2011-2016

Columbia County Growth Management Plan: Partial Update

Prepared by the CSRA Regional Commission

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview:

This partial update to the 2005 Columbia County Growth Management Plan is intended to serve as a bridge between that plan and the future. Many things have changed since 2005. Not only has Columbia grown; the State of Georgia has taken a different approach to planning. These changes are reflected in the updated *Requirements for a Partial Update to the Local Government Comprehensive Plan.* Adopted by the Board of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in 2007, these new requirements make it easier for local governments to educate and engage the public as well as cultivate the type of development that creates communities of lasting value. As Columbia County looks towards the future, it is important to have an up-to-date policy guide that can reflect the community's vision. That is the intent of this appendix. The subsequent sections are intended to replace the corresponding sections of the 2005 plan. Also included here are concepts intended to assess the current conditions and ultimately advocate for quality growth to continue in Columbia County.

1.2 Partial Update Requirements:

In January of 2010 Columbia County contracted with the CSRA Regional Commission to prepare the partial update of the *Columbia County Growth Management Plan*. Data gathering and the initial meetings of the locally appointed advisory committee began in early March of 2010. The plan is intended to be submitted to the RC and DCA for their final review in December 2010. As stated in the *Requirements for a Partial Update to the Local Government Comprehensive Plan* a partial update must contain the following elements:

1. **Identification of Issues and Opportunities**
2. **Land Use**
3. **Updated Implementation Program** that consists of:
    a. Short Term Work Program
    b. Policies
    c. Report of Accomplishments

1.3 Quality Community Objectives Assessment

The Quality Community Objectives were adopted by DCA as statements of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. The assessment was created using the Quality Community Objectives Assessment tool created by the Office of Planning and Quality Growth, and illustrates strengths and needs as they relate to the 4 main and 15 sub categories that make up the Quality Community Objectives.

1.4 Identification of Issues and Opportunities

Using the Quality Community Objectives Assessment Tool, along with the Analysis of Areas Requiring Special Attention, and intensive input from citizens, our appointed advisory committee and Columbia County Development Services staff, a preliminary list of Issues and Opportunities was formed. This list was then further refined and prioritized using input gathered from the public at the two open houses that were held on May 11, 2010 and July 8, 2010. This prioritized list formed the basis of the implementation strategy. The list of Issues and Opportunities contained in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan

along with their implementation program is detailed in the Report of Accomplishments. Some issues and opportunities remain unresolved, while some have been adequately addressed.

1.5 Land Use

The Land Use section is the foundation for the Growth Management Plan Update, as it affects each Element within the plan through its designations and distribution of land uses. The previous update, in 2005, provides the basic structure to the changes in land use policy in Columbia County. The two most important features of land use policy going forward will be nodes and corridors which provide the bulk of the urban/suburban/rural choices available for living and working environments. This concept of choice has been overlaid upon the structural focus of Land Use chapter (i.e., nodal development and corridors).

1.6 Updated Implementation Program

The implementation program for the identified issues and opportunities is presented in three parts. A Short Term Work Program, an assessment of policies that could be adopted to advance toward an action on an identified issue or opportunity, and a report of accomplishments from the previous Comprehensive Plan.

Report of Accomplishments

The Report of Accomplishments looks at each individual item in the previous Short Term Work Program and identifies its current status. Activities are given one of four statuses:

1. Have been completed;
2. Are currently underway (including a projected completion date);
3. Have been postponed (explaining why); or
4. Have not been accomplished and are no longer activities the local government intends to undertake (explaining why).

Short Term Work Program

This program identifies specific implementation actions that the County or other entities intend to take during the planning period. The program includes all ordinances, administrative systems, (historic preservation commission, design review, etc.), community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, and all programs and initiatives called for to be put into place by the plan.

Long-Term Goals and Policies

The policies element of the Implementation Program lists all policies that can be adopted in order to provide ongoing guidance and direction to officials for making decisions that are consistent with the State Planning Goals and address the identified Issues and Opportunities as they are presented in this partial update.

Chapter 2

Quality Community Objectives Assessment

Chapter 2: Quality Community Objectives Assessment

2.1 Overview

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. The Office of Planning and Quality Growth has created the Quality Community Objectives Local Assessment to assist local governments in evaluating their progress towards sustainable and livable communities.

This assessment is meant to give a community an idea of how it is progressing toward reaching these objectives set by the Department, but no community will be judged on progress. The assessment is a tool for use at the beginning of the comprehensive planning process, much like a demographic analysis or a land use map, showing a community that "you are here." Each of the fifteen Quality Community Objectives has a set of yes/no statements, with additional space available for comments. The statements focus on local ordinances, policies, and organizational strategies intended to create and expand quality growth principles.

A majority of "yes" answers for an objective may indicate that the community has in place many of the governmental options for managing development patterns. "No" answers may provide guidance in how to focus planning and implementation efforts for those governments seeking to achieve these Quality Community Objectives.

This initial assessment is meant to provide an overall view of the community's policies, not an in depth analysis. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions in this assessment. Its merit lies in completion of the document, and the ensuing discussions regarding future development pattern.

Should a community decide to pursue a particular objective, it may consider a "yes" to each statement a benchmark toward achievement. Please be aware, however, that this assessment is only an initial step. Local governments striving for excellence in quality growth should consider additional measures to meet local goals.

This chapter enumerates the State of Georgia's planning objectives, and the effectiveness of current policy and administration in Columbia County in meeting these objectives. These state objectives are known as "Quality Community Objectives" and are intended to apply to every community as they develop their comprehensive plan.

2.2 Individual Objective Assessments

Development Patterns			
Traditional Neighborhoods Objective:			
Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district	✓		Planned Unit Development process allows for a mix of uses within a single zoning district.
2. Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development "by right" so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process	✓		Nodal Protection Overlay District promotes neo-traditional development in designated areas
3. We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade bearing trees appropriate to our climate.		✓	
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.		✓	
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	✓		Keep Columbia County Beautiful
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation so that walking is an option that some would choose.	✓		
7. In some areas several errands can be made on foot if so desired.	✓		
8. Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.	✓		
9. Some of our children can and do bike to school safely	✓		
10. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community	✓		
Traditional Neighborhoods Assessment:			
Traditional neighborhood development patterns, with a focus on mixing of uses, pedestrian environment, and a variety of housing types incorporated into a single development, are still rare in Columbia County. There has been some movement towards traditional neighborhood development with two planned unit developments incorporating this development pattern. Stronger policies are needed to encourage the broader application of traditional neighborhood development in subdivision design.			

Development Patterns

Infill Development Objective:

Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.

Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and / or infill development.	✓		Vacant storefront survey underway by the Columbia County Development Authority.
2. Our community is actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment		✓	
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield development		✓	
4. We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road).	✓		
5. Our community allows small lot development (5,000 ft^2 or less) for some uses	✓		

Infill Development Assessment:

Columbia County completed a redevelopment plan for Martinez in 2005, which is served by existing infrastructure and is seeing a gradual decline. The Martinez area redevelopment plan is yet to be implemented, but is a key part of Columbia County's strategy for containing commercial growth within nodal development areas. As a part of this update the establishment of incentives for redevelopment in the Martinez area is recommended to enhance ongoing redevelopment efforts.

Development Patterns

Sense of Place Objective:

Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.

Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
1. If someone were dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where he or she was, based on our distinct characteristics		✓	
2. We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage, and have taken steps to protect those areas.		✓	
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.	✓		

Development Patterns			
Sense of Place Continued			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
4. We have ordinances to regulate the type and size of signage in our community.	✓		
5. We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.		✓	A draft is being developed.
6. If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland		✓	
Sense of Place Assessment:			
In the 2000 Growth Management Plan, Evans Town Center was envisioned as a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly destination. There has been limited progress in creating a pedestrian environment. This is due in part to the current ordinances and design guidelines. Current guidelines are not adequate to create the sense of place that is desired for Evans Town Center because they are not based on the principles of access management and pedestrian-friendly design.			

Development Patterns			
Transportation Alternatives Objective:			
Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. We have public transportation in our community.	✓		Only senior transit is available in Columbia County using 5311 funds.
2. We require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry / exit.		✓	
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.	✓		
4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.		✓	
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks whenever possible.		✓	
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community	✓		
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.	✓		
Transportation Alternatives Assessment:			
Currently transportation alternatives in Columbia County are lacking. Public transit is minimal, and walking and biking facilities are generally lacking. The 2025 Transportation Plan for the county calls for a fairly extensive system of new bike lanes and the green space plans calls for a network of interconnected greenways. If implemented as envisioned, together these would promote a significant alternative transportation infrastructure.			

Development Patterns			
Regional Identity Objective:			
Regions should promote and preserve an "identity," defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.		✓	
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.		✓	
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage(mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal, etc,)		✓	
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	✓		
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.	✓		
6. Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education	✓		
Regional Identity Assessment:			
With the recent development of Savannah Rapids Park and Pavilion, Columbia County has contributed to the region's sense of history, identity, and place. This important park preserves historic structures and helps to tell the story of how the Savannah River played a crucial role in the early development of the region.			

Resource Conservation			
Open Space Protection Objective			
New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. Our community has a greenspace plan.	✓		
2. Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.	✓		
3. We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.	✓		
4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.	✓		Our Residential Cluster Overlay District achieves this goal.

Open Space Protection Continued

Open Space Protection Assessment:

Columbia County has a strong and recently developed green space plan and parks master plan. The county has been making steady progress on implementing these plans with the acquisition of new green spaces for preservation and recreation. Columbia County's development patterns tend to favor low-density, large lot development that consumes land rapidly. Recently residential developments have taken advantage of conservation subdivision provisions to set aside the more sensitive lands within a development site.

Resource Conservation

Heritage Preservation Objective:

The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.		✓	
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.		✓	
3. We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.		✓	

Heritage Preservation Assessment:

Historic preservation has lagged in Columbia County without an entity to oversee historic preservation efforts. One bright spot is the City of Harlem that has recently completed an historic survey and is currently applying for historic district status for its downtown. Columbia County has been proactive in preserving Heggie's Rock and other notable natural features, including the Savannah River.

Resource Conservation

Environmental Protection Objective:

Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.	✓		
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.		✓	
3. We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.		✓	
4. Our community has passed the necessary "Part V" environmental ordinances, and we enforce them.		✓	
5. Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.		✓	

Environmental Protection Continued:			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.	✓		
7. We are using storm water best management practices for all new development.		✓	
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.).		✓	
Environmental Protection Assessment:			
Columbia County has numerous environmental protection policies in place, including river corridor protection, a tree protection ordinance, a soil erosion ordinance, a flood protection ordinance, and site plan and engineering review. Columbia County does lack some important environmental protection ordinances, notably a groundwater recharge protection ordinance and an aquifer protection ordinance.			

Social and Economic Development			
Growth Preparedness Objective:			
Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	✓		
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.		✓	
3. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.	✓		
4. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	✓		
5. We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.	✓		
6. We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth, and these areas are based on a natural resources inventory of our community.		✓	
7. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.	✓		
8. We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.		✓	
9. We have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed about land use issues, zoning decisions, and proposed new development.	✓		
10. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	✓		

Growth Preparedness Continued:
Growth Preparedness Assessment:
Columbia County has been largely pro-active in putting in place the infrastructure for growth. The water and sewer systems have been expanded to meet future needs. A recently enacted storm water management program has helped to address some of the problems of recent rapid growth. The weakest link of Columbia County's infrastructure may be the road system, which requires improvements to keep up with development pressures.

Social and Economic Development			
Appropriate Business Objective:			
The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets and weaknesses, and has created a business development strategy based on them.	✓		SWOT analysis conducted by the Columbia County Development Authority in 2009.
2. Our economic development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit businesses and/or industries that will be compatible.	✓		The Columbia County Development Authority is in charge of recruiting compatible business.
3. We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.	✓		The Columbia County Development Authority recruits sustainable and environmentally responsible firms to the County, when feasible.
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.	✓		
Appropriate Business Assessment:			
Columbia County has sought out economic development in key regional industries, including manufacturing and medical services. Columbia County should carefully consider opportunities to plug into regional strengths and to continue to develop a high-skill, high-wage workforce.			

Social and Economic Development			
Employment Options Objective:			
A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.	✓		
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.		✓	
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	✓		
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	✓		
Employment Options Assessment			
Columbia County has a relatively small economic base with employment that is largely driven by serving the needs of the local population. Columbia County's economic development strategy will need to adapt to its growing prominence in the economy of the region. Columbia County is already beginning to see economic diversification, as medical employment growth is taking a foothold in the county.			

Social and Economic Development			
Housing Choices Objective:			
Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.	✓		
2. People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.	✓		
3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).		✓	
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.		✓	No original town exists in developing Columbia County.
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or "neo-traditional" development.	✓		These are allowed as a part of a Planned Unit Development.
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.	✓		
7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.		✓	There is currently a moratorium on multifamily housing in Columbia County that will end 12/31/2010. Thereafter multi-family development will be allowed according to the 2010 Multi-family housing study, included as an appendix to this plan
8. We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.		✓	
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.		✓	
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.	✓		
Housing Choices Assessment:			
Columbia County has limited housing choices to meet the needs of its current population and current employment base. Columbia County's housing is by far the most expensive in the region. Also, the supply of attached and multifamily housing choices is limited, especially in light of the existing demographic patterns in the county.			

Social and Economic Development			
Educational Opportunities Objective:			
Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. Our community provides workforce training options for its citizens.	✓		
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	✓		
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	✓		
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.	✓		

Educational Opportunities Assessment:
With a strong public school system and the recent planned addition of a campus from Augusta Technical College, Columbia County is offering strong educational and training opportunities to its citizens.

Governmental Relations			
Regional Solutions Objective:			
Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.			
Criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. We participate in regional economic development organizations.	✓		
2. We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.	✓		
3. We work with other local governments to provide or share appropriate services, such as public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency response, E-911, homeland security, etc.	✓		
4. Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.	✓		
Regional Solutions Assessment:			
Generally regional solutions are not needed for most of Columbia County's current challenges.			

Governmental Relations			
Regional Cooperation Objective:			
Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.			
Regional Cooperation	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
1. We plan jointly with our cities and county for comprehensive planning purposes.	✓		
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.	✓		
3. We initiate contact with other local governments and institutions in our region in order to find solutions to common problems, or to craft region-wide strategies.	✓		
4. We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	✓		
Regional Cooperation Assessment:			
Regional cooperation is a challenge in the Augusta region. Columbia County is experiencing a disproportionate share of both employment and population growth, while other counties in the region are experiencing poor growth. Finding opportunities for regional cooperation will be an important goal of the Growth Management Plan Update.			

Chapter 3

Issues and Opportunities

Chapter 3: Identification of Issues and Opportunities

3.1 Overview

The way to address issues facing any community is to identify them first. The following section includes issues and opportunities developed by Columbia County based on the eight main planning elements. The County has organized the issues and opportunities by each major functional element. For each element, specific issues and related opportunities are presented. The issues and opportunities developed as they pertain to land use will be addressed in Chapter 4.

3.2 Population

- Columbia County has experienced consistent population growth.
- Anticipated population growth could outpace the County's ability to provide services.
- Reliable and adequate funding needs to be secured to ensure the delivery of basic services to our growing senior population. (Nutrition, Recreation, Transportation, etc.)

3.3 Economic Development

- The construction of a new county-wide broadband network will be a critical tool in the recruitment and retention of employers in Columbia County.
- Actively work to in partnership with the Columbia County Development Authority to ensure that our employment base remains diverse.
- Facilitate a relationship between federal, state, and local governments with business and industry to promote economic development.
- Actively support the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce in order to nurture small businesses and local entrepreneurs.
- Collaborate on a multi-jurisdictional level to promote tourism throughout the region.

3.4 Housing

- Encourage a wide range of housing types to support persons with special needs and to accommodate varying age groups, household sizes, work force needs, and income levels throughout the community.
- Implement the recommendations of the 2010 Multi-family Housing Study prepared by the Columbia County Planning Department, and included as an appendix to this update.
- Encourage housing development to locate in areas convenient to shopping, recreation facilities, schools and other community activities.
- Encourage infill-housing development, where appropriate, in suitable areas supported by necessary infrastructure.
- As Columbia County continues to grow, housing should be evaluated to ensure that needs are adequately addressed.

3.5 Natural and Cultural Resources

- Future development will impact viewsheds across the county due to topographical variability found throughout the jurisdiction.
- Nominate eligible historic resources to the National Register
- Prioritize historic resources for preservation and enhancement
- Continue to implement the County's existing Green Space Plan

3.6 Community Facilities and Services

- Coordinate new development with the availability of adequate water service.
- Provide service to citizens in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible
- Ensure that disposal facilities in the county meet regulatory requirements and can continue to support and facilitate effective solid waste handling programs.
- Continue investing in the public safety agencies to maintain an adequate level of service.
- Coordinate facility expansion based on future population projections and local land use planning.
- Continued support of the public library system and other cultural facilities to ensure adequate service is provided to existing and future populations.
- Continue to support the preservation and enhancement of cultural facilities throughout the county.

3.7 Transportation System

- Upgrade and expand existing transportation facilities, especially the street network, to accommodate future growth in the most efficient manner.
- Improve the mobility of pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the county.
- New developments are not required to connect to existing sidewalk networks. They are encouraged (not required) to provide sidewalks within the development.
- New development has the potential to sprawl along our transportation corridors
- Recent trends indicate that, geographically, residential growth continues to outpace employment growth, thereby increasing the jobs/housing balance.
- The increase in traffic volume on all roads indicates the need to have a balanced program that addresses the needs of both county roads (which are the responsibility of the county) and state roads (the responsibility of GDOT).

Chapter 4

Land Use

Chapter 4: Land Use

4.1 Introduction

Land and the uses to which it is put constitute the foundation on which all other aspects of development are founded. Land use and development patterns establish the foundation for the Growth Management Plan. Consequently, the principal objective of this Land Use section is to determine the most suitable and efficient use of the land and he pattern in which those uses will occur. The integration of existing development patterns, growth trends and the analysis of land development capacity (the ability of land to support development) form the basis for the land use policy described in this section of the Growth Management Plan.

4.2 Land Use Assessment

4.2.1 Land Use Category Descriptions

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning" includes a list of standard land use categories. The broadly defined land use categories contained in the list establish the parameters under which each local jurisdiction should classify existing parcels. The following section provides an overview of the land use categories Columbia County will use in order to inventory current land uses. A breakdown of current land uses in each is contained in Figure L-1 and Map L.1.

Residential

Because Columbia County is predominately a bedroom community, it is important to consider all types of residential development. The residential category is for land devoted to permanent living accommodations, including lots containing houses or manufactured homes, housing subdivision developments, and buildings containing multiple housing units attached horizontally (such as duplexes or townhomes) or vertically (like apartments).

In order to evaluate these various forms of residential use, the "Residential" category is divided into 6 subcategories on the Future Land Use Map: Rural Residential, Low-Density Residential, Medium-Density Residential, and High-Density Residential.

Rural Residential

Rural Residential areas are primarily located in the southern and western portions of the county where sanitary sewer and often public water is not available, necessitating on-site sewage disposal systems and wells. Rural Residential areas are usually zoned R-A Residential-Agricultural, where lots are required to be a minimum of 2-½ acres and often larger due to poor soil conditions.

Low-Density Residential

Low Density Residential areas are primarily in the urbanized area of the county, but can also be located in the rural southern and western areas in the county. These are lots consisting of single-family houses, commonly developed in suburban subdivisions at densities approaching 1 unit per acre. Lots and areas qualifying as low density residential are usually a minimum 30,000 square foot lots and are usually zoned R-1 Single-Family Residential. Some low density lots are also zoned R-A, but these are nonconforming legal lots of record.

Medium-Density Residential

Most of the residential portions of Martinez and Evans fall within this category, having been the first areas that attracted growth from Augusta- Richmond County once sanitary sewer service was available in the area. Typical development in this category consists of single-family subdivisions with net densities between one unit per acre and approaching eight units per acre. Most of the single-use developments in these areas are zoned R- 2 Single-Family Residential, R-3 Single-Family Residential or R-3A Single and Two-Family Residential. The mixed-use developments that are located in these areas tend to be large with a variety of housing types, recreational opportunities and compatible shopping facilities, zoned PUD Planned Unit Development.

Two-Family Residential

The mixed-use developments that are located in these areas tend to be large with a variety of housing types, recreational opportunities and compatible shopping facilities, zoned PUD Planned Unit Development.

High-Density Residential

There are pockets of high density housing located in the urbanized area of the county. High density residential consists of town homes and apartments with net densities between eight and 14 units per acre. High density housing is usually zoned T-R (Townhouse Residential) A-R (Apartment Residential) or within larger Planned Units Developments.

Very High Density Residential

An additional refinement of high density housing was needed, so this Very High Density Residential category was created. There are pockets of very high density housing located in the urbanized area of the county. Very high density residential consists of apartments and condominiums with net densities ranging anywhere from 14 units per acre and up. Very high density housing is usually zoned A-R (Apartment Residential) or within larger Planned Units Developments. The 2010 Multi-family Housing study, completed in 2010, calls for the establishment of a new zoning district for all apartment developments after 12-31-2010, A-R-10. This new district would limit the density of apartments to 10 units per acre. The study also calls for multi-family developments within Planned Unit Developments to be limited to 12 units per acre. As it stands now, there is no maximum density for multi-family within P.U.D.'s.

Mixed Use

Mixed use is typically a single building containing more than one type of land use; or a single development of more than one building and use, where the different types of land uses are in close proximity, planned as a unified complementary whole.

Professional/Office

Professional Office use is a type of commercial development that primarily provides a service as opposed to the sale of goods or merchandise. Examples include medical or engineering offices, real estate offices, insurance agencies and corporate headquarters. Most of the office professional use is in the urbanized area of Martinez-Evans. Purely office/professional uses are often zoned P-1 Professional, although the commercial zoning districts also allow office uses.

Commercial

Commercial uses are predominantly establishments that offer goods or merchandise for sale or rent, and other commercial uses that do not operate in "office" settings. Such uses include stores, shopping centers, hotels, restaurants, gasoline stations, automobile body shops, physical fitness centers, markets and building supply centers. Commercial development within Columbia County consists of both sales and service uses.

These uses occur on individual lots or within strip shopping centers. The area around the major intersection of Washington Road, Columbia Road, and Bobby Jones Expressway in Martinez has long been the commercial hub of the county with several large shopping centers anchored by big box retail chains. With direct access to I-20, Washington Road supports a large concentration of interstate-oriented commercial uses on individual lots, such as fast food restaurants, gas stations, and overnight lodging. Most of the more recent commercial developments have occurred in the Evans area as shopping centers, often organized around a grocery store, along with new family-style restaurants and other convenience services typically located on individual lots. Commercial uses are zoned:
C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial), C-C (Community Commercial), C-2 (General Commercial) or C-3 (Heavy Commercial), depending on the types of uses and intensity of development. Some commercial uses, such as auto paint and body stores are occasionally located in the M-1 zone. Industrial

Industrial

This category includes industrial, light manufacturing, distribution and business park uses. Most industrial uses in the county are zoned M-1 Light Industrial reflecting the low intensity of such uses common to Columbia County; some more intense uses are zoned M-2 General Industrial. A large portion of the industrial and quarry activities occur in the S-1 zone, as well.

