

**RESOLUTION  
TO ADOPT THE  
COMMUNITY AGENDA  
OF THE  
JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2008-2018  
FOR WHITFIELD COUNTY, AND CITIES OF  
DALTON, TUNNEL HILL, AND VARNELL**

**Whereas**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan to retain their Qualified Local Government status and eligibility for State permits, grants, and loans; and

**Whereas**, the Community Agenda 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell has been completed to establish a future development vision, policies and implementation strategies to guide growth and development for the county and its cities; and

**Whereas**, such Community Agenda, 2008-2018 has been approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as meeting Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

**Now Therefore Be It Resolved**, that the City of Varnell hereby officially adopts the Community Agenda, 2008-2018 for Whitfield County and the Cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill and Varnell.

**Resolved**, this <sup>9<sup>th</sup></sup> day of December, 2008.

BY:

Dan Peoples  
Mayor, City of Varnell

ATTEST:

Dan Harrison  
City Clerk, City of Varnell



# CITY OF VARNELL

## CHAPTER 5

### *Presenting the Community Vision, Community Issues & Opportunities and the Implementation Plan for the City of 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.

## COMMUNITY VISION

The Community Vision section paints a picture of what the City desires to become and provides complete descriptions of the development patterns envisioned. This section begins with the vision statement for City. The Community Vision then presents the Future Development Map subsection that includes the Future Development Map with supporting character area descriptions. Finally, the Community Vision outlines its relationship to the Quality Community Objectives (QCO) as set forth by DCA in Appendix A.



*Historic Prater's Mill is located in east 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

## 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, which was developed with the extensive public visioning process described in Chapter 1, 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 the Future Development Maps and character area narratives for the City of Varnell. Each 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 areas
- 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 City 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 in Appendix A. This identifies the QCOs that will be pursued in the character area. These objectives were adopted by



*Existing commercial development located along SR 71/Cleveland Highway in Varnell*

the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to measure how communities preserve their unique resources while accommodating future development.

The Future Development Map for the City of Varnell identifies the following character areas:

- Preserve
- Ridge Conservation
- Town Neighborhood
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Emerging Suburban
- Transition Corridor
- Community Activity Center

## 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

### Primary Land Uses

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

### Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a comprehensive system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and integrates recommendations of the Conasauga River Alliance
- ☞ Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross these areas



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



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

- ☞ *Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations*
- ☞ *Encourage use of Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting 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 the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ minimum environmental planning criteria*
- ☞ *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for erosion and sedimentation, as defined in the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act*

## **RIDGE CONSERVATION**

This area includes all steep slopes (minimum slope of 25%) in the City, which include areas in Varnell. 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 areas’ ridgelines, which contribute to the City’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 ordinance

## 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. 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 and that of neighboring homes
- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale and style of existing adjacent homes
- Ensure that building setbacks of infill development are consistent with surrounding homes
- Promote single-family uses
- Increase pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and the Community 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



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

## Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

## Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Amend 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 sub-standard facilities and prioritize projects
- ☞ Implement recommended sidewalk projects from the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities for the North Georgia Region

## 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 traditional town centers. Much of Varnell is designated Suburban Neighborhood based on existing development patterns.

### Development Pattern

The development pattern should seek to:

- Accommodate infill development that compliments the scale and style of existing adjacent homes
- Ensure that building setbacks of infill development are consistent with surrounding 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



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

- Accommodate senior housing opportunities, which can be integrated into neighborhoods that benefit from close proximity to area goods 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

### Primary Land Uses

- Single-family residential
- Parks
- Public/institutional

### Implementation Strategies

- ☞ Amend zoning ordinance to create flexible setback provisions for infill development
- ☞ Prepare and adopt a connector street plan
- ☞ Complete inventory and analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify needs and prioritize projects: new systems, filling in gaps in existing systems, or replacing sub-standard facilities

## EMERGING SUBURBAN

The Emerging Suburban character area includes areas just outside the City 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. For the most part, non-residential uses should be accommodated at mixed use nodes located at designated major intersections on state or federal highways (See Community Activity Center character area description).

