



CHAPTER 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 opportunity.

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 (**Map 17, Appendix B**). Residential lot sizes vary throughout the unincorporated area of the County, ranging from 2-4 acres in rural/agricultural areas to ½ acre in growth areas with centralized water systems but no sewer. Compared with average metropolitan area densities of three units per acre, the County is using nine (9) times more land per capita with associated fiscal and energy costs that are staggering. Higher density mobile home parks and subdivisions are scattered; most being located in the eastern half of the County.

Exhibit 116 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. Development patterns along these routes are a mix of commercial and residential.

Public water facilities allow subdivision development at greater densities. Within Carroll County, rural residential lots with densities as high as 2 units per acre are common due to the availability of public water. The Carroll County Water Authority (CCWA) has recently increased its raw water sources and has the ability to serve a larger population base. The CCWA's allocation of water resources will have a significant impact on future growth patterns, particularly within the towns of Mt. Zion and Villa Rica, which purchase water from the CCWA.

Centralized wastewater treatment and disposal services generally 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 than would have occurred with development on centralized systems. The Plan



advocates greater reliance of development on centralized wastewater systems in cities, urban growth areas and in designated suburban areas where municipal or community wastewater services can be provided in an environmentally responsible and cost-effective manner.

Exhibit 116: Acreage of Existing Land Use by Jurisdiction

Land Use	Unincorporated Carroll County	Carrollton	Villa Rica	Bowdon	Temple	Whitesburg	Roopville	Mt. Zion	Bremen	Totals
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
Totals	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

Source: Carroll County, Georgia

Map 18 in Appendix B shows the land cover derived from satellite images. 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 **Map 1 in Appendix B** and **Exhibit 116**, 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 on 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 Carroll County has occurred on scattered rural estates with the heaviest concentrations between Carrollton and Villa Rica, resulting from a lack of guidance offered by prior Comprehensive Plans. The existing agriculture zoning district has a 4 acre minimum lot size requirement that mandates parcels that are too small to farm and too large to mow. 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 urban development. Urban development at that time was denser than the current suburban sprawl. Since adoption of the four-acre rule, the County has found that large lot zoning has expedited land conversion and created unnecessary service



costs. The Plan recommends density-based zoning, conservation subdivisions and other 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 117** lists the County’s zoning districts and the amount of land within each district (**Map 19, Appendix B**). The Agricultural (A) zoning district, which applies to 82.7% of the unincorporated County, permits land to be split into tracts of 4 acres or more. Many tracts zoned Agricultural are used for residential use with little agriculture taking place, in part due to the low minimum tract size. Residential zoning districts allow for varied lot sizes with minimums ranging from a ½ acre (R-3) to 3 acres (R-1). No maximum lot sizes are in effect. The Fairfield Plantation development, which is predominantly residential, has Planned Unit Development zoning. Residential zoning districts (R-1, R-2, R-30, R-3, MFR, MHS, HDDR, PUD) 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 lands⁴¹ account for 4,759 acres or 1.7% of the County.

Exhibit 117: 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

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 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

41 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.



the County's most valued resources. To accomplish these ends, the Plan establishes six (6) growth tiers in which different intensities and uses of development are located. The most intensive development is planned within the cities, the areas surrounding the cities where urban services are anticipated to be provided (Urban Growth Areas) and along transportation corridors. Suburban area development will vary based upon the availability of centralized wastewater services. The Plan recommends two tiers of suburban development, the first reflecting suburban and the second rural residential character. The remainder of the County is designated for rural development at densities of the existing agricultural zoning.

2. Growth Scenarios

The Land Use Element establishes a preferred growth pattern that was defined by the County's Coordinated Planning Committee (CPC) after conducting a thorough analysis of the relative impacts of three alternative growth scenarios. Each of the scenarios represented distinct growth patterns that would accommodate projected population and employment growth in distinct ways. A "Rural Residential" scenario was based on historical zoning practice with an assumption that centralized wastewater service would be confined to existing city limits and some limited annexation areas. A "Corridors" scenario directed most of the County's growth to existing cities and areas along the key transportation corridors of I-20, SH 61 and U.S. 78. A "Centers/Villages" scenario identified growth areas around each of the cities that would be anticipated to capture all urban and suburban growth.

