

Northeast Georgia Regional Plan

Update 2018

Planning & Government Services Division
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission



Area Agency on Aging
Local Government Services
Planning
Workforce Development



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Phone 706.369.5650
James R. Dove, Executive Director

February 27, 2018

Mr. Brian Johnson
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Office of Planning and Environmental Management
60 Executive Park South, NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

Re: Regional Plan Submittal

Dear Mr. Johnson:

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission has completed an update of its regional plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the two required public hearings and have involved regional stakeholders in development of the annual update in a manner appropriate to our region's dynamics and resources and in accordance with the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, Chapter 110-12-6. Evidence of the public hearings has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have, at a minimum, reviewed the Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, The Upper Oconee, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Plans, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the MACORTS, Gainesville-Hall, and Atlanta Regional Commission's Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Plans and The CSRA, Georgia Mountains, Middle Georgia, Atlanta Regional, and Three Rivers regional commissions' regional plans and taken them into consideration in formulating our update.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services, at (706) 369-5650 or bwalker@negrc.org.

Sincerely,

James R. Dove
Executive Director

Enclosures
JD/BW:jab

Contents

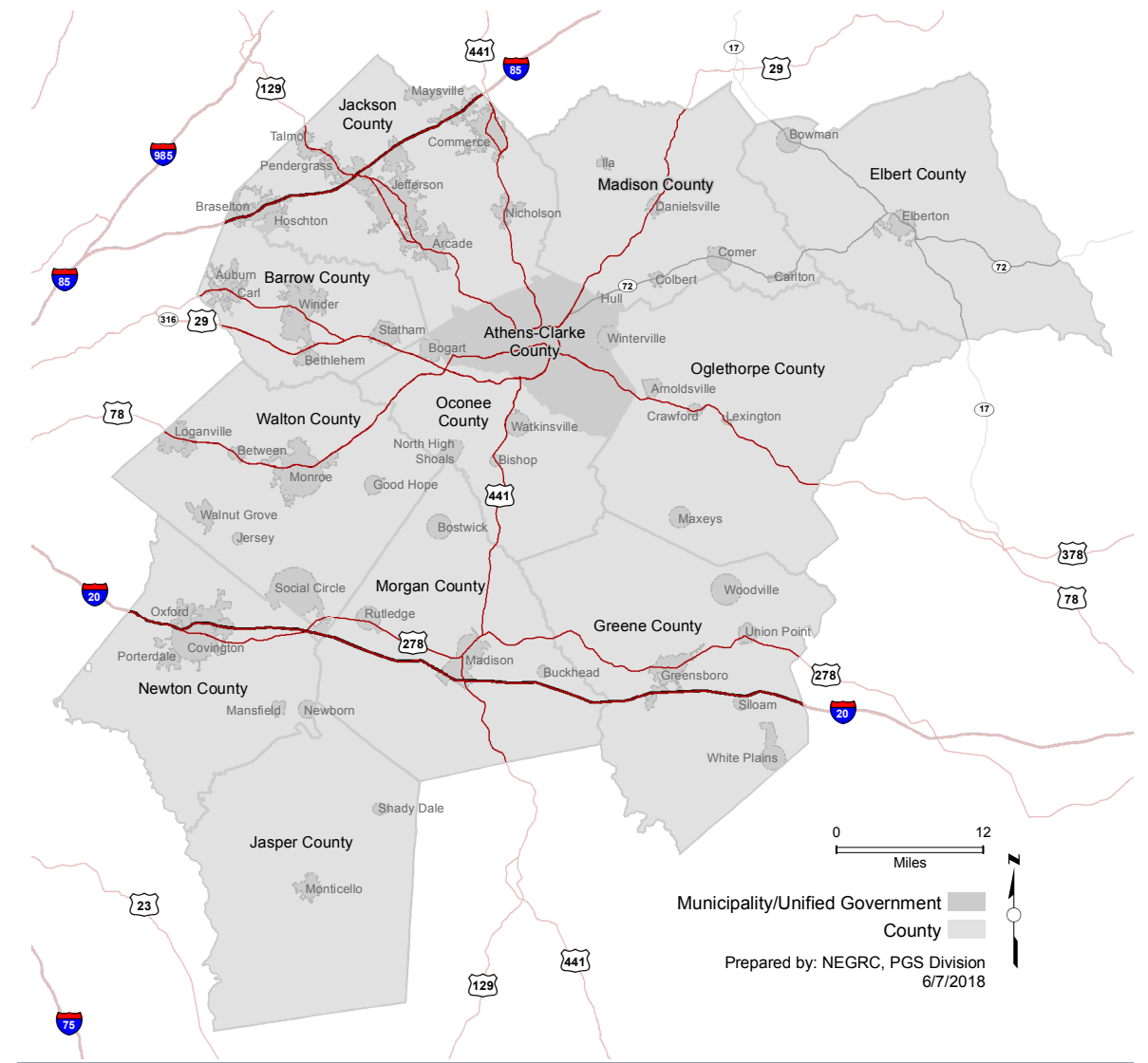
| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| Regional Goals | 8 |
| Regional Needs & Opportunities | 22 |
| Implementation Program | 26 |
| Appendices | 42 |



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

From the pastoral, agriculturally thriving eastern and southern parts of our region to the developing western counties and our urban core of Athens, Northeast Georgia boasts diverse landscapes and opportunities, a high quality of life, and, most importantly, wonderful people who are dedicated to their communities.



Northeast Georgia at a glance. The region's twelve counties and fifty-four municipalities feature high quality of life, vast opportunity, and great people.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan identifies both short- and long-term strategies to enhance the region's prosperity and competitiveness, improve quality of life for all residents, and establish a framework for regional coordination and cooperation. It answers four essential planning questions:

1. Where are we now? We need to understand the current state of the region. Examining existing development and transportation patterns, natural resources and environmental areas, and educational opportunities, prepares us to evaluate future scenarios and respond to identified goals.

Northeast Georgia's main population centers exist in the central and western parts of our region. Generally speaking, this is also where transportation networks are most strained, employment opportunities are most abundant, local governments offer comprehensive services, and natural resources may be most threatened by development. In our rural areas, agriculture dominates the landscape, while small, neighborly towns offer intimate experiences and stakeholders feel that life moves more slowly.

Priority Needs

- ▶ Develop resources to support and encourage local entrepreneurial development.
- ▶ Establish greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs.
- ▶ Address aging physical infrastructure.
- ▶ Provide transportation choices throughout the region.
- ▶ Enable people without automobiles to access employment opportunities.

2. Where are we going? We establish an understanding of the region as it would exist without concerted planning. What will be our greatest needs? What areas present opportunities?

As with the region's current state, we can expect the western and central urbanized and urbanizing areas to account for the majority of Northeast Georgia's growth well into the future. For the most part, rural communities intend to remain so, and local and regional plans address this through focused planning and limited community services and infrastructure expansion. [The Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan](#) identifies Regionally Important Resources and presents protection strategies for use by local governments, developers, and others; following this guide will ensure the viability of our most treasured environmental and cultural assets.

Priority Opportunity

- ▶ Develop web presence to highlight information and market and promote the region.

3. Where do we want to be? We form a unified set of goals distilled through stakeholder involvement activities.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) Council led the plan update, supported by an advisory committee that worked with NEGRC staff to help develop and refine the plan's goals, priorities, issues, and recommended strategies. Input from stakeholders, the general public, and other interested parties provided additional guidance. Feedback about the plan's contents was captured through a series of public hearings, four listening sessions, and an online survey. The NEGRC website served as an information portal by providing updates, schedule notices, input opportunities (including an online survey), and links to drafts of the plan document. The goal was to gather feedback from as broad a spectrum of the region's population as possible. (Additional information can be found in the plan's appendices.)

Stakeholder Involvement Activities

- ▶ Identified key stakeholders in addition to the general public, designated the NEGRC's Council as the plan's Steering Committee the Council's Planning & Government Services Committee as the Technical Advisory Committee for the plan.
- ▶ Held two public hearings to present information on how to provide input and access plan information.
- ▶ Held four public listening sessions to gauge impressions and conduct a SWOT analysis.
- ▶ Published online survey to gather responses from those unable to attend listening sessions and to give attendees the chance to provide anonymous feedback.
- ▶ Provided a dedicated space on the NEGRC website to serve as a portal for information about the plan.

Through the SWOT analysis, online questionnaire, and visioning exercises, and based on the priority needs and opportunities, we developed a set of goals as a common representation of stakeholder preferences and priorities. (Additional information, supporting policies, and associated maps with defining narratives are located in the Regional Goals chapter.)

Regional Goals

- ▶ Enhance economic competitiveness.
- ▶ Value communities and neighborhoods.
- ▶ Support existing communities.
- ▶ Promote adequate, equitable, and affordable housing.
- ▶ Provide more transportation choices.
- ▶ Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.

4. How do we get there? We present key implementation initiatives that will ensure we achieve the goals laid out in this plan and meet the vast potential of our region.

The Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Regional Goals and addressing the identified needs and opportunities. It also identifies specific measures to be undertaken by the region's leaders to implement the plan and provide guidance to developers, local governments, and other public agencies for addressing regional goals. (Selected actions are presented here; further action items and other information is found in this plan's work program.)

Key Strategies and Actions to be Pursued

- ▶ STRATEGY: Promote a Northeast Georgia web presence
 - ACTION: Create and manage a Northeast Georgia promotional website

- ▶ STRATEGY: Aggregate a public, comprehensive, and accessible directory of opportunities and incentives for development in the region
 - ACTION: Create and manage a list of funding and other opportunities for local entrepreneurs and artists

- ▶ STRATEGY: Comprehensive and accessible regional tourism database
 - ACTION: Create, manage, and promote publicly accessible inventory of historic landmarks, festivals and events, tours, and other visitor attractions

- ▶ STRATEGY: Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining works and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs
 - ACTION: Create report on employer-assisted housing initiatives

- ▶ STRATEGY: Provide communities and bicyclist- and pedestrian-friendly "Complete Streets" best practices to increase community appeal and safety, and to provide access to all users
 - ACTION: Develop Complete Streets design guidelines for various settings

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The 2018 Regional Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs effective October 1, 2017.



REGIONAL GOALS

Regional Goals

The Regional Goals element establishes a vision for the Region's future that seeks to articulate what the stakeholders and public are committed to working together to achieve. That vision is presented here in the following ways:

Regional Goals & Supporting Policies

A list of overarching goals that the plan will address, along with general statements that are intended support each goal. Regional goals and policies provide guidance and direction for leaders in the region to ensure their decisions are consistent with the regional vision. This list was developed to provide a framework for addressing the identified region-wide needs and to offer Regional Commission staff and local governments a guide for achieving established statewide planning goals.