New development should provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, a range in housing types and sizes, and traffic calming measures. Neighborhood focal points can also be created by locating schools, community centers, or well-designed small-scale commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences (see Community Activity Center character area description). This preferred neighborhood design can be accommodated with master-planned, Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND). 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.

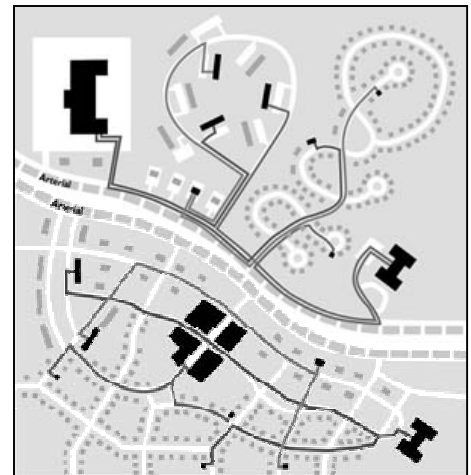
### Development Pattern

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



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



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.

- 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
- 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 soil erosion control and groundwater recharge area protection measures, including Best Management Practices (BMP)

### 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
- ☞ Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to 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 maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible.



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



*A wider range of housing types in limited areas of the county, such as attached townhomes shown above integrated into a larger mixed use neighborhood, is needed in order to meet the anticipated demand of changing demographics in Whitfield County.*

## COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER

The Community Activity Center character represents locations at important intersections along major thoroughfares adjacent to Town Neighborhood, 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 can 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 strong, walkable connections 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
- Accommodate smaller-scale commercial uses that serve local residents rather than regional-oriented "big box" development
- Discourage strip development



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



*Development should blend in with surrounding areas and is encouraged to protect existing trees.*

- Limit driveway spacing along the highway frontage and align driveways wherever possible and require shared driveways and 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

### **Implementation Strategies**

- ☞ Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities
- ☞ 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 for Community Activity Center character area locations
- ☞ Adopt mixed use development ordinance
- ☞ Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly



*Mixed use buildings provide opportunities for retail, office and residential uses in the same building.*

## TRANSITION CORRIDOR

The Transition Corridor character area represents arterial 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.

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.

### 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



*Transition Corridor in Varnell and adjacent unincorporated Whitfield County along SR 71/Cleveland Highway*

- 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

### **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 Plans for Transition Corridor character area locations to guide enhancements*
- ☞ *Adopt an overlay district or amend land development regulations to direct building placement and design, sign placement, size and materials, landscaping, access and other elements that contribute to the look and function of the corridor*

## Map I Future Development Map – City of Varnell

## COMMUNITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section provides an updated list of issues and opportunities for the City of Varnell and Whitfield County that was identified in the *Community Assessment* portion of the Comprehensive Plan. This updated version reflects public comments gained from the community participation activities as well as other input gathered during the review of the *Community Assessment*. The following information is organized by the major topics defined in the DCA Local Planning Requirements:

- Population
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Community Facilities & Services
- Natural & Cultural Resources
- Land Use
- Transportation
- Intergovernmental Coordination

### POPULATION

#### Issues

**Aging population** – Varnell’s aging population will increasingly have special needs in terms of residential choices and community services and facilities.

#### Opportunities

**Steady income levels** – Whitfield County’s per capita personal income (PCPI) level ranked 16th in the state and was 96% of the state average and 86% of the national average.

#### Strategies

- ☞ Update comprehensive plan frequently to insure planned growth and enact appropriate growth management ordinances

### HOUSING

#### Issues

**Aging in place** – As large segments of the population age, the need continues to grow and demand will be created to address residential needs of the Baby Boomers and empty nesters, including providing for “aging in place” with associated services and reasonable accommodation for those that are handicapped or disabled.