Transportation, Communication and Utilities

This category includes such uses as power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, public transit stations, telephone switching stations, streets and highways. In Columbia County, uses classified in this category almost exclusively consist of streets, highways and the railroad tracks, along with cell towers and utility substations.

Institutional

Institutional uses include public state, federal or local government uses as well as quasi-public institutions and some private institutions. Governmental uses include County Administration buildings and courthouses, fire stations, libraries, post offices and public schools (but not parks). Institutional uses include churches, cemeteries and other private non-profit uses. Public and institutional uses are typically not concentrated in specific locales, and this is the case in Columbia County, with one exception – Evans Town Center. While the majority of public and institutional land uses in the county are located on scattered sites, the Government Complex in Evans is a growing hub of local governmental uses and community facilities. This hub has been reinforced with the completion of the new Columbia County Courthouse Annex, and will be expanded with the completion of the main library and performing arts center in Evans in 2006. In addition, the Fort Gordon Military Reservation occupies a significant portion of land in the southeast tip of the county. There are fourteen elementary schools, six middle schools,

four high schools as well as multiple private educations facilities located throughout the county. Institutional uses in the county consist primarily of churches and other faith-based institutions.

Parks – Active Recreation

Parks- Active Recreation uses include land dedicated to active recreational uses. These lands may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, sports fields and recreation centers. Parks such as Patriots' Park that have baseball, softball, football or soccer fields, play equipment or basketball, tennis or multi-purpose courts for sports activities provide active recreation opportunities in the county.

Parks – Passive Recreation and Conservation

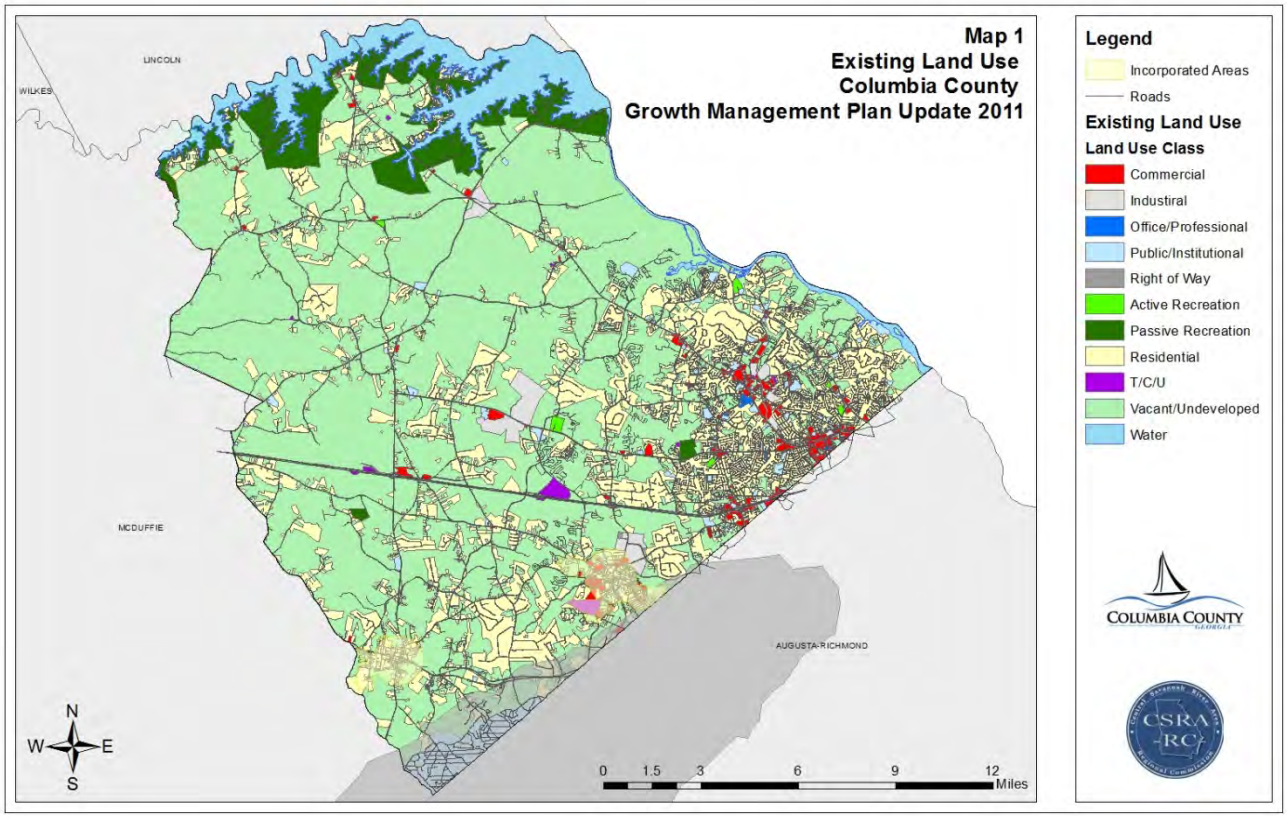
This category includes land dedicated to passive recreational uses or undeveloped open space reserved for public use. These lands may be either publicly or privately owned and may include picnicking grounds, camping, trails and interpretive areas, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, or may be held in their natural state. Columbia County enjoys extensive access to recreational uses particularly due to the presence of Clarks Hill Lake and the Savannah River along the northern border of the county. Mistletoe State Park occupies almost 2,000 acres in the northwest corner of the county and Wildwood Park offers 975 acres of recreational uses such as boating and camping. In addition to these large state and local facilities, there are eight other County parks ranging in size from two to100 acres and offering a wide array of recreational amenities and passive open space.

Undeveloped/Vacant

Undeveloped land is vacant and lands where development has been abandoned or where deteriorated buildings are located. Undeveloped lands are located throughout the county, but tend to predominate around areas that are zoned for nonresidential use or are relatively unusable due to floodplain or wetlands on the property. Flood prone areas encompass about 17 percent of the acreage in the county's 192,726 acre land area. Undeveloped lands are clearly evident along the banks of the Savannah River and within the floodplain of several of its tributaries, such as Kiokee, Little Kiokee, and Euchee Creek. Water bodies such as lakes and streams are also considered undeveloped areas.

Figure 1 Existing Land Use Acreage Totals, Columbia County

Existing Land Use Acreage Totals, Columbia County		
Land Use Category	**Acres**	**%**
Commercial	2,285.97	1.2%
Industrial	2,211.07	1.2%
Residential	43,173.08	23.2%
Office / Professional	130.44	0.1%
Public / Institutional	4,322.20	2.3%
Parks -Active Recreation	245.83	0.1%
Parks -Passive Recreation	10,048.90	5.4%
T/C/U	7,669.90	4.1%
Undeveloped / Vacant	115,826.04	62.3%
Total	185,913.43	100%
Source: Columbia County GIS Office; Calculations by CSRA RDC		



Map 1 Existing Land Use
As a supplement, a larger version of this map is included at the end of the chapter.

4.2.2 Influences on Future Development

Historic Patterns of Growth

Over the last 35 years, Columbia County has experienced phenomenal growth as more and more people moved to the area seeking new housing in proximity to good schools within the Augusta-Aiken Metropolitan Area. Single-family residential growth has been the strongest area of new development with the majority occurring in classic suburban subdivisions in the northeast section of the county. As single-family residential growth continues, much of it is occurring in the form of large, executive-style homes located in subdivisions closer to the Savannah River and centered on golf courses and other recreational amenities. There is a limited amount of single-family attached housing, and even fewer multi-family developments in the county and these tend to be concentrated in the Martinez-Evans area primarily along Belair and Washington Roads.

Commercial growth has been a function of automobile accessibility, with the largest concentrations located at major thoroughfare intersections and along the established commercial corridors that tie into I-20: Washington Road, Belair Road, and Bobby Jones Expressway. Unfortunately, much of the earliest commercial development in the county occurred in the form of ubiquitous strip centers, fast food restaurants and gas stations that sprawl along major arterial roads.

The establishment of a town center at Evans was one of the objectives of the "Forward 2020" plan and was promoted by the recent adoption of the Evans Town Center Overlay District in November of 2002. Evans Town Center is successful in its mix of live, work, and play uses and as a concentration of important civic functions. Evans Town Center is successful as a regional attractor for various types of economic activity. However Evans Town Center fails to function as a true town center from an urban design perspective.

Evans Town Center does not have the characteristics to promote a walkable environment. Important characteristics that are missing include buildings close to the sidewalk, buildings in close proximity to each other, and a system of minor streets for creating alternative paths and distributing traffic. Instead of commercial development being concentrated along a network of smaller streets near the center, it is spreading out along the major arterials. Also Evans Town Center lacks key urban design features, such as well-defined edges, gateways, and central public spaces lined with activity.

In short, Evans Town Center is successful as a concentration of economic and civic activity, but it is not successful in creating the pleasant public environment and traffic reduction benefits of a true town center.

Industrial uses in the county primarily consist of light industrial developments, industrial and business parks, wholesale and distribution uses which have capitalized on the county's valuable attributes of available land, water and sewer service, and access to I-20. Currently, there are two main concentrations of industrial development in the county: one near Evans, with access to railroad transportation, and the other near Grovetown with access to I-20 via Horizon South Parkway. By virtue of water and sewer extensions in the vicinity of the Horizon South Parkway/Lewiston Road interchange, future industrial growth is planned to extend along this segment of the I-20 corridor.

Land Use and Infrastructure Patterns

Although a small pocket of the Central Martinez area is not supplied with county sewer, the majority of the urbanized portion of the county around Martinez-Evans is fully served by the county's public water and sewer facilities. The sewer and water service areas do not extend much beyond William Few Parkway, leaving almost the entire western half of the county reliant on wells and septic tanks. Historically, the installation of new infrastructure in Columbia County has tended to create expanded service areas that mimic the pattern of the drainage basins which dissect the area. For instance, the Reed Creek basin in Martinez contains most of the county's population base and is the location of the first treatment plant, which was built in 1973. The series of gently sloping ridge tops and moderately steep hillsides, which guide the course of several creeks in the area, have helped shape the pattern of development during the last thirty years as new growth has spread out from the Reed Creek basin (Martinez) in a banding pattern moving westward towards Belair Road and further to William Few Parkway. Single-family residential development has been closely tied to the water and sewer service areas, with the exception of a limited number of homes on large lots (five acres of more) near the lake and in the rural parts of the county. Though less dependent on sanitary sewer availability than residential subdivisions, commercial and industrial development has also been fueled by access to public utilities and has concentrated along the I-20 corridor.

Blighted and Transitional Areas

Columbia County is fortunate in having virtually no blighted areas and no areas in transition from one use to another that create incompatible land use relationships or untenable living conditions. Most of the county's older homes fall into one of three categories: the historic homes of Appling and Harlem, most of which are well-maintained by their resident owners; the neighborhoods of the late '60s and early '70s, in and around Martinez, which are well-tended by their residents; and scattered aging structures on large lots that are prime candidates for redevelopment in economically attractive locations. Within this last category, however, there are a growing number of single-family houses, built during a quieter era and fronting on major thoroughfares such as Washington Road, Fury's Ferry Road, and Belair Road, which now find themselves on busy multiple lane arterial roads. These houses are transitioning to low-intensity commercial and office uses, compatible with nearby residential development to the rear.

Incompatible Land Use Relationships

Classic land use conflicts such as incompatibilities between adjacent uses are limited in Columbia County. The abundance of land and low density development patterns has limited land use conflicts until recent years. However, as development pressures have continued, new land use conflicts are beginning to emerge.

The protection of single family residential areas has been an increasing issue in the county. Recent denser housing development and commercial development has at times been viewed as a threat to existing single family neighborhoods. Finding the right location and relationship between these necessary uses and existing neighborhoods was one of the key goals of the 2005 Growth Management Plan update.

After the adoption of the 2020 Growth Management Plan, the county increased the minimum lot size requirement for single-wide manufactured homes to five acres. With manufactured homes no longer available as a source of affordable housing the demand for other affordable housing types, such as townhomes, has increased. Most of these new townhome developments use narrow dead-end private streets off a central public road. A majority of the units do not have garages but utilize a concrete parking pad in front of the entrance. This, in conjuncture with the narrow private roads, allows for little or no guest parking and creates unsafe conditions for fire protection. This development arrangement also does not allow for adequate green space or landscaping. Concerns about these new townhome developments include traffic impacts, safety vehicle access, and lack of greenspace, visual incompatibility, and durability and longevity of this new housing stock.

As a result of the advent of metal buildings, clear-cut properties and garish signs, Columbia County has turned its eye to the aesthetics of the built environment. Design guidelines for development within the Evans Town Center and the newly established Corridor Protection Overlay have been adopted as well as a signage provision in the Zoning Ordinance. Another area of concern is the affect that major arteries are having on existing residential units. During the mid 1960s and 1970s, when Columbia County was experiencing its first wave of residential development, homes were built directly off of main roads such as North Belair Road, Baston Road, and Old Evans Road, to name a few. These roads have now been widened to accommodate the steadily increasing traffic volumes. The residential value of these homes

has diminished as the traffic volume and noise increase and as the structures age. The 2020 Growth Management Plan calls for the conversion of these units into office use. This appears to have beneficial effects in that the structures are upgraded and that office use has minimal impact on the surrounding residential uses. However, this has added increased stress on the road network due to turning volumes. This has also increased the pressure for strip commercial development along major arterials, which is contrary to the 2020 Growth Management Plan vision for a nodal development pattern.

In response to this and other factors this update of the Growth Management Plan proposes a series of linkages between the established nodes where appropriate development could occur. A further discussion of this policy can be found later in this chapter.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Columbia County is rich with natural resources, particularly water features such as the Savannah River, which serves as its northern boundary, along with the many creeks, floodplains and wetlands, which bisect the county. In addition, the large granite outcropping known as "Heggie's Rock" and the abundant natural open spaces in the undeveloped areas of the county provide valuable opportunities for community enhancement through protection and use as accessible natural areas. The greenway trail system being developed as part of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) will link several of the parks and community facilities within the county and ultimately connect to the larger trail system which extends into Richmond County and the City of Augusta.

4.2.3 Future Land Use Demand

Future land use demand is driven by population growth and employment growth. Population growth drives the demand for new residential development; employment growth drives the demand for new commercial and industrial development. Population and employment projections for Columbia County have been established through 2040. These projections are based on regional population and employment projections, with the added assumption that Columbia County will continue to gather a disproportionate share of both population and employment growth. The population of the county is expected to grow in the next 30 years from 115,700 to 194,340, about a 68 percent increase; total employment in the county is expected to grow in the same period from 47,260 to 82,910, about a 75 percent increase.

Figure 2 Population & Household Projections

Population and Household Projections 2010-2030						
	2010	**2015**	**2020**	**2025**	**2030**	**2040**
Persons per household	2.74	2.64	2.59	2.56	2.53	2.51
Population	115,700	128,490	141,490	154,610	167,790	194,340
Households	42,400	48,350	54,290	60,200	66,030	77,250
Source: Woods & Poole Economics						

Figure 3 Employment Projections

Employment Projections 2010-2030						
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2040
Persons Employed	47,260	51,910	57,020	62,620	68,760	82,910
Source: Woods & Poole Economics						

Population growth is transformed into new residential land demand through a series of equations and assumptions. First population is transformed into households using assumptions about household size. Next, households are allocated to low density, medium density, and high density types. Each type uses a corresponding amount of land. The total of the land used for each of the housing type is the total residential land use demand. Using this method, an additional 17,204 acres of residential development is forecast for the next 20 years in Columbia County

Figure 4 Residential Land Use Demand

Residential Land Use Demand 2000-2025					
Land Use Category	**Density (DU/Acre)**	**Units**	**Gross Acres**	**Net Acres**	**% of Acreage**
Residential –Low Density	0.50	3,834	7,667	5,808	45.0%
Residential –Medium Density	2.80	24,047	8,588	6,506	49.5%
Residential – High Density	6.30	3,137	498	377	3.0%
Residential –Very High Density	12.00	2,091	174	132	1.0%
Mixed Use	6.3	1,743	277	210	1.5%
Total			17,204	13,033	100%
Source: Columbia County GIS, Calculations by CSRA RC					

Employment growth is transformed into new commercial, office, industrial and institutional land demand through a more complex series of equations and assumptions. First, employment growth is allocated to different economic sectors. Then new jobs in each economic sector are allocated to a distribution of commercial, office, industrial or institutional land types. New employment is then transformed to floor area by using the typical floor area needed for each employee. Finally floor area is converted into acres by using standard building assumptions about the amount of floor area per acre of land (sometimes know as F.A.R. floor area ratio). Critical assumptions in this future land use demand projection include:

- What types of land does each employment in each economic sector use?
- How much floor area is needed for the average employee?
- What percent of the average land parcel is developable?
- How much 'extra' land should be allocated to facilitate market choice and flexibility?

Figure 5 Employment Growth by Sector

Employment Growth by Sector 2010-2030							
Sector	**2010**	**2015**	**2020**	**2025**	**2030**	**2040**	**Change**
Farm, Forestry, Fishing, Mining	590	610	630	650	670	700	**+ 110**
Utilities	110	110	110	120	120	120	**+ 10**
Construction	4,520	4,930	5,830	5,870	6,400	7,620	**+ 3,100**
Manufacturing	3,710	3,800	3,880	3,950	4,020	4,120	**+ 410**
Wholesale Trade	660	630	600	570	540	480	**- 180**
Retail Trade	6,300	6,840	7,410	8,010	8,630	9,930	**+ 3,630**
Transportation, Warehousing	640	740	840	960	1,080	1,350	**+ 710**
Information	560	620	680	750	830	990	**+ 430**
Finance & Insurance	1,610	1,650	1,670	1,690	1,700	1,700	**+ 90**
Real Estate	2,110	2,340	2,580	2,840	3,120	3,720	**+ 1,610**
Professional & Tech	2,790	3,380	4,060	4,850	5,760	7,990	**+ 5,200**
Management	450	470	480	500	510	540	**+90**
Administrative	4,750	5,420	620	7,120	8,210	11,000	**+ 6,250**
Education, Health Care, Social Services	4,520	5,140	5,810	6,560	7,390	9,290	**+ 4,770**
Recreation, Food Service	5,160	5,730	6,360	7,040	7,780	9,420	**+ 4,260**
Other Services	3,520	3,880	4,270	4,690	5,130	6,130	**+ 2,610**
Military	310	310	310	310	310	310	**0**
Federal Employees	140	150	170	180	200	230	**+ 90**
State & Local Government	4,820	5,190	5,570	5,970	6,390	7,260	**+2,440**
Total*	**47,260**	**51,910**	**57,020**	**62,620**	**68,760**	**82,910**	**+ 35,630**
Source: Woods & Poole Economics *=Totals may not add due to rounding							

Figure 6 Future Land Use Demand

Employment to Acreage Future Land Use Demand 2000-2025				
Land Use Category	**Commercial**	**Professional Office**	**Industrial**	**Institutional**
New Employment	6,693	5,552	5,144	4,832
Average Floor Area per Employee	600	330	800	330
Estimated Floor Area Ratio	0.2	0.23	0.14	0.23
Additional Acreage Demand	461	183	685	159
Efficiency Multiplier	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.15
Market Choice Multiplier	1.75	1.15	2.00	1.15
Additional Acreage Allocation	928	242	1,574	210
Source: Columbia County Staff, EDAW Analysis 2005				

These assumptions can be updated when more accurate data is available or when policies behind the assumptions change. Using this method, the following land use demand is forecast: 928 acres of commercial, 242 acres of office-professional, 1,574 acres of industrial, and 210 acres of institutional.

These forecasts also include factors that take into account the usable portion of developed land because not all the land is used in developments (efficiency multiplier) and a factor to provide for market competition between different land parcels (market choice multiplier). It is important to realize that while these forecasts are realistic and based on empirical methods, they are estimates. Also, land use demand can be changed by county policy – denser or less dense development can be promoted, redevelopment can make new use of existing developed lands, and so forth.

Columbia County can look to the future with optimism but should be cautious in guiding development. Development opportunities outweigh constraints by a comfortable margin. The current development trend in Columbia County, in which growth is spreading to the west, particularly along the Washington Road and Columbia Road corridors, will encourage future development in the county during the twenty-year planning period.

The following discussion summarizes opportunities for future development within Columbia County and identifies potential constraints and concerns.

Opportunities

Opportunities for future development of Columbia County include the following:

- Elected officials have a progressive attitude with regard to the need for planned development of the county that will enhance the quality of life.
- Columbia County is bisected by the Interstate-20 corridor. Interstate access creates opportunities for new planned industrial, distribution and commercial uses.
- Continued and sustained population growth in the area will maintain a healthy market demand for new development — so Columbia County can afford to be selective about the quality of development it accepts.
- Columbia County enjoys excellent access to regional recreational amenities such as Thurmond Lake and the Savannah River.
- Columbia County is located just far enough from Augusta to provide a relaxed lifestyle, facilitating creation of a unique community identity.
- There is an abundance of undeveloped land within the county. Almost two-thirds of the land area is undeveloped or in agricultural use.
- Columbia County benefits from access to high-quality medical facilities provided in the Augusta region
- There exist few blighted areas in the county.
- The construction of a County-wide broadband network, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 will offer enhanced connectivity for the County's residents and businesses, both current and future.

Constraints

Some important constraints that will mold and direct growth include the following:

- Current development patterns, notably low density residential development, the lack of distributed commercial development, and strip commercial development are contributing to increased traffic congestion. As traffic congestion increases, it erodes quality of life in the county and effectively poses as a drag on new development.

- There is significant floodplain acreage within the county, particularly along Kiokee, Little Kiokee, and Euchee Creek all well as adjacent to Thurmond Lake and the Savannah River.
- The county is challenged to keep up with the pace of new growth with regard to the provision of public services such as water and sewer.
- A significant portion of the lakefront is controlled by the Corps of Engineers.