Regional Development Maps

Utilizing local plans the regional development maps illustrate the desired pattern of development for the next 20 years.

Areas Requiring Special Attention Map and Defining Narrative

A map of the region highlighting areas where conditions are present that could lead to potential development conflicts, or areas with opportunities for economic growth, and accompanying narrative that identifies specific strategies for managing each area.

Regional Goals & Supporting Policies

The following goals and corresponding policies are intended to provide guidance and direction to regional leaders for making decisions consistent with achieving the Regional Vision or addressing Regional Issues and Opportunities.

Enhance economic competitiveness

- ▶ Support economic development decisions that retain, expand, or create employment opportunities that align well with the region's workforce and existing economic clusters.
- ▶ Price in the cost of the potential impacts on public infrastructure and natural resources when evaluating economic development proposals.

Value communities and neighborhoods

- ▶ Encourage new development that will contribute to, not take away from, the region's character and sense of place.
- ▶ Redevelopment and infill projects should be pursued if they complement surrounding areas, and add value to the community.

Support existing communities

- ▶ Existing infrastructure investments and public facilities should incentivize appropriate infill redevelopment, and compact development patterns.
- ▶ Growth and new development should not be place and unexpected burden on existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.

Promote adequate, equitable, and affordable housing

- ▶ Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- ▶ Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.

Provide more transportation choices.

- ▶ Support transportation investments that consider modes other than automobile, and that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- ▶ Transportation improvements will reinforce the desired development patterns for the community
- ▶ Consider context sensitive design considerations, to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts for new and reconstructed transportation projects.
- ▶ Support the creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- ▶ We will encourage new development that supports and ties in well with existing and planned transportation options in the community.

Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.

- ▶ Work on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, watershed protection)
- ▶ Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making

Regional Development Maps

The type of development that occurs in a region has implications on nearly all facets of planning study, including transportation, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and infrastructure. Analyzing development patterns allows for a broader review than simply looking at land use. It provides insights into relationships between different sectors of a community or region, and helps show intended (or current) scenarios more plainly than land use analysis. This section illustrates the desired patterns of development and areas requiring special attention across the region for the next 20 years.

Regional Land Use Map

Identifies the regional development patterns desired, based on existing and expected conditions over the next 20 years, using three general land use categories: Developed, Developing, and Rural.

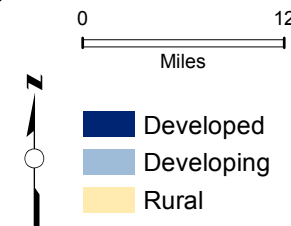
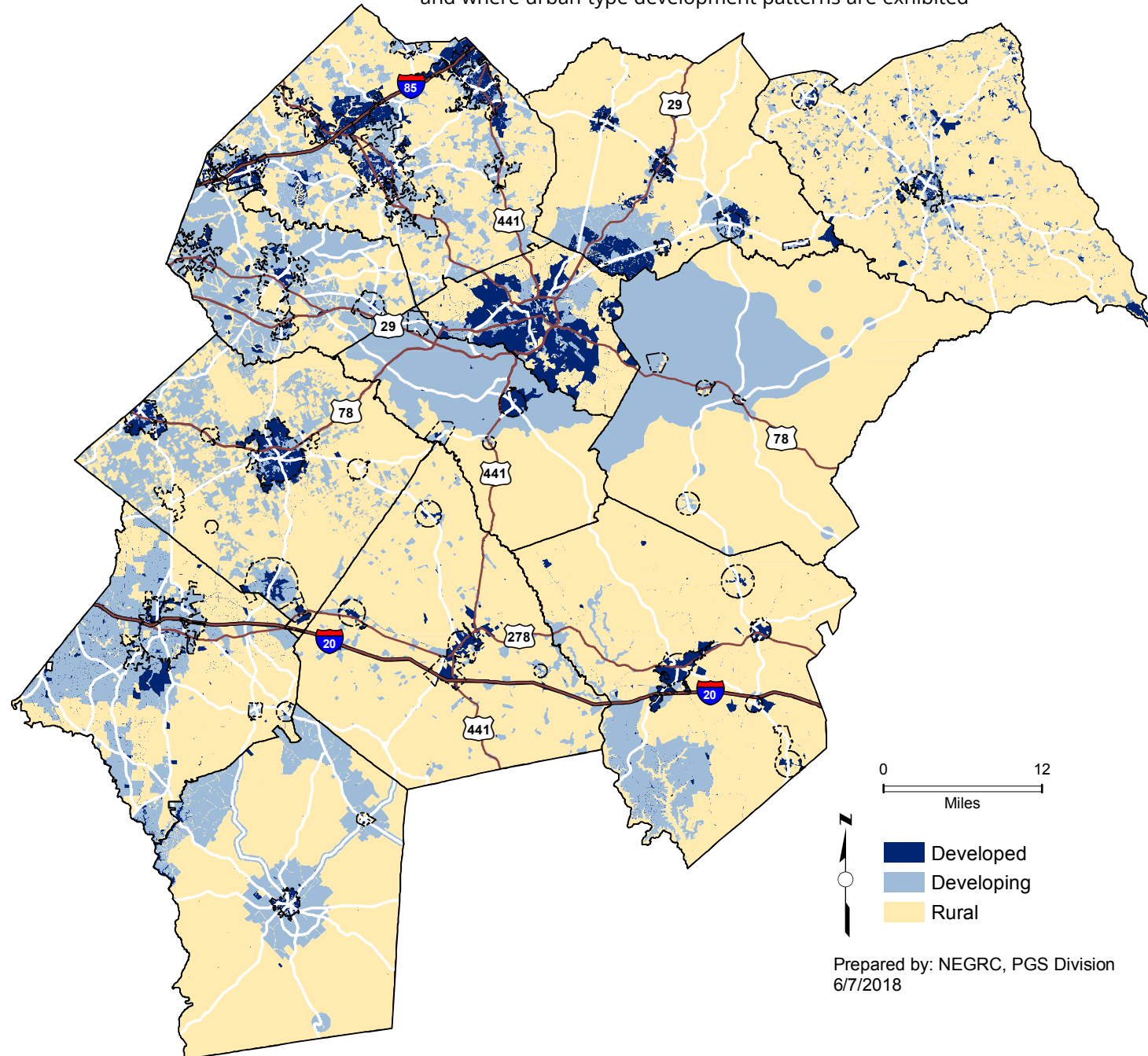
Conservation and Development Map

Delineates important conservation areas based on environmentally sensitive areas, important resources, and other environmental and cultural resources in the region. Conservation areas are overlaid on Regional Land Use categories to introduce areas of potential concern.

Regional Land Use Map

As opposed to traditional land use maps, which often feature upward of ten categories, the Regional Land Use Map classifies the type of development desired in the future into one of three general categories:

- ▶ **Rural:** not expected to become urbanized or require urban services in the next 20 years
- ▶ **Developing:** likely will become urbanized and require provision of new urban services in the next 20 years
- ▶ **Developed:** built-up areas in which urban service provision already exists and where urban-type development patterns are exhibited

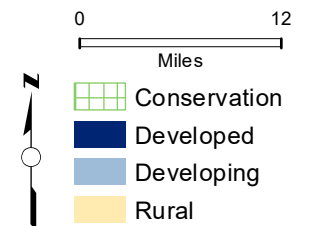
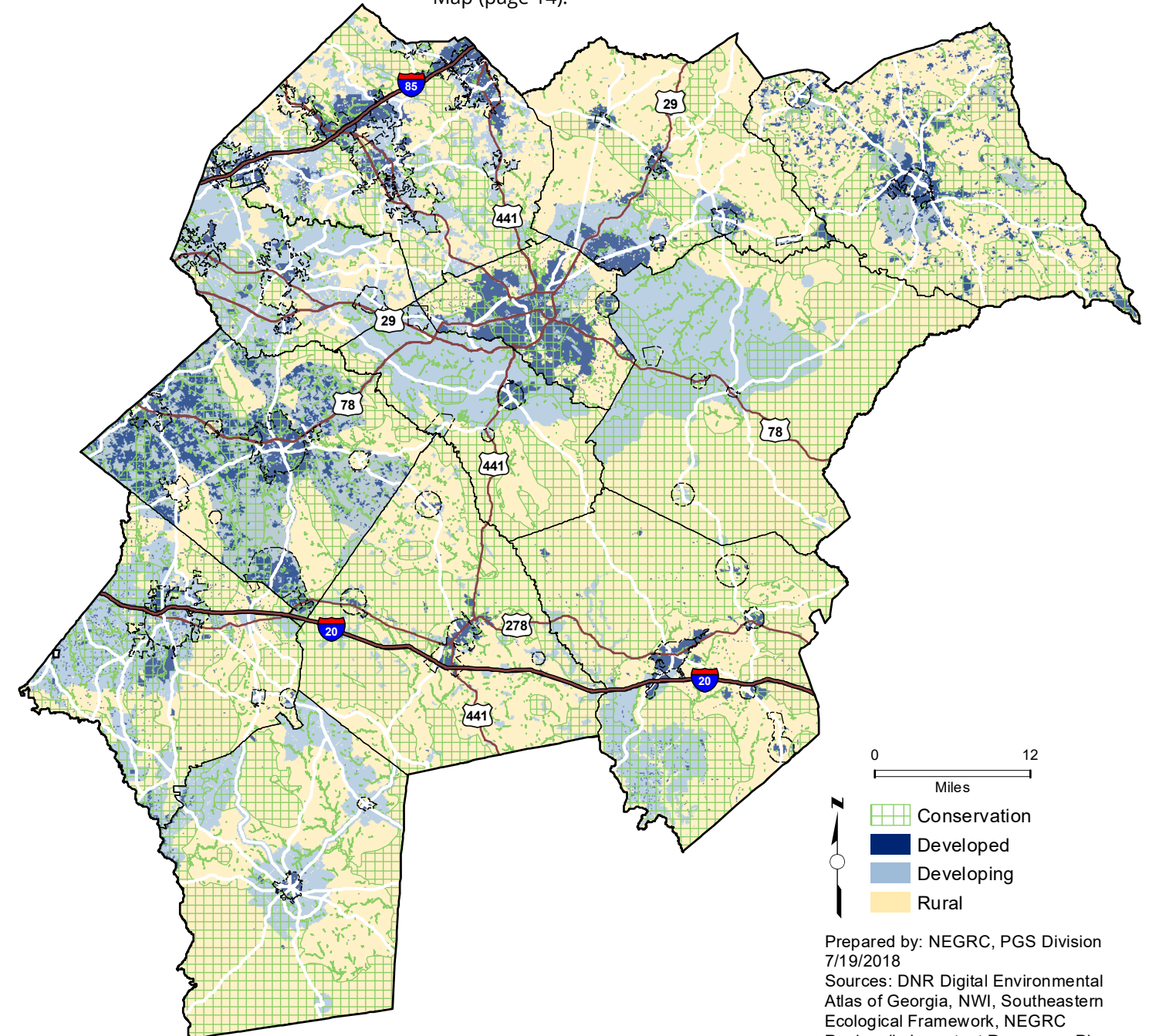


Prepared by: NEGRC, PGS Division
6/7/2018

Conservation and Development Map

As a supplement to the Regional Land Use map, the Conservation and Development Map identifies areas to be preserved in order to protect resources of regional importance and environmentally sensitive areas. "Conservation" includes Regionally Important Resources, wetlands, riparian areas, and groundwater recharge areas.

