%	293

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

Value	Percent	Responses
Invest in and improve public safety	28.1% 	268
Enhanced public transportation program	27.8% 	265
Incentives for new housing development	24.7% 	235
Increase number of free public Wifi locations	23.4% 	223
More strict land use ordinances to control future growth	22.6% 	215
Increase efforts to promote tourism	19.0% 	181
Recruit more industrial and manufacturing companies	16.4% 	156
More community owned industrial parks	8.9% 	85
None of the above	1.8% 	17

12. In your opinion, what is the most significant issue to Whitfield County and its four municipalities? (Check only one)

Value	Percent	Responses
Not enough housing options	13.0%	122
Not enough good jobs	11.0%	103
Young professionals leaving	9.2%	86
Blight and unkept properties	8.9%	83
Lack of growth	7.5%	70
Too much development	7.5%	70
Lack of job diversity	5.4%	51
Lack of entertainment for all ages	4.3%	40
Concerns over local schools	4.2%	39
Poor access to high-speed internet broadband	4.1%	38
Too much traffic	3.7%	35
Loss of scenic views and natural areas to growth	3.3%	31
Lack of public sewer	3.1%	29
Limited public transportation	3.1%	29
Not enough local stores and restaurants	2.7%	25
Not enough major retail stores	2.7%	25
Too much litter	2.0%	19
Lack of sidewalks/bike lanes	1.7%	16
Lack of diversity in community involvement	1.5%	14
Inadequate public services	1.2%	11

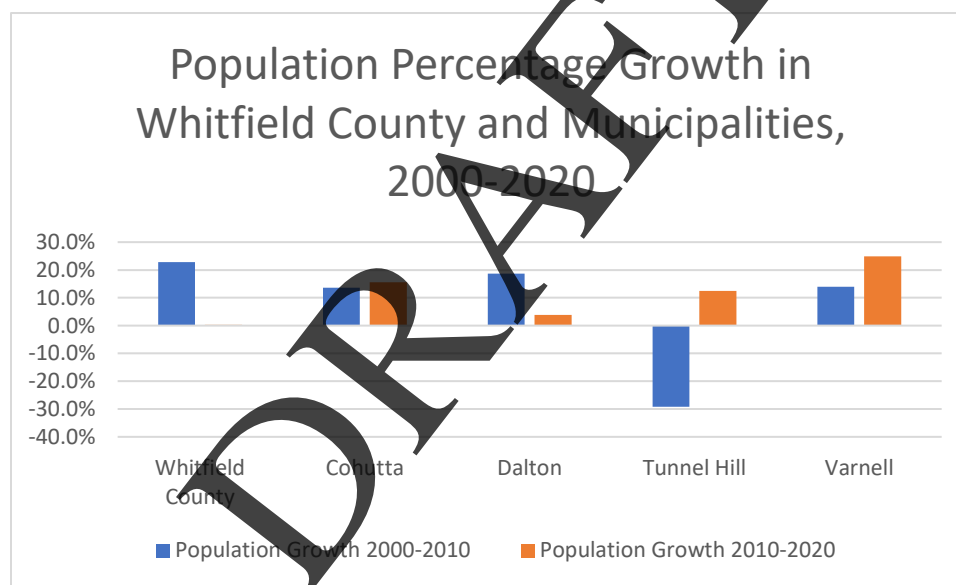
Totals: 936



## APPENDIX B: POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

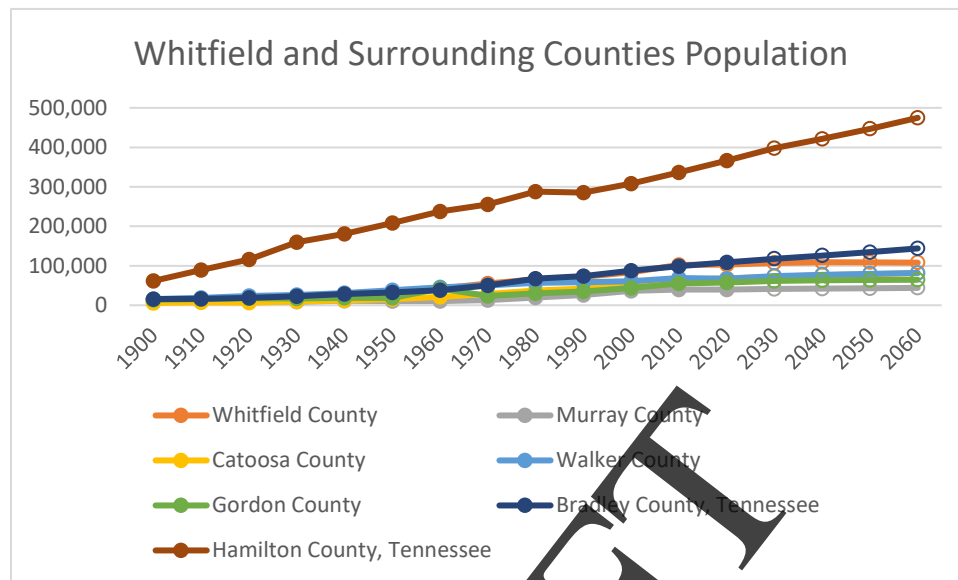
### Population

Whitfield County, Georgia is part of the fifteen-county Northwest Georgia Regional Commission planning region. Murray County is located to the east, Walker County is located to the southwest, Murray County is located to the west, Gordon County is located to the south, Bradley County, Tennessee is located to the north, and Hamilton County, Tennessee is located to the northwest. The county is approximately 291 square miles in area and has a population of 102,864 according to the 2020 Census. There are four municipalities in the county, Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell. Cohutta is 4.92 square miles and has a population of 764. Dalton is 21.16 square miles and has a population of 34,417. Tunnel Hill is 1.98 square miles and has a population of 963. Varnell is 3.83 square miles and has a population of 2,179.



*Population Growth in Whitfield County and its Municipalities Between 2000 and 2020. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census Official Publications, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/decennial-publications.2020.html>; "Table P1: Race," <https://data.census.gov>*

Whitfield County and all four municipalities experienced population growth between 2010 and 2020. This growth ranged from Whitfield County's 0.3% to Varnell's 24.9%. Three of the four municipalities experienced larger population growth between 2010 and 2020 than between 2000 and 2010. These three were Cohutta, which went from 13.6% growth to 15.6% growth, Tunnel Hill, which went from a 29.2% decline to 12.5% growth, and Varnell, which went from 13.9% growth to 24.9% growth. The county declined from 22.8% growth to 0.3% growth while Dalton went from 18.7% growth to 3.9% growth.