*Varnell’s Town Neighborhood character area includes churches, small scale retail, residential and civic uses.*

**Limited housing mix** – Most of Varnell’s housing stock is made up of large-acre lot, single-family residential with very few multi-family options available.

**Affordable workforce housing** – Many employees of Whitfield County businesses have limited affordable housing choices within the County at their income levels. Mobile homes/trailers and manufactured housing are currently providing many with affordable housing in Whitfield and adjacent counties.

**Additional housing need relative to employment** - The 2006 employment-to-housing ratio of 1.85 fell well above the standard target of 1.5. The 2006 employment-to-labor force ratio of 1.36 fell well above the standard target of 1.0. These ratios show the continued strength of the Whitfield County employment base, but outline the need for additional housing within the County for local employees.

**High foreclosure rate** – Foreclosures require alternative housing options for property owners, and resulting vacant homes contribute to declining neighborhood property values and local tax revenue.

**Deteriorating housing** – Poor housing conditions can be found in Varnell and surrounding areas.

### Opportunities

**Steady home value increases** - Both the number of sales and the value of homes in Whitfield County showed a steady increase from 1997 to 2004. Average home sale prices increased 23.7% from 1997 to 2004, and 15.7% from 2000 to 2004. The average home sales price was \$124,430 in 2004.

**Local assistance** - The Dalton-Whitfield Community Development Corporation offers comprehensive services for residents, helping to increase home ownership, improve the physical condition of housing and the quality of affordable housing, decreasing the foreclosure rate and decreasing the number of homeless and unstably housed residents.

**Infill housing** - Infill housing opportunities can contribute to affordable housing stock and help stabilize and enhance established neighborhoods in Varnell.

### Strategies

- ☞ Increase code enforcement in Varnell to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")
- ☞ Encourage a mixture of housing types in developing areas, concentrating new 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 and other services
- ☞ Recruit residential developers who build a range in housing types/price points, including higher value housing



*Much of the housing development in the Varnell area is occurring outside of the city limits in unincorporated Whitfield County.*

- ☞ Adopt/amend zoning districts that allow more intense, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development and also encourage a variety of housing types
- ☞ Encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)
- ☞ Promote higher value housing development based on large population of homeowners who may "trade up" in upcoming years

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Issues

**Lagging wages in County**— Average weekly wage and annual pay for most industries trailed the state and nation. Whitfield County residents who were part of the labor force were less likely than residents of the state as a whole to hold management, professional and related occupations and more likely to hold positions in production, transportation and material moving occupations.

**Dependence on few industries** – The County is largely dependent on a few industry super-sectors – Manufacturing; Trade, Transportation & Utilities; and Professional & Business. These three sectors account for 80% of all jobs in the County. One in 10 textile product mill jobs in the United States is located within Whitfield County.

**Employing educated young workers** – There is limited diversity of the local economy and college educated young residents often seek job opportunities outside of Whitfield County. New industry and professional job opportunities are needed to attract and keep young workers in the area.

**Educational Attainment** – The County suffers from significantly low levels of educational attainment. On every level of educational attainment, the County lags behind the state and other nearby Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

**Limited entertainment and shopping options** – Compared to nearby areas, Varnell and surrounding area suffers from a proportional lack of entertainment establishments as well as big box and upscale retailers.

**Projected manufacturing sector declines** – The manufacturing supersector grew modestly from 1990 to 2006 and maintained the largest share of employment in Whitfield County at 38.1% (down from 41.2% in 2000 and 51.4% in 1990). However, textile mills in the Northwest Georgia Region are projected by the Georgia Department of Labor to see employment losses in their respective sectors of 1,580 jobs between 2004 and 2014.

**Attracting young professionals to City neighborhoods** – Many young professional employees in Whitfield County choose to live in areas outside of the County, in spite of longer commutes. The area has struggled to attract these young professionals the neighborhoods within Whitfield County.