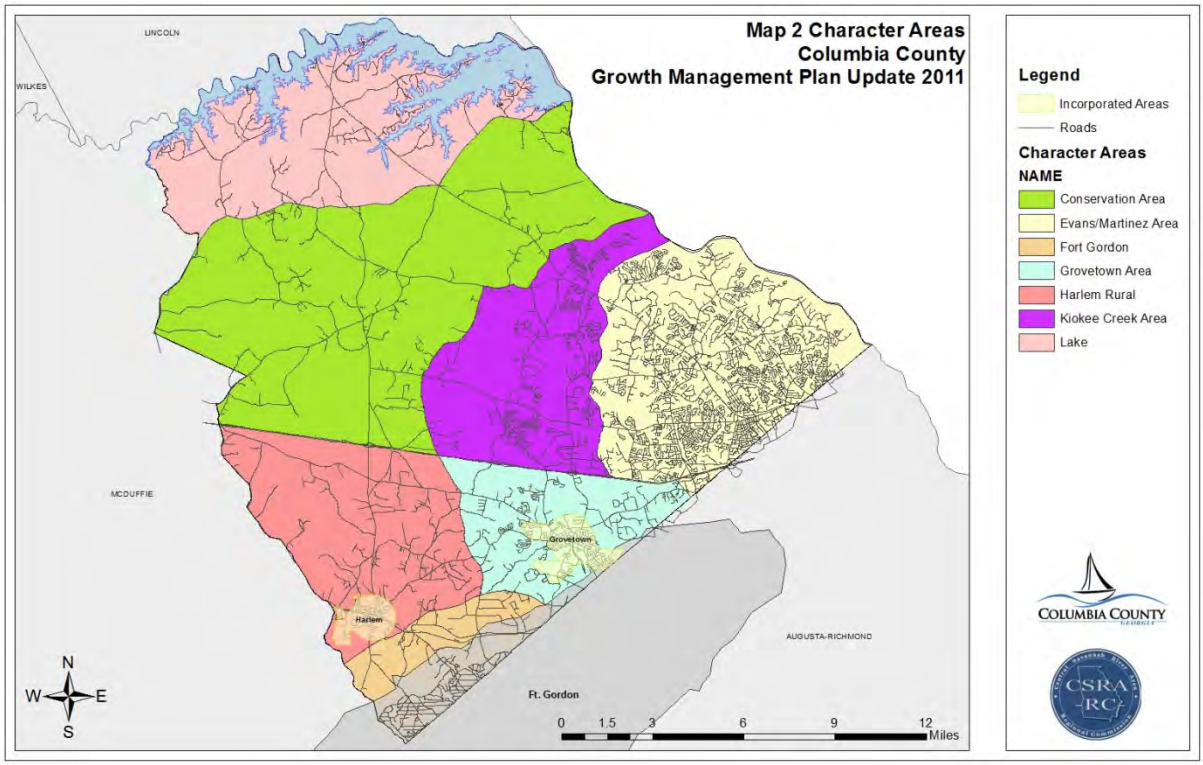
4.3 Land Use Analysis

4.3.1 Existing Character Areas

Within the Community Assessment portion of the 2005 *Columbia County Growth Management Plan* the County articulated a desired future development scenario. This preliminary scenario was presented in the form of "character areas" as recommended by the "*Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning*." These preliminary character areas were further refined through the public input portion of the 2005 *Columbia County Growth Management Plan Update* and were presented in the Community Agenda portion of that document. Characters areas not only identify existing and future land uses that may be appropriate for a particular area, they can highlight a variety of other factors such as: the form, function and style of new development; existing features that should be incorporated into future development scenarios; and, relationships to adjacent development. In short, a character area addresses not only *what* a piece of land should be used for; but, also *how* that land should be used. A brief description of the existing character areas can be found in **Figure 7**.

Figure 7 Character Area Descriptions

Character Areas and Descriptions		
Character Area	**Description**	**Growth Trends**
Evans-Martinez	Most urbanized and developed area of the county with the highest concentration of commercial, civic, and employment uses.	Expanding commercial development, denser residential development.
Kiokee Creek	Relatively undeveloped area but close to Martinez-Evans and with water/sewer provision.	Rapid single family housing subdivision development; some planned unit development.
Conservation	Rural area with some environmentally sensitive lands.	Little development pressure.
Lake	Access to recreational opportunities of Lake Thurmond. Land largely owned by Army Corps of Engineers.	Limited low-density recreational development
Harlem	Traditional small town with mixed uses and historic center.	Moderate single family development in subdivisions.
Grovetown	Historic small town but new suburban development patterns dominate. Large and active industrial district.	Moderate single family development and some commercial development
Fort Gordon	Rural area surrounding military base.	Little development pressure.



Map 2 Character Areas

As a supplement, a larger version of this map is included at the end of the chapter.

4.3 Future Development Strategy

The Growth Management Plan Update will achieve this vision by organizing future development into a rational system of nodes and corridors. A Node is a concentrated activity center with a balance of commercial, office and residential uses. The Nodal Development Concept is a plan to organize these more intense land uses into nodes, and thus protecting existing neighborhoods, lessening sprawl, and making the most efficient use of existing infrastructure. Most new commercial, office, and mixed-use developments are planned for designated nodes and the corridors that connect them. Nodes have been placed predominantly where major infrastructure exists and in the more developed parts of the county, while corridors have been located in places where development has already taken root between the nodes. All nodes are placed at existing intersections, usually of two major roads. Most of the proposed nodes currently have access to water and sewer infrastructure.

The nodal development concept is not new, but has been part of Columbia County's Growth Management Plan for 10 years; the growth corridor policy is new to this update of the Plan. The updated plan has placed more of an emphasis on how nodes should function, and interact with one another, and on developing policies to help implement the concept, while at the same time accurately reflecting the situation on the ground.

Two nodes have specific development plans – the Evans Town Center area and the Martinez area. Both of these node-specific plans give recommended guidance on urban design and land use patterns within the nodes, as well as proposed infrastructure projects to enhance the quality of the nodes. In general it is recommended that node-specific plans be developed for all Tier I and Tier II nodes.

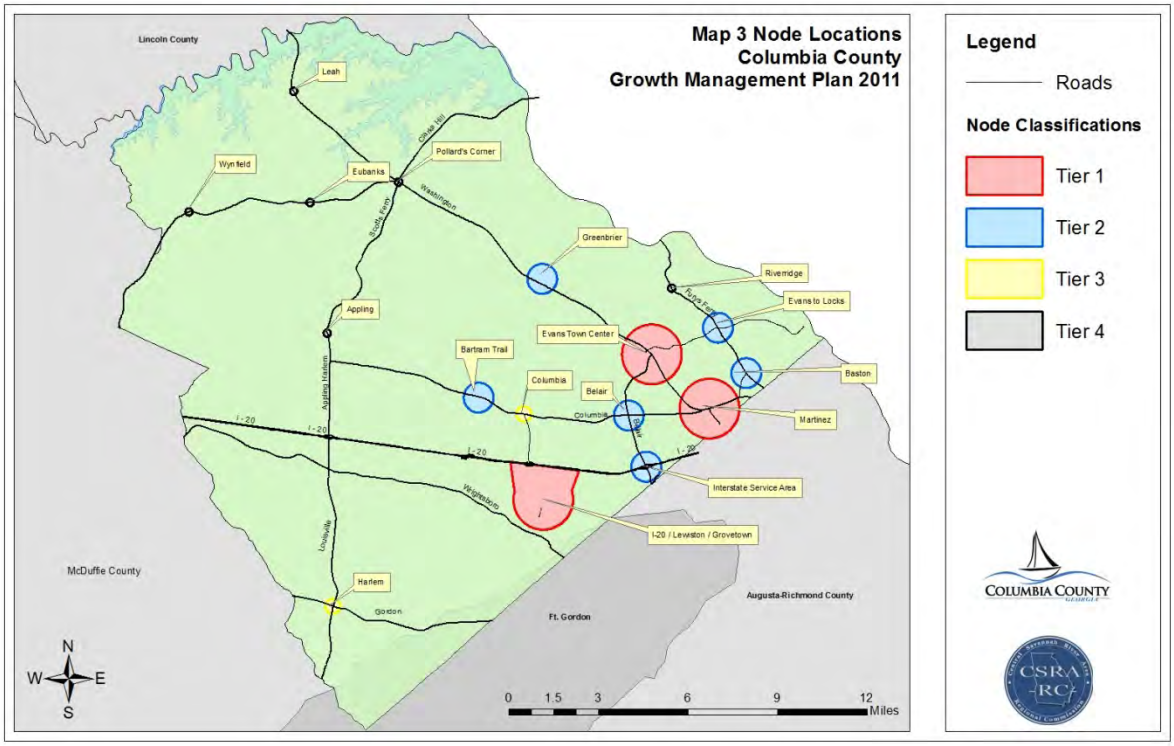
Nodes come in four sizes called Tiers. The largest nodes are called Tier I nodes. These nodes can contain the widest variety of land uses – retail, office/professional, civic, and multifamily residential. Tier I nodes should contain the largest amount of development in terms of acreage and square feet, and are generally about 2 miles in diameter. Commercial development within Tier I nodes can be very large in scale, including big box national chains, and attract a market from the entire county and possibly beyond from neighboring counties. Major destinations within the county, including major civic facilities, are best located within Tier I nodes. The Tier I nodes are Evans Town Center, Martinez, and Lewiston/Grovetown. Tier II nodes are the second largest nodes. Tier II nodes can contain retail, office/professional, civic, and dense residential land uses such as smaller multi-family developments and townhomes. Generally Tier II nodes will have less acreage and less commercial square feet than Tier I nodes and are generally about 1 mile in diameter. Also, big box stores that draw from a regional market are not appropriate for Tier II nodes.

The Tier II nodes include Baston, Evans to Locks, Belair, Greenbrier, and the Interstate Service Area. The Bartram Trail node is not currently appropriate for development, but as the residential population around Bartram Trail develops and as Columbia County's population grows this will be a good future location for a node.

Tier III nodes are the third largest nodes, and are primarily intended to serve the retail needs of adjacent neighborhoods. Tier III nodes should be modest in scale and acreage, providing services such as groceries and other neighborhood conveniences, and are generally contained within a ½ mile diameter. The scale of development should be neighborhood-sized, attracting residents from just a few miles around. Some office and civic development can be an adjunct to the neighborhood services in Tier III nodes. Tier III nodes include Columbia, and Harlem.

Tier IV nodes are the smallest nodes, and are only planned for rural areas. These nodes should consist of just a handful of convenience services, such as gas stations, small restaurants, and convenience stores. They should only contain a few acres of commercial activity, all contained within a ¼ mile diameter. Tier IV nodes include Appling, Eubanks, Riveridge, Winfield, Pollard's Corner, and Leah.

The nodes were divided into four categories to reflect both the past development patterns in Columbia County as well as guide future development patterns. Below is an illustration the Tiers along with the appropriate land uses, acreage of commercial and office uses, range of square feet for these commercial and office uses, pictures of local examples and images of regional examples for each Tier level.



Map 3 Node Locations

As a supplement, a larger version of this map is included at the end of the chapter.

Figure 8 Nodal Structure

Figure L-8 Nodal Structure				
Designation	**Possible Uses**	**Acres**	**Range of sq. ft.**	**Represnetative Areas**
Tier 1	• Retail • Employment • LargeCivic • Multifamily Residential • Big Box Retail	100-200	1,000,000-2,000000	Evans Town Center Government Center Education Medical Financial
Tier2	• Retail • Medium Employment Centers • Small Civic • Dense Residential	30-50	300,000-500,000	Baston Road Columbia Road Belair Road
Tier3	• Retail (Neighborhood Services) • Professional Office	6-20	60,000-180,000	Grovetown
Tier 4	• Retail • Local Convienence • Office	2-4	Up to 40,000	Pollard's Corner Pumpkin Center Leah

Complementing the nodal development policy is a node buffer policy. This policy states that commercial development is to be discouraged immediately outside the nodes, as this undermines the integrity of the planned nodes. Development will be permitted in the identified corridors between nodes. Generally the non-competition buffer around anode should be about 1 mile beyond the edge of the node. For Tier I nodes, larger buffers may be necessary.

Historically land use along major arterials has often dominated by commercial development. In an effort to encourage appropriate development a system of linkages or corridors has been established between existing nodes. These linkages are organized in the same way that the nodes are. Corridors are divided into tiers based on their proximity to other nodes, existing development patterns, or desired future development patterns. It should be stated that this policy was not put in place to encourage sprawling development along major arterial roads; rather it is an effort to aid County Staff in making common sense planning decisions and guide appropriate growth in areas that have already seen significant development.

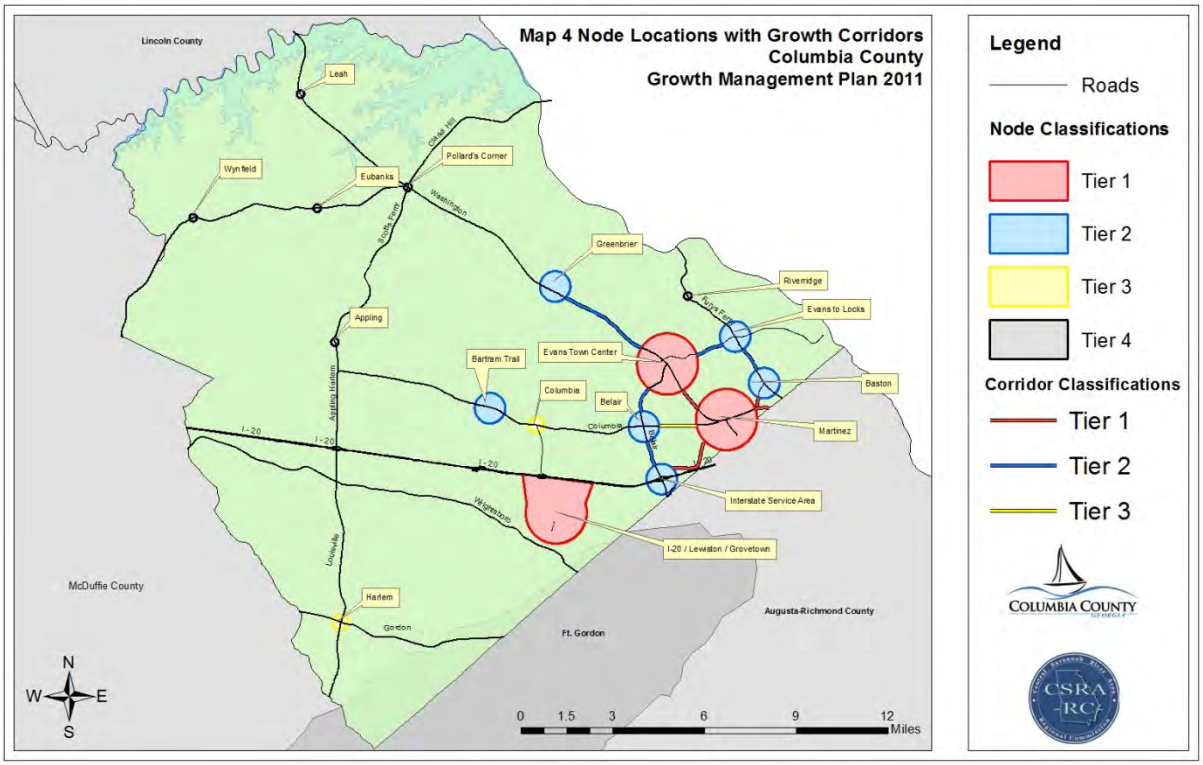
To ensure that appropriate development is located within the new corridor system, an amendment to the Permitted Use table of the County's Zoning Ordinance is recommended. A new category, much like the existing Evans Town Center will provide clarity for which specific uses will be permitted within the new corridors. In an effort to reduce future curb cuts along the designated corridors, the County's Zoning Ordinance should be amended to include an interconnectivity requirement for new development, where applicable. Although the majority of commercial development will locate inside nodes, some property outside of nodes is unsuitable for any other use than commercial. In such rare cases, requests for commercial zoning should be considered so long as they meet the following set of minimum criteria:

1. Adjacent property is zoned commercial or zoned PUD for commercial use.
2. The request will not increase the footprint of commercial zoning in the area.
3. Due to surrounding conditions, non-commercial land use is impractical.
4. The requested zoning will not limit the usability of nearby residential property.

Single family residential can still be developed along major arterials so long as the development is oriented away from major corridors and buffered with walls and a planted buffer.

Figure 9 Corridor Structure

Corridor Structure			
Designation	**Existing Uses**	**Future Uses**	**Location**
Tier 1	- Strip Commercial	-Light Retail -Professional -Institutional -High-Density Residential	- Baston Road - Between Baston and Martinez nodes - Washington Road – Between Martinez and Evans Town Center nodes - Flowing Wells/ Wheeler Road to Old Anderson Road between Martinez and Interstate Service Area nodes
Tier 2	- Professional - Residential	-Large-Scale Professional -Large-Scale Institutional -High-Density Residential	- Fury's Ferry Road - Between Evans to Locks, and Baston nodes - Evans to Locks Road – Between Evans to Locks and Evans Town Center nodes - Washington Road- Between Evans Town Center and Greenbrier nodes - North Belair Road - Between Evans Town Center and Belair Nodes - South Belair Road – Between Belair and Interstate Service Area nodes
Tier 3	- Low - Density Residential - Some Commercial	-Smaller-Scale Professional -Smaller-Scale Institutional -High Density Residential	- Columbia Road – Between Martinez and Belair nodes



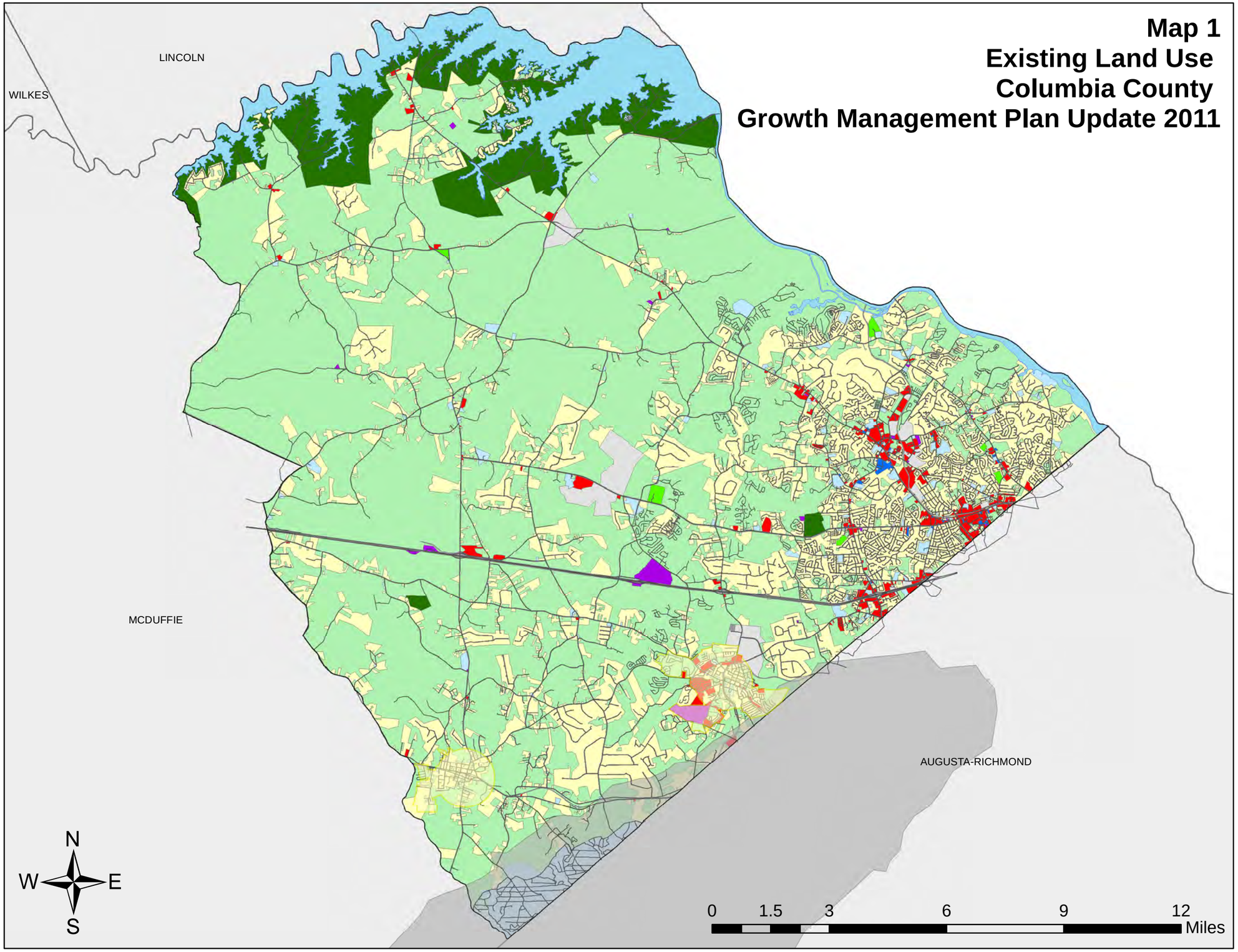
Map 4 Nodes and Corridors

As a supplement, a larger version of this map is included at the end of the chapter.

As growth in the county continues, it may become necessary to 'promote' nodes and corridors from a less intense to a more intense Tier. The primary growth policy of the county is to promote growth within existing Tier I nodes without extending their geographic size (diameter). This will help create an efficient, concentrated, mixed-use development pattern and limit the impacts of future growth on existing single family neighborhoods.

Nodes may be promoted to larger tiers when they are built-out (when all commercially zoned land has been developed). Nodes that will be considered for promotion should display a balance of commercial, office, civic, and dense residential uses. If these uses are out of balance, increasing the size of the node may exacerbate this problem. Nodes should have an efficient transportation structure before they are promoted, meaning that they have a high degree of interconnectivity that creates alternate transportation routes and prevents overloading existing arterials. Node promotion is only appropriate in areas that have experienced significant population growth in the immediate surroundings and where appropriate infrastructure exists or can be developed in a timely manner.