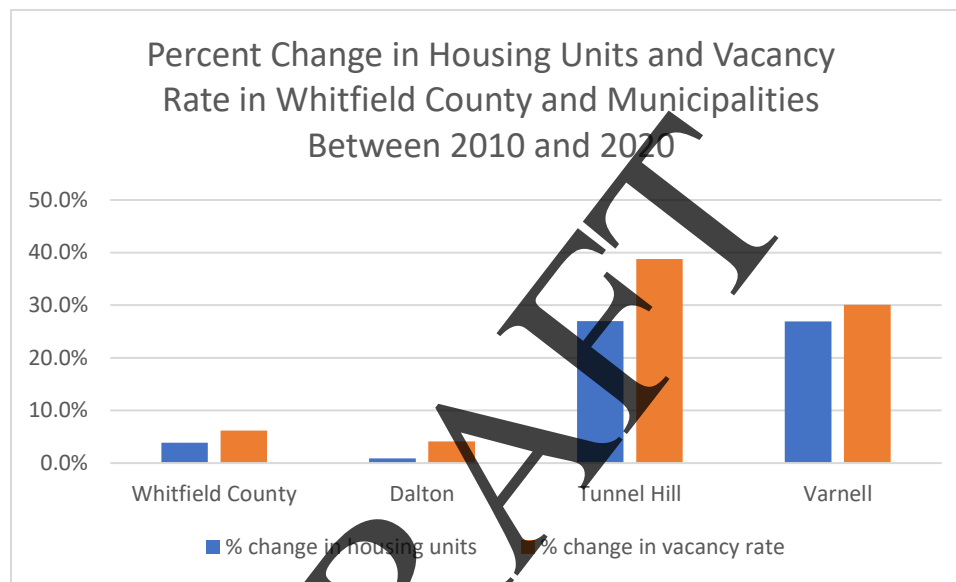
Population of Whitfield and adjacent Counties from the US Census 1900 Decennial count through 2020, followed by population projections from the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2021 projections and population projections from the University of Tennessee Knoxville, 2022 projections. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census Official Publications, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/decennial-publications.2020.html>, Table P1: Race, <https://data.census.gov>, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, <https://opb.georgia.gov/census-data/population-projections>, and Boyd Center Population Projections, <https://tnsdc.utk.edu/estimates-and-projections/boyd-center-population-projections/>

Whitfield and all neighboring counties are expected to increase in population between 2020 and 2060. Hamilton, Bradley, and Walker counties are expected to have the largest increases numerically at 108,570, 35,291, and 14,239, respectively. Murray, Whitfield, and Gordon counties are expected to have the smallest increases numerically at 4,083, 5,171, and 7,029, respectively.

## Housing

According to the 2016-2020 5-year American Community Survey (ACS), there are 40,236 housing units in Whitfield County, of which 253 are in Cohutta, 13,250 are in Dalton, 419 are in Tunnel Hill, and 702 are in Varnell.

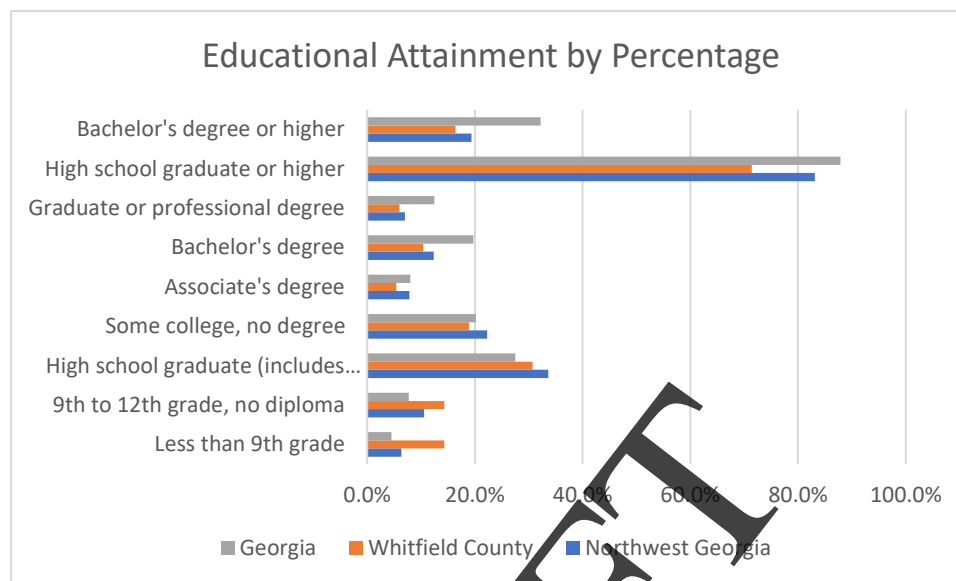
The vacancy rate in Whitfield County is 9.5%. Dalton is the only municipality that has a higher vacancy rate at 11.1%. Tunnel Hill has the lowest vacancy rate at 1.0%.



*Housing Units and Vacancy Rate in 2010 and 2020, Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, "Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics," <https://data.census.gov>*

Whitfield County and the three municipalities for which 2010 data could be located experienced an increase in both housing units and vacancy rates between 2010 and 2020 according to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2016-2020 ACS. 2010 data for Cohutta was not located, so it is unknown how its housing situation has changed in the past decade. Whitfield County and Dalton had small increases in housing and vacancy rates while Tunnel Hill and Varnell had large increases.

