

# Oconee County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2023 Update

Prepared by:

WSP



June 2023

**RESOLUTION**  
**TO ADOPT THE JUNE 2023 OCONEE COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**UPDATE**

WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia, and its municipalities was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the **Oconee County Board of Commissioners** that the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia dated June 2023, as approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this 6<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2023.

Oconee County Board of Commissioners

  
John Daniell, Chairman

  
Holly Stephenson  
Clerk, Board of Commissioners

**RESOLUTION**  
**TO ADOPT THE JUNE 2023 OCONEE COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**UPDATE**

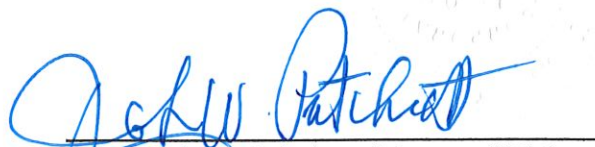
WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

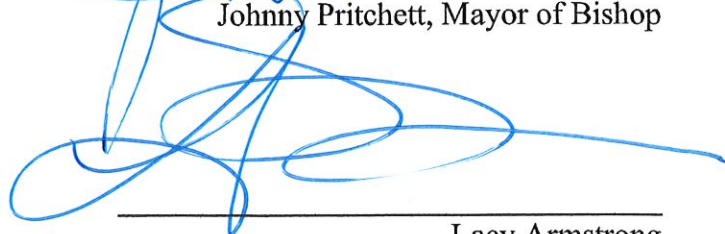
WHEREAS, the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia, and its municipalities was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the **Town of Bishop** that the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia dated June 2023, as approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this 12 day of June, 2023.

Town of Bishop

  
Johnny Pritchett, Mayor of Bishop

  
Lacy Armstrong  
Clerk, Town of Bishop

**RESOLUTION**  
**TO ADOPT THE JUNE 2023 OCONEE COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**UPDATE**


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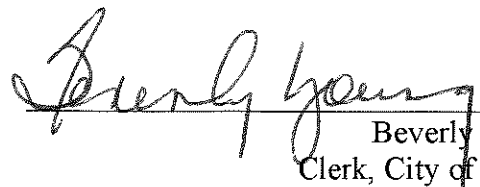
WHEREAS, the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia, and its municipalities was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the **City of Bogart** that the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia dated June 2023, as approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this 6<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2023.

City of Bogart

  
Janet Jones, Mayor of Bogart

  
Beverly Young  
Clerk, City of Bogart





260 HILLSBORO ROAD  
PO BOX 129  
HIGH SHOALS, GA 30645

WWW.NORTHHIGHSHOALS.ORG

MAYOR: VIOLET DAWE  
POST1: ERIC CARLSON  
POST 2: JASON PRESLEY  
POST 3: ERIC WRIGHT  
POST 4: HILDA KURTZ  
POST 5: MEAGAN CUNDIFF

**RESOLUTION  
TO ADOPT THE JUNE 2023  
OCONEE COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**


**WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and**

**WHEREAS, the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update, for Oconee County, Georgia, and its Municipalities, was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;**


**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Town of North High Shoals that the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia dated June 2023, as approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.**

Adopted this 12th day of June, 2023.

Town of North High Shoals

  
Eric Carlson, Mayor Pro Tempore



  
Sue Bishop, Clerk  
Town of North High Shoal

**RESOLUTION**  
**TO ADOPT THE JUNE 2023 OCONEE COUNTY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**UPDATE**

WHEREAS, the 1989 Georgia General Assembly enacted House Bill 215, the Georgia Planning Act, requiring all local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

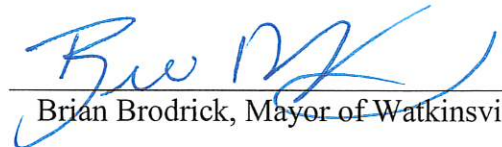
WHEREAS, the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia, and its municipalities was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the **City of Watkinsville** that the Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Oconee County, Georgia dated June 2023, as approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs is hereby adopted, and furthermore, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission shall be notified of said adoption within seven (7) days of the adoption of this resolution.

Adopted this 21<sup>st</sup> day of June, 2023.

City of Watkinsville



  
Brian Brodrick, Mayor of Watkinsville

  
Julie A. Klein  
Clerk, City of Watkinsville

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## OCONEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Janet Jones *Mayor of Bogart*

Dr. Violet Dawe *Mayor of North High Shoals*

Brian Brodrick *Mayor of Watkinsville*

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Post 8 | Christopher Herring

Post 9 | Vacant (Watkinsville appointment)

Post 10 | Stephen Goad (North High Shoals appointment)

Post 11 | Gavin Jordan (Bogart appointment)

Post 12 | Vacant (Bishop appointment)

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## CONSULTANT TEAM

### WSP ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE, INC.

Lee Walton, AICP

Ron Huffman, AICP, ASLA

Meagan Silas Matechak, ENV SP

Brian Ray, AICP, RLA

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# Introduction

Chapter

1



## Purpose of the Plan

This comprehensive plan serves as a decision-making tool for local government officials and community leaders. It intends to guide land use, development, community improvement, investment, and overall quality of life in the short and long term. Based on input from the public and stakeholders, the plan identifies key needs and opportunities, sets goals, and recommends policies to achieve them. The plan also provides a vision for the community and a rationale for consistent application of regulatory tools such as zoning, and subdivision regulations.

## Using the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan should be used for the following:

- **A basis for regulatory actions** – The plan serves as a foundation and guide for the provisions of the Unified Development Code which includes zoning and subdivision regulations.
- **Tool for decision making** – The plan is a resource that guides and recommends investments in capital projects, and other local initiatives such as parks and open spaces.
- **A source for more detailed plans** – Few plans can address every need in sufficient detail; the plan recommends more detailed plans and studies where they are needed to address a specific issue.
- **A standard of review** – The comprehensive plan is the standard for review for development proposals and applications for state and federal funding and support.
- **An information source** – The plan is a valuable source of information for local boards, commissions, organizations, citizens, and businesses. It is also a tool for promoting the community and highlighting opportunities for investment.

- **A long-term guide** – The plan is also a long-term guide by which to measure and evaluate public and private proposals that will have lasting effects on the physical, social, and economic environment of the community as a whole.

## Executive Summary

The Oconee County Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that presents the community's primary goals for achieving its long-range vision for growth and development in the County.

This executive summary presents Plan Highlights and Putting the Plan into Action. The first section, **Plan Highlights**, provides a brief overview of the 'Community Vision,' including key goals organized by 'Vision Theme.' **Putting the Plan into Action** summarizes the steps and players involved in the plan's implementation.

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### Plan Highlights

Recognizing that Oconee County as a whole will continue to have steady population growth, this plan is intended to balance opportunities for economic development with the desire to maintain existing "small town" ambiance and historical integrity. This plan also acknowledges the need to plan in more specific detail for community revitalization, redevelopment, open space protection and natural connections (e.g., greenways) with recreation planning, improvement of water and sewer facilities, and development of effective transit connections that manage traffic circulation and enhance connections throughout the County.

The Needs and Opportunities, as described by detailed strategies in Chapter 3 and the Goals and Objectives in Chapter 4, are summarized by primary goals organized into four main categories. The primary goals are intended to organize and represent citizens' ideas and concerns related to the topics of economic development, infrastructure, residential uses and housing, land use, transportation, parks, recreation, and greenspace, and broadband services.

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### Putting the Plan into Action

While adopting a comprehensive plan may seem like the end of the process, in reality it represents the beginning of a new phase: *implementation*. Implementing the plan requires an understanding of the recommendations and tools available for putting the plan into action for all of Oconee County. In short, the plan is a tool that provides a policy basis for:

- Budgeting
- Local land use regulation
- Coordination among local governments, state and federal agencies, utilities, regional agencies
- Detailed plans for specific functions
- Promotion and economic development

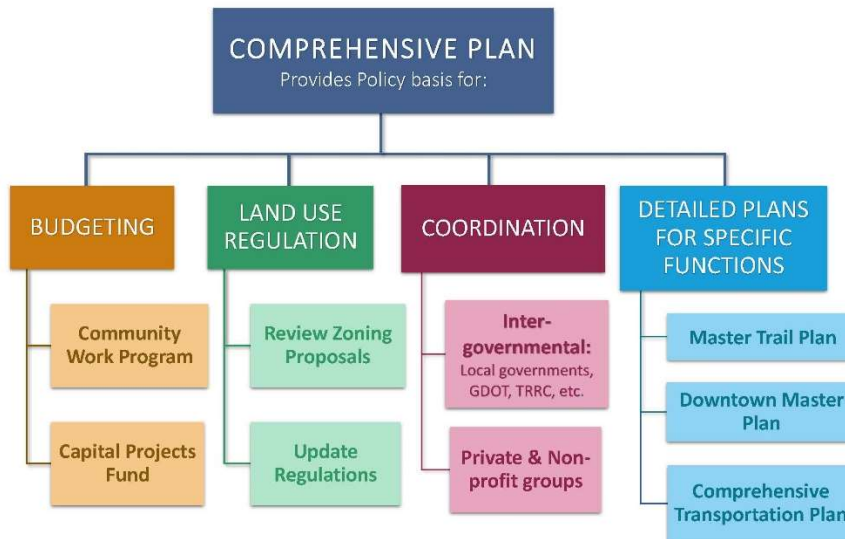
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### BUDGETING

The Implementation Program (see Chapter 8) outlines the overall strategy for achieving the Community Vision for future development and for implementing the Future Development Guide. A five-year Community Work Program (CWP) prioritizes the recommended strategies and assigns responsible parties to each. As presented, it provides elected officials and staff with a prioritized "to-do" list in addition to providing a policy guide.

## LAND USE REGULATION

The policy basis for land use regulation occurs in two specific ways. First, the Future Development Guide provides a tool for evaluating rezoning requests. Second, local zoning and subdivision regulations sometimes require amendments based on the Comprehensive Plan recommendations.



## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP

The Land Use Guide (see Chapter 5) consists of the Oconee County Future Development Map and character area policy. The Future Development Map assigns a unique character area to each parcel in the County and within municipal limits. The character area policy describes with text and illustrations the vision for growth and development for each character area. The Future Development Map is used to guide future rezonings; proposed zoning change requests are reviewed for consistency with the character area policy associated with the Future Development Map.

## ZONING AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Evaluation and adoption of changes to regulations that address land use and development is a common follow-up after adoption of a comprehensive plan. The purpose of any zoning updates and/or Unified Development Code amendments is to ensure that local regulatory tools support the implementation of the Future Development Map and specified goals in this plan.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

The policy basis for coordination occurs in two major components. First, County departments should coordinate their plans with that of the Comprehensive Plan. Second, coordination should occur between governments within the County and City entities, whether at the local (public or private), regional, or state level.

## SERVICE DELIVERY

Local governments should review or develop service plans to ensure that they are consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. This includes ensuring that future facilities are planned to meet the service demand promoted by the plan. For example, future planning to provide infrastructure that supports targeted employment growth should be consistent with areas shown on the Future Development Map (and described in the character areas policy).

## COORDINATION

This plan provides the opportunity for the county, municipalities, and other entities to view future needs from a common policy playbook. For example, private developers, utility providers, and economic development agencies can each see that specific areas are designated for future growth and specific areas for rural preservation. As a result, these entities should be able to work

together to ensure that their projects and policies support the Community Vision. In addition, coordination among the County, municipalities, and with other local (public and private) entities can facilitate implementation of community goals.

## DETAILED PLANS FOR SPECIAL FUNCTIONS

Functional plans address specific government services such as parks & recreation, transportation and economic development, also specific areas such as corridors and nodes. These individual plans can address issues and concerns raised by stakeholders during the public planning process in greater detail than the comprehensive plan. This Comprehensive Plan recommends the development and implementation of special focus and small area plans that are coordinated with and supplement the Comprehensive Plan.

**Watkinsville Downtown Master Plan** – Unique Watkinsville downtown planning and associated zoning has been addressed during the past two decades. Watkinsville intends to prepare a new Downtown Master Plan in the near future.

**Sewer Master Plan** – Throughout the Visioning Process the limitations of sewer infrastructure and capacity were mentioned. A sewer master plan can establish a formal plan of action, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, to secure the funding necessary to operate and maintain a sewer program.

**Parks & Recreation System Plan:** The County is completing a master plan for existing and proposed park facilities. A long-range comprehensive parks and recreation system plan is needed in the future.

**Comprehensive Transportation Plan:** The Comprehensive Transportation Plan guides countywide transportation development

for short, intermediate, and long-term time frames. The plan addresses both vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle connections and evaluates potential improvements for each. Future updates to this plan will be required, as well as ongoing coordination with regional transportation planning (MACORT).

**Small Area Plans:** Certain nodes and corridors in northern Oconee County are more intensely developed/ developing and require more detailed planning for land use, mobility and infrastructure coordination. Small area plan efforts will zoom in to provide higher fidelity planning that is compatible with the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies.

## Organization of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into 8 chapters:

1. **Introduction** – Introduces the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan and the overall organization of the document.
2. **Community Profile** – Provides important background information including an analysis of relevant demographic and other data used to develop the list of needs and opportunities. It also includes a summary of the public outreach process.
3. **Needs & Opportunities** – Lists prioritized needs the community is committed to addressing and opportunities on which to capitalize as the community pursues its vision, articulated in Chapter 4. The list of needs and opportunities was informed by the analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter as well as the results of an analysis of the

community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, conducted by the steering committee.

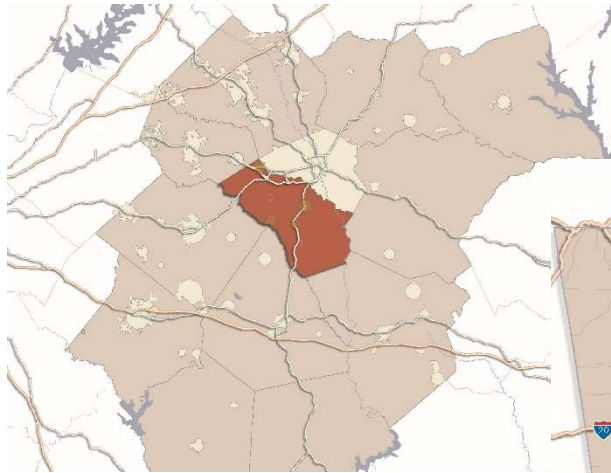
4. **Goals & Objectives** – Establishes a vision that guides the Comprehensive Plan, sets goals, and recommends general policies that will move the community towards achieving that vision.
5. **Land Use** – Illustrates and describes the character, type, and location of future development within each jurisdiction.
6. **Transportation** – Provides recommendations for roads, trails, and sidewalks and identifies opportunities to increase connectivity throughout the county.
7. **Parks & Greenspace** – Provides recommendations intended to enhance the park system and recreation opportunities.
8. **Community Work Program** – Presents specific actions for each jurisdiction to pursue over the next 5 years; potential funding sources, timelines, and responsible parties are also identified. The reports of accomplishments, following each community work program (CWP), track the status of each community's previous 5-year CWP.

# Community Profile

Chapter  
**2**

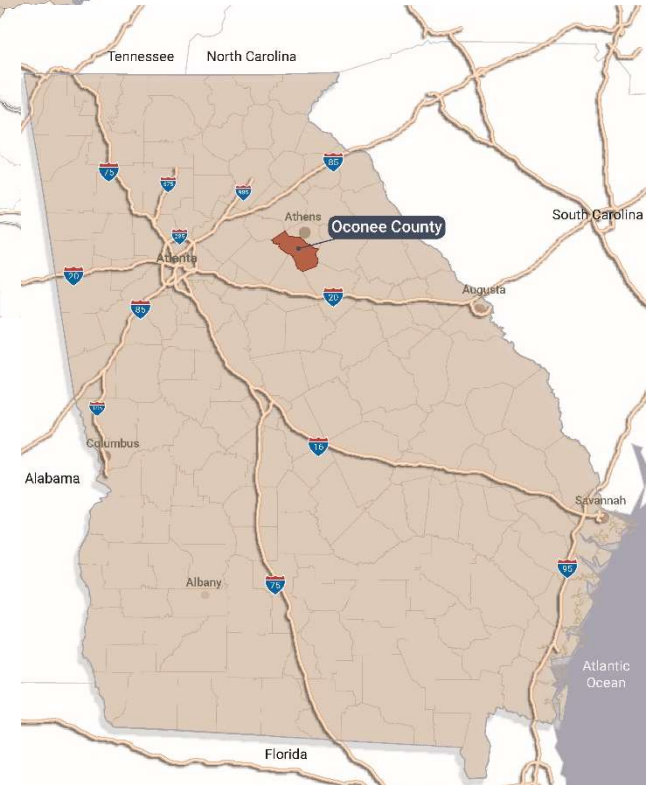
## Regional Setting

Oconee County is located fifty-three miles east of Atlanta and six miles south of the City of Athens. Oconee County is part of the Athens-Clarke Metropolitan Statistical Area, which consists of Clarke, Oglethorpe, Jackson, Madison and Oconee Counties. Oconee County's borders are contiguous with Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Morgan, Greene, Oglethorpe and Walton Counties. The county seat is in Watkinsville, one of four incorporated cities. The other three cities are Bishop, Bogart and North High Shoals.



Bishop, known initially as Greenwood Crossing, was named for resident W. H. Bishop (one of the city's original council members).

Bishop was incorporated in 1890. North High Shoals, on the southwestern border, was named for a rapid in the nearby Apalachee River and incorporated in 1933.



## History

Oconee County, the 135th County formed in Georgia, was created by the legislative act of 1875. It was included in the territory ceded by the Cherokee Nation to the State of Georgia and part of the area established as Clarke County in 1801, out of Jackson County. The County's early history primarily revolved around the towns and communities. The construction of the Eagle Tavern in 1789 as a blockhouse for the protection of settlers marked the establishment of what is today the City of Watkinsville. The earliest record of the land on which the City of Watkinsville now stands is found in the records of Clarke County in 1791. In 1806, the City of Watkinsville was incorporated as the County seat of Clarke County. Bogart, on the county's northern border, was founded in 1869 and was originally named for Osceola, a member of the Creek-Seminole Nation. The town was renamed Bogart for a railroad agent in 1892.

## Purpose

The Oconee County Comprehensive Plan represents the growth and development policy for the county and municipalities, as expressed by a Future Development Map and supporting goals and



implementation strategies. This plan also serves the purpose of meeting the intent and requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," as established in 2018. Preparation of a plan in accordance with these standards is an essential requirement in maintaining status as a Qualified Local Government (QLG). QLG status allows communities to be eligible for state assistance programs. This plan allows Oconee County to retain its QLG status; each municipality has its own comprehensive plan that it maintains and updates.

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## Scope

This plan addresses economic development, housing, natural and historic resources, land use and development patterns, and transportation. These 'planning elements' are organized into Goals & Objectives (see Chapter 4) for the purpose of expressing community goals and implementing strategies. They are addressed as individual components in the Existing Conditions Summary (see Appendix), which provides a summary of existing local conditions and trends and was used in the identification of community needs and opportunities.

A description of current conditions and issues is also provided in the Appendix. It is important to note that the topic of transportation is primarily addressed in the Oconee County long-range transportation plan.

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## Why We Plan

Comprehensive planning is an important management tool for promoting a strong, healthy community. A comprehensive plan is a significant policy document that guides the physical development of a community; it can be used to promote orderly and rational development, so the county and municipalities can remain physically attractive and economically viable while preserving important natural and historic resources.

The comprehensive plan allows the community to become more certain about where development will occur, what it will be like, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met. It helps guide investments in infrastructure such as roads, parks, and other facilities to maintain and improve residents' quality of life as well as economic development prospects.

The Oconee County Comprehensive Plan represents these and additional ideas discussed during the public participation process. It lists specific needs and opportunities, supporting goals and strategies, desired development patterns and land uses, and a five-year prioritized work program (Community Work Program) to implement the plan.

# Demographic Overview

To begin to understand and assess the current conditions within Oconee County and its municipalities, an analysis of demographic data was prepared at the beginning of the planning process.

This section presents trends from that analysis, assesses their implications, and makes projections for growth in the future. The comparison of data from Oconee County to the Northeast Georgia region and the State of Georgia provides a context to understand Oconee County's current position and opportunities for growth in the future.

The data and figures used in the analysis and presented in this section are the most recent and accurate available at the time the plan was written.

- Data from 2010 and 2020 comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's Decennial Census.
- 2017-2021 American Community Survey data represents a 5-year estimated average based on U.S. Census Bureau surveys conducted over the same period.

## Population

**Oconee County's population has grown, a trend which is expected to continue.** Currently, the total population is about 39,194.

Population forecasts provide insight into what a community might look like twenty or so years down the road. Such projections can address how and where a community will grow through following a comprehensive plan and implementing development regulations and short-term strategic work plans. Population projections are

produced by a variety of agencies and can also be calculated through several statistical methods.

Looking to 2050, population projections indicate that the county's population could reach over 62,000 residents, equating to growth of 51.2% between 2020 and 2050. Alternatively, some models predict a slightly lower population in the range of 60,500 to 61,000 residents. One method for population projection is based upon annual growth trends over the past several decades. A series of growth rates are evaluated for potential population growth. The second method is the estimate of the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. These projections are prepared using Census data combined with information on migration and age data to create state and county level projections. The state's population projections fall between the low and medium Method 1 projections.

The latest Census data suggest that the age dynamics in Oconee County have changed slightly since 2010. The school-age population (under 19 years old) has decreased by 2.2% over the ten-year period. Meanwhile, the number of residents 65 and older has increased by 5.0%. This is indicative of a slight increase in the average age in the county.

Also of interest is the change in population among ethnic groups in the county. Oconee County had a predominantly White population in 2010 and saw a slight decrease in the White population in 2020 (1.72%). There has been an increase in other races including increases in the Asian and Biracial populations. The Black population decreased by 0.4% over the study time period. However, despite its continued growth, the make-up of Oconee County's population with regard to age, race, and sex, remains fairly similar to the composition of the 2010 population.

<b>METHOD 1: Annual Growth Trend Extrapolation Model</b>						
	Average annual growth rate	Average Annual Increase (People/Year)	2020	2030	2040	2050
LOW	(2013 – 2014) 1.59%	796	39,194	45,891	53,733	62,914
MEDIUM	(2010 – 2020) 2.44%	1,401	39,194	49,879	63,476	80,781
HIGH	(2012 – 2015) 4.83%	4,030	39,194	62,817	100,677	153,922
<b>METHOD 2: Georgia Planning &amp; Budget Projections Model</b>						
			2020	2030	2040	2050
	PROJECTION		39,194	48,026	58,180	64,008

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

When compared with growth rates over the same period for all Counties in Georgia, Oconee County ranks as the 27<sup>th</sup> fastest growing county in the State as of 2020. A look at population for the county and its municipalities is presented below.

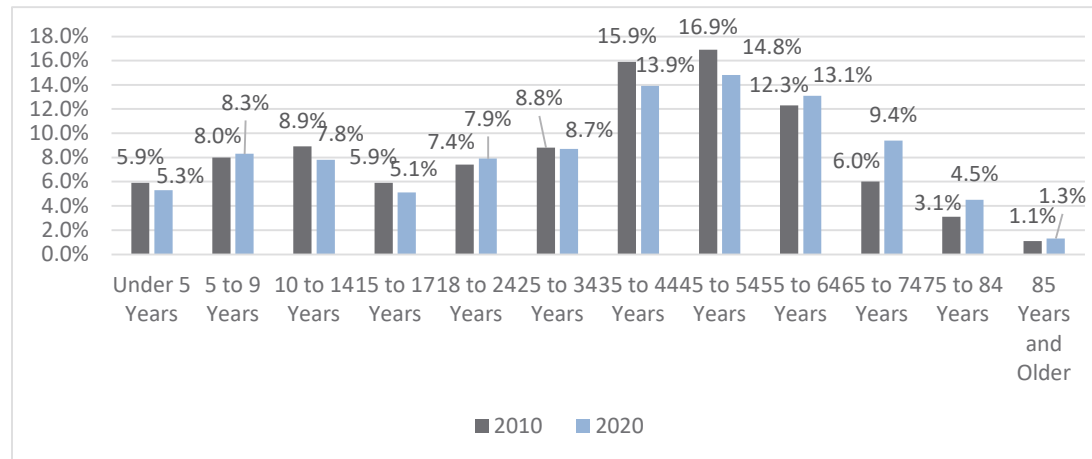
Jurisdiction	2010 Census	2020 Census
<b>Unincorporated County</b>	28,066	34,302
<b>Bishop</b>	224	332
<b>Bogart</b>	1,034	1,326
<b>North High Shoals</b>	652	670
<b>Watkinsville</b>	2,832	2,896
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,808</b>	<b>39,194</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 and 2020.

## Age

Identifying demographic indicators, such as age distribution patterns within a community, provides insight into potential needs and demands for that population. Oconee County is home to a growing population of older and elderly residents. In 2010, 10.2% of the population was over the age of 65. In 2020, that figure was 15.2%. Two other age groups youth (0-17) and middle-age (35-54) experienced a decrease in population, while young adults (18-34) experienced a very small increase in population. Oconee County is still a younger region, with a median age of 40.1 years old. Additionally, Jackson and Morgan Counties have slightly lower median ages, at 38.4 and 39.3 years old, respectively.

### Population by Age Distribution: 2010 & 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 and 2020.

The decrease in the youth and middle age groups is not concerning. The decreases are nominal, with the youth group going from 28.7% of the population in 2010 to 26.5% in 2020, while the middle age group went from 29.2% to 27.2% over the same time period.

## Income

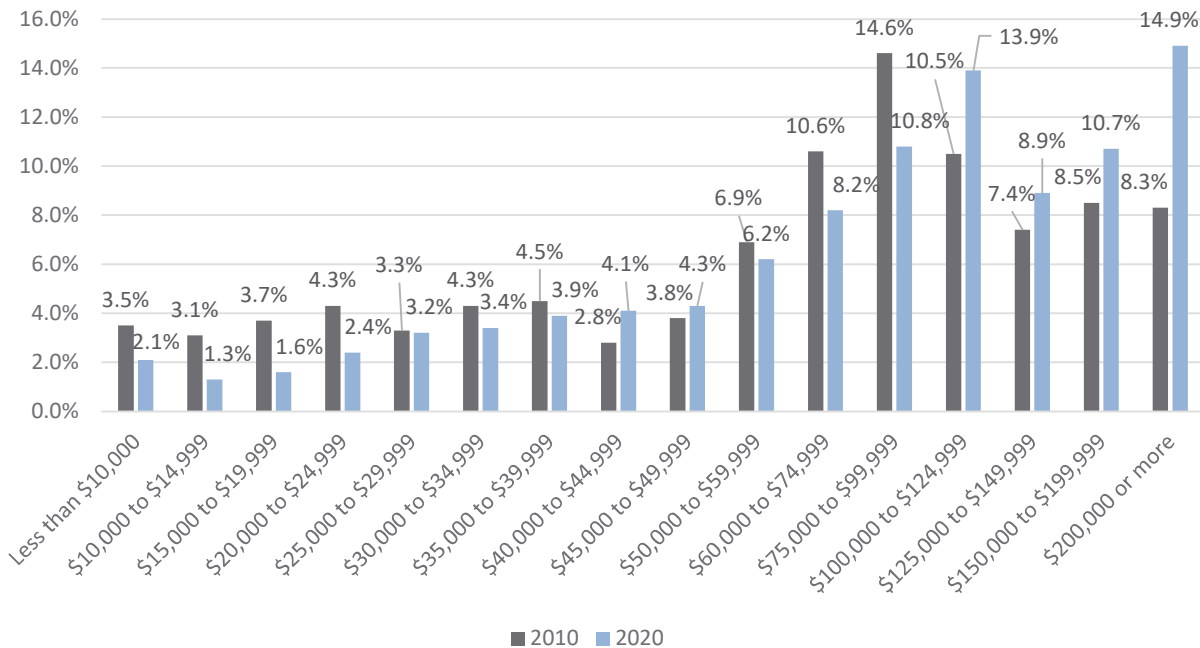
Household incomes in Oconee County are significantly higher than other Counties within the Region and are projected to continue to increase. Median earnings for Oconee, Jackson, and Morgan residents in various occupations are shown below. Of the three counties, Oconee has the highest median household income at

\$95,064, while Jackson has the lowest, at \$68,307. Morgan County saw a large increase in median household income between 2010 and 2020, going from \$45,817 to \$68,669. The median household income increased in all three categories by at least \$15,000.

Over the course of the decade, Oconee County's median household income increased by \$20,712 to \$95,064. During this period, all income ranges between \$100,000 and \$200,000 or more in Oconee County saw decreases in the percentage of households.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
Total Households	11,155	13,773	20,917	24,268	6,529	7040
Less than \$5,000	3.5%	2.1%	5.6%	4.0%	9.1%	4.1%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	3.1%	1.3%	6.5%	3.1%	8.2%	2.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.7%	1.6%	4.9%	3.5%	4.2%	3.0%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	4.3%	2.4%	6.3%	3.9%	5.6%	5.5%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	3.3%	3.2%	4.7%	4.0%	5.5%	3.2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	4.3%	3.4%	5.6%	4.0%	4.4%	3.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	4.5%	3.9%	5.8%	4.1%	6.7%	4.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2.8%	4.1%	5.1%	4.8%	5.5%	5.4%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3.8%	4.3%	3.8%	2.8%	4.8%	3.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	6.9%	6.2%	10.5%	9.7%	6.8%	6.8%
\$150,000 or more	10.6%	8.2%	10.0%	10.6%	9.6%	11.6%
<b>Median household income</b>	<b>\$74,352</b>	<b>\$95,064</b>	<b>\$51,506</b>	<b>\$68,307</b>	<b>\$45,817</b>	<b>\$68,669</b>

Median Oconee Household Income: 2010-2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 and 2020

The median household income in Oconee County currently ranks as the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the State of Georgia and is 21% higher than the regional average, 55% higher than the State, and 46% more than the U.S.

## Housing

**Single-Family houses dominate Oconee County's housing stock.** Of the approximately 14,600 housing units in the county, 94.5% are one family dwellings according to census data. When compared to regional data, the median value of a home in Oconee County is 18.3% higher, as of 2020. Data and projected change in housing occupancy status, and tenure (renter vs. owner occupied) are presented below.

Housing Units by Occupancy Status and Tenure

	2015		2020		2022	
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	12,847		14,578		14,768	
<b>Occupied</b>	11,880	92.5%	13,773	94.5%	13,965	94.6%
<b>Owner</b>	9,453	73.6%	11,374	78.0%	11,676	79.1%
<b>Renter</b>	2,427	18.9%	2,399	16.5%	2,289	15.5%
<b>Vacant</b>	967	7.5%	805	5.5%	803	5.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2015 & 2020, ESRI forecasts for 2022

## Commuting Patterns

**A large percentage of Oconee County's population commutes to a job in another county.** According to 2019 estimates from the U.S. also work in Oconee County. Of those employed in Oconee County, 75.0% report living outside the County. A breakdown of where Oconee County workers are commuting is presented below.

### Where Oconee County Workers are Employed

1.	Clarke County, GA	38.7
2.	Oconee County, GA	22.3%
3.	Fulton County, GA	5.0
4.	Gwinnett County, GA	4.8%
5.	Barrow County, GA	3.6
6.	Walton County, GA	2.5%
7.	Hall County, GA	2.2
8.	Cobb County, GA	2.1%
9.	Dekalb County, GA	1.9
10.	Jackson County, GA	1.5%
	All Other Locations	15.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *On the Map Application*, <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov>

Coupled with data that show that the typical household earns a substantially higher income, Oconee residents are more likely to own than rent their home and work outside the county. This leads to the conclusion that people with the opportunity to choose where to live and educate their children are choosing Oconee County. This has continued to be true over the years, as reinforced in data going back to 2010.

## Implications

While the data does not present the complete picture, it establishes the background necessary to set realistic goals and make viable policy recommendations and can confirm perceptions about the county.

The projected growth in the population of people 65 and over, as well as those likely with school-aged children, seems to confirm the feedback in the first online survey. Survey takers strongly highlighted Oconee County's greatest asset including schools and the overall quality of life with small town feel. These are two factors that are likely driving at least a portion of the projected growth.

# Community Participation & Plan Development

Oconee County is projected to experience continued steady growth and investment over the next 20 years. In an effort to meet the community's future needs, the planning process coordinated efforts of its citizens to create a community vision for future development that will be guided by Oconee County's Comprehensive Plan. Community input is the driving force behind a successful Comprehensive Plan; the planning process was designed to actively engage residents and key stakeholders through public hearings, focus groups, public forums, social media, and online questionnaires. Focus groups made up of citizens and community leaders participated in the Joint Comprehensive Plan update over the course of the nearly 12-month planning process.

Creating a functional comprehensive plan begins with defining a common vision for the future development of the community. A community vision is the overall image of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future. It is the starting point for creating a plan and actions to implement the plan. A successful visioning process requires meaningful participation from a wide range of community stakeholders.

## VISIONING PROCESS

The visioning process, or citizen participation process, for this plan update included multiple layers of participation from residents and stakeholders. Public workshops, focus groups, stakeholder

interviews, and an online survey provided opportunities for input, as described in this section.

### KICK-OFF MEETING

The first public hearing and citywide Kick-Off Meeting took place in July 2022 at an Oconee County Commission meeting. Its focus was to inform the public about how to provide input over the course of the planning process and an overview of the components of the Comprehensive Plan.



### FOCUS GROUPS

Participants provided input on the future of Oconee County and its municipalities at ten focus groups held at various locations across the county. Focus Group participants prioritized and contributed to a list of community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and needs that were compiled. Participants also provided input during a mapping exercise intended to generate discussion on desired community character (e.g., appropriate land uses, amount of open





space, transportation, etc.), including which areas of the county are likely to support change or should remain relatively unchanged.

### **FUTURE LAND USE CHARRETTE**

A countywide Future Land Use Charrette was held December 13, 2022, at the Oconee Veterans Park. Attendees participated in a small group map exercise and conversed with the planning team to develop scenarios for preferred land use types and intensities across the county.