Map 1
Existing Land Use
Columbia County
Growth Management Plan Update 2011



Legend

- Incorporated Areas
- Roads

Existing Land Use

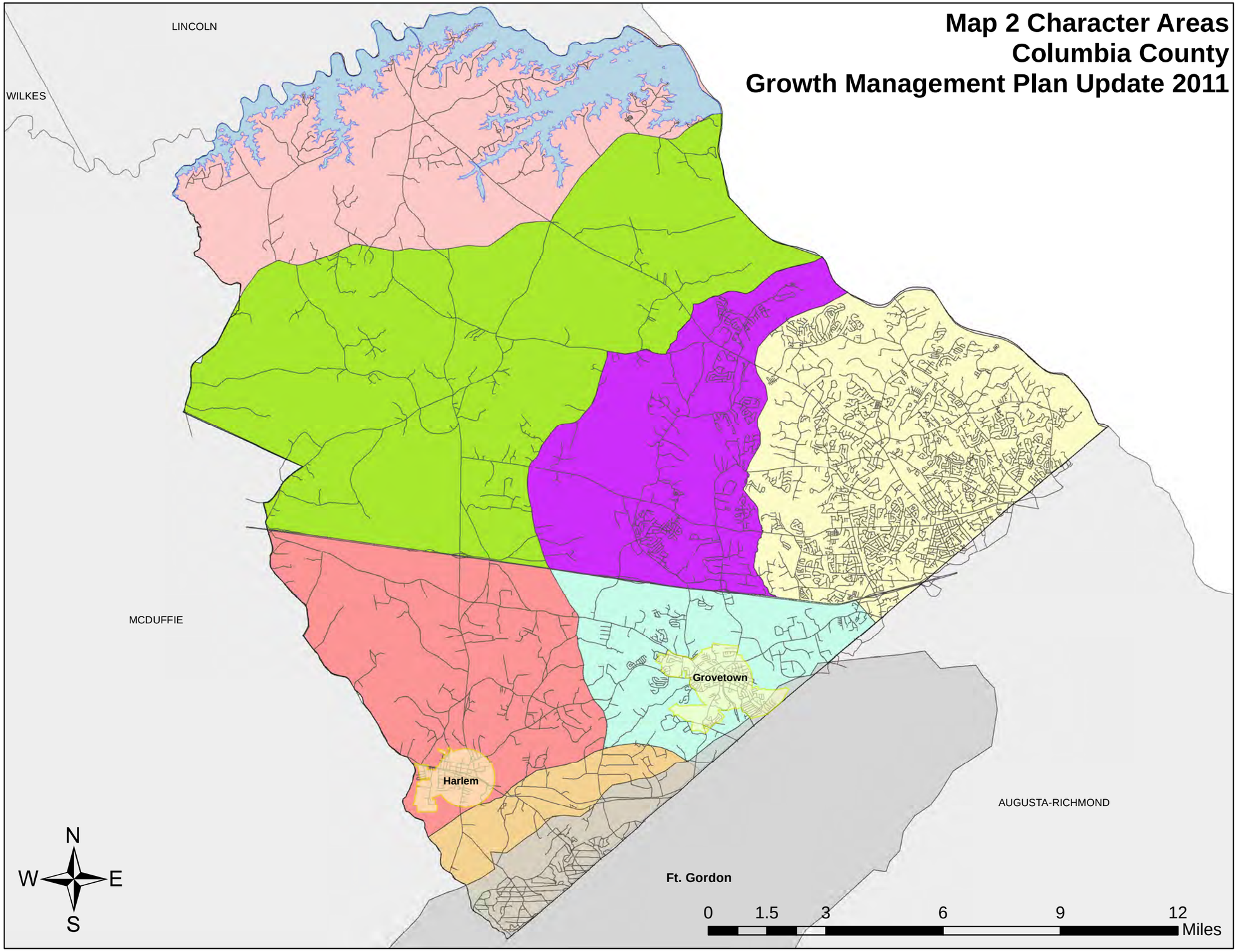
Land Use Class

- Commercial
- Industiral
- Office/Professional
- Public/Institutional
- Right of Way
- Active Recreation
- Passive Recreation
- Residential
- T/C/U
- Vacant/Undeveloped
- Water

COLUMBIA COUNTY
GEORGIA

CSRA RC
Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission

Map 2 Character Areas
Columbia County
Growth Management Plan Update 2011



Legend

- Incorporated Areas
- Roads

Character Areas

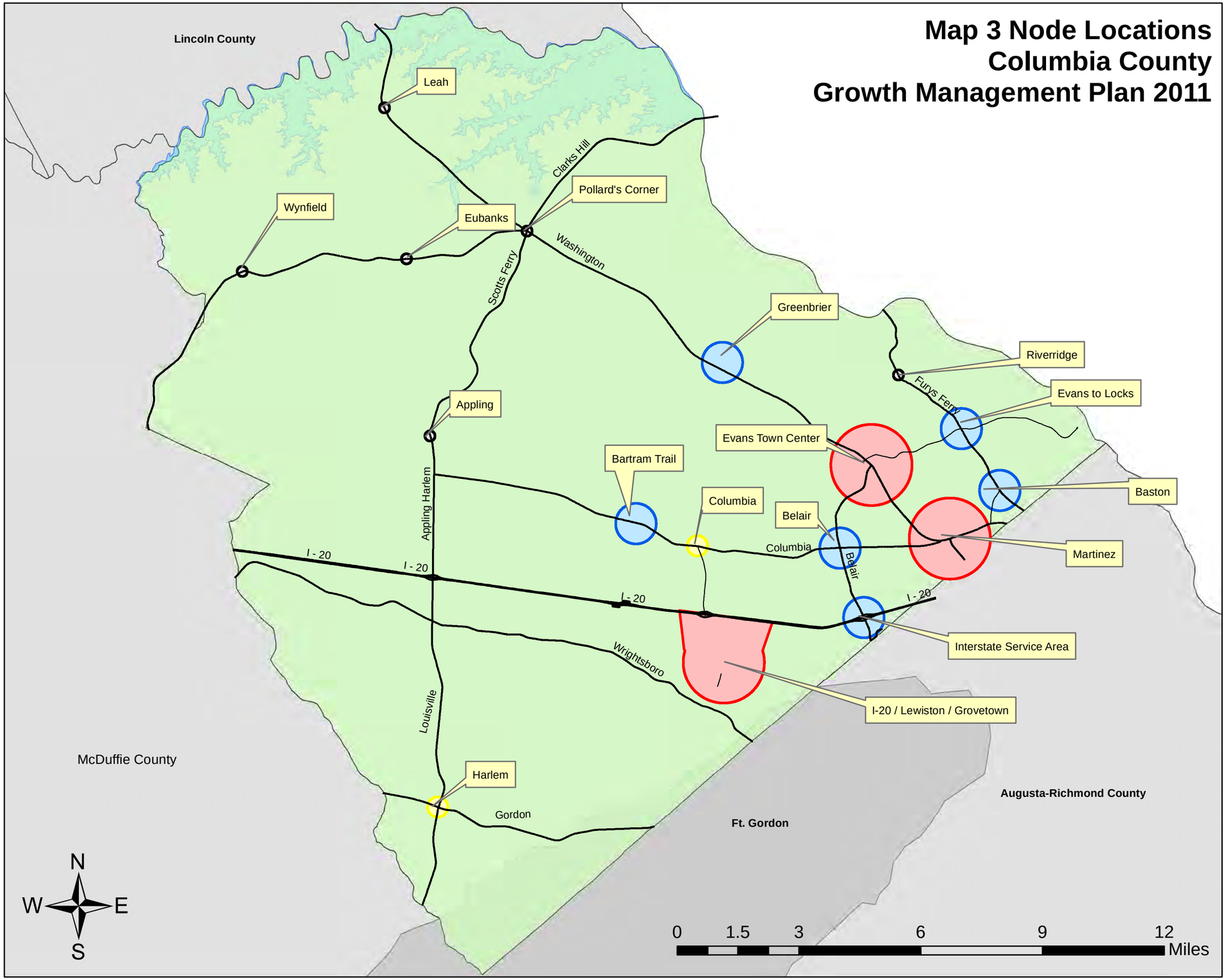
NAME

- Conservation Area
- Evans/Martinez Area
- Fort Gordon
- Grovetown Area
- Harlem Rural
- Kiokee Creek Area
- Lake

COLUMBIA COUNTY GEORGIA

CSRA RC Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission

Map 3 Node Locations
Columbia County
Growth Management Plan 2011



Legend

Roads

Node Classifications

Tier 1

Tier 2

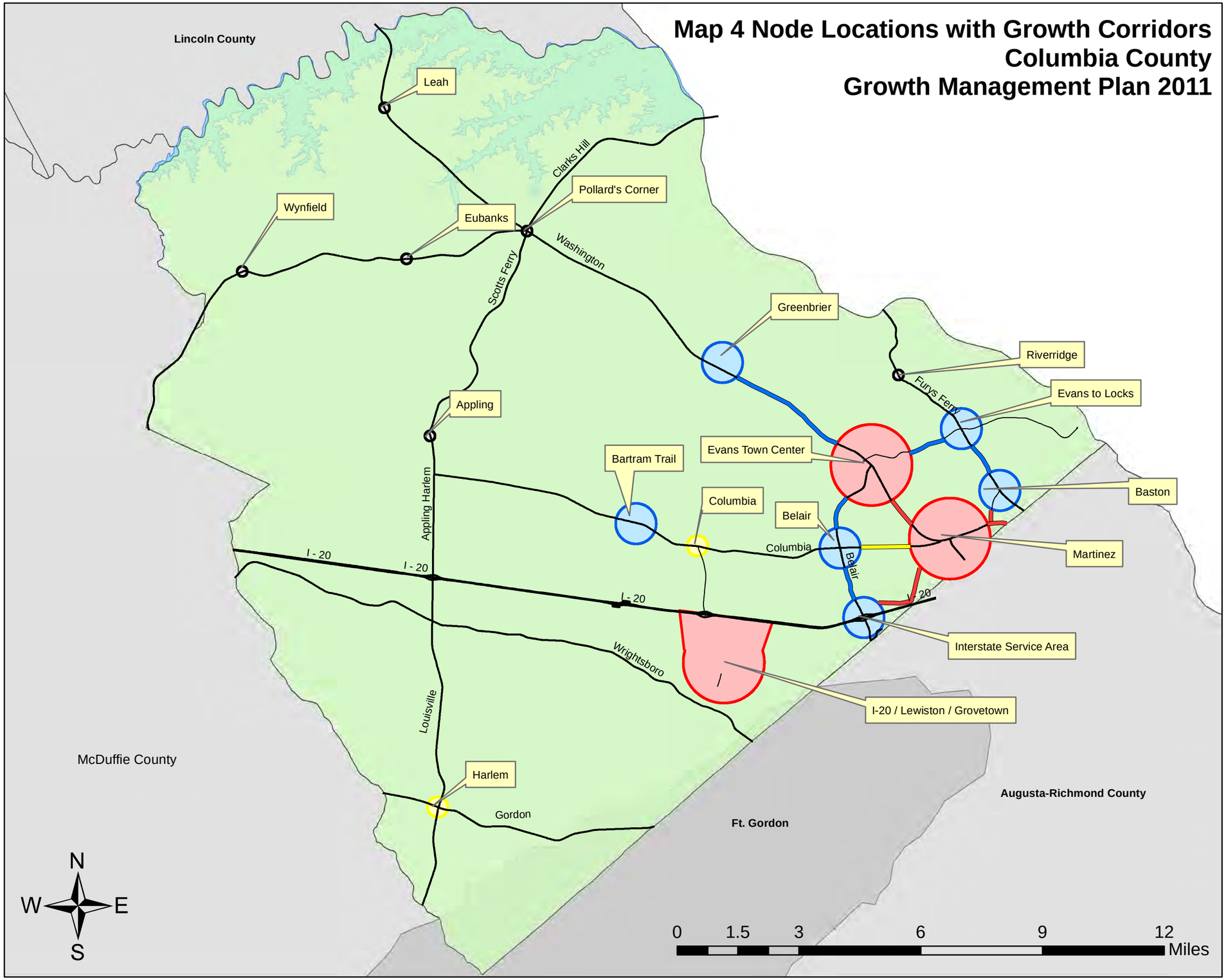
Tier 3

Tier 4

COLUMBIA COUNTY GEORGIA

CSRA RC Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission

Map 4 Node Locations with Growth Corridors
Columbia County
Growth Management Plan 2011



Legend

Roads

Node Classifications

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4

Corridor Classifications

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3

COLUMBIA COUNTY GEORGIA

CSRA RC Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission

Chapter 5

Implementation

Chapter 5: Implementation

5.1 Report of Accomplishments:

The best measure of any plan's success is to assess the progress it is making towards its stated goals. The report of accomplishments that follows is an item by item list of the previous implementation strategy. It looks at the short-term work program from the 2005 Growth Management Plan and gives and update as to the status of each item. Items that have been completed are noted. A brief explanation is given for items that have not been completed as well as their future status as a long or short-term goal or policy.

Growth Management

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Perform an annual review and update of the STWP using the DCA process	No	Change in priorities	No
Research zoning approvals that are over 5 years old for GPM compatibility. Review properties during the annual review process	No	Change in priorities	No
Investigate additional cost recovery systems for off-setting the impacts of new development on the County's infrastructure	Yes	Study completed in 2007	No
Develop Overlay Guidelines for County nodes and corridors	No	Established within Evans to Locks/Fury's Ferry Road and Belair Road/ Columbia Road Nodes.	Yes
Develop a Unified Development Code (UDC), incorporating zoning, subdivision and site design standards that integrate the principles of the GMP	No	Ongoing	Yes
Amend Zoning Ordinance to incorporate the requirement for a site plan at rezoning	No	Unpopular initiative	No

Housing

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Revise subdivision regulations to increase interconnectivity within subdivisions, such as paved roads, connectivity between subdivisions and multiple entrances	No	Lack of funding	Yes
As part of the UDC, address land use compatibility and use transition	No	Lack of funding	No
Develop site and visual design guideline book for multi-family development and manufactured housing	No	Lack of funding	No
Develop a Traditional Neighborhood Ordinance to promote pedestrian infrastructure and a variety of housing types	No	Lack of funding	No

Housing Continued

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Develop a Rural Residential Zone for large lot development for the rural and conservation character areas	No	Lack of funding	Yes
Revise PUD standards to incorporate the multi-family development design guidelines and any additional design standards established by the UDC	No	Ongoing	Yes

Economic Development

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Coordinate the installation of public infrastructure such as water, sewer, and roads to ensure they are consistent with the GMP and enhance industrial development	No	Ongoing	Yes
Continue to fund efforts to recruit high quality, clean industry	No	Ongoing	No
Establish a program for coordinating site planning review of adjacent properties within commercial nodes	Yes		No
Initiate the Central Martinez revitalization plan – including the improvement district for landscaping, circulation and streetscapes	No	Ongoing	Yes
Implement the Evans Town Center Plan	No	Ongoing	Yes

Historic Resources

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Assess the need for Historic Preservation responsibility within the County	No	Change in priorities	No
Update inventory of historic resources	No	Change in priorities	No

Natural Resources

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Establish a scenic corridor within the context of the greenway plan linking Wildwood Park and Mistletoe State Park	No	Change in Greenway plan	No
Use Greenspace acquisition program to integrate open space, plazas and paths within Martinez and Evans	Yes	Ongoing	Yes
Develop additional guidelines for development along the lake and river shorelines to increase public access and protect environmentally sensitive areas	Yes	Ongoing	Yes
Develop and enforce a Department of Natural Resources state-mandated groundwater recharge ordinance	No		No
Establish a large lot district in accordance with the Conservation, Rural and Fort Gordon Character areas for lands with sensitive soils and no sanitary sewer	No	Lack of funding	No
Study possible ways to increase public access to Heggie's Rock	No	Lack of funding	No
Revise the Landscape and Tree Conservation Ordinances	Yes	Completed 2010	No
Establish requirements for open space and enhanced landscaping as part of the UDC and Overlays	No	Lack of funding	Yes

Transportation

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Explore the feasibility of developing an Access Management Plan	No		Yes
Establish additional transportation safety and design standards as part of an Access Management Plan and the UDC	No		Yes
Update development regulations and design standards to reflect GMP goals to support pedestrian and bike access	Yes	County has made revisions to conform with the recommendations for urbanized areas	No
Construct sidewalk on William Few Parkway	Yes		No
Construct a multi-use path along Evans to Locks Road from Government Center to Fury's Ferry Road	No	Ongoing	
Undertake a transit feasibility study	No	Lack of funding	No

Transportation Continued

Element	Completed?	Comments	Carrying Over?
Construct a multi-use path along Old Evans Road from McCormick Road to Rose Lane as part of the Central Martinez revitalization.	No	Ongoing	Yes
Construct and re-stripe for bike lanes and multi-use paths as part of the Central Martinez (CM) revitalization	No	Ongoing	Yes
Construct Rose Lane extension as part of the CM revitalization	No	Ongoing	Yes
Construct Settlement Road and Rose Street connector as part of the CM revitalization	No	Ongoing	Yes
Realign and construct Marsella Road and Settlement Avenue as part of the CM revitalization	No	Ongoing	Yes
Streetscape projects as part of the CM revitalization	No	Ongoing	Yes
Construct William Few Connector from William Few to Hardy McManus	No	Ongoing	Yes
Widen Washington Road from 2 lanes to 4 lanes from Gibbs Road to William Few Parkway	No	Ongoing	Yes
Widen Fury's Ferry Road from 2 to 4 lanes from River Watch Pkwy to Evans To Locks Road	No	Ongoing	Yes
Widen and realign Old Petersburg Road & Old Evans Road from 2 to 4 lanes and 0 to 4 lanes from River Watch Parkway to Washington Road	No	Ongoing	Yes
Widen Flowing Wells Road from 2 to 4 lanes from Wheeler Road to Washington Road	No	Ongoing	Yes
Construct North Belair Road connector	Yes		No
Widen North Belair from Washington Road to Evans-to-Locks	Yes		No
Widen Owens/Cox/Gibbs Road from Washington Rd to Washington Road	No	Ongoing	Yes
Widen Hereford Farm Road from Belair Road to Gibbs Road	No	Ongoing	Yes
Widen I-20/Lewiston Road from Columbia Road to Grovetown	No	Ongoing	Yes
Resurfacing road projects	No	Ongoing	Yes
Dirt road paving projects	No	Ongoing	Yes

Community Facilities			
Element	**Completed?**	**Comments**	**Carrying Over?**
Establish a coordinated planning process with the Board of Education where the GMP and school facility plans are reviewed annually	No	Lack of coordination from BOE	Yes
Create a capital improvement plan that is coordinated with proposed node development	No	Long term goal	Yes
County office additions and improvements to facilitate "one stop shop" concept	Yes		No
Upgrade existing parks – parking, equipment, storage, restrooms, etc	No	Ongoing	Yes
Examine proposed nodes and identify linkages with the County Greenway Plan	No	Lack of funding	No
Wildwood Park - regional conference center/lodge (seed money)	No	Lack of funding	No
Storm water Master Plan	Yes		No
Evans Town Center Park Development (Park Facility)	No	Ongoing	Yes
Animal Control Building Expansion –Pet interaction & familiarization	No	Ongoing	Yes
Cares Facility	Yes		No
Park Acquisitions: Savannah Rapids Canal Head Future Park	No	Lack of funding	No
Study ways to increase access to Clarks Hill Lake and the Savannah River for year-round recreational use	No	Lack of funding	No
Assist in the development of extended care facilities to meet the needs of the County's growing senior population	No	Lack of funding	No
Improvements and upgrades to park and recreation facilities throughout the County: Blackstone Camp, Savannah Rapids Pavilion, Wildwood Park, Blanchard Woods, Baker Place, Reed Creek Park.	Yes		Yes
Expansion and upgrades to Health Department Building	Yes	Construction Ongoing	Yes

Land Use			
Element	**Completed?**	**Comments**	**Carrying Over?**
Establish a review process with municipalities regarding re-zonings and infrastructure improvements adjacent to County/city limits	No	Lack of funding	Yes
Develop the nodal buffer policy to address the appropriate location of office, commercial, and multifamily development.	No	Change in priorities, see Land Use Chapter	No
Develop the Greenbrier Town Center Plan	No	Ongoing	Yes
Develop the Rural Appling Node Plan	No	Lack of funding	No
Support the development of the Harlem Area node	No	Lack of funding	No
Support the coordinated development of the Grovetown/Lewiston node	No	Change in priorities	No
Rework Evans Town Center Overlay to incorporate traditional town center principles	Yes		No
Develop node guidelines for each node that address land use, design, parking, access management, and green space	No	Established within Evans to Locks/Fury's Ferry Road and Belair Road/ Columbia Road Nodes.	Yes
Establish mixed-use zoning category to support nodal development options	No	Mixed Use development is handled through the existing P.U.D. process	No
Explore feasibility of developing a Transferable Development Rights Program to accomplish historic resources, open space, conservation and the Nodal Development Concept goals	No	Lack of funding	No

5.2 Five Year Short-Term Work Program

This program identifies specific implementation actions the local government, or other entities, intends to take during the interim planning period. This program should include any ordinances, administrative systems (such as site plan review, design review, etc.), community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to implement the plan. The Short Term Work Program must include the following information for each listed activity:

- Brief description of the activity
- Timeframe for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost (if any) of implementing the activity
- Funding source(s), if applicable

Growth Management

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Expand existing CPOD guidelines to include all nodes and corridors		✘	✘	✘	✘	County	Staff Time	County
Develop a Unified Development Code (UDC), incorporating zoning, subdivision and site design standards that integrate the principles of the GMP	✘	✘				County	$100,000	Consultant
Offer incentives for redevelopment of existing lots within the Martinez node.	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	Varies by development	County
Amend subdivision regulations to require P.U.D. process for all commercial developments on identified corridors between nodes.	✘	✘				County	Part of UDC Development, Staff Time	County
Amend Zoning Ordinance permitted use table to include appropriate uses within Tier I, and Tier II Corridors	✘					County	Staff Time	County
Amend Zoning Ordinance to allow for conditional interconnectivity requirement for new development within Tier I, and Tier II Corridors	✘					County	Staff Time	County

Housing

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Revise subdivision regulations to increase interconnectivity within subdivisions, such as paved roads, connectivity between subdivisions and multiple entrances	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	Part of UDC Development	Consultant
Develop a Rural Residential Zone for large lot development for the rural and conservation character areas	✘	✘	✘			County	Staff time	Planning & Development Services
Revise PUD standards to incorporate the multi-family development design guidelines and any additional design standards established by the UDC	✘	✘				County	Staff time	Consultant and Planning & Development Services

Economic Development

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Coordinate the installation of public infrastructure such as water, sewer, and roads to ensure they are consistent with the GMP and enhance industrial development	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST Tier I & II	$3,000,000	County with Development Authority
Initiate the Central Martinez revitalization plan – including the improvement district for landscaping, circulation and streetscapes				✘	✘	County	Unidentified	Planning & Development Services & Merchants
Implement the Evans Town Center Plan	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	Staff Time	County
Offer incentives to developers to spur the redevelopment of the Martinez area identified in the Central Martinez revitalization plan.	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	Varies by development	County

Natural Resources

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Use Greenspace acquisition program to integrate open space, plazas and paths within Martinez and Evans	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	Staff Time	Planning & Development Community Leisure
Develop additional guidelines for development along the lake and river shorelines to increase public access and protect environmentally sensitive areas	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	City/ County	Staff Time	Planning & Development Services With Consultant
Establish requirements for open space and enhanced landscaping as part of the UDC and Overlays		✘				County	Part of UDC Development	Consultant

Transportation

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Explore the feasibility of developing an Access Management Plan	✘	✘				County	Staff Time	Planning & Development Services
Establish additional transportation safety and design standards as part of an Access Management Plan and the UDC	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	$150,000 & Staff time	Consultant & Engineering Department
Construct and re-stripe for bike lanes and multi-use paths as part of the Central Martinez (CM) revitalization	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County, TE & SRTS Funds	$721,741	Construction & Maintenance
Construct Rose Lane extension as part of the CM revitalization	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST	$768,545	Construction & Maintenance

Transportation Continued

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Construct Settlement Road and Rose Street connector as part of the CM revitalization	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST	$1,103,310	Construction & Maintenance
Realign and construct Marsella Road and Settlement Avenue as part of the CM revitalization	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST	$152,433	Construction & Maintenance
Streetscape projects as part of the CM revitalization	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST	$1,000,000	Construction & Maintenance
Construct William Few Connector from William Few to Hardy McManus	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST	$10,340,782	Construction & Maintenance
Widen Washington Road from 2 lanes to 4 lanes from Gibbs Road to William Few Parkway	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST	$21,302,000	Construction & Maintenance
Widen Fury's Ferry Road from 2 to 4 lanes from Riverwatch Pkwy to Evans To Locks Road	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	State	$7,300,000	GDOT
Widen and realign Old Petersburg Road & Old Evans Road from 2 to 4 lanes and 0 to 4 lanes from Riverwatch Parkway to Washington Road	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	Federal & State	$34,089,000	GDOT
Widen Flowing Wells Road from 2 to 4 lanes from Wheeler Road to Washington Road	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	State	$7,000,000	GDOT
Widen Owens/Cox/Gibbs Road from Washington Rd to Washington Road	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County & Federal & State	$15,089,560	Construction & Maintenance
Widen Hereford Farm Road from Belair Road to Gibbs Road	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County & State	$5,269,721	Construction & Maintenance
Widen I-20/Lewiston Road from Columbia Road to Grovetown	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County, Federal & State	$10,000,000	GDOT
Resurfacing road projects	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	$1,000,000	Construction
Dirt road paving projects	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	$1,000,000	Construction

Community Facilities

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Establish a coordinated planning process with the Board of Education where the GMP and school facility plans are reviewed annually	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	Staff time	Planning & Development Services with Board of Education
Create a capital improvement plan that is coordinated with proposed node development	✘	✘	✘			County	$80,000	Planning & Development and Engineering Department
Continue upgrades to existing parks and recreation facilities – parking, equipment, storage, restrooms, etc	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	SPLOST	$1,000,000	Parks & Recreation Department

Community Facilities Continued

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Evans Town Center Park Development (Park Facility)	✘	✘	✘			County	$3,500,000	Engineering Department
Animal Control Building Expansion –Pet interaction & familiarization	✘	✘				County	$1,000,000	Facilities
Health Department Building Expansion	✘	✘				County	$1,000,000	Facilities

Land Use

Element	11	12	13	14	15	Funding Source	Cost	Responsible Party
Establish a review process with municipalities regarding re-zonings and infrastructure improvements adjacent to County/city limits		✘	✘	✘		City, County	Staff time	County and adjacent municipalities
Create Greenbrier Town Center Plan			✘	✘	✘	County	$50,000	Consultant, County
Develop node guidelines for each node that address land use, design, parking, access management, and green space	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	County	$75,000/ area	Consultant & Planning & Development Services

5.3 Long Term Goals and Supporting Policies

The policies identified in this section are focused around the major plan elements identified in the "Local Planning Requirements" of the *Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.* They represent the more detailed county-wide measures that are intended to ensure the community goals and character elements are reinforced as part of the regular planning efforts of the County. Goals and policies were developed with extensive public participation as part of the 2005 Growth Management Plan Update, and have been revised to incorporate input from stakeholders during this update. They reflect the primary issues of concern to Columbia County stakeholders.