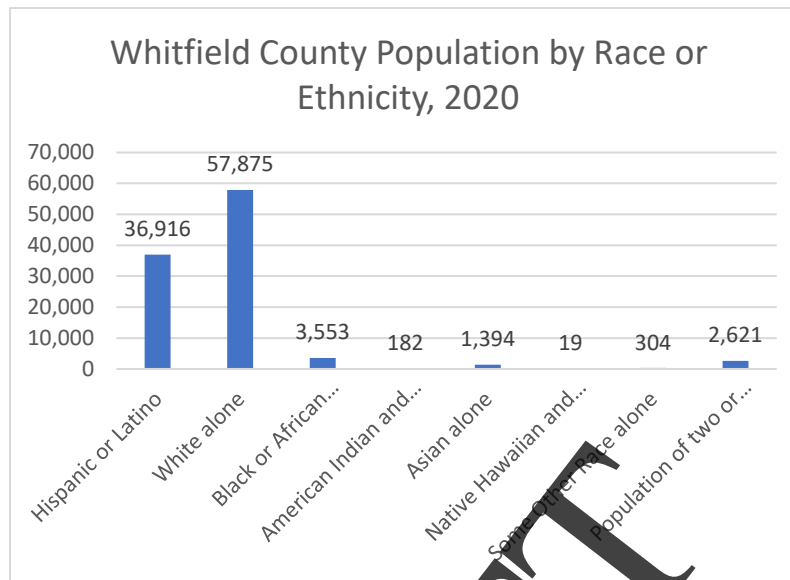
## Education



*Educational attainment comparisons for Whitfield County, Northwest Georgia, and Georgia levels for those 25 and older. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, "Table DP02. Selected Social Characteristics." <http://data.census.gov/>*

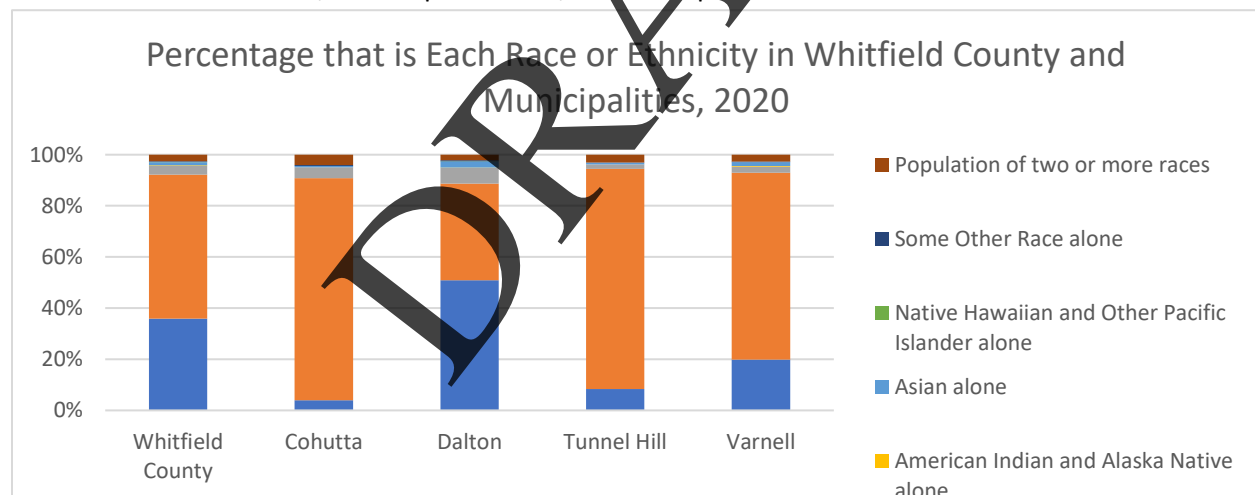
Educational attainment is important for each community of the Northwest Georgia region, as it provides for greater employment opportunities, attracts businesses, and increases the overall contentment of residents. Whitfield County has significantly lower levels of education than both the region and the state, having more people with less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade education or between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade than either the state or the region and having less people with a high school degree, less people with some college, less people with an associate's degree, less people with a bachelor's degree, and less people with a graduate or professional degree. This leaves the county less attractive than the Northwest Georgia region and the state of Georgia in terms of attracting employers that are looking for an educated workforce.

## Race and Ethnicity



Population of Whitfield County and Municipalities by Race or Ethnicity. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, "Table P2: Hispanic or Latino." <https://data.census.gov>

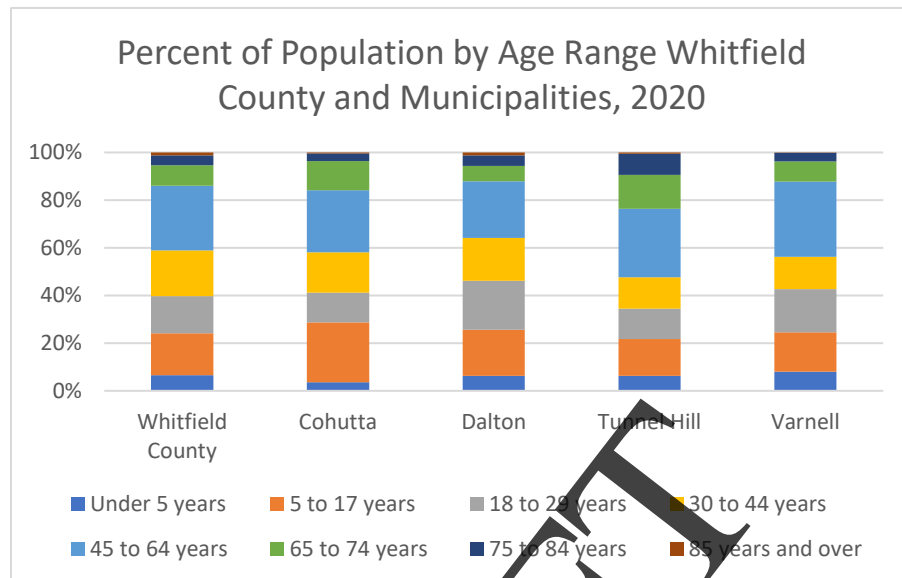
A small majority of the people in Whitfield County are non-Hispanic White. Hispanic or Latino people make up most of the rest of the residents of the county. Smaller portions of the county are non-Hispanic Black or African American, non-Hispanic Asian, or non-Hispanic and of two or more races.



