



VII. Land Use

A. Existing Land Use

The primary forces that mold land use patterns include: infrastructure, topography, hydrology, population growth, land and construction costs, cultural preference, automobile reliance, and educational opportunities.

Low-density residential (i.e., 2-4 acre lot sizes) land use has permeated throughout the County with the heaviest concentration of rural residential use occurring around Carrollton and between Temple and Villa Rica. Residential lot sizes vary throughout the unincorporated area of the County, ranging from 1-4 acres in rural/agricultural areas to 1/2 acre in growth areas limited sewer availability. Compared with average metropolitan area densities of three (3) units per acre, the County is using nine (9) times more land per capita with higher associated fiscal and energy costs. Higher density mobile home parks and subdivisions are scattered; most being located in the eastern half of the County.

Exhibit 7-1 lists the number of acres used for specific land use categories in unincorporated Carroll County and in each municipality. Agriculture, forestry, parks, recreation and conservation lands comprise 69.2% of the acreage in unincorporated Carroll County. Rural residential uses occupy 26.9% of the unincorporated area. Commercial and industrial land uses account for 1.2% of the unincorporated area. The total number of acres evaluated (308,801) is lower than the total number of acres in the County (322,444) in large part because public right-of-way is not evaluated for tax purposes.

This land use pattern is the result of continuous public and private development actions. Public actions that impact growth patterns are regulatory and fiscal. Public investment in infrastructure and services directly influences the use of land. Major transportation routes, such as I-20, Highway 61, and Highway 27, have attracted development by allowing a heightened level of transportation access. A Corridor Development requirement has assisted in maintaining value and viability of properties along these corridors, thus preventing the development of land uses which conflict with the roadside and surrounding areas. Development patterns along these routes are a mix of commercial and residential.

Public water facilities availability allows subdivision development at greater densities. Within Carroll County, rural residential lots with densities as high as two units per acre are common due to the availability of public water. The Carroll County Water Authority's allocation of water resources will



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have a significant impact on future growth patterns, particularly within the town of Mt. Zion and city of Villa Rica, which purchase some water from the CCWA.

Centralized wastewater treatment and disposal services are unavailable in the unincorporated areas of Carroll County. The predominant method of treatment is private on-site septic facilities. The safe operation of on-site private facilities requires large minimum lot sizes to allow sufficient land for the installation of facilities and to avoid groundwater pollution caused by concentrated sewerage treatment. Reliance on septic systems for much of the recent development in the County has resulted in far greater land consumption per capita and loss of open space. The Plan advocates growth in designated suburban areas where municipal wastewater services can be provided.

Exhibit 7-1: Acreage of Existing Land Use by Jurisdiction

Land Use	Unincorporated Carroll County	Carrollton	Villa Rica	Bowdon	Temple	Whitesburg	Roopville	Mt. Zion	Bremen	Total
Agriculture/Forestry	109,676.7	611.8	721.5	261.7	1,009.5	220.1	65.0	2,159.0	0.0	114,725.3
Residential	74,521.6	4,059.2	2,241.7	1,143.2	1,850.2	706.0	248.9	1,313.9	89.2	86,173.9
Commercial	2,869.0	2,459.1	748.0	127.2	147.7	45.6	4.5	2.5	928.9	7,332.4
Industrial	546.0	1,091.5	345.5	179.2	44.0	8.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,214.6
Public/Institutional	4,991.8	3,539.6	502.2	175.8	186.8	66.2	50.0	83.9	163.3	9,759.7
Transportation/Communications/Utilities	2,362.0	73.0	28.9	1.4	1.6	7.7	0.3	9.2	0.0	2,484.1
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	82,242.3	253.4	216.0	158.1	678.8	435.6	72.7	2,054.9	0.0	86,111.8



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Total	277,209.4	12,087.7	4,803.7	2,046.6	3,918.6	1,489.6	441.3	5,623.4	1,181.5	308,801.8
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Source: Carroll County, Georgia

Residential development has concentrated near thoroughfares radiating from and around the cities; more dispersed residential development is evident throughout the remaining rural areas. Commercial centers exist primarily within the city limits where public services are available, although there are a few limited commercial areas along main roads and adjacent to intersections. Highways 27 and 61 have experienced increasing pressure for strip commercial development. Tree cover dominates much of the rural landscape with intermingled clear-cut ground, pastures, non-forested wetland, and low density residential use. The southeast portion of the County, which is largely owned by timber companies, is more densely forested than areas along the Little Tallapoosa River that have historically been used for other agricultural pursuits.