### **OPEN HOUSE**

A public open house was held near the conclusion of the process to present the Comprehensive Plan's findings and recommendations for final comment before the plan was



transmitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review. The public was invited to comment on draft recommendations of the plan at a countywide open house held March 29, 2023, at the Oconee Veterans Park. Specifically, goals, strategies, proposed work plan items, and character areas associated with the Future Development Map were displayed for review and comment. Additionally, a graphic representation of the existing conditions assessment and public input summary was provided. The meeting format allowed participants to drop-in at their convenience and stay for as little or as long as they desired. Participants spoke individually with planning team members and filled out comment forms to present questions or concerns. A

virtual open house option was also available for public review, including an online survey for public comment.

### **COMMUNITY SURVEY**

A forty-six-question online community survey was developed and promoted throughout the community as another forum for public input. It was open from June 2022 through September of 2022, and hard copies were provided, as necessary. The survey information was distributed at the public meetings, online through the county website and social media, and other local events. In total, approximately 1,400 responses were received.

### **FLYERS, E-MAIL BLASTS AND PROJECT WEBPAGE**

Throughout the planning process, flyers were distributed both in person and electronically to announce and promote public meetings. An email distribution list was continually updated and was used to publicize the community survey and public meetings. Additionally, public meetings and workshops were advertised on the counties' website and posted in public spaces throughout the community.

### **ADDITIONAL LOCAL OUTREACH**

Aside from public workshops, the planning team also presented updates at a Planning Commission Meeting and a Commission Work Session.

*Refer to Appendix A for community outreach records.*

# Needs & Opportunities

Chapter

3

## Overview

By considering internal (strengths, and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors, Focus Groups guided the planning team's development of an initial list of needs to be addressed and opportunities to be leveraged.

The list of needs and opportunities not only describes *what* the plan should address, it also provides an idea of *where* a community currently stands concerning its stated vision and goals. Input from the community guided every element developed during the update of the Comprehensive Plan, but particularly in identifying and prioritizing the list of needs and opportunities.

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## POPULATION GROWTH

The analysis of demographic data revealed the following needs:

- The population increased by 24.4 percent between 2010 and 2020 to nearly 39,194 residents in 2020. Looking to 2050, population projections indicate that the county's population could reach over 62,000 residents. The growing population will increase the demand for housing, supporting retail and services, and translate into a need for the county to invest more in community services and infrastructure to maintain the same level of services.
- Overall, the population is aging with a growing population of older and elderly residents. From 2010 to 2020, the population over the age of 65 increased by 5.0%, while two other age groups, youth (0-17) and middle age (35-54), experienced a decrease in population. The increase in the

older population may support a greater range of housing options, and an increase in the need for senior services.

- The decrease in the youth and middle age groups is not concerning as the decreases are nominal, with the youth group decreasing from 28.7% of the population in 2010 to 26.5% in 2020, while the middle age group shifted from 29.2% to 27.2% over the same time period.

These translate into needs:

- Expand options for housing choice at targeted locations.
  - Including workforce housing and additional housing options.
- *Strategically plan for the timing and expansion of new facilities and infrastructure, to guide growth and reinforce the community's desired development patterns.*
- *Expand commercial services including entertainment and shopping opportunities.*

## LAND USE

One of the chief concerns expressed by focus group participants and the general public during the planning process is that as growth happens the quality of life and community's unique character can erode. The Planning Team identified the following needs based on input:

- Guide and regulate development in a way that ensures it is well integrated with the existing character of the community and aligns with the area's overall vision and stated goals.
- *Preserve and enhance the physical attractiveness of particular districts of the community, particularly gateway corridors or similar areas important to the image of the community.*
- Identify a consensus among key stakeholders for improvement needs along significant corridors.
- Maintain the tree canopy through tree replacement where development occurs.
- Plan at a more detailed level in specific areas (small areas) where development intensity and traffic congestion are greatest.
- *Maintain the Unified Development Code as necessary to implement the Comprehensive Plan Land Use strategies effectively.* These revisions could address:
  - Design guidelines for new development
  - Parking standards to include options for more flexible parking.

- Overlay districts to regulate aesthetics in specific areas, or along corridors.
- Landscaping and planting standards
- Street design standards to tailor their design to their location and the traffic they serve.
- Improve connectivity of streets, sidewalks, and green spaces.

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## PARKS, RECREATION, GREENSPACE

The discussion among the stakeholders specifically regarding parks, recreation, and greenspace revealed the following needs.

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### PARKS

- More park space at all scales is needed.
- Neighborhood pocket parks are needed.
- Large-scale multi-sport complexes need expansion and improvement.
  - Need more ball fields.
- Need an indoor pool in the county.
- Identify land for parks expansion to maximize ability to serve the growing population.
- Connect new and existing parks and greenspace to neighborhoods with trails, sidewalks, and other off-street facilities.

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### RECREATION

- Multi-Use trail network to connect greenspace, parks, and other trail networks, and the Oconee, and Apalachee Rivers

- Evaluate converting existing rail lines to rail trails, especially in the Watkinsville area.
- Upgrades to existing recreation facilities and fields are needed to keep up with demand.
- Preserve greenspace near new and existing neighborhoods.
- As the population grows so may the demand for large-scale investments such as an Aquatic Center/Indoor Pool, a Nature/Environmental Education Center, and a Blue Way or public access to the many scenic waterways throughout Oconee County
- Additional recreation program capacity is needed to support existing demand and projected population growth and may increase the need for staffing and maintenance.
- Develop a comprehensive long-range parks and recreational system plan.

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## **FINANCE & SERVICE**

- Increased staff for operations, programming, and maintenance may be needed.
- Building maintenance costs may also increase over time as buildings age.
- Develop a strategy that ensures that funding for improvements is balanced between large-scale projects, e.g. (Multi-sport complex, an Aquatic Center, a Nature/Environmental Education Center, and a designated Blue Way) and smaller or neighborhood pocket parks, and sidewalk expansions.
- Recommendations for amendments to the UDC that will help the County build out a network of interconnected greenspace, off-street trails, sidewalks or other non-automobile-oriented modes of transportation.

- Identify possible locations for a large-scale multi-use trail or system of trails that will connect parks other destinations within the county.
- Implementation Program to prioritize improvements, estimate costs, and recommend primary and supplemental funding sources.

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## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

The discussion among the stakeholders identified the following needs.

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### **ROAD NETWORK**

- Operational truck traffic through the county is adding to congestion issues, especially in incorporated areas.
- Improvements and upgrades are needed to increase safety on major thoroughfares (e.g., Hwy 15).
- A bypass and trucking study is needed to reduce impacts on cities and towns along current routes.
- Traffic calming needed for North High Shoals due to truck traffic.
- Work with GDOT to designate a truck route through the county with the goal of alleviating some congestion in the incorporated areas.
- Evaluate transportation planning near large neighborhoods for long-term plans and improvements (Highway 53, Highway 441, near schools).

These needs offer the opportunity to:

- Consider adding design principles into the controls for appropriate overlay districts or corridors to ensure that street design considers all users of a street including pedestrians, bicyclists and public transportation passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, and automobiles.
- Consider the GDOT future connectors and incorporate the exhibit into future transportation plans.

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## **BIKE, PEDESTRIAN, AND OTHER NETWORKS**

- The sidewalk network is missing connections.
  - This includes sidewalk infrastructure along Atlanta Highway in Bogart, Spartan Lane, LaVista Road, to Hog Mountain, and pedestrian crosswalks at Highway 441/Spartan Lane and other major intersections.
  - Need to improve connectivity, walkability, and bike paths between neighborhoods.
- Explore possible location of Park & Ride or other facilities to accommodate commuters to Atlanta.
- Safety improvements on rural and urban roads to accommodate cyclists are needed.
- A large -scale multi-use trail or network of trails connecting destinations can provide enhanced recreation opportunities and strengthen sense of place.

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## **WATER, SEWER, TELECOM, BROADBAND**

- The rural areas of the county lack broadband internet service, but improvements are being made.

# Goals & Objectives

Chapter

4



## Overview

The Goals and Objectives in this section are drawn from the Needs and Opportunities section. They establish a framework for planning recommendations, policies, and future projects and actions.

**Goals** describe end situations toward which planning efforts should be directed. They are broad and long-range and, although they may never be fully attained, they represent **an end to be sought**.

- **Objectives** describe more specific actions that should be undertaken to advance toward the overall goals. They may include policies, strategies, actions, or projects, and provide specific guidelines for planning action.

## Land Use

**Goal 1:** Promote growth that builds lasting value in our community by enhancing or complementing the existing character of the area.

### Objectives

- **Objective 1.1:** Maintain small-town character and cultural identity while supporting controlled growth.
- **Objective 1.2:** Support incremental growth by prioritizing infill within areas already developed or within an identified node that maintains consistency with the built environment.
- **Objective 1.3:** Encourage development projects to be complete and connected to lessen impacts on public facilities, services, and infrastructure funding.
- **Objective 1.4:** Support architectural, landscape, and building standards that increase value to the community

and maintain Oconee County and its municipalities' character.

- **Objective 1.5:** Prevent development requiring water or sewer infrastructure outside areas designated for water or sewer service by an Oconee County Water and Wastewater Master Plan.
- **Objective 1.6:** Promote quality corridor development including gateway corridors.
- **Objective 1.7:** Improve connectivity of streets, sidewalks, and green spaces.
- **Objective 1.8:** Ensure a sustainable and countywide tree canopy is maintained.

## Residential Uses & Housing

**Goal 2:** Enhance and maintain existing residential neighborhoods while increasing the overall range of housing options.

### Objectives

- **Objective 2.1:** Protect and enhance existing neighborhoods through zoning, code enforcement, beautification, and application of architectural standards for new development.
- **Objective 2.2:** Connect neighborhoods to supporting commercial uses, schools, civic facilities, and recreational amenities.
- **Objective 2.3:** Support entry-level housing in locations that align with applicable land use areas.
- **Objective 2.4:** Expand options for housing at targeted locations including workforce housing.
- **Objective 2.5:** Expand options for senior housing services.

## Economic Development

**Goal 3:** Promote economic activity to generate work opportunities by recruiting, supporting, and retaining a range of employers from local and small businesses to major employers that will strengthen the tax base and improve quality of life.

### Objectives

- **Objective 3.1:** Improve the aesthetics of commercial development through improved design standards.
- **Objective 3.2:** Create distinct nodes or districts that are easily identifiable in designated nodes.
- **Objective 3.3:** Utilize public art as an economic development tool.
- **Objective 3.4:** Examine existing codes and practices to ensure a consistent, fair, and friendly regulatory environment.
- **Objective 3.5:** Expand commercial services and other amenities.
- **Objective 3.6:** Retain and attract businesses to create employment opportunities.
- **Objective 3.7:** Create opportunities for new community-serving commercial development.
- **Objective 3.8:** Recruit desired restaurants and stores.

## Transportation

**Goal 4:** Build and improve a multi-layered transportation network that facilitates safe access for all forms of transportation.

### Objectives

- **Objective 4.1:** Where appropriate, increase the capacity of the road network in a strategic way that can help to guide growth in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Objective 4.2:** Reduce traffic congestion and conduct long-range transportation system planning.
- **Objective 4.3:** Increase bicycle and pedestrian network connectivity.
- **Objective 4.4:** Evaluate design principals for overlay districts or corridors to ensure that street design considers all modes including pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation passengers of all ages and abilities, along with trucks, buses, and automobiles.
- **Objective 4.5:** Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure improvements at key locations like schools, parks, civic facilities, and recreational destinations.
- **Objective 4.6:** Evaluate roadway and intersection safety near large neighborhoods to promote long term sustainability and safety.
- **Objective 4.7:** Improve the sidewalk network and analyze where missing connections necessitate sidewalk network improvements.
- **Objective 4.8:** Improve safety on rural and urban roads to accommodate cyclists.
- **Objective 4.9:** Maintain an updated long-range transportation plan to ensure multi-modal transportation options and safety are supported in an efficient system for the short- and long-range transportation system.
- **Objective 4.10:** Evaluate trucking routes and bypass options to increase safety on major thoroughfares.
- **Objective 4.11:** Evaluate traffic calming needed for North High Shoals due to truck traffic.

## Infrastructure

**Goal 5:** Ensure that the water and sewer infrastructure needs of current and future populations remains served by safe, efficient, and cost-effective systems.

### Objectives

- **Objective 5.1:** Improve sewer and water infrastructure capacity where possible and needed for growth (concurrent infrastructure planning and development).
- **Objective 5.2:** Ensure future water and sewer lines depicted in the Oconee County Water and Wastewater Master Plan are located in conformance with the desired land use pattern.

## Broadband Services

On October 1, 2018, the Minimum Standards and Procedures were modified in response to the Georgia General Assembly amending provisions of the Georgia Planning Act aimed at enhancing and extending high-speed internet infrastructure to improve access to high-speed internet, computer processing, and information access and storage to aid in economic growth and education. Additionally, broadband provides a community access to services such as healthcare, public safety, educational and economic opportunities, e-commerce, social connectivity, and other resources. Broadband access also supports the success of businesses and improves connectivity.

DCA will designate facilities and developments that offer broadband services at a rate of not less than 1 gigabit per second as broadband

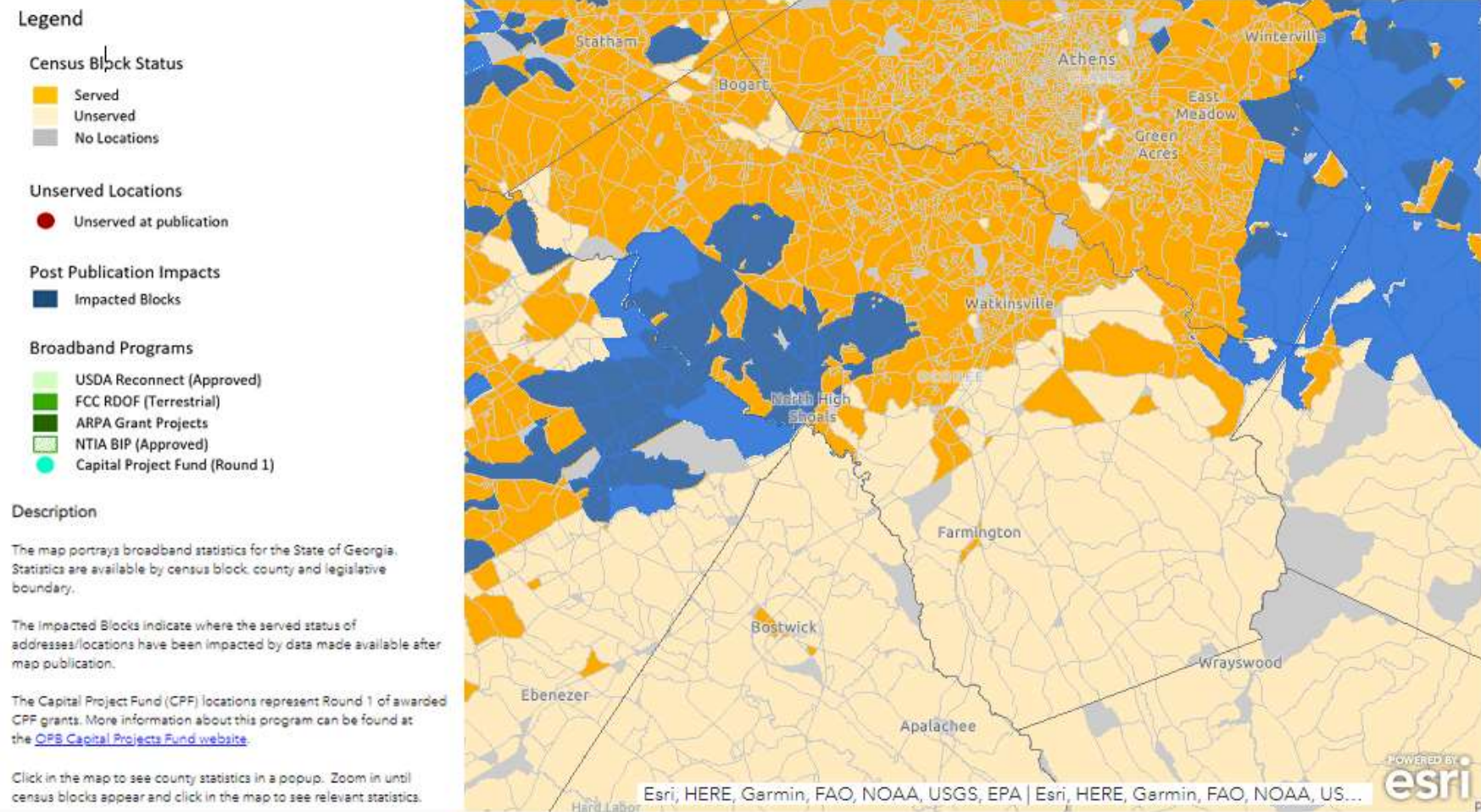
ready sites. The county originally identified broadband deficiencies in the 2017 Strategic Plan. Oconee County has since partnered with Spectrum to install a broadband network to deliver internet services to unserved areas in the county. As seen in the figure below, the southern half of the county contains unserved areas based on a broadband availability map with 2022 availability data. In installation of expanded Spectrum services began in December 2022 and is currently underway. The project includes six phases including walkout, design, permitting, pole attachment approvals, construction, and activation. The broadband expansion includes an estimated 2.5-year build including an 80-mile fiber ring and over 540 miles of fiber extension to homes and businesses. Spectrum expects speeds of 10 gigabits per second for residential and business uses.

**Goal 6:** Ensure that the internet infrastructure needs of current and future populations remains served by safe, efficient, and cost-effective systems. Broadband services are critical infrastructure on similar level of importance as other necessary utilities.

### Objectives

- **Objective 6.1:** Improve broadband infrastructure where possible and needed for growth.
- **Objective 6.2:** Encourage service providers to offer service to rural residents when installing or upgrading fiber or other broadband technology that utilizes public right of way.

## OCONEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Source: DCA 2022 Georgia Broadband Availability Map

## Parks, Recreation, and Greenspace

**Goal 7:** Support a network of parks, recreational facilities, and natural areas that meet the needs of area residents and enhance the quality of life.

### Objectives

- **Objective 7.1:** Protect natural resources, including greenspace near existing and new neighborhoods.
- **Objective 7.2:** Prioritize and build-out existing parks and recreational facilities.
- **Objective 7.3:** Ensure funding capacity for maintenance, operation, and improvement of the existing system.
- **Objective 7.4:** Provide non-motorized connections between local and regional scale parks.
- **Objective 7.5:** Complete build-out of previous and new parks master plans and ensure regular updates.
- **Objective 7.6:** Determine where new parks need to be built including creating more ball fields, potentially developing an indoor pool, and connecting new and existing parks and greenspace to new trails, sidewalks, and other off-street facilities.
- **Objective 7.7:** Identify locations and land for expansion of parks and recreation space to maximize the population and geographic area served.
- **Objective 7.8:** Evaluate converting existing rail lines to rail trails to add to the trail and sidewalk network.
- **Objective 7.9:** Develop a comprehensive long-range parks and recreation system plan.
- **Objective 7.10:** Due to population growth and projected growth, consider the demand for large-scale investments such as an aquatic center/indoor pool, a nature/environmental education center, and a public access to waterways in the county.

# Land Use

Chapter  
**5**



The Land Use section of this Comprehensive Plan establishes a framework for the type, intensity, and general character of development in Oconee County and its municipalities. The mapping and descriptions of character area categories provide a vision and future development strategies for each area of Oconee. Land use and development policies, regulations, and approvals should align with these character areas based comprehensive plan guidelines. Refer to Appendix B for municipal area highlight maps.

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of the Future Development Guide. The guide includes the Future Development Map, which depicts unique character areas that describe the type of development and land uses desired for particular areas in the unincorporated county and within municipal limits. In addition to the goals and strategies presented in Chapter 4, this guide explains and illustrates the ‘community vision’ for growth and development in Oconee County.

The Future Development Guide includes the three sections shown below:

- Future Development Map
- Character Area-Based Planning Summary
- Character Area Policy

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### **Future Development Map**

The Future Development Map is used to identify the geographic location of the character areas within the county. The character areas are described in detail later in this chapter. The Future

Development Map is intended to help guide decision making related to the physical location of development and where the most appropriate scale and intensity of development should occur.

While the map recommends land uses and development patterns for a 20-year planning horizon, it is important that it is regularly reviewed to determine if amendments are needed based on changing market and demographic trends or local goals. At a minimum, the plan should be updated every five years.

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### **Relationship of Future Development Map to Zoning**

Zoning consists of a zoning map that assigns a zoning classification to every property. The associated zoning ordinance or unified development code describes these classifications, including their allowable land uses and requirements for how buildings, parking, landscaping, signs, and other site features may be placed on a parcel.

The zoning map and zoning ordinance provide property owners with certain rights to development, while the Comprehensive Plan’s Future Development Map serves as a policy guide to the future development of property. The Future Development Map and Character Area Policy should be used as a guide for future rezoning decisions undertaken by the County and municipalities.





## Character Area-Based Planning

Character area-based planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions. Tailored strategies are applied to each area, with the goal of enhancing the existing character/function or promoting a desired new character for the future.

In rural areas, character is generally defined by open space, with large lots for farms and homes and a system of widely spaced roads. In areas with urban and suburban development, character areas are organized by community elements. These elements represent the four basic types of development – the primary ‘building blocks’ of a community – and include open space, neighborhoods, centers, and

corridors. The table below summarizes general characteristics of each element as well as their application on the Future Development Map as specific character areas. The character areas are further described in this chapter.



COMMUNITY ELEMENTS		
COMMUNITY ELEMENT & DIAGRAM	SUMMARY DESCRIPTION	CHARACTER AREA
<b>OPEN SPACE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parks, golf courses, floodplain, wetlands, greenspace (public or privately owned)</li> <li>– Intended to be maintained in a natural state or for passive recreation uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parks/Recreation/Conservation</li> </ul>
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Existing neighborhoods</li> <li>– Areas suitable for new housing development/infill development</li> <li>– Located near open spaces, centers/nodes, and corridors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Country Estates</li> <li>– Suburban Neighborhood</li> <li>– Traditional Neighborhood</li> </ul>
<b>CENTER</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provides residents access to a variety of retail and civic uses/space.</li> <li>– May be larger commercial (local retail / service uses) centers, single-use employment centers (e.g., business or industrial park), or mixed-use centers that include a variety of commercial, residential and/or employment elements.</li> <li>– Includes smaller neighborhood commercial uses in rural and suburban areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Activity Center:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Downtown</li> <li>– Civic Center</li> <li>– Community Village</li> <li>– Mixed-Use Office</li> <li>– Public Institutional</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>CORRIDOR</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Often links activity centers and neighborhoods</li> <li>– Primary transportation corridors or concentrations of specific land use / development type</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Corridor Commercial</li> </ul>



## Character Area Policy

Character areas shown on the Future Development Map are described on the following pages. Each page presents a ‘character area policy’ that represents and describes the character area in terms of the desired development pattern and supporting implementation strategies.

Each character area policy presented in the narrative incorporates the following components:

- Description details the policy intent of each character area, specifically to preserve, maintain, enhance and/or create a desired character.
- General Characteristics provides a general overview of desired development pattern in terms of characteristics that are more specifically addressed in the Character Area Categories.
- Primary Future Land Uses lists appropriate land uses that support the desired mix and/or type of land uses in a character area.
- Development Strategies are the implementation measures needed to achieve the desired development patterns for the character area. They reference strategies identified in Chapter 3: Needs and Opportunities.
- Appropriate Zoning notes the zoning districts that support the desired development patterns for the character area.

# Character Area Categories

## Agriculture & Conservation

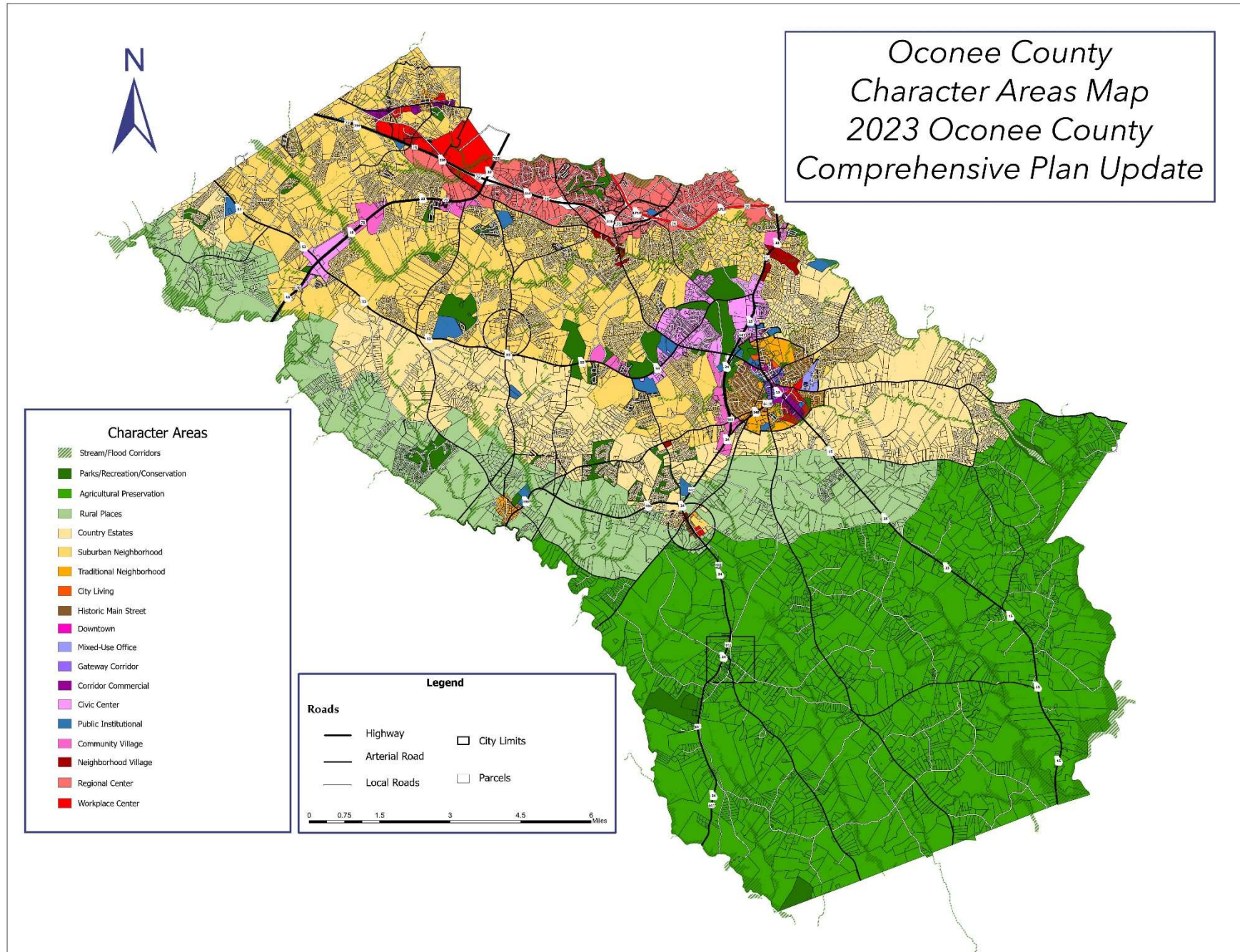
Parks/Recreation/Conservation  
Agricultural Preservation  
Rural Places

## Residential

Country Estates  
Suburban Neighborhood  
Traditional Neighborhood  
City Living (*Watkinsville*)

## Activity & Industry

Neighborhood Village Center  
Community Village Center  
Historic Main Street  
Downtown (*Watkinsville*)  
Mixed-Use Office (*Watkinsville*)  
Gateway Corridor (*Watkinsville*)  
Corridor Commercial  
Civic Center  
Regional Center  
Workplace Center  
Public Institutional



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## **Agriculture & Conservation**

## PARKS/RECREATION/CONSERVATION

### DESCRIPTION:

These lands include stream buffers and corridors, parks, conservation areas, and other natural environmental resources that are protected from land development activities.

Parks, recreation, and conservation areas are dedicated to passive or active recreation uses or for the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands. Parks and recreation areas may be defined as community parks, neighborhood parks, community squares, or greenspace.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Community parks are typically larger facilities intended to attract users from a wider radius and provide a variety of recreational activities. Additional need for community parks has been identified in two locations within Watkinsville to increase access to major recreation space community wide. These parks should be developed in a similar fashion as Harris Shoals Park, providing an array of recreational activities. Typical facilities located in community parks include, but are not limited to children's playground, public restrooms, public art, group picnic areas, amphitheaters, and competitive sports facilities. Additionally, because the community park is intended to attract users from a wider radius, on-site parking may be necessary.

Neighborhood parks are typically smaller facilities, of 1-to- 3 acres, located within residential developments and intended to serve a more localized population providing basic recreation opportunities for nearby residents of all ages. Parks are generally located near the center of neighborhoods and are typically open spaces intended to provide unstructured recreation but may also include playground



equipment. There are no specific sites identified within Watkinsville, but these parks should be included, and centrally situated, within new residential developments.

Community squares are intended to be the central part of the community and to accommodate a variety of community functions. Rocket Field has been designated as Watkinsville's community square based on its location and potential for providing unstructured recreation opportunities and hosting community events (e.g., farmers markets, community festivals, and other public activities).

The conservation areas are focused around the community's stream corridors, which serve to protect the region's water quality, natural habitats, and provide valuable tree cover and open space. Stream corridors are defined by either the delineated 100- year flood hazard boundary or a 100-foot stream corridor transition area, whichever is greater (exemptions may be considered based on



topographic limitations of the property in question). Development within this area should be limited to minimize the adverse impacts of development on water quality and to preserve adequate space to accommodate multi-use trails and community infrastructure networks (such as public sewerage or stormwater treatment facilities).

**PRIMARY FUTURE LAND USES:**

- Undeveloped areas in their natural state; wetlands
- Passive Parks (environmentally constrained areas)
- Active Parks (areas without environmental constraints)
- Greenways/Trails, Golf course

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- All parks and recreation areas should be linked to a pedestrian and/or bicycle facility network increasing their accessibility.
- The planting and preservation of trees and vegetative cover should be emphasized within all parks and recreation areas.
- Conservation areas should, to the greatest extent feasible, accommodate multi-use trails along the river corridor providing interconnectivity throughout Watkinsville and neighboring areas and increasing the recreational use of designated greenspace.
- Natural vegetative buffers should be maintained between the river corridor and multi-use trail.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

- Appropriate zoning for Watkinsville's Parks/Recreation/Conservation Character Area is PRC (Parks, Recreation, and Conservation). In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION

### DESCRIPTION:

This Character Area is composed chiefly of open land and active agricultural production of food crops, fiber crops, animal feed, poultry, livestock, and commercial timber production. Individual farms tend to be large with homes sparsely distributed on large, existing tracts.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Uses in the area may result in odors, dust, noise or other effects that may not be compatible with residential development. This Character Area includes lands in row crops, hay fields, or in pasture; woodlands and areas under forestry management; commercial wholesale nurseries; sparsely settled homes on individual tracts; and areas of sensitive natural resources.



Agricultural Preservation Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active agricultural crop and animal production, horse farms, timbering.</li> <li>• Homesteads on large individual lots.</li> <li>• Manufactured homes on large individual lots.</li> <li>• Large-lot (5 acres and larger) subdivisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compatible “cottage” industries</li> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water typically not available or planned.</li> <li>• Public sewer is not available or planned.</li> <li>• Rural roadways.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Preserve the Character Area for active agricultural activities.<sup>1</sup>
- Allow minor subdivisions or individual lot splits; limit to a density of 5 acres or more per parcel.
- Foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in a rural setting.
- Allow home-based or agriculturally compatible “cottage” industries as home business accessory uses in support of or related to agricultural activities in the area.
- Amend the UDC to allow compatible commercial uses within agricultural zoning districts.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

This Character Area is intended primarily to remain in open or forested land, developed only for agricultural purposes along with farm- houses, barns, silos, and other related structures. The majority of the Character Area is zoned AG, which does not allow “subdivisions” in the traditional sense (those involving new streets and public utilities) but allows minor subdivisions or individual lot splits. The following criteria determine the zoning and density designation in the unincorporated area

Subdivisions in the Agricultural Preservation Character Area	
<b>County Zoning District</b>	AG (Agricultural)
<b>Subdivision Type</b>	Restricted to Minor Subdivisions and individual lot splits <i>only</i>
<b>Water Availability</b>	No
<b>Sewer Availability</b>	No
<b>Minimum Roadway Type</b>	Paved public road

Note that, in all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

<sup>1</sup> Creation of a cohesive and integrated process for agricultural preservation is a cornerstone recommendation of this Plan—see the

Guiding Principles and Policies section of this Community Agenda for details.

## RURAL PLACES

### DESCRIPTION:

A residential-agricultural community, which benefits from its scenic rural landscape, with much of its identity based on its agrarian past while accommodating limited residential growth.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The Rural Places Character Area balances natural environment and human uses with very low-density residential, farms, forests, outdoor recreation, and other open space activities. Large-scale suburban development is not compatible within this Character Area due to conflicts with active animal agriculture and dust and chemical drift from agricultural operations. Home-based and farm-based businesses are allowed in the rural area provided they are compatible with existing nearby residential uses.



Rural Places Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active agricultural crop and animal production, horse farms, timbering.</li> <li>• Mini-farm estates on lots of more than 5 acres.</li> <li>• Homesteads on individual lots.</li> <li>• Large-lot residential subdivisions in appropriate locations.</li> <li>• Low-density conservation subdivisions in appropriate locations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> <li>• Cottage industries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water may not be available.</li> <li>• Public sewer is not available or planned.</li> <li>• Rural roadways.</li> </ul>



#### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

- Provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities.
- Avoid the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, residential developments.
- Accommodate the development of mini-farm estates that blend into the overall fabric of the area, on tracts 5 acres and greater in size.
- The uses and building scale of new development should maintain the character of the rural environment and surrounding area.
- All residential development will be limited to single-family homesteads on individual (non-subdivision) lots except for large-lot subdivisions and low-density conservation subdivisions in appropriate locations.