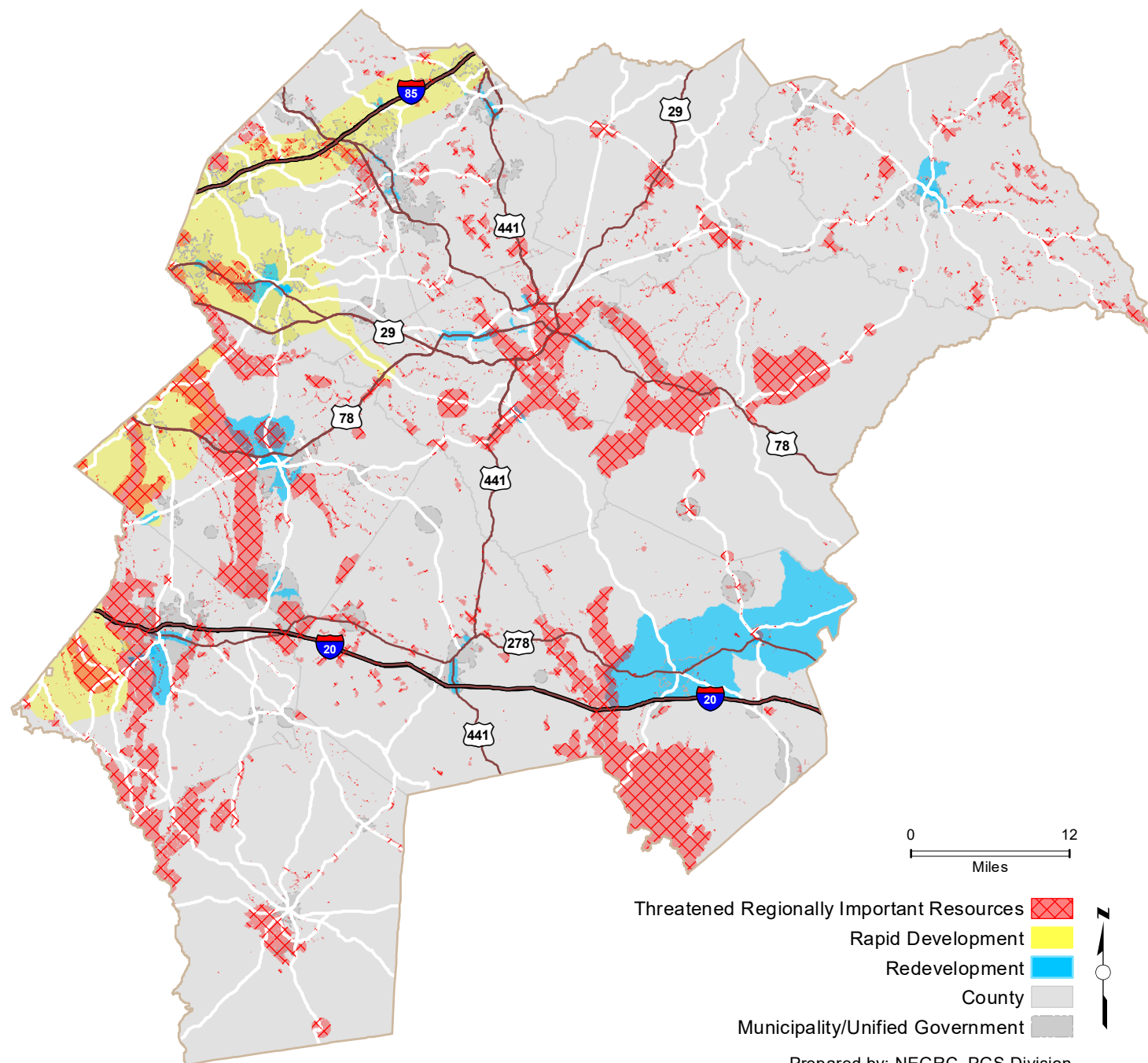
- ▶ Note the areas where Conservation overlaps the Developed or Developing land use categories; they are included in the "Threatened Regionally Important Resources" category on the Areas Requiring Special Attention Map (page 14).



Prepared by: NEGRC, PGS Division
7/19/2018
Sources: DNR Digital Environmental Atlas of Georgia, NWI, Southeastern Ecological Framework, NEGRC Regionally Important Resources Plan

Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map

The Areas Requiring Special Attention map illustrates specific areas of exhibit conditions that could need targeted monitoring and mitigation, due to factors such as: the potential for rapid development or change of land use, areas with the potential for redevelopment and or economic growth, and areas with environmental and/or cultural resources that face the threat of development. Strategies for managing each area are described in the defining narrative section that follows.



Prepared by: NEGRC, PGS Division

Defining Narrative (Areas Requiring Special Attention)

This section provides context and meaning to the development patterns displayed on the Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map (previous page). The following defining narratives provide a general definition, a list of compatible land uses, an inventory of Regional Quality Community Objectives, and a menu of implementation measures that may be useful to achieve the desired development patterns, for each ARSA Map category.

For ease of use, and to avoid needless repetition throughout the section, the Quality Community Objectives are described here and identified by name only in the proceeding text:

Economic Prosperity: Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.

Resource Management: Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community.

Efficient Land Use: Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.

Local Preparedness: Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.

Sense of Place: Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities.

Regional Cooperation: Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.

Housing Options: Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community.

Transportation Options: Address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents.

Educational Opportunities: Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions.

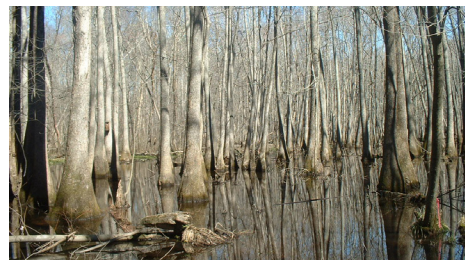
Community Health: Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities.

Threatened Regionally Important Resources

This area represents the intersection between adopted Regionally-Important-Resources (RIR) and the 'Developed' and 'Developing' Projected Land Use Character Areas identified in the Regional Plan.



Big Haynes Creek



Alcovy River Greenway



Yellow River



Elder Mill Bridge

Development Patterns

- Ÿ Clustering development to preserve open space within the development site
- Ÿ Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) as amenities that shape identity and character of the development
- Ÿ Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas by setting them aside as public parks, trail corridors, or greenbelts
- Ÿ Site plans, building design, and landscaping that are sensitive to natural features of the site, including topography and views
- Ÿ Using infrastructure availability to steer development away from areas of natural, cultural, and environmentally sensitive resources
- Ÿ Consideration of qualitative as well as quantitative measures during the planning and design of infrastructure and other public projects
- Ÿ Facilities for bicycles, including bikeways or bike lanes, parking racks, etc.
- Ÿ Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- Ÿ Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses, decrease stormwater runoff, enhance air quality, and perform heat island mitigation
- Ÿ Reduced parking requirements for commercial and residential developments, particularly when nearby parking or public transit is available
- Ÿ Parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or

retention features, such as pervious pavement

Land Uses

This Area requires less attention to which specific land use classifications are encouraged (or discouraged) than to the nature of development and how it could impact the RIR in question. Although the land uses listed above in Regionally Important Resources could be applicable within the Potential RIR-Development Conflict Areas, certain RIRs might be too sensitive for even agriculture or trail development while others could easily accommodate more intensive uses nearby. When changes are proposed, or to establish or maintain protection status, local governments should evaluate these areas on a case-by-case basis, and they should always refer to the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources.

Quality Community Objectives

- Ÿ Local Preparedness
- Ÿ Sense of Place
- Ÿ Transportation Options
- Ÿ Efficient Land Use
- Ÿ Regional Cooperation
- Ÿ Resource Management

Threatened Regionally Important Resources, Continued



Madison-Morgan Historic District



Lake Varner



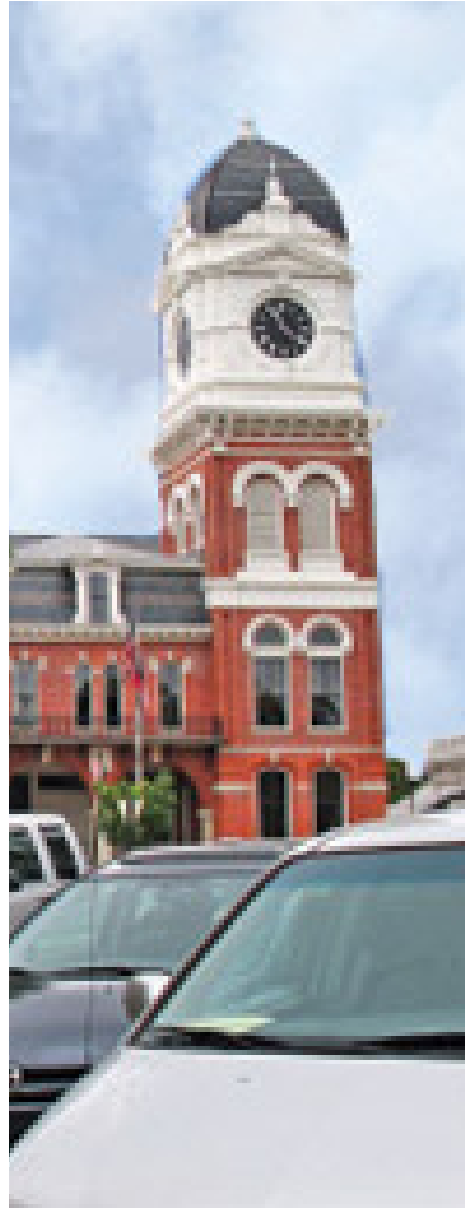
Porterdale Historic District

Implementation Measures

- Ÿ The primary implementation mechanism in this area will be the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources, which is described above.
- Ÿ Other measures that may be useful include:
 - Ÿ Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
 - Ÿ Identify and improve waterways that do not meet established standards
 - Ÿ Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.
 - Ÿ Low-Impact Development and Green Infrastructure – protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs
 - Ÿ Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development, cluster development, etc.
- Ÿ Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- Ÿ Noise and Lighting Regulations – control the impact of development adjacent to natural, historic, and/or less-intensely developed areas.