*Varnell Gymnasium provides opportunities for recreation for the area residents.*

## Opportunities

**Strong Manufacturing base** – Manufacturing accounts for nearly one in two jobs in Whitfield County. Manufacturing's share of employment in Whitfield County is more than three times the national average.

**Local employment available for local residents** - Approximately 87% of the Whitfield County labor force worked inside the County in 2000, leaving only 13% commuting to jobs outside of the County. Whitfield County residents held 60% of the jobs available in the county.

**Access to Transportation** - Varnell businesses have ready access to a major interstate corridor (via a short drive on SR 201), state highways, a rail corridor and airports in Chattanooga and Atlanta.

**Local education and job training resources** – Whitfield County has strong local institutions that provide higher education and job training, including Dalton State College which has a large student population and good diversity of degree programs.

## Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate economic development activities for recruiting research and office parks to facilitate efforts to diversify the economic base*
- ☞ *Continue business/industrial retention efforts*
- ☞ *Coordinate completion of implementation of sewer master plan to expand infrastructure to strategic opportunity areas shown on the Future Development Map*
- ☞ *Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in the town center as well as existing and emerging Community Activity Centers*
- ☞ *Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare local workers for expanded opportunities available in a more diversified local economy*
- ☞ *Implement strategies outlined by the Target Industry Plan for Whitfield County, the Whitfield County Situational Analysis and Strategic Implications reports, and the 2008 branding prepared by 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*
- ☞ *Continue to support and promote efforts of Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority*



*U.S. Post Office in Varnell*

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

### Issues

**Limited sewer service area** – Growth in Varnell and surrounding area is currently limited due to lack of sewer infrastructure. Planned sewer expansion should be coordinated with land use planning.

### Opportunities

**Sewer expansion as a tool to manage growth** - Limited sewer creates the need for large residential lots. As planned sewer services expand, the opportunity exists to use the expansion as a way to direct growth to locations the county outlines in the land use plan and to manage the timing of new growth.

**Future water needs** – Substantial water resources are available in Varnell via Dalton Utilities that can support long term growth with proactive planning and resource management.

### Strategies

- ☞ Expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned.
- ☞ Complete and implement long range water resources master plan
- ☞ After extension of sewer service to Varnell, discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure. Septic tanks will remain appropriate for areas designated to remain rural during the planning period.
- ☞ Update infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with the Future Development Map and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the Future Development Map
- ☞ Coordinate with the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the Whitfield County Board of Education on school planning and community planning efforts; establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments that match Whitfield County requirements
- ☞ Coordinate with the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners to Implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations
- ☞ Continue to actively pursue greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails



*The City of Varnell provides trash pickup services to the residents of the City.*

## TRANSPORTATION

### Issues

**Limited public transit** – There are sizable numbers of low-income, elderly, disabled, and minority persons in the Varnell area who need non-automobile options to access jobs, medical care, and shopping needs.

**Limited bicycle/pedestrian facilities** – Though sidewalks are in place on SR 71, Varnell and surrounding area does not have an adequate sidewalk network, connectivity between the City neighborhoods, the unincorporated community surrounding Nob North Golf Course is limited.

### Opportunities

**Coordinated planning** – As the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update is upcoming (per the MPO), there is a good current opportunity for coordination of land use and transportation planning.

**Public transportation opportunities** – There is the potential to enhance public transportation, especially for special needs population, building on the currently underutilized on-call bus system provided by Whitfield County or implementing a fixed-route system.

**Implementation of bike/pedestrian recommendations** – Projects have already been identified in previous studies, including the 2005 Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan, that identify needed improvements. In addition, roadway improvement projects present an opportunity to incorporate pedestrian and/or bicycle provisions, and Varnell's and Whitfield County's waterways provide potential greenway/trail alignments.