#### APPROPRIATE ZONING:

Subdivision densities within this Character Area, when allowed, range from a minimum of 2 acres (in Bishop) per dwelling unit (DU) to five acres or more (in North High Shoals and the unincorporated area). Appropriate zoning districts are:

- In Bishop, A-1 (Agricultural) and AR-2 (Agricultural Residential Two Acre).
- In North High Shoals, A-1 (Agricultural).
- In the unincorporated area, the appropriate zoning and density designation are determined by the following criteria:

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property. Important factors in considering a rezoning include the condition and level of service provided by road access to the property (higher level of service may support higher density), the location of the property relative to other Character Areas (Country Estates or Agricultural Preservation), and the existing uses and zoning of other properties in the area.

Subdivisions in the Rural Places Character Area [Unincorporated Oconee County]		
	1 DU per 5 Acres	1 DU per 4 Acres
<b>County Zoning District</b>	AG (Agricultural Residential Five Acres)	AR-3 (Agricultural Residential Three Acres)
<b>Subdivision Type</b>	Conventional or Conservation	Conventional or Conservation
<b>Water Availability</b>	No	No
<b>Sewer Availability</b>	No	No
<b>Minimum Roadway Type</b>	Local	Collector

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## **Residential**

## COUNTRY ESTATES

### DESCRIPTION:

A low-intensity residential community reminiscent of a rural environment. Areas within this Character Area are lands that are undeveloped but rarely or no longer in agricultural production or have been developed as “estate farms” or large-lot subdivisions.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

This Character Area provides a transition between the more rural areas of the county and traditional suburban residential development and provides an “edge” between the urban and rural fringe.



Country Estates Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horse farms and residually compatible agricultural activities.</li> <li>• Homesteads on individual lots.</li> <li>• Mini-farm estates on lots of more than 3 acres.</li> <li>• Large-lot conventional subdivisions.</li> <li>• Low-density conservation subdivisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water may be available or planned.</li> <li>• Sewer is typically not available.</li> <li>• Rural roadways.</li> </ul>

#### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

- Retain and conserve the low-intensity character in the area with a residential density of 3 to 4 acres per dwelling unit (DU).
- Accommodate limited farming activities in the area; including horse farms, and appropriate accessory uses such as barns, corrals, grazing areas, stables and similar structures, and equestrian-related commercial usage such as equestrian centers, boarding stables, riding academies, and tack shops.
- Encourage upscale executive housing to meet the market demand.
- Encourage and accommodate the further development of estates and “gentlemen’s farms” that blend into the overall fabric of the area.
- Residential developments should use design elements or features such as meadows, woodlots, existing vegetation, mature landscaping, and historic farm sites to maintain rural characteristics.

#### APPROPRIATE ZONING:

Subdivision densities within this Character Area, when allowed, range from a minimum of 3 to 4 acres per dwelling unit.

Appropriate zoning districts are:

- In Bishop, AR-1 (Agricultural Residential One Acre) and AR-2 (Agricultural Residential Two Acre).
- In North High Shoals, A-2 (Agricultural Residential), R-1 (Single-Family Residential), and PUD (Planned Unit Development).
- In the unincorporated area, the appropriate zoning and density designations are determined by the following criteria:

Subdivisions in the Country Estates Character Area [Unincorporated Oconee County]		
	1 DU per 4 Acres	1 DU per 3 Acres +
<b>County Zoning District</b>	AR-3 (Agricultural Residential Three Acre)	AR-3 (Agricultural Residential Three Acre)
<b>Subdivision Type</b>	Conventional or Conservation	Conventional or Conservation
<b>Water Availability</b>	No	Varies
<b>Sewer Availability</b>	No	No
<b>Minimum Roadway Type</b>	Local	Collector

Note that, in all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

### DESCRIPTION:

Pedestrian-friendly residential neighborhoods with primarily large, single-family lots and connective, common greenspaces. Denser residential development is logically located in areas adjacent to nonresidential uses. Attractive streetscapes and landscaped common areas are located throughout.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

This Character Area includes established suburban neighborhoods in conventional subdivisions and master planned developments. This Character Area consists principally of single-family detached houses with some higher density housing included in a planned development or near an established nonresidential area. Houses tend to be on 1.5-acre to 2-acre or larger lots on public water. Water and sewer are either existing or planned within this Character Area.

This area is characterized by low pedestrian orientation, high to moderate degree of building separation, predominately residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear. Undisturbed greenspaces, small parks, and other natural areas are scattered throughout the area between existing neighborhoods.



The intent of this Character Area is to provide for future development projects that are suitable with existing residential development in size, scale and overall density. New development requests should be reviewed in terms of impact on the surrounding area; no multi-family housing should be located in this character area.

Suburban Neighborhood (prev. "Suburban Living") Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single-family residential subdivisions.</li> <li>• Conservation Subdivisions.</li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water is available or planned.</li> <li>• Well-developed network of local, collector and arterial roads.</li> <li>• Parks and recreation facilities serve the area; schools are nearby.</li> </ul>

### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

- Protect existing neighborhoods from negative impacts.
- Retain and conserve current sound housing stock.
- Promote new residential development that fosters a sense of community and provides essential mobility, recreation, and open space, while assuring suitability with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Encourage appropriate reuse, redevelopment, or refurbishment of areas where activity and aesthetics have declined.
- Promote innovative and mixed-use development in appropriate locations, such as MPDs in the unincorporated area.
- Promote walkability within each community through path systems or sidewalks, particularly connecting to such focal points as schools, parks, community centers, or commercial activity centers within walking distance of residences.
- Encourage natural resource protection by allowing conservation subdivisions in the R-1 (Single-Family Residential) zoning district in the unincorporated area.

### APPROPRIATE ZONING:

Residential subdivision densities within this Character Area range from a minimum of 1.5 to over 2 acres per dwelling unit (DU) in unincorporated Oconee (depending on the availability of public water or sewer), and from a minimum of ¾ to over 1 acre per DU in municipalities (depending on the availability of public water and sewer). Appropriate zoning categories applicable to this Character Area are:

- In Bishop, R-1 (Single-Family Residential), AR-1 (Agricultural Residential One Acre), and R-2 (Two-Family Residential) in appropriate locations.
- In Bogart, R-1 (Single-Family Residential), and R-2 (Medium Density Single-Family and Two-Family Residential) in appropriate locations.
- Within Watkinsville, Suburban Living areas should be zoned DR (Detached Residential).
- In the unincorporated Oconee, the appropriate zoning and density designation are determined by the following criteria:

Residential Development in the Suburban Neighborhood (prev. "Suburban Living") Character Area [Unincorporated Oconee County]		
	1 DU per 2 Acres +	1 DU per 1.5 Acres +
<b>County Zoning District</b>	AR (Agricultural Residential Two Acre)	R-1 (Single-Family Residential)
<b>Minimum Lot Size (Conventional Development) on public water or sewer</b>	2 acres + per Single-Family Detached DU	1.5 acre + per Single Family Detached DU
<b>Common Development Type</b>	Conventional or Conservation Subdivision	Conventional or Conservation Subdivision
<b>Water Availability</b>	Yes*	Yes*
<b>Sewer Availability</b>	No	Yes
<b>Minimum Roadway Type</b>	Local	Collector
*Larger lot sizes are required if public water is not available.		

Note that, in all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

*(Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals, Watkinsville)*

### DESCRIPTION:

Traditional Neighborhoods are primarily residential neighborhoods with a mix of detached single-family homes at an overall higher density than the Suburban Neighborhood Character Area. Development is pedestrian-oriented with varying setbacks along roadways, attractive streetscapes, and integrated parks and recreational facilities.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

This Character Area is intended for a variety of detached single-family housing units. This area is also appropriate for supportive land uses servicing the neighborhood population including, but not limited to parks, playgrounds, fire stations, and childcare centers as part of the effort to create complete planned neighborhoods.



Traditional Neighborhood Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single-family detached residences.</li> <li>• Single-family attached and accessory housing units in appropriate locations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childcare center.</li> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water is available.</li> <li>• Sewer is available or planned.</li> <li>• City streets.</li> <li>• Parks and recreation facilities serve the area.</li> </ul>



**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- This Character Area is intended to accommodate lower development intensities at a maximum residential density of 2.2 dwelling units (DU) per developable acre with access to public water and sewer. In areas inaccessible to public sewer, net residential densities shall be determined by soil conditions and their ability to accommodate on-site septic systems.
- Limit subdivisions requiring sewer connections to areas already served by sewer lines.
- Attached single-family homes and accessory housing units may be suitable as a means of meeting the mixed housing types criterion provided the overall residential density does not exceed 2.2 DU per developable acre (on public water and sewer), and that the units are compatible with surrounding development in terms of building scale, access, parking, and structural design.
- Home occupation shall be allowed provided that it is a nonretail commercial enterprise, and the work area is invisible from the frontage.
- Neighborhoods should be designed to contribute to a safe, accessible transportation network through the provision of an interconnected street network that accommodates vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian travel with adequate facilities.
- The planting and preservation of trees and vegetative cover should be emphasized within all new development including plantings along street corridors.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning categories applicable to the Traditional Neighborhoods Character Area are:

- In Bishop, R-1 (Single-Family Residential), and R-2 (Two-Family Residential) in appropriate locations.
- In Bogart R-1, (Single-Family Residential), and R-2 (Medium Density Single-Family and Two-Family Residential) in appropriate locations.
- In North High Shoals, R-1 (Single-Family Residential) and R-2 (Two-Family Residential) in appropriate locations.
- Within Watkinsville, appropriate zoning in this Character Area is DR (Detached Residential).

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.



## CITY LIVING (WATKINSVILLE)

### DESCRIPTION:

Higher density, small-lot residences clustered within and around downtown Watkinsville with reduced setbacks, attractive streetscaping, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly amenities, and green spaces, where appropriate. Architecture and scale of development compliments that of downtown Watkinsville.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

This Character Area is intended primarily for attached housing units, typically row houses, townhouses, or similar type development, and multi-family structures (but not duplexes). This area may also be appropriate for small lot single-family detached units (provided the development is compatible with surrounding land uses), parks, open space, or playgrounds.



City Living Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attached housing units such as row houses and townhouses.</li> <li>• Multi-family housing.</li> <li>• Live/Work Units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-lot single-family detached as part of an overall development.</li> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water is available.</li> <li>• Sewer is available or planned.</li> <li>• City streets.</li> <li>• Parks and recreation facilities serve the area.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

This Character Area is intended to accommodate higher intensity residential land uses and requires access to public water and sewer to accommodate higher residential densities.

- Developments may provide a mix of owner and renter-occupied housing opportunities.
- Detached dwelling units may be allowed as part of an overall development plan providing a mix of housing units that meet the minimum density requirements.
- Higher density residential development should be distributed in the vicinity of Downtown increasing public access to the centrally located commercial, civic, entertainment, and employment activities.
- The Character Area should accommodate a maximum residential density of six dwelling units (DU) per developable acre.
- Inclusion is encouraged of community amenities meeting the city's vision, goals, and objectives including, but not limited to: parks, playground areas, green space (area suitable for passive recreation), and land set aside for civic buildings, or mixed housing types.
- Developments must contribute to pedestrian and bicycle transportation increasing access to recreation areas, downtown Watkinsville, and to the community's bicycle and pedestrian network.
- The planting and preservation of trees and vegetative cover should be emphasized within all new development.
- Developments should be built to the scale and character of the community with standards regarding the size and design of all structures.

- Adequate buffers should be provided screening the development from incompatible adjacent land uses, where appropriate.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning in the City Living Character Area in Watkinsville is AR (Attached Residential). In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

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## **Activity & Industry**

## NEIGHBORHOOD VILLAGE CENTER

### DESCRIPTION:

A compact assortment of convenience-oriented retail stores, services, and offices that address the demands of nearby residents. Development is arranged in a village-like setting with pocket parks, plazas, and/or other public spaces encouraging pedestrian circulation and social interaction.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Neighborhood Village Centers offer a mix of small-scale commercial uses connected by sidewalks, pedestrian paths, and, where appropriate, bicycle infrastructure. Given a Neighborhood Village Center's small-scale and emphasis on local-serving stores, the scale and size of individual businesses and the village center as a whole are very important.

Examples of uses within a Neighborhood Village Center include small-scale corner markets, prescription shops, bakeries, cafes, and small retail shops; personal services such as laundromats, dry cleaners and barber/beauty shops; professional services such as lawyers, accountants, insurance agents, physicians and dentists; and small scaled semipublic/ institutional community services.



Neighborhood Village Center Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small commercial center with retail and professional and personal services that are primarily oriented to serve residents of nearby neighborhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public water is available.</li> <li>Sewer may be available or planned.</li> <li>Access from a collector or arterial roadway.</li> </ul>

#### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

- Each Neighborhood Village Center should include a mix of retail, services, and offices that are primarily oriented to serve residents of nearby neighborhoods with their day-to-day needs. A retail development anchored by a coffee shop would be an example of an appropriate use. Residential development may be located adjacent to these villages.
- Neighborhood Village Centers are intended to contain buildings of no greater than 8,000 square feet in total, with individual suites in a multi-tenant building no greater than 3,000 square feet each.
- Buildings should be clustered, one and two stories in height, and should respect the predominant scale and character of development in the surrounding area through complimentary architectural elements, materials, building massing and articulation, setbacks, and other design elements and by providing a gradual transition to any taller or higher density buildings (existing or proposed).
- Design for each center should be pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between shared parking areas, different uses, and the surrounding neighborhood(s). Site design elements such as on-street parking, shared off-street parking, widened sidewalks, sidewalk seating, low-level pedestrian lights, consistent signage, and landscaping contribute to the quaint character of Neighborhood Village Centers and create a sense of place.
- The use of coordinated and characterizing elements such as awnings, varying shingle styles or other natural materials, archways, porticos, decorative cornices, parapets, and landscaping are required.

- Adaptive re-use of existing structures and buildings is encouraged to serve as a focal point.
- There should be adequate buffering of adjacent residential uses from light and sound; buffering between uses within a Neighborhood Village Center development is not required.
- The UDC should be amended to develop appropriate architecture, design, and landscape criteria.

#### APPROPRIATE ZONING:

Neighborhood Village Centers should be zoned:

- In Bishop, B-1 (General Business) with size limitations.
- In unincorporated Oconee, OIP (Office Institutional Professional District) or B-1 (General Business).

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## COMMUNITY VILLAGE CENTER

### DESCRIPTION:

Mixed-use developments that integrate and link together a compatible assortment of higher-intensity commercial (such as larger-scaled shopping centers, professional offices, and services), residential, and recreational uses through a comprehensive circulation system. Land use components coexist as part of a collective approach to creating communities that are safe, attractive, and convenient for pedestrians and motorists alike. Improved pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections to jobs, activities, services, and green spaces, particularly from existing and developing higher density residential communities, tie these village areas together. Entertainment and cultural arts are an important focus of investment.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Typically located at the convergence of important transportation corridors, Community Village Centers include shopping and service facilities that offer a wide variety of goods and services, including convenience goods for village center residents and shopping goods for surrounding neighborhoods. A community village concept should create a small community where it is possible to live, work, and play through a variety of housing options, small businesses, offices, retail shops, services, well-placed parks, plazas, and open spaces.



Natural and historic resources within Community Village Centers should be enhanced and preserved as a means of defining a distinct identity or sense of place. A Community Village Center creates a focal point for its surrounding neighborhoods.

Types of uses typical of a Community Village Center include a large grocery or drug store, small office complexes such as “office condominiums,” financial institutions, full-service restaurants, medical/dental clinics, gas stations, community gathering spaces, and institutional uses (such as libraries or community centers).

Community Village Center Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger commercial center with retail and professional and personal services that serve residents of a large portion of the county.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water is available.</li> <li>• Sewer is available or planned.</li> <li>• Access from a collector or arterial roadway, or within an existing mixed-use development</li> </ul>



#### DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

- Each commercial development in a Community Village Center should include a mix of retail, office, services, and employment to serve a wider market area than a neighborhood village, but not regional in nature. A shopping plaza anchored by a major grocery store, or a stand-alone drug store or supermarket are examples of appropriate uses.
- Community Village Center developments may contain multi-tenant buildings of no greater than 125,000 square feet in total, with no individual or stand-alone business greater than 70,000 square feet unless specifically approved by the governing body. “Big box” retail uses are not compatible with this Character Area.
- Primarily retail-oriented developments should form nodes around major intersections.
- Design for each center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses and shared parking areas.
- Bike-friendly design, including bike lanes, bike racks, and repair stations, should be applied, where appropriate, particularly when a residential component is present in or adjacent to the development.
- Outdoor restaurant seating is encouraged.
- The pedestrian-friendly environment should be enhanced by providing sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to other neighborhood amenities, such as libraries, community centers, health facilities, parks, schools, etc.
- Civic uses and gathering places should be part of the overall design of a Community Village Center.

- Buildings within a planned project or shopping center should share similar design characteristics and design vocabulary. Precise replication is not desirable; instead, a development should utilize similar colors, materials, textures, repeating patterns, massing, articulation, and/or architectural and stylistic features to achieve unity.
- Large parking areas should be located behind buildings and not along rights-of-way, where possible. Shared parking is encouraged.
- There should be adequate buffering of adjacent residential uses from light, sound, dumpster enclosures, and HVAC systems; buffering between uses within a Community Village Center development is not required.
- The UDC should be amended to develop appropriate architecture, design, and landscape criteria.

#### APPROPRIATE ZONING:

Community Village Centers should be zoned B-1 (General Business), B-1-MPD, B-2 (Highway Business) or B-2-MPD (with appropriate use and intensity limitations) primarily, with OIP (Office-Institutional-Professional), in appropriate locations, depending on their location and potential impact on the surrounding area.

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the County and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## HISTORIC MAIN STREET

### DESCRIPTION:

Primarily small-scale retail and office development that is pedestrian-oriented in nature and compatible with the historic character of the town or city it is located within.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The Character Area comprises “original” downtown areas in the county’s four municipalities; each includes many historic structures that contribute to the local cultural resources. The Historic Main Street Character Area is located along Main Street in Watkinsville, US 441 in Bishop, Atlanta Highway in Bogart, and at the Apalachee River crossing in North High Shoals. Protection of this Character Area furthers each municipality’s desire to retain its characteristic “small-town feel.”



Historic Main Street Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-scale retail and offices in a walkable environment.</li> <li>• Adaptive reuse of existing and historic structures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate-scaled commercial development.</li> <li>• Public, semi-public, and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full urban services common to the city.</li> </ul>



**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- The main purpose of this Character Area is to retain and adaptively reuse the existing structures for small-scale retail and office uses retaining the historic character of each municipality.
- Retail and office development should be limited to pedestrian-oriented uses that do not generate excessive vehicle trips or require an abundance of parking.
- Residential uses should be limited to the upper floor of buildings with retail and office downstairs.
- Moderate-scaled commercial development may be appropriate provided storefront facades are oriented towards the street and integrated with adjacent structures. Buildings should not exceed two stories.
- Exterior design, lighting, and signage should be low key, pedestrian-oriented, and compatible with the character of the community.
- The district should provide connectivity to the community's bicycle and pedestrian networks.
- Trees and vegetation should be included in all streetscape improvements.
- On-street parking should be maintained not only for additional parking spots it provides, but also for its use as a buffer between the vehicular lanes and the sidewalk.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning for Historic Main Street Character Areas includes the application of historic protection overlay districts.

- The underlying zoning districts applicable in Bishop and Bogart are B-1 (General Business) and OIP (Office-Institutional-Professional).
- In North High Shoals, the applicable underlying zoning districts are B-1 (General Business) and O-I-P (Office-Institutional-Professional).
- Appropriate zoning in Watkinsville is HM (Historic Main Street).

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## DOWNTOWN (WATKINSVILLE)

### DESCRIPTION:

The Downtown Character Area serves as the civic and commercial heart of Watkinsville. This Character Area is a mixed-use district that meets a wide variety of the population's needs within a village-style atmosphere by offering a range of land use activities including commercial retail sales and service businesses that provide for local needs, private office uses, government offices and public facilities, small-scale lodging, restaurants, and entertainment.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Residential uses can also be incorporated into the Character Area via single-family detached, single-family attached, residential lofts, and other higher density housing options, depending on the preferences of the local jurisdiction.



Downtown Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private offices, retail shopping goods, business supplies.</li> <li>• Government offices and public facilities.</li> <li>• Small-scale lodging, restaurants, and entertainment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lofts over retail or office uses.</li> <li>• Attached residences.</li> <li>• Live-work residences.</li> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full urban services common to the city.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- The street network should be designed on a pedestrian scale that provides interconnectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Automobile access and circulation should be designed in a logical grid of streets that provides adequate access but restricts through traffic.
- Development should be designed in accordance with the scale and character of the city regulating the size, height, and exterior design of new or redeveloped structures. “Big box” retail uses are not compatible with this Character Area.
- Uses may be mixed either vertically (by constructing offices or residences above retail space) or horizontally (by connecting different uses adjacent to each other) in accordance with a desired mix and intensity defined by the local jurisdiction.
- Residential development should be prohibited from the ground floor of commercial buildings within the Character Area. Attached residential development may be included as a stand-alone use along the edges of the district acting as a transition to lower intensity land uses. Homes with a designated retail or office space open to the public (a live-work residence) may be appropriate for the area in an attached or detached configuration, depending on the municipality.
- The planting and preservation of trees and vegetative cover should be emphasized within all new development.
- The Character Area should encourage efficient site utilization including, but not limited to, multi-storied buildings and shared parking lots.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning for the Downtown Character Area in Watkinsville is the DT (Downtown) district. In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## MIXED-USE OFFICE (WATKINSVILLE)

### DESCRIPTION:

A mix of offices, professional services, small-scale lodging, and residential uses designed at a pedestrian scale. Primary uses include office and professional activities that generate higher employment densities than retail sales and services while encouraging a creative mix of compatible residential uses.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Residential uses should be limited to higher density attached units clustered along the edge of the district and should serve as a buffer between the more intense nonresidential uses and the stream buffer.



Mixed-Use Office Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offices and professional services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential development of higher density attached units along edges of the area.</li> <li>Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full urban services common to the city.</li> <li>Sidewalks and bicycle lanes.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Residential development should be limited, as defined by the local jurisdiction, to ensure that the majority of land within the Character Area is reserved for employment uses.
- In Watkinsville, the Character Area should be developed as a transition between the Downtown and the Traditional Neighborhoods Character Areas.
- The Character Area should have a network of pedestrian facilities linking to the Downtown, facilitating the patronage of downtown businesses and to adjacent residential neighborhoods facilitating pedestrian access to employment.
- The Character Area should encourage efficient site utilization including, but not limited to, multi-storied buildings and shared parking lots.
- Character Area design characteristics should include adequate landscaping and buffering from incompatible adjacent residential land uses.
- Natural areas should be incorporated into the Character Area design as a means of providing functional open space and connectivity between adjacent uses.
- The planting and preservation of trees and vegetative cover should be emphasized within all new development.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning for Watkinsville's Mixed-Use Office Character Area is MUO (Mixed-Use Office). In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## GATEWAY CORRIDOR

### DESCRIPTION:

Three iconic entryways into the City of Watkinsville highlight the history and natural beauty of the area. The focus of the South Main Street corridor is the preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of the existing historic structures and the preservation and restoration of natural areas along the identified roadway. The focus of the Simonton Bridge Road corridor is the preservation of existing historic structures and natural resources. The focus of the South Barnett Shoals Road corridor is the preservation and adaptive reuse of existing historic structures.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The Simonton Bridge Road corridor area is compatible for detached residential only. The South Main Street corridor area is compatible for a mix of land uses including attached or detached residential; small-scale, neighborhood-compatible retail sales and services; small-scale lodging and cafes; and office or professional land uses provided the uses do not generate traffic volumes that necessitate improvements to South Main Street to maintain an adequate level of service. The South Barnett Shoals Road corridor area is compatible for a mix of land uses including: attached or detached residential; small scale, neighborhood-compatible retail sales and services; small-scale lodging and cafes; office or professional land uses; and warehousing.



Gateway Corridor Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<p>In the Simonton Bridge Road area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detached residences in the South Main Street area.</li> <li>• Attached or detached residential.</li> <li>• Small-scale, neighborhood-compatible retail sales and services.</li> <li>• Small-scale lodging and cafes.</li> <li>• Office or professional land uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full urban services common to the city.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Within the South Main Street corridor, retail sales and services should be limited in the area and situated to provide small-scale, convenience-type commercial uses to surrounding neighborhoods. Retail sales cannot be stand-alone uses, must be incorporated in a residential unit, and must be an accessory component of the principal use of the property.
- The commitment to retain, and/or restore the existing structure as the focal point of the property within a Scenic Corridor Character Area is paramount. Both corridors favor the preservation of on-site historic structures and, in the South Main Street corridor, the adaptive reuse of onsite historical structures.
- The South Main Street corridor should be developed as a transition from the Downtown to the Traditional Neighborhoods Character Areas around Watkinsville.
- Natural areas should be incorporated into all Character Area designs as a means of providing functional open space and connectivity between adjacent uses.
- South Main Street design characteristics should include adequate landscaping and buffering between residential and employment land uses and between adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- The South Main Street corridor should encourage efficient site utilization through shared parking lots for residential and employment land uses.
- Any new construction should adhere to design standards, as defined by the city, and integrate new development in terms of the size, scale, and design of nearby historic buildings.

- The planting and preservation of trees and vegetative cover should be emphasized within all new development.
- Development should be designed to preserve the aesthetic qualities of the corridors by limiting the size and placement of signs and light fixtures.
- Enhance the corridor experience through the inclusion of alternative transportation facilities (sidewalks and bicycle lanes).

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning districts for Watkinsville's Gateway Corridor Character Areas include SM (South Main Street Scenic Corridor) or SB (Simonton Bridge Road Scenic Corridor), as well as Mixed-Use Office and Attached Residential, as appropriate. In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.



## CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL

### DESCRIPTION:

Large-scale, auto-oriented, primarily commercial development that is located along major roadways for visibility and access and significantly buffered from adjacent residential, agricultural, and other neighboring lower-intensity commercial developments.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The designation targets retail, service, light industry, or office development that is incompatible with a Downtown environment and require additional space to accommodate their activity.



Corridor Commercial Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auto-oriented retail, service and repair.</li> <li>• Larger-scale commercial uses that serve the driving public.</li> <li>• Corporate and professional offices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> <li>• Nursing home, retirement community, personal care home.</li> <li>• Day care center.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full urban services common to the city.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- The Character Area is intended to accommodate land-intensive commercial uses requiring major road access.
- Developments should conform to the scale and character of the community.
- Buffers and landscaping are important aspects of development to mitigate the negative impacts of a high concentration of commercial uses. Buffers should also be utilized to screen incompatible adjacent land uses as appropriate and to enhance the aesthetic character of the area.
- Exterior lighting and signage should be regulated to minimize adverse impacts on adjacent properties and roadways.
- Developments should include shared driveways and inter-parcel access, where possible, minimizing the number of curb cuts along major thoroughfares.
- This Character Area is not directly connected to residential neighborhoods but should be reasonably accessible to residents by foot or bicycle.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning districts for the Commercial Corridor Character Area are:

- B-2 (Highway Business) in Bogart and the unincorporated county.
- In Watkinsville, CC (Commercial Corridor).

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## CIVIC CENTER

### DESCRIPTION:

The Civic Center Character Area is the center of civic activities in unincorporated Oconee County. The Character Area includes a relatively high intensity mix of businesses, retail shopping, offices, sports and recreational complexes, public schools, a college campus, and other public and semi-public uses (such as the Oconee Civic Center, libraries, and museums) that create a multi-dimensional environment.



### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Interconnectivity with surrounding residential brings people to the area and supports civic center character. This Character Area is a vibrant place where people can live, work, recreate and shop.

Typical nonresidential uses include: a shopping center anchored with a large grocery or drug store, small office complexes such as “office condominiums,” financial institutions, full-service restaurants and medical/dental clinics, gas stations, lofts above ground level office or retail, and public and institutional uses such as schools, parks, libraries, and community/civic centers.

Civic Center Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer-based commercial establishments that offer goods and services to the residents of central Oconee.</li> <li>• Employment-based business offices.</li> <li>• Civic, institutional, and semi-public uses, such as educational and sports/recreation facilities, museums, libraries, senior centers, YMCAs, civic and convention centers.</li> <li>• Single-family residential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisted Living and CCRC developments.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water is available.</li> <li>• Sewer is available or planned.</li> <li>• Transportation network to adequately support traffic demands.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Single-family residential should be guided by the Suburban Neighborhood Character Area standards, including:
  - Protect existing neighborhoods from negative impacts.
  - Retain and conserve the existing sound housing stock.
  - Promote walkability within each community through path systems or sidewalks, particularly connecting to such focal points as schools, parks, community centers or commercial activity centers within walking distance of residences.
  - Allow Assisted Living and CCRC developments in areas where a transition between established nonresidential centers and single-family neighborhoods is needed.
- Housing designed for senior residents should be encouraged in master-planned developments where appropriate retail and professional services can be close at hand.
- Commercial retail and service development should be guided by the Community Village Character Area, including:
  - Commercial retail and service development areas that can accommodate a mix of retail sales, professional and personal services, and offices that serve a wider market area than a neighborhood village, but not regional in nature. A shopping plaza anchored by a major grocery store, or a stand-alone drug store or medical/dental clinic, are examples of appropriate uses. Outdoor restaurant seating is encouraged.
  - Commercial retail and service development areas may contain multi-tenant buildings of no greater than 125,000 square feet in total, with no individual or stand-alone business greater than 70,000 square feet unless specifically approved by the governing body. “Big box” retail uses are not compatible with this Character Area.
  - Buildings within a planned project or shopping center should share similar design characteristics and design elements. Precise replication is not desirable; instead, a development should utilize similar colors, materials, textures, repeating patterns, massing, articulation, and/or architectural and stylistic features to achieve unity.
- Design for each center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses and shared parking areas.

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES (CONT'D):**

- Bike-friendly design, including bike lanes, bike racks, and repair stations, should be applied, where appropriate, particularly when a residential component is present in or adjacent to the development.
- Civic uses and gathering places should be part of the overall design.

Large parking areas should be located behind buildings and not along rights-of-way, where possible. Shared parking is encouraged.

- There should be adequate buffering between commercial and adjacent residential uses from light, sound, dumpster enclosures, and HVAC systems; buffering between uses within a planned mixed-use development, such as an MPD, is not required.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Single-family detached residential subdivision densities within this Character Area (unincorporated Oconee) range from a minimum of 1.5 acres to over 2 acres per dwelling unit (DU), depending on the availability of public water.

Appropriate zoning categories applicable to this Character Area for nonresidential uses in the unincorporated area are OIP (Office-Institutional-Professional), B-1 (General Business), B-1-MPD, B-2 (Highway Business), and B-2-MPD (with appropriate use and intensity limitations), depending on their location and potential impact on the surrounding area.

Residential Development in the Civic Center Character Area [Unincorporated Oconee County]		
County Zoning District	AR (Agricultural Residential Two Acre)	R-1 (Single-Family Residential)
<b>Minimum Lot Size (Conventional Development) on public water or sewer</b>	2 acres + sf per Single-Family Detached DU	1.5 acres + per Single Family Detached DU
<b>Common Development Type</b>	Conventional or Conservation Subdivision	Conventional or Conservation Subdivision
<b>Water Availability</b>	Yes*	Yes*
<b>Sewer Availability</b>	No	Yes*
<b>Roadway Type</b>	Local	Collector
*Larger lot sizes are required if public water or sewer are not available.		

Note that, in all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## REGIONAL CENTER

### DESCRIPTION:

The Regional Center Character Area embraces the eastern portion of SR 316, leading into Athens-Clarke County. The area is characterized by regional-serving retail and commercial services, office complexes for medical and corporate offices, hotels, restaurants and entertainment facilities, higher-density residential planned developments, and single-family detached subdivisions.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The area is currently a “multi-use” area of distinct and separate uses.



Regional Center Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional medical and professional offices.</li> <li>Small office complexes such as “office condominiums,” financial institutions, and other service providers.</li> <li>Hotels and meeting facilities.</li> <li>Shopping centers with major retail anchors.</li> <li>Department stores, large marketers, and individual “big box” retail stores.</li> <li>High density residential development within a vertically integrated mixed-use master planned environment.</li> <li>Single-family residential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assisted Living and CCRC developments.</li> <li>Recreational uses such as theaters, roller skating rings, arcades.</li> <li>Entertainment, restaurants, and cultural arts.</li> <li>Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public water is available.</li> <li>Sewer is available or planned.</li> <li>Transportation network to adequately support traffic demands.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Provide a wide variety of mixed uses, size and intensity of uses (from low to high), and types of uses in order to create and maintain the regional-serving role of the Character Area.
- Require buffers to protect lower-density residential areas within and near the Character Area that would be impacted by higher-density and commercial development of the Character Area. Buffering between uses within a planned mixed-use development, such as an MPD, is not required.
- Transitions in intensity of development should be established approaching the boundaries whenever possible, moving in gradations from high-intensity regional office parks and retail shopping centers down to low-intensity single-family neighborhoods. Where a gradual transition is impractical, major buffering between the development and adjacent uses, or other solutions should be established through zoning and site plan restrictions.
- Plan for a community trail and sidewalk network that is as friendly to alternative modes of transportation as to the automobile.
- Require master planning of individual sites to address access management, landscaping, and streetscape elements. Plan and design transportation improvements that correlate traffic capacity with development of the area.
- Accessory, temporary outdoor storage of retail goods should be shielded from public view. In the case of auto dealerships and

storage/repair businesses, vehicles stored on site should be screened from view from the public right-of-way by a low wall, hedge, or landscape strip. Display platforms should be incorporated into overall design.

- Encourage civic and cultural uses and recreational and entertainment businesses that will promote human interaction.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

In the unincorporated area, appropriate zoning for primarily residential development (in appropriate locations) would be the AR (Agricultural Residential), R-1 (Single-Family Residential), R-1-MPD, R-2 (Two-Family Residential), R-2-MPD, R-3 (Multi-Family Residential), and R-3-MPD districts; for primarily nonresidential development (in appropriate locations), appropriate zoning includes: OIP (Office-Institutional-Professional), B-1 (General Business), and B-2 (Highway Business).