Rapid Development

The western portion of Northeast Georgia has exhibited tremendous growth in recent years. Potentially Rapid Development areas are the most likely locales in this western section in which significant growth is likely to take place. In some cases, it is possible that development could outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including recreation.



Covington Historic District

Development Patterns

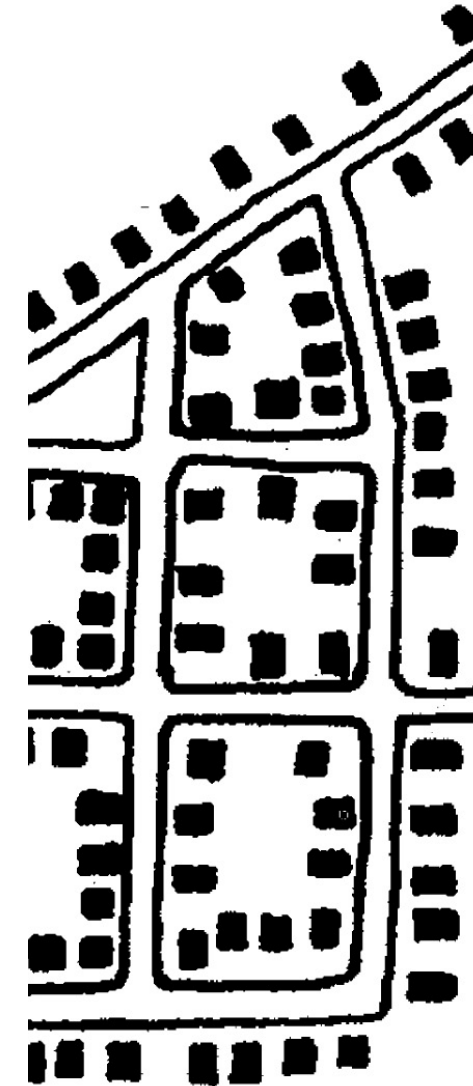
- Ý Addition of neighborhood commercial centers on appropriate infill sites to serve surrounding neighborhoods
- Ý Developments that have easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily
- Ý Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- Ý Structures (shopping, warehouses, offices, etc.), Sidewalks, and bicycle lanes located along the street front, with parking and connective alleyways in rear of buildings, making the corridor more attractive and pedestrian-friendly while alleviating some traffic congestion
- Ý Addition of new uses to single-use sites (e.g. restaurants and shopping added to office parks)
- Ý New developments that contain a mix of residential and commercial uses and community facilities at small enough scale and proximity to encourage walking between destinations
- Ý Parking regulations that allow for and encourage shared parking
- Ý Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses, decrease storm water runoff, enhance air quality, and perform heat island mitigation
- Ý Brownfield redevelopment that converts formerly industrial/commercial sites to mixed-use developments
- Ý Greyfield redevelopment that converts vacant or under-utilized commercial strips to mixed-use

- assets
- Ý Facilities for bicycles, including bikeways or bike lanes, parking racks, etc.
- Ý Distribution of affordably-priced homes throughout locality/region
- Ý Residential development that offers a mix of housing types (single family homes, town homes, live/work units, lofts, over-the-shop, and apartments), densities and prices in the same neighborhood
- Ý Residential development with healthy mix of uses (corner groceries, barber shops, drugstores) within easy walking distance of residences
- Ý Clustering development to preserve open space within development site
- Ý Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) As amenities that shape the identity and character of the development
- Ý Integrating appropriate mixed-use and/or housing development with new school construction to increase walkability and reduce trip generation

Land Uses

- Ý Residential
- Ý Commercial (office and retail)
- Ý Mixed-use
- Ý Light industrial/warehouses
- Ý Public/institutional
- Ý Natural, Cultural, and Historic areas
- Ý Parks
- Ý Trails, Greenways, Blueways
- Ý Agriculture (small-scale)

Rapid Development, Continued



Compact Development Pattern

Quality Community Objectives

- Ý Sense of Place
- Ý Transportation Options
- Ý Resource Management
- Ý Efficient Land Use
- Ý Local Preparedness
- Ý Economic Prosperity
- Ý Housing Options
- Ý Educational Opportunities
- Ý Regional Cooperation

Implementation Measures

- Ý Effective, intentional recruitment and planning – recruit businesses that suit the community, match training to workforce needs (current and future), control big-box development, form a business incubator, etc.
- Ý Utilize existing economic programs and opportunities – Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/ Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), enterprise zones, opportunity zones
- Ý Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
- Ý Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/ transfer of development rights, etc.
- Ý Low-Impact Development and Green Infrastructure – protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs
- Ý Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development,

- cluster development, etc.
- Ý Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- Ý Noise and Lighting Regulations – control the impact of development adjacent to residential and other less-intensely developed areas
- Ý Overlay Districts – mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied
- Ý Public Facilities and Services – adequate public facilities standards, appropriate school siting, “Fix it First” policy, strategic location of public facilities, urban service areas
- Ý Quality, diverse housing stock – provide housing options for all income levels and ages, allow accessory dwelling units, establish Urban Redevelopment Areas (OCGA 36-61-1), etc.
- Ý Subdivisions and Land Development regulations – contributes significantly to the geography and geometry of the community (DCA Model Code 2-2)
- Ý Plan for and implement multi-modal transportation – corridor studies, bikeability/walkability audits, bicycling and walking plans, complete streets policies, appropriate facility design, transit- and bicyclist-/pedestrian-oriented development, transportation demand management, etc.
- Ý Intergovernmental Coordination – coordinated development review processes, Intergovernmental Service Agreements (DCA Model Code 7-5), service delivery strategies, etc.

Redevelopment

Opportunities for redevelopment in the region exist primarily in the form of declining commercial developments including strip centers and malls. Brownfield sites, including manufacturing and mining sites, also offer the potential for creative reuse.



Potential Redevelopment Area



Positive Redevelopment Attributes

Development Patterns

- Ý Accommodation of “big box” retail in a way that complements surrounding uses, such as breaking up the façade to look like a collection of smaller stores
- Ý Commercial structures (shopping, warehouses, offices, etc.) located near the street front, with parking in the rear of buildings, making the community more attractive and more pedestrian-friendly
- Ý Improvement of sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers
- Ý Redevelopment of older strip commercial centers in lieu of new construction further down the strip
- Ý Infill development on vacant sites closer in to the center of the community; these sites, with existing infrastructure in place, are used for new development, matching character of surrounding neighborhoods in lieu of more development on greenfield sites
- Ý Driveway consolidation and inter-parcel connections between parking lots
- Ý Developments that have easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily
- Ý Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- Ý Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses, decrease stormwater runoff, enhance air quality, and perform heat island mitigation
- Ý Use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large

- expanses of paved parking
- Ý Parking regulations that allow for and encourage shared parking
- Ý Brownfield redevelopment that converts formerly industrial/commercial sites to mixed-use developments
- Ý Greyfield redevelopment that converts vacant or under-utilized commercial strips to mixed-use assets
- Ý Revitalization of existing neighborhood commercial centers to capture more market activity and serve as community focal points
- Ý Reuse of existing vacant or underutilized structures (e.g. commercial centers, office spaces, warehouses) to accommodate new community facilities

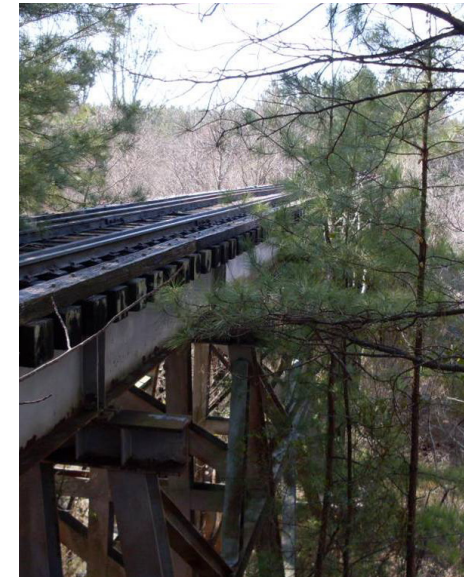
Land Uses

- Ý Commercial (office and retail)
- Ý Mixed-use
- Ý Light industrial/warehouses
- Ý Public/institutional

Quality Community Objectives

- Ý Sense of Place
- Ý Transportation Options
- Ý Resource Management
- Ý Local Preparedness
- Ý Economic Prosperity
- Ý Housing Choices
- Ý Educational Opportunities
- Ý Regional Cooperation
- Ý Community Health

Redevelopment, Continued



Athens Line



Existing and Potential Redevelopment Pattern, Athens-Clarke County, GA

Implementation Measures

- Ý Effective, intentional recruitment and planning – recruit businesses that suit the community, match training to workforce needs (current and future), control big-box development, form a business incubator, etc.
- Ý Utilize existing economic programs and opportunities – Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), Revitalization Area Strategies (RAS), Enterprise Zones (EZs), Opportunity Zones (OZs, state & federal)
- Ý Brownfield Site Remediation – clean-up of contaminated properties; can be initiated by property owners or local governments
- Ý Strategies for Re-Use of Greyfields – reusing sites such as abandoned shopping centers for transit-oriented, mixed-use development
- Ý Business Improvement District (BID)/Community Improvement District (CID) – self-taxing entity formed by property owners and/or businesses within a specific geographic area; can be formed to provide additional services, increase safety and attractiveness, etc.
- Ý Rehabilitation Codes – reuse older buildings, leading to reinvestment in blighted areas
- Ý Targeted Corridor Redevelopment – using public incentives or urban redevelopment powers to encourage revitalization of problem properties, such as declining shopping centers or abandoned “big-box” stores
- Ý Utility Relocation – remove overhead utilities from public view, either below ground or at the rear of lots
- Ý Adaptive Use – conversion of a building for new uses
- Ý Public Nuisance Ordinance – control nuisances such as loud noises, stagnant water, abandoned vehicles, accumulation of junk, and tall weeds and grass
- Ý Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- Ý Overlay Districts – mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied
- Ý Plan for and implement multi-modal transportation – corridor studies, bikeability/walkability audits, bicycling and walking plans, complete streets policies, appropriate facility design, transit-and bicyclist-/pedestrian-oriented development, transportation demand management, etc.
- Ý Access Control Measures – restricts entry/exit to sites to increase safety and attractiveness
- Ý Intergovernmental Coordination – coordinated development review processes, Intergovernmental Service Agreements (DCA Model Code 7-5), service delivery strategies, etc.



NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

Regional Needs & Opportunities

This section, presented in divisions relating to classical planning analysis areas such as housing and transportation, presents a final catalog of focal points to guide the forward-looking, implementation-based components of the plan.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) publishes a list of typical issues and opportunities as part of the State Planning Recommendations. This list, in addition to an evaluation for the region's consistency with statewide planning goals and objectives was used as the starting point for developing the Issues and Opportunities list. Further issues and opportunities were identified as part of a synthesis of all of the input received during the planning process.

Needs and/or Opportunities that are called out in **blue text** below are considered a priority and have a corresponding strategy and Action Items in the Regional work Program Section

Economic & Workforce Development

Local and regional economic health has major implications for socioeconomic conditions, public health, educational quality and attainment, and the provision of community services.

The analysis of existing economic and workforce conditions within the region highlighted the need for:

- Ý A platform to market the region, share information, and promote the wide range of incentives and opportunities available.
- Ý **Resources to support and encourage local entrepreneurial development.**
- Ý **Greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs.**

Northeast Georgia must build on existing economic development and job growth initiatives to ensure its long-term economic competitiveness and resiliency.

These needs suggest opportunities for:

- Ý **Development of web presence that would be a one stop access point for information, data, and news in order to more effectively market, promote, and increase the entire region's visibility to potential visitors and investors.**
- Ý Connecting entrepreneurs to available support services.
- Ý Improving workforce training opportunities and creating stronger links between educational and training programs and employers.

Housing & Community Development

An assessment of the built environment included analysis of current housing stock, development and redevelopment trends, and the land use patterns that define the region's diverse communities, including urban centers, small towns, and rural landscapes. Access to quality and affordable housing options is one of the most critical elements of a healthy built environment and a range of housing options that meets the needs of individuals and

The following were identified as housing and community development needs within the region:

- Ý A greater diversity of housing types and price points is needed to serve both the projected growth in the aging population and to attract and retain younger people.
- Ý More transportation choices to connect housing to employment or other destinations.
- Ý **Aging physical infrastructure replacement.**

families of all incomes and life stages supports healthy neighborhoods. Northeast Georgia has established communities and neighborhoods at virtually every scale—all of which serve as a foundation for the region's future development and growth. However, continued uneven distribution of growth will pose a challenge for rural communities and small towns as population trends shift growth away from some of the region's small towns.

These gaps offer opportunities for:

- Ý Creating connected, resilient, and affordable housing options that will strengthen communities.
- Ý Improving the efficiency of infrastructure investments by identifying sustainable funding options.
- Ý Existing housing stock is not currently well suited to meet the needs of the growth in the population aged 65 and over.
- Ý Overall population growth within the region is projected to be unevenly distributed, concentrated in the western portion of the region.

Transportation

An efficient and well-connected transportation network is critical to the long-term economic viability of the region, as well as to a high quality of life for residents.

The state of the region's transportation systems currently has the following needs:

- Ý **Few transportation choices region wide**
- Ý **Connections to employment by method other than automobile are extremely limited**
- Ý Costs for maintenance of transportation infrastructure are increasing

In addition, transportation routes cross political boundaries and are generally best considered at the regional scale.

The following opportunities exist to address these issues:

- Ý Connecting housing and major employment centers
- Ý Expanding options for mobility and transit
- Ý Identifying more reliable funding for the planning, construction, and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.

Natural Resources

Intact environmental resources are the cost-effective complement to the region's physical infrastructure, cleansing air and water and reducing environmental risks such as flooding. Most natural systems including watersheds, wetlands, and habitat also cross the boundaries of individual jurisdictions, requiring inter-governmental coordination to manage these complex and

The region's Natural Resources systems faces challenges related to:

- Ý Limited nature of water resources and recent droughts
- Ý Lack of consistent drought resiliency planning
- Ý Limited information about the need for conservation
- Ý Lack of preventative infrastructure maintenance and replacement
- Ý Lack of land use planning in some areas of the region, which can result in negative impacts to natural resources, including fragmented ecosystems
- Ý Need to manage solid waste, including increasing recycling

critical resources. Access to an adequate, stable water supply is vital to the region's health and prosperity. Water resources are finite, requiring coordinated decision-making to ensure a long-term supply.

These gaps highlight opportunities for:

- Ý Increasing the drought resiliency of the region and its communities
- Ý Expanding and extending the water supply
- Ý Improving marketing around conservation education and the cost of water
- Ý Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance efforts
- Ý Promoting more sensitive land use practices that reduce the loss of open space and agricultural land and protect ground and surface water
- Ý Increasing opportunities for recycling and reuse



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Performance Standards

The following Performance Standards will be used by local governments to ensure implementation of the Regional Plan across Northeast Georgia. Since these Minimum Standards are seen as essential to implementing the Regional Plan, the Regional Commission and DCA will provide technical and training assistance to governments to help them achieve them.

Excellence Standards are deemed desirable for implementation of the plan, and typically refer to best practices in planning and development.

Minimum Standards

- Ý Update the local Comprehensive plan, including the Future Development Map and/or Future Land Use Map, at regular intervals as required by the State of Georgia.
- Ý Utilize the Future Development Map and/or Future Land Use Map to steer new development to appropriate areas of the community.
- Ý Update the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) and Capital Improvements Element (CIE), where applicable, as required by the State of Georgia.
- Ý Submit potential Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) to the Regional Commission per the Development Thresholds established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- Ý Comply with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Part V. Environmental planning Criteria by adopting appropriate ordinances for Groundwater Recharge Areas, Wetlands Protection, and River Corridor Protection, where applicable.
- Ý Update the local pre-disaster mitigation plan per the standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Ý Share updated Tax Assessor's data tables and land parcels with the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission annually, where applicable.

Excellence Standards

- Ý Develop and adopt a zoning ordinance that is revised and updated regularly to reflect the community vision.
- Ý Develop, adopt, and implement policies and regulations to preserve agricultural land and activities.
- Ý Incentivize redevelopment and the enhancement of existing commercial and industrial areas over development in outlying areas through mechanisms such as TDRs, Opportunity Zones, Enterprise Zones, etc.
- Ý Develop, adopt, and implement policies and regulations to encourage connectivity within the community.
- Ý Maintain a geographic information system (GIS) that utilizes in-house staff or a third party, such as the Regional Commission.
- Ý Develop GIS data for address points and/or building footprints.
- Ý Maintain current electronic inventories of environmental and historic resources in the community.
- Ý Adopt a tree ordinance.
- Ý Adopt a water conservation policy. Monitor impaired streams and rivers to determine pollution sources and implement mitigation strategies.
- Ý Designate a local historic district and establish an active historic preservation commission through the adoption of an historic overlay ordinance.
- Ý Actively seek state and/or federal historic designations for districts and/or properties.
- Ý Develop and adopt a Capital Improvements Element (CIE) according to state law.
- Ý Develop and adopt an impact fee ordinance according to state law.
- Ý Partner with local boards of education to identify new school locations in areas connected by appropriate infrastructure.
- Ý Develop, adopt, and implement local bicycle and/or pedestrian plans.

Excellence Standards, Continued

- Ý Develop, adopt, and implement plans to protect and create public greenspaces such as parks, greenways, and other recreational facilities.
- Ý Become an official partner with the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center.
- Ý Develop and adopt a local Transit Development plan.
- Ý Participate in regional transit initiatives and programs.
- Ý Maintain a current and navigable community website.
- Ý Participate actively in regional tourism planning and promotion efforts.
- Ý Maintain a working relationship with the local chamber of commerce to encourage economic development activities that support the community's vision.
- Ý Develop and adopt an Urban Redevelopment plan, where applicable.
- Ý Seek the Opportunity Zone designation for an applicable portion of the community from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- Ý Seek the Certified Work Ready Community designation from the Georgia State Workforce Investment Board.
- Ý Seek the Entrepreneur-Friendly Community designation from the Georgia Department of Economic Development.
- Ý Develop and implement plans, policies, and regulations to address blighted areas within the community.
- Ý Actively seek to achieve a diverse supply of rental and ownership housing options to accommodate households of all income levels within the community.
- Ý Seek designation from the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) to address specific housing needs.
- Ý Participate in the Georgia Certified Literate Community Program through the Technical College System of Georgia.
- Ý Develop and implement an Existing Industry Program (EIP) or a Business Retention and Expansion Program (BREP).
- Ý Participate actively in multi-county economic development efforts (e.g. Joint Development Authorities, Work Ready regions, etc.).

Local Government Performance Standards Update

The following list of governments have not achieved the regional commission's established regional plan minimum performance standards.

| Local Government | Minimum Performance Standard Not Met | Specific Action Steps taken to Assist Government | Local Government | Minimum Performance Standards Not Met | Specific Action Steps taken to Assist Government |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Athens-Clarke County Winterville | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | | Oglethorpe County Arnoldsville Crawford Lexington Maxey's | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | |
| Barrow County Auburn Bethlehem Carl Statham Winder | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | | Elbert County Elberton Bowman | Update SDS Update SDS Update SDS | Offered to assist County and City staff with require update forms. |
| Morgan County Madison Bostwick Buckhead Rutledge | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | | Madison County Danielsville Carlton Colbert Comer Hull Ila | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | |
| Greene County Greensboro Siloam Union Point White Plains Woodville | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | | Newton County Covington Mansfield Newborn Porterdale Oxford | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | |
| Jasper County Monticello Shady Dale | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | | Oconee County Bishop Bogart North High Shoals Watkinsville | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | |
| Jackson County Jefferson Arcade Braselton Commerce Hoschton Maysville Nicholson Talmo | All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | | Walton County Monroe Good Hope Loganville Social Circle Walnut Grove | Submit potential DRIs to the RC All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met | Met with County staff to review thresholds and rules. |

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Regional Work Program

This portion of the Implementation Program includes a Report of Accomplishments, summarizing activities and achievements since the last Regional Plan update (2012), and an updated Work Program, identifying the specific actions the Regional Commission plans to undertake during the next five years to address the priority Needs and Opportunities.