*Varnell is surrounded by rural, agricultural areas, such as the area shown here between the city and SR 71/Cleveland Highway.*

### Strategies

- ☞ *Coordinate with the Dalton-Whitfield MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update*
- ☞ *Coordinate with the MPO in the development of the street connectivity study that includes the adoption of a collector street plan that provides a long-range outline for developer-driven construction of a connected street system in areas where growth is anticipated*
- ☞ *Adopt street standards that prescribe “Complete Streets” with the construction of new roads, including those constructed by public agencies and developers, that provide room for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles, thus offering residents and those traveling through each community a variety of transportation choices*
- ☞ *Adopt subdivision regulation and zoning ordinance amendments that require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path system in all new developments*
- ☞ *Prepare an Access Management Plan for the Community Activity Center character area (Hwy 71) with recommendations that*

include opportunities for driveway consolidation and interparcel access

- ☞ Coordinate with the MPO bicycle/pedestrian planning efforts in addition to implementing recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- ☞ Participate in regional efforts to promote the Chattanooga to Atlanta passenger High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) rail
- ☞ Continue coordinated land use and transportation planning
- ☞ Coordinate with MPO Traffic Signalization Study
- ☞ Coordinate with MPO to implement the recommendations outlined in the Transit Feasibility Study

## NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

### Issues

**Water quality** – Stormwater runoff from developed and developing areas increases the pollution of the watershed and increases flooding as water moves more quickly.

**Protecting mountain and valley views** – The views created by the topography in Varnell and surrounding areas of Whitfield County are of great value. Protecting these assets is important in order to continue to attract quality development in addition to preserving the historic rural character of the City and County.

**Protecting Civil War sites** – Civil War sites/land areas are in need of protection. The National Park Service has identified Whitfield County as having the largest intact collection of Civil War defenses in the nation.

**Protecting Trail of Tears sites** – Trail of Tears and other sites important to the County's Native American history are in need of protection.

**Protecting Old Federal Road sites** – The Old Federal road is in need of protection.

**Out-of-date historic resource inventory** – The last historic resources survey in Whitfield County that included Varnell was last performed in 1994. Many structures, sites and districts not included in the 1994 study have since become eligible, based on the minimum criteria that a resource is at least 50 years old.

**Lacking environmental regulations** – Varnell lacks needed regulations for protection of steep slopes, protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas and wetlands.

**Greenspace and parks** – There is a need for more land for active and passive parks and greenspace in Varnell. Existing and future parks should provide for outdoor recreation opportunities for all age groups of the population, including many more trails.

**Environmental planning with future land use and development** Environmental considerations are needed in the context of future land use planning and development to protect and preserve ecosystems and watersheds.



*Varnell's historic housing stock is threatened.*

## Opportunities

**Promotion of historic sites as tourist destinations** – Civil War, Trail of Tears and Old Federal Road sites could be promoted more directly as tourist destinations. The not-for-profit Prater's Mill Foundation, which restored Prater's Mill and oversees preservation and promotion efforts, provides a good working model of organized efforts that can benefit historic preservation efforts in the County.

**Appreciation of history** – Residents and elected officials of Varnell and Whitfield County have a strong appreciation for the history and culture of the area and understand the importance of protecting these assets as new development occurs.

**Available preservation tools** - Tools exist that can assist with protection and acquisition of historic buildings and sites, including revolving funds for repair and acquisition of properties, façade or conservation easement negotiation, utilization of federal funds, promotion of conservation tax credits, the DCA Regionally Important Resource (RIR) Program for historic and natural resources, and designation of Varnell as a Certified Local Government (CLG).