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.



## WORKPLACE CENTER

### DESCRIPTION:

This Character Area is intended primarily for larger-scale heavy commercial, industrial, wholesale, and office uses that may be land intensive, generate high employee, or truck traffic, or create noise, odor, or other impacts associated with manufacturing and production uses.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

As a large employment center of regional importance, the Workplace Center Character Area can also incorporate associated aspects of commerce such as professional office buildings, corporate and regional offices, high-tech and research facilities, business park complexes, and light industrial/manufacturing uses.

Retail uses may be included as secondary and are expected to be primarily local serving for the businesses and employees in the Character Area. Redevelopment of low-density residential uses to employment-based uses are anticipated as the area develops.



Workplace Center Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light industrial, warehousing, and light manufacturing. Heavy industrial is restricted to locations where adverse impacts can be adequately mitigated.</li> <li>• Heavy commercial uses, such as auto repair and service.</li> <li>• Employment uses such as business parks, research &amp; development, logistics/distribution, and services.</li> <li>• Wholesaling companies, business parks.</li> <li>• Professional office complexes and campuses including small office complexes such as “office condominiums.”</li> <li>• Flex-space and mixed use with combination of office and retail/wholesale/warehouse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial retail and services that support the business and employment base in the area.</li> <li>• Semi-public and institutional uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public water is available.</li> <li>• Sewer is available or planned.</li> <li>• Access available from arterial or major collector roads with transportation routes adequately scaled for employee and business traffic.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Residential uses are not appropriate within this Character Area.
- Adequate buffers and landscaping should be required between a Workplace Center Character Area and adjacent residential or commercial land uses.
- Apply guidelines that address outdoor signage, sound, and lighting to mitigate the negative impacts of a high concentration of heavy commercial and light industrial uses.
- Intensive uses producing negative impacts related to noise, odor, truck traffic, or other adverse conditions should be carefully sited to ensure compatibility with other employment uses within the Character Area.
- Require master planning of individual sites to address access management, landscaping, and streetscape elements.
- Plan and design vehicular and alternative transportation improvements that support development of the area.
- Access directly to major transportation corridors should be limited.
- Internal transportation networks should adequately accommodate traffic needs and provide interconnectivity and shared parking where applicable.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Zoning districts appropriate for the Workplace Center Character Area are:

- In Bishop, OBP (Office-Business Park), and I (Industrial).
- In Bogart, P-O-R (Professional-Office-Research) and I-M (Industrial).
- In Watkinsville, EC (Employment Center).
- In the unincorporated area, appropriate zoning districts include I (Industrial), TB (Technology Business), OBP (Office-Business Park), OIP (Office-Institutional-Professional), B-2 (Highway Business), and B-1 (General Business) in appropriate locations.

In all cases, the zoning requirements of the jurisdiction and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

## PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL

### DESCRIPTION:

This Character Area represents the various civic functions scattered throughout the County. The Character Area Map illustrates the existing and proposed locations of civic functions, including the following: county and city government offices, state offices and facilities (GDOT, etc.). libraries, schools, law enforcement, emergency services, and other areas owned or operated by city or county government.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The Character Area Map has identified an area for large-scale expansion of county or municipal government uses adjacent to existing developments. Smaller-scale government administration offices generating a higher point of service demand should remain clustered downtown strengthening its location as a vibrant hub of the community.

Certain civic uses may be suitable within predominantly residential areas provided they do not generate significant traffic and are built to scale with the surrounding area. These uses may include but are not limited to, fire stations, elementary schools, and childcare centers.



Public Institutional Character Area		
Primary Land Uses	Compatible Secondary Land Uses	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Civic functions such as county and city government offices, library, school, law enforcement, and emergency services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other areas owned or operated by city or county government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full urban services common to the city.</li> <li>Sidewalks and bicycle lanes.</li> </ul>

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Institutional development should be built to the scale and design of surrounding land uses.
- District design characteristics should include adequate landscaping and buffering from adjacent land uses.
- The planting and preservation of trees and vegetative cover should be emphasized within all new development.
- Pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities should be included as part of developments intended as major destination points.

**APPROPRIATE ZONING:**

Appropriate zoning for Watkinsville's Public Institutional Character Area is PI (Public Institutional). In all cases, the zoning requirements of the City and applicable conditions of zoning approval control the use and development of any specific property.

In the unincorporated area, appropriate zoning districts include OIP (Office-Institutional-Professional), B-1 (General Business), B-2 (Highway Business), and OBP (Office-Business Park), as well as residential zoning districts in limited circumstances (churches and schools).

# Transportation

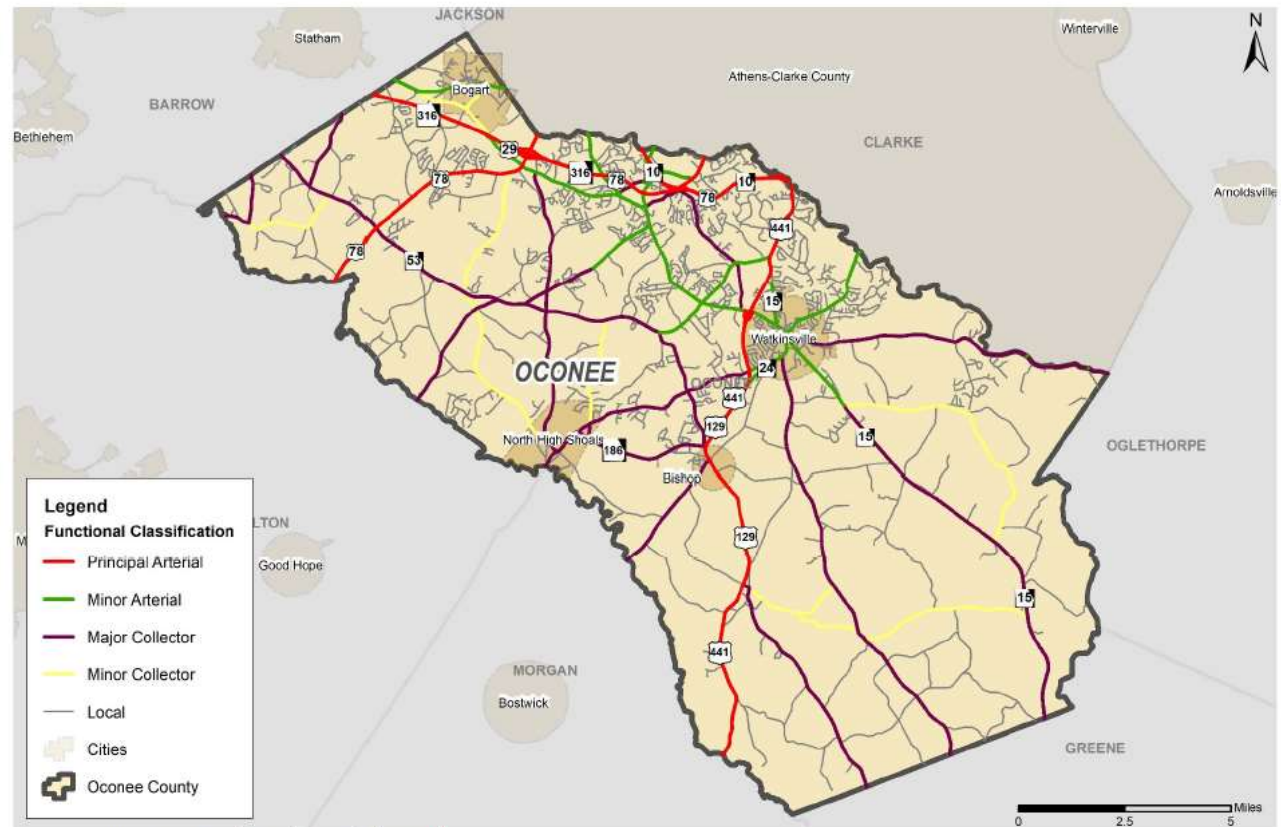
Chapter

6

# Transportation Network

## Roadway Network

The roadway network in Oconee County and its municipalities consist of principal arterials, minor arterials, major and minor collectors, and local roads. This classification system aligns with the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA), and the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) established Functional Classification Guidelines. These classifications provide guidance as to the function of each roadway and serve to balance the competing needs of mobility and access. The jurisdiction of local streets falls under the County, or the individual municipalities, which are in charge of oversight of their respective roadways. The GDOT maintains jurisdiction of U.S. Highways, and State Highways throughout the planning area.



Source: 2017 GDOT Roadway Characteristics Database.

## Madison, Athens-Clarke, Oconee, Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS)

MACORTS serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the urbanized area of the region, and since a portion of unincorporated Oconee County, as well as the cities of Bogart and Watkinsville are located within the MPO boundary, there is requirement for a transportation element within the comprehensive plan. MPOs are federally mandated organizations that provide regional context to transportation planning in urbanized areas.

This section, the MACORTS Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and most recent version of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) should be used together when considering local transportation decisions within the established MPO boundaries.

MACORTS is responsible for cooperatively developing a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that details a balanced four-year program of projects (Tier 1) and a second two-year program of projects (Tier 2) to be undertaken in the MPO's boundaries. Included in the TIP is a prioritized listing of area projects grouped by project type, along with estimated costs and sources of funding for each project. The role of the TIP is to implement the short-range (four-year) elements of the Long-Range (twenty-year) Transportation Plan. Designed to be responsive to changing conditions the TIP may be amended as needed through a process approved by the MPO and the FHWA.

## OUTSIDE THE MPO

Transportation planning for the portion of the Oconee County that lies outside the MPO boundaries follows a similar process. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is identified through GDOT's ongoing planning processes and are vital to the state's transportation program. Projects in the STIP emphasize the maintenance, safety, and improvement of existing transportation facilities and public transportation systems. Additionally in the non-MPO areas which the STIP covers, projects are identified in direct cooperation with rural (non-MPO) local governments through formal, annual face-to-face meetings with GDOT as well as regular/ongoing informal contact with GDOT throughout the rest of the year. It is also developed with input from stakeholders and the general public.

This comprehensive plan, through public involvement, notes the importance of addressing the most congested corridors and intersections in the county. Small area plans to address land use and transportation coordination are recommended for congested corridors and nodes.

## Key Roadway Improvements

### Key Roadway Improvements MPO & STIP

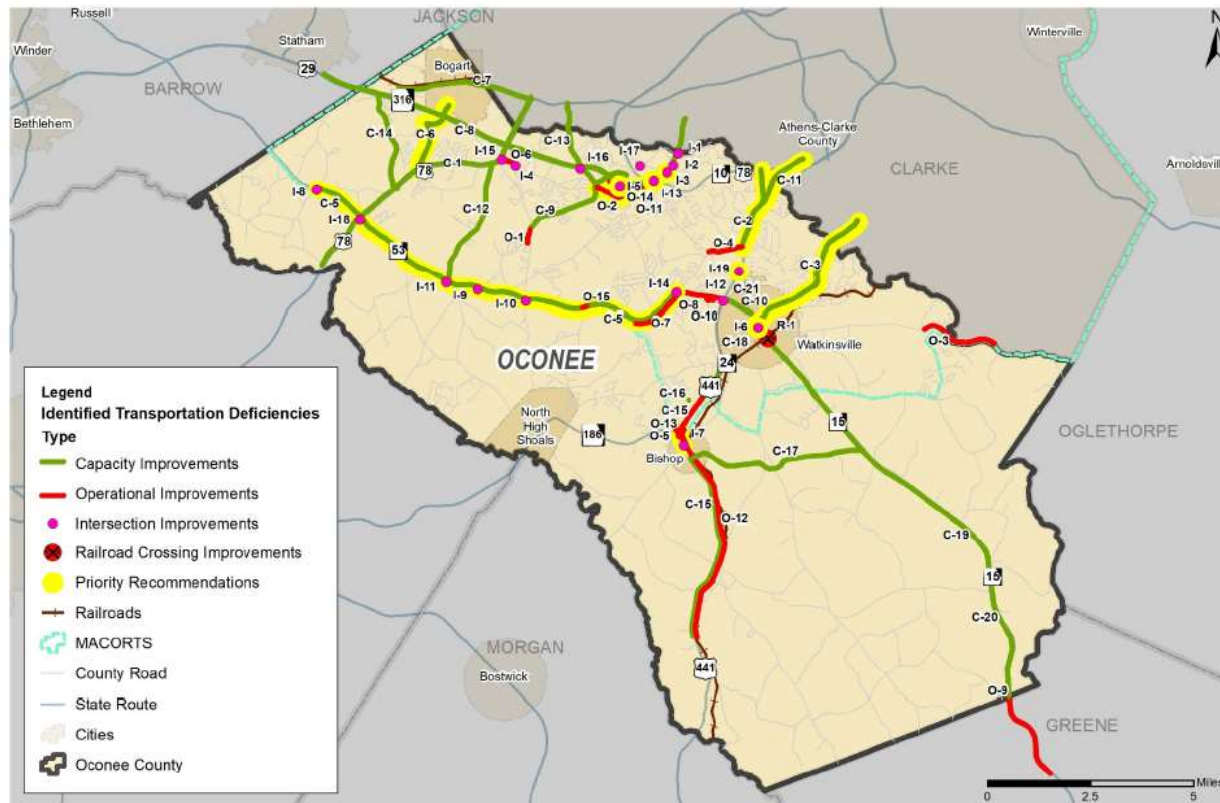
#### Tier 1 – Short Range 2021-2024

1. Road Projects – including SR 316 at Jimmie Daniel Road

### Key Roadway Improvements Local:

1. Road resurfacing
2. Road Maintenance Minimization
3. Intersection Improvements





2. Bridge Projects – including Clotfelter Road Bridge over Barber Creek

4. Major Transportation Improvements

6. Pavement Management
7. Traffic Signal Replacement
8. Culvert Improvement & Replacement

#### Tier 2 – Long Range 2025-2026

3. Road Widening
4. Bridge Maintenance & Improvements
5. Intersection Improvements

#### Active Transportation:

1. Pedestrian Infrastructure
2. Trails
3. Bicycle Infrastructure

SOURCE: OCONEE COUNTY LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

#### TIER 1 PROJECTS

Tier 1 Projects are projects that GDOT has programmed for the short-term of 2021-2024.

## **TIER 2 PROJECTS**

The FY 2022 - 2023 Second Tier of Projects lists transportation projects that the GDOT has programmed for the period from FY 2025 - 2026. Also, projects that are priority projects from a local standpoint but not currently programmed by the GDOT are listed in the FY 2025 - 2026 Second Tier of Projects. Potential transportation projects for which federal-aid or state funding is sought but which are currently not programmed by the GDOT cannot be included in the FY 2021 - 2024 TIP - but can be included in the FY 2025 - 2026 Second Tier of Projects.

## **GDOT PRIORITIZATION**

GDOT, in conjunction with Oconee County, initiated the development of a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to guide transportation needs and projects through 2045. The plan determined a prioritization of roadway capacity improvements, roadway operational improvements, intersection improvements, bridge improvements, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. This LRTP should be referenced for transportation guidance and updated at appropriate intervals.

# Parks, Recreation, & Greenspace

Chapter

7

# The Value of Parks, Recreation, and Greenspaces

The County's parks system provides a valuable service for the entire community. According to the Trust for Public Land, the actual economic impact that parks and green spaces have on a community can be measured by considering the following things:

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## Property Values

Homes and other uses that are within a 15 minute or 0.25-mile walk have been shown to have higher property values, which will translate into increased tax revenue.

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## Tourism Value

Oconee Veteran's Park attracts users from outside Oconee County both for its park facilities and its recreational programming. Visitors for each reason may also spend their money at the retail establishments on the way to or from home, which will increase sales tax revenue.

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## Direct Use

Direct use value is the difference between what a user is willing to pay at a comparable private facility for a use the park offers for a reduced cost. Things like team sports, bicycling and walking trails, or even picnic facilities are all examples of activities and facilities that visitors would likely pay more for if they weren't offered at a public park or through a public program.

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## User Fees

User fees are the most easily quantifiable stream of income. Strategic planning for parks and recreation facilities should take into account the impact of user fees as well as other funding options.

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## Health Value

Access to parks and recreation facilities has been shown to contribute to an overall community increase in physical activity. The more active a community, the lower their overall medical costs are likely to be due to improved health relative to conditions associated with heart disease and diabetes.

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## Community Connections

In addition to places that provide opportunities for recreation, parks and green spaces provide a community with the opportunity to connect, parks can help to define the character and quality of life in a community. By providing a venue for gatherings, events, and connections with others in the community, park spaces can help a community feel more cohesive.



*Source: Dan Burden*

## **Stormwater & Floodplain Management**

Because of the large amount of impervious surface in developed area, parks and green spaces can help manage stormwater and, in some cases, floodplains. New parks can include stormwater management elements incorporated into the park design to align water features and stormwater management.



*Source: Natural Lands Trust*



*Source: Intrinsic Architecture*

# Oconee County Parks & Recreation

Oconee County has over 600 acres of parkland to enjoy. Park amenities include ball fields, tennis courts, picnic shelters, playgrounds, walking paths, trails, Community Center, disc golf course, meeting rooms, outdoor volleyball court and more. Additionally, there are park plans currently in progress that will provide for updates to existing parks and create new park facilities. The public participation process identified that a long-range county-wide park system plan is needed to support future development in the county.

The Parks and Recreation Department provides both maintenance to existing parks and facilities as well as programming and activities. According to the department's mission statement, the Parks and Recreation Department, through a coordinated effort, seeks to enrich the quality of life of the citizens we serve, by providing safe and accessible recreational facilities and a diversified program of recreational activities for all citizens. The current facilities and the amenities they offer are as follows.

## Bogart Sports Complex

33 acres

- Baseball/Softball Fields
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Walking Track
- Picnic Pavilion

## Heritage Park

364 acres

- Bike Trail
- Hiking Trails
- Outdoor Arena & Barn
- Horse Trails

## Herman C. Michael Park

37 acres

- Baseball/Softball Fields
- Basketball Court
- Volleyball Courts
- Pavilion, Picnic Tables & Shelters
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Soccer Field
- Tennis Court
- Walking Track
- Disc Golf Course

## Oconee Veteran's Park

197 acres

- Baseball/Softball Fields
- Basketball Court
- Bike Trail
- Hiking Trails
- Locker Room
- Meeting Rooms
- Pavilion, Picnic Tables & Shelters
- Restrooms
- Soccer Field
- Tennis Court
- Indoor Walking Track
- Dog Park



In support of advancing that mission the following needs and opportunities have been identified by the Parks and Recreation subcommittee to be addressed by this plan.

## Needs & Opportunities

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### Parks

- More park space at all scales is needed.
- Neighborhood pocket parks
- Large scale multi-sport complex
- Identify location, land for expansion to maximize population served.
- Connect new and existing parks and greenspace to the community with trails, sidewalks and other off-street facilities.

### Recreation

- Multi-Use trail network to connect greenspace, parks, and other trail networks, and the Oconee and Apalachee Rivers
- Make improvements to the county owned horse trails and facilities in the southern portion of the county.
- Upgrades to existing recreation facilities and fields are needed to keep up with demand.
- As the population grows so may the demand for large scale investments like such as an Aquatic Center/Indoor Pool, a Nature/Environmental Education Center, and a Blue Way or public access to the many scenic waterways throughout Oconee County

- Additional capacity in physical space and variety in programming offered will be needed to support existing demand and projected population growth.

### Finance & Service

- Increased funding to pay for expansions and upgrades in staff, operations, programming, and maintenance, may need to be found.

The general needs and opportunities statements contained above should serve as at least a guide for a much more robust parks, and greenspace master planning effort.



*Source: Randall Arendt*



# Community Work Program

Chapter  
**8**

This section describes the next steps that should be undertaken to begin the process of implementation. These include:

- Use of the Comprehensive Plan as a day-to-day decision support tool.
- Review and update the Unified Development Code to align with the vision, goals, and policies presented in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Updating the Comprehensive Plan at regular intervals.
- Enhancement of public communication regarding decision making.
- A short-term Community Work Program (CWP) for each community (Oconee County, Town of Bishop, City of Bogart, Town of North High Shoals, and the City of Watkinsville) for the next 5 years.
- A report of accomplishments for each community's previous 5-year work program.
- Exploration of possible funding sources and techniques for implementation.

## Use of the Plan on a day-to-day basis

The Comprehensive Plan should become the official policy guide for land use, development, and community improvement for all jurisdictions. It should be used by staff, appointed commissioners and board members, as well as elected officials to review and assess all proposals for improvements and development in the years ahead.

## Review Unified Development Code

Zoning is an essential regulatory tool for implementing planning policy, and it works hand-in-hand with the Character Areas described in the Land Use chapter. Each one describes the quality, intensity, and appropriate location for new development in the future. The recommended development strategies and guidelines the Comprehensive Plan describes should be used to review the existing zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, property maintenance, and other related codes to ensure consistency with the Plan's desired outcomes. Specific recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan that development regulations can address include, but are not limited to:

- Promoting sustainable development and growth in targeted areas.
- Ensuring the scale, design and configuration of development is appropriate for the character area in which it is located.
- Updating landscaping, planting, parking, and screening requirements to promote quality, attract development and redevelopment within existing commercial areas.
- Encourage the development of a wider range of housing options within targeted areas.
- Ensuring future non-residential development is connected to surrounding neighborhoods by either greenspace or improvements that make it accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as automobiles.

- Facilitating the development of parks, trails, and open spaces to enhance the existing quality of life, and meet the recreation needs of the community.

## Update the Plan on a regular basis

The Comprehensive Plan is not a static document. If conditions or community attitudes change, the plan can and should be amended to remain relevant and useful as a policy guide. Ideally each jurisdiction should conduct an annual review of the status of projects listed in their short-term work program to determine the progress towards implementation. Projects can be added or removed because they are no longer relevant by adopting an amended version. The Land Use element should also be reviewed regularly as conditions change. As development continues in the northern and western portions of the county and within municipal areas, the pressure to develop in areas designated to remain rural in character will increase.

## Enhance Public Communication

The process of updating the plan has been an opportunity to engage in a discussion about the function and relevance of planning, and how citizens can participate to help define the future. The opportunity exists to continue building interest as the plan is implemented by developing additional techniques for sharing information about planning and development decisions. For

example, webpage features or a monthly newsletter devoted to future actions before the Planning Commission or Board of Commissioners or City Councils related to planning and development.

# Oconee County Community Work Program, 2023-2027

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
1.	Oconee County Administrative Building	2023	\$14.8 M	Administration	GO Bond/SPLOST
2.	Calls Creek Plant Upgrade Phase 1	2023	\$6.6 M	Water Resources	GEFA
3.	Calls Creek Plant Upgrade Phase 2	2023-2024	\$17.8 M	Water Resources	GEFA/Capacity Fees
4.	Daniells Bridge Force Main	2024	\$1.1 M	Water Resources	SPLOST
5.	LAS Decommissioning	2025	\$100,000	Water Resources	SPLOST
6.	LAS Field Services Building	2024-2026	\$6 M	Administration/WR	Enterprise Fund/SPLOST
7.	LAS Park Phase 1	2025-2027	\$8 M	Parks	SPLOST/Gen Fund
8.	OVP Tennis Courts	2025	\$2 M	Parks	SPLOST
9.	OVP Access Road	2023	\$1 M	Parks	General Fund/SPLOST
10.	Rays Church Road Roundabout Design	2023-2026	\$525,000	Public Works	General Fund
11.	Snows Mill Road Roundabout Design	2023-2025	\$538,000	Public Works	General Fund
12.	Broadband Expansion	2023-2025	\$1.5 Mil	Administration	Grants/General Fund

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
13.	Intersection Design Project Construction	2024-2027	\$7.5 M	Public Works	TSPLOST
14.	Hog Mountain Road Trail	2024-2025	\$1.2 M	Public Works	TSPLOST
15.	Additional Trail Construction	2024-2027	\$1.8 M	Public Works	TSPLOST
16.	Road Resurfacing Program	2023-2027	\$40 M	Public Works	TSPLOST/SPLOST
17.	Recreation Parks Master Planning	2023-2027	\$35,000	Parks & Rec	General Fund
18.	Complete Mars Hill Beautification Project	2023-2027	\$380,000	BOC/JDA	JDA
19.	Complete Mars Hill Widening Phase II	2023-2024	\$18M	Public Works	GDOT
20.	Prepare small area studies for appropriate higher intensity character areas or redeveloped areas (Butlers Crossing, Highway 78 & 53, Highway 78 & 316, new interchanges along Highway 316, Highway 441 & Hog Mountain, and Highway 441 & New High Shoals)	2023-2027	Unknown	TBD	General Fund

# Oconee County

## Report of Plan Accomplishments, 2018-2022

	Activity	Status	Comments
1.	Draft Economic Development Structure to include potential MOUs and implementation strategy	Completed	Completed
2.	Develop Recreation Parks Master Plan	Underway	Partially completed and carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan for remaining park plans
3.	Develop Water & Wastewater Master Plan	Cancelled	Utilizing previously existing master plan; update no longer a priority
4.	Complete Courthouse Improvements	Completed	Completed
5.	Identify Land for Administration Building	Completed	Completed
6.	Construct Administration Building	Underway	Construction began 6/2022 to be completed 7/2023
7.	Complete Animal Shelter Renovation	Completed	Completed
8.	Complete Mars Hill Phase II	Underway	Road construction underway, GDOT PI 0009011 NTP 9,20/2021; Completion date 8/16/2023
9.	Complete Bishop Farm Parkway Extension	Cancelled	No longer a priority or need
10.	Implement Road Resurfacing Program	Completed	Completed

Activity	Status	Comments
11. Complete Mars Hill Beautification Project	Underway	Phase 1 completed, Phase 2 to be completed following completion of GDOT PI 0009011, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
12. Rewrite and Update Unified Development Code	Completed	Completed
13. Oconee Senior Center Expansion	Completed	Completed



## Town of Bishop Community Work Program, 2023-2027

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
1.	Roadway and sidewalk maintenance	2023-2027	Unknown	City	SPLOST
2.	Construct community picnic shelter	2023-2027	Unknown	City	General Fund, SPLOST, etc.
3.	Fund maintenance and promotion of community center	2023-2027	Unknown	City	SPLOST

## Town of Bishop

### Report of Plan Accomplishments, 2018-2022

	Activity	Status	Comments
1.	Secure placement of partial turn lanes within city by GDOT	Cancelled	GDOT widening plan for Hwy 441 replaces this project.
2.	Construct community picnic shelter	Underway	Land acquisition phase under way
3.	Fund maintenance and promotion of community center	Underway	Determining scope and receiving bids

## City of Bogart Community Work Program, 2023-2027

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
1.	Sidewalk along Atlanta Highway / South Burson to Library/Venues	2023-2025	\$390,000	City of Bogart	SPLOST & City Funds
2.	Stormwater Improvements throughout city	2023-2025	\$110,000	City of Bogart	SPLOST & City Funds
3.	Install pedestrian cross walk at the Atlanta Highway / Burson Avenue signal	2023-2027	\$20,000-\$30,000	City of Bogart, GDOT	SPLOST, City Funds

# City of Bogart

## Report of Plan Accomplishments, 2018-2022

	Activity	Status	Comments
1.	Implement Streetscape Improvements on Main Street	Completed	Completed
2.	Upgrade current street lighting with LED bulbs	Completed	Completed
3.	Develop basic street lighting plan for the city	Cancelled	No longer a priority
4.	Build Sidewalks in Clarke County on Atlanta Highway	Completed	Completed
5.	Conduct feasibility study for city-wide Wi-Fi	Cancelled	No longer a priority
6.	Upgrade ballfields at Bogart Sports Complex to Little League standards.	Cancelled	No longer a priority
7.	Install pedestrian cross walk at the red light at Atlanta Hwy and Burson Avenue	Postponed	Sidewalk along Atlanta Hwy, South Burson to the Library and venues is under construction; once completed this item will be pursued
8.	Implement resurfacing other upgrading on local streets	Cancelled	This is annual maintenance, not needed in work program
9.	Fund participation in joint training and partnerships with other local municipalities, RC, and Oconee BOC	Cancelled	This is annual training and maintenance of training program, not needed in work program

# Town of North High Shoals Community Work Program, 2023-2027

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
1.	Improvements to Hillsboro Road, drainage from driveway southward; intersection with Ray's Church for traffic slowing; Improvements to Ray's Church - guard rail at steep shoulder.	2023-2027	TBD – Pending engineering study results	Town	General Fund
2.	Update Zoning map	2023-2027	\$2,500	Town	General Fund, Dept. of Community Affairs
3.	Update Ordinance	2023-2027	\$2,500	Town	General Fund, Dept. of Community Affairs
4.	Construct sidewalks on Hillsboro Road	2023-2027	\$400,000	Town	SPLOST, Grants
5.	Construct sidewalks on Gober Road	2023-2027	\$400,000	Town	SPLOST, Grants
7.	Explore annexation of rest of Hickory Ridge and Hickory Lake	2023-2027	N/A	Town	N/A
8.	Master Plan for park	2023-2027	\$5,000	Town	General Fund
9.	Dog park	2023-2027	\$7,000	Town	General Fund
10.	Nature trail at park (upgrading trails, new signage, etc.)	2023-2027	\$5,000	Town	General Fund
11.	Greenway path from park to Hickory Ridge and Steeplechase	2023-2027	\$500,000	Town	SPLOST, Grants

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
12.	Ball field restoration	2023-2027	\$2,000	Town	General Fund
13.	Construct equipment structure at town park	2023-2027	\$10,000	Town	SPLOST
14.	Install electric car charging station at town hall	2023-2027	\$25,000	Town	Grants
15.	Solar Panels at Town Hall	2023-2027	\$13,000	Town	General Fund
16.	Upgrade traffic signs/posts	2023-2027	\$5,000	Town	SPLOST, General Fund
17.	Conduct at least two fact-finding trips to similar-sized towns in Georgia to research best practices, etc.	2023-2027	\$10,000	Town	General Fund
18.	Revise city street light plan	2023-2027	\$10,000	Town	General Fund

## Town of North High Shoals

### Report of Plan Accomplishments, 2018-2022

	Activity	Status	Comments
1.	Completion of new Town Hall and Community Center	Completed	Completed in 2019
2.	Furnishings for new Town Hall	Cancelled	No longer a priority
3.	Nature trail at park (upgrading trails, new signage, etc.)	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
4.	Ball field restoration	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
5.	Use and promotion of historic Town Hall	Completed	Completed - Being rented
6.	Rays Church Road / Hillsboro Road intersection reconstruction	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
7.	Upgrade traffic signs/posts	Postponed	Delayed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
8.	Revise city street light plan	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan



Activity	Status	Comments
9. Update zoning map and ordinance	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
10. Construct sidewalks on Hillsboro Rd. and Gober Rd.	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
11. Plan and identify funding for a greenway path along stream from Ray's Church Rd. to Hopping Rd. (connect to neighborhoods)	Postponed	Not completed but carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
12. Construct equipment structure at town park	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
13. Install solar panels at new town hall	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
14. Install electric car charging station at town hall	Postponed	Postponed due to funding, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan
15. Conduct at least two fact-finding trips to similar-sized towns in Georgia to research best practices, etc.	Postponed	Postponed due to pandemic travel restrictions, carried over to 2023-2027 Work Plan

# City of Watkinsville

## Community Work Program, 2023-2027

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
1.	Consider Historic Preservation Ordinance	2023	\$2,000	Jeff Campbell, Chuck Garrett	General Fund, DDA, DCA, Grants
2.	Establish a Greenspace Program ( <i>Purchase currently available privately held greenspaces to develop for public use</i> ).	2023	\$5 million - \$8 million	Brian Brodrick, Christine Tucker, Jeff Campbell	GEFA Loans, Bonds, General Fund, SPLOST, ARPA, Grants
3.	Establish Citywide Beautification Program	2024	\$30,000	Brian Brodrick, Connie Massey	General Fund, Grants
4.	Relocate Public Works Department Facilities	2025	unknown	Jeff Campbell, Brett Thomas	General Fund, Grants, SPLOST, County
5.	Explore Truck Bypass	2023-2024	unknown	Brian Brodrick, Chuck Garrett, Brett Thomas	TSPLOST, GDOT, FHWA
6.	Explore Rail Trail Opportunity	2023	unknown	Brian Brodrick, Chuck Garrett, Brett Thomas	TSPLOST, County
7.	Evaluate Road Capacity of Barnett Shoals Road and Create/Implement Design	2024-2025	\$1 million	Brian Brodrick, Chuck Garrett, Brett Thomas	TSPLOST, County
8.	Construct Mulberry/Simonton Bridge Road Pedestrian Connector to Downtown	2024	\$4 million	Brian Brodrick, Chuck Garrett, Brett Thomas	GDOT TAP grant, TSPLOST, ARPA Funds
9.	Activate Harris Shoals Park Master Plan	2023	\$3.5 million	Christine Tucker, Connie Massey	SPLOST, DNR GOSP grant, General Fund

#	Activity	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party	Funding Source
10.	Consider Improvements to Stormwater Conveyance Systems	2025	Unknown	Brian Brodrick, Chuck Garrett	SPLOST, General Fund
11.	Develop Downtown Master Plan	2025	\$65,000	Christine Tucker, Jeff Campbell	General Fund, DDA, DCA, Grants
12.	Consider Establishing an Arts Council	2025	\$2,000	Christine Tucker, Jeff Campbell	General Fund, OCAF, DDA, DCA, Grants
13.	Explore and/or Activate Adopted Transportation Plan elements not already identified separately above, including connecting sections of existing infrastructure and construction of roundabouts and/or traffic calming mechanisms	2023-2026	\$1 million - \$2 million	Brian Brodrick, Chuck Garrett, Brett Thomas	TSPLOST, SPLOST
14.	Explore establishment of local history museum in partnership with the Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation	2027	Unknown	Brian Brodrick, Christine Tucker, Connie Massey	DDA, General Fund, OCAF, UNG

## City of Watkinsville Report of Plan Accomplishments, 2017-2021

Activity	Status	Comments
1. Install public art displays	Completed	Council Approved Funding in Fiscal Years 2019, 2020, 2021, And 2022 For various OCAF Public Projects, Including Creation of Art Boards to Be Placed Throughout City
2. Develop plan to promote Watkinsville as destination for arts, crafts, and cultural activities	Completed	August 2022 - Launched New Branding Campaign: Come.Connect.Create
3. Draft and adopt policy or plan to incorporate locally significant historic landmarks into the design of new development, where applicable (Survey by UGA of buildings of historic value).	Underway	Will Be Incorporated into Consideration of Historic Preservation Ordinance as Part of STWP 2023-2027

Activity	Status	Comments
4. Implement tree protection and planting program to reduce levels of impervious surfaces	Completed	August 2020 Council Approved Revision to Existing Urban Forest Ordinance to Address Recommended Species, Guidelines for Planting, And Reinforce Land Use Regulations as They Relate to Site Development Plans
5. Develop complete streets and trails plan	Completed	October 2019 Council Adopted Citywide Transportation Plan
6. Draft and adopt policy to require construction of bicycling and walking facilities with new development that exceeds certain thresholds	Completed	October 2019 Council Adopted Citywide Transportation Plan
7. Develop a multi-use greenway system utilizing stream corridors	Underway	To Be Incorporated into STWP 2023-2027 Activity to Explore And/or Activate Council Adopted Citywide Transportation Plan.
8. Define needs for updated service delivery strategy to mitigate inefficiencies through strategic planning and cooperative aid agreements	Completed	December 2022 - Council Approved Amendments to Subdivision and Zoning Regulations

Activity	Status	Comments
9. Modify existing Zoning and Subdivision Regulations as needed to address future development, public health, safety, and welfare	Completed	December 2022 - Council Approved Amendments to Subdivision and Zoning Regulations
10. Establish internal standard operating procedure to utilize the Future Development Map when reviewing rezones and making other land use decisions	Completed	City Manager Established a Formal Plans Review Process in October 2019
11. Participate in creation of Comprehensive Municipal Downtown Development Area (to include municipal, commercial, and residential units)	Completed	September 2022 – Created A Downtown Development Authority, Established A Downtown District
12. Develop plan to create mutually beneficial greenspace with local businesses/institutional properties	Completed	Council Established a Model Development Agreement and Used It to Leverage Public Greenspace at Wire Park, Waters Walk, And Trove Developments
13. Purchase currently available privately held greenspaces to develop for public use	Underway	100-acre land purchase under contract to close in late 2023; additional future acquisitions are anticipated
14. Establish citywide beautification program	Underway	City Hired a Parks Maintenance Worker in Fiscal Year 2022 And Assigned Him This Task

Activity	Status	Comments
15. Restore and/or reconstruct Old School House and Old Railroad Station	Dropped	Council Discussed In 2020 And at That Time Decided Not to Pursue Further
16. Relocate City Hall facilities	Cancelled	No longer a priority
17. Relocate Street Department facilities	Underway	Currently Evaluating Options
18. Partner with Extra Special People (ESP) and Miracle League to enhance Harris Shoals Park ballfield and install additional playground facilities	Completed	June 2022



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## Supplemental Plans

Supplemental plans are planning documents that address in detail a specific topic or issue of importance to the community and that have applicable project recommendations for Oconee County. These plans support the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan by addressing identified needs, goals, and strategies in Chapters 3 and 4, and their recommendations should be used by the County to identify and prioritize projects in conjunction with the CWP. The supplemental plans listed below are incorporated into the plan by reference:

- MACORTS – Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation
- Oconee County Stormwater Management Program
- Oconee County Water & Wastewater Master Plan
- Oconee County Water Conservation Plan
- Oconee County Drought Contingency Plan
- Oconee County Long-Range Transportation Plan

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## Maintenance Actions

Oconee County intends to address the following to support goals, policies, and objectives from Chapter 4 beyond the five-year timeframe of the CWP.