Report of Accomplishments

| Activity | Time Frame | Responsible Party | Est. Cost | Funding Source | Status | Explanation | |
|----------------------------------|--|-------------------|---|---------------------------|--|-------------|---|
| 1.0 Development Patterns | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Facilitate local government greenway, bicycle, and pedestrian planning and education. | 2016-2020 | NEGRC, local governments | \$25,000 per plan | GDOT, GDCA, Local | Ongoing | Addressed in Action Items on pp. 40-41 now. |
| 1.2 | Catalog, assess, and plan for recreation, cultural, agricultural, and tourism resources, including farmland protection. | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | \$22,500 annually | GDCA | Ongoing | Addressed in Action Items on pp. 40-41 now. |
| 2.0 Resource Conservation | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Review RIR designations annually and assist communities with implementation of RIR management plan as requested | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | \$2,000+ annually | GDCA | Completed | |
| 2.2 | Develop and implement water quality plans and programs | 2016-2020 | NEGRC, local governments | \$20,000 -30,000 per plan | GEPA, GDCA | Abandoned | Lack of Funding |
| 2.3 | Assist local governments with conservation funding opportunities, as requested | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | Varies | GDCA, GDNR, NPS | Ongoing | Addressed in Action Items on pp. 40-41 now. |
| 2.4 | Assist local governments in assessing historic resources and pursuing related funding opportunities, as requested | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | Varies | GDCA, GDNR, GDOT | Abandoned | Lack of Funding |
| 2.5 | Engage in collaborative mitigation planning with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to address air pollution issues, if necessary | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | Minimal | NEGRC, GDNR | Abandoned | Assisted City of Braselton, Bowman, and Barrow County with planning and grant application preparation |
| 2.6 | Assist with regional solid waste planning efforts | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | Varies | NEGRSWA, GDCA | Abandoned | No requests to date |
| 2.7 | Update the RIR plan to improve readability and usefulness of the document for local governments and developers. | 2016 | NEGRC | \$25,000 | GDCA | Completed | |
| 2.8 | Produce Yellow River Water Trail Maps for display at kiosks located in the City of Porterdale. | 2015-2016 | NEGRC, Local Governments, Other Partnering Agencies | \$15,000 per plan | GDCA, NEGRC, Local Governments, Partnering Agencies. | Completed | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-----------|-------|--------------------------|----------------|----------|---|
| 3.0 Community Facilities and Infrastructure | | | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Encourage local governments to implement Northeast Georgia Plan 2035 | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | \$22,000 annually | GDCA | Ongoing | Long-term measure, not found in 5-year STWP |
| 3.2 | Provide technical and staffing support for local and multi-jurisdictional transportation planning efforts | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | Varies | GDOT, GDCA | Ongoing | Now addressed in action items on pp 40-41. |
| 3.3 | Assist local governments with hazard-mitigation planning and implementation, as requested | 2016 | NEGRC | \$22,000 per plan | GEMA | Ongoing | PDM Plan updates will be prepared as requested. |
| 3.4 | Support GDOT's work on a connectivity study for the Athens-Atlanta corridor by attending stakeholder meetings and providing other requested assistance | 2016 | NEGRC | Minimal | GDOT, GDCA | Ongoing | Now addressed in action items on pp 40-41. |
| 4.0 Social and Economic Development | | | | | | | |
| 4.1 | Assist local governments with economic development planning and funding opportunities | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | Varies | GDCA, EDA, ARC | Ongoing | Long-term measure, not found in 5 year STWP |
| 4.2 | Assist local governments with housing programs such as Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) and Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), as requested | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | Varies | GDCA | Ongoing | Now addressed in action items on pp 38-39. |
| 4.3 | Quantify regional need for workforce housing and recommend action items for increasing its availability near jobs | 2014-2016 | NEGRC | \$21,000 | GDCA | Ongoing | Now addressed in action items on pp 38-39. |
| 4.4 | Develop community-level plans, strategies, and inventories to promote and protect local agriculture and local-food assets | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | \$15,000-25,000 per plan | GDCA, USDA | Complete | |
| 4.5 | Develop regional tourism and branding study and/or plan | 2016-2020 | NEGRC | \$25,000-35,000 annually | GDCA, GDED | Complete | |
| 4.6 | Develop a regional food systems study of growers, suppliers, buyers, distribution, etc. | 2014-2016 | NEGRC | \$20,000-30,000 | GDCA | Complete | |
| 5.0 Government Relations | | | | | | | |
| 5.1 | Market the Planning and Government Services (PGS) Division and educate local government officials through newsletter and in-house training programs and workshops | 2016-2019 | NEGRC | \$10,000-20,000 annually | GDCA | Ongoing | Long-Term measure not included in 5-Year STWP |
| 5.2 | Host and coordinate Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force | 2016-2019 | NEGRC | \$2,500 annually | GDOT | Ongoing | Long-Term measure not included in 5-Year STWP |
| 5.3 | Disseminate historic preservation information pertaining to Section 106 Reviews to local governments | 2016-2019 | NEGRC | \$4,000 annually | GDNR | Ongoing | Long-Term measure not included in 5-Year STWP |

Work Program

| Priority | Strategy | Action | Partners | Short-Term (1-5 yrs) | Long-Term (6-10 yrs) | Ongoing | |
|---|--|--|--|---|-------------------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Development of web presence that would be a one stop access point for information, data, and news in order to more effectively market, promote, and increase the entire region's visibility to potential visitors and investors. | Promote a Northeast Georgia web presence | Create and manage a Northeast Georgia promotional website. | JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD | Year 2-3 \$10,000-\$25000 | | | |
| | | Create feasibility study for potential impacts of a Northeast Georgia promotional and social media presence and/or smart phone App. | JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD | Year 4-5 \$15,000-\$20,000 | | | |
| | | Catalog and capitalize upon existing tourism and economic development-related promotional efforts in Georgia and the Southeast (ex. Georgia Power's Select Georgia Maps, GDEcD's travel regions, Georgia Agritourism Association). | JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD, EDA | Year 1-3 \$5,000- \$10,000 | | | |
| | | | Conduct audit of and recommend improvements to local and regional online materials (ex: JDANEG website and ED Pros Trails Connectivity Project). | GDCA, GDEcD, EDA | | | \$5,000 Annually |
| | | | Create and manage an inventory of vacant land, vacant buildings/spaces, Opportunity Zones (OZs), Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS) designations, Camera-Ready Communities, and other economic incentives and opportunities. | JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD | Year 2-3 \$5,000- \$10,000 | | |
| | | | Create and manage a list of funding and other opportunities for local entrepreneurs and artists. | Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, Artist Communities | Year 1-2 Staff Time | | \$5,000 Annually |
| | | | Create section of the NEGRC website to feature local government resources. | Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments | Year 1-2 Staff Time | | \$1,000 Annually |
| | | Comprehensive and accessible regional tourism database. | Create, manage, and promote a publicly accessible inventory of historic landmarks, festivals and events, tours, and other visitor attractions. | JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments | Year 4-5 \$10,000 | | |
| | | | Survey local, regional, and state stakeholders about whether to reconvene regular or as-needed meetings of the dormant regional tourism group. | JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD | | | Staff Time |
| | Resources to support and encourage local entrepreneurial development. | Support entrepreneurial development. | Develop a catalog of all regional entities that are involved in entrepreneurship and develop a plan for enhanced, easy access to existing regional entrepreneurship resources, including educational institutions | Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments | Year 3-5 \$10,000 | | |
| Conduct evaluation of the climate and capacity for entrepreneurial and small business development across the region, defining local strengths and weaknesses, funding gaps, and industry best practices | | | Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments | Year 1-2 \$25,000 | | | |
| Create feasibility study for regional business incubation facilities, and the potential role of local educational institutions in supporting the effort | | | JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments | Year 4-5 Staff Time | | | |

Work Program (continued)

| Priority | Strategy | Action | Partners | Short-Term (1-5 yrs) | Long-Term (6-10 yrs) | Ongoing |
|---|---|---|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs. | Connect employers with skilled and dedicated employees | Produce region-wide report on link between educational preparation/attainment and existing/future employment opportunities. | WIB, Local Governments, Technical Colleges | | | Staff Time |
| | | Develop educational program (materials and workshop) to educate local governments about diverse housing types for people of all incomes. | Local Governments | | | Staff Time |
| Connections to employment by method other than automobile are extremely limited | Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining workers and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs. | Create report on employer-assisted housing (EAH) initiatives. EAH programs can include: Counseling for employees about housing choices and financing Direct financial help to employees for rent, closing costs, or mortgage payments A real estate investment by an employer An Individual Development Account (IDA) or other savings program for employees interested in purchasing a home Use of government matching funds and tax credits as incentives for private investment | Local Governments, Federal Government | Year 3-4 Staffing | | |
| | | Develop region-wide Housing + Transportation Affordability analysis and recommendations. | Local Governments, Employers, Developers | Year 1-3 \$20,000/ Study | | |
| | Develop, implement, and sustain viable housing projects that meet market demands and needs. | Publish model guidelines and/or best management practices to assist communities in assessing housing needs and identifying appropriate housing types based on factors such as community demographics, future jobs and housing affordability goals. | Local Governments, GDCA | Year 2-4 \$17,500/ Study | | |
| | | Publish best management practices guide to mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented community design and amenities alternatives to single-family housing, including apartments, condos, and townhouses to meet the needs of both older and younger residents in the region. | Local Governments | | | Staff Time |
| | | Host regional housing collaborative forum, such as a housing roundtable, to promote information sharing and identification of partnership opportunities. | Local Governments, GDCA | Year 3-5 \$50,000 | | |
| Few transportation choices region wide | Provide communities with bicyclist- and pedestrian-friendly "Complete Streets" best practices to increase community appeal, safety, and provide access to all users | Develop Complete Streets design guidelines for various settings (neighborhood- and community-level). | Bike advocacy groups, Local Governments | Year 1-3 \$20,000/ Study | | |
| | | Create document of case studies and/or best practices for multi-purpose infrastructure improvements to maximize positive impacts of public investment (such as multi-use trails within utility easements). | Local Governments | Year 3-5 Staff Time | | |
| | | Complete a study to identify and establish protection and maintenance standards for regionally significant multi-modal transportation corridors. | Local Governments | Year 2-5 \$10,000 /Study | | |

Work Program (continued)

| Priority | Strategy | Action | Partners | Short-Term (1-5 yrs) | Long-Term (6-10 yrs) | Ongoing |
|--|---|--|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| | | Develop guide to maximizing longevity and flexibility of infrastructure improvements for local governments. | Local Governments | Year 4-5 \$25,000/Study | | |
| Aging physical infrastructure replacement. | Address aging infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and water and wastewater systems. | Develop best-practices document for capital improvements programming. Examples could include an Asset Management Program that: Conducts ongoing condition assessment that: Evaluates the existing condition of all assets Establishes Level of Service (LOS) Establishes a system of ranking and prioritization to identify the asset most likely to experience failure and identify alternatives for renewing the asset (e.g., rehabilitation versus replacement) Performs life cycle costing Identifies long term funding needs and strategies | Local Governments, UGA Vinson Institute | Year 4-5 \$25,000/Study | | |
| | | Publish how-to guide to conducting comprehensive infrastructure inventories and assessments for local governments. | Local Governments | Year 2-4 \$5,000/Community | | |
| | | Allocate resources efficiently. | Conduct feasibility study to analyze potential for publishing measures, benchmarks, and/or asset assessment processes to evaluate transportation system improvements and project prioritization. | Local Governments | Year 1-3 \$15,000/Community | |

APPENDICES

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| SWOT Analysis Summary | 45 |
| QCO Analysis Summary | 48 |
| Stakeholder Involvement Report | 50 |
| Supporting Data | 55 |

SWOT Analysis Summary

During the stakeholder engagement process, the NEGRC hosted two public hearings, four listening sessions, and an online questionnaire. Formal Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analyses were conducted at the listening sessions, and further SWOT information was distilled from feedback received via other methods.