Goals articulate what the County wishes to achieve through its Growth Management Plan. Policies are the methods of incentives, coordination, and regulation that help to achieve these goals.

Columbia County has goals addressing the following subjects:

- Coordination with other government entities
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Historic Resources
- Natural Resources
- Transportation
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure
- Future Development Policy
- Multifamily Housing and Commercial Development
- Rural Character

Goal 1: Coordination With Other Government Entities	
Columbia County will maintain and enhance planning processes that ensure coordination across county departments, local service providers, surrounding municipalities and the general public.	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Coordinate planning and development review with the Columbia County Board of Education	1. The planning department and the Board of Education should include each other in their planning processes and allocate staff to attend key meetings held by the other organization 2. The planning department should have the opportunity to review and comment on school facility location and expansion plans 3. School placement should reinforce desirable growth patterns as outlined in the Growth Management Plan 4. The planning department and the Board of Education should share population projections and projected enrollment data 5. The planning department and the Board of Education should coordinate on the reuse of former schools sites
2. Sewer and water extensions should reinforce desired growth patterns as discussed in the Growth Management Plan	1. Infrastructure extensions should be limited to nodal areas and residential areas developed at urbanized densities. These areas are contained within the Evans-Martinez, Kiokee Creek, and Grovetown Character Areas.
3. The county should coordinate planning and development review functions with the city governments of Grovetown and Harlem	1. Cities should be encouraged to consider the County's Growth Management Plan in their development review activities 2. Columbia County and its cities should engage in a formal cross-review of major development plans and significant re-zonings 3. Columbia County and its cities should communicate and coordinate on planned transportation improvements
4. Coordinate with Fort Gordon and its management plans	1. The county should incorporate recommendations from the Fort Gordon Joint Land Use Study into its Growth Management Plan and its ongoing current planning activities
5. Increase citizen involvement in the planning and development process	1. Publish an annual review of approved re-zonings 2. Conduct an annual meeting of GMP Steering Committee to review progress on the Growth Management Plan and its implementation

Goal 2: Housing	
Diversify the housing stock and provide quality housing opportunities reflecting the variety of lifestyles and life stages of Columbia County residents	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Protect residential areas from encroachment by incompatible uses and adverse environmental conditions	1. Develop enhanced lighting, signage, landscaping and buffering standards for new non-residential developments in close proximity to existing residential neighborhoods
2. Promote and encourage residential densities and designs that ensure varied living areas and housing types and an integration of uses	1. Enhance the planned development character of the Kiokee Creek Character Area with the provision of open space and public squares, landscaped medians, protection of trees and an emphasis on Traditional Neighborhood Development in appropriate locations within master planned developments. 2. Promote interconnectivity within and between subdivisions to allow the diffusion of traffic patterns 3. Require multiple entrances and exits to increase neighborhood connectivity 4. Develop sidewalk requirements based on residential densities and proximity to nodes
3. Address the housing needs of an active aging population	1. Explore regional and national trends and tools for providing appropriate housing choices for an active aging population
4. Require a reasonable portion of all residential development to be set aside for neighborhood-level recreation areas	
5. Enable people to work near where they live, and live near where they work	1. Distribute office employment to all of the identified nodes 2. Require mixed use for large commercial projects 3. Require mixed use plans for large residential projects
6. Increase variety of housing opportunities	1. Identify additional land in nodes and between nodes for multi-family housing 2. Develop appropriate design standards for multi-family housing development that encourage walking and biking and provide recreation opportunities 3. Develop appropriate designs standards for multi-family and townhouse developments

Goal 3: Economic Development	
Diversify, strengthen and sustain the economic base of Columbia County consistent with the prudent management of the county's environmental resources and infrastructure	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Encourage the expansion of clean, high tech, quality industrial development that strengthens the economic base of the community and minimizes air, water, and noise pollution	1. Identify and set aside appropriate land for new industrial uses 2. Continue to encourage state funded, quality vocational training to increase the skilled labor force trained for appropriate employment opportunities
2. Work with Fort Gordon to identify needs that can be locally met	
3. Encourage growth of medical sector in the county	1. Market Columbia County as a location for medical sector growth
4. Create opportunities for tourism	1. Consider enhancements to Lake Thurmond and/or Wildwood Park, such as a lodge or retreat center 2. Coordinate tourist-oriented improvements and marketing with the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area
5. Promote small business by increasing regulatory flexibility for home based offices without destroying the residential nature of neighborhoods	
6. Strengthen coordination and partnership opportunities with adjacent counties	
7. Monitor the expansion plans, employment growth, and possible reductions in employment at major employers in the region	
8. Leverage the future Broadband infrastructure network as a tool to attract economic development to Columbia County	

Goal 4: Historic Resources	
Protect, enhance, and promote the historic identity and resources of Columbia County	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Create an inventory of possible historic properties, their ownership, location, condition, and National Register status	1. Develop adequate staffing to deal with the implementation of Columbia County's historic preservation goals and policies 2. Coordinate with State Historic Preservation Office to create plan for identifying and inventorying historic properties 3. Apply for historic district status where appropriate, such as in Appling. 4. Apply for National Register status for historic buildings where appropriate
2. Develop a protection plan for unique cultural and historic resources of the county	1. Educate the public about the historic and cultural resources available in the county 2. Promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings where feasible

Goal 5: Natural Resources	
Protect and nurture the natural environment of Columbia County	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Protect Columbia County's watersheds	1. Develop and adopt a watershed ordinance that meets Georgia Department of Natural Resource's standards 2. Restrict development in areas of sensitive soils and areas with poor drainage
2. Protect Columbia County's groundwater recharge areas	1. Develop and adopt a watershed ordinance that meets Georgia Department of Natural Resource's standards 2. Restrict development in areas of sensitive soils and areas with poor drainage
3. Pursue Columbia County's Greenspace Master Plan, in order to serve recreational needs and protect sensitive lands	1. Pursue the greenways network identified in Columbia County's Greenspace Master Plan 2. Purchase and/or protect floodplain lands from development 3. Provide connections between neighborhoods, nodes, and recreation areas with inter-linked greenways 4. Coordinate future regional storm water management solutions within the greenway protection network
4. Protect water quality and prevent flooding	1. Enforce existing soil erosion ordinances 2. Continue to pursue the development of storm water management infrastructure 3. Direct development into appropriate areas and away from inappropriate areas that negatively impact water quality, such as adjacent to streams 4. Protect and preserve flood-prone and wetland areas
5. Protect the tree cover and open space in urbanizing areas of county	1. Enhance minimum open space requirements for different development types 2. Review the County's current landscaping and tree conservation regulations to see if they are adequate to limit unnecessary clear cutting and tree removal during the land development process
6. Protect scenic corridors that contribute to the County's unique character and aesthetically pleasing image	1. Identify current scenic corridors that are appropriate for protection 2. Create a corridor preservation plan for scenic corridors according to public priorities and the guidance of Character Areas from the Growth Management Plan

Goal 6: Transportation	
Provide a transportation system that continues to keep pace with growth, mitigates congestion, and integrates various modes of travel in order to allow mobility options, promotes sustainable economic development and protects the natural and cultural resources of Columbia County	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Make the most efficient use of limited transportation funds	1. Concentrate commercial uses to nodes and identified corridors 2. Use access management within corridors to decrease congestion and increase safety. Develop corridor-specific access management plans on currently congested corridors such as Washington Road 3. Install medians along major roadway corridors to increase capacity and 4. Develop a functional road classification system that provides guidelines for future right-of-way requirements and land use decisions. The functional plan should include number of lanes, land uses, and transportation capabilities of the roadway 5. Coordinate transportation facilities and services to coincide with development plans and demands 6. Plan and program transportation improvement projects to coincide with planned development within nodes 7. Pursue stable sources of transportation funding to maximize joint funding opportunities with the Georgia Department of Transportation
2. Decrease congestion along major arterials	1. Use access management for strip commercial development along arterial roadways. Discourage single lot access and enforce a minimum distance between curb cuts for commercial and professional land uses 2. Increase internal connectivity by providing a network of local roads that create an alternative to using major arterial roads 3. Increase inter-parcel connectivity of all new commercial and residential development to create alternate routes to major destinations 4. Increase mixed use in nodes and corridors
3. Provide adequate infrastructure and designate truck routes in order to prevent truck traffic in residential areas	
4. Decrease commuter traffic by promoting alternatives to commuting	1. Promote telecommuting with employers and employees within the County 2. Promote live-work arrangements and flexibility for home-based offices

Goal 6: Transportation Continued	
Provide a transportation system that continues to keep pace with growth, mitigates congestion, and integrates various modes of travel in order to allow mobility options, promotes sustainable economic development and protects the natural and cultural resources of Columbia County	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
5. Increase bicycle and pedestrian access and mobility both County-wide and within nodes and corridors	1. Promote bikeway and pedestrian systems that connect from residential areas to nodal developments 2. Establish a formal network of designated bicycle and pedestrian pathways throughout the County. The county's planned Greenway system should be part of this network 3. Pursue pedestrian and bike facilities alongside major thoroughfares and designated corridors. Require new development on major corridors to provide these facilities where feasible 4. Require new development to connect to the County's existing and planned greenway, pedestrian, and bicycle system. 5. Require sidewalks in higher density subdivisions, and encourage sidewalks in all developments 6. Increase pedestrian and bike access within multi-use nodes 7. Pursue a comprehensive pedestrian network within nodal developments 8. Enforce maximum block lengths in nodes 9. Establish minimum bike parking requirements for all commercial within nodes. For example, require one bike space per 20 parking spaces 10. Encourage reduced and/or shared parking requirements within nodal developments 11. Designate and develop safe street crossings for both minor roads and arterials within nodes.

Goal 7: Community Facilities and Infrastructure	
Ensure the provision of community facilities and services following the nodal development pattern that supports efficient growth and will protect and enhance the quality of life for existing and future residents of Columbia County the county, while maintaining existing neighborhoods and preserving the rural character prevalent in the western half of the county.	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Make the most efficient use of public funds through long term planning and coordination	1. Encourage early land reservation by the County and the Board of Education to minimize land costs and obtain the best sites 2. Encourage early land reservation by the County's Greenspace Master Plan to minimize land costs and obtain future park sites 3. Provide advance planning analysis and cost estimates for transportation projects to maximize State and Federal monies for road projects
2. Increase community services for the growing senior population	1. Identify the demand for expanded programs at existing senior centers 2. Monitor the ridership and future demand for senior transportation services 3. Coordinate service delivery to seniors through the Area Agency on Aging 4. Identify and implement health and wellness programs in cooperation with the major hospitals in the region
3. Create a system of accessible open spaces that serves various recreational needs of county residents	1. Make the greenway plan an integral part of the County's land use plan 2. Develop a connected greenway along creek basins with public access points to Lake Thurmond, the Savannah River, and Augusta Canal 3. Develop public/private partnerships to maintain neighborhood parks 4. Enable and encourage Conservation Neighborhoods that would allow reduced lot sizes in order to protect valuable open space assets and environmentally fragile areas
4. Enhance the character and livability of nodes	1. Implement design standards for the Central Martinez Area from the Central Martinez Area Study 2. Encourage pedestrian connections within nodes and between nodes and between neighborhoods and nearby schools 3. Develop design overlays for nodes to establish a unique identity using architectural guidelines, sidewalk requirements, street trees, lamps, street furniture and other urban design features 4. Construct portions of the nodal overlay design improvements as an incentive for future development 5. Require new developments to meet the design overlay standards within the nodes 6. Enhance the urban character of nodes with the provision of small open spaces and public squares within development, the protection of trees and the promotion of landscaped medians

Goal 7: Community Facilities and Infrastructure Continued	
Ensure the provision of community facilities and services following the nodal development pattern that supports efficient growth and will protect and enhance the quality of life for existing and future residents of Columbia County the county, while maintaining existing neighborhoods and preserving the rural character prevalent in the western half of the county.	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
5. Invest in new infrastructure to encourage the nodal development pattern and discourage sprawl	1. Prioritize public facilities and capital improvements within the nodes 2. Encourage expansion of water and sewer in planned nodal development areas in order to discourage sprawl into rural areas 3. Create a Capital Improvement Program that prioritizes projects based on the Growth Management Plan and funds capital improvements with consideration for adequate operation and maintenance costs prior to expansion of community facilities 4. Review and update the Short Term Work Program annually in conjunction with the budgeting process 5. Locate public facilities according to the need, population density, accessibility and compatibility with adjacent uses and guidance from the Growth Management Plan and Central Martinez Area Study

Goal 8: Future Development Policy	
Focus and direct future growth and development in clearly identified nodes and corridors, thereby maximizing the use of existing and efficient and economical provision of additional county services to discourage sprawl	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Discourage commercial development between nodes that are not linked by an identified corridor	1. Enforce greater regulatory requirements and less flexibility for commercial development outside of nodes and corridors than for commercial development inside of nodes corridors 2. Increase buffering requirements for properties between nodes not in an identified corridor 3. Require minimum distance between driveways for commercial development in identified corridors 4. Require inter-parcel access between commercial developments 5. On a case-by-case basis, allow for single family homes on major arteries to be converted to office or high density housing. Individual properties should be evaluated based on their proximity to a node and the impact on surrounding residential homes. 6. Extensions of water and sewer between planned nodal areas should be provided to serve predominantly residential uses

Goal 8: Future Development Policy Continued	
Focus and direct future growth and development in clearly identified nodes and corridors, thereby maximizing the use of existing and efficient and economical provision of additional county services to discourage sprawl	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
2. Provide incentives for development within nodes	1. Provide incentives for shared parking and additional density 2. Consider providing limited county funding to share infrastructure costs for appropriate development within nodes 3. Consider tax increment funding to help spark redevelopment in nodal areas targeted for redevelopment
3. Reduce intense development outside nodes	1. Use the buffer policy to reinforce desired pattern of growth within nodes and identified corridors 2. Implement an access management program which will reduce the ease of driveway access on major arterials between nodes not identified as a corridor
4. Make planned nodal developments pedestrian friendly and encourage circulation patterns that do not depend solely on arterial circulation	1. Require wide sidewalks with setbacks from the street. 2. Increase pedestrian infrastructure 3. Require short block lengths within the nodes 4. Require large parking lots to be subject to the block size requirements and provide internal circulation 5. Require buildings to be street-oriented along internal streets where appropriate 6. Reduce parking requirements for individual uses that include shared or joint parking areas within the planned development 7. Allow on-street parking in designated areas 8. Require identification of pedestrian access between parcels and to and from greenways with all site plans within a node. 9. Require commercial areas to provide internal circulation systems
5. Develop enhanced design and site development standards for all types of development, including landscaping, buffering, screening, site placement, and sidewalks	
6. Create urban design standards for nodes to promote pedestrian friendly development and high quality public spaces	1. Establish usable open space requirements for development in nodes 2. Establish landscaping, buffering, and tree protection requirements in key nodes and corridors 3. Establish signage controls as necessary for key nodes and corridors 4. Develop a recommended timing plan with measurable milestones for the implementation of nodal infrastructure

Goal 9: Multifamily Housing and Commercial Development	
Locate multifamily housing and commercial developments following the future development policy so that they are compatible and complementary with the existing community fabric	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Encourage all future commercial and office development to be located in identified nodes and corridors	1. Refer to the future development map to identify the County's preferred locations for commercial development 2. Encourage and permit reduced parking requirements for commercial development through shared parking, public parking, or through improved estimates of actual parking demand. 3. Increase allowable buildable area in nodes by more lenient requirements for building footprint and/or height within nodes.
2. Locate multifamily development primarily in Tier I and Tier II nodes and Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III corridors	1. New development with A-R-10 zoning designation will be appropriate in Tier I, and Tier II nodes. 2. New development with T-R zoning designation will be appropriate in all identified nodes and development corridors.
3. Encourage land use transitions between more intensive, commercial and industrial land uses, and less intensive, residential land uses.	1. Promote high density residential, office, and institutional as transitions between commercial and single family 2. Require appropriate buffers where different land uses abut one another
4. Encourage mixed use development within nodes and corridors	1. Encourage and permit reduced parking requirements for mixed-use development through shared parking, public parking, or through improved estimates of actual parking demand
5. Encourage large land holdings to plan for multiple uses	

Goal 10: Rural Character	
Preserve the existing rural and conservation character prevalent in the western area of the county	
Policy	**Supporting Policies**
1. Discourage intense development in rural character areas	1. Limit extension of water and sewer services to these areas at public cost 2. Focus infrastructure spending on existing urbanized areas and nodes 3. Focus new government facilities on existing urbanized areas and nodes
2. Limit commercial areas in rural areas to defined rural nodes	
3. Develop rural design guidelines for key corridors, such as form based codes	
4. Protect environmentally sensitive lands through implementation of Columbia County's Greenspace Master Plan	
5. Evaluate the costs and benefits of implementing a transferable development rights program to protect important natural lands, agricultural lands, and forestry lands	

Appendix

MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING IN COLUMBIA COUNTY

COLUMBIA COUNTY PLANNING & ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

OCTOBER 12, 2010

Walden Glen Apartments, Evans

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Executive Summary

In order to meet market demand and offer a variety of housing types to residents, Columbia County should pursue a well-balanced mix of housing. One element of this mix is multi-family housing, which benefits the County by enhancing housing options and making efficient use of land. Household size in the U.S. has been shrinking since the 1970s as couples are having less children, baby-boomers are aging and more Americans than ever choose to live alone. Young professionals, skilled laborers, childless couples and senior citizens are among the groups who could be served by multi-family housing. Multi-family housing is also a key component of smart growth, which aims to limit urban sprawl and reduce traffic. Compact developments occupy less land, require less investment in public infrastructure expansion, and generate both fewer and shorter automobile trips than single-family housing. When such developments are located within the County's designated nodes, they also foster retail growth by providing a convenient customer base.

In 2009, the County passed a moratorium on the rezoning of property for multi-family housing. Resolution 09-787 put forth the basis for the moratorium:

> *The Board has received expressions of concern from various elected officials and citizens concerning the substantial increase in multifamily housing in the County and feels that it needs to review and study the situation in order to protect the best interests of Columbia County. The Sheriff has pointed out that law enforcement calls per multi-family housing resident are 42% higher than law enforcement calls per single family housing residents and stated that additional personnel will be required as additional multifamily units are constructed. The Columbia County Board of Education has advised the Board that the construction of multifamily housing complexes has a substantial impact on the schools in the area and can result in overcrowding situations. Citizens have complained that the concentration of apartment homes in these complexes will contribute to traffic congestion which is becoming an ever increasing problem in the County as its growth continues.*

On the issue of density, some jurisdictions have a maximum limit on the PUD (planned unit developments) which is the same as their zoning classifications for multi-family. Columbia County has a maximum density of 8 units per acre for townhouse developments and 14 units per acre for apartment developments. In the PUD zoning, there is currently no maximum density in the ordinances and the requested density is reviewed, approved or denied, or determined by the Board of Commissioners during the zoning process. If the County wanted to operate as the comparable jurisdictions, then a maximum density could be set for the PUD zoning district that is equal to the townhouse and apartment zoning categories. Furthermore, if the County decides to lower the maximum density allowed for any new apartment rezoning, then 10 units per acre would be consistent with benchmark jurisdictions.

It is recommended that the County consider an annual review of multi-family development and maintain a count of units built, units under construction, and of undeveloped acreage zoned for apartments. This information would be presented to the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners for review at the start of each calendar year.

Introduction

At the request of the Board of Commissioners, the Columbia County Planning & Engineering Department has prepared an assessment of the County's multi-family housing stock. This report documents how the County's housing has changed over the years, compares local housing figures to those of similar jurisdictions, examines the use of zoning to regulate housing density, and makes recommendations for the future. Apartments and their role in the County are given particular attention. For the purposes of this report, "multi-family" includes any building containing more than two residences, more commonly known as townhouses and apartments, regardless of whether the unit is rented or owned.

At the request of the Board of Commissioners, the Columbia County Planning & Engineering Department has prepared an assessment of the County's multi-family housing stock. This report documents historical data looking at population growth and types of residential development. The report examines the use of zoning to regulate housing density, compares local housing figures to those of similar jurisdictions, and makes recommendations for the future.