Each of the scenarios 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;
- community facility and service costs; and
- consistency with the goals established by the CPC.

After evaluating each of the alternatives (see summary analysis in **Appendix B**) and input from the public, the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners, the CPC selected a preferred alternative that incorporates elements of all three growth alternatives and is reflected in the maps, objectives and policies of this Land Use Element.

Exhibits 118, 119 and 120 demonstrate that the preferred alternative has sufficient capacity to accommodate projected growth. Based on the projected population growth that would occur between the years 2000 and 2030:

- 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-2030 growth.



Exhibit 118: Projected Residential Growth

2000 Population	87,268
2030 Projected Population	148,421
Population Increase 2000 - 2030	61,153
Persons Per Household	2.63
Occupied Dwellings	23,252
Vacancy Rate (assumed)	5%
Additional Dwelling Units Needed	24,415

Source: Planning Works, modifications by PRISM Associates and Carroll County Planning

Exhibit 119: Commercial and Industrial Development Projections

2000 Population	87,268
2030 Projected Population	148,421
Population Increase 2000 - 2030	61,153
Commercial and Industrial Acres	9,547
2000 Commercial and Industrial Acres Per Person	0.11
Additional Acres from Population Growth	6,727
Additional Acres for Local Market Capture (20%) ⁴²	1,345
Total Additional Commercial and Industrial Land (acres)	8,072

Source: Planning Works, modifications by PRISM Associates and Carroll County Planning

⁴² 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.



Exhibit 120: Development Potential of Preferred Scenarios

	Growth Tiers					Total
	Cities/UGAs	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: Planning Works, modifications by PRISM Associates and Carroll County Planning Staff

3. Growth Tiers

Map 20 in Appendix A illustrates the Growth Tiers that form the basis for distinguishing land use and infrastructure policies required to achieve the preferred scenario. While better defined by objectives and policies in subsequent sections of this Element, these tiers include:

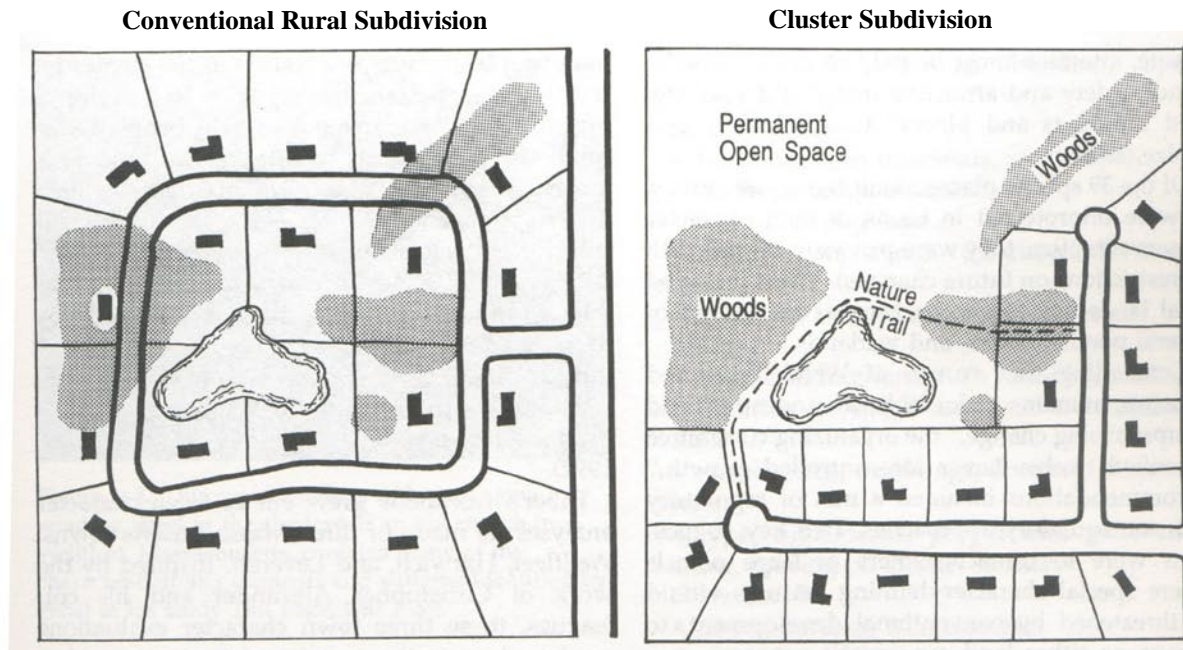
- *Cities* – currently incorporated areas that are not subject to this Comprehensive Plan.
- *Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)* – areas that could readily be served by municipal water and wastewater services in the next 25 years. UGA development is intended to include most future retail employment growth that is not located in existing cities and residential development relying on centralized water and sewer service.
- *Transportation Corridors and Centers* – transportation corridors with mixed use and commercial development following Highways 61 and 27 with nodal centers at critical interchanges with major arterials.-
- *Suburban Sewered (S-1)* – areas that currently include a mix of rural and suburban development are planned for suburban densities of two to four units per acre on centralized water and sewer service. Some areas will be served by community systems and others by municipal or regional systems. All development will be designed to retain the existing rural character of this tier. Because centralized wastewater service will be available, development may occur at densities of two to six dwellings per acre subject to transfer of development rights (see **Objective LU-8** and subsequent policies).
- *Suburban Unsewered (S-2)* – areas that will accommodate rural residential development relying on centralized water systems and a mix of community wastewater systems and on-site service. Average density without community systems will be approximately one dwelling per acre. Up to two units per acre may be developed on community systems.