As is evident in the **Population Map** and **Existing Land Use Map** in **Appendix C**, most of the population growth within the County has occurred in the region to the north and east of Carrollton to Villa Rica, along the Interstate 20, Highway 61 and Highway 166 corridors. The population growth has primarily occurred in unincorporated rural residential subdivisions and on the fringes of Carrollton and Villa Rica. Blighted areas within Carroll County are isolated to small areas within the incorporated cities. In rural areas, there are a number of trailer parks that have fallen into disrepair, as well as areas of illegal dumping.

Rural residential development within unincorporated Carroll County has occurred on scattered rural estates with the heaviest concentrations between Carrollton and Villa Rica. The existing agriculture zoning district has a four-acre minimum lot size requirement. Historically, the major motivation behind large lot zoning patterns was to allow parcels to be subdivided from farms to allow farmers to liquidate land assets while creating parcels that could serve as “holding zones” for future development. Residential development at that time was denser than the current residential sprawl. Since adoption of the four-acre rule in agricultural zoning, the County has found that large lot zoning has expedited land conversion from agricultural to residential. The Plan recommends strategies to retain agricultural land, open space, and natural resources while promoting more efficient growth patterns.

Carroll County has adopted and enforces land use controls through zoning and subdivision regulations. **Exhibit 7-2** lists the County’s zoning districts and the amount of land within each zoning district. Agricultural (A) zoning district, which applies to 82.7% of the unincorporated County, permits land to be split into tracts of four acres or more. Many tracts zoned Agricultural are used for



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residential use with little agriculture use taking place. Residential zoning districts allow for varied lot sizes with minimums ranging from a one acre (R-2) to three acres (R-1). No maximum lot sizes are in effect. The Fairfield Plantation development, which is predominantly residential, has Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning. The PUD zoning classification has since been repealed. It is recommended that R-3 zoning (1/2 acre lot size) also be repealed due to a recent ruling by Environmental Health that at least 1/2 acre must be dedicated to septic for any new residential construction. Residential zoning districts (R-1, R-2, R3, R-30, MFR, MHS, and HDDR) encompass approximately 32,990 acres or nearly 12.0% of unincorporated Carroll County. Commercial, Industrial, Office and Institutional zoning applies to 9,853 acres or nearly 3.6%, mostly located adjacent to major transportation nodes. Public right-of-way and other unclassified lands⁵⁰ account for 4,759 acres or 1.7% of the County.

Exhibit 7-2: Zoning by Acreage for Unincorporated Carroll County

Zoning District	Symbol	Acres
Agricultural	A	228,339.05
Low Density Residential	R-1	11,386.42
Medium Density Residential	R-2	6,258.19
Medium Density Residential	R-30	1,096.46
High Density Residential	R-3	4,443.47
Multi-Family Residential	MFR	1,299.40
Manufactured Home Subdivision	MHS	4,845.26
Higher Density Detached Residential	HDDR	1,544.56
Commercial	C	3,854.02
Industrial	I	5,582.41
Office and Institutional	OI	416.85
Planned Unit Development	PUD	2,115.73
Right-of-Way and Unclassified		4,759.34
Total Acres		275,941.16

Source: Carroll County, Georgia

⁵⁰ The County does assign zoning on public rights-of-way. There are also fragments of land for which zoning may have been assigned but do not appear on the County’s graphic information system (GIS) records.



B. Future Land Use

1. Overview

The County's future land use, described in this Land Use Element, has been established based upon consideration of natural resources, existing land use, recent demographic trends, projected growth, existing and projected community facilities and services, other background data, public input, and evaluation of County's growth alternatives. The Plan proposes to distribute projected growth by establishing a land use pattern and programming facilities to efficiently serve anticipated needs, while preserving the County's most valued resources. The most intensive development is planned within the cities, the areas surrounding the cities where urban services are anticipated to be provided, and along transportation corridors. The remainder of the County is designated for rural development at densities of the existing agricultural zoning.

2. Growth Areas

The Land Use Element establishes a preferred growth pattern after conducting a thorough analysis of the relative impacts of three alternative growth scenarios. Each of the areas represents distinct growth patterns that can accommodate projected population and employment growth in distinct ways. The residential areas are based on historical zoning practice with an assumption that centralized wastewater service would be confined to existing city limits and some limited annexation areas. The corridor areas direct most of the County's growth to existing cities and areas along the key transportation corridors of I-20, SR 61, U.S. Highway 27, and U.S. 78. The agricultural areas are those where farming is or could be facilitated.

Each of the areas was evaluated for:

- the ability to accommodate projected growth;
- impact on community character in incorporated and unincorporated areas;
- effect on timber and agricultural productivity;
- promotion of economic development prospects;
- transportation and utility costs and impacts; and
- community facility and service costs

After evaluating input from the public, the Planning Commission, and the County Commissioners, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee selected a **Future Land Use Map** that incorporates elements of all three areas and is reflected in the objectives and policies of this Land Use Element.