### PLAN MAINTENANCE

Oconee County's Planning and Code Enforcement department is responsible for coordinating with municipalities to maintain the Comprehensive Plan to accurately reflect current community conditions and the community's vision and priorities for the future. Specific requirements for amendments and updates are described in the Rules of Georgia Department of Community

Affairs (DCA) Chapter 110-12-1 "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning."

### ANNUAL REVIEW

County staff should provide a status of the plan implementation to the Board of Commissioners and Mayors on an annual basis. Specifically, the Community Work Program should be reviewed to identify the status of implementation measures. If determined appropriate, the annual review process can be used to undertake a formal annual update (see below).

### PLAN AMENDMENTS

According to the DCA rules, the local government determines when a plan amendment is necessary to address changing circumstances that may have detracted from the usefulness of the plan as a guide to local decision-making.

### UPDATES TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

At a minimum, a plan update must be completed every five years, in accordance with the Local Comprehensive Plan Recertification Schedule maintained by DCA. An annual update option is provided for communities wanting to update their plan on a more frequent basis. The annual update requires submittal of a new fifth year for the CWP and any changes needed for the other years of the CWP, and if needed, changes can be made to other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. For communities collecting impact fees, an annual update of the CWP is required.

# Participation Records

Appendix

A

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

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**NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC**

The Oconee County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing at the Oconee County Courthouse, Watkinsville, GA, on Tuesday, July 26, 2022, at 6:00 PM regarding the upcoming Oconee County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2023 Update. All those having an interest in this matter should be present.

OCONEE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

PN: 7/7

**Notice of Public Hearing for the 2023 Oconee County [Joint] Comprehensive Plan Update**

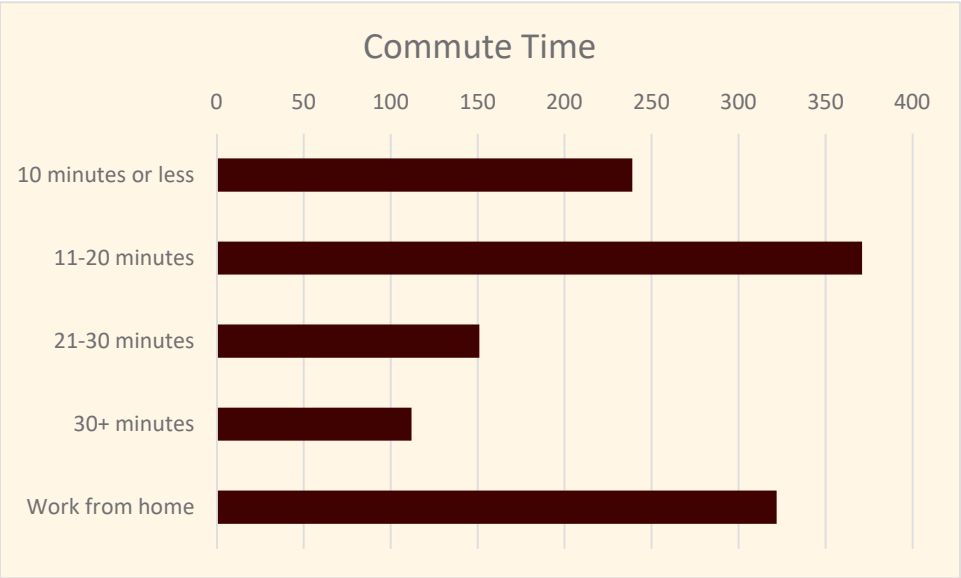
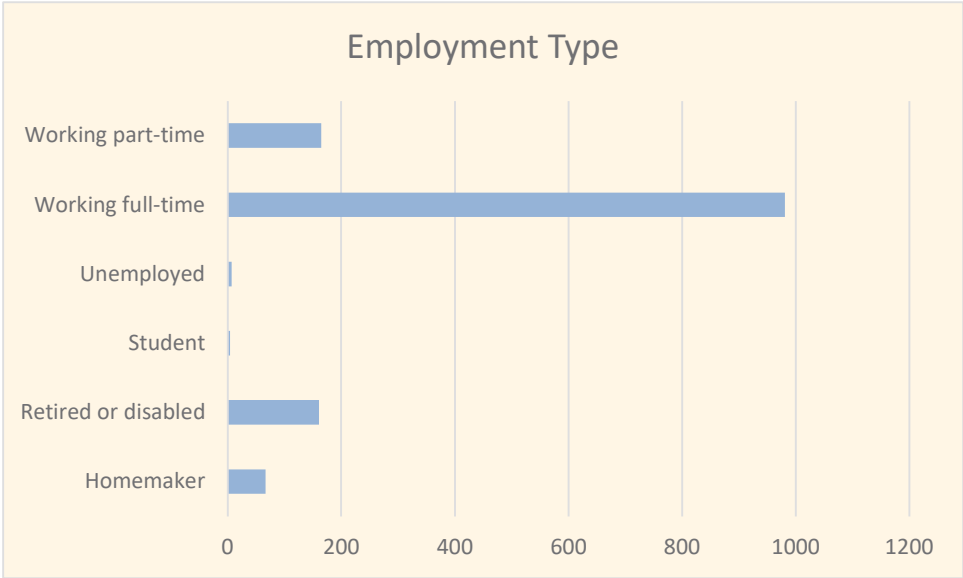
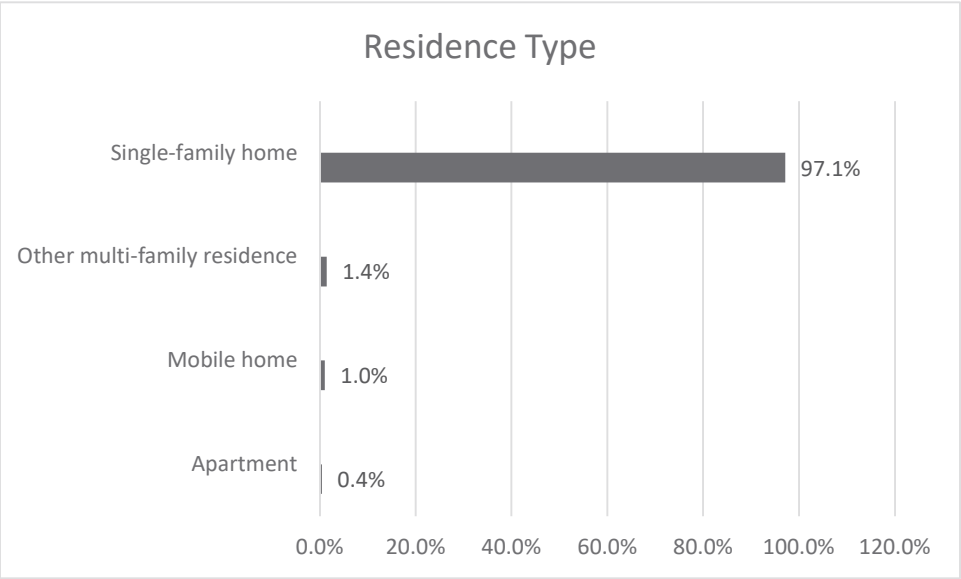
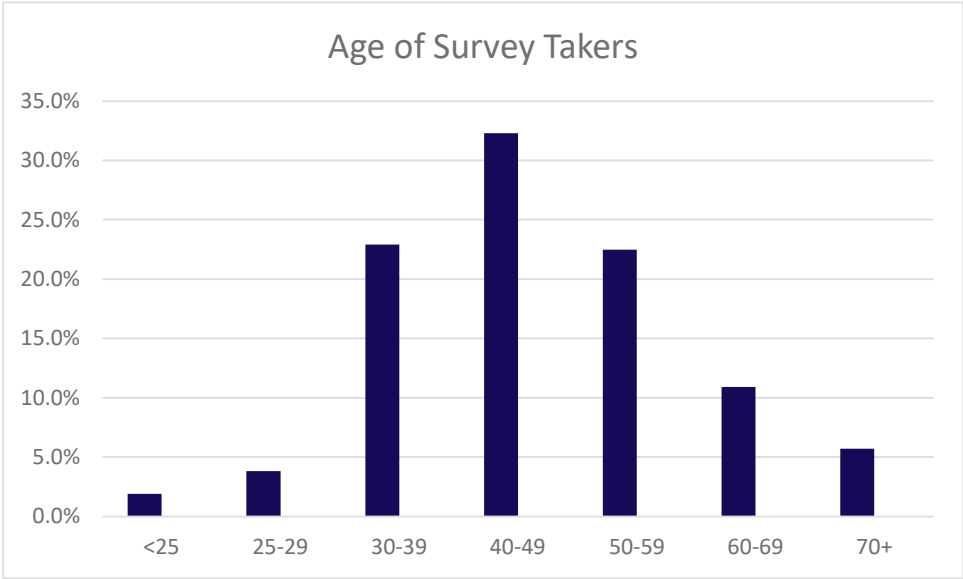
Oconee County, and the Cities of Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals, and Watkinsville will hold a Public Hearing on April 25, 2023, at 6:00 PM in the Oconee County Board of Commissioners' Chambers located at 23 North Main Street, Watkinsville, GA 30677. The purpose of this hearing is to receive public comments on the proposed 2023 Comprehensive Plan update which has been prepared by County staff and consultants based on the recommendations of stakeholders in focus groups and open house meetings. All those having an interest in this matter are invited to comment. Following this hearing, the Comprehensive Plan will be transmitted to the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission and Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review prior to adoption by the County and municipalities.

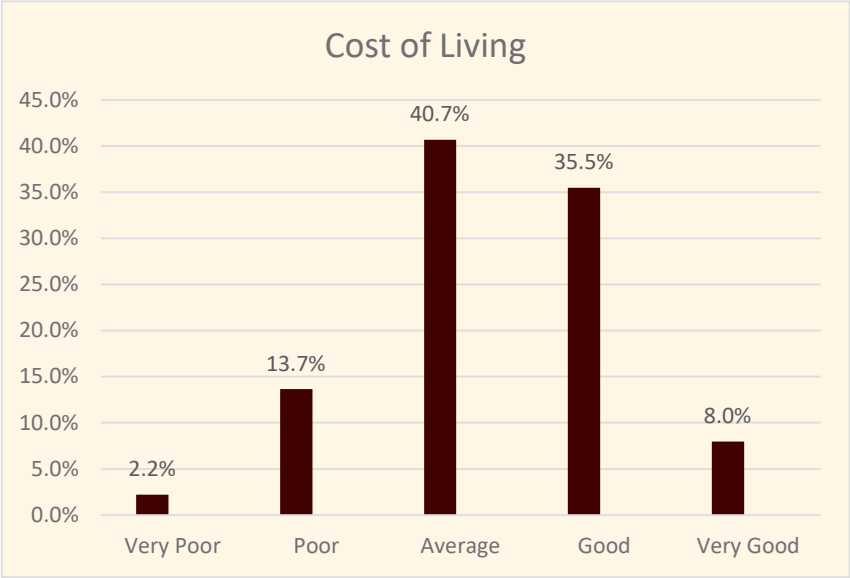
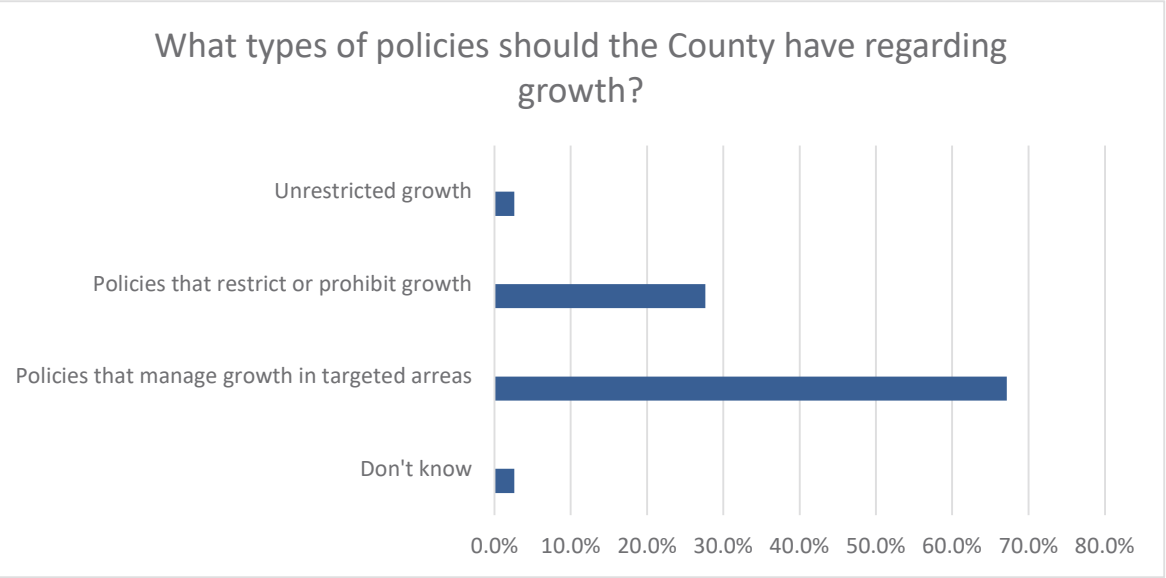
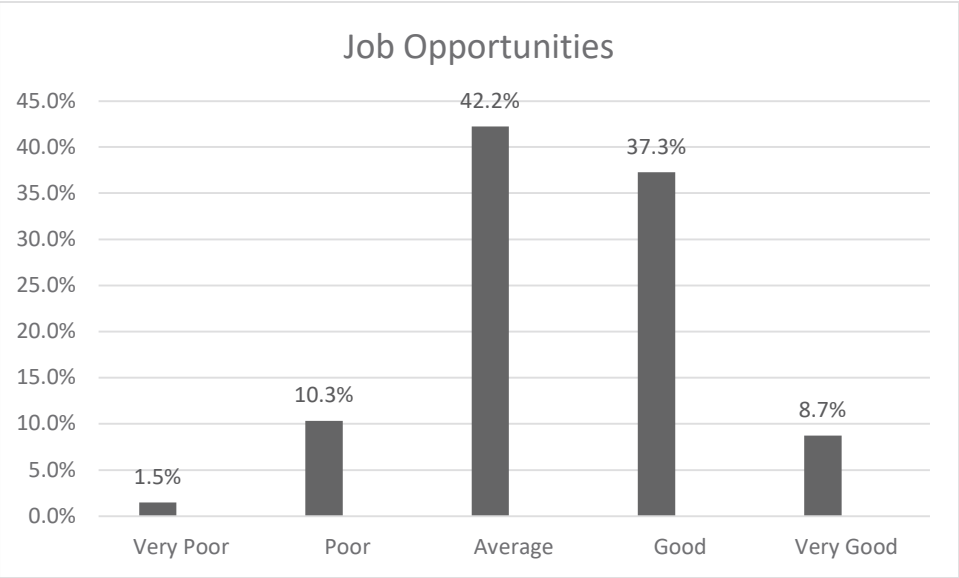
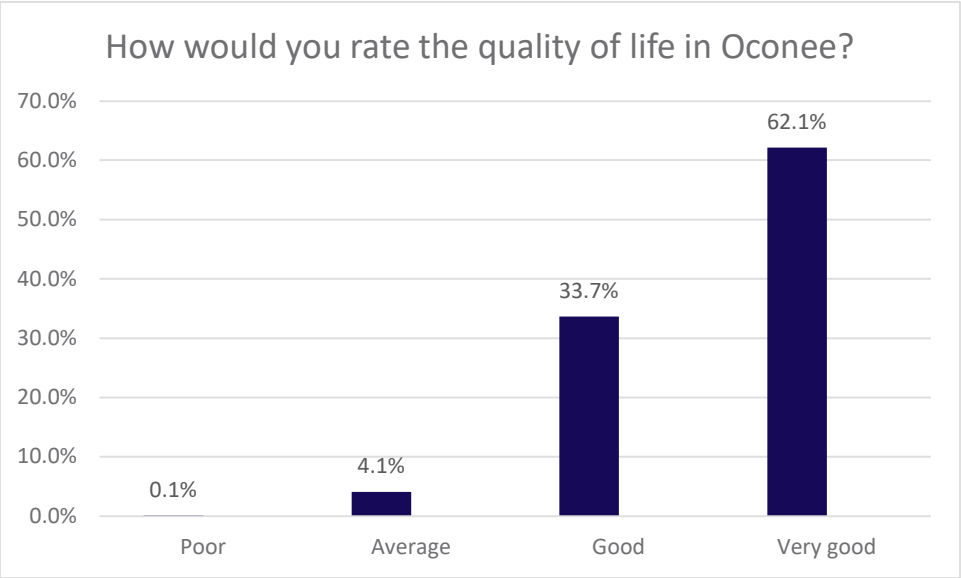
PN: 4/8

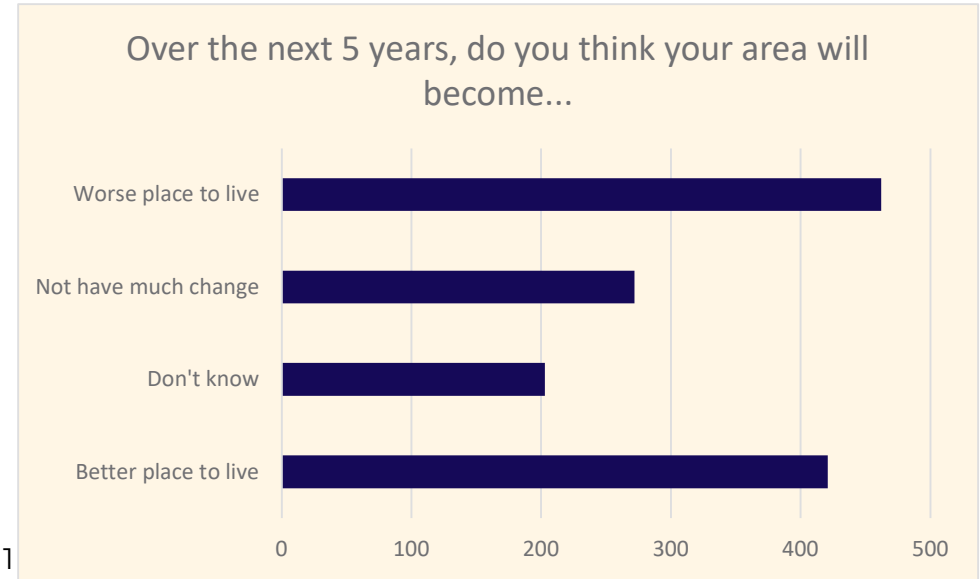
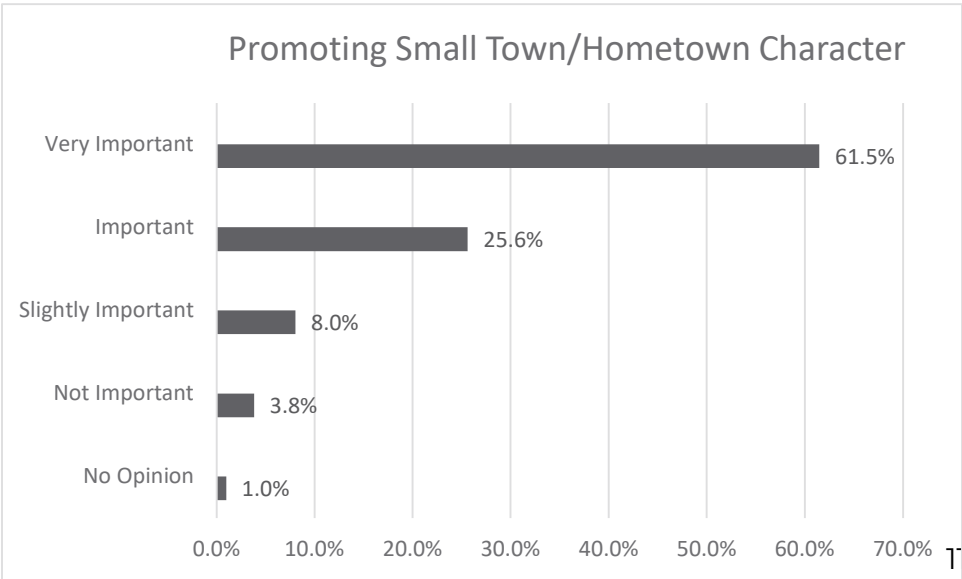
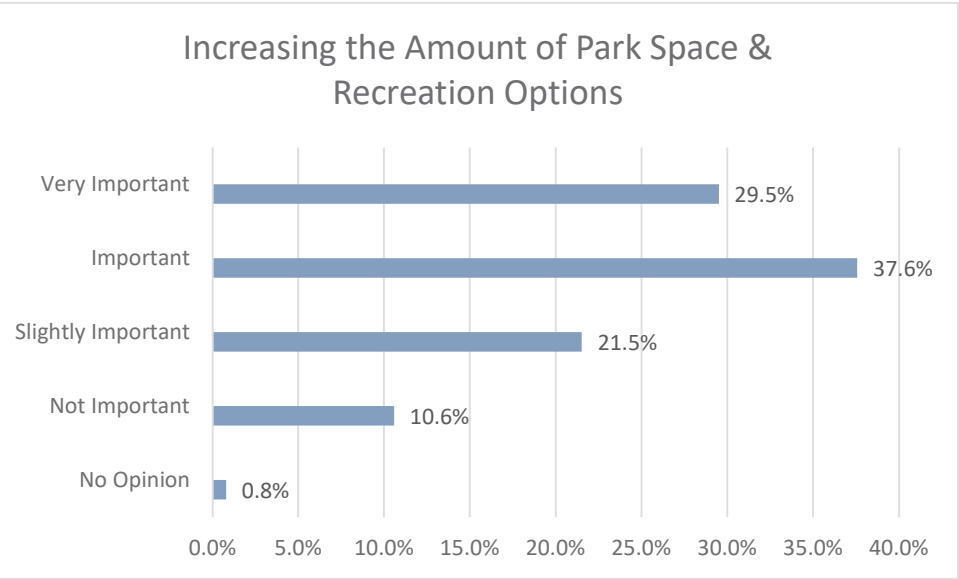
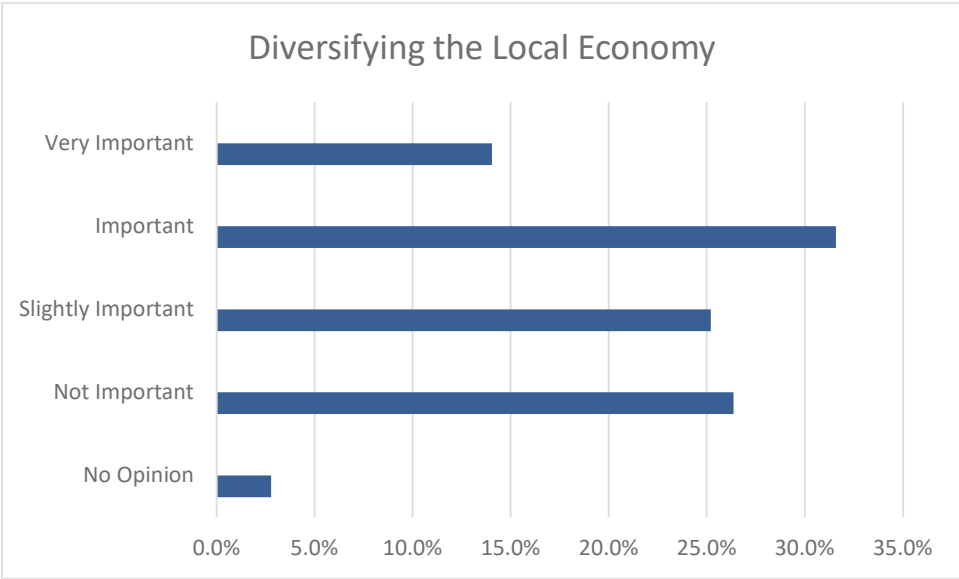
<b>OCONEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS</b> <b>Public Hearing on the Draft Update to the Comprehensive Plan</b> <b>Tuesday, April 25, 2023 @ 6:00 p.m.</b> <b>Oconee County Courthouse</b> <b>(PLEASE PRINT)</b>		
NAME	E-MAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
Amanda Ledford McCoy	alkensarea.horsecommunity@gmail.com	706-338-1358
Jeanne Barsanti	barsanti@kellamuth.net	706-769-7696

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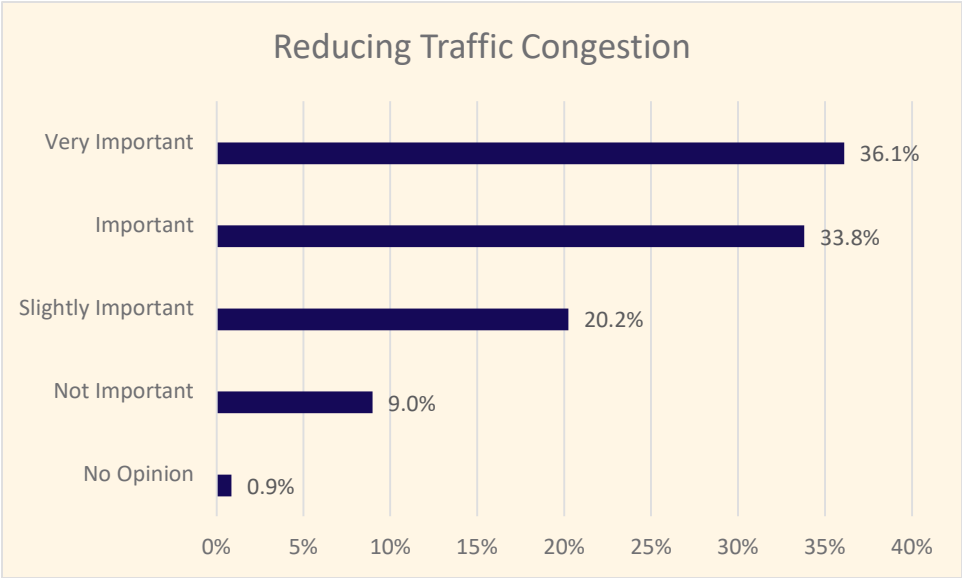
ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY











## FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

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## OCONEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Public Open House – March 29, 2023

NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS
Larry Guthrie	larryguthrie@att.net
Joyce Hardigree	
Alice Combs & Billy	
John Ivy	JOHNIVY@GMAIL.COM
David Wanner	dwanner@uga.edu
Beggy Hardigree	
Karen Seger	karenseger@gmail.com
GLENN SEGER	GLAUNSEGER@GMAIL.COM
ROBERT CUMMINGS	RECUMMINGS2@HOTMAIL.COM
Anna Cummings	acjazz@92@gmail.com
Nathan Byrd	nathan.byrd@usil.com
Steve Follin	SEFOLLIN@GMAIL.COM
Amrey Harden	aharden@broad.net
Matt Eldred	cmatteldred@gmail.com
LISA DAVOL	ldavol@conee.ga.us
Stephen Goad	stephengoad@bellsouth.net
George Rodrigues	rodhome105@gmail.com
Joanna Barsanti	barsanti@bellsouth.net
Brian Brodrick	tbrodrick@cityofwatensville.com
Susanna Drannen	susannadrannen@gmail.com



## OCONEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Public Open House – March 29, 2023

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## STAKEHOLDERS

- Scoping Meetings
  - 5/2/2022 – Board of Commissioners – Chairman John Daniell, Commissioner Amery Harden, and Commissioner Mark Saxon
  - 5/10/2022 – Mayor Janet Jones of Bogart, Mayor Brian Brodrick of Watkinsville, and Mayor John Pritchett of Bishop
  - 5/20/2022 – Commissioner Mark Thomas and Mayor Violet Dawes of North High Shoals
- Specific Groups Targeted for Outreach
  - The City of Bogart
  - The Town of Bishop
  - The Town of North High Shoals
  - The City of Watkinsville
  - Farmington area
  - Mars Hill area
  - Highway 78 area
  - Highway 441 area
  - Oconee Board of Education
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Design Professionals
  - Developers

## PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

- County and Municipal Staff –
  - Guy Herring (Director of Planning & Code Enforcement), Sharyn Dickerson (Watkinsville City Manager), Sue Bishop (Clerk, North High Shoals), Lacy Armstrong (Clerk, Bishop), Beverly Young (Clerk, Bogart)
- Oconee County Planning Commission –
  - Scott Green, Jeff Burks, Mike Floyd, Nathan Byrd, Matt Elder, Charles Hunt, Nick Hobbs, Christopher Herring, Stephen Goad, and Gavin Jordan
- Municipal Representatives –
  - Drew Kurtz (Mayor pro temp of Bishop), Janet Jones (Mayor of Bogart), Dr. Violet Dawe (Mayor of North High Shoals), and Brian Brodrick (Mayor of Watkinsville)

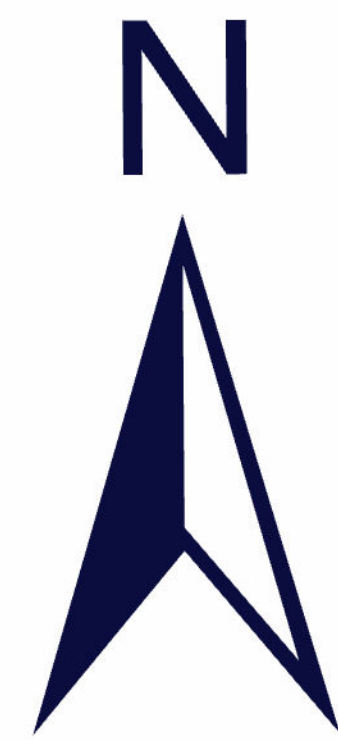
# Municipal Character Area Maps

Appendix

**B**



Oconee County  
Character Areas Map  
2023 Oconee County  
Comprehensive Plan Update