## Strategies

- ☞ *Adopt a Hillside Development Ordinance*
- ☞ *Incorporate map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the review process.*
- ☞ *Adopt the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual's Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section for new development to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design*
- ☞ *Coordinate with Whitfield County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan that outlines a countywide system of interconnected greenway/trail corridors, defines specific priorities for property acquisition to develop the system, and integrates recommendations of Conasauga River Alliance*
- ☞ *Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources, including Prater's Mill*
- ☞ *Coordinate with Whitfield County to prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan*
- ☞ *Support minimum state requirements for stream buffers*
- ☞ *Adopt applicable "Part V" Environmental Ordinances in accordance with Department of Natural Resources' minimum environmental planning criteria*
- ☞ *Follow Best Management Practices (BMP) for any land disturbance activities to protect water quality*



*Locally-owned commercial establishments remain part of Varnell's retail mix.*

- ☞ Amend zoning ordinance to require landscaping with native vegetation or non-invasive species that requires limited irrigation (or none at all)
- ☞ Adopt a historic preservation ordinance and create a historic preservation commission to be able to seek Certified Local Government (CLG) status, which can make the City eligible for federal historic preservation funds

## LAND USE

### Issues

**Commercial services imbalance** – There is a lack of commercial services and providers of goods in the Varnell and north Whitfield County where there is a growing population. Almost all commercial activity is concentrated in Dalton.

**Code enforcement and maintenance standards** – There is a need to better protect the image and attractiveness of the Varnell by requiring more consistent property maintenance and design standards.

**Limited entertainment** – Local ordinances contribute to the lack of local entertainment and dining options.

### Opportunities

**Mixed use development** – Most development in Varnell and the surrounding area is suburban residential development that separates residential from commercial. Mixed use developments that are clustered or in nodes could provide jobs and services within walking distance of residences and also preserve open space.

**Traditional Neighborhood Development** – Traditional neighborhood development can provide a wide range of housing types in newly developing areas with a connected pedestrian-friendly street system and ample open space. The City and County can encourage clustering of community facilities including schools, fire stations, libraries and parks in order to create a sense of place.

**Greenspace preservation** – In addition to public purchase of land for greenspace and parks, greenspace can be permanently protected through private initiatives such as new residential development where incentives are provided for greenspace preservation (i.e. conservation subdivision practices).

### Strategies

- ☞ Prepare and adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) ordinance specifically tailored to meet the needs of Varnell
- ☞ Prepare and adopt “Big Box” ordinance to specify design parameters, maximum square footage requirements, a plan for re-use, etc.



*New commercial development along SR 71/Cleveland Highway in Varnell*

- ☞ Prepare and adopt design/development standards for industrial sites, and consider creation of a “development impact matrix” to determine potential impacts of specific industries on the environment and infrastructure
- ☞ Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks with new development
- ☞ Prepare and adopt sign ordinance amendments to implement desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements that require connected system of streets within new subdivisions and connect to existing subdivisions, including requiring multiple stub out streets to allow for future connectivity when adjacent properties develop
- ☞ Create more specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas
- ☞ Develop zoning districts, overlay or amendment to existing districts that allow for senior living opportunities near other housing, ranging from senior-oriented housing developments to attached or detached “granny flats” in neighborhoods
- ☞ Encourage mixed use development nodes at major intersections along corridors and other throughway roads to lessen the effects of linear sprawl
- ☞ Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance that limits clearing and grading and therefore maintain the natural tree canopy as much as possible.



Corner commercial butler building located in the heart of Varnell near SR 201

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

### Issues





**Coordination with schools** – Coordination between the school systems, city councils and the BOC ensures that new facilities keep up with growth.

**Unincorporated islands and municipal boundaries** – Varnell includes multiple areas of unincorporated islands. In addition, municipal boundaries have been expanded over time in such a way as to create confusing service delivery areas surrounding the City.

### Opportunities

**Municipal boundaries coordination** – Varnell and Whitfield County should coordinate to correct the annexation islands and other City boundary-related issues.