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The Plan demonstrates sufficient capacity to accommodate projected growth. Based on the projected population growth that would occur between the years 2018 and 2040:

24,425 dwelling units will be developed County-wide;

Commercial and industrial development will occupy an additional 8,072 acres; and

Using the County’s potential maximum buildout at 123,023 dwelling units at proposed densities, the 30 year projected growth of 24,425 dwelling units will leave room for 98,598 dwelling units for post-2040 growth.

Exhibit 7-3: Projected Residential Growth

2010 Population	110,527
2040 Projected Population	148,421
Population Increase 2010 - 2040	61,153
Persons Per Household	2.63
Occupied Dwellings	23,252
Vacancy Rate (assumed)	5%
Additional Dwelling Units Needed	24,415

Source: 2010 Census Data, University of West Georgia, Atlanta Regional Commission, Carroll County Planning Department

Exhibit 7-4: Commercial and Industrial Development Projections

2010 Population	110,527
2040 Projected Population	148,421
Population Increase 2010 - 2040	61,153
Commercial and Industrial Acres	9,547
2010 Commercial and Industrial Acres Per Person	0.11
Additional Acres from Population Growth	6,727



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Additional Acres for Local Market Capture (20%) ⁵¹	1,345
Total Additional Commercial and Industrial Land (acres)	8,072

Source: 2010 Census Data, University of West Georgia, Atlanta Regional Commission, Carroll County Planning Department

Exhibit 7-5: Development Potential of Future Land Use Map

	Growth Tiers					Total
	Cities	Commercial Corridor	Suburban (sewered)	Suburban (unsewered)	Rural	
Total Vacant Land (acres)	28,876	1,102	7,746	13,177	106,001	156,902
Land Required for Non-Residential Development (acres)	8,840	1,102	0	0	0	9,942
Remaining Vacant Land (acres)	20,036	0	7,746	13,177	106,001	146,960
Average Density (dwellings per acre)	3 dwellings per acre	NA	3 dwellings per acre	1 dwelling per acre	1 dwelling per 4 acres	
Development Potential (dwelling units)	60,107	0	23,239	13,177	26,500	123,023
Projected Dwelling Units						24,425
Surplus Residential Development Potential (dwelling units)						98,598

Source: Carroll County Planning Staff

⁵¹ The local market capture accounts for additional acreage needed to accommodate new commercial and industrial development that provides goods, services and jobs that County residents currently travel outside the County to obtain. As the population grows the variety of viable economic activities increases, which retains and circulates dollars within the local economy.



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3. Future Land Use Map

The **Future Land Use Map** illustrates the land use and infrastructure policies required to achieve the preferred scenario. While better defined by objectives and policies in the Comprehensive Plan, the classifications include:

Cities – currently incorporated areas that are not subject to this Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation Corridors – transportation corridors with mixed use and commercial development following Highways 61 and 27 with nodal centers at critical interchanges with major arterials.

Residential - areas that will accommodate rural residential development relying on centralized water systems and on-site sewer service. Average density will be approximately one dwelling per acre.