Percentage of Each Race and Ethnicity in Whitfield County and Municipalities by Race or Ethnicity. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, "Table P2: Hispanic or Latino." <https://data.census.gov>

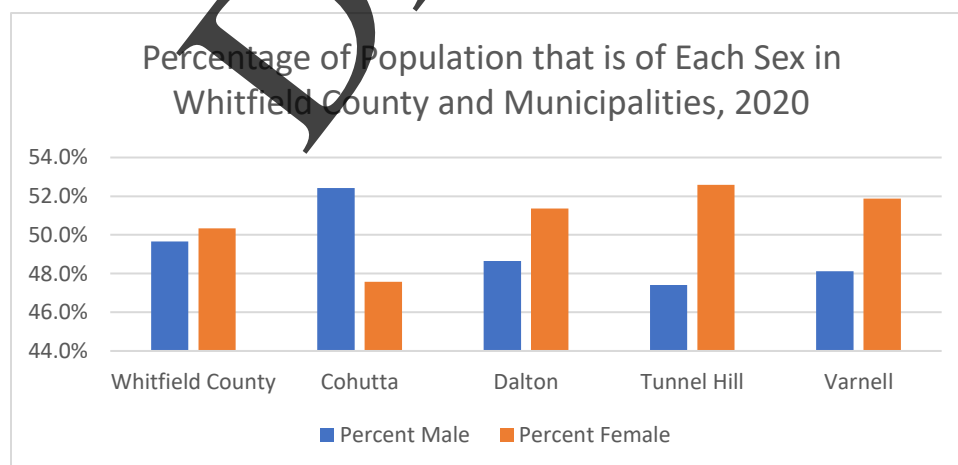
Just like with the county, three of Whitfield County's four municipalities have majority non-Hispanic White populations. Cohutta, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell have more than 70% non-Hispanic White populations, even more than the 56.3% figure for the county. As a result, their Hispanic populations are significantly smaller at 3.9%, 8.3%, and 19.9%, respectively, compared to the county's 35.9%. Dalton has significantly larger percentage of the population that is Hispanic and a significantly smaller percentage of the population that is non-Hispanic White at 50.8% and 37.9%, respectively.

## Age and Sex



Age of Population in Whitfield County and Municipalities, 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, "Table S0101: Age and Sex." <https://data.census.gov>

Most of the population in Whitfield County is between 5 and 64 years old. The largest share of any one age group is 45-64 at 27.7% of the population. Tunnel Hill has a significantly larger percentage of the population that is 65 or older than the county at 23.7% compared to 13.9% for the county. This is due to having a significantly larger share of the population between 65 and 84 at 23.1% compared to the county's 13.0%. Cohutta has a significantly larger share of the population that is between 5 and 17 at 25.1% compared to the county's 18.0%.

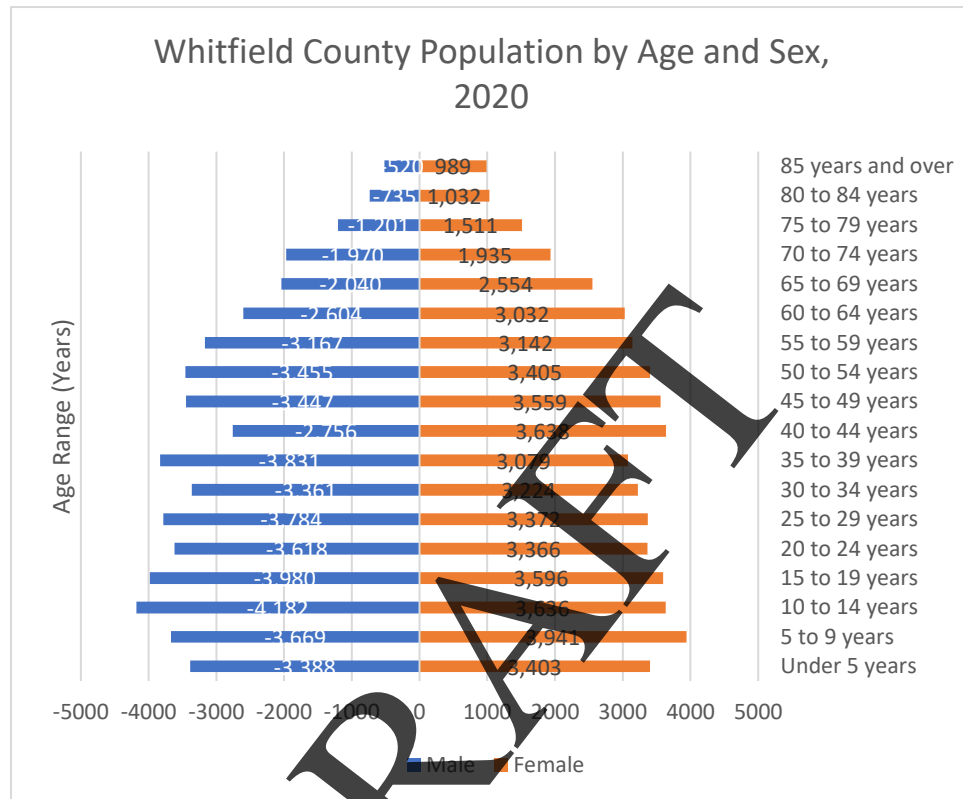


Percentage of the Population of Whitfield County and Municipalities that is of Each Sex, 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table S0101. Age and Sex." <http://data.census.gov>



## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028

The population of Whitfield County is almost entirely split evenly between men and women, 49.7% are male and 50.3% are female. Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell have larger shares of the population that are female at 51.4%, 52.6%, and 51.9%. Cohutta has a majority male population at 52.4%.



*Whitfield County Population by Age and Sex, 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table S0101. Age and Sex." <http://data.census.gov>*

The data indicates that there is currently a healthy balance between the sexes at most age ranges in Whitfield County, with only the 40-44 age range having a noticeable gap. The chart indicates that aging is not currently a large problem in the county and is unlikely to be a serious problem in the next few decades given the relatively even spread across all 5-year intervals before age 65.