## Strategies

-  *Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation*
-  *Coordinate to develop a unified system for sharing permit information in order to assist schools in estimating future enrollment*
-  *Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services*
-  *Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO*

## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Implementation Program outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Vision for Future Development and for addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. It section identifies the specific measures to be undertaken by the City of Varnell to implement the Community Agenda. The Implementation Program includes the following sections:

- 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments (see appendix B)
- 2008-2012 Short Term Work Program
- Long Term Work Program
- Policies

### SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM (STWP)

The Short-Term Work Program (STWP) identifies specific implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*. For each action the STWP outlines the following information:

- Brief description
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost
- Funding source

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Housing	Increase code enforcement throughout the City to speed the repair or removal of dilapidated homes and littered properties (including abandoned "junk trailers")					✓	City Council, City Administrator	TBD	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned		✓				City Administrator	N/A	DU (Dalton Utilities)
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate with the County to implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	N/A	County, General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Participate in the creation of a long range water resources master plan			✓			City Administrator	N/A	DU (Dalton Utilities)
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate with County to update infrastructure master plans to establish consistency with comprehensive plan and implement infrastructure expansion that is consistent with the plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	TBD	County, General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Coordinate school planning and community planning efforts; establish requirements for land dedication for new schools in large planned developments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, County Board of Ed.	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Community Facilities & Services	Identify new park land for small neighborhood parks in Emerging Suburban areas along with greenspace preservation/acquisition opportunities and development of connected greenways with trails			✓	✓		City Council, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Transportation	Coordinate with the MPO on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Administrator	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Transportation	Adopt specific cross sections for roads that cross Preserve Character areas			✓			City Council, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund

Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018

Category	Action/Implementation Strategy	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Transportation	Prepare an existing conditions analysis of the City's sidewalks to identify sub-standard facilities and prioritize repair or replacement projects			✓			City Council, MPO	TBD	General Fund, MPO
Transportation	Prepare and adopt street connectivity requirements for residential subdivisions			✓			City Council, MPO	TBD	General Fund, MPO
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt a Hillside Development/Steep Slopes Ordinance					✓	City Council, RDC	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Amend zoning ordinance to require landscaping with native vegetation or non-invasive species that requires limited irrigation (or none at all)				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Adopt GA DNR "Part V" Environmental Ordinances for river corridor, watershed protection and groundwater recharge areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, RDC	N/A	General Fund
Natural & Cultural Resources	Promote the use of conservation easements and conservation tax credits to preserve open space					✓	City Administrator	N/A (in house)	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt a "Big Box" ordinance				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Prepare and adopt necessary code amendments to require interparcel access, limit curb cuts, and require sidewalks or alternative pedestrian path systems with new development				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt a TND ordinance				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to permit senior living opportunities near other housing				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Amend zoning ordinance to permit flexible building setback provisions for infill development				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Adopt Mixed Use development ordinance				✓		City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Land Use	Review sign ordinance for inconsistencies with the desired development pattern and amend accordingly		✓				City Council, RDC	TBD	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Maintain an adequate Whitfield County service delivery strategy and intergovernmental agreement concerning annexation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Study potential impacts of consolidation of some municipal and County government services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, RDC	N/A	General Fund
Intergovernmental Coordination	Continue to coordinate transportation planning activities with the MPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	City Council, MPO	N/A	General Fund

## LONG TERM WORK PROGRAM

A long term work program identifies specific long-term implementation actions the City government or other entities intend to take beyond the first five-year timeframe of the planning period. This includes ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, and financing arrangements or other programs/initiatives to be put in place to implement the *Community Agenda*.