Strengths

Education

The region has a strong public and private education system, including pre-school, K-12, technical, undergraduate, and post-graduate programs. Facilities are generally distributed well throughout the region.

Automobile Transportation Network

State and federal highways cover urbanized and rural Northeast Georgia well. Traffic congestion, to be expected in urbanized areas, is mostly found within the western section of the region toward Atlanta.

Recreation

Small pocket parks, major regional sports complexes, state parks, national forest, and other facilities provide space for traditional recreational programming. Greenways, trails, and paths are popular with hikers and people on bikes. River trails and lakes offer outstanding opportunities for boating.

Natural and Historic Resources

Stakeholders cite rural landscapes and small-town feel as major positive attributes. In addition to the recreation-based strengths

noted above, our riparian corridors and lakes provide clean water. Historic downtowns and rural places contribute to the sense of place and distinctiveness noted as major strengths.

Economic Development

The region's proximity to Atlanta and accessibility to the Savannah port contribute to excellence in production, employment, and shipping. Dedicated community and regional teams have been highly successful in cultivating existing businesses and drawing new opportunities for economic development.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Through the NEGRC, in project-specific groups, and as diverse municipal stakeholder groups within single counties, local governments in our region excel at working together for mutual benefit.

Agriculture

Agriculture has long been a major part of the culture and economy of Northeast Georgia; local-based food movements, including the "Georgia Grown" program, have bolstered this as a strength within our region.

Weaknesses

Non-Automobile Transportation

While the region excels in automobile transportation, stakeholders reference a deficiency in accommodating users of other modes, such as transit, walking, and bicycling.

Workforce

At regional listening sessions and in assorted local comprehensive planning input meetings, attendees have noted fairly consistently that the workforce is not well enough trained for the kinds of job currently available and projected to thrive in Northeast Georgia.

Sprawl

Stakeholder input notes that suburban sprawl is an issue. Inefficient land use threatening rural atmosphere, increased reliance on automobiles and declining ability of roads to handle traffic, and high infrastructure costs contribute to this concern.

Poverty

Certain areas of Northeast Georgia exhibit poverty levels well beyond state and national averages. Education, employment, and lack of public transportation options are seen as problematic here.

Traffic Congestion

Some urban and suburban areas face congestion on local roads and highways. Lack of funding for non-automobile modes, lack of coordination between planning for land use and transportation, and major population growth are among the likely responsible factors.

Housing

While stakeholders noted that a diversity of housing types exist within some areas of the region, the current housing inventory is not well suited to serve the projected rise in the aging population, or to attract and retain young professionals. Both groups have shown a preference for a greater range of options in housing type and price than currently exist.

Opportunities

Economic Development

Stakeholders want Northeast Georgia to be selective in economic development, identifying the best industries and employers and targeting them for success here. They specifically mentioned that they do not want poorly conceived economic development to become a threat to communities.

Film Industry

Within our regional economy, the film industry stands out as a new frontier for successful, high value/low impact development opportunities. Some communities have already seen significant benefits.

Education & Workforce

Due to the impression that a workforce imbalanced with employment needs is a weakness, we have an opportunity to realign needs. Career academies and technical colleges are already working with local governments, chambers of commerce, and employers to ensure that this happens.

Planning & Coordination

The activities of the NEGRC (including this regional plan, itself) offer substantial opportunities for strengthening decision making in land use, transportation, community and economic development, natural resources, and other areas.

Threats

Water Availability

After major droughts in recent years, stakeholders worry that water availability could become a serious threat (potentially affecting residents, businesses, and wildlife).

Uncoordinated Economic Development

While the previously-referenced partnerships present examples of successful regional collaboration in economic development, some areas and types of development remain isolated and piecemeal.

Atlanta Spillover

Regional and local stakeholders are concerned with the presence and ever-growing nature of the Atlanta metropolitan region immediately to the west of our region. Traffic, development pressures, air and water quality, and crime are examples of how this manifests.

Drug Abuse

Nationally, in Georgia, and for our region, drug abuse is becoming an increasingly prevalent concern. The opioid epidemic is responsible for crime, major health and public safety costs, community decline, and injury and death.

Infrastructure

Although infrastructure in Northeast Georgia is currently seen as a strength in some areas, region-wide, the need for improvement exists, both at present and to avoid future issues. Specific examples include roads and bridges, water and sewerage, and telecommunications (especially broadband inter-net).

Stasis

Stakeholder input suggests a relative resistance to change, and that the demands of the future must be addressed with forethought and willingness to vary approaches to business and industry, in addition to governance.

QCO Analysis Summary

This appendix uses The Georgia Department of Community Affairs guidance on best practices for implementation in analyzing the region's consistency with its Quality Community Objectives (QCO). The best practices were evaluated in two ways: first, by analyzing each of the region's communities' individual consistency as found in their most recent comprehensive plans and forming a regional mean, and additionally, by an analysis of the region at-large. The following summary provides a general, regionalized assessment of the QCOs.

Economic Prosperity

Economic development efforts are based on communities' strengths and weaknesses, as well as sustainability, diversity, and compatibility with existing businesses. Small business development is encouraged through entrepreneur support programs throughout most of the region. Jobs for skilled and unskilled labor, including professional and managerial positions, are available.

Resource Management

Most communities identify environmental protection as a strength, citing inventories and protection programs for natural resources and sensitive areas, passage and enforcement of environmental and tree preservation (and re-planting) ordinances, and use of stormwater best management practices. Additionally, the NEGRC has identified and is in the process of developing a plan for protection of Regionally Important Resources.

Efficient Land Use:

While most of the region maintains inventories of areas ripe for potential redevelopment and allows small-lot development (5,000 square feet or less), infill opportunities associated with previously-developed sites such as brownfields and greyfields are not broadly promoted. Likewise, a majority of communities do not plan for nodal development that focuses growth at intersections rather than allowing it to spread along major roads.

Local Preparedness

In large part, local governments, school districts, and other decision-making entities have and share 20 year population projections to inform planning. Along these lines, the region has designated focal areas for growth, based on natural resources inventories, and communities make public information relatively easy to come by. However, many communities lack a Capital Improvements Program that supports growth with plans.

Sense of Place

Northeast Georgia's communities value sense of place. Most cite having distinct characteristics, protecting history and heritage, and regulating signage. However, they do not typically regulate or offer guidance to developers on aesthetics, and farmland protection is not commonly applied.

Regional Cooperation

Most governments indicate that they participate in regional economic development and environmental organizations or initiatives; they also work with other communities to increase efficiency of service provision and coordinate planning activities. However, potential for more region-wide coordination exists.

Housing Options

Housing diversity throughout the region is sufficient to meet residents' needs, including multi-family and garage apartments. Traditional development patterns, including those that follow communities' original growth patterns, are not as prevalent; nor are community development corporations that build low-income housing or special needs housing.

Transportation Options

For the most part, non-automobile transportation is not well established in Northeast Georgia. Public transportation, walking, and bicycling do not play a significant role in most communities. While most communities do not have a plan for bicycle routes, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Council unanimously adopted the Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking. Additionally, walkability is enhanced by most communities allowing shared parking areas for retail and commercial uses where appropriate (having fewer parking lots creates potential for more intensive, pedestrian-friendly development).

Educational Opportunities

Communities in most areas of the region provide workforce training related to locally-available employment opportunities, and higher education is prevalent throughout Northeast Georgia, but job opportunities for college graduates are not as ubiquitous.

Community Health

The social safety net within the region is strong. With a robust network of both public and private providers that serve the most basic needs of the disadvantaged, the region is well served.

Stakeholder Involvement Report

Identification of Stakeholders

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission identified the following parties as essential stakeholders whose input was sought during the planning process. Stakeholders represented a variety of disciplines and affiliations, and were asked to help guide the development of the Regional Plan Update.

Stakeholders were chosen based on their role as regional decision-makers, their ability to affect or be affected by the regional plan, and/or their potential to serve as resources during the plan's implementation phase. The following organizations and disciplines from which stakeholder participation was solicited:

Regional Agencies & Organizations

- Ý Council of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
- Ý Planning Advisory Committee of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
- Ý Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging
- Ý Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board
- Ý Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycling and Pedestrian Task Force
- Ý Northeast Georgia Health District
- Ý Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority
- Ý Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study

State & Local Partners

- Northeast Georgia's 12 County and 54 Municipal Governments, and Residents
- Ý Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Ý Georgia Department of Transportation
- Ý Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Ý Georgia Forestry Commission
- Ý Main Street and Better Hometown Programs
- Ý Development Authorities and Chambers of Commerce
- Ý Convention and Visitors Bureaus

Fields & Disciplines

To complement the specific stakeholder groups identified above, representatives from the following fields and disciplines were consulted:

- Ý Agriculture & Forestry
- Ý Community & Economic Development
- Ý Community & Regional Planning
- Ý Education
- Ý Historic Preservation
- Ý Housing
- Ý Human Services
- Ý Natural & Cultural Resources
- Ý Recreation
- Ý Tourism Promotion
- Ý Transportation
- Ý Utilities

Identification of Participation Techniques

This section presents and describes various approaches that were used to gather input during the update of the Regional Plan. Some were intended to disseminate information to stakeholders, while others will generate stakeholder input to be used in developing plan elements.

Steering Committee

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Council, served as the Steering Committee for the update of the Regional Plan.