## Economics

### Income

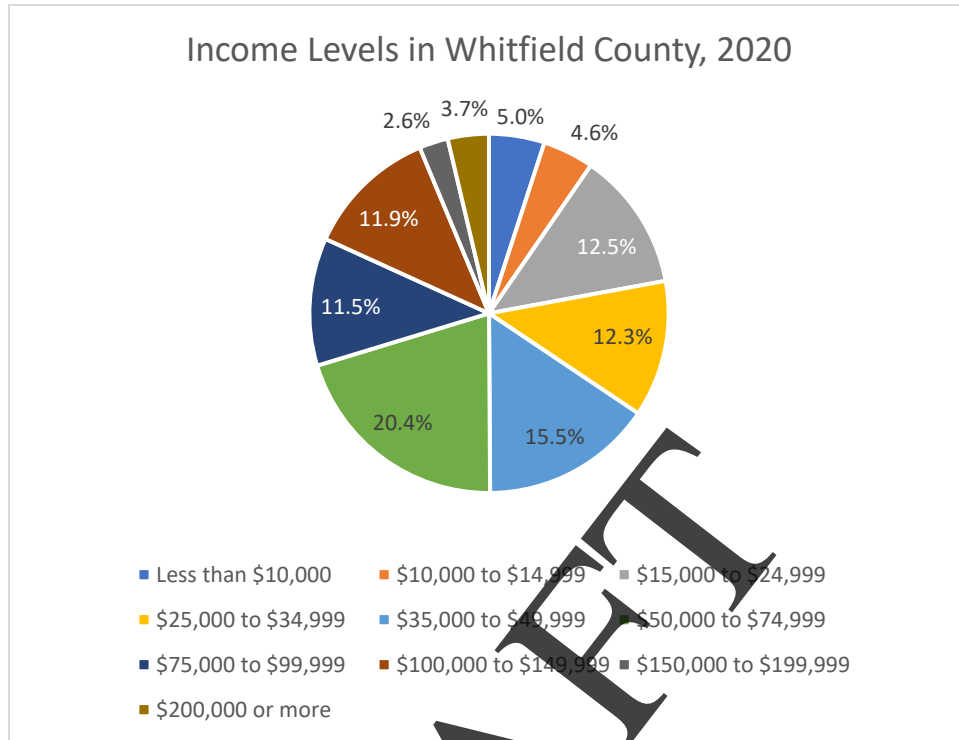
According to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the mean household income level in Whitfield County is \$67,316 and the per-capita income is \$24,361.

#### *Median Household Income Levels*

<u>Location</u>	<u>Median Income</u>
Whitfield County, Georgia	50,055
Murray County, Georgia	51,133
Catoosa County, Georgia	58,932
Walker County, Georgia	46,601
Gordon County, Georgia	48,662
Bradley County, Tennessee	51,872
Hamilton County, Tennessee	58,606
Cohutta city, Georgia	52,396
Dalton city, Georgia	46,894
Tunnel Hill city, Georgia	50,859
Varnell city, Georgia	63,693
Georgia	61,224

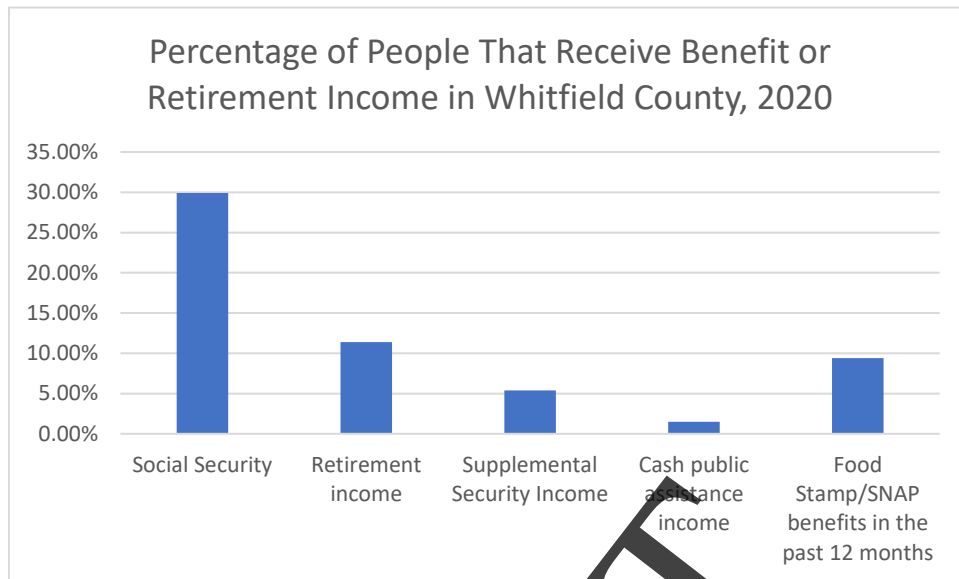
*Median Household Income in Whitfield County, Surrounding Counties, Georgia, and Whitfield County Municipalities, 2016-2020. Source: "Table B19013: Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)." <http://data.census.gov>*

The median household income in Whitfield County is \$50,055, which is higher than two of the seven neighboring counties and lower than the state. Cohutta, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell have higher median household incomes than the county while Dalton has a lower median household income.



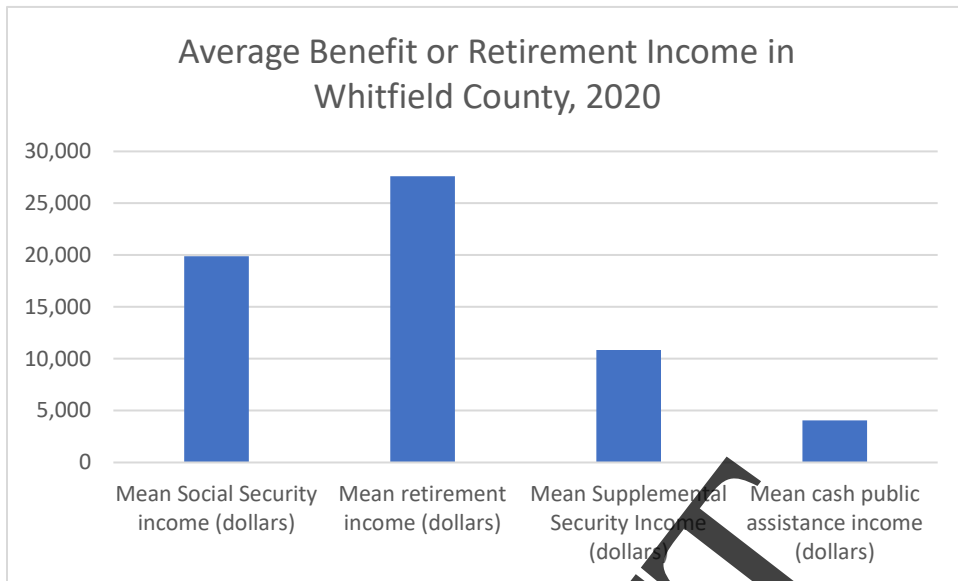
*Income Levels in Whitfield County, 2016-2020. Source: "Table S1901: Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)." <http://data.census.gov>*

The most common income level in Whitfield County is between \$50,000 and \$74,999 at 20.4%. The other common income levels are between \$35,000 and \$49,999 at 15.5%, between \$15,000 and \$24,999 at 12.5%, between \$25,000 and \$34,999 at 12.3%, between \$100,000 and \$149,999 at 11.9%, and between \$75,000 and \$99,999 at 11.5%.