Columbia County has grown rapidly from a population of about 22,000 in 1970 to well over 100,000 by 2005, emerging as an upper-middle-class suburb of Augusta and being highly desirable due to its excellent school system and high quality of life.

With regards to the housing mix, the percentage of single family homes has remained steady at 79% over the last 25 years, and the percentage of apartments has also remained steady at 3% of the total housing stock. However during the same time, the percentage of townhomes has increased and the percentage of mobile homes has declined.

For owner-occupied housing, Columbia County had the highest rate at 86% compared to all the other benchmark jurisdictions. The closest jurisdiction by location is Augusta-Richmond County and that had the highest rate of renter-occupied housing at 43%. This data illustrates a strong personal investment by the community in Columbia County.

This report includes charts giving numerical data on the multi-family developments as existing, under construction, and rezoned land awaiting development. There are 1,430 existing apartments (i.e. renter-occupied), about 600 units under construction, and zoning has already been approved to build over 1,300 more apartment units on currently vacant land. With reference to townhome developments (i.e. owner-occupied), the County has over 2,000 existing units, about 230 units under construction and rezoned land for over 1,500 units.

Definitions

Relevant Definitions from Section 90-9 Columbia County Code of Ordinances

Dwelling means a building or portion of a building arranged or designed to provide living quarters for one or more families on a permanent or long term basis.

(1) ***Single-family detached dwelling*** means a residential building, whether site-built, a manufactured home or an industrialized building, designed for or occupied by one family, including:

a. *Site-built single-family detached dwelling* means a single-family detached dwelling constructed on the building site from basic materials delivered to the site, and which is constructed in accordance with all requirements of the building codes adopted by the county, and meets or exceeds the standards for single-family and two-family dwellings under section 90-131(a)(7).

b. *Type A single-family detached dwelling* means a one-family manufactured home or a one-family industrialized home that meets or exceeds the standards for single-family and two-family dwellings under section 90-131(a)(7).

c. *Type B single-family detached dwelling* means a one-family manufactured home or a one-family industrialized home that does not meet the standards for single-family and two-family dwellings under section 90-131(a)(7).

(2) ***Two-family dwelling*** means a residential building designed exclusively for occupancy by two families in separate dwelling units living independently of each other, including:

a. *Site-built two-family dwelling* means a two-family dwelling constructed on the building site from basic materials delivered to the site, and which is constructed in accordance with all requirements of the building codes adopted by the county, and meets or exceeds the standards for single-family and two-family dwellings under section 90-131(a)(7).

b. *Type A two-family dwelling* means a two-family manufactured home or a two-family industrialized home that meets or exceeds the standards for single-family and two-family dwellings under section 90-131(a)(7).

c. *Type B two-family dwelling* means a two-family manufactured home or a two-family industrialized home that does not meet the standards for single-family and two-family dwellings under section 90-131(a)(7).

(3) ***Group dwelling*** means a building or portion of a building occupied or intended for occupancy by several unrelated persons or families as their normal place of residence, but in which separate cooking facilities are not provided for such resident persons or families. This term includes, but is not limited to, the terms "roominghouse," "apartment hotel," "fraternity house" or "sorority house." A hotel, motel or tourist home shall not be deemed to be a group dwelling.

(4) ***Multifamily dwelling*** means a dwelling on a single lot, designed for or occupied by three or more families living independently of each other, with the number of families in residence not exceeding the number of dwelling units provided.

(5) ***Townhouse or row house dwelling*** means one of a series of three or more attached one-family dwelling units on separate lots which:

a. May or may not have a common roof;

b. Shall not have a common exterior wall;

c. Are separated from each other by fire restrictive party wall partitions extending at least from the lowest floor level to the roof.

Dwelling unit means one or more connected rooms constituting a separate, independent housekeeping establishment for use on a basis involving owner occupancy, rental or lease on a weekly, monthly or longer basis, with provisions for cooking, eating and sleeping, and physically set apart from any other rooms or dwelling units in the same structure.

High density residential zoning district means a zoning district established to provide for the development of townhouse or apartment residential units which shall include the T-R and A-R districts.

Low-moderate density residential zoning district means a zoning district established to provide for the development of single-family and two-family residential dwellings which shall include the R-A, R-1, R-1A, R-2, R-3, R-3A and R-4 districts.

Manufactured home means a dwelling fabricated in an off-site facility for installation or assembly at the building site, bearing a label certifying that it is constructed in compliance with the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974, 42 USC § 5401 et seq., which first became effective on June 15, 1976. This term includes a structure, transportable in one or more sections, which, in the traveling mode, is eight body feet or more in width, or 40 body feet or more in length, or, when erected on-site, is 320 or more square feet in floor area, and which is built on a permanent chassis and designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation when connected to the required utilities, and includes the plumbing, heating, air conditioning and electrical systems contained in the manufactured home; except that this term includes any structure which meets all of the requirements of this definition except the size requirement and with respect to which the manufacturer voluntarily files a certification required by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and complies with the standards established under the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974, 42 USC § 5401 et seq.

Mobile home means a dwelling manufactured prior to June 15, 1976, and not subject to the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974, 42 USC § 5401 et seq., transportable in one or more sections, which, in the traveling mode, is eight body feet or more in width, or 40 body feet or more in length, or, when erected on-site, is 320 or more square feet in floor area, and which is built on a permanent chassis and designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation when connected to the required utilities, and includes the plumbing, heating, air conditioning and electrical systems contained in the mobile home.

Multi-family dwelling means a dwelling on a single lot, designed for or occupied by three or more families living independently of each other, with the number of families in residence not exceeding the number of dwelling units provided.

Residential zoning district means a zoning district established under article II of this chapter for the development of single-family, two-family and multi-family dwellings which shall include the R-A, R-1, R-1A, R-2, R-3, R-3A, R-4, T-R and A-R districts.

Recommended Definitions to be added

Key to text changes:

apartment text to be added

Apartment unit means an individual unit, each of which has separate cooking facilities, that is located within an apartment house that is intended for occupancy by a single family where the unit may be rented, leased, or owned and where there may or may not be ownership interest in common areas and facilities of the property on which the unit is located.

Apartment house means a residential building designed or used for three or more dwelling units.

Condominium means a single dwelling unit in a multiunit dwelling or structure that is separately owned and may be combined with an undivided interest in the common areas and facilities of the property.

Sec. 90-49. A-R apartment residential district.

(a) This applies to property already zoned A-R apartment residential district only and no new A-R rezoning applications will be accepted from December 31, 2010.

(b) *Established.* The A-R apartment residential district is established for development of multifamily residential dwellings at a density of not greater than 14 units per acre, which have ample open space, recreational areas and off-street parking. Uses in the A-R district must be served by public water and sewer. It is intended that the A-R district be located along arterial streets and be adjacent to existing commercial zoning districts or high density residential uses, or adjacent to areas designated for commercial or high density residential development on the growth management plan. The land uses permitted in the A-R district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53.

(~~b~~ c) *Special requirements.* A minimum of ten percent of the site approved for a development under the A-R district shall be set aside as usable open space, a portion of which shall be improved with active recreation facilities, including play equipment suitable for children.

(Code 1979, § 2-16-27)

A-R 10 apartment residential district.

(a) *Established.* The A-R 10 apartment residential district is established for development of multifamily residential dwellings at a density of not greater than 10 units per acre, which have ample open space, recreational areas and off-street parking. Uses in the A-R 10 district must be served by public water and sewer. It is intended that the A-R 10 district be located within the Tier 1 and Tier 2 nodes on the growth management plan. The land uses permitted in the A-R 10 district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53.

(b) *Special requirements.* A minimum of ten percent of the site approved for a development under the A-R 10 district shall be set aside as usable open space, a portion of which shall be improved with active recreation facilities, including play equipment suitable for children.

Code of Ordinances Article II. Residential Districts

Sec. 90-41. R-A residential-agricultural district.
The R-A residential-agricultural district is established to provide for rural farm or very low density, nonsuburban development in areas where intensive land development is not desired due to limited ability to provide public services and facilities. The minimum lot size in the R-A district is 2 1/2 acres, with the exception of legal lots of record existing at the time of the enactment of this chapter. The land uses permitted in this district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53. (Code 1979, § 2-16-20)

Sec. 90-42. R-1 single-family residential district.
The R-1 single-family residential district is established to provide low density, suburban development on lots served by public water, but that may not have access to the public sewer. The R-1 district is designed to serve as a transition between R-A and R-1A districts. The minimum lot size in the R-1 district is 30,000 square feet if served by the public sewer and 40,000 square feet if sewer service is not available. The land uses permitted in the R-1 district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53. (Code 1979, § 2-16-21)

Sec. 90-43. R1-A single-family residential district.
The R-1A single-family residential district is established for the development of low to medium density single-family residential uses. The R-1A district is designed to serve as a transition between the R-1 and R-2 districts. Uses in the R-1A district must be served by public water and sewer. The minimum lot size in the R-1A district is 20,000 square feet. The land uses permitted in the R-1A district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53.
(Code 1979, § 2-16-21.1)

Sec. 90-44. R-2 single-family residential district.
The R-2 single-family residential district is established to provide for the development of medium density single-family residential uses. Uses in the R-2 district must be served by public water and sewer. The minimum lot size in the R-2 district is 10,000 square feet. The land uses permitted in the R-2 district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53. (Code 1979, § 2-16-22)

Sec. 90-45. R-3 single-family residential district.
The R-3 single-family residential district is established to provide for high density single-family residential development. Uses in the R-3 district must be served by public water and sewer. The minimum lot size in the R-3 district is 7,500 square feet. The land uses permitted in the R-3 district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53.
(Code 1979, § 2-16-23)

Sec. 90-46. R-3A single-family and two-family residential district.
The R-3A single-family and two-family residential district is established to provide for high density single-family and two-family residential development. Uses in the R-3A district must be served by public water and sewer. The minimum lot size in the R-3A district for single-family development is 7,500 square feet, and for two-family development, the minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet. The land uses permitted in the R-3A district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53. (Code 1979, § 2-16-24)

Sec. 90-47. R-4 recreational residential district.

The R-4 recreational residential district is established to provide for low density residential development related to Clarks Hill Lake for residents to maintain summer or weekend homes. The R-4 district is intended to permit only those residential and related recreational uses of land and structures, and to exclude all those activities not compatible with the character of recreational-residential areas. The minimum lot size in the R-4 district is 40,000 square feet, with the exception of legal lots of record existing at the time of the enactment of the ordinance from which this chapter is derived. The land uses permitted in the R-4 district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53. (Code 1979, § 2-16-25)

Sec. 90-48. T-R townhouse residential district.

(a) *Established.* The T-R townhouse residential district is established to provide for the development of townhouse residential units at a density not greater than eight units per acre. Uses in the T-R district must be served by public water and sewer. It is intended that the T-R district serve as a transition between single-family detached houses and existing commercial and apartment zoning districts, or areas designated for a commercial and apartment development in the growth management plan. The land uses permitted in the T-R district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53.

(b) *Special requirements.* A minimum of ten percent of the site approved for a development under the T-R district shall be set aside as open space, a portion of which shall be improved with active recreation facilities, including play equipment suitable for children.

(Code 1979, § 2-16-26)

Sec. 90-49. A-R apartment residential district.

(a) *Established.* The A-R apartment residential district is established for development of multifamily residential dwellings at a density of not greater than 14 units per acre, which have ample open space, recreational areas and off-street parking. Uses in the A-R district must be served by public water and sewer. It is intended that the A-R district be located along arterial streets and be adjacent to existing commercial zoning districts or high density residential uses, or adjacent to areas designated for commercial or high density residential development on the growth management plan. The land uses permitted in the A-R district shall be as set forth in section 90-50, and lot and structure requirements shall be as set forth in section 90-53.

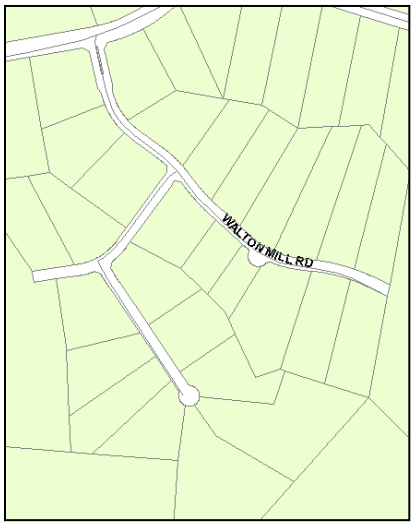
(b) *Special requirements.* A minimum of ten percent of the site approved for a development under the A-R district shall be set aside as open space, a portion of which shall be improved with active recreation facilities, including play equipment suitable for children.

(Code 1979, § 2-16-27)

Visualizing Density : Columbia County Examples

R-A RESIDENTIAL-AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT WITH A MINIMUM LOT SIZE OF 2 1/2 ACRES

Aerial showing properties on Walton Mill Road, off Tubman Road



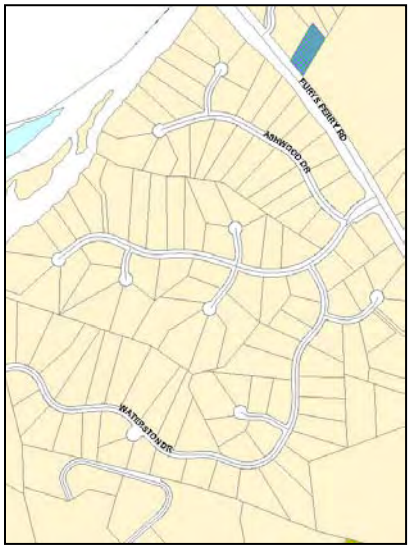
Zoning map for R-A is light green

A typical house in R-A zoning district

NM / 10.12.10

R-1 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT WITH A MINIMUM LOT SIZE OF 1 ACRE

Properties in River Chase Subdivision, off Furys Ferry Road



Zoning map for R-1 is a tan color

A typical house in R-1 zoning district

NM / 10.12.10

R-2 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT WITH A MINIMUM LOT SIZE OF 10,000 SF

Properties off Rhodes Hill Drive and Rhodes Hill Court, Martinez

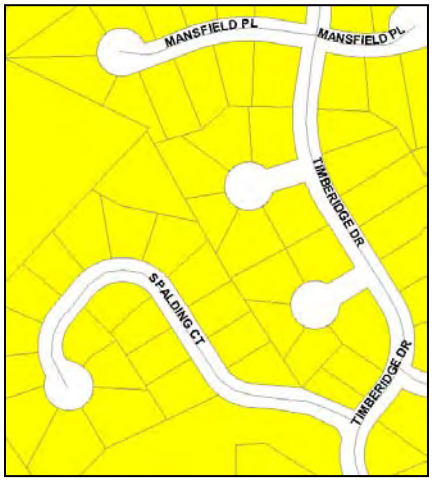
Zoning map for R-2 is light yellow

A typical house in R-2 zoning district

NM / 10.12.10

R-3 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT WITH A MINIMUM LOT SIZE OF 7,500 SQUARE FEET

Aerial showing properties off Timberidge Drive, Martinez



Zoning map for R-3 is dark yellow

A typical house in a R-3 zoning district

R-4 RECREATIONAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT WITH A MINIMUM LOT SIZE OF 40,000 SQUARE FEET

Properties off Keg Creek Drive, Clarks Hill Lake area

Zoning map for R-4 is bright green

A typical house in R-4 zoning district

T-R (TOWNHOUSE-RESIDENTIAL) ZONING DISTRICT AT MAXIMUM 8 UNITS PER ACRE

Steeplechase Townhomes started construction in 2006 and are located off Evans-to-Locks Road. There will be 74 lots on completion and the density will be low at 3.6 units per acre due to the informal site configuration that includes a common area in the center.

This project is in the Evans-to-Locks/ Furys Ferry Road Node Protection Overlay District and the variety of townhouse types and the use of different materials and colors give more interest to the streetscape.

T-R (TOWNHOUSE-RESIDENTIAL) ZONING DISTRICT AT MAXIMUM 8 UNITS PER ACRE

Harris Ridge Townhomes, off Wrightsboro Road, is zoned T-R (townhouse-residential) and was started in 2005.

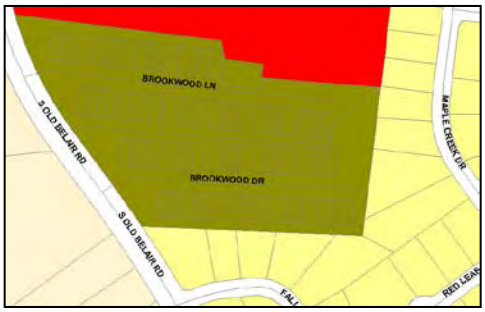
The completed project will have 190 attached units, there are no amenities planned and each unit is practically the same design. The density averages to 7.1 units per acre.

Zoning map for T-R is a dark green color.

A-R (APARTMENT-RESIDENTIAL) ZONING DISTRICT AT MAXIMUM 14 UNITS PER ACRE

Brookwood Townhomes, off S Old Belair Road, zoned A-R (apartment-residential). These townhomes were started in 1995 and completed in 1999 and include a community pool for the residents.

The density is 11.8 units per acre and the typical unit is two stories with one story end units. This gives some height variation in roofline and improves the streetscape.



Zoning map for A-R is a dull green color.

A-R (APARTMENT-RESIDENTIAL) ZONING DISTRICT AT MAXIMUM 14 UNITS PER ACRE

Wedgewood Park Apartments are located off Old Evans Road, Evans and amenities include a swimming pool and a playground.

The apartment buildings are three stories high, and the density is 10 units per acre. There is some variation in the building materials to give a little interest to the elevations.

A-R (APARTMENT-RESIDENTIAL) ZONING DISTRICT AT MAXIMUM 14 UNITS PER ACRE

Ansley at Town Center Apartments, Evans, were completed in 2009 and amenities include a swimming pool, a clubhouse and a fitness center.

There are a total of 242 apartment units and the density is 14 units per acre. This project is located in the Evans Town Center and the required quality of design and materials was achieved.

The main photograph shows the Ansley at Town Center Apartments with an R-2 residential zoning district towards the front of the image.

NM / 10.12.10

Visualizing Density outside of Columbia County

Madison on the Green Apartments is located on River Ridge Drive, Augusta, and amenities include a clubhouse, pool and fitness center.

The density is 18 units per acre.

The Greens on Washington Apartments are located in Augusta and amenities include a clubhouse, pool, fitness center and playground.

The density is 23 units per acre.

St. Johns Towers is located in downtown Augusta and is the home of the Wesley Woods Senior Living community. The amenities include activities, a wellness program, dining and transportation.

The density is 160 units per acre.

The following two pages show examples selected from a book titled *Visualizing Density* by Julie Campoli and Alex S. MacLean. This book was commissioned by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy to help planners, designers, public officials and citizens better understand the concept of density as it applies to the residential environment. It is important to understand that the scale of the buildings in relation to the site arrangement can be very different but still achieve the same density, as illustrated in the last two images on this page.

Mtn. View, CA 16.3 units/acre

Salt Lake City, UT 20.6 units/acre

Boston, MA 27.6 units/acre

Phoenix, AZ 31.5 units/acre

Boulder, CO 33 units/acre

Detroit, MI 33.9 units/acre

Oakland, CA 44 units/acre

Los Angeles, CA 60 units/acre

Cambridge, MA 71 units/acre

Cupertino, CA 85 units/acre

Kansas City, MO 96 units/acre

New York, NY 296 units/acre

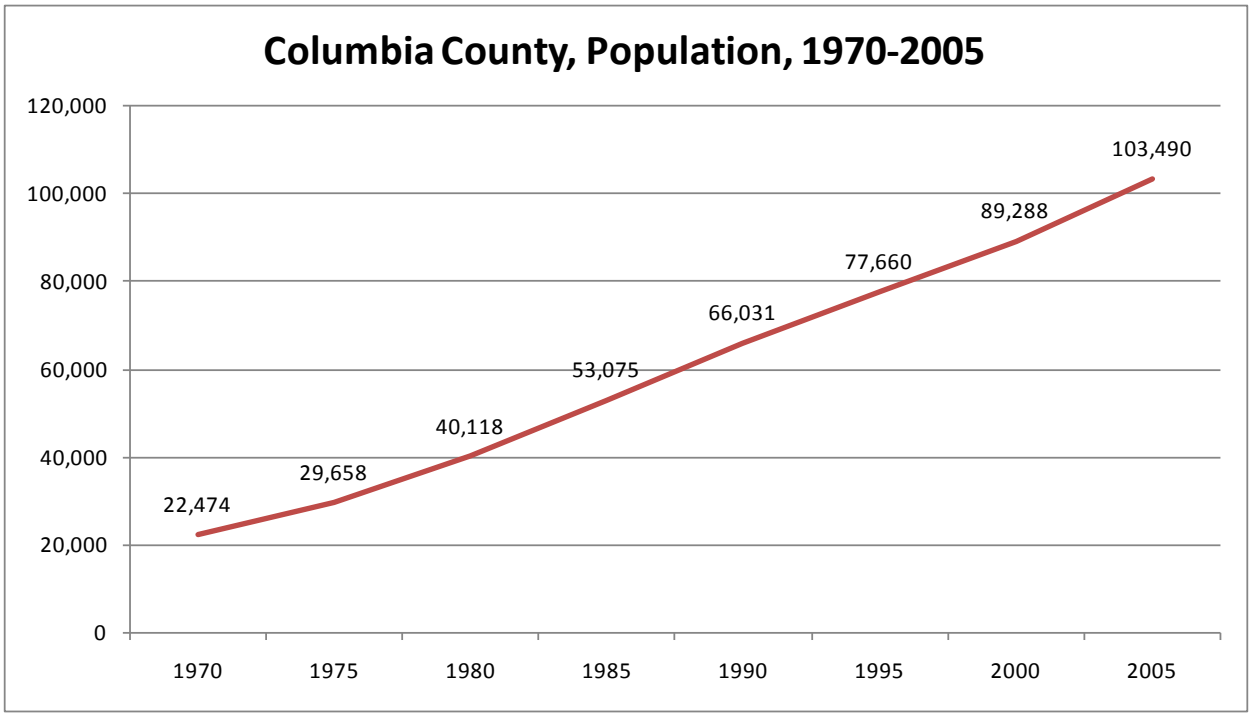
This selection of photographs represents a broad range of density at many levels. They illustrate that building and site design, much more than density, is what shapes the physical character of a place.

NM / 10.12.10

Historical Background

Prior to 1970, Columbia County was a rural community of less than 20,000 people with an economy dependent upon agriculture; therefore, little demand existed for multi-family housing. Rapid growth ensued in the 1970s as Columbia County emerged as an upper-middle-class suburb of Augusta, highly desirable due to its excellent school system and high quality of life.