**Character Areas**

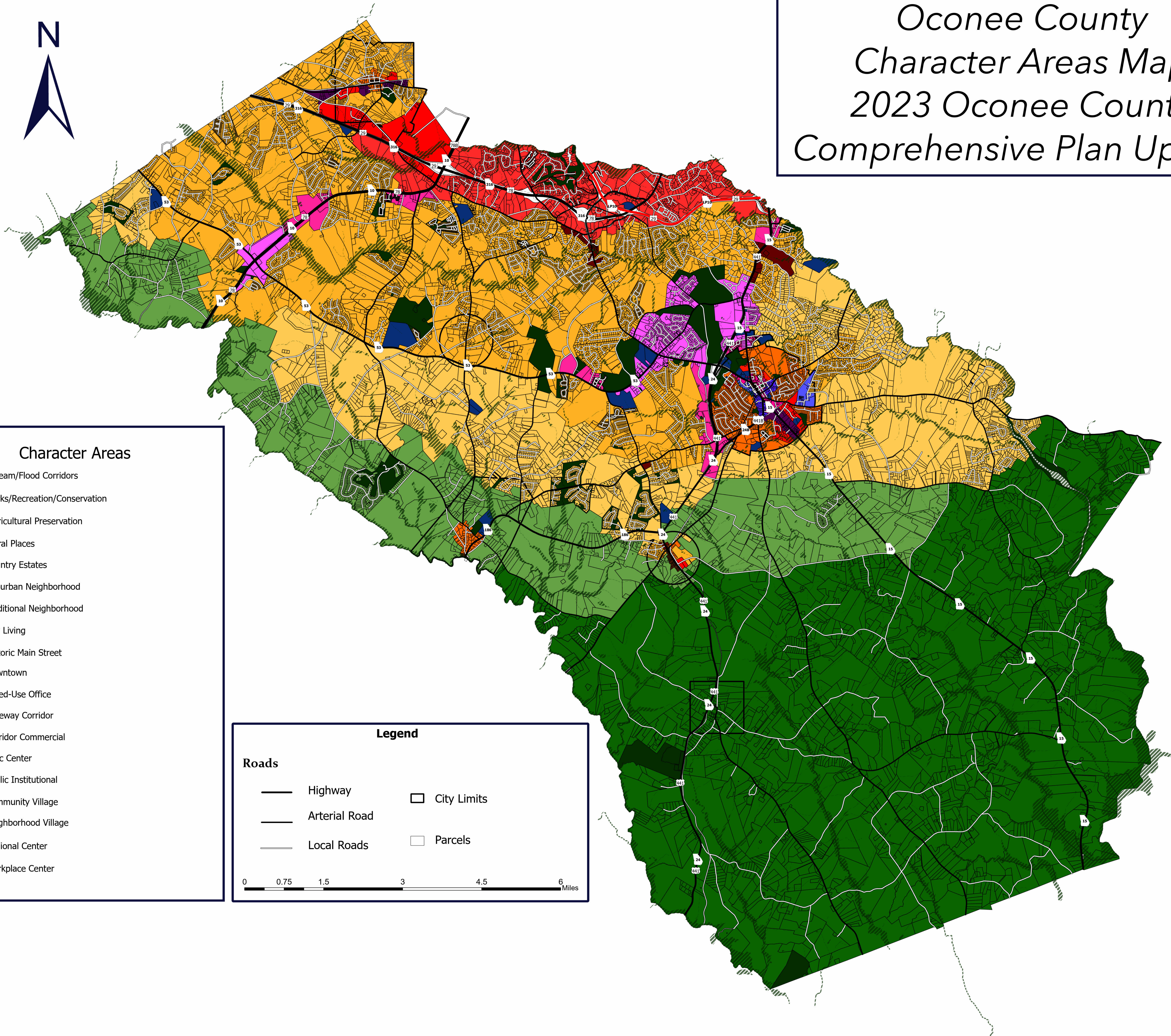
- Stream/Flood Corridors
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Agricultural Preservation
- Rural Places
- Country Estates
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Traditional Neighborhood
- City Living
- Historic Main Street
- Downtown
- Mixed-Use Office
- Gateway Corridor
- Corridor Commercial
- Civic Center
- Public Institutional
- Community Village
- Neighborhood Village
- Regional Center
- Workplace Center

**Legend**

**Roads**

- Highway
- Arterial Road
- Local Roads
- City Limits
- Parcels

0 0.75 1.5 3 4.5 6 Miles





# City of Bishop Character Areas Map 2023 Oconee County Comprehensive Plan Update

## Character Areas

- Stream/Flood Corridors
- Public Institutional
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Agricultural Preservation
- Rural Places
- Country Estates
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Traditional Neighborhood
- City Living
- Historic Main Street
- Downtown
- Mixed-Use Office
- Gateway Corridor
- Corridor Commercial
- Civic Center
- Community Village
- Neighborhood Village
- Regional Center
- Workplace Center

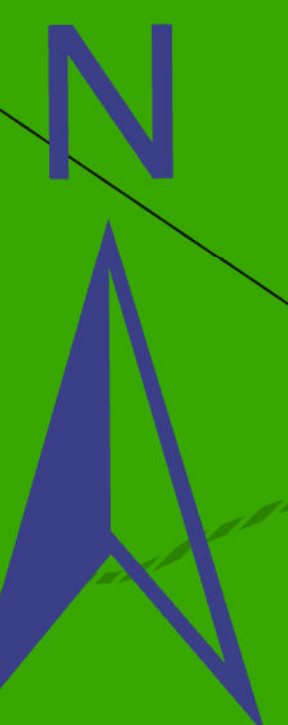
## Legend

### Roads

- Highway
- Arterial Road
- Local Roads

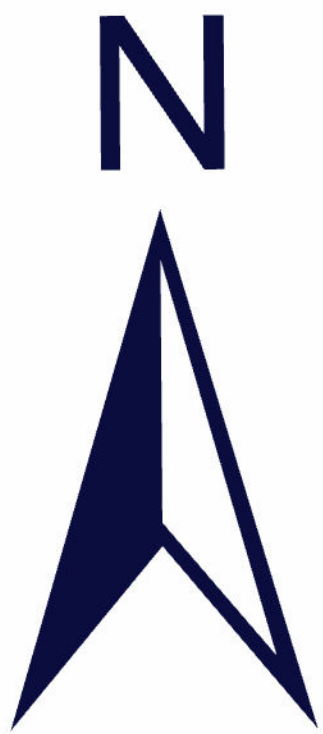
- City Limits
- Parcels

0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles





City of Bogart  
Character Areas Map  
Oconee County



**Character Areas**

- Stream/Flood Corridors
- Public Institutional
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Agricultural Preservation
- Rural Places
- Country Estates
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Traditional Neighborhood
- City Living
- Historic Main Street
- Downtown
- Mixed-Use Office
- Gateway Corridor
- Corridor Commercial
- Civic Center
- Community Village
- Neighborhood Village
- Regional Center
- Workplace Center

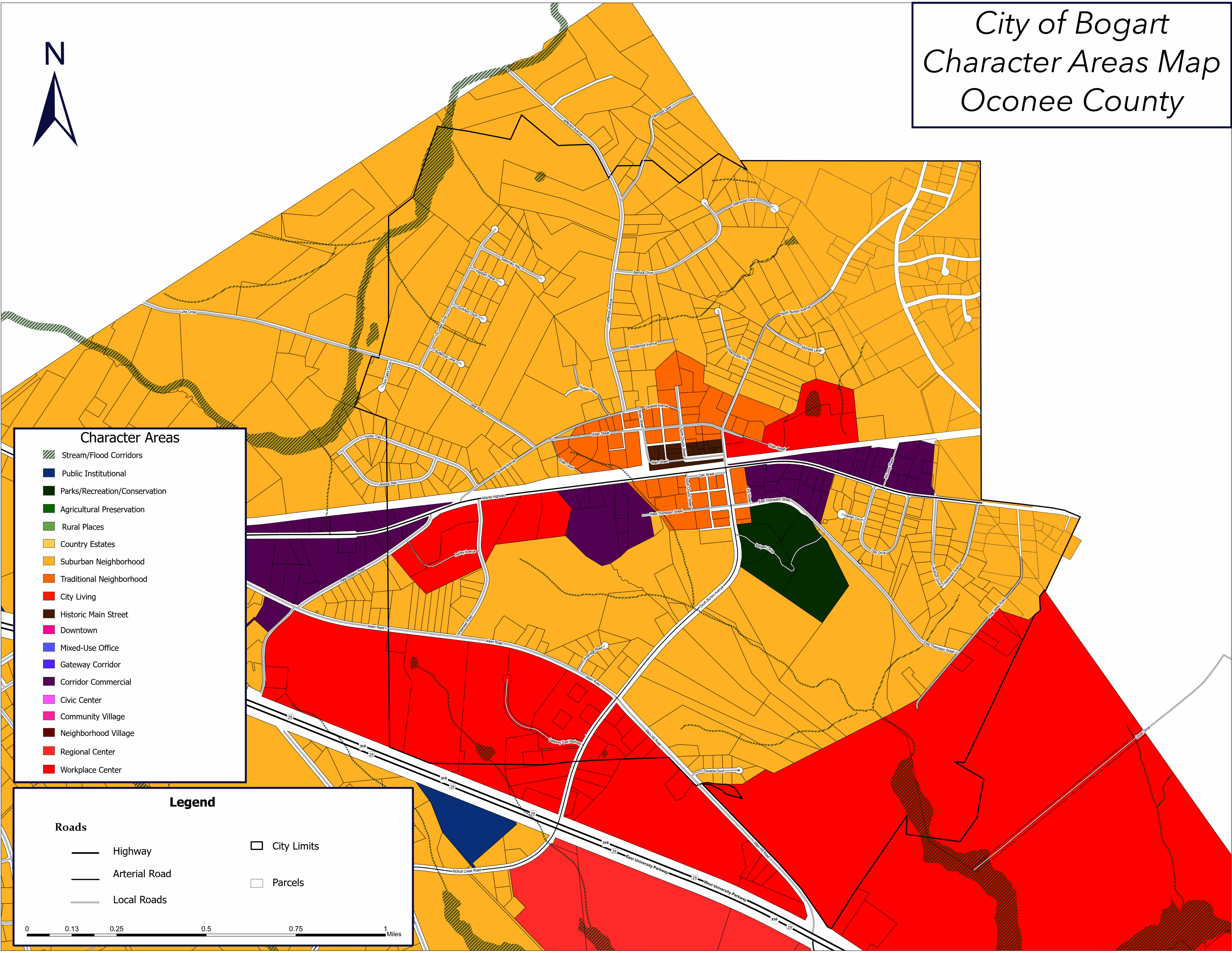
**Legend**

**Roads**

- Highway
- Arterial Road
- Local Roads

- City Limits
- Parcels

0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles





# North High Shoals Character Areas Map 2023 Oconee County Comprehensive Plan Update

## Character Areas

- Stream/Flood Corridors
- Public Institutional
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Agricultural Preservation
- Rural Places
- Country Estates
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Traditional Neighborhood
- City Living
- Historic Main Street
- Downtown
- Mixed-Use Office
- Gateway Corridor
- Corridor Commercial
- Civic Center
- Community Village
- Neighborhood Village
- Regional Center
- Workplace Center

## Legend

### Roads

- Highway
- Arterial Road
- Local Roads

- City Limits
- Parcels

0 4.5 9 18 27 36 Miles



# City of Watkinsville Character Areas Map 2023 Oconee County Comprehensive Plan Update

## Character Areas

- Stream/Flood Corridors
- Public Institutional
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Agricultural Preservation
- Rural Places
- Country Estates
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Traditional Neighborhood
- City Living
- Historic Main Street
- Downtown
- Mixed-Use Office
- Gateway Corridor
- Corridor Commercial
- Civic Center
- Community Village
- Neighborhood Village
- Regional Center
- Workplace Center

## Legend

### Roads

- Highway
- Arterial Road
- Local Roads

- City Limits
- Parcels

0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles



# Existing Conditions Summary

Appendix

C

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## Introduction

This Existing Conditions Summary presents an inventory and evaluation of existing local conditions that were used, in conjunction with input from the public participation process, to identify needs and opportunities in the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan. This summary is organized into the following sections:

- Socioeconomic Data Summary
- Population
- Housing
- Employment
- Land Use
- Natural Resources
- Cultural/Historic Resources
- Transportation
- Community Facilities
- Intergovernmental Coordination
- Appendix B-1: Detailed Socioeconomic Characteristics

## Socioeconomic Data Summary

Oconee County's convenient location near GA Highway 29 and Highway 78, just over 60 miles outside Metro Atlanta and near Athens, lend the county to high potential for accommodating economic growth while upholding the integrity of the county's culture and small-town and rural area ambiance for residents. This outlook indicates a continued pattern of growth in the future, which makes it imperative that the county prepare for anticipated growth.

Changes in the population and socioeconomic characteristics will have tremendous impacts on the social, economic, and physical environment of Oconee County. As population increases, the county must ensure that its existing facilities and services can accommodate additional demand. Different segments of the population will have different needs based on age, income, and other factors, which inevitably shape the demand for housing, services, and infrastructure.

This section summarizes the socioeconomic characteristics of Oconee County including tables and charts.

### Population

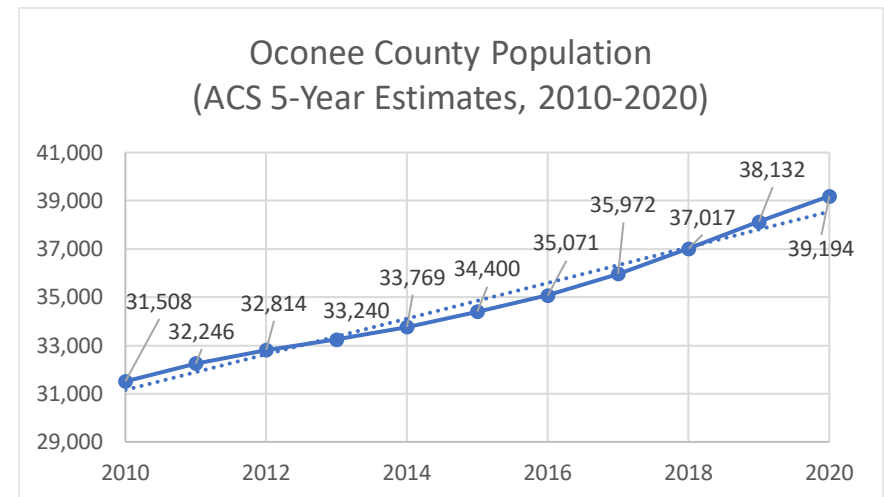
In the second decade of the 21st century, Oconee County experienced steady population growth, increasing yearly. While there were no significant yearly leaps in population, the growth rate was heightened in the last three years of the decade.

Population information is provided by the American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates) for 2010 through 2020. That information is then used to make projections through 2050. Additionally, population estimates can be calculated using a combination of various statistical calculation methods and other factors such as economic forecasts and future land use and zoning regulations, which are further described in Appendix B-1.

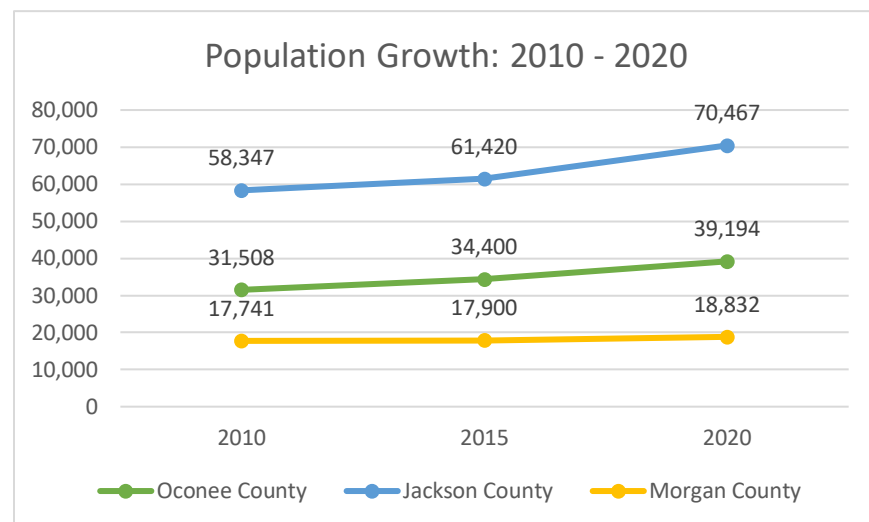
### Patterns and Forecasts

Between 2010 and 2020, the county's population increased from an estimated 31,508 residents to 39,194, a growth rate of roughly 24.4 percent. Nearby Jackson and Morgan Counties serve as points of comparison- of the surrounding counties, these are the two closest in size to Oconee County. By comparing based on population size, it is possible to identify trends and determine if they are unique to Oconee County or if they are representative of a larger, regional trend. Both counties did see growth, but at lower rates than those of Oconee County. Jackson County underwent a 20.8 percent growth, while Morgan County only saw 6.1 percent growth.

#### Oconee County Population: 2010 – 2020

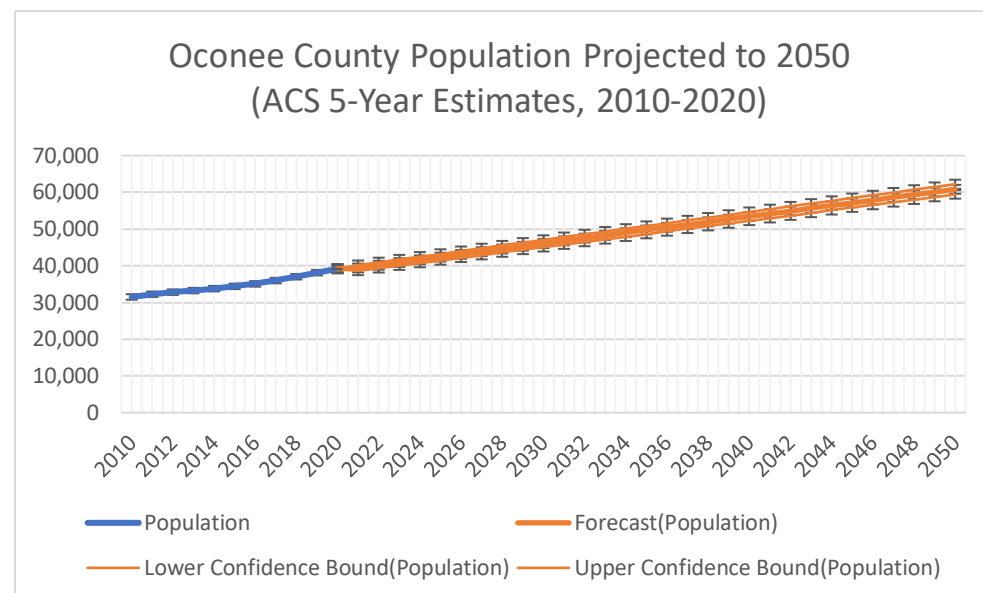


### Oconee and Comparison County Populations: 2010 – 2020



Looking to 2050, population projections indicate that the county's population could reach over 62,000 residents, experiencing a growth rate of 51.2% between 2020 and 2050. Alternatively, some models predict a slightly lower population in the range of 60,500 to 61,000 residents. Jackson and Morgan Counties are projected to increase in population as well.

### Oconee Population Projection: 2010 – 2050

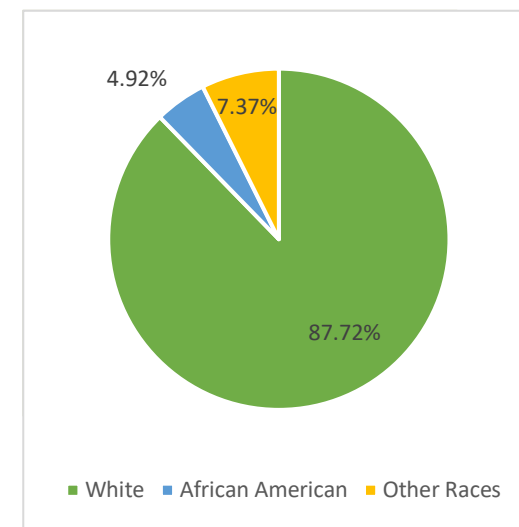


### Ethnic Diversity

In 2010, Oconee County was largely comprised of white residents (89.43%), with a small population of African American residents (5.35% residents)- the remaining 5.22% of the population identified as either Asian or another race.

Since that time, the Census Bureau estimates that there has been a slight increase in the number of residents who identify as Asian or another, rising to 7.37% of the total population, while the white and African American populations decreased to 87.72% and 4.92% of the total

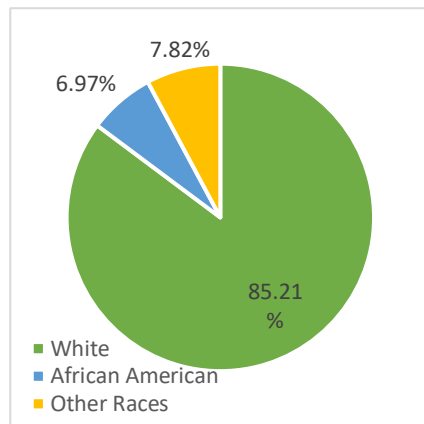
### Oconee County - 2020



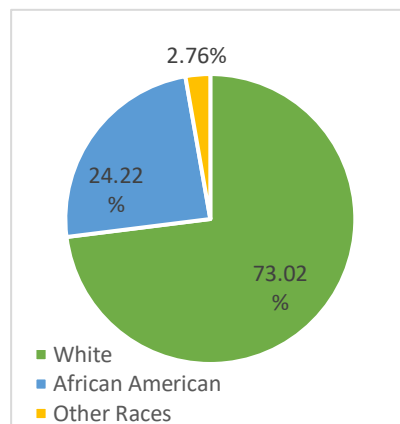
population, respectively. The counties' Hispanic or Latino population (regardless of race) has increased from 4.4% of the population in 2010 to 5.2% in 2020.

In comparison, both Jackson County and Morgan County have remained predominately white throughout the last decade. It is important to note that Morgan has a significantly larger minority population, at 26.42%, that almost equals the minority population of the other two counties combined (27.08%).

**Jackson County - 2020**



**Morgan County - 2020**



## Families

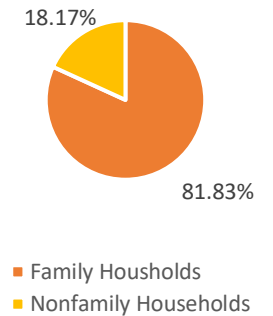
The Census Bureau defines a household as the person or persons occupying a dwelling unit. A “family household” consists of two or more related individuals, while a “nonfamily household” consists of only one individual or several individuals that live together but are not related.

In 2020, Oconee County had a higher percentage of family households (81.83%) than nonfamily households (18.17%), which was slightly higher than the percentage of family households in 2010 (79.95%).

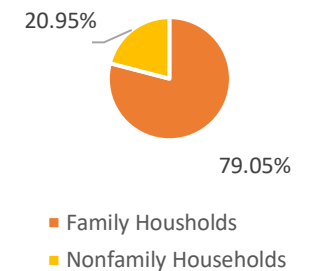
At 82.58% owner-occupied housing units, home ownership was fractionally less prevalent in 2020, as opposed to 82.70% in 2010.

Nearby Morgan County experienced a similar decline in homeownership, going from 74.85% in 2010 to 74.05% in 2020. Jackson County was the only comparable region to experience a rise in homeownership in the decade, increasing from 75.23% to 79.0%.

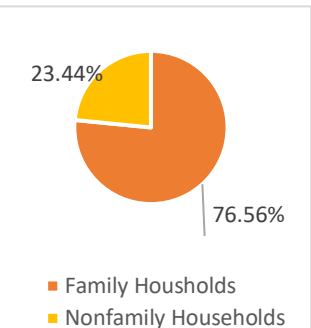
**Oconee County - 2020**



**Jackson County - 2020**



**Morgan County - 2020**



## Housing

In addition to the county's population growth between 2010 and 2020, the number of housing units in also increased in this time, by approximately 20.14%. Housing vacancy rates decreased between 2010 and 2020, reflecting a rebound after the Great Recession impacted the housing market in the beginning portion of the decade. Neighboring counties demonstrate similar patterns.

### Availability

Since 2010, Oconee County has undergone a substantial increase in the number of housing units, increasing 20.14% from 12,134 units to 14,578 units in 2020. In juxtaposition to that growth, there was a 10.76% decline in rental units. Of Oconee County's vacant housing stock in 2020, 3.23% of units were available to rent while 36.65% were for sale. Other units were for seasonal use, unoccupied, or otherwise vacant. Since 2010, the percentage of vacant housing units has decreased by 2.55% to 805 vacant units in the county.

### New Homes

According to available data, the 2010s began with an extremely slow construction rate because of the Great Recession – 5.74% of current units were constructed between 2010 and 2013, the lowest amount since the 1960s. The construction rate picked up in the middle of the decade, as 8.72% of occupied housing units were built in 2014 or later. Just over a fifth of total occupied housing units (22.58%) were constructed between 2000 and 2009. The rebound is expected to be curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses, Oconee County experienced a 20.14% increase in the number of housing units, which grew from 12,134 units in 2010, to 14,578 units in 2020. Over the past decade, the amount of vacant housing has decreased by 17.77%, going from 979 units in 2010 to 805 units in 2020. Additionally, both Jackson and Morgan Counties experienced a decrease in the amount of vacant housing over the same time period, decreasing by 23.61% and 5.60% respectively. While there

has been an overall decrease in the number of vacant units in Jackson and Morgan counties between 2010 and 2020, they still have a higher percentage of vacancies compared to Oconee County.

### Housing Entities

Oconee County does not have a Housing Authority organization to provide affordable housing to very low, low, and moderate-income persons. The County is also not involved in a entity with a larger jurisdiction that administers CDBG grant allocations. Residents and developers can apply for any applicable state and federal programs that are available.

## The Economy

The Georgia Department of Labor estimates that employment in Oconee County has increased at around a 3.1% rate since 2021. This is slightly lower than the 3.9% employment rate in Georgia over the same period. The industry mix in Oconee is largely Service-Providing at almost 80%, with Government at approximately 10% and Goods-Producing at 10% of the industry mix. A key strategy in Oconee Counties' economic development continues to be the expansion of existing businesses and industry throughout the county. Industry in Oconee remains strong, including expanded services in the health care industry, along with education and social services.

### Regional Ties

The commuting patterns of workers who live in Oconee County and those who come into the county to work provide a clear picture of the extent to which Oconee County is economically intertwined other nearby cities and counties. Additionally, the county's convenient accessibility to the Athens-Clarke area and its location along Georgia Highway 29, make it attractive for both businesses and residents.

According to the most recent American Communities Survey (2020), of the employed residents that lived in Oconee County, the largest group of

31.0% have a 10-to-19-minute commute followed by 26.87% that have a 20-to-29-minute commute.

### Economic Base

In the direct aftermath of the Great Recession, educational services, and health care and social assistance was a leading industry throughout the region, employing the highest number of workers in Oconee County, Jackson County, and Morgan County. At the end of the decade, it is still the highest employer of workers in the study area. Despite a marginal decrease in the percentage of workers it employs, this industry still employs almost a third (30.90%) of workers in Oconee County as of 2020. The second largest industry in Oconee County is Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services, employing 12.5% of the population, up from 9.9% of the population in 2010.

Since 2010, the agriculture industry decreased by 0.6%, the manufacturing industry decreased by 1.6%, wholesale trade decreased by 1.1%, Educational Services decreased by 1.7%, and public administration decreased by 1.3%. Alternatively, finance and insurance increased by 3.7%, professional services increased by 2.6%, arts and entertainment increased by 1.5%, and other services increased by 1.0%.

### Economic Development Organizations

**Oconee Chamber of Commerce:** The Chamber fosters quality of life and community through alliances that support economic growth in the county. The Chamber recognizes that approximately 80% of Georgia's new job growth comes from existing businesses and therefore provides assistance to support existing businesses in the county.

**Oconee County Industrial Development Authority (IDA):** The IDA works with the Oconee Chamber of Commerce to support industrial development in the county.

**Oconee County Economic Development Task Force:** The task force consists of ten members from the county, cities in the county, and two citizen members.

## Land Use

This section describes the nature of existing land use in Oconee County in terms of different land use types, as well as current goals and objectives that are used to establish a framework for planning recommendations, policies, and future project actions. Existing land use refers to the current use of parcels and categorized in the Existing Land Use Character Areas table.

Predominant land uses in Oconee County are agricultural preservation, located in the southeastern portion of the county, rural places, located just north of the agricultural preservation zones, and suburban and country estate zones in the center and north of the county. All of these are relatively low-density, especially when compared to other land uses found in the rest of Oconee, such as traditional neighborhoods or the downtown area found in Watkinsville.

Most industrial areas, which fall under the Technology Center and Workplace Center Character Areas, can be found in the northern portion of Oconee, bordering other counties. The county's commercial corridors can be found in the City of Bogart, along Atlanta Highway, and in the City of Watkinsville, along Greensboro Highway and a small portion of South Main Street/Macon Highway.

Future commercial development should be clustered and implement access management tools along corridors to avoid strip, piecemeal development. In residential areas, small-scale commercial development, such as retail and restaurants, should also be clustered and should complement the surrounding neighborhood's character.

In addition, Watkinsville and Bogart host a mix of uses including corridor commercial, workplace center, retail, downtown (Watkinsville), city living, and traditional neighborhood. Developing mixed use standards would accommodate future infill developments and new developments that want to offer compact, walkable communities where residents can live, work, and play.



EXISTING LAND USE CHARACTER AREAS	
CHARACTER AREAS	DESCRIPTION
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	Parks, recreation, and conservation areas are dedicated to passive recreation uses or for the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands.
Agricultural Preservation	Composed chiefly of open land and active agricultural production of food crops, fiber crops, animal feed, poultry, livestock and commercial timber production. Individual farms tend to be large and homes sparsely distributed on large, existing tracts.
Rural Places	A residential-agricultural community, which benefits from its scenic rural landscape, with much of its identity based on its agrarian past while accommodating limited residential growth; low-density residential
Country Estates	A low-intensity residential community reminiscent of a rural environment; areas that are undeveloped but rarely or no longer in agricultural production or have been developed as "estate farms" or large-lot subdivisions.
Suburban Neighborhood	Pedestrian-friendly residential neighborhoods with primarily large, single-family lots and connective, common greenspaces.
Traditional Neighborhood	Primarily residential neighborhoods with a mix of detached single-family homes at an overall higher density than the Suburban Neighborhood Category
City Living (Watkinsville)	Higher density, small-lot residences clustered within and around downtown Watkinsville with reduced setbacks, attractive streetscaping, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly amenities, and green spaces, where appropriate.
Neighborhood Village Center	A compact assortment of convenience-oriented retail stores, services, and offices that address the demands of nearby residents
Community Village Center	Mixed-use developments that integrate and link together a compatible assortment of higher intensity commercial, residential, and recreational uses through a comprehensive circulation system.
Historic Main Street	Primarily small-scale retail and office development that is pedestrian-oriented in nature and compatible with historic character of the town or city it is located within.
Downtown (Watkinsville)	A mixed-use district that meets a wide variety of the population's needs within a village-style atmosphere by offering a range of land use.
Mixed-Use Office (Watkinsville)	A mix of offices, professional services, small-scale lodging, and residential uses designed at a pedestrian scale.
Gateway Corridor (Watkinsville)	Iconic entryways into the City of Watkinsville that highlight the history and natural beauty of the area.
Corridor Commercial	Large-scale, auto-oriented, primarily commercial development that is located along major roadways for visibility and access and significantly buffered from adjacent residential, agricultural, and other neighboring lower-intensity commercial developments
Civic Center	A relatively high intensity mix of businesses, retail shopping, offices, sports and recreational complexes, public schools, a college campus, an established residential component, and other (semi-) public uses.
Technology Gateway	Incorporates many aspects of commerce such as office buildings, research facilities, corporate park complexes, and light industrial uses. Retail and residential are complementary land-uses.
Regional Center	Characterized by retail and commercial services, medical and commercial office complexes, hotels, entertainment facilities, higher-density residential developments, and single-family detached subdivisions.
Workplace Center	Intended primarily for larger-scale heavy commercial, industrial, wholesale, and office uses that may be land intensive, generate high traffic volume, odors, loud noises, and other assorted impacts.
Public Institutional (Watkinsville)	Represents the various civic functions throughout the City of Watkinsville.

## Natural Resources

### Environmental Planning Criteria

In order to protect the state's natural resources and environment, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) developed Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (Chapter 391-3-16). These minimum standards and procedures, also known as Part V Criteria, are required under the Georgia Planning Act to be used by local communities in the development of comprehensive plans. In addition, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (Chapter 110-2-1) require local governments to review the Part V Criteria to determine if there is need to adapt development regulations to address protection of the following natural resources:

- Water Supply Watersheds
- Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Wetlands
- Protected Rivers
- Protected Mountains

The Compliance with State Environmental Planning Criteria table in this section indicates whether these natural resources are present in Oconee County and, if so, associated protection efforts. See also the Natural Resources Map in this section.

Compliance with State Environmental Planning Criteria			
Resource	Definition <sup>1</sup>	Location	Local Protection
Water Supply Watershed	The area of land upstream of a governmentally owned public drinking water intake.	Upper Oconee Watershed	Watershed Protection Ordinance: <b>Yes</b>
			Typical provisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced stream buffer requirements and limitations on impervious surface within 7-mile radius of public water intakes;</li> <li>Uses associated with sanitary landfills or hazardous waste are prohibited</li> </ul>
Groundwater Recharge Area	Any portion of the earth's surface where water infiltrates into the ground to replenish an aquifer.	As delineated by DNR in Hydrological Atlas 18 (1989 Edition), Oconee County contains groundwater recharge areas of low susceptibility to pollution.	Groundwater Recharge Area Protection Ordinance: <b>Yes</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special requirements for uses associated with on-site hazardous materials;</li> <li>Septic tank regulations, including minimum lot size requirements</li> <li>Permanent storm water infiltration basins are prohibited in areas of high pollution susceptibility</li> </ul>
Wetland	Areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.	Wetlands are located throughout the county, typically along streams and waterbodies, as delineated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory.	Wetlands Protection Ordinance: <b>Yes</b>
			Typical provisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses associated with hazardous waste are prohibited;</li> <li>Local development permit is required for regulated activity</li> </ul>
Protected River	Any perennial river or watercourse with an average annual flow of at least 400 cubic feet per second as determined by appropriate U.S. Geological Survey Documents.	Oconee County does not contain any protected rivers.	Not applicable.
Protected Mountain	All land area 2,200 feet or more above mean sea level, that has a slope of 25% or greater for at least 500 feet horizontally, and shall include the crests, summits, and ridge tops which lie at elevations higher than any such area.	Oconee County does not contain any protected mountains.	Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> Source: DNR Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (Chapter 391-3-16)

## Regional Water Plan

DCA's Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning require local governments to review the Regional Water Plan when preparing a comprehensive plan to determine whether additional or modified regulations/actions are needed.

The Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council coordinates and prepares the Regional Water Plan for the Upper Oconee Water Planning Region which includes 13 counties and 62 incorporated municipalities, including Oconee County. An update to the Regional Water Plan was adopted by GAEPD in 2017. This updated Plan highlights the interrelationships between approaches to water, wastewater, and watershed management, and is guided by the following policy goals:

- Promote alternatives and technologies that conserve, reuse, return, and recycle water within the Upper Oconee region.
- Ensure that management practices balance economic development, recreation, and environmental interests.
- Educate stakeholders in the region on the importance of water quality and managing water as a resource including practices such as water conservation and increased water efficiency.
- Encourage the development of and accessibility to data and information to guide management decisions.
- Identify programs, projects, and educational messages to reduce non-point source pollution to protect water quality in lakes and streams.
- Recommend innovative strategies (water, sewer, and/or stormwater) that provide sufficient revenues to maintain a high level of service while promoting water conservation and efficiency.
- Identify and plan measures to ensure sustainable, adequate water supply to meet current and predicted long-term population, environmental, and economic needs.

## Water quality protection measures

The county's Watershed Protection Department is required to manage the Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) and the Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP). The SWMP was implemented to address storm water management within the jurisdiction of the county. It has been developed as required under the State of Georgia, Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Phase II MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) General Permit GAG610000. The objective of the SWMP and the WPP is to reduce the discharge of pollutants from the MS4 to waters of the State to the maximum extent practicable, in order to protect water quality and to satisfy the appropriate Federal and State water quality requirements.

Specific measures Oconee County must manage and address include:

- Public education and outreach on storm water impacts
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE program)
- Drainage systems operation and maintenance including inspections
- Capital improvement program planning e.g. replacing aging storm water infrastructure
- Annual reporting of the Storm Water Management Plan and Watershed Protection Plan
- Inspections of all county-owned drainage control structures
- Long-Term Water Quality Monitoring and Biological Monitoring and Assessments
- Storm water Maintenance Agreements regarding detention facilities (post development)
- Inspection of industrial facilities that are potential to pollute the waters of the State

The county's Stormwater Management Program includes six elements:

- Public Education and Outreach
- Public Participation

- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Construction Site Runoff Control
- Post-Construction Runoff Control
- Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping

## Floodplains

In addition to the natural features identified in the Environmental Planning Criteria table, floodplains are also found throughout the county. A floodplain is any land area susceptible to being inundated by water from any source. Floodplains serve three major purposes: 1) natural water storage and conveyance, 2) water quality maintenance, and 3) groundwater recharge. Unsuitable development can prevent floodplains from serving their purpose. For example, any fill material placed in the floodplain eliminates essential water storage capacity, causing water elevation to rise, resulting in the flooding of previously dry land. The county's 100-year floodplains are shown on the Natural Resources Map in this section. The 100-year floodplain is an area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

In addition to state and regional requirements, development within the county's floodplain is regulated through Section 1220, Floodplain Management Requirements, of the county's code. A community's floodplain management activities, including having effective ordinances in place, can make it eligible to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS). The CRS program is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. Depending on the level of participation, flood insurance premium rates for policyholders can be reduced up to 45%.

## Greenspace

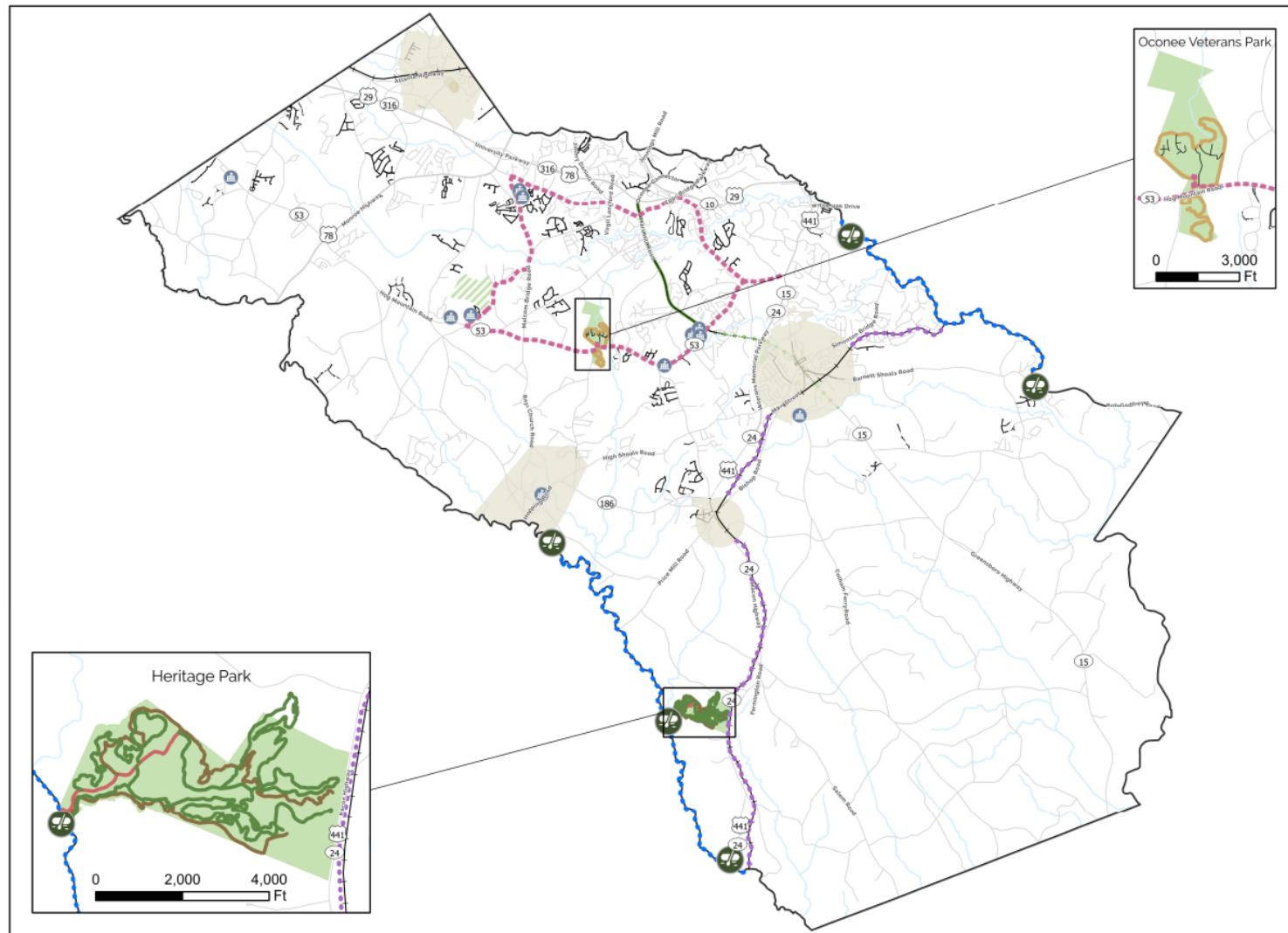
The counties' Park and Recreation Department is responsible for over 600 acres of parks within the county, with at least 150 acres of new parks

space planned for implementation in the near future. Park amenities include ball fields, tennis courts, picnic shelters, playgrounds, walking paths, trails, a community center, a disc golf course, meeting rooms, and an outdoor volleyball court.

The existing inventory of parks and greenspace throughout the county include:

- Bogart Sports Complex
- Heritage Park
- Herman C. Michael Park
- Oconee Veterans Park

Throughout the county, there remain areas suitable for park development, which include, but are not limited to, Herman C. Michael Park, Heritage Park trails, LAS Park, Middle Oconee Park, and various locations in the downtown area and along the proposed Master Trail Plan that are adequate for additional open space, pocket parks, and trails.



## Master Facilities Map

- County Parks
- Proposed Park
- City Limits
- County
- Public Schools
- Proposed Launch Sites
- Roads
- Rail Lines
- Rivers & Streams
- Sidewalks
- Existing
- Under Construction
- Bike Lanes
- Existing
- Planned
- Existing Trails
- Bicycle
- Walking
- Multi Use
- Equestrian
- Proposed Trails
- Priority 1
- Priority 2 (Rails-to-Trails)
- Priority 2 (Water Trail)



0 1/2 Miles

2/17/2023  
Planning & Government  
Services Division GIS/ISKI

**NEGRC**  
Geographic Information Systems

## Historic & Cultural Resources

### National Register of Historic Resources

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the official list of the nation's historic and archaeological resources worthy of protection. A program of the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service, the National Register is intended to identify, evaluate, and protect historic places. As an honorary designation, National Register status places no obligations or restrictions on private owners. However, in order to take advantage of incentive-based preservation programs such as the 20% Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, rehabilitation projects must retain a property's historic character by following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The National Register includes nine historic resources in Oconee County: Bishop Historic District, High Shoals Historic District, the William Daniell House, the Durham Homeplace, Eagle Tavern, Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill, Farmers and Citizens Supply Company Block, the Abe Jones House, and the South Main Street Historic District.

**Bishop Historic District:** Located in Bishop, it is roughly aligned along Price Mill, Old Bishop Roads, and US 441 within the city limits. Listed on May 10th, 1996, it is also known as Greenwood Crossing, and is designated to be of local significance. The National Register says that it is significant in terms of architecture, commerce, community planning and development, and transportation.

**High Shoals Historic District:** Located in North High Shoals, the High Shoals Historic District is centered on GA 186 and the banks of the Apalachee River. A place of local significant in terms of architecture and community planning and development, it was dedicated on October 26th, 2006.

**William Daniell House:** The William Daniell House can be found 3 ½ miles northwest of Watkinsville on Epps Bridge Road. Listed on February 13th,

1995, it is of local significance in terms of architecture and agriculture. It is also known as the Daniell-Kinne House.

**Durham Homeplace:** Locally significant in terms of architecture, the Durham Homeplace was listed on the National Register on March 15th, 2000. It can be found at 1561 Watson Springs Road in Watkinsville.

**Eagle Tavern:** Found along US 129 in Watkinsville, the Eagle Tavern is a place of national significance in the areas of commerce and architecture. It was listed on the National Register on May 13th, 1970.

**Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill:** Located in Watkinsville 4/5 miles south of the junction of Elder Mill Road and GA 15, Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill were listed to the National Register on May 5th, 1994. It has a level of significance at the state level in terms of transportation, industry, engineering, and architecture.

**Farmers and Citizens Supply Company Block:** Farmers and Citizens Supply Company Block is located along US 129 in Watkinsville. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places as a location of local significance in terms of commerce and architecture on July 2cd, 1987.

**Abe Jones House:** Locally significant in terms of architecture, the Abe Jones House was listed on the National Register on January 28th, 1994. It can be visited at 2411 Hog Mountain Road in Watkinsville.

**South Main Street Historic District:** Found in Watkinsville, the South Main Street Historic District is centered on South Street and Harden Hill Road. The historic district was added to the National Register on March 26th, 1979, because it is locally significant in terms of landscape architecture, entertainment and recreation, and architecture.

### Historical Markers

Historical markers educate citizens and visitors about the people and events that shaped Georgia's past and present. The Georgia Historical Society has managed the state markers program since 1998. Prior to that time markers were placed by the Georgia Historical Commission. Additionally, local historical societies may also erect markers.



Currently, Oconee County has 8 markers that cover Eagle Tavern, Elder Mill Covered Bridge, E.D Stroud School- an “equalization school” that sought to give African American students the same opportunities as white students, the Stoneman Raid, Oconee County, the Birthplace of Bishop A.G. Haygood and Miss Laura A. Haygood, John Andrew, a Revolutionary War soldier who lived from 1758-1830, and Jeannette Rankin’s Georgia Home.



*Oconee County Schoolhouse Source: Georgia Dept. of Archives and History*

Historical Markers in Oconee County		
Marker Name	Location	Year
Eagle Tavern	26 North Main Street, Watkinsville	1966
Elder Mill Covered Bridge	On Elder Mill Road, south of GA 15 in Watkinsville	2001
E.D. Stroud School	191 Colham Ferry Road, Watkinsville	2014
The Stoneman Raid	In front of Eagle Tavern, across from the courthouse	1957
Oconee County	At the intersection of North Main Street and Court Street in Watkinsville	1954
Birthplace of Bishop A.G. Haygood and Miss Laura A. Haygood	At South Main Street and Greensboro Road in Watkinsville	1955
John Andrew	On Macon Highway one mile south of Price Mill Road in Bishop, Georgia	2009
Jeannette Rankin’s Georgia Home	On Mars Hill Road in Watkinsville, Georgia	1992

Sources: Georgia Historical Society

## Historic Sites

Georgia’s Natural, Archaeological, and Historic Resources GIS (GNAHRGIS) is a Web-based registry that catalogs information about the natural, archaeological, and historic resources of Georgia. In this context, “historic resources” includes buildings, structures, historic sites, landscapes, and districts included in the Historic Preservation Division’s Historic Resources Survey or listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The information was compiled by the Historic Preservation of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in conjunction with the Georgia Archaeological Site File at the University of Georgia.

GNAHRGIS identifies over 760 points of natural, archeological, and historic points of interest in Oconee County. A substantial number of these points of interest are churches, homes, and cemeteries. Some listed churches include Farmington Methodist Church, Freeman Creek Baptist Church, Friendship Presbyterian Church, and First Christian Church.

## Historic Preservation Resources / Tools

### Certified Local Government Program

The Certified Local Government Program (CLG) is a federal program administered at the state level by HPD. Any city, town, or county that has enacted a historic preservation ordinance and enforces that ordinance through a local preservation commission, is eligible to become a CLG.

The benefits of becoming a CLG include eligibility for federal historic preservation grant funds, the opportunity to review local nominations for the National Register prior to consideration by the Georgia National Register Review Board, opportunities for technical assistance, and improved communication and coordination among local, state, and federal preservation activities.

None of the municipalities in Oconee County (Bogart, Watkinsville, Bishop, and North High Shoals) are CLGs, and Oconee County itself is not a CLG. No information is available if there are any historic preservation ordinances or local preservation commissions in any of the local governments.

## Community Facilities

Community facilities include public facilities and services available to Oconee County residents. Factors such as public safety, sufficient public infrastructure and access to quality education, healthcare, cultural activities, and recreation determine a community's ability to attract and retain residential, commercial, and industrial development. As such, the economic vitality of a community is closely tied to the availability and quality of services provided to its citizens.

As Oconee County continues to grow, the level of service provided by community facilities will need to be able to accommodate additional capacity. Increased demand for additional facilities and services will strain the county's existing resources and ability to provide sufficient capacity. In addition, shifting demographics create intensified needs for specific types of needs and amenities. For instance, seniors will demand increased medical services, passive recreational opportunities, and public transportation.

When planning for the maintenance and expansion of community facilities, regional coordination is an important component. Strategic coordination between Oconee County and the municipalities associated with it will remain important in future endeavors to expand community facilities and infrastructure.

The following section provide an overview of Oconee County's existing community facilities while highlighting potential improvement.

### Water, Sewer, and Wastewater Facilities

#### *Water Supply & Treatment Facilities*

Oconee County operates in own water distribution system, with the primary source of water being the Bear Creek Reservoir. The Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority's water system has a capacity of 21 million gallons per day and may be expanded in the future to 42 gpd. However,

lack of centralized water systems in unincorporated areas of Oconee County continues to be a constraint for future development.

#### *Wastewater Treatment*

Oconee County operates and maintains a sewer and treatment system, which includes two wastewater treatment plants. The Land Application System wastewater treatment plant located on Rocky Branch Road is a current facility that the county intends to decommission and convert the site into a park. Calls Creek Wastewater Reclamation Facility (WRF) treatment plant is the second wastewater treatment plant serving the county, which is located just north of Watkinsville. The county has purchased land for a future plant that will be the Middle Oconee WRF.

The population of the county and demand for sewer service is growing, which is beginning to strain the county's aging infrastructure. Coordinating growth with plant expansion to meet increased need for sewer service is an important and urgent issues.

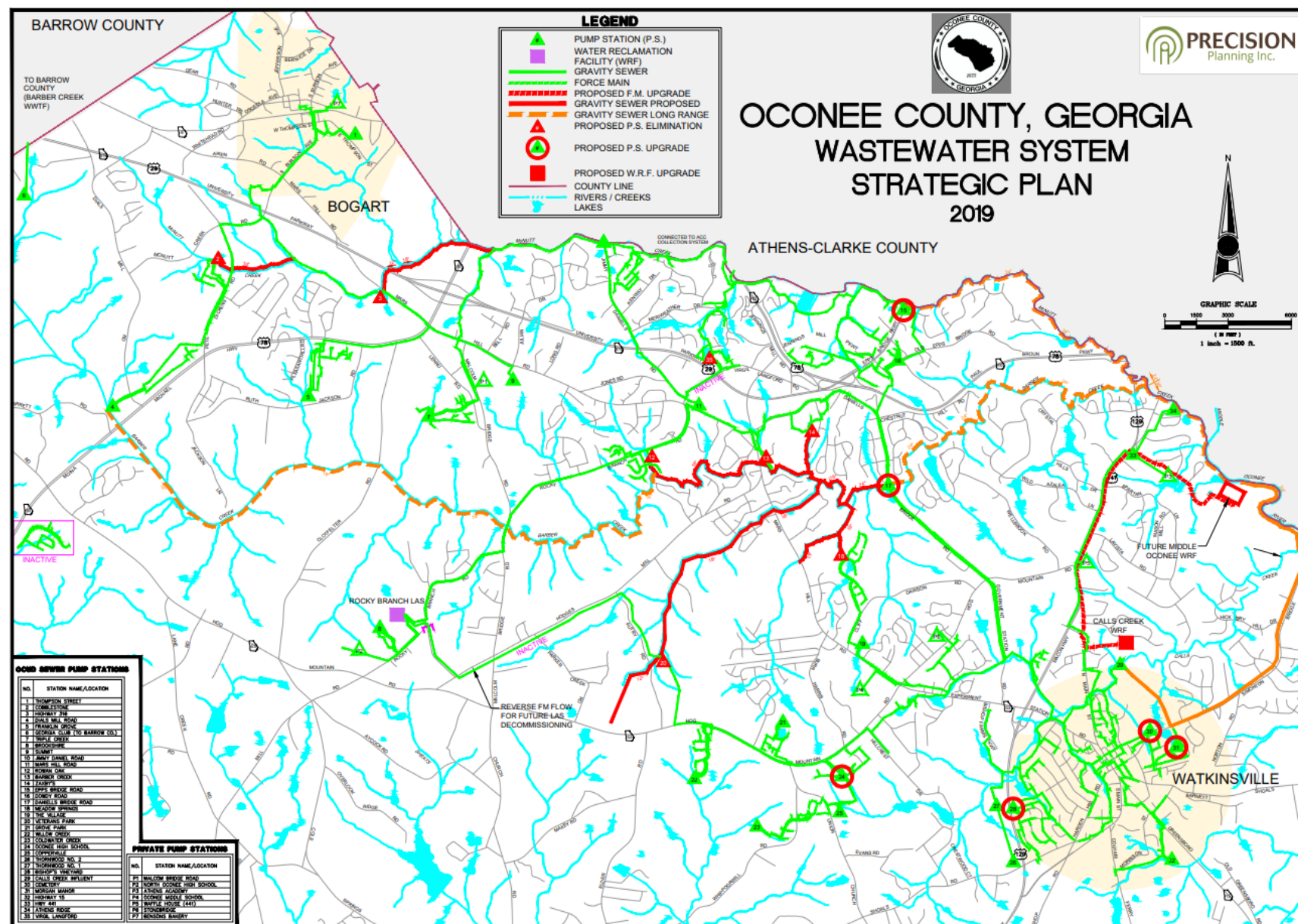
#### *Solid Waste Management*

Oconee County individuals' contract with one of several private providers for residential solid waste pick-up. In Bogart, the city provides solid waste pick-up services. County residents also have disposal access at five county-run recycling/waste centers located at Greensboro Highway, Jimmy Daniel Road, Hog Mountain Road, Rankin Road, and Highway 441.

#### *Stormwater Management*

In accordance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, Oconee County's Storm Water Management Program was created in 2004. The program incorporates regulatory actions, educational outreach, and monitoring activities to minimize the impact of stormwater.





Source: Oconee County Wastewater System Strategic Plan, 2019

## Public Safety Facilities

Oconee County operates its own Sheriff's office and fire services. Ambulance service is a contracted service with EMS, Inc. for countywide service.

**Oconee County Sheriff's Office:** Located in downtown Watkinsville, the Oconee County Sheriff's Office offers numerous services, including but not limited to various resources for children and Choosing Healthy Activities and Methods Promoting Safety (C.H.A.M.P.S).

**Oconee County Fire Rescue:** Located in Watkinsville, Fire Rescue is responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing the fire prevention and suppression activities of seven volunteer fire stations in Oconee County. These seven fire stations are staffed with 180 volunteer firefighters and first responders. They are also responsible for responding to all structure fires in Oconee County and other applicable calls, keeping updated records for ISO and working to achieve the best ISO rating, coordinating joint training for all stations, providing fire safety classes for schools and daycare centers, working with local and state agencies on arson investigations, recruiting new volunteer firefighters, and coordinating volunteer firefighter training.

**Georgia State Patrol:** Oconee falls under the jurisdiction of Georgia State Patrol Post 32, which is assigned to Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, Madison, and Oconee Counties.

## Medical Facilities

**Oconee County Health Department:** The Oconee County Health Department provides public health services, such as a clinic that provides immunizations and walk in hours.

**Landmark Hospital of Athens**

**St. Mary's Health Care System**

**Oconee Regional Medical Center**

## Educational Facilities

Unlike roads, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, recreation and mass transit, which are the responsibility of local governments, the School Board, by constitutional mandate, is responsible for managing and providing educational facilities to meet the needs of current and future students for the associated school district. The local governments, therefore, do not have control of the funding sources or the allocation of funds for new or renovated schools, which may add student capacity.

Current population trends indicate Oconee County is home to a younger population with 28.7% under the age of 18. With expected population increases, maintaining appropriate level of service for educational facilities will be paramount.

Oconee County has 1 primary school, 6 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 2 high schools, for a total of 11 schools in the district. It was recently ranked within the Top 10 in the state on 18 of the statewide Georgia Educational Milestones.

In addition to the public-school district, there are two private schools in the county- Living Word Academy and Prince Ave Christian School, both located in Bogart.

### High Schools

The high schools in the county include North Oconee High School and Oconee County High School.

### Middle Schools

There are two middle schools in the county including Malcom Bridge Middle School and Oconee County Middle School.

### Elementary Schools

The county is served by six elementary schools that are part of the Oconee County school system, including Colham Ferry Elementary School, Dove Creek Elementary School, High Shoals Elementary School,

Malcom Bridge Elementary School, Oconee County Elementary School, and Rocky Branch Elementary School.

### *Private Schools*

Oconee County contains three private schools, Athens Academy, Prince Avenue Christian School, and Westminster Christian Academy. The first two schools educate 930 and 730 students each year, respectively.

## Recreational Facilities

Oconee County's Parks and Recreation Department manages over 600 acres of active and passive parks throughout the county, which provide a variety of amenities, including ball fields, tennis courts, picnic shelters, playgrounds, walking paths, trails, a community center, a disc golf course, meeting rooms, and an outdoor volleyball court.

Throughout the county, there remain areas suitable for park or open space designation, especially smaller, neighborhood and "pocket" park development. Such areas are found in existing residential areas, as well as throughout downtown areas.

## Other Community Facilities

**County Seat:** The County Seat can be found at 23 North Main Street in Watkinsville. Several departments integral to the function of the county can be found here.

**Oconee County Clerk of Courts:** Located at 23 North Main Street in Watkinsville, the Magistrate and Juvenile Courts can be found here, as well as several processes related to them.

**Library:** There are a number of public libraries, found all across the county. To name a few, the Oconee County Library and the University of North Georgia, Oconee Library are both in Watkinsville, while the Bogart Library is in Bogart. The Bogart Library is part of the Athens Regional System and a member of the statewide PINES system.

**Oconee County Senior Center** functions as a community gathering place for adults over the age of 60. Members participate in a variety of planning programming activities including health and wellness programs, exercise programs, educational programs, arts and crafts classes, computer classes, music classes, and special events.



## Intergovernmental Coordination

Intergovernmental coordination seeks to formulate improved coordination processes among local governments, and with local, regional, state, and federal agencies that make direct or indirect decisions influencing land use decisions in Oconee County. The establishment, maintenance and utilization of channels of communication between governmental bodies, for information exchange and problem resolution is basic to the planning process. This element will establish the necessary relationships and provide principles and guidelines for use in effectively coordinating between the county and cities within the county, and other entities with which the county shares common boundaries and/or common planning interests.

### Adjacent Local Governments

Oconee County includes the cities of Bogart, Bishop, North High Shoals, and Watkinsville. Service agreements between the cities and county governments allow for coordination provision of services to city and county residents.

### Independent Agencies, Boards, Authorities

#### Development Authorities

**Oconee County Industrial Development Authority:** The Oconee County Industrial Development Authority is an economic development mechanism that strives to revitalize, develop, and redevelop industrial business districts throughout the county.

#### School Boards

**Oconee County Board of Education:** The Oconee County School Board of Education manages the public school system and its facilities in Oconee County. The six-member elected School Board is the official governing body for the school system. Its responsibilities include policy making,

budget approval, hiring and evaluation of the superintendent, hearing appeals of discipline and grievance issues, and other duties as prescribed by law.

#### Regional and State Agencies

**Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council:** The Council is made up of members who reside in the region and who have been appointed by the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or the Speaker of the House. The Council is led by a Chair and Vice-Chair who are voted on by the membership. The Council promotes the vision and goals of the Upper Oconee water planning region.

**Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT):** GDOT maintains and improves State and Federal highways in Oconee County and provides financial assistance for local road improvements.

**Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):** DCA has several management responsibilities for the state's coordinated planning program and reviews plans for compliance with the state's adopted minimum planning standards. It also provides a variety of technical assistance and grant funding to counties and cities.

**Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR):** DNR is available to provide assistance and guidance to municipalities in a number of important areas including water conservation, environmental protection, wildlife preservation and historic preservation. It is the mission of the DNR to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and utilize sound environmental practices. The department has nine divisions working to accomplish this mission: Environmental Protection Division (EPD), the Coastal Resources Division, Pollution Prevention Assistance Division, Wildlife Resources Division, Water Conservation Program, and the Program Support Division.

## Service Delivery Strategy (SDS)

In 1997, the state passed the Service Delivery Strategy Act (HB489). This law mandates the cooperation of local governments with regard to service delivery issues. The act required each county to adopt a Service Delivery Strategy (SDS), which can be renegotiated every ten years.

The SDS includes an identification of services provided by various entities, assignment of responsibility for provision of services and the location of service areas, a description of funding sources, and an identification of contracts, ordinances, and other measures necessary to implement the SDS.

## Transportation

Multi-modal transportation networks are essential for efficient movement of people, commodities, goods and services within and through cities, counties, and even regions. This element provides an overview of Oconee County's existing transportation network and introduces opportunities for improvement to the overall system.

### Roads and Highways

Transportation networks provide access to goods and services through multiple transit modes. They also provide important connections between emergency and public safety facilities and residences and businesses. This section describes Oconee County's road network in terms of the Functional Classification of the roadways.

#### *Road Network Hierarchy*

Roadways are grouped into functional classifications according to the character of traffic they are intended to support. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) guidelines were consulted to develop the descriptions presented in this section. GDOT maintains jurisdiction of the interstate and state highways while the county, or individual municipalities, maintain local streets.

**Interstate:** Provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control.

**Arterials:** Provides the next highest level of service mobility so that traffic can move from one place to another quickly and safely. Arterials can be further classified as principal or minor arterials.

**Collectors:** Provides lower level of service at a lower speed for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials. Collectors can be further classified as major or minor collectors.

**Local Roads:** Consists of roads not defined as arterials or collectors. Primarily provides access to homes, businesses, and other property, with minimal "through" movement.

#### *Existing Road Network*

Oconee County is located along Highways 29 and 78, a major highway that provides connections between the county, Athens, and further away, the Atlanta metro area. As a highway, these roadways provide the highest level of service in the county, in terms of distance and speed.

Predominant arterials in the county includes Highway 78 and Highway 441. Highway 78 connects the northwestern portion of the county to Highway 29 and the Athens area. Highway 441 runs mainly north to south and connects the central portion of the county including Farmington, Bishop, and Watkinsville with Athens to the north. The northern portion of the county contains much of the commercial area and traffic. Commercial developments are located along the northern corridors, and there is anticipated future commercial and residential growth in this area.

For the most part, local roads include neighborhood roads, or roads connecting collectors to private property.

### Alternative Modes of Transportation

Enhancing urban connectivity and walkability in Watkinsville and other areas remains an objective for Oconee County as steady growth continues.

#### *Pedestrian facilities & Sidewalks*

In order to provide enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access between residential areas and downtown and other community centers, the county should prioritize the implementation of sidewalks, trails, and safer crosswalks and railroad crossings.

The county should conduct a full inventory and analysis of conditions in downtown Watkinsville and other main pedestrian areas, noting the availability of pedestrian infrastructure and crosswalks, open spaces, land use, and available parking in an effort to enhance connectivity,



walkability, infill development and parking solutions. When feasible and where applicable, sidewalk and bike path projects could be implemented during road improvements for efficiency.

### *Public Transportation*

With regard to public transit, Oconee County currently does not have a public transportation network. As the county grows and demands change, the county should reevaluate the need for a public transit service to sufficiently accommodate the needs of its community.

## **Railroads, Trucking, and Airports**

### *Railroads*

Rail service in the county is provided by CSX and Norfolk Southern railroads. A railroad bisects the city of Watkinsville, with nearly all of the residential development in Watkinsville located north of the railroad tracks. The current development patterns can also be attributed to the county's two major transportation components of the rail line and highway system.

### *Truck Routes*

Oconee County contains designated truck and freight network routes, which include Highway 441. There are two routes running mainly north and south through the central and eastern parts of the county. Another truck route runs along Highway 29 and 78. Oconee County should coordinate with GDOT to evaluate alternative truck route options in areas considering bypass routes, to minimize the impact of freight traffic routed through cities within the county.

### *Airports*

While there are no airports within the municipal limits of Oconee County, the Athens-Ben Epps Airport is located approximately 8 miles from the northern part of the county.

## **Transportation and Land Use**

Oconee County's transportation network should support planned development patterns to maximize the capacity of the existing and planned transportation network. Management of the type and location of future growth could support the reduction of traffic congestion and yield a higher quality of life. In addition, providing inter-parcel access and alternative access facilities between developments enhances mobility and alleviates traffic congestion.

Major transportation routes such as Highways 29, 78, and 441 have attracted a mix of commercial and residential development adjacent to their corridors, which will likely serve as a catalyst for future growth in the surrounding areas. Strategic corridor design will ensure future compatibility with new development.

## **Moving Forward**

Most critical transportation issues facing the county continue to be related to traffic congestion and its effect on circulation between activity centers and other destinations around the community.

The county is pursuing small area transportation studies that will address transportation-related issues discussed in this Plan. Access management along corridors that connect major activity centers and residential areas will be a key component in avoiding continued traffic issues as the county grows and expands. The Future Development Guide provides direction in linking land use and corridor development/redevelopment for both vehicles and pedestrians/bicycles and should be consulted regularly during the permitting process for new developments.

## Appendix C-1.

### Detailed Socioeconomic Characteristics

#### People

Identifying socioeconomic trends in a community's population overtime enables a community to more efficiently accommodate projected service and facility demands, as they relate to the population.

Table 1 presents data that is taken from the American Community Survey, conducted by the Census Bureau on an annual basis. The numbers for 2010 and 2020 vary somewhat from the 2010 and 2020 Census figures because the ACS is based on a sample survey rather than full counts of the total population. The data is useful, however, when viewing changes on a comparable basis over time. In addition, it should be noted although the ACS produces population estimates, the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (PEP) produces the official estimates of the population for the nation, states, counties, cities, and towns. In the table below, all the information is based on ACS data.

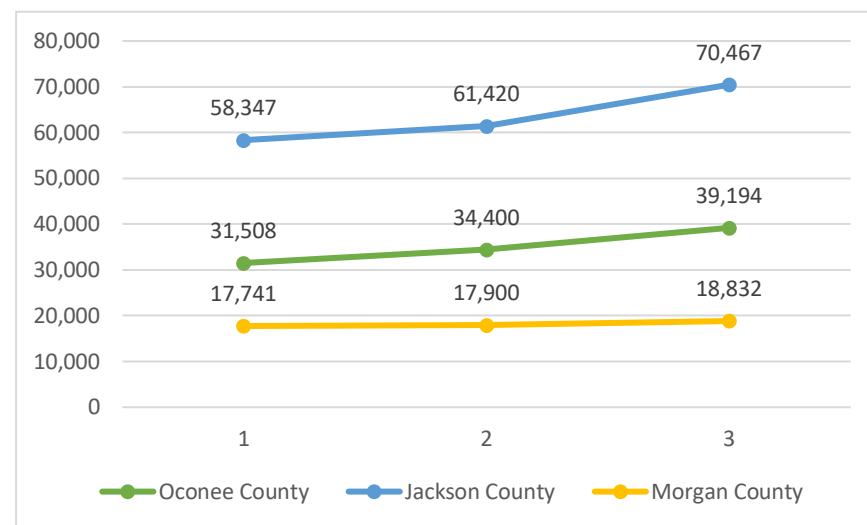
During the 2010s, Oconee County experienced a steady increase in population. It finished off the decade with almost 8,000 more residents in 2020 than in 2010. In comparison with nearby counties, it was in the middle in terms of growth. Jackson County had substantial population growth, while Morgan County had minimal growth, gaining less than one thousand residents during the decade.