*Percentage of People That Receive Benefit. Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics." <http://data.census.gov>*

The most common form of benefit or retirement income tracked by the American Community Survey in Whitfield County was Social Security at 29.9%. The next most common form was retirement income at 11.4%. Supplemental Security Income and cash public assistance income and food stamp/SNAP benefits were significantly rarer at 5.4% and 1.5%, respectively.



*Percentage of People That Receive Benefit. Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics." <http://data.census.gov>*

The average Social Security and retirement incomes in Whitfield County were \$19,902 and \$27,597, respectively. This is significantly lower than average incomes in the area, even combined, likely indicating reliance on additional forms of income in retirement. Similarly, the even lower \$4,062 average cash public assistance income indicates that it can only act as a supplement to other forms of income.

## Poverty

### *Poverty Income Level*

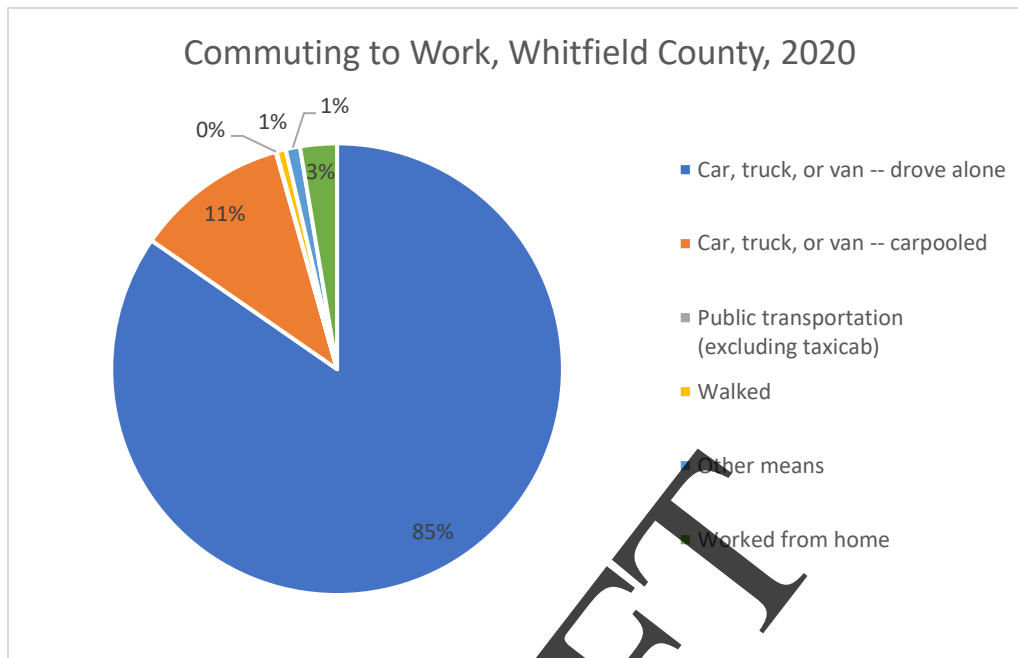
<u>Location</u>	<u>Percent Below Poverty Level</u>
Whitfield County, Georgia	16.20%
Murray County, Georgia	16.00%
Catoosa County, Georgia	9.00%
Walker County, Georgia	15.10%
Gordon County, Georgia	15.90%
Bradley County, Tennessee	15.60%
Hamilton County, Tennessee	12.60%
Cohutta city, Georgia	3.90%
Dalton city, Georgia	20.90%
Tunnel Hill city, Georgia	7.90%
Varnell city, Georgia	8.00%
Georgia	14.30%

*Percentage of People Below Poverty Level in Whitfield County, Municipalities, Surrounding Counties, and Georgia, 2016-2020. Source: "Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months." <http://data.census.gov>*

The poverty rate in Whitfield County is 16.2%, which is higher than all six adjacent counties and the state. The poverty level in Cohutta, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell is lower than the county while the poverty level in Dalton is higher. The poverty rate for people below the age of 18 in Whitfield County is 24.7%.



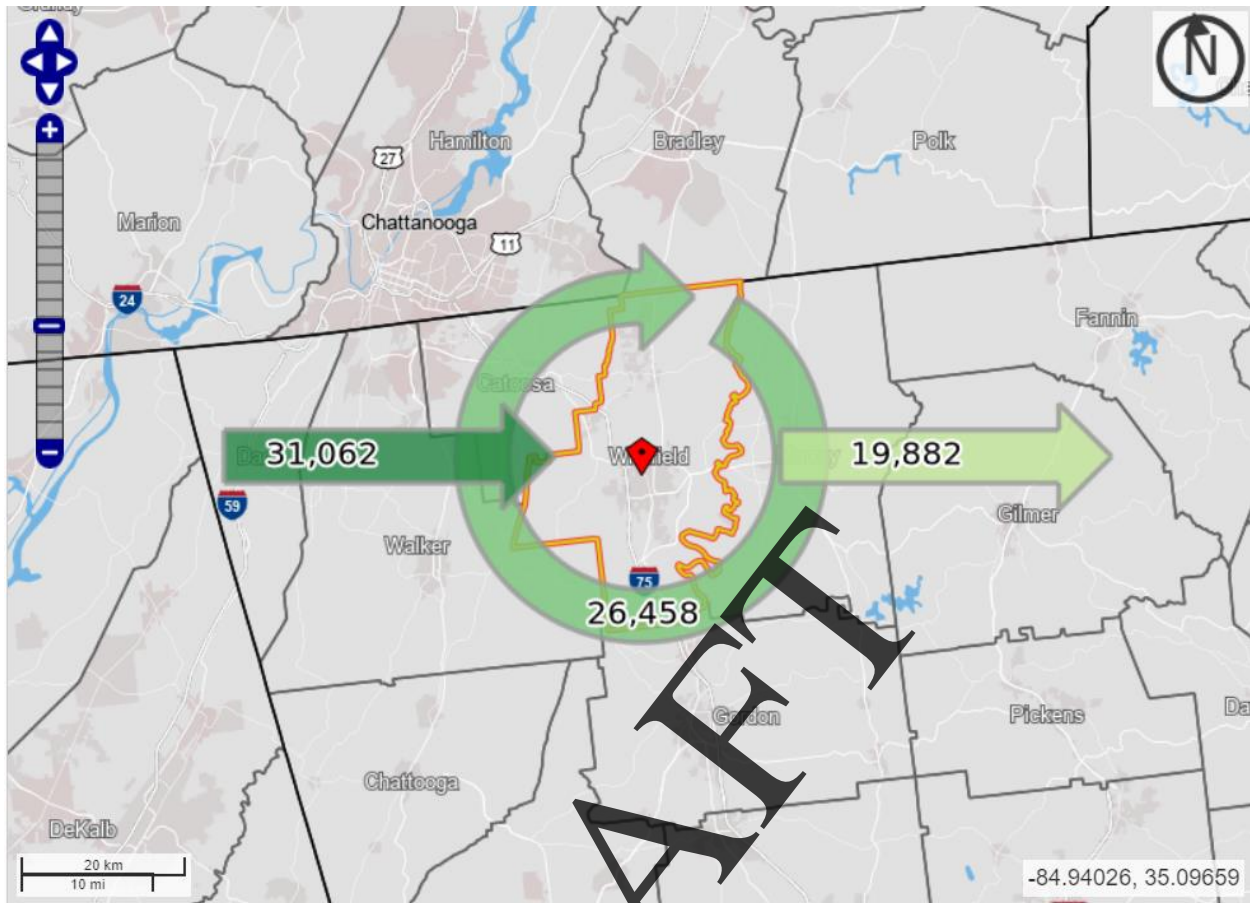
## Commuting



*Commuting to Work, Whitfield County, 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. "Table B08006: Sex of Workers by Means of Transportation to Work."*  
<http://data.census.gov>

85% of workers in Whitfield County commuted solo by car, truck, or van. The other common methods of commuting were carpooling at 11%.

## Whitfield County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2024-2028



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD, On The Map, Whitfield County 2019.  
<https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

26,458 out of 57,520 or 46.0% workers employed in Whitfield County also live in the county while 31,062 or 54.0% live outside the county. 26,458 out of 46,340 or 57.1% of people living in Whitfield County are also employed in the county while 19,882 or 42.9% are employed outside the county.

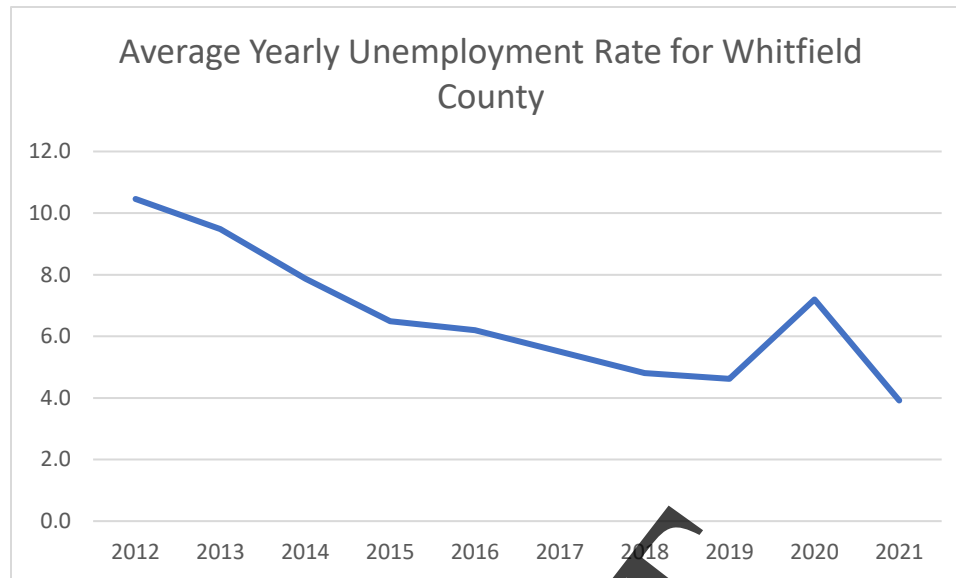
## Employment

### Local Unemployment Rate

<u>Location</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate</u>
Whitfield County, Georgia	6.00%
Murray County, Georgia	6.50%
Catoosa County, Georgia	3.50%
Walker County, Georgia	6.80%
Gordon County, Georgia	3.50%
Bradley County, Tennessee	5.40%
Hamilton County, Tennessee	4.60%
Cohutta city, Georgia	0.00%
Dalton city, Georgia	5.00%
Tunnel Hill city, Georgia	2.50%
Varnell city, Georgia	8.10%
Georgia	5.60%