- *Rural* – These areas consist primarily of farm, ranch and timber lands that are zoned “Agriculture”. Other than buildout of approved and existing subdivisions, future development in this tier will occur at densities of one dwelling per four acres.

Within the two suburban tiers, the use of cluster development patterns will be encouraged provided adequate water and wastewater facilities are available. **Exhibit 122** illustrates a clustered subdivision development pattern (also called conservation subdivision) with modest residential lots and preserved open space. Cluster subdivision patterns will be implemented through the County’s land development regulations.

Exhibit 122: Cluster Subdivision Design



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

Within Urban Growth Areas, traditional neighborhood development (TND) will be encouraged. TND’s feature central public open spaces (commons, squares, and parks) adjacent to a mixed-use (commercial, institutional and residential) centers with urban densities. Within TND neighborhoods, mobility is created through a connective grid street pattern, which can be modified with curvilinear streets, if needed, to meet topographical conditions.

At the inception of this process, a majority of community leaders, participants and focus groups urged the County to protect the transportation corridor development from premature development that is inconsistent with the Plan’s proposed uses and that would destroy the Plan’s efficacy before it could be implemented. An Interim Development Ordinance was adopted that permitted 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. Innovative planning will transform the transportation corridors into commercially attractive developments that provide for employment opportunities. These policies are essential to



encourage mixed-use non-residential and residential development, internally capture automobile trips, and stimulate pedestrian activity.

4. Future Land Use Plan

The future land use map (**Map 21, Appendix B**) 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 Urban Growth Areas reflect the extent of land that will reasonably be served by municipal water and wastewater systems within the next 20 years.⁴³ Locations for residential, commercial, industrial and other future land uses for these areas will be developed in future specific UGA 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 annexation within the Urban Growth Areas.

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 tier policies at the rezoning and development approval stages. Not all neighborhood commercial areas have been designated on the future land use map. Subject to tier policies, 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 is organized into general categories of net densities based on tier policies. Suburban residential development (S-1 & S-2) 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.
- *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, 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.

⁴³ Some areas may be served by alternative systems that meet municipal requirements or they may be developed at intensities not requiring municipal services.



- *Park/Recreation/Conservation* –Active or passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include 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.
- *Agriculture and Forestry* – 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.
- *Urban Growth Areas* – This category allows for a mix of residential and non-residential development consistent with land use plans mutually adopted by the County and applicable cities through intergovernmental agreements.