**Table 1: Population Growth 2010 – 2020**

	2010	2015	2020	Percent Change: 2010-2015	Percent Change: 2015-2020
<b>Oconee County</b>	31,508	34,400	39,194	9.2%	13.9%
<b>Jackson County</b>	58,347	61,420	70,467	5.3%	14.7%
<b>Morgan County</b>	17,741	17,900	18,832	0.9%	5.2%

Source: American Community Surveys for 2010, 2015 & 2020

**Figure 1: Regional Population Growth 2010-2020**



Source: American Community Surveys for 2010, 2015 & 2020

Since 2010, the overall regional has experienced stable population growth. The growth rate was slower at the beginning of the decade, most likely due to the lingering effects of the Great Recession, but all three counties saw an uptick in growth between 2015 and 2020. Oconee County had the greatest growth in its population (9.18%) between 2010 and 2015, while Jackson County had the largest growth (14.73%) between 2015 and 2020. All three counties are projected to grow by 2050.

#### Age and Sex

Identifying demographic indicators, such as age distribution patterns within a community, provides insight into potential needs and demands for that population.

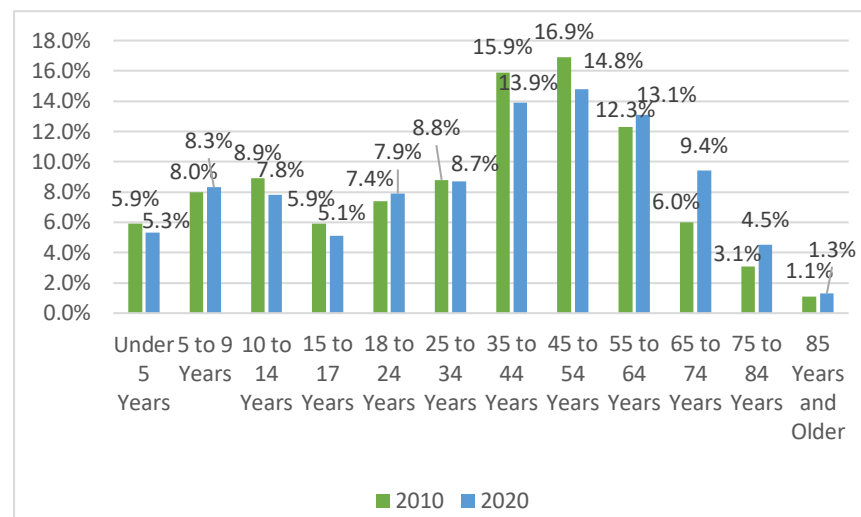
**Table 2: Population by Age & Sex**

Population by Age & Sex	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
<b>Age</b>						
Total Population	31,508	39,194	58,347	70,467	17,741	18,832
Under 5 Years	5.9%	5.3%	7.5%	6.5%	5.7%	5.0%
5 to 9 Years	8.0%	8.3%	7.0%	6.7%	7.2%	7.4%
10 to 14 Years	8.9%	7.8%	7.4%	7.8%	6.8%	6.0%
15 to 17 Years	5.9%	5.1%	4.7%	4.4%	4.6%	4.2%
18 to 24 Years	7.4%	7.9%	8.0%	7.1%	6.6%	6.6%
25 to 34 Years	8.8%	8.7%	13.7%	13.4%	11.8%	11.2%
35 to 44 Years	15.9%	13.9%	14.8%	13.9%	13.8%	11.0%
45 to 54 Years	16.9%	14.8%	14.3%	13.9%	15.7%	14.7%
55 to 64 Years	12.3%	13.1%	11.5%	12.0%	13.2%	14.1%
65 to 74 Years	6.0%	9.4%	6.9%	8.7%	8.6%	11.7%
75 to 84 Years	3.1%	4.5%	3.0%	4.7%	4.1%	6.7%
85 Years and Older	1.1%	1.3%	1.2%	1.0%	2.1%	1.5%
<b>Median Age</b>	38.9	40.1	36	38.4	38.9	39.3
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	49.5%	49.4%	50.0%	49.5%	48.5%	49.5%
Female	50.5%	50.6%	50.0%	50.5%	51.5%	50.6%

Source: American Community Surveys, 2010 & 2020

Oconee County is home to a growing population of older and elderly residents. In 2010, 10.2% of the population was over the age of 65. In 2020, 15.2% of the population was over the age of 65. Two other age groups- youth (0-17) and middle-age (35-54)- experienced a decrease in population, while young adults (18-34) experienced a very small increase in population. Oconee County is still a younger region, with a median age of 40.1 years old. Additionally, Jackson and Morgan Counties have slightly lower median ages, at 38.4 and 39.3 years old, respectively.

The decrease in the youth and middle age groups is not concerning. The decreases are nominal, with the youth group going from 28.7% of the population in 2010 to 26.5% in 2020, while the middle age group went from 29.2% to 27.2% over the same time period.

**Figure 2. Population by Age Distribution: 2010 & 2020**

Source: American Community Surveys for 2010 & 2020

Jackson County similarly experienced growth in its older and elderly population, going from 11.1% to 14.4% between 2010 and 2020. The middle age population also increased by 0.1%. The two other age groups underwent minor decreases in the same time period.

Morgan County demonstrated similar trends to the other two counties in terms of growth within the older and elderly population. This group experienced a notable jump in size, going from 14.8% to 19.9% from 2010 to 2020. This pattern is indicative of a community aging in place. Every other age group decreased in size over the course of the decade.

Female residents continue to comprise over half the population in Oconee, Jackson, and Morgan Counties. This is consistent with statewide trends of a higher female population.



## Ethnicity

remaining percentage of other races increased over the course of the decade.

**Table 3: Population by Race and Ethnicity**

POPULATION: RACE & ETHNICITY	Oconee County				Jackson County		Morgan County	
	2010		2020		2010	2020	2010	2020
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
<b>Total:</b>	31,508	100.00%	39,194	100.00%	58,347	100.00%	70,467	100.00%
<i>White alone</i>	28,179	89.43%	34,380	87.72%	51,590	88.42%	60,046	85.21%
<i>Black or African American alone</i>	1,684	5.34%	1,927	4.92%	4,084	7.00%	4,912	6.97%
<i>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</i>	0	0.00%	40	0.10%	79	0.14%	11	0.02%
<i>Asian alone</i>	869	2.76%	1,594	4.07%	982	1.68%	1,255	1.78%
<i>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone</i>	5	0.02%	34	0.09%	59	0.10%	24	0.03%
<i>Some other race alone</i>	414	1.31%	141	0.36%	759	1.30%	1,797	2.55%
<i>Two or more races</i>	357	1.13%	1,078	2.75%	794	1.36%	2,422	3.44%
<b>Total</b>	31,508	100.00%	39,194	100.00%	58,347	100.00%	70,467	100.00%

Source: American Community Surveys for 2010 & f2020

The 2010 American Community Survey demonstrates that Oconee County had a largely predominant white population, at 89.43%, while African American residents made up 5.34% of the total population. Other races, including, Native Americans, Asians, Native Hawaiians, people of two or more races and all others, made up the remaining percentage of the population. Since then, the white population and African American percentage of the overall population has decreased, while other races have established more of a presence.

Additionally, the majority of Jackson County in 2010 identified as white (88.42%) while 7% of the population was African American. Other races, as described above, made up the remaining percentage of the population. The 2020 American Community Survey indicated that there were minimal changes in race distribution in Jackson County.

Morgan County had a slightly more diverse racial make-up than the two other counties, with 73.58% of the population being white in 2010, while a quarter of the county was African American. In 2020, the white and African American populations in the county had decreased, while the

In 2020, the Hispanic or Latino population made up 8.1% of Jackson County, 3.1% of Morgan County, and 6.6% of Oconee County.

## Population Projections

Population forecasts provide insight into what a community might look like twenty or so years down the road. Such projections can address how and where

a community will grow through following a comprehensive plan and implementing development regulations and short-term strategic work plans. Population projections are produced by a variety of agencies and can also be calculated through several statistical methods.

Looking to 2050, population projections indicate that the county's population could reach over 62,000 residents, experiencing a growth rate of 51.2% between 2020 and 2050. Alternatively, some models predict a slightly lower population in the range of 60,500 to 61,000 residents. Jackson and Morgan Counties are projected to increase in population as well.

**Table 4: Population Projections**

Also, the high projection in Method 1 is unlikely, it is included for consistency.

<b>METHOD 1: Annual Growth Trend Extrapolation Model</b>						
	Average annual growth rate	Average Annual Increase (People/Year)	2020	2030	2040	2050
LOW	1.59%	796	39,194	45,891	53,733	62,914
	(2013 – 2014)					
MEDIUM	2.44%	1,401	39,194	49,879	63,476	80,781
	(2010 – 2020)					
HIGH	4.83%	4,030	39,194	62,817	100,677	153,922
	(2012 – 2015)					
<b>METHOD 2: Georgia Planning &amp; Budget Projections Model</b>						
			2020	2030	2040	2050
PROJECTION			39,194	48,026	58,180	64,008

Source: American Community Surveys for 2020, Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning & Budget Projections

Population calculations can be achieved through various statistical calculation methodologies. In addition to statistical calculations, other factors contributing to growth patterns were considered when developing population projections for Oconee County, including regional growth projections, development potential in and around the county, the housing market, and economic conditions.

*Method 1: Annual Growth Trend Extrapolation Model*

Method 1 presented in Table 4 depicts projections based on annual growth trends since over the past several decades. The average annual growth rate was extrapolated for three different time periods, which represented low, medium, and high projections.

The “high” projection encompasses growth patterns between 2012 and 2015 and predicts a population of 100,677 by the year 2040. The major growth that took place in Oconee County between 2012-2015 is considered an anomaly, due to a larger increase in population during this time outside of the average annual increase seen between 2010 to 2020.

The “low” projection extrapolates the average annual growth rate between 2013 and 2014, a rate of 1.59%. While this period does not include growth from the early 2000s, it does include a period when the county was in a slower growth pattern, which are generally anticipated over a 20-year time frame. The low

projections from Method 1 indicate a 2040 population of 53,733. Being that the current population is upwards of 39,200 people, this projection over the next couple of decades seems somewhat low, especially with recent trends and expected development that could attract new residents.

Comparatively, the “medium” projection in Method 1 seems the most realistic, as the period between 2010 and 2020 saw economic highs and lows that are likely over a 20-year period. With an average annual growth rate of 2.44%, the 2040 population is predicted to be around 63,476 people.

*Method 2: Georgia Planning & Budget Projections Model*

The second method used to evaluate 2050 population projections for Oconee County is including the Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget projections. These projections are prepared using census data combined with information on migration and age data to create state and county level projections. The Oconee County projections based on the state’s model are listed in Table 4. The state’s population projections fall between the low and medium method 1 projections.

## Population Trends

Oconee County's population has increased steadily between 2010 and 2020, with the highest rate of increase in population between 2017 to 2020 and between 2010 to 2011. There has been a 8.96% population growth between 2017 and 2020.

The ACS estimates indicate that compared to Jackson and Morgan counties, Oconee County has increased population at a higher rate. From 2010 to 2020 Oconee County has a population increase at a rate of 24.4% compared to 20.8% in Jackson County and 6.2% in Morgan County.

The latest Census data suggests that the age dynamics in Oconee County have changed slightly since 2010. The school-age population (under 19 years old) has decreased by 2.2% over the ten-year period. Meanwhile, the number of residents 65 and older has increased by 5.0%. This is indicative of a slight increase in the average age in the county.

Also of interest is the change in population among ethnic groups in the county. Oconee County had a predominantly White population in 2010 and saw a slight decrease in the White population in 2020 (1.72%). There has been an increase in other races including increases in the Asian and Biracial populations. The Black population decreased by 0.4% over the study time period. However, despite its continued growth, the make-up of Oconee County's population with regard to age, race, and sex, remains fairly similar to the composition of the 2010 population.

## Families

This section utilizes the most recent American Community Survey data to evaluate the composition of families in Oconee County. The Census Bureau refers to families as "households", with a "family household" consisting of two or more related individuals, and a "nonfamily household" consisting of only one individual or several

individuals that live together but are not related. The term "family" is used more generally to refer to all types of households.

In 2010, Oconee County had 11,155 households, with 79.95% (8,918) considered traditional family households, and 20.05% (2,237) classified as non-family households. Jackson and Morgan Counties had a similar percentage of family households at 75.87% and 74.56%, respectively.

The 2020 ACS found that Oconee County still had a similar percentage of traditional family households, with 81.83% of the population identifying as a traditional family. Overall, the number of traditional family households slightly increased in the county and in Jackson and Morgan counties.

**Table 5: Household Type: 2010 - 2020**

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>2010</b>						
Total households	11,155	100.00%	20,917	100.00%	6,529	100.00%
Family households*	8,918	79.95%	15,870	75.87%	4,868	74.56%
Male householder	267	2.39%	953	4.56%	258	3.95%
Female householder	1,136	10.18%	2,591	12.39%	979	14.99%
Nonfamily households**	2,237	20.05%	5,047	24.13%	1,661	25.44%
Male householder	847	7.59%	2,319	11.09%	827	12.67%
Female householder	1,390	12.46%	2,728	13.04%	834	12.77%
<b>2020</b>						
Total Households	13,773	100.00%	24,268	100.00%	7,040	100.00%
Family Households*	11,270	81.83%	19,184	79.05%	5,390	76.56%
Married-couple family	1,755	12.74%	15,214	62.69%	4,033	57.29%
Male Householder	496	3.60%	1,069	4.40%	345	4.90%
Female Householder	1,259	9.14%	2,801	11.54%	1,012	14.38%
Nonfamily Households**	2,503	18.17%	5,084	20.95%	1,650	23.44%

\*A family household has at least one member of the household related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

\*\* A nonfamily household consists of people living alone and households which do not have any members related to the householder.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010-2020 American Community Survey

Since 2010, the average household size in Oconee County has stayed about the same, while Jackson County's has increased slightly, and Morgan County's has decreased slightly. In 2020, Oconee County's average household size increased to 2.9 persons per household. This number is similar to that of Jackson County (2.7) and Morgan County's average size of 2.7.

**Table 6: Household Size: 2010 – 2020**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010-2020 American Community Survey

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>2010</b>						
Total households	11,155	100.00%	20,917	100.00%	6,529	100.00%
1-person household	1,931	17.31%	4,068	19.45%	1,437	22.01%
2-person household	3,734	33.47%	7,018	33.55%	2,198	33.67%
3-person household	2,477	22.21%	3,935	18.81%	1,110	17.00%
4-or-more-person household	3,013	27.01%	5,869	28.06%	1,764	27.02%
<b>2020</b>						
Total households	13,773	100.00%	24,268	100.00%	7,040	100.00%
1-person household	2,301	16.71%	3,919	16.15%	1,492	21.19%
2-person household	4,734	34.37%	9,415	38.80%	2,902	41.22%
3-person household	2,741	19.90%	3,781	15.58%	1,054	14.97%
4-or-more-person household	3,997	29.02%	7,153	29.48%	1,592	22.61%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.9	(x)	2.7	(x)	2.8	(x)
<b>Change 2010 - 2020</b>						
Total households	2,618		3,351		511	
1-person household	370	-1%	-149	-3.30%	55	-1%
2-person household	1,000	1%	2,397	5.24%	704	8%
3-person household	264	-2%	-154	-3.23%	-56	-2%
4-or-more-person household	984	2%	1,284	1.42%	-172	-4%

Overall, the counties have similar percentage distribution in terms of household size, though there have been some notable shifts since 2010. The number of households with 4 people or more remains strong in Oconee County, at 29.02%, which is almost one third of the county's households. Households in Oconee of 3 persons have decreased slightly in 2020 to account for 19.9% of the households. Two-person households make up the majority in the county, at 34.4%, followed by 4-person households, which includes 29.02% of the total. One person households make up 16.7% of the county.

All of the subject counties saw a decrease in one-person households. Both Oconee and Jackson counties saw increases in four or more person households and decreases in three-person households. Morgan county saw a decrease in both 4 and 3-person households. While the size of households has increased slightly in Oconee, this reflects the slight increase in the young adult and older population.

### Tenure Status of Families

Overall, Oconee County did not see much change between the number of residents who own their home compared to those who rent a home between 2010 and 2020. Since 2010, the number of owner-occupied households has slightly decreased, while the number of renter-occupied households has slightly increased, each by only slightly over a tenth of a percentage point.

Morgan County demonstrate similar patterns, with the number of owner-occupied units decreasing while the number of renter-occupied units increased. Jackson County demonstrated an inverse pattern to the other two counties. Overall, owner households remain the predominant style of tenure across the comparison region.

## Homes

Between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses, Oconee County experienced a 20.14% increase in the number of housing units, which grew from 12,134 units in 2010, to 14,578 units in 2020. Over the past decade, the amount of vacant housing has decreased by 17.77%, going from 979 units in 2010 to 805 units in 2020. Additionally, both Jackson and Morgan Counties experienced a decrease in the amount of vacant housing over the same time period, decreasing by 23.61% and 5.60% respectively. While there has been an overall decrease in the number of vacant units in Jackson and Morgan counties between 2010 and 2020, they still have a higher percentage of vacancies compared to Oconee County.

**Table 7: Change in Housing Occupancy: 2010-2020**

	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>2010</b>						
Total Households	11,155	100%	20,917	100%	6,529	100%
Owner Households	9,225	82.70%	15,736	75.23%	4,887	74.85%
Renter Households	1,930	17.30%	5,181	24.77%	1,642	25.15%
<b>2020</b>						
Total Households	13,773	100%	24,268	100%	7,040	100%
Owner Households	11,374	82.58%	19,171	79.00%	5,213	74.05%
Renter Households	2,399	17.42%	5,097	21.00%	1,827	25.95%
<b>Change 2010 - 2020</b>						
Total Households	2,618		3,351		511	
Owner Households	2,149	-0.12%	3,435	3.77%	326	-0.80%
Renter Households	469	0.12%	-84	-3.77%	185	0.80%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010-2020 American Community Survey

Most units in Oconee County are owner-occupied. However, there was a slight decrease in the number of owner-occupied units in the county, going from 82.70% to 82.58% over the last ten years. The change is almost negligible. In comparison, Jackson County is the only one of the three to experience an increase in the number of owner-occupied units,

going from 75.23% to 79% occupancy, while Morgan County underwent a nominal decline in accordance with Oconee County.

In conjunction with this decline in owner-occupancy in Oconee and Morgan Counties, the number of renter-occupied units increased by 0.12% and 0.80% respectively. This is while the median gross rent increased in both counties, going from \$714 to \$837 in Morgan County and \$729 to \$1,098 in Oconee County over the ten-year period.

## The Housing Supply

This section examines the availability of vacant homes as an indicator of potential population absorption. Housing that is considered “available” is limited to vacant housing units that were for sale or rent. “Other vacant” units indicated in the table may be under repair, not in the market, or dilapidated.

In 2020, the percentage of vacant housing units in Oconee County was 5.52%, down from 8.07% in 2010. In the other regions, the vacancy rate declined as well- Jackson County had a significant drop, going from 10.25% to 6.99% in the examination period.

In 2020, roughly 39% of vacant units in Oconee County were available either for sale or for rent. There is more available housing in this county than Jackson or Morgan, where 32.93% and 13.20% of units were for sale or for rent. Availability in all three counties declined between 2010 and 2020.

Since 2010, the number of vacant units for rent decreased by 10.76%, with only 26 total units listed to be rented. In addition, there was a 7.15% increase in the number of vacant homes for sale, which was 28.5% of the housing stock 10 years ago. Most available homes in Oconee County fall into the “other vacant” category, which includes housing units that are under repair, not in the market, or dilapidated.

Housing Types

The primary housing types in Oconee County are detached, single family homes, which comprise over 87% of the housing supply. The rest of the housing stock is comprised of single-unit attached homes, mobile homes, and 2-unit developments. Many of these units qualify as multifamily due to the density of the development.

Housing Value

At \$304,400, Oconee County’s median household value reflects a high-quality supply of housing. Morgan County’s median household value follows behind (\$236,674), while Jackson County has the lowest of the three (\$210,100), comparatively.

Table 10: Housing Value

HOUSE VALUE	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Owner-occupied units	11,374	100%	19,171	100%	5,213	100%
Less than \$20,000	118	1.04%	279	1.46%	71	1.36%
\$20,000 to \$49,999	50	0.44%	788	4.11%	222	4.26%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	345	3.03%	2,319	12.10%	587	11.26%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	789	6.94%	2,415	12.60%	446	8.56%
\$150,000 to \$299,999	4,277	37.60%	8,736	45.57%	2,040	39.13%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	3,870	34.02%	3,577	18.66%	1,212	23.25%
\$500,000 to \$749,999	1,110	9.76%	643	3.35%	300	5.75%
\$750,000 to \$999,999	344	3.02%	223	1.16%	69	1.32%
\$1,000,000 or more	471	4.14%	191	1.00%	266	5.10%
Median Value (dollars)	\$304,400	(X)	\$210,100	(X)	\$236,674	(X)

Source: Census Bureau 2020 American Communities Survey

Housing Trends

Compared to 2010, there was a sizeable increase in the number of housing units present in 2020 for Oconee County. These findings are consistent with population growth patterns in that ten-year period. Additionally, Jackson and Morgan Counties experienced population increases between 2010 and 2020.

Table 10: Housing Units

Total Housing Units	14,578
1-unit, detached (Single Family)	87.2%
1-unit, attached (Townhome)	4.2%
2 units	2.2%
3 or 4 units	0.0%
50-or-more-units (Apartments)	0.7%
Mobile home	5.8%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.0%

Source: Census Bureau 2020 American Communities Survey

In 2010, Morgan County had a lower number of homeowners who had a mortgage, home equity loan, or any similar debts (66.46%) than Jackson County (69.97%) and Oconee County, where over 73% of homeowners had a mortgage or similar debts. In 2020, Morgan County still had a lower number of homeowners with mortgages or similar debts (66.46%) than Oconee or Jackson Counties (73.97% and 69.97%, respectively). However, the overall percentage of housing units with mortgages decreased in each of the three counties. Oconee County underwent the largest decline, with the number of homeowners with mortgages or similar debts dropping 8.61% to 65.36% between 2010 and 2020, while Jackson County had the smallest decline, dropping only 2.4%.



During this time period, the percentage of owner-occupied households in Oconee County experienced a minute decrease (0.12%). In addition, the number of vacant housing units decreased by over 17 percent between 2010 and 2020. Overall, trends over the past ten years point to a healthy housing market in Oconee County, with a strong percentage of occupied housing units (91.93%), homeownership (82.7%), and a relatively high-quality housing supply.

Workers

The people who work in Oconee County, and the businesses and institutions that employ them are the backbone of the county’s economic place.

Regional Setting

All three counties- Oconee, Jackson, and Morgan- are a part of the Northeast Georgia Regional Council. It was created in 1963 to be a focal point for regional issues concerning local government and to be a resource for those governments in a variety of specialized areas. These include local government planning, economic development, grant preparation, administration, job training, and aging services. Oconee County falls under the Athens-Clarke County Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Table 12: 2020 Employment Status

EMPLOYMENT	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Working Age Population*	30,285	100.00%	54,580	100.00%	15,159	100.00%
In labor force**	19,846	65.53%	34,688	63.55%	9,297	61.33%
Civilian labor force	19,840	65.51%	34,633	63.45%	9,297	61.33%
Employed	19,259	63.59%	33,267	60.95%	9,020	59.50%
Unemployed	581	1.92%	1,366	2.50%	277	1.83%
Armed Forces	6	0.02%	55	0.10%	0	0.00%
Not in labor force***	10,439	34.47%	19,892	36.45%	5,862	38.67%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey

\*Working Age Population refers to citizens age 16 years and over

\*\*Labor Force: All non-institutionalized civilians who are either employed or unemployed

\*\*\*Not in labor force: Includes, but not limited to students, institutionalized people, housewives, retired workers

Commuting Patterns

The Census Bureau produces statistics for commuting flows on national, state and county levels. Data related to commuting patterns can be accessed in the American Community Survey and the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES).

For Oconee County, slightly under a third of the working age population (31.03%) has a commute length between 10 and 19 minutes, while another quarter of the population (26.87%) has a commute between 20 and 29 minutes. Morgan County has the largest population (24.59%) with a commute less than 10 minutes, while Jackson County has a notable percentage of the population (20.87%) that have a longer commute, starting with 20.87% of the population that have a commute of 30 to 39 minutes. It then leads the other two counties in commuting time past that.

The American Community Survey also provides insight into commuter patterns for workers, including place of work. Of the estimated 14,569 employed workers living in Oconee County in 2019, the majority (75.0%) commuted to work outside of the county in which they resided, while about 25.0% lived and worked in their county of residence.

**Table 13: Commuter Patterns – Place of Work**

COMMUTER PATTERNS	Oconee County	Jackson County	Morgan County
Worked in county of residence	25.0%	25.8%	34.3%
Worked outside county of residence	77.7%	75.0%	72.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey

Census Bureau but are estimates extrapolated from partial survey data, not actual counts.

Workers over 16 years of age are considered to be either “in labor forces” or “not in labor force.” According to the Census, the labor force includes employed and unemployed members of the civilian labor force as well as members of the Armed Forces. The “not in labor force” group constitutes working age citizens which consists mainly of students, home caretakers, retired workers, seasonal workers not currently working, institutionalized people (jail, mental institution), and those in a nursing home.

**Table 14: Travel Time to Work**

Travel Time to Work	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Working Age Population*	19,055	100.00%	32,748	100.00%	8,865	100.00%
Did Not Work at Home	16,821	88.28%	30,674	93.67%	8,370	94.42%
Less than 10 minutes	1,403	7.36%	2,603	7.95%	2,180	24.59%
10 to 19 minutes	5,912	31.03%	6,991	21.35%	2,413	27.22%
20 to 29 minutes	5,121	26.87%	5,491	16.77%	1,333	15.04%
30 to 39 minutes	1,803	9.46%	6,835	20.87%	841	9.49%
40 to 59 minutes	1,111	5.83%	5,013	15.31%	883	9.96%
60 to 89 minutes	1,016	5.33%	2,751	8.40%	584	6.59%
90 or more minutes	455	2.39%	990	3.02%	136	1.53%
Worked at home	2,234	11.72%	2,074	6.33%	495	5.58%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey

## Employment by Industry

Employment data is particularly pertinent to understanding the economic base of an area. It is important to note that the Census data is based on employed persons, not necessarily on jobs alone. Thus, a person working multiple jobs is counted only once by the Census. As noted, the jobs exclude sole proprietors and businesses that have no employees.

The numbers on the following tables are taken from the American Community Surveys (ACS) for 2010 and 2020, which are prepared by the

**Table 15: Employment by Industry: 2010 - 2020**

INDUSTRY	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
Civilian employed population 16 years and over (labor force)	15,279	19,259	26,421	33,267	7,972	9,020
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.90%	1.30%	1.80%	1.80%	6.00%	2.80%
Construction	5.60%	5.50%	10.10%	8.90%	9.40%	10.70%
Manufacturing	8.80%	7.20%	12.70%	14.90%	14.30%	13.30%
Wholesale trade	3.10%	2%	5.60%	4.00%	2.10%	2.20%
Retail trade	10.20%	10.10%	12.30%	13.60%	12.30%	7.70%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.00%	3.30%	5.70%	5.90%	3.80%	6.70%
Information	1.70%	1.50%	1.80%	1.60%	1.70%	3.00%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	4.90%	8.60%	5.20%	4.20%	5.90%	3.80%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	9.90%	12.50%	7.80%	10.30%	8.50%	8.70%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	32.60%	30.90%	19.60%	19.90%	15.90%	20.50%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5.30%	6.80%	8.50%	5.40%	8.00%	11.00%
Other services, except public administration	4.90%	5.90%	5.30%	5%	6.50%	4.10%
Public administration	5.80%	4.50%	3.60%	4.50%	5.80%	5.60%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey for 2010 and 2020

In the direct aftermath of the Great Recession, educational services, and health care and social assistance was a leading industry throughout the region, employing the highest number of workers in Oconee County, Jackson County, and Morgan County. At the end of the decade, it is still the highest employer of workers in the study area. Despite a marginal decrease in the percentage of workers it employs, this industry still

employs almost a third (30.90%) of workers in Oconee County as of 2020.

The second largest industry in Oconee County is Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services, employing 12.5% of the population, up from 9.9% of the population in 2010.

The fastest growing industry in Oconee County is Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, rising from 4.9% in 2010 to 8.6% in 2020. Most industries experienced a decline, while Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services, and Other Services, Except Public Administration were the other growing industries.

Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities, as well as Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance both underwent 1.7% decreases in their industry share in Oconee County, while these two industries experienced growth in Jackson and Morgan Counties.

### Employment by Occupation

Table 16 displays data related to occupation and takes a different view of employment in Oconee County, focusing on the occupations of people that live in the county, as opposed to all employees that work for

companies in the county regardless of where they live. Also, unlike the figures for employment by industry in Table 15, the following tables include all working residents, including government employees and sole proprietors.

As noted previously, 2010 was a point in time at the severest depths of the Great Recession, while in 2020, the economy had recovered. Each



county experienced an increase in the number of employed residents, with Oconee going from 15,279 workers to 19,529 workers in 2020.

Table 16 demonstrates a clear picture of what occupations were able to recover from the difficult economic times at the beginning of the decade, as well as showing if any occupations suffered any losses.

Oconee County's top three job categories in 2010 were 1) Professional and Related Occupations; 2) Management, Business, and Financial Operations Occupations; and 3) Office and Administrative Support Occupations. By 2020, Sales and Related Occupations had overtaken Office and Administrative Support Occupations for the third-place occupier in Oconee County, while the top two spots remained the same. While the job market has diversified, Professional and Related Occupations lead, employing over a third of the county (33.40 percent). Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations had a sizeable decrease, going from 7.04 percent to 5.44 percent over the course of the decade.

Jackson County experienced a similar decline in Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations, while Morgan County had a large increase in these jobs, going from 11.97 percent of total occupations to 14.21 percent in 2020.

Similar to Oconee County, the management and business occupations remain to be a steady employer for the working populations of Jackson and Morgan, followed by sales and various office jobs.

**Table 16: Employment by Occupation: 2000 – 2020***Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey for 2010 & 2020*

OCCUPATION	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>2010</b>						
Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over	15,279	100.00%	26,421	100.00%	7,972	100.00%
Management, Business, and Financial Operations Occupations	2,850	18.65%	3,316	12.55%	1,435	18.00%
Professional and Related Occupations	4,604	30.13%	3,464	13.11%	1,465	18.38%
Healthcare Support Occupations	159	1.04%	417	1.58%	187	2.35%
Protective Service Occupations	293	1.92%	557	2.11%	79	0.99%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	358	2.34%	1,613	6.10%	447	5.61%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	685	4.48%	848	3.21%	232	2.91%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	343	2.24%	569	2.15%	115	1.44%
Sales and Related Occupations	1,691	11.07%	3,039	11.50%	968	12.14%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	1,758	11.51%	3,493	13.22%	814	10.21%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	96	0.63%	133	0.50%	207	2.60%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations	1,075	7.04%	3,764	14.25%	954	11.97%
Production Occupations	745	4.88%	1,965	7.44%	697	8.74%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	622	4.07%	2,243	8.49%	372	4.67%
<b>2020</b>						
Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over	19,259	100.00%	33,267	100.00%	9,020	100.00%
Management, Business, and Financial Operations Occupations	3,667	19.04%	5,324	16.00%	1,311	14.53%
Professional and Related Occupations	6,433	33.40%	6,744	20.27%	1,629	18.06%
Healthcare Support Occupations	172	0.89%	776	2.33%	186	2.06%
Protective Service Occupations	271	1.41%	897	2.70%	221	2.45%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	582	3.02%	1,416	4.26%	611	6.77%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	528	2.74%	1,053	3.17%	314	3.48%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	572	2.97%	839	2.52%	125	1.39%
Sales and Related Occupations	2,203	11.44%	3,213	9.66%	657	7.28%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	1,956	10.16%	4,255	12.79%	959	10.63%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	190	0.99%	198	0.60%	75	0.83%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations	1,048	5.44%	3,293	9.90%	1,282	14.21%
Production Occupations	870	4.52%	2,441	7.34%	1,264	14.01%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	767	3.98%	2,818	8.47%	386	4.28%

## Income

Median earnings for Oconee, Jackson, and Morgan residents in various occupations are shown in Table 17. Of the three counties, Oconee has the highest median household income at \$95,064, while Jackson has the lowest, at \$68,307. Morgan County saw a large increase in median household income between 2010 and 2020, going from \$45,817 to \$68,669. The median household income increased in all three categories by at least \$15,000.

Over the course of the decade, Oconee County's median household income increased by \$20,712 to \$95,064. During this period, all income ranges between \$100,000 and \$200,000 or more in Oconee County saw decreases in the percentage of households.

Unlike the increase or reduction in the number of workers during the same period, increases and decreases in the earning medians reveal no particular patterns.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey for 2010 and 2020*

*Note: 2010 and 2020 median earnings are shown in then-current 2010 and 2020 dollars, respectively.*

**Table 16: Median Household Income**

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Oconee County		Jackson County		Morgan County	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
Total Households	11,155	13,773	20,917	24,268	6,529	7040
Less than \$5,000	3.5%	2.1%	5.6%	4.0%	9.1%	4.1%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	3.1%	1.3%	6.5%	3.1%	8.2%	2.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.7%	1.6%	4.9%	3.5%	4.2%	3.0%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	4.3%	2.4%	6.3%	3.9%	5.6%	5.5%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	3.3%	3.2%	4.7%	4.0%	5.5%	3.2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	4.3%	3.4%	5.6%	4.0%	4.4%	3.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	4.5%	3.9%	5.8%	4.1%	6.7%	4.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2.8%	4.1%	5.1%	4.8%	5.5%	5.4%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3.8%	4.3%	3.8%	2.8%	4.8%	3.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	6.9%	6.2%	10.5%	9.7%	6.8%	6.8%
\$150,000 or more	10.6%	8.2%	10.0%	10.6%	9.6%	11.6%
<b>Median household income</b>	<b>\$74,352</b>	<b>\$95,064</b>	<b>\$51,506</b>	<b>\$68,307</b>	<b>\$45,817</b>	<b>\$68,669</b>