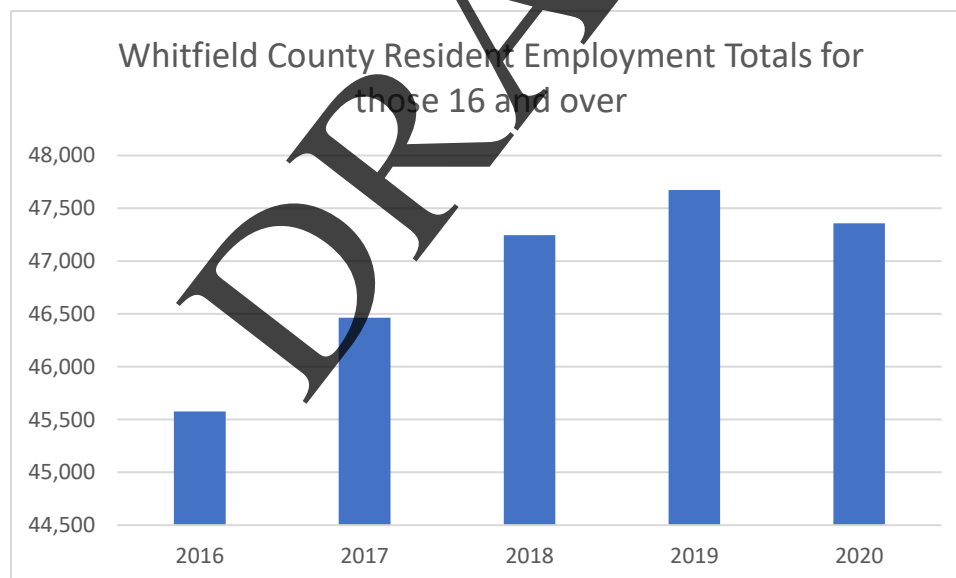
*Local Unemployment Rate. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. "Table S2301: Employment Status," <http://data.census.gov>*

Whitfield County has a higher unemployment rate than four of the six neighboring counties and the state at 6.0%. Cohutta, Dalton, and Tunnel Hill have lower unemployment rates than the county while Varnell has a higher unemployment rate than the county.



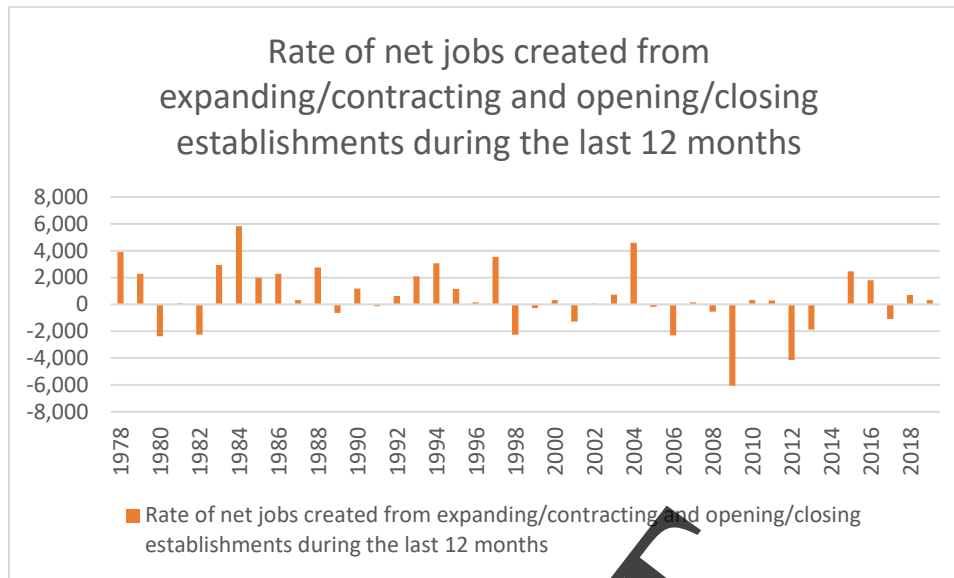
Average Yearly Unemployment Rate for Whitfield County, GA 2012-2021. Source: Whitfield County, GA unemployment - U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LAUCM130150000000003>

Whitfield County's unemployment consistently dropped between 2012 and 2019, went up due to COVID-19 in 2020 before falling below 2019 levels in 2021.



Whitfield County Resident Employment Totals for those 16 and over, 2012-2016 through 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table S2401: Occupation by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over." <http://data.census.gov>

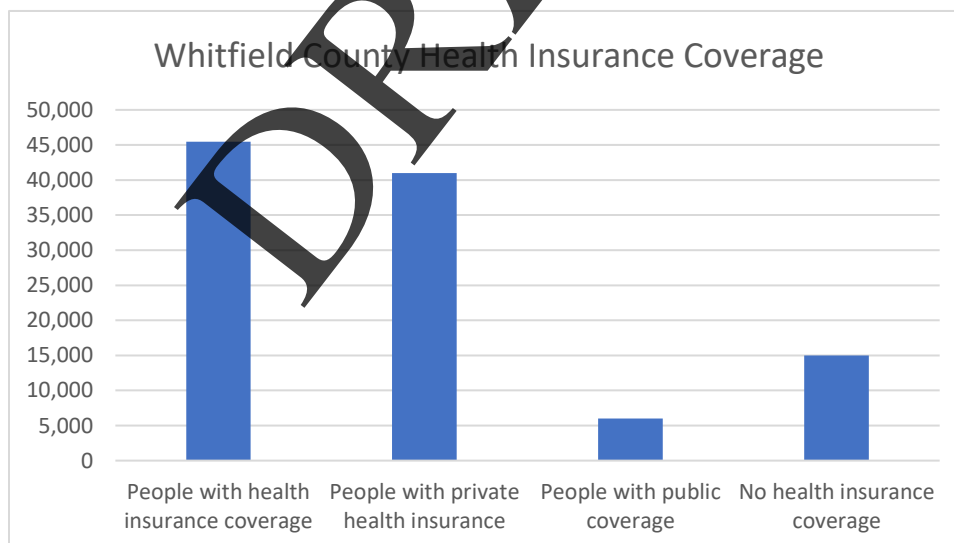
Whitfield County's employment consistently went up between 2016 and 2019, before dropping in 2020. This indicates that the employment situation was healthy before 2020, and it is too soon to tell whether the decline is a temporary decline due to COVID-19 or is a sign of a bigger issue.



Rate of net jobs created from expanding/contracting and opening/closing establishments during the last 12 months in Whitfield County, 1978-2019. Source: US Census Bureau, Economic Business Dynamics Statistics, <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/bds/data/>

For the most part, the rate of net jobs created in Whitfield County has been positive. The main exceptions have been 1980, 1982, 1998, 2006, 2009, and 2012.

## Health Insurance



Health Insurance Coverage. Source: "Table B27011: Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type by Employment Status." <http://data.census.gov>

Most people in Whitfield County have health insurance coverage. Most health insurance coverage comes from private sources.

## APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION DOCUMENTATION

DRAFT



DRAFT