Chart 1 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005)

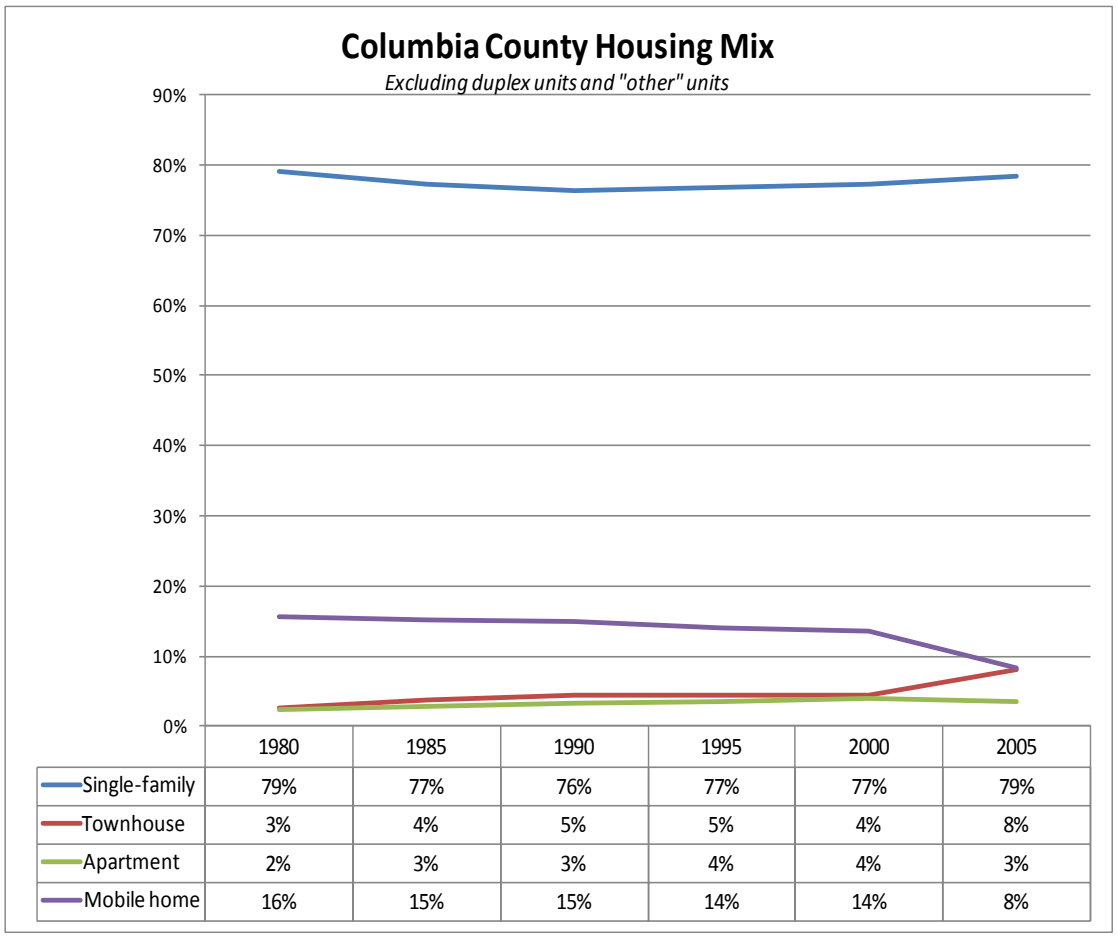


As the population grew, more affluent, suburban-style development became prevalent. By 1980, single-family homes made up 79 % of the total housing stock. Manufactured homes were also a large segment of the County's housing, constituting 15 %. Apartments totaled about 320 units and accounted for less than 3 % of the total.

By 2005, the County's residential subdivisions were complimented by significant economic growth in the retail and professional sector. Despite associated urbanization, the latest figures from the U.S. Census show relative consistency in the County's housing mix. In 2005, single-family homes still accounted for 79 % of County's total, and apartments were just over 3 % and totaled approximately 1,365 units. The number of apartments increased four-fold in 25 years and the increase in single-family homes nearly kept the same pace.

Chart 2 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005

Categories condensed by Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department)



	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Single-family	79%	77%	76%	77%	77%	79%
Townhouse	3%	4%	5%	5%	4%	8%
Apartment	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Mobile home	16%	15%	15%	14%	14%	8%

The only housing types to see significant changes were in manufactured homes, which decreased by half to just 8 % and townhouses which increased from 3 % in 1980 to 8 % of the total by 2005. It would appear that townhouses are replacing manufactured houses as the preferred type of affordable housing. The demand for townhouses could also be attributed to demographic shifts toward smaller households. Nationwide, the population is expected to continue this trend as baby-boomers enter retirement and young couples wait longer to marry and have children. Since 1970, married couples with children have been declining in number and now account for only one quarter of America's population. In Columbia County, the average household size fell from 3.1 in 1980 to 2.7 in 2005 and is projected to decrease to 2.5 by 2025 according to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

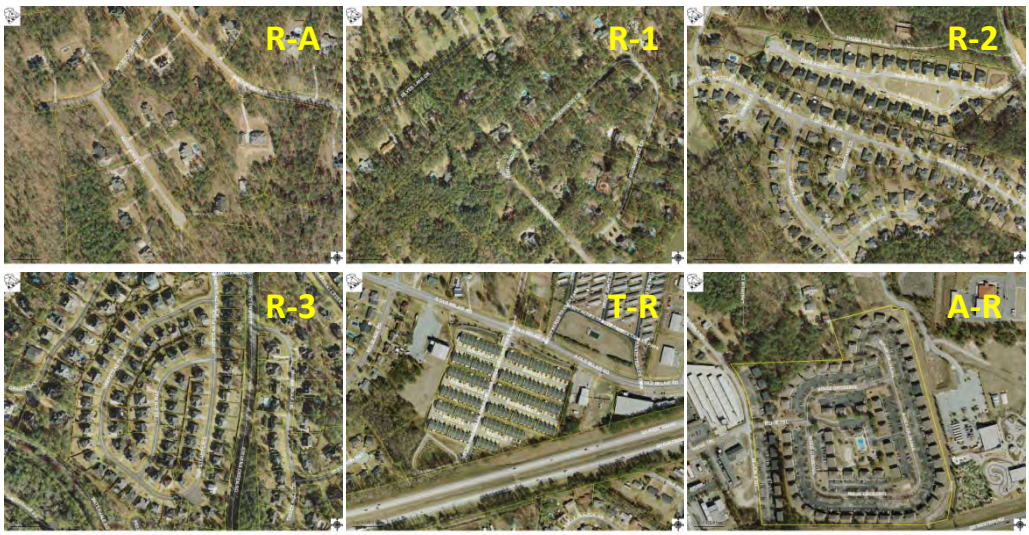
Current Conditions

In Columbia County and similar jurisdictions, residential density is controlled through zoning. The County's zoning code also specifies housing types within districts.

Chart 3 (Source: Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department, 2009)

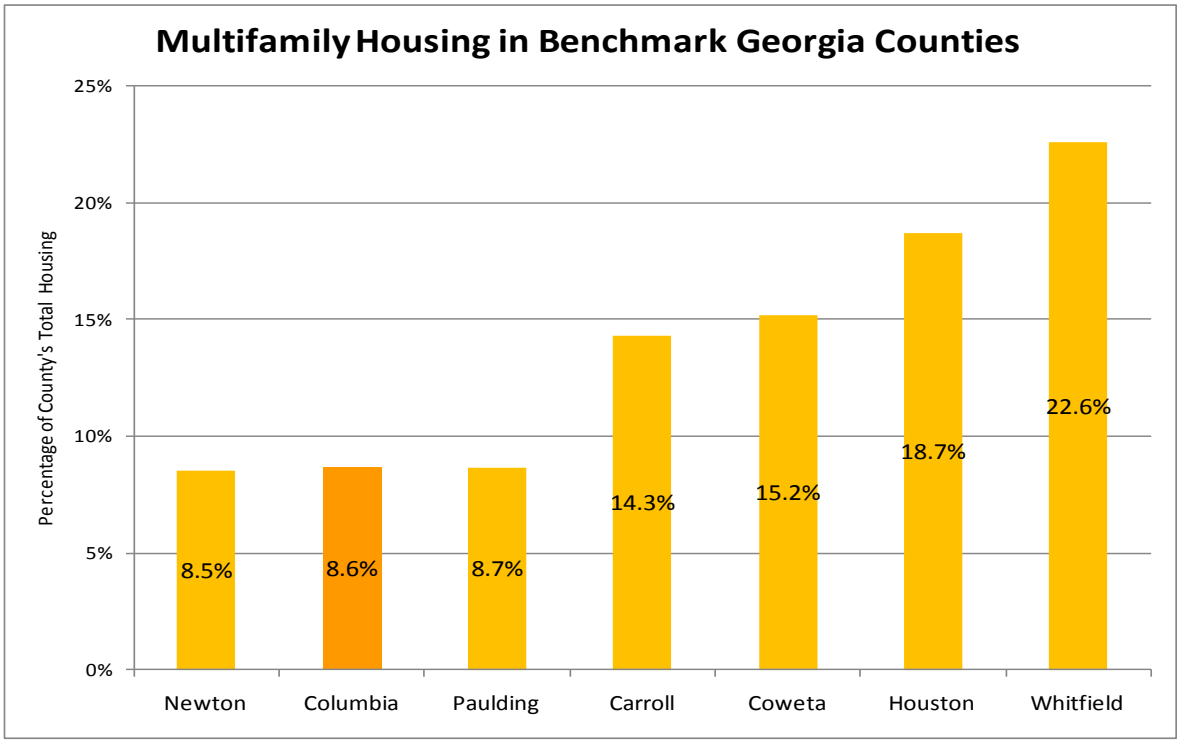
Columbia County Zoning Code, Density & Housing							
	Density		Permitted Housing				
Zoning District	Maximum Units Per Acre*	Minimum Lot Size	Single-Family	Mobile Home	Two-Family	Townhouse	Apartment
R-A	0.4	2.5 acres	✓	✓			
R-4	1.1	40,000 sq. ft.	✓	✓			
R-1 no sewer	1.1	40,000 sq. ft.	✓				
R-1 with sewer	1.5	30,000 sq. ft.	✓				
R-1A	2.2	20,000 sq. ft.	✓				
R-2	4.4	10,000 sq. ft.	✓				
R-3	5.8	7,500 sq. ft.	✓				
R-3A	8.7	7,500 sq. ft.	✓		✓		
T-R (townhouse)	8.0	N/A	✓		✓	✓	
A-R (apartment)	14.0	N/A	✓		✓	✓	✓
PUD	as approved	N/A	✓		✓	✓	✓

*For single-family housing, the zoning code requires a minimum lot size, but the overall density limit is also shown here for comparison. (1 acre = 43,560 sq. ft.)



To evaluate Columbia County's housing situation in a broader context, comparisons to other counties are useful. Six benchmark jurisdictions were selected for the purposes of comparison. Each benchmark county is similar to Columbia County in at least two of three regards; total population, population density, and household income. As of 2005, Columbia County had fewer apartments than any of the other jurisdictions except for Newton County. The average number of apartments for all seven was about 3,800 units and the average number of townhouses for all seven was about 2,300 units.

Chart 4 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005
Categories condensed by Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department)



Apartments comprised an average of 8.6 % of the total housing units for all jurisdictions, compared to about 3.4 % in Columbia County. As of 2009, Columbia County has about 2,000 apartments built or underway. This total is further augmented by a large stock of townhouses. The County's current total of over 2,300 townhouses built or underway is virtually identical to the average for all seven comparable jurisdictions in 2005. The following table gives the actual numbers of the different units in the benchmark jurisdictions and shows that the multi-family ranges from 8.5% to 22.6% with Columbia County being close to the lowest at 8.6%.

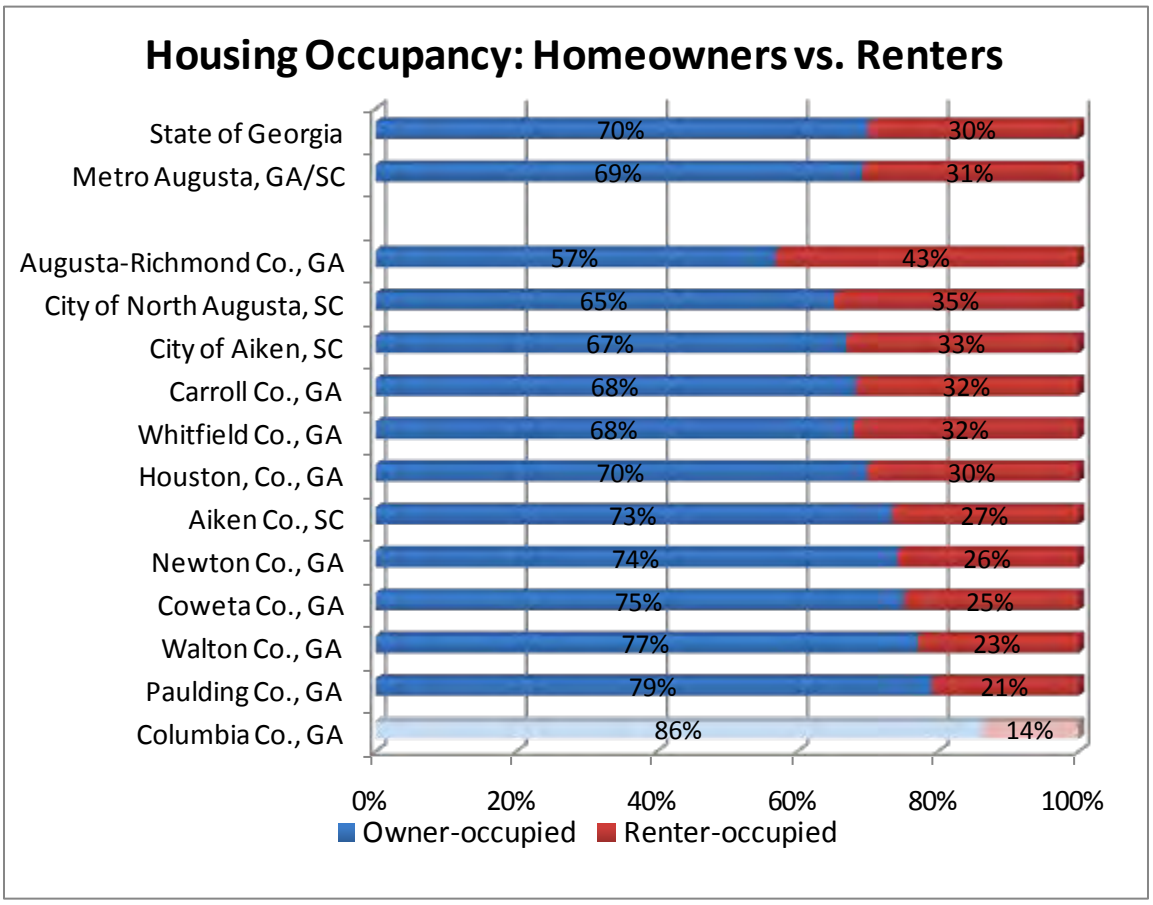
Multifamily Housing in Benchmark Georgia Counties							
	Newton	Columbia	Paulding	Carroll	Coweta	Houston	Whitfield
Apartments	2,340	1,365	3,211	3,965	4,755	6,880	4,311
Townhouses	816	2,080	1,142	2,531	2,231	3,690	3,633
Total Multifamily Units (apartments & townhouses)	3,156	3,445	4,353	6,496	6,985	10,570	7,944
Total Housing Units	36,969	39,919	50,308	45,392	45,989	56,586	35,170
Multifamily Percentage	**8.5%**	**8.6%**	**8.7%**	**14.3%**	**15.2%**	**18.7%**	**22.6%**

According to the Apartment Association of Greater Augusta, the vacancy rate for apartments in Evans and Martinez has fluctuated between 4 and 7 % since January of 2009, compared to a 7 to 8 % vacancy rate in the entire Augusta metro area. Such a low rate reflects Columbia County's strong housing market and flourishing economy.

The County's share of renter-occupied housing units was also lower than all other benchmark jurisdictions. The following chart also includes data for the Augusta metro area and associated jurisdictions. Rental figures include residents of all housing types, not just multi-family units.

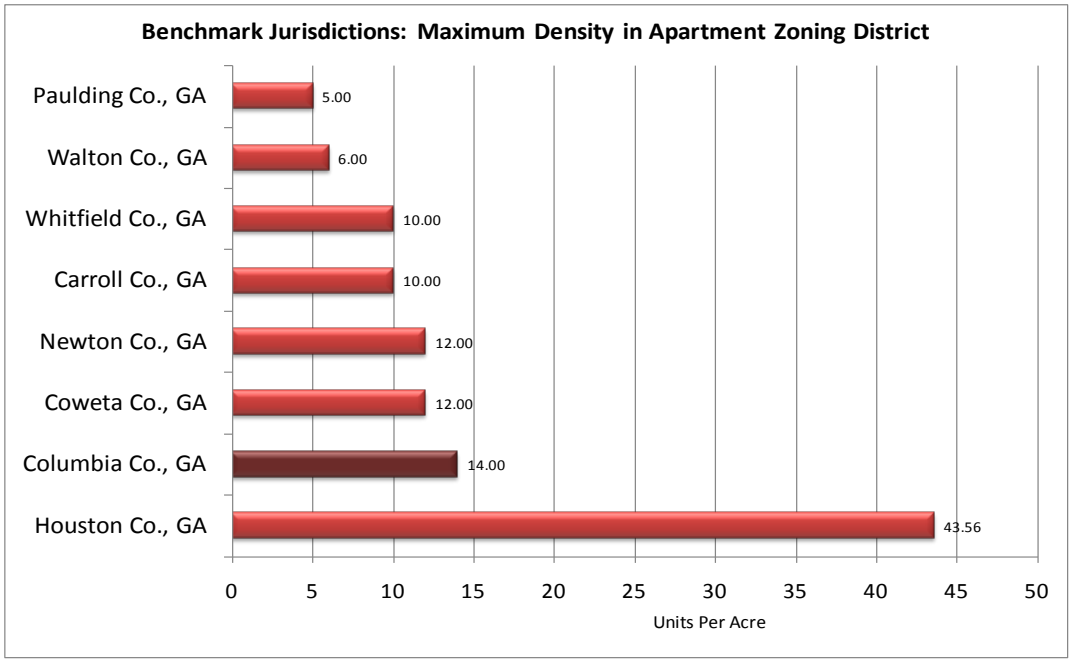
Columbia County had the highest owner-occupied housing rate at 86% compared to all the other benchmark jurisdictions. This illustrates a strong personal investment by the community. It is important to note that the closest jurisdiction by location is Augusta-Richmond County and that jurisdiction has the highest rate of renter-occupied housing at 43%. The overall figures for the State of Georgia is 70% owner-occupied and 30% renter-occupied, so Columbia County has less than half of renter-occupied properties as a percentage compared to the average throughout the State.

Chart 5 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007)



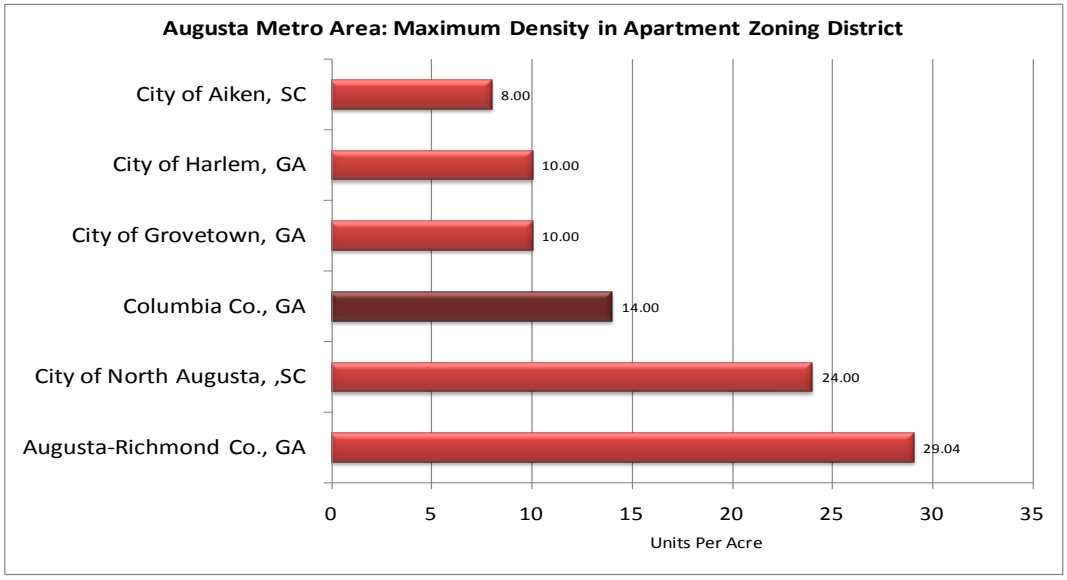
Although Columbia County has relatively few apartments and renters, the County zoning code permits fairly dense apartment developments in the A-R district. The County's 14 unit per acre maximum density limit is high compared to standards in other jurisdictions, which are typically around 10 units per acre as illustrated in Chart 6. Houston has the highest density at 43 units and is experiencing a rapid growth in population related to the Warner Robbins Air Force base.

Chart 6 (Source: Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department, 2009)



In the Augusta Metro Area, density limits differ substantially between jurisdictions. Columbia County allows a higher density than the City of Aiken, the City of Harlem and the City of Grovetown, while North Augusta and Augusta-Richmond County permit a higher density than Columbia County.

Chart 7 (Source: Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department, 2009)



In PUD (planned unit development) district, the County establishes a maximum density for each development through the zoning approval process. To date, the highest density allowed in PUD has been 14 units per acre.