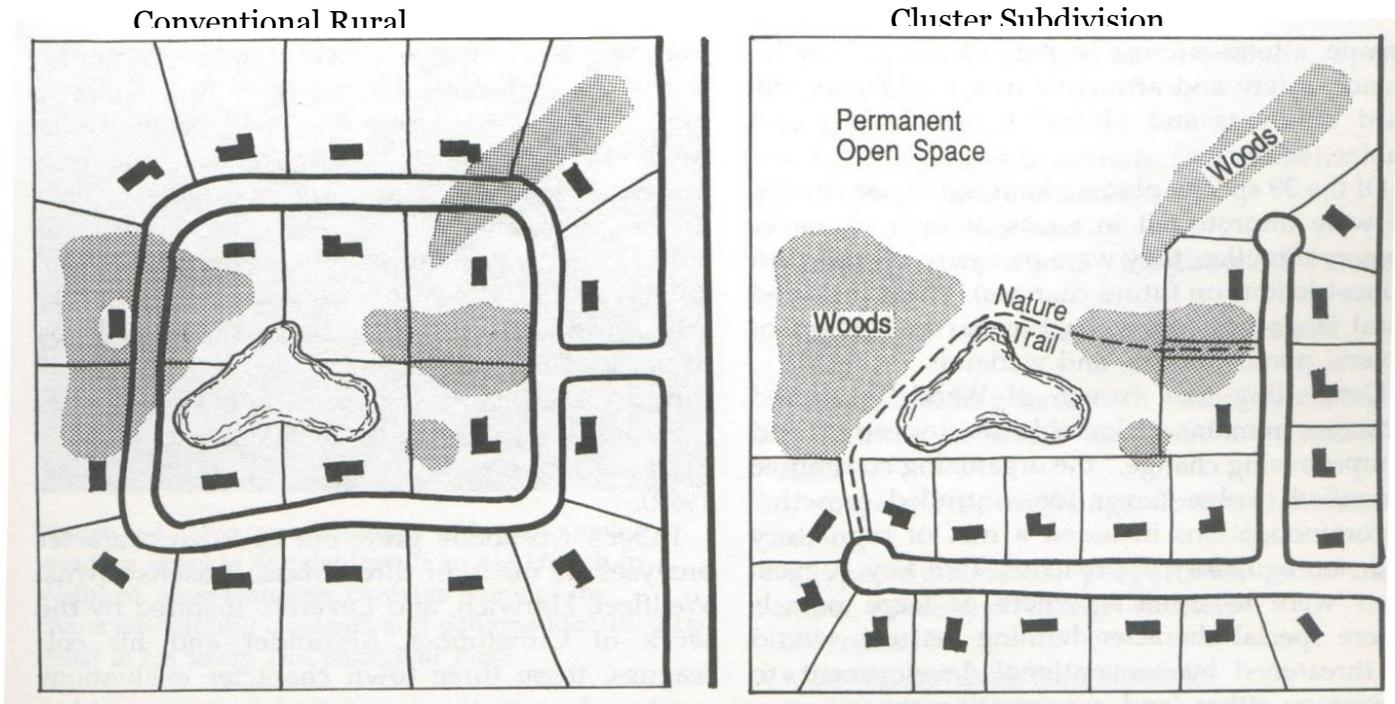
Within the residential area, the use of cluster development patterns will be encouraged provided adequate water and wastewater facilities are available. **Exhibit 7-6** illustrates a subdivision development pattern (also called conservation subdivision) with modest residential lots and preserved open space. Subdivision patterns will be implemented through the County's land development regulations.



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Exhibit 7-6: Cluster Subdivision Design



Source: Randall Arendt, et al., Rural By Design, Page 31.

Agricultural – These areas consist primarily of farm, ranch, and timber lands that are zoned “Agriculture”. Other than buildout of previously approved and existing subdivisions or lot splits (grandfathered), future development in this tier will occur at densities of one dwelling per four acres, or less.



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A Corridor Development Ordinance was adopted that permits only appropriately designed development along highways, thus protecting the efficient movement of traffic through the corridors. At present, the transportation corridors contain a hodgepodge of low intensity and poorly designed residential and non-residential uses that present traffic hazards due to a large number of access points or curb cuts along the corridors. Corridor planning will transform the transportation corridors into commercially attractive developments that provide for employment opportunities.



4. Future Land Use Plan

The **Future Land Use Map** in **Appendix C** was developed after evaluating existing zoning, existing land use, lot patterns, future growth needs and existing infrastructure. To provide for coordinated expansion of urban densities of the County's cities, the residential areas reflect the extent of land that will reasonably be served by municipal water and wastewater systems within the next 20 years. Locations for residential, commercial, industrial, and other future land uses for these areas will be developed in future specific residential plans to be developed in coordination with each city. The county and cities are expected to adopt intergovernmental agreements for coordination of infrastructure extensions, land use transitions, riparian corridor preservation, and annexations.

The **Future Land Use Map** assigns land use categories to all parcels in unincorporated Carroll County. The intensity of development will be determined by the appropriate policies at the rezoning and development approval stages. Limited neighborhood commercial and service uses may be developed in specified residential areas in the future based on appropriate infill policies that assure compatibility with neighborhood character. The future land use categories are as follows:

Residential –Residential development may include neighborhood scale commercial uses to serve the predominately residential development.

Commercial –Non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service, and entertainment facilities, are organized into general categories of intensities. Neighborhood scale commercial uses may be authorized in residential areas subject to zoning and tier policies.

Some examples of commercial development in Carroll County:



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Industrial –Manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining, or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses.

Public/Institutional –State, federal, or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations,



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libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries and hospitals. Facilities that are publicly owned, but would be classified more accurately in another land use category, should not be included in this category. For example, publicly owned parks and/or recreational facilities should be placed in the Park/Recreation/Conservation category; landfills should fall under the Industrial category; and general office buildings containing government offices should be placed in the Commercial category. Note that these land uses may be established in areas designated for any of the other land uses.

Transportation/Communications/Utilities

–Major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, television, radio and cellular towers, telephone switching stations, airports, bus facilities, gas, electric, telephone, sewer, water and drainage utilities.

Park/Recreation/Conservation –Active or passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include farms with purchased development rights, playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers, open space, habitat corridors, bicycle and pedestrian trails and paths, and environmentally-sensitive lands or similar uses.





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Agriculture – This category is for land dedicated to agriculture, farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting, or other similar rural uses such as pasture or woodlands not in commercial use.