Steering Committee Members:

- Ý Andy Ainslie, Morgan County
- Ý Marcello Banes, Newton County
- Ý David Bentley, Morgan County
- Ý Richard Berry, Oglethorpe County
- Ý Jody Blackmon, Madison County
- Ý Linda Blechinger, Barrow County
- Ý Robbie Boggs, Oglethorpe County
- Ý Phil Brock, Greene County
- Ý Tom Crow, Jackson County
- Ý Joyce Chambers, Walton County
- Ý John Daniell, Oconee County
- Ý Nancy Denson, Athens-Clarke County
- Ý David Dyer, Jasper County
- Ý Dodd Ferrelle, Athens-Clarke County
- Ý Cary Fordyce, State Appointee (Governor's Office)
- Ý Pat Graham, Barrow County
- Ý Larry Guest, Elbert County
- Ý Amrey Harden, Oconee County
- Ý Doug Haynie, Jackson County
- Ý Lamar Houston, Athens-Clarke County
- Ý Tommy Jennings, Barrow County
- Ý Howard Ledford, State Appointee (Governor's Office)
- Ý Kevin Little, Walton County
- Ý Tommy Lyon, Elbert County
- Ý Tate O'Rourke, State Appointee (Governor's Office)
- Ý Bob Padilla, Madison County
- Ý Bill Palmer, Elbert County
- Ý Carl Pennamon, Jasper County
- Ý Fred Perriman, Morgan County
- Ý Billy Pittard, Oglethorpe County
- Ý Jeffery Smith, Greene County
- Ý Lee Rhodes, Greene County
- Ý Roy Roberts, State Appointee (Lt. Governor's Office)
- Ý Jerry Roseberry, Newton County
- Ý John Scarborough, Madison County
- Ý Jim Shaw, Jackson County
- Ý Jeffery Smith, Greene County
- Ý Frank Turner, Newton County
- Ý Stone Workman, Jasper County

Technical Advisory Committee

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Planning and Government Services Committee, a working group of the NEGRC's Council with the assistance of staff of the NEGRC's Planning and Government Services Division served as the regional plan's Technical Advisory Committee.

Technical Advisory Committee Members:

- Ý Tommy Lyon, Chair, Elbert County
- Ý Andy Ainslie, Morgan County
- Ý Linda Blechinger, Barrow County
- Ý John Daniell, Oconee County
- Ý David Dyer, Jasper County
- Ý Pat Graham, Barrow County
- Ý Carl Pennamon, Jasper County
- Ý Cary Fordyce, State Appointee (Governor's Office)
- Ý Howard Ledford, State Appointee (Governor's Office)
- Ý Bill Palmer, Elbert County
- Ý Jerry Roseberry, Newton County
- Ý
- Regional Commission Staff:
- Ý Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director
- Ý Justin Crighton, Planner
- Ý John Devine, Principal Planner
- Ý

Public Hearings

Two public hearings were held to present important information about how to provide input and the plan's recommendations to stakeholders, and the general public: the first at the Regional Commission's Headquarters and the second as part of a regularly scheduled Planning & Government Services (PGS) Committee Meeting (immediately preceding NEGRC council meeting). NEGRC staff was present at both to review plan elements and receive input from attendees. Public Hearings were held as follows:

- Y November 1, 2017 NEGRC Headquarters - Athens, GA
- Y February 15, 2018 NEGRC PGS Committee Mtg. - Athens, GA
- Y

| NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION | | | |
|---|------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Public Hearing #1: November 1, 2017 - 10:00 a.m. NEGRC Headquarters Building | | | |
| NAME | TITLE | ADDRESS | EMAIL |
| JOHN PEVINE JUSTIN CRIGHTON | Principal Planner Planner | NEGRC NEGRC | — |

THIS PUBLIC HEARING ALSO SERVED AS LISTENING SESSION #1

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
Planning & Government Services (PGS) Committee**

Meeting Agenda

February 15, 2018 at 11:30a.m. Hilton Garden Inn

| | |
|---|--------------|
| I. Call to Order | Tommy Lyon |
| II. Approval of January 18, 2018 Minutes | Tommy Lyon |
| III. Planning & Government Services (PGS) Report -Regional Plan Update/DCA Transmittal | Burke Walker |
| IV. Other Business/Area Reports | Members |
| V. Adjournment | Tommy Lyon |

Press Release

For Immediate Release — October 13, 2017

REGIONAL PLAN HEARING & LISTENING SESSION

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) announces a regional hearing and listening session for the update to the 12-county area's long-range plan. The purpose of the regional hearing is to inform interested parties about the process NEGRC will use to develop the update. The listening session will be used to gather attendees' input for the region.

The regional hearing will take place at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 1, 2017 at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (305 Research Dr., Athens). The listening session will follow immediately after. Please contact Justin Crighton, NEGRC Planner, at jcrighton@negrc.org or (706) 369-5650 with any questions.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) serves Athens-Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton counties.

10/13/2017

Public Listening Sessions

Four listening sessions for the update of the Regional Plan were held to ask invited stakeholders about their general impressions of the region, and how they see it evolving over the next 20 years. Attendees were asked to participate in a SWOT analysis, the results of which factored heavily into the formulation and prioritization of the list of Needs and Opportunities. Listening Sessions were held as follows:

- Y November 1, 2017 NEGRC Headquarters - Athens, GA
- Y November 3, 2017 Walton County Government Center - Monroe, GA
- Y November 13, 2017 Jackson County Planning Auditorium - Jefferson, GA
- Y November 17, 2017 NEGRC Headquarters - Athens, GA

| NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION | | | |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Listening Session #2: November 3, 2017 - 3:00 p.m. Walton County Government Building | | | |
| NAME | TITLE | ADDRESS | EMAIL |
| Joshua Jameson | Council member (Good Hope) | 89 Wayne Meadows Rd Good Hope | jjameson@monroega.gov |
| Ruben Schwartz | Project Specialist | 433 Lawrenceville Rd Lawrenceville | rschwartz@loganvillega.gov |
| Tim Prater | Director (Loganville) | 493 Lawrenceville Rd Loganville | tprater@loganvillega.gov |
| Shannon Bond | Deputy Director | 4305 Lawrenceville Rd Logv | sbond@loganville-ga.gov |
| William Malcom | Council Member (Good Hope) | P.O. Box 54, Good Hope, GA | wmalcom30@gmail.com |
| Dan Curry | Mayor Loganville | 4303 Lawrence Rd Loganville | dancur607@bellsouth.net |
| Tommy Guinn | Mayor Good Hope | P.O. Box 10 Good Hope | TommyGuinn@goodhopega.com |
| Mike Martin | Director, Walton | 303 S Hammond Dr | mmartin@walton-ga.gov |
| Charna Parker | Asst. Director, Walton | 303 S Hammond Dr | cparker@walton-ga.gov |
| Paul Dally | Mayor - Social Circle | 1166 N Cherokee Rd Social Circle | pdally@socialcirclega.com |
| Apple Schirmer | City Manager | 1166 N Cherokee Rd Social Circle | aschirmer@socialcirclega.com |
| Patrick Kelley | Code Director | 215 N Broad St | pkelley@monroega.gov |
| Ein Kennedy | Planner, NEGRC | 305 Research Dr., Athens | ekennedy@negrc.org |

| NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION | | | |
|---|------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Public Hearing #1: November 1, 2017 - 10:00 a.m. NEGRC Headquarters Building | | | |
| NAME | TITLE | ADDRESS | EMAIL |
| JOHN PEVINE JUSTIN CRIGHTON | Principal Planner Planner | NEGRC NEGRC | — |

THIS PUBLIC HEARING ALSO SERVED AS LISTENING SESSION #1

| NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------|--|
| Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Listening Session #3: November 13, 2017 - 2:00 p.m. Jackson County Planning Auditorium | | | |
| NAME | TITLE | ADDRESS | EMAIL |
| Toni Harvey Gina Roy Jerry Weitz Paul Graham Sean Cigone | Sr. Planner Public Dev DIRECTOR Consulting Planner Chairman Planner | 67 Athens St 67 Athens St | tharvey@jacksoncountygapan.com groya@jacksoncountygapan.com jweitz@bllcath.net pgraham@lancasterga.com scigone@negrc.org |

| NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION | | | |
|---|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Listening Session #4: November 17, 2017 - 10:00 a.m. NEGRC Headquarters Building | | | |
| NAME | TITLE | ADDRESS | EMAIL |
| Stephen W. Smith Burke Walker | Planner - NEGRC Director/AR/DC Planner, PGS | 305 Research Dr. | ssmith@negrc.org bwalker@negrc.org |

Website Information

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission’s website (NEGRC.org) served as the main online conduit of information for the Regional Plan. The site served as an easily accessible portal for to check the plan’s process, drafts, and online survey throughout the update process.

Online Survey

An online survey was developed and deployed to gather responses from citizens across the region who were unable to physically attend a listening session, or another event. The link to the survey was available on the NEGRC’s Regional Plan web page, as well as distributed via e-mail to all of our local governments with a request to share on their own social media. The intent of the online survey was to gather general comments, opinions and how they would prioritize goals for the region as a whole.

| ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE & SELECTED RESULTS | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Questionnaire</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Results will be used to identify the needs and opportunities that will help guide the development of the Regional Plan Update. Your responses will help to shape a vision for the future of the region. It should take about 10-15 minutes to complete, and comprises 8 questions. We encourage you to express your opinions as thoroughly as possible in your remarks. Thank you again for your participation.</p> <p>What county to you live in? <input type="text"/> Other: <input type="text"/></p> <p>What county to you work in? <input type="text"/> Other: <input type="text"/></p> <p>What are three defining characteristics of the Region that you would like to see preserved or enhanced? <input type="text"/></p> | <p>What patterns or trends in development (within your community and region-wide) would you NOT like to see occur or continue? <input type="text"/></p> <p>What are the most pressing issues that will affect the Region in the future? <input type="text"/></p> <p>Are there any particular places in your community (or elsewhere) that especially require attention? If so, what are they, what is the problem, and what would you do to fix it? (Please be specific in your description of the location.) <input type="text"/></p> <p>What is the region's greatest need? <input type="text"/></p> | <p>What is the region's greatest need? <input type="text"/></p> <p>What is the region's greatest strength? <input type="text"/></p> <p>03 What are three defining characteristics of the Region that you would like to see preserved or enhanced? 1. The rural feel with access to many metropolitan opportunities. 2. Preserve the way the individual counties work together as a region. 3. Overall communication among community leaders.</p> <p>Nature Areas - RIVERS Trails and Parks Antebellum History</p> <p>04 What patterns or trends in development (within your community and region-wide) would you NOT like to see occur or continue? Growth is coming... I would like to make sure we are prepared</p> <p>Newton has a very serious crime problem. Murders, gun violence, burglaries, lack of efficient Public Safety</p> |

Supporting Data

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Population | 56 |
| Total Population | 56 |
| Age Distribution | 57 |
| Race and Ethnicity | 58 |
| Income | 58 |
| Economic Development | 60 |
| Economic Base | 60 |
| Labor Force | 61 |
| Economic Resources | 63 |
| Economic Trends | 67 |
| Housing | 68 |
| Housing Types & Mixes | 68 |
| Condition and Occupancy | 69 |
| Cost of Housing and Cost-Burdened Households | 71 |
| Special Housing Needs | 73 |
| Community Facilities and Services | 76 |
| Intergovernmental Coordination | 77 |
| Transportation System | 80 |