Chart 8 (Source: Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department, 2009)

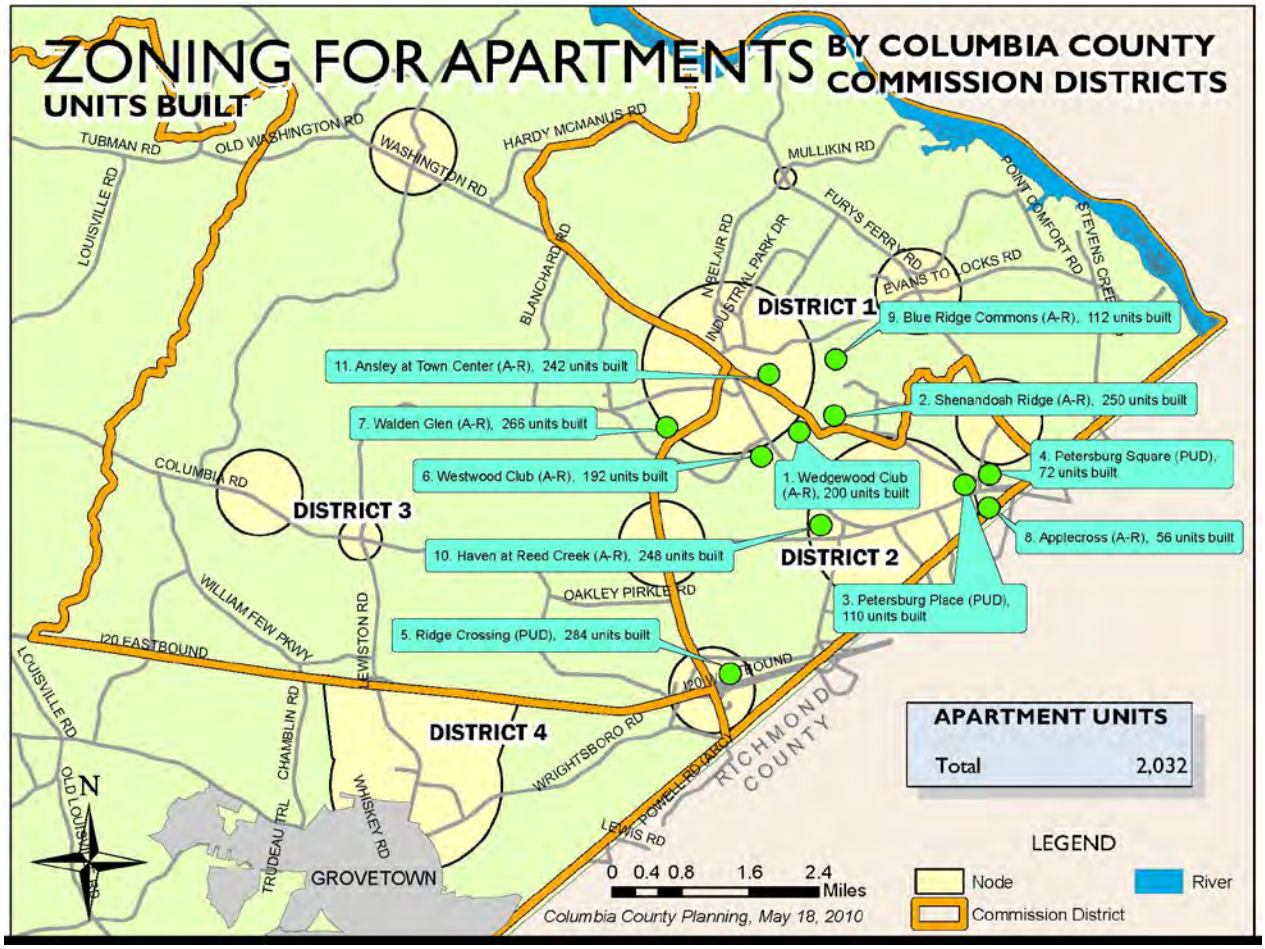
Maximum Density Limit in Planned Zoning District **Benchmark Jurisdictions and Augusta Metro Area**	
Jurisdiction	**Units/Acre**
Augusta-Richmond Co., GA	As specified in PUD documents
Columbia Co., GA	As specified in PUD documents
City of Harlem, GA	As specified in PUD documents
Houston Co., GA	43.56
City of North Augusta, ,SC	24
Walton County, GA	20
Newton County, GA	12
City of Grovetown, GA	10
City of Aiken, SC	8
Henry Co., GA	8
Whitfield County, GA	8
Paulding County, GA	5
Carroll Co., GA	4
Fayette Co., GA	4

Many comparable jurisdictions limit the density in their planned zoning districts to the same standard as their apartment zoning district. Nonetheless, apartments are much more prevalent in those jurisdictions than in Columbia County. Therefore, stricter density standards do not necessarily control county-wide apartment growth.

The following maps show the locations for apartments that are built and under construction and those locations that are zoned for apartments but not yet built. The corresponding charts list the name of the apartment complex, the zoning classification, density, and total number of units.

This data shows that most of the apartments are located within or near to the larger nodes and that the average density will be 11.8 units per acre once the units under construction have been completed.

Chart 9 (Source: Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department, 2009)

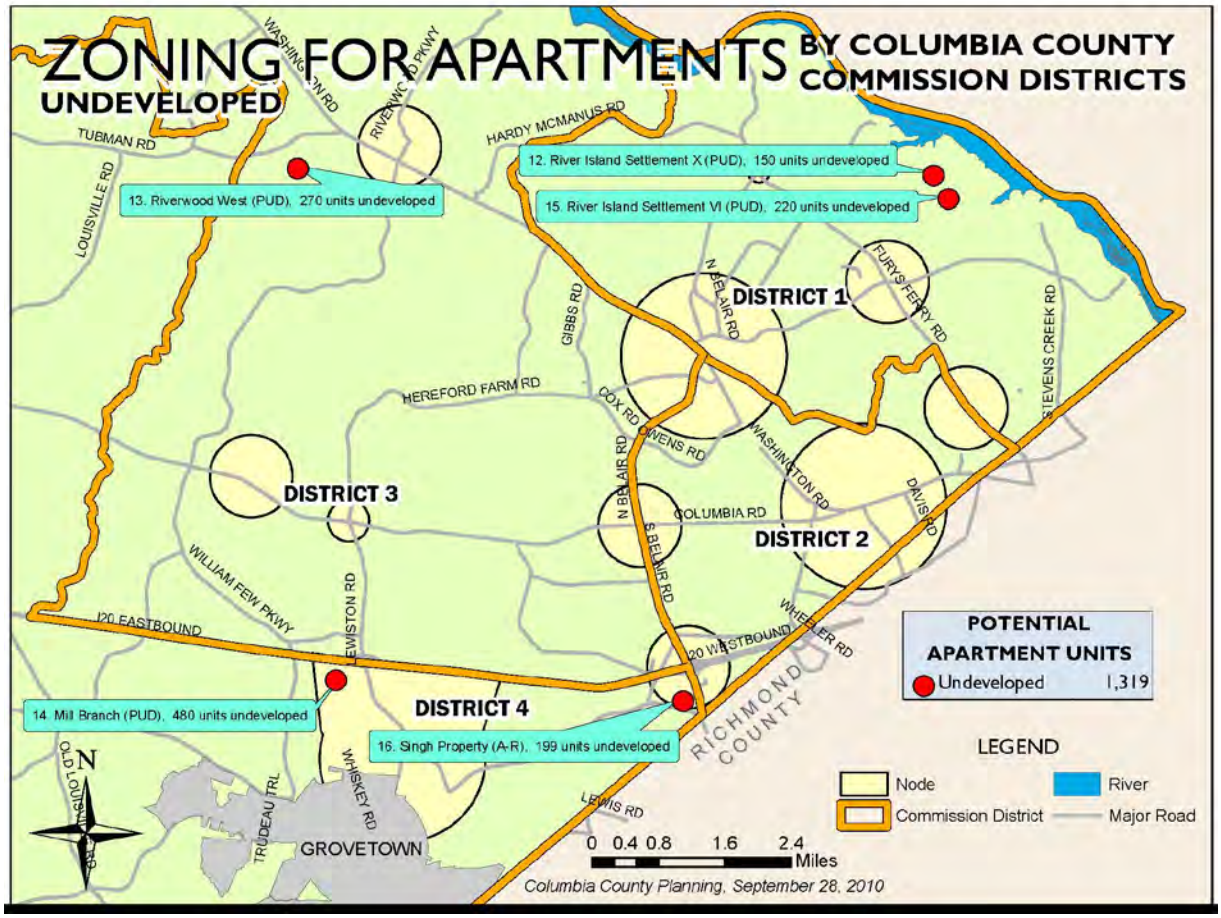


Multi-Family Housing Inventory, Columbia County							
APARTMENTS BUILT							
map i.d.	name	location	zoning	acres	units	units per acre	Node
1	Wedgewood Club	Blue Ridge Dr & Old Evans Rd.	A-R	20.60	200	9.7	n/a
2	Shenandoah Ridge	Blue Ridge Dr & Old Petersburg Rd	A-R	23.97	250	10.4	n/a
3	Petersburg Place	West of Old Petersburg Rd & Baston Rd	PUD	9.93	110	11.1	Martinez
4	Petersburg Square	East of Old Petersburg Rd & Baston Rd	PUD	6.44	72	11.2	n/a
5	Ridge Crossing	Beverly Rd & I-20	PUD	25.00	284	11.4	Interstate Service Area
6	Westwood Club	South of Washington Rd & Owens Rd	A-R	14.61	192	13.1	n/a
7	Walden Glen	North of N Belair Rd & Owens Rd	A-R	19.66	266	13.5	Evans Town Center
8	Applecross Apartments	South of Washington Rd & Baston Rd	A-R	3.98	56	14.1	Martinez
9	Blue Ridge Commons	Blue Ridge Dr at Lakeside Middle School	A-R	10.27	112	10.9	n/a
10	Haven at Reed Creek	Kroger & Washington Rds	A-R	20.66	248	12.0	Martinez
11	Ansley at Town Center	Old Evans Rd & Jamaica Ct	A-R	17.30	242	14.0	Evans Town Center
			TOTALS:	172	2,032	11.8	

(NOTE: Some acreage, unit and density figures are estimates calculated using the best available data.)

The following data shows that most of the proposed apartments are located within or near to the larger nodes. The maximum density approved is 14 units per acre for the new developments.

Chart 10 (Source: Columbia County Planning and Engineering Department, 2009)



Multi-Family Housing Inventory, Columbia County							
APARTMENTS UNDEVELOPED (Projections)							
map i.d.	**name**	**location**	**zoning**	**acres**	**units**	**units per acre**	**Node**
12	River Island Settlement X	Blackstone Camp Rd.	PUD	29.60	150	5.1	n/a
13	Riverwood West	Washington Rd & Old Washington Rd	PUD	27.00	270	10.0	n/a
14	Mill Branch	Horizon South Pkwy & I-20	PUD	40.90	480	11.7	I-20/Lewiston/Grovetown
15	River Island Settlement VI	Blackstone Camp Rd	PUD	18.30	220	12.0	n/a
16	Singh Property	Jimmie Dyess & Wrightsboro Rd	A-R	14.19	199	14.0	Interstate Service Area
			TOTALS:	**130**	**1,319**	10.1	

(NOTE: Some acreage, unit and density figures are estimates calculated using the best available data.)

The chart below lists the names, locations, and details for townhouses that are built, under construction, and rezoned but undeveloped locations. The average density for the existing townhouses is 5.9 units per acre, for development underway is 3.7 units per acre, and undeveloped is 6.2 units per acre.

Multi-Family Housing Inventory, Columbia County

TOWNHOUSES BUILT

name	location	zoning	total acres	units	units per acre	Node
Applecross Townhomes	South of Washington Rd & Baston Rd	A-R	13.46	93	6.9	Martinez
Bayview/Bayhill	Southern Pines Dr & Industrial Park	PUD	38.60	185	4.8	n/a
Belair Pines	S Old Belair Rd & Belair Pines	PUD	13.00	125	9.6	n/a
Belair Villas	S Belair Rd & S Old Belair Rd	A-R	5.84	59	10.1	Interstate Service Area
Brittany Place	Brittany Way	T-R	3.35	32	9.6	Martinez
Brookwood Townhomes	S Old Belair Rd & Columbia Rd	A-R	9.97	118	11.8	n/a
Cammaron	King Rd & Prince Dr	PUD	10.76	83	7.7	Martinez
Cedar Rock	The Pass & Cedar Rock Dr	PUD	18.90	63	3.3	n/a
Connor Place	Old Evans Rd	T-R	14.80	76	5.1	Evans Town Center
Crawford Mill	S Old Belair Rd & Crawford Mill Ln	PUD	32.80	79	2.4	n/a
Creekwalk	The Pass & Creekwalk Dr	PUD	11.54	65	5.6	n/a
Crown Point	Stephens Creek Rd	PUD	10.35	64	6.2	n/a
Evans Lake	Evans to Locks Rd & Grand Slam Dr	A-R	4.35	32	7.4	Evans Town Center
Faircloth Commons	Washington Rd & Faircloth Dr	PUD	23.00	90	3.9	Evans Town Center
Fox Creek Villas	Old Trail Rd & Fox Creek Dr	T-R	8.90	56	6.3	Martinez
Harris Ridge	4540 Wrighstboro Rd	T-R	26.60	190	7.1	n/a
Hidden Lake Townhomes	Columbia Rd & Oak Ridge Dr	PUD	13.40	70	5.2	Belair
Highpointe/Morningside Village	Greenbrier Ave & Washington Rd	PUD	27.00	301	11.1	n/a
Jones Station	Southern Pines Dr & Manly Way	PUD	14.40	54	3.8	n/a
Joshua Tree Villas	The Pass & Joshua Tree Ln	PUD	8.20	54	6.6	n/a
Reed Creek Villas	The Pass & Furys Ferry Rd	PUD	4.44	25	5.6	n/a
Southern Pines	Long Needle Cir	T-R	5.67	34	6.0	n/a
Steeplechase	Furys Ferry Rd & Full Circle Dr	T-R	20.28	74	3.6	Evans to Locks
Villages At Riverwatch	Old Petersburg Rd & Coach Ln	T-R	3.30	18	5.5	Martinez
Wisteria Place	Blue Ridge Dr & Micah Trace	A-R	1.43	20	14.0	n/a
West Lake Townhomes	Stephens Creek Rd & Prestwick Dr	R-3	9.44	40	4.2	n/a
		TOTALS:	**354**	**2,100**	5.9	

TOWNHOUSES UNDERWAY

name	location	zoning	total acres	units	units per acre	Node
High Meadows	Chamblin Rd	PUD	38.00	63	1.7	Bartram Trail
Lazy Acres	Oakley Pirkle & Crawford Creek Pl	PUD	10.34	32	3.1	n/a
Picket Fences	Old Evans Rd	PUD	8.74	115	13.2	Evans Town Center
		TOTALS:	**57**	**210**	3.7	

TOWNHOUSES UNDEVELOPED (Projections)

name	location	zoning	acres	units	units per acre	Node
Copper Ridge	4874 Washington Rd	PUD	21.70	90	4.1	n/a
Riverwood Plantation	Washington Rd & William Few Pkwy	PUD	51.00	306	6.0	Greenbrier
River Island Settlement	Blackstone Camp Rd	PUD	47.50	200	4.2	n/a
Serotta	Columbia Rd	PUD	40.00	254	6.4	Bartram Trail
Ivy Falls	Columbia Rd	PUD	8.00	46	5.8	Bartram Trail
Baker Glen	Baker Place Rd & Chamblin Rd	PUD	25.50	203	8.0	n/a
Bacon/Crowell	Furys Ferry Rd & Southern Pines Dr	T-R	3.23	26	8.0	n/a
Mary Barton Hitt	Furys Ferry Rd & Old Furys Ferry Rd	T-R	5.40	43	8.0	Evans to Locks
Sana Ullah	643 Gibbs Rd	T-R	2.00	16	8.0	n/a
Bro-Con	4221 Old Evans Rd	T-R	10.41	83	8.0	Evans Town Center
Jerry Kendrick	336 Old Plantation Rd	T-R	2.00	16	8.0	Martinez
Allen Reece	112 Shaw St	T-R	3.10	25	8.0	Martinez
Regions Bank	4601 Columbia Rd	T-R	10.00	80	8.0	Belair
Welcome South	Wrightsboro Rd & Apostolic Ln	T-R	19.91	159	8.0	n/a
Columbia Co. - Greenspace	Furys Ferry Rd & Southern Pines Dr	T-R	13.47	N/A	N/A	n/a
Home Sites Ltd. - Greenspace	Furys Ferry Rd	T-R	34.46	N/A	N/A	n/a
Crowell Co. - Greenspace	Furys Ferry Rd	T-R	19.76	N/A	N/A	n/a
		TOTALS:	**250**	**1,547**	6.2	

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Future Conditions

In addition to the County's 2,032 existing apartments, zoning has already been approved to build over 1,300 more apartment units on currently vacant land. If all of the aforementioned units are built by 2015 and development of other housing types continues at the post-2000 rate, then it is projected those 3,351 units would constitute 7 % of the County's housing and more closely match the apartment totals and housing mix of similar jurisdictions.

The future economic health of the County is dependent upon maintaining a balanced mix of housing types. PUD zoning allows a variety of housing options such as single family and townhomes to cater for different price demands. The County needs to consider whether the density in the PUD zoning district should stay unspecified or be restricted to a maximum density comparable to the AR (apartment) and TR (townhouse) zoning districts. These factors have a direct bearing on the quality of life and can help to maintain current living standards that are a great asset to this community and which have been recognized nationally on a number of occasions.

Recommendations

A. Multi-family development should match the pace of population growth and be limited to appropriate sites.

Columbia County has fewer apartments than similar jurisdictions. However, if most of the 140 vacant acres already zoned for apartments are developed by 2015, then the County's apartment total of about 3,500 units will constitute 7 % of all housing, which is comparable to the 9 % average of the benchmark counties. In the meantime, new zoning to allow apartments should match the population growth rate in order to preserve a balanced housing mix. From 2000 to 2008, the County's population increased an average of 2.7 % each year. Therefore, approval of zoning to allow a 2.7 % annual increase in new apartments (in addition to those already approved) could be appropriate for apartment development through 2015. This calculates to about 50 units per year. Since most apartment developments average about 200 units, this could effectively result in only one rezoning over the next four years.

Alternately, if the County opts to maintain the current share of apartments at 3 % of the County's housing inventory, then no new additional zoning to allow apartment development would be needed in the near future. The 140 vacant acres already zoned for apartments would most certainly provide apartment development that outpaces population growth through 2015. If all of the vacant land is developed, then apartments would increase in number by nearly 75 %, while population is projected to increase less than 15 % from 2010 to 2015. The County should monitor the development of the vacant acreage and track the number of apartment units added annually.

With regards to multi-family housing, the County's most important role is limiting apartments and townhouse development to the most appropriate locations, as recommended by the Growth Management Plan (i.e. along major arterial and collector roads, within nodes and near commercial development as a transitional use). These locations minimize traffic, encourage pedestrian-friendly retail development, and avoid perceived conflicts with single-family detached homes. When the GMP is next updated, appropriate locations should be identified even more specifically.

Townhouses constitute about 8 % of the County's housing stock according to the 2005 Census. If most of the 250 vacant acres already zoned for townhouses are developed by 2015 and all other housing types increase at the same rate as recent years, then townhouses would account for about 10 % of all housing in 2015.

Summary: Zoning to allow a 2.7% annual increase in new apartments up to 2015 could keep up with the projected population growth. This calculates to about 50 apartment units per year which could effectively result in only one rezoning over the next four years since most apartment developments average about 200 units. The County should monitor the development of the vacant acreage and track the number of apartment units and townhouses added annually. When the GMP is next updated, identify specific locations suitable for apartments and townhouses. Any new apartment developments, including those in a PUD shall be encouraged to be located within nodes. Any new townhouse developments, including those in a PUD shall be located within nodes or along arterials. Any townhouse developments shall remain at 8 units per acre.

B. Review density standards in apartment and PUD zoning districts

When considering the density of future apartment zoning, it is important to realize that lowering the maximum density in the A-R district would not necessarily result in fewer apartments, as evidenced by benchmark jurisdictions with lower density limits yet more apartments than Columbia County. Lowering the maximum density could instead create less dense developments covering more acreage. A more effective method to control apartment growth is to approve A-R rezoning applications more selectively.

Nonetheless, if the County decides to lower the maximum density allowed through zoning, then 10 units per acre would be consistent with benchmark jurisdictions. Retroactively lowering the density standard for all land zoned A-R would likely reduce property values for the undeveloped sites. Therefore, any change in the density limit should be applied through a new zoning district. An amendment to the zoning code would be required to create a new district, possibly called "A-R10," and the County could either stop accepting applications for A-R zoning (14 units per acre) or limit approvals of new apartment zoning to A-R10, allowing 10 units per acre.

Another important element of responsible multi-family housing development is ensuring that a high quality product will be built. The County can control elements such as architectural style, building materials, landscaping, and amenities through the approval of PUD zoning. The County has far less control over apartments built in the A-R zoning district, where a developer is free to build apartments with no design restrictions (except where in an overlay district). Therefore, the County could decide to continue to allow higher density developments in the PUD district than the A-R district as act as an incentive to developers to produce higher quality developments.

Allowing a higher density in the PUD district also allows for mixed-use developments. Mixed-use developments that incorporate apartments with retail can create entertainment districts that not only serve as a regional destination for shoppers but also create a unique sense of "place" in otherwise anonymous suburban settings. Developments such as The Village at Sandhill in Columbia, S.C. and Birkdale Village in Huntersville, N.C. act as economic magnets. The GMP recommends urban-style, mixed-use developments in the Evans Town Center, and the emerging Gateway District off I-20's Lewiston Road exit is also a prime location.

It is strongly recommended that the County complete an annual review of multi-family development and maintain an accurate count of units built, under construction, and of undeveloped acreage. This information would be presented to the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners for review at the start of each calendar year.

Summary: Review the density in apartment zoning district and consider amending the zoning code to create a new district, called "A-R10," to allow 10 units per acre for any future apartment rezonings. Also, the maximum density allowed in the PUD zoning district will be 12 units per acre. Current undeveloped land zoned "A-R" will remain at 14 units per acre as per the current code.

C. Zoning Code Update

Complete all zoning code revisions before the end of 2010.

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D. Adopt the Multi-family Housing Study as part of the new GMP

Adopt the Multi-Family Housing Study as part of new GMP. In the new GMP, permit more zoning flexibility along the corridors between nodes for a greater mix of land uses. The final GMP shall be presented to the Planning Commission and then to the Board of Commissioners in November 2010. The Regional Commission and the State will then have time to review the new GMP and it will be returned to the County by January 2011. Adopt the new GMP prior to the February 28, 2011 deadline.

Summary of Recommendations

A. **Zoning to allow a 2.7% annual increase in new apartments up to 2015 could keep up with the projected population growth. This calculates to about 50 apartment units per year which could effectively result in only one rezoning over the next four years since most apartment developments average about 200 units. The County should monitor the development of the vacant acreage and track the number of apartment units and townhouses added annually. When the GMP is next updated, identify specific locations suitable for apartments and townhouses. Any new apartment developments, including those in a PUD shall be encouraged to be located within nodes. Any new townhouse developments, including those in a PUD shall be located within nodes or along arterials. Any townhouse developments, including those in a PUD shall remain at 8 units per acre.**

B. **Review the density in apartment zoning district and consider amending the zoning code to create a new district, called "A-R10," to allow 10 units per acre for any future apartment rezonings. Also, the maximum density allowed in the PUD zoning district will be 12 units per acre. Current undeveloped land zoned "A-R" will remain at 14 units per acre as per the current code.**

C. **Complete all zoning code revisions before the end of 2010.**

D. **Adopt the Multi-Family Housing Study as part of new GMP. In the new GMP, permit more zoning flexibility along the corridors between nodes for a greater mix of land uses. The final GMP shall be presented to the Planning Commission and then to the Board of Commissioners in October 2010. The Regional Commission and the State will then have time to review the new GMP and it will be returned to the County by January 2011. Adopt the new GMP prior to the February 28, 2011 deadline.**

E. **Planning staff will carry out further study of retirement communities, looking at concepts and statistics for retirement communities within Columbia County and other examples outside of the County.**