### **Community Facilities & Services**

- Coordinate with Dalton Utilities to expand sewer service to include currently underserved, developed areas and to areas where growth is planned
- Coordinate with the County to implement the Whitfield County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommendations

### **Transportation**

- Coordinate with the MPO in the development of a street connectivity study
- Adopt street standards that prescribe “Complete Streets” with the construction of new roads
- Prepare an Access Management Plan for Community Activity Center character areas
- Implement recommendations identified in the North Georgia Regional Bike and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- Adopt Streetscape Master Plans for Transition Corridor character area locations to guide future enhancements

### **Natural & Cultural Resources**

- Adopt and encourage the use of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual’s Stormwater Better Site Design Standards section to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate stormwater treatment in site planning and design
- Coordinate with the County to develop a Countywide Greenways Master Plan
- Implement education and marketing program to increase the appreciation of local historic, cultural and archeological resources
- Coordinate with the County to prepare an updated countywide historic, cultural and archeological resources inventory and preservation plan
- Adopt a Tree Protection/Replacement Ordinance
- Apply to the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program to be eligible for federal historic preservation funds

### **Land Use**

- Adopt Transition Corridor and Community Activity Center overlay districts (or adopt comparable land use regulations) to enhance the look and function of these areas

## **POLICIES**

Policies are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to City officials. They provide a basis for making decisions in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including achieving the Community Vision and appropriately addressing the Community Issues and Opportunities. The following policies are organized by major topic in the following subsections.

### **Housing**

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.
- Stimulate compatible infill housing development in existing neighborhoods.
- Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- Encourage development 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 affordable 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 affordable 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.

### **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.
- Take into account access to housing and impacts on transportation when considering economic development projects.
- Take into account 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.
- Support coordinated economic development activities (with the County, other cities and the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority), including business recruitment efforts and implementation of economic development-related studies.
- Encourage the use of public-private mechanisms or private initiatives, such as Tax Allocation Districts, Commercial Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts to finance improvements in important corridors and growth areas.
- Leverage local assets of highway access, higher education, proximity to larger metropolitan areas and technological infrastructure to attract jobs and improve quality of life.
- Support business/industrial retention efforts.
- Support continued workforce development efforts to prepare local workers for expanded opportunities available in a diverse local economy.

### **Community Facilities & Services**

- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities in order to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.
- 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.
- Limit development within our community to areas that can be reasonably served by public 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.
- Work with the local school board to encourage school location decisions that support the community's overall growth and development plans.
- Discourage septic tanks within areas designated for urban and suburban growth during the planning period and promote the use of packaged systems that can later tap into an expanded sewer infrastructure.

### **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).

- Design new and reconstructed roadways will using context sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using “complete streets” concepts 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, and planning for future connectivity between subdivisions and adjacent undeveloped property with stub out streets).
- 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.
- Coordinate with the MPO to plan for and implement transportation needs, both on a City and County-wide level.
- Coordinate transportation and land use planning.
- Support local and regional public transit opportunities.

### **Natural & Cultural Resources**

- The protection and conservation of our community’s natural, cultural and historic 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.
- Work to redirect development pressure away from agricultural areas in order to conserve farmland to protect and preserve 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 into the development review process.
- Incorporate minimum map of state-required stream, creek and river buffers into the development process.
- Promote passive-use tourism and recreation uses for environmentally sensitive areas and historic resources areas, which are not suitable for development.

## 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.
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- 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.
- 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/linear development along major roadways.
- Open to land planning and development concepts that may be new to our area but have been tried successfully in other places.
- Promote the development of lifestyle amenities, especially in areas such as entertainment, restaurant and shopping in the town centers as well as existing and emerging Community Activity Centers.
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing underutilized shopping centers ("greyfields") with walkable, mixed use development.
- Support specific development and design review requirements for commercial and mixed use properties to achieve desired development patterns of character areas.

### **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

### **SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS**

Supplemental plans focus on special areas, situations or issues of importance to the community, such as plans for conservation or management of natural or cultural resources, redevelopment plans for particular areas of the community, master plans for downtown development, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, gateway plans, rural preservation plans, recreation plans, or the community's required solid waste management plan. The supplemental plans listed below are incorporated into the *Community Agenda* by reference.

- North Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2005)
- Transit Feasibility Study (2006)
- 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (2005)

# **APPENDIX A: QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES**

# **APPENDIX B: REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

# **APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS & DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS**