Development Potential of the SR365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia:
A Quality Growth Study

Year 2004

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ABSTRACT

Hall County is experiencing unprecedented growth in part due to the attraction of the nearby Atlanta metropolitan region, the recreational opportunities afforded by Lake Sidney Lanier, the availability of moderately priced housing, and its transportation infrastructure, among other things. To help Hall County’s leaders and citizens respond to the challenges posed by the forecasted growth, the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development explored Hall County’s economic development, transportation, green infrastructure, and livability opportunities and constraints. The findings and recommendations contained in this report are intended to improve quality of life, preserve the subregion’s environmental and cultural character, and strengthen the local economy for the present and the future. This study is part of an overall effort conducted in partnership with Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Institute (EDI).
DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THE SR 365 CORRIDOR IN HALL COUNTY, GEORGIA:
A QUALITY GROWTH STUDY

Prepared for Hall County Board of Commissioners
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OVERVIEW

Hall County is experiencing unprecedented growth in part due to the attraction of the nearby Atlanta metropolitan region, the recreational opportunities afforded by Lake Sidney Lanier, the availability of moderately priced housing, and its transportation infrastructure, among other things. To help Hall County’s leaders and citizens respond to the challenges posed by the forecasted growth, this study explores Hall County’s economic development, transportation, green infrastructure, and livability opportunities and constraints. The findings and recommendations contained in this report are intended to improve quality of life, preserve the subregion’s environmental and cultural character, and strengthen the local economy for the present and the future. This study is part of an overall effort conducted in partnership with Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Institute (EDI).

Because different types of planning require information and analysis at varying geographic scales, this effort has defined the study area at two scales. The first is the Northeast Hall County Subregion. The Subregion includes parts of the Chattahoochee and North Oconee Rivers, the northern portion of Lake Lanier, as well as the Cities of Lula, Clermont, and Gillsville, and part of Gainesville. At this scale the study presents findings and recommendations related to green infrastructure and livability. The second scale is the State Route (SR) 365 Corridor. Beginning in Gainesville and continuing to the northern Hall County boundary, the Corridor scale presents suggestions related to economic development, transportation, and livability. Section 3 of this report provides more information on the methodology and definitions of the study area. Sections 4 and 5 present the findings and recommendations related to the Subregion and Corridor.

The findings and recommendations presented in this report are based on information gathered during the Hall County/Gainesville Comprehensive Plan update process, stakeholder interviews conducted by EDI, meetings with government agencies, and site visits. Accepted principles related to economic development, green infrastructure, transportation systems, and livability were used to identify the variety of implementation suggestions presented.
SECTION 1: ISSUES, VISION, AND GOALS

Issues • Several issues have been identified that will impact the future of the study area. They include:

Expected population growth: The estimated 2003 population for the county is 156,101 persons living in 57,011 housing units.\(^1\) Hall County population projections for 2025 were prepared as part of the comprehensive planning process. Based on census data, historic trends, and recently adopted residential density policies, the potential population for Hall County was estimated at nearly 325,000 people by 2025.\(^2\) This population growth will significantly impact the available natural resources and existing infrastructure in the county. Therefore, planning must consider concentrated and sustainable development patterns, adequate transportation linkages, and appropriate annexation practices for the County to successfully accommodate this growth.

Hispanic poverty and education levels: Hall County’s Hispanic population experienced a nearly six-fold increase between 1990 and 2000, and now constitutes approximately 20 percent of the total population. The Hispanic population is younger than that of the county overall, and lives in larger households. The poverty rate among Hispanics in the year 2000 of 28 percent was more than double that of the county population overall. Education rates among Hispanics are significantly lower than the county population overall: only 23 percent have a high school degree or more compared to 71 percent for the county overall. Further, only three percent of Hispanic adults have a Bachelors degree or higher compared to 19 percent for the county overall. These low education rates and high poverty rates among the county’s fastest growing demographic group have profound implications for the county’s ability to achieve its goals of high quality economic development.

Increasing demand for residential development: As of 2000, there were 51,046 housing units in Hall County.\(^3\) Based on housing trends and population projections, analysis shows a potential demand for approximately 123,800 housing units by the year 2030. Although this future estimate may not be realized due the reduced density adopted by the Hall County Commissioners in 2003, the number of housing units will significantly increase by 2030. At its highest capacity, Hall County can accommodate over 130,000 housing units.\(^4\) Residential development must be planned with preservation of agricultural land and open space and the provision of public infrastructure and services in mind.

Proposed sewer expansion: Coordinated, county wide sewer development in Hall County needs to be considered given the debate over two sewer expansions by the cities of Gainesville and Lula. Gainesville has considered expanding the sewer northwards along the 365 corridor as a first step in developing it as a commercial-industrial corridor. However, the initial proposal caused concern about potential negative impacts to the North Oconee River and the historic Head’s Mill property. Extending the sewer line along the 365 corridor will likely spur new development. Careful planning is necessary to ensure that any new development preserves and enhances the scenic character of the corridor, conforms to the character and scale of the existing land uses, and responds to additional transportation needs that result from new construction. There is also

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\(^1\) U.S. Census Bureau, 2003 population and housing estimates.
discussion that the City of Lula might extend its sewer capacity to 365 and beyond. This move would have significant environmental and land use impacts.

**Increasing traffic congestion:** The traffic demand analysis for the County indicates an increase in traffic volumes as well as vehicle miles traveled. As Gainesville and Hall County grow internally and regionally, congestion in downtown Gainesville will be a continuing challenge. Since right-of-way is not readily available, other options like transit, sidewalks, bike paths, alternative transportation modes, and travel demand management techniques need to be considered.\(^5\)

**Stakeholder perception from blind summary:** The stakeholders desires centered on seeing Hall County transform from a poultry capital to a new economic hub with 365 being the main commercial and industrial employment corridor. The 50-year economic development vision is to have a blend of high tech industry with tourism. There are conflicting perceptions of a scenario with strip development on one hand and the preservation of green space on the other. One significant development that seems desirable to the community is a live-work-play mixed use development in the Glade Farm Area. Considering the size of the single parcel targeted for development in the area and its proximity to the river, it is likely that this development would have significant environmental impacts and could very well alter the existing character of the northern part of Hall County.\(^6\)

**Comprehensive planning process underway:** The Draft Comprehensive Plan for Gainesville and Hall County lays out the goals and strategies for land use, transportation, parks, utilities, housing, economic development and other major facilities and services. The documents consider physical layout and development of the community, appropriate protection of natural resources and the financial resources necessary to support the various elements of the Plans. The Comprehensive Plan has incorporated results from several public participation activities. The county has also attempted to inform the people about the opportunities and challenges facing the community with respect to growth and development matters in Plan Forum sessions. The comprehensive planning process is still underway. Ultimately, implementation of an adopted plan will guide future growth.

**Vision** • Hall County and the City of Gainesville’s draft Comprehensive Plan (2004) seeks to balance urban, suburban, and rural development “to achieve fiscal and economic health, preserve natural and cultural resources and open space, foster community facility efficiency and quality, and provide for a diverse housing stock and community livability.”

In 2004 the Economic Development Institute (EDI) of the Georgia Institute of Technology conducted confidential interviews with 62 stakeholders regarding the future of the 365 Corridor. These interviews resulted in a build-out vision for the corridor that includes a “live-work-play corridor that yields ample industrial and commercial growth and high-end quality development, and preserves green space and other rural attributes.”\(^7\)

**Goals** • Hall County and the City of Gainesville have collaborated to draft several goals to achieve this vision. The goals are related to land use management, the provision of community facilities and services, transportation planning, the preservation of natural and cultural

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\(^6\) Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: Interviews with Community Stakeholders [Draft]. Georgia Tech EDI. July 2004.

\(^7\) Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: Interviews with Community Stakeholders [Draft]. Georgia Tech EDI. July 2004.
resources, economic development, adequate housing, and intergovernmental coordination. This study focuses on land use management, transportation planning, the preservation of natural and cultural resources, and economic development. Specifically, this study addresses the following goals:

- Development Quality
- Efficient/Fiscally Sound Growth
- Parks and Leisure
- Transportation System Assessment
- Transportation Alternatives
- Conservation and Protection of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Open Space Preservation
- Historic Preservation
- Coordinated Growth

Recommendations and implementation strategies and tools associated with these goals begin on page 14.

**Study Focus**  •  In response to the county’s vision and goals, this study focuses on economic development and explores opportunities related to green infrastructure, transportation systems, and livability.

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**Economic Development**

The process of local economic development preserves and raises the community’s standard of living and improves quality of life through development of human and physical infrastructure that is based on principles of equity and sustainability. It involves efforts to stimulate or maintain business activity and employment, which entail understanding and promoting the community’s existing assets as well as developing new resources to foster successful and sustainable industries. If done successfully, economic development reduces inequality among different demographic groups (age, gender, race, and ethnicity) as well as spatially defined groups such as indigenous population versus in-migrants or old-timers versus newcomers. It also promotes sustainable resource use and production, avoids sprawl or inefficient land use patterns, and preserves natural assets for present and future users.

**Green Infrastructure**

A strategically planned network of undeveloped land, parks, waterways, and working lands connected to community facilities and historic/cultural sites to improve quality of life, sense of place, habitat, and the environment.

**Transportation System**

Transportation planning enables the system to respond to the expected needs of an area based on future population and employment projections. It involves developing connectivity—through automotive, pedestrian, bicycle, and other modes—among employment, residential, civic, recreational, historic, and cultural centers to enhance economic development and community. It relies on context sensitive solutions to address new and existing challenges.

**Livability**

They are economically, socially, and culturally vital places that serve the needs of all and preserve the unique sense of identity inherent in a place. Livable places are created by planning for the short- and long-term future of communities.

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\(^8\) Gainesville/Hall County Vision, Goals, and Objectives [Draft]. September 2003.
Guiding Principles • A literature review has unveiled several principles related to economic development, green infrastructure, transportation planning, and livability. To respond to the challenges and opportunities of Northeast Hall County, several guiding principles from each discipline have been identified. The following table outlines these principles.

Table 1: Guiding Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT9</th>
<th>GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE10</th>
<th>TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM11</th>
<th>LIVABILITY12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Government, business, education, and the community work together to create a vibrant local economy, through a long-term investment strategy</td>
<td>• Identify and protect green infrastructure before development</td>
<td>• The system satisfies the purpose and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders</td>
<td>• Plan for complete and integrated communities containing housing, shops, work places, schools, parks and civic facilities essential to the daily life of the residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visioning, planning and implementation efforts should continually involve all sectors</td>
<td>• Engage diverse people and organizations</td>
<td>• The system is a safe facility for both the user and the community</td>
<td>• Community size should be designed so that housing, jobs, daily needs and other activities are within easy walking distance of each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Economic development efforts should be aimed at reducing poverty by promoting jobs that match the skills of existing residents, improving the skills of low-income individuals, and addressing the needs of families, including the availability of quality affordable child care, transportation, and housing</td>
<td>• Link natural areas and features for people and programs</td>
<td>• The system is in harmony with the community, and it preserves environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values of the area</td>
<td>• As many activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance of transit stops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Economic development efforts should give first priority to supporting existing enterprises as the best source of business expansion and local job growth</td>
<td>• Design green infrastructure systems that function at different scales, across political boundaries, and through diverse landscapes</td>
<td>• The project exceeds the expectations of both designers and stakeholders and achieves a level of excellence in people's minds</td>
<td>• A community should contain a diversity of housing types to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within its boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communities and regions should identify specific gaps and niches their economies can fill, and promote a diversified range of specialized industry clusters drawing on local advantages to serve local and international markets</td>
<td>• Ground green infrastructure activities in sound science and land-use planning theories and practices</td>
<td>• The project involves efficient and effective use of the resources</td>
<td>• Businesses within the community should provide a range of job types for the community's residents</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Fund green infrastructure as a primary public investment</td>
<td>• The improvement is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community</td>
<td>• The community should focus on a center that combines commercial, civic, cultural and recreational uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasize that green infrastructure benefits are afforded to all</td>
<td>• The project is seen as having added lasting value to the community</td>
<td>• Each community should have a well-defined edge, such as agricultural greenbelts or wildlife corridors, permanently protected from development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Make green infrastructure the framework for conservation and development</td>
<td>• Communication with all stakeholders is open, honest, early, and continuous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE</td>
<td>TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM</td>
<td>LIVABILITY</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communities should use and invest in technology that supports the ability of local enterprises to succeed, improves civic life, and provides open access to information and resources • Communities should invest in excellent schools, post-secondary institutions, and opportunities for continuous education and training available to all • Communities should support and pursue economic development that maintains or improves the environmental and public health • New development should take place in existing urban, suburban, and rural areas before using more agricultural land or open space • Having a distinctive identity will help communities create a quality of life that is attractive for business retention and future residents and private investment.</td>
<td>• A full range of stakeholders is involved with transportation officials in the scoping phase • The highway development process is tailored to meet the circumstances and environment in which it is located • A commitment to the process from top agency officials and local leaders is secured • The public involvement process is tailored to the project • The landscape, the community, and valued resources are understood before engineering design is started • A full range of tools for communication about project alternatives is used (e.g., visualization)</td>
<td>• Streets, pedestrian paths and bike paths should contribute to a system of fully-connected and interesting routes to all destinations • Wherever possible, the natural terrain, drainage and vegetation of the community should be preserved • The regional land-use planning structure should be integrated within a larger transportation network built around transit rather than freeways • Regions should be bounded by and provide a continuous system of greenbelt/wildlife corridors to be determined by natural conditions • Materials and methods of construction should be specific to the region, exhibiting a continuity of history and culture and compatibility with the climate to encourage the development of local character and community identity • General plans should designate where new growth, infill or redevelopment will be allowed to occur • Plans should be developed through an open process</td>
<td>• A full range of stakeholders is involved with transportation officials in the scoping phase • The highway development process is tailored to meet the circumstances and environment in which it is located • A commitment to the process from top agency officials and local leaders is secured • The public involvement process is tailored to the project • The landscape, the community, and valued resources are understood before engineering design is started • A full range of tools for communication about project alternatives is used (e.g., visualization)</td>
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SECTION 2:
STUDY AREA BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

History • Hall County was founded in 1818, with the City of Gainesville as its primary activity center. When, in 1828 gold, was found in the county’s northern neighbors—Lumpkin and White Counties—Gainesville grew as the region’s trading and supply center. Even before this time, Native Americans and Spanish settlers were panning for gold in many North Georgia rivers. But by the 1850s, much of the panning and mining had ceased as word of the California Gold Rush spread to the southeast.

The lure of gold was soon replaced by the introduction of the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railroad in 1871. This development was followed by the emergence of two new industries in Hall County—cotton and lumber. Both businesses thrived until the 1930s, when the boll weevil devastated cotton fields and Chestnut blight ravaged the forests.

The combination of the railroad service and presence of what were thought to be health-enhancing springs around Gainesville helped the region become the “Great Health Resort of the South.” As a result, hotels, medical facilities, and cultural venues emerged in and around the city. The legacy of the region’s reputation is evident in the growing medical complex located in Gainesville, which serves much of North Georgia.

After the destructive Gainesville tornado of 1936, and with the advent of World War II (1941-45), Hall County, especially Gainesville, became the location for the rise of the state’s poultry industry. Poultry farms continue to operate in much of the southeast portion of the county, although the industry’s presence is declining.

The construction of Buford Dam, built in Hall County by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1950s, created the 38,000-acre Lake Lanier, named for Sidney Clopton Lanier, a poet and musician who often gave tribute to the Chattahoochee River in his works. The Lake Lanier project was a result of the federal River and Harbor Act, intended to develop the nation’s rivers systems for national defense, flood control, power production, navigation, and water supplies. Each year millions of visitors enjoy the recreational water sports provided by the lake, easily accessed from Atlanta via several major highways.

The Northeast Hall County subregion also includes the Cities of Lula, Gillsville, and Clermont. Lula emerged as a mining and agricultural center in 1877. Today, many of the original buildings in the town remain. Gillsville is a small community that sits on the Hall and Banks County line. It is home to a several pottery artisans, including Hewell’s Pottery, which has been making pottery since the mid-1800s. Clermont was incorporated in 1913, but dates back to a settlement which located there around 1820.

Today, Gainesville is the medical, financial, and educational center of Northeast Georgia and Hall County boasts the Olympic rowing and canoe/kayak facilities, several golf courses, and many parks and camping areas.
**Demographic Trends**  •  Hall County’s appeal is evident in historic and projected population, household, and employment data. For example, from 1990 to 2000 the county’s population increased by 45.9 percent, from 95,434 residents to over 139,000.\(^{13}\) Analysis indicates that this trend will continue through 2025, when projections based on policies proposed in the currently evolving comprehensive plan show there will be over 325,000 residents in the county.\(^{14}\)

A significant trend in Hall County’s population is reflected by the growing number of Hispanic residents. The Hispanic population in Hall County went from 4,558 in 1990 to 27,242 by 2000, an almost six-fold increase in just 10 years.\(^{15}\) Further analysis shows that the Hispanic population is expected to increase, ultimately representing approximately 29 percent (94,265 residents) of the total population by 2025.\(^{16}\) Planning for the future opportunities and challenges related to this growing segment of the population is critical for Hall County.

With increasing population comes a greater number of households, and hence an increased need for residential units. Analysis indicates a 53.1 percent increase in the number of households between 2000 and 2010 (see Table 2). The market impact of this forecast is already evident in the significant number of homes currently under construction in Hall County. For example, there is a planned unit development currently being built on State Route 365, just north of the City of Lula, which will add 105 new homes.

**Table 2: historic and projected number of households**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Households</strong></td>
<td>26,278</td>
<td>34,930</td>
<td>47,381</td>
<td>85,514</td>
<td>132,550</td>
<td>170,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual Increase</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,652</td>
<td>12,451</td>
<td>29,665</td>
<td>47,036</td>
<td>38,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent increase</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Demographic Trends and Development Demand Analysis: Gainesville and Hall County, Georgia, McBride Dale Clarion Team and Ross+associates (DRAFT, May 2003).

For more information about demographic trends in Hall County refer to draft Gainesville and Hall County Comprehensive Plan and the Development Potential of SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: Economic Development Report Card by Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Institute.

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SECTION 3: METHODOLOGY

Study area • This study focuses on the corridor surrounding State Route (SR) 365 in Hall County, Georgia. State Route 365 connects to Atlanta via Interstate 985 and 85 to the southwest and continues northeast through Habersham County to the City of Cornelia, approaching the South Carolina border. This study is concerned only with the segment starting at the City of Gainesville and continuing to the northern border of Hall County.

Geographic scales • To address the issues and opportunities of the study area we identified the various geographic scales that impact the SR365 corridor. We defined the scales as the Northeast Hall Subregion and the 365 Corridor. At each scale we investigated one or more of the focus areas—green infrastructure, transportation systems, economic development, and livability. The table below illustrates the different geographic scales and identifies the associated focus and purpose.

Table 3: defining geographic scale

<table>
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<th>GEOGRAPHIC SCALE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Northeast Hall Subregion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: Green infrastructure • Livability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose: The subregion scale makes it possible to inventory and analyze the larger ecological, cultural, and historical assets to develop an integrated green infrastructure that provides greater connectivity within the subregion, while also creating the framework for the preservation of community and cultural identity and the environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **365 Corridor** |
| Focus: Economic development • Transportation |
| Purpose: At this scale the study addresses the issues of the corridor to identify unique economic opportunities and transportation improvements that will enhance the area. |
Following are detailed descriptions of each geographic scale.

The **Northeast Hall Subregion** has been defined by major boundaries, including roads, natural features, city boundaries, and large tracts of land. The area has been selected to capture significant historic, cultural, recreational, entertainment, shopping, and natural amenities within approximately eight miles of SR365. The north and east boundaries are the Hall County boundary. The southern boundary is Winder Highway. The western boundary is created by the railroad, Thompson Bridge Road, and Mount Vernon Road.

The subregion includes the northeastern portion of Hall County, and the Cities of Lula, Clermont, and Gillsville, and part of the City of Gainesville. The area is characterized by numerous streams and rivers and rolling terrain leading to the mountains to the north. The focal point is Lake Sidney Lanier and the Chattahoochee River, which runs parallel to SR365. The southern edge of the region is the urban core of Gainesville, followed by low-density suburban development. Traveling north, development patterns become increasingly rural, with poultry farms to the southeast and pastures and dairy farms to the northwest. Much of the northern portion of the region is undeveloped lands composed mostly of riparian corridors and hardwood and pine forests.

The subregion includes the Lee Gilmer Airport, located just east of Gainesville, and is served by two active freight rail lines. The Norfolk Southern Atlanta/Greenville line passes through Gainesville and Lula and the CSX line connects Gainesville and Athens, Georgia. Amtrak provides daily passenger service along the CSX line.

The Northeast Hall Subregion identification process was intended to capture the significant historic, cultural, and natural resources near the SR365 Corridor in order to fully analyze issues related to green infrastructure. Therefore, the Subregion defined in this report is larger than the study area analyzed in the Economic Development Institute’s report on the area’s tourism potential.

The **365 Corridor** is defined within approximately a three-mile buffer of SR365. The SR365 Corridor begins where Winder Highway intersects 365 and continues north to the Hall County boundary. The eastern boundary is Old Cornelia Highway and the eastern boundary of the City of Lula. The western boundary is the Chattahoochee River and Bill Wilson Road near the northern edge of Hall County. This portion of SR 365 was constructed in 1979 and is also known as the Lanier Parkway. It was proposed as a system to connect Atlanta, Northeast Georgia, and South Carolina. In 1985, SR 365 became an interstate, I-985. The 365 Corridor study area focuses on this approximately 15 mile stretch. It is important to note that this definition of the SR 365 Corridor is larger than the Economic Development Institute’s study area. It was expanded to coincide with the section of SR 365 encompassed by the subregion scale defined above.

Lanier Parkway is a four-lane divided road with a grass median. The right of way is 300 feet. The speed limit in our study area is posted at 65 mph. There are several intersections (among them are Old Cornelia Highway, White Sulphur Road, Simpson Road, Cagle Road, SR 52 (Lula Road), Belton Bridge Road, Tribble Gap Road, and Mud Creek Road) and many additional roads that access 365. The intersection of SR365 and 52 is the location of the only traffic light within the corridor. Right and left turn lanes exist at most intersections.

The SR365 corridor includes mostly low-density residential areas with intermittent retail, service, and light industrial land uses. Institutional uses and
natural/undeveloped areas also make up a large portion of the corridor. The identity of the corridor is linked to the freight railroad that runs through it and the varying topography. Because of the hilly terrain, motorists can experience several view sheds of the foothills when traveling to the north. When going toward the south, short-distance view sheds highlight the forested areas and one long-distance view shed allows travelers to survey a significant portion of southern Hall County (view sheds identify vantage points where individuals experience aesthetic or significant views).

Visualization • To better understand the full potential of the area, this study includes a visualization component. This visualization is aimed at achieving three purposes:

- identify and present the resources available in Hall County and visually demonstrate examples of undesirable growth that could undermine these assets,
- use the synthesis of photography and computer imaging to represent alternative uses of existing natural and historic resources in the community, and
- give readers a greater understanding of Hall County’s potential.

The resulting visualizations use photo and map enhancements to illustrate conceptual designs for various aspects of the study area.

Data Collection • This study incorporates data from a variety of sources. We conducted an extensive literature review on the history of the area and of SR365, consulted with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and reviewed comprehensive plans and land use regulations and ordinances that may affect the corridor. We also analyzed parcel level geographic information systems data provided by Hall County to assess existing land uses and green infrastructure. In addition, data collected through interviews by the Economic Development Institute (EDI) were used to gain insight into stakeholders’ opinions and vision for the study area. Meetings were held with the Georgia Mountain Regional Development Center and Day Wilburn Associates, Inc., a transportation consultant hired by GDOT and Hall County. Information and photographs were gathered during field visits. Lastly, these data were used to outline a context sensitive—identifying and responding to the particular characteristics of a place—approach embracing quality growth principles.
SECTION 4:
NORTHEAST HALL SUBREGION

The coordination of green infrastructure planning, transportation management, economic development, and the promotion of livability requires a variety of tools and strategies. This section outlines recommendations for each of the geographic scales—the subregion and the corridor—based on the vision and goals of Hall County and the guiding principles outlined on page 7.

Findings, Recommendations, and Case Studies • The Northeast Hall Subregion was selected to address the issues and opportunities associated with green infrastructure planning and the creation of quality places. Its boundaries follow roads, rail corridors, natural features, and large land masses. The following sections outline our findings and suggested recommendations. In some instances, case studies of other places are presented as examples.

Green Infrastructure

The word “infrastructure” is most often associated with our water systems, power lines, and roads. These systems create a connection among the many residents and businesses of a community. However, there is an even more fundamental system that binds not only people, but also our larger natural systems...green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is a strategically planned network of undeveloped land, parks, waterways, working lands, and other natural areas connected to community facilities and historical/cultural sites that is designed to improve quality of life, sense of place, habitat, and the environment.17 Unlike traditional conservation strategies that seek to conserve and restore environmentally important areas, green infrastructure planning begins by identifying ecologically, socially, and economically important natural systems to guide future development patterns.18 This is particularly important in the Northeast Hall County Subregion, which is defined by its natural resources, including the Chattahoochee River, Lake Lanier, the North Oconee River, and the foothills.

A well-developed green infrastructure system provides many benefits; for example, such a system:

- increases biodiversity,
- maintains natural ecological processes,

17 The Conservation Fund and the USDA Forest Service, www.greeninfrastructure.net
18 Towards a Sustainable America: Advancing Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment for the 21st Century, the President’s Council on Sustainable Development, May 1999.
- reduces flooding,
- improves air and water quality,
- increases recreational and transportation opportunities,
- enriches wildlife habitat,
- links people to natural places, and
- creates a sense of place.

A green infrastructure network consists of several hubs and links. Hubs are larger tracts of land that sustain a variety of natural processes and provide a home for wildlife. Hubs can also be recreational or educational destinations for people. Examples include reserves, working lands (farms and forests), parks, and public lands. Links connect the hubs and facilitate the flow of ecological processes and transportation for both people and wildlife. Links can be formed by connected pieces of property that are being used for farming, timber, park, or public facilities, or they may be rivers and streams that are protected with land buffers. These links may or may not be open to the public. If the links are traversed with trails, the trails should be located along the boundaries to protect the interior natural systems. Links can also be parks and streetscapes that are landscaped with native trees and plants. This allows the green infrastructure system to connect to historical and cultural resources within urbanized areas.

It is important to determine the purpose of the links between hubs. Links that will be used to allow people to access various resources must include paths or sidewalks. Links that are intended to enhance the viability of native flora and fauna must meet specific thresholds—ranges in size, location, etc. based on purpose—as determined by scientific research. For guidance on thresholds for hubs and

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links consult a wildlife biologist.  

The Northeast Hall Subregion has several obvious hubs, including the Elachee Nature Science Center (approx. 1,300 acres), the Chicopee Agricultural Center (approx. 1,500 acres), the future Don Carter State Park (approx. 9,000 acres), the site of Gainesville’s future reservoir (approx. 800 acres) and two large privately owned agricultural properties (approx. 1,000 acres, and 4,000 acres). The Chattahoochee River and Lake Lanier also act as hubs for both natural systems and recreation.

At present there are few links between the hubs. The subregion’s extensive river system, especially the Chattahoochee River, connects several hubs in the western portion of the subregion. Opportunities exist to connect other hubs with smaller rivers, public facilities, and streetscapes.

In the Northeast Hall Subregion, a coordinated green infrastructure network can enhance people’s relationship with nature, protect important natural systems, and preserve the rural character of the area.

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<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are many natural, historic, and cultural resources in the Northeast Hall subregion.</td>
<td>Compile an inventory of all natural, historic, and cultural resources in the subregion and assemble information in a geographic information system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The entire subregion consists of a total of approximately 150,000 acres. A draft inventory of the subregion’s resources unveiled an estimated:\n
- **Agricultural Land** = 31,000 acres
- **Vacant Land** = 55,600 acres
- **Public/Institutional Land\(^{24}\)** = 11,700 acres

Several historic sites listed in the 1999 Inventory of Notable Historic Structures have also been mapped, although not all were identifiable.\(^{25}\) In addition, the boundaries around Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River illustrate the areas managed and protected by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. Finally, a 50 foot buffer was mapped around all rivers, according to Hall County ordinance. All of these elements are illustrated in Map 3, which shows existing green infrastructure and opportunities for expansion. The Economic Development Institute’s report on tourism potential also identifies some historic and cultural resources in the study area.

Additional research into the quality of the soils, habitat, and historic and cultural sites is necessary to prioritize areas for inclusion in a green infrastructure master plan. Analysis of existing and possible green infrastructure resources can be best analyzed spatially using a geographic information system.

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\(^{23}\) Estimates based on parcel level data provided by Hall County. Data for land west of SR365 was updated in 2004, data for land east of SR 365 was updated in 2000.

\(^{24}\) “Public/Institutional Land” includes parks, schools, colleges, medical facilities, firehouses, post offices, nature centers, and religious sites.

MAP 3
Northeast Hall Subregion's Potential Green Infrastructure

Legend
- major stream
- minor stream
- protected
- agricultural
- institutional
- park
- vacant
- education
- medical
- historic
- religious
- interstate
- state highway

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles
There are approximately 55,000 acres of undeveloped (or vacant) land in the subregion, and over 31,000 acres of agricultural land. Single land owners hold two large agricultural tracts of land, one more than 4,000 acres and the other just over 1,000 acres. As the county continues to grow, properties important to the green infrastructure system may be developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are approximately 55,000 acres of undeveloped (or vacant) land</td>
<td>Work with stakeholders to prioritize significant properties for acquisition or other forms of preservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the subregion, and over 31,000 acres of agricultural land. Single</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>land owners hold two large agricultural tracts of land, one more than 4,000 acres and the other just over 1,000 acres. As the county continues to grow, properties important to the green infrastructure system may be developed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several tools can be used to preserve important land, including Conservation Easements, Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Land Acquisition, and Regulation. Following are brief descriptions of these programs and policies.

**Conservation Easement:** Specific development or land use rights can be donated or sold to a non-profit organization, land trust, or government agency through a conservation easement. Land must be evaluated by a conservation organization to determine its preservation worthiness. The original landowner retains the title to the land, but an easement is placed on that title to permanently protect the property from undesirable development. Even if the property is subsequently sold, the development restrictions remain in place. Landowners receive tax incentives for conservation easements.

**Purchase of Development Rights (PDR):** A PDR takes places when a landowner sells the right to develop the property to an organization or government agency. An easement is then placed on the title of the property to prevent future development. The difference between a PDR and a simple conservation easement rests in the price paid for the property. In a PDR program, the price is determined by the market. Following is a simplified formula for determining the price:

\[
\text{Value of Development Rights} = \text{Appraised Value of Land if Developed} - \text{Appraised Value of Land as Agricultural/Conservation}
\]

**Transfer of Development Rights (TDR):** Unlike a PDR which prevents development, a TDR program directs development. A TDR program establishes sending and receiving zones. Sending zones are usually environmentally, culturally, or historically significant land, like forests, historic properties, or farmlands. Receiving areas are places that have existing or planned infrastructure capacity—roads, water and sewer systems, schools—to accommodate new development. The TDR program allows property owners in sending areas to sell their development rights, but retain ownership of their property. These development rights can be purchased by property owners in receiving zones. The additional development rights allow the receiving zone owners to develop the property at greater density—for example reducing the minimum residential lot size or building a home over the maximum allowable

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26 The Geographic Information System parcel level data used to identify specific parcels was provided by Hall County, Georgia.

square footage. An easement is placed on the title of the sending property that permanently restricts development. [See Section 7: Model Ordinances for more information on TDRs.]

In essence, a TDR program allows landowners to receive financial compensation without sacrificing valuable green space, while also creating more compact development and the efficient use of infrastructure and public services. It is important to carefully review the zoning ordinances governing the receiving areas. These ordinances, which regulate development size and density, can be crafted to promote demand for the purchase of development rights from sending area.

**Land Acquisition:** While the most costly tool for local governments, land acquisition provides total control and use of an area. Not only must governments consider the cost of purchase, but also the lost revenue that results from removing the land from the tax base and the ongoing maintenance of the land.

**Regulations:** Local governments can employ zoning and subdivision regulations to implement the land use goals defined in their comprehensive plan. Areas of land can be zoned as open space or residential densities could be decreased to significantly increase the number of acres per unit (e.g. one unit per 25 acres to preserve agricultural character of an area). Any type of regulation must be supported by the comprehensive plan and accepted land use practices and theories to avoid accusation of a “takings,” where a landowner asserts that government regulations have unfairly caused a negative economic impact, for example decreasing the value of the property.

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<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New development patterns are resulting in disconnected residential</td>
<td>Promote compact development that preserves green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subdivisions that are causing green space fragmentation.</td>
<td>space and allows for the efficient provision of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>public infrastructure and services.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are several ways to promote compact development, among them are traditional neighborhood design, conservation subdivisions, and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). Following are brief descriptions of these tools:

**Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND):** TND promotes compact neighborhoods that host a compatible mix of uses and housing types. Based on designs of early 20th century towns where pedestrian needs took precedence over the automobile, this type of design promotes a sense of community, walkability, and the integration of public parks within each neighborhood. The TND’s compact nature results in less agricultural or undeveloped land being converted for residential and commercial uses. [See Section 7: Model Ordinances for more information on TNDs.]

**Conservation Subdivisions:** A conservation subdivision is a residential or mixed-use development where a portion of the land is permanently protected.

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30 Traditional Neighborhood Development: Community Choices Tools. Atlanta Regional Commission.
as open space and the houses and commercial buildings are clustered on the site. The open space can be forest, farmland, a pasture, or meadow. On the remaining portion of the land, the developer can build as many units as would have occurred if the entire site was being developed. As the table below illustrates, a conservation subdivision does not decrease the number of units built, instead it clusters the units to protect valuable open space for both public and environmental benefits.

### Table 4: conventional versus conservation subdivisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SITE SIZE</th>
<th>UNITS (zoned at one unit/acre)</th>
<th>OPEN SPACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Subdivision</td>
<td>100 acres</td>
<td>100 units</td>
<td>0-5 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Subdivision</td>
<td>100 acres</td>
<td>100 units</td>
<td>20-60 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An easement is placed on the title of the land designated for open space to permanently prevent development. Conservation subdivisions can be especially effective when the designated open space expands the larger green infrastructure network or links hubs. [See Section 7: Model Ordinances for more information on conservation subdivisions.]

**Transfer of Development Rights (TDR):** see page 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few trails or green corridors connect the existing hubs.</td>
<td>Identify potential links and protect them from development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hall County has several existing and protected hubs, including Elachee Nature Science Center, the Chicopee Agricultural Center, the future Don Carter State Park, the Glades Farm area, and the Chattahoochee River and Lake Lanier. While it is important to identify any other significant and sensitive hubs, creating links is a more urgent issue in Hall County.

Creating a green infrastructure system requires taking advantage of river networks, lake buffers, and public right-of-ways to connect hubs for wildlife and people. Public utility and rail corridors can be used to create connections between green hubs. The 50-foot undisturbed buffer on all sides of perennial streams, lakes (five acres or larger), and other bodies of water and the 25-foot buffer on all sides of lakes and ponds smaller than five acres and intermittent streams, both mandated by Hall County’s Code of Ordinances (8.35.060), can serve as links between the green hubs. Further more, in the North Oconee Water Supply Watershed District the County has established a 100-foot buffer on both sides of streams. Consider increasing the size of buffers to enhance the links and to reduce flood risk. Buffers between 65 and 495 feet have been shown to prevent flooding.31 An analysis of the subregion’s rivers and streams should be conducted to arrive at a buffer width appropriate for the area based on ecological and community needs. Because slopes along streams are usually gradual, the outer edges of stream buffers can also be used for multi-use trails that provide alternative forms of transportation between natural amenities and activity centers.

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Also, promoting the proper use of conservation subdivisions can extend and connect existing green infrastructure (see page 19 for more information on conservation subdivisions). Finally, identify parcels that connect existing and planned hubs to target areas for the use of conservation easements or transfer of development rights, or for land acquisitions (see page 18 for details).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are several historically significant sites in the subregion. Increasing development pressures may threaten their preservation.</td>
<td>Adopt an historic preservation ordinance and identify appropriate tools for preservation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As development increases in Hall County, historically and culturally significant sites may become at risk of demolition. These sites are important to preserving the identity of the subregion and can play an important role in the area’s economic vitality, especially that portion which derives from tourism-related activities.

While some of these sites are on the National Register of Historic Places, Hall County does not currently have a historic preservation ordinance. This study recommends the development and adoption of a historic preservation ordinance. Such an ordinance would establish a historic preservation commission endowed with some or all of the following responsibilities:

- Prepare and maintain an inventory of all property with the potential for designation as historic property,
- Recommend districts, sites, buildings, and objects for historic designation,
- Review application for Certificates of Appropriateness (applications submitted to the commission requesting permission to change the appearance of a designated historic property or a property within a designated historic district),
- Restore or preserve historic properties,
- Conduct educational programs,
- Receive donations, grants, funds, or gifts of historic property and acquire and sell historic properties, and
- Participate in private, state, and federal historic preservation programs.

The ordinance should also outline the process by which properties would be nominated for historic designations and how requests for the relocation, reconstruction, renovation, and demolition of historic properties would be addressed. A model historic preservation ordinance in compliance with the Georgia Historic Preservation Act is available from the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. [See Section 7: Model Ordinances for more information on historic preservation.]

Historic preservation programs can utilize tools similar those discussed earlier in this report. For example:

**Historic Preservation Easement:** A historic preservation easement can restrict the use and alteration of a structure or site that is designated as historically significant by federal, state, or local historic preservation laws. The easement can be granted to a governmental unit or charitable or educational association,
such as a land conservancy. The easement is placed on the deed so that it remains in effect even if the property is sold.

**Facade Easement:** A facade easement is a legal agreement designed to protect the façade of a certified historic structure. Property owners receive a federal tax deduction in exchange for promising to maintain, protect, and preserve the façade of a certified historic structure in perpetuity.32

After a historic preservation ordinance is adopted and the commission is established, Hall County can apply to become part of the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program, coordinated by the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Once certified, the county will become eligible for federal historic preservation grant funds and will receive technical assistance and participate in local, state, and federal preservation activities. More information about the CLG program is available from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources at www.gashpo.org.

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<tr>
<td>Many government jurisdictions and organizations are involved in the development of the subregion.</td>
<td>Identify all stakeholders and establish a Green Infrastructure Task Force composed of representatives from all stakeholder groups.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

A task force composed of many stakeholders can work with the community to set priorities for preservation. The participation of a variety of stakeholders is invaluable to the planning process. The task force can provide:

- specialized knowledge of an assortment of disciplines (wildlife biology, land use planning, engineering, park management, etc.),
- personal experience with the many sites and community groups,
- education and outreach tools to get the larger community involved in the process, and financial resources necessary to develop effective strategies for green infrastructure development.

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<tr>
<td>The subregion lacks a coordinated plan to preserve important resources and protect the area’s sense of place and history.</td>
<td>Develop and implement a green infrastructure master plan.</td>
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</table>

Charge the proposed Green Infrastructure Task Force to work with the general public to develop a green infrastructure master plan.

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<tr>
<td>Even though Hall County has extensive waterfront resources, they are not fully utilized due to critical design flaws at various junctures. In the present situation, the waterfront areas are more vehicle friendly than they are people friendly.</td>
<td>Implement a waterfront improvement program that creates places for people and vehicles.</td>
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Waterfront locations along Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River are presently developed largely as parking lots and boat launches. Furthermore, there is a deficiency of organized green space and trail systems in the design of waterfront parks. These areas need inviting signage or entrances to existing parks and viewing platforms that give people the opportunity to experience the scenic beauty of the waterfront areas.

To make the area more inviting, avoid expansive parking lots along the waterfront and place boat launches to the side, camouflaged by landscaping. Introduce landscaping features that enhance the human waterfront experience by framing views and creating a sense of outdoor positive space. Specific design suggestions for the Olympic rowing venue include:

- improve the site by making it function as a civic space that enhances the waterfront experience and takes advantage of the expansive view,
- replace the parking with a lawn framed by two rows of trees on either side to generate enclosure, and
- make the water approachable via rows of steps and a viewing platform.

The following images use visualization techniques to illustrate the potential impact of these recommendations on the Olympic rowing venue and Laurel Park. [See Section 7: Model Ordinances for more information on landscaping ordinances.]
Introduce appropriate signage at entrance

Move parking lot and boat launch to the corner of the site, camouflaged by trees

Take advantage of waterfront view by replacing parking lot with a civic space – lawn with a row of trees on either side

Potential enhancement of the 1996 Olympic Venue on Lake Lanier at Clarks Bridge Road.
**Existing:** The Olympic rowing venue provides an expansive view of the lake but lacks an inviting character. It presents enormous opportunities to be developed as a civic space and a link in the green infrastructure system.

**Conceptual Proposal:** The Parking Lot in the Olympic Rowing venue can be made more people friendly with simple landscaping improvements.
A quality growth study of Hall County, Georgia

Existing: Olympic Rowing Venue

Conceptual Proposal: Olympic Rowing Venue
Laurel Park: enhancement opportunities
Case Studies: Following are brief overviews of green infrastructure plans and related policies and programs.

Kinston-Lenoir County (NC) Green Infrastructure Plan for the Neuse River Floodplain
Developed by The Conservation Fund in partnership with the University of North Carolina’s Department of City and Regional Planning, the City of Kinston, and the County of Lenoir, this plan includes the adaptive re-use of flood properties for conservation and recreation. The plan identifies Green Infrastructure hubs and links, as well as existing recreational and cultural resources. In 2002 these partners again came together to produce a study entitled Green Infrastructure as Economic Development. The plan identifies opportunities for the City and County to leverage existing natural and historic assets for an economic development strategy based on recreation and heritage tourism.
Web site: www.greeninfrastructure.net

Chattahoochee Hill Country Alliance
The Chattahoochee Hill Country is located 45 minutes south of downtown Atlanta and stretches across 65,000 acres of largely undeveloped land in south Fulton, northwestern Coweta, eastern Carroll, and eastern Douglas counties. Property owners have been working with local, state and federal government and conservation organizations to protect their natural areas and ensure economic growth through sustainable development and conservation. This group has explored Transfer of Development Rights programs and conservation subdivisions, as well as community design practices.
Web site: www.chatthillcountry.org
Livability

Quality of life in an environment has a strong link to its livability, and hence its long-term economic survival. People will choose to live, visit, more importantly will care for, pay attention to, and commit to the environments which satisfy their needs. These needs may be:

- functional—presence of needed amenities, and physical spaces and relations
- aesthetic—visual appearance
- psychological—connection to the community’s history, meanings, and values.

The environment should present individuality or distinction from other places and serves as the basis for its recognition as a separate entity that reflects the current needs, activities, ideals and aspirations of the community. The individuality or distinction should be related to the topography, appearance, economic functions, and social activities, but it should derive particular significance from the area’s history. Even though the physical environment presents these characteristics, it gains meaning by people’s understanding and imagination. In this sense, a community must decide for itself what livability means to it, what the distinctive historical, physical, functional, and psychological features of the environment are, and how they can be preserved and enhanced in order to create a distinctive character.

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<td>Housing stock is not varied.</td>
<td>Implement zoning changes to encourage variation in housing in the activity centers and lower density in agricultural centers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variation in the housing stock relates to housing type (detached and attached single family homes and multi-family homes, including condominiums, apartments, townhomes, etc.), lot size, and housing price. Housing is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Providing a variety of housing types allows residents to find suitable housing based on their changing needs and income. For example, retirees and empty-nesters may desire smaller homes and lots, or may prefer a condominium that requires less maintenance. In contrast, families with many children may desire larger homes.

Hall County’s current housing inventory is composed primarily of single family housing units. Trends and population projections forecast greater demand for multi-family and duplex housing types, as illustrated in Table 5. In fact, demand is predicted to more than double for both multi-family and duplex housing types. Opportunities for multi-family housing could be considered in Hall County’s mixed use land use category. By locating residential units near retail and office centers, Hall County could decrease reliance on automobiles, promote carpooling and public transportation, and make bicycling and walking viable means of transportation for some trips.

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36 For more information see companion report Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: Recommendations for a Strategic Plan for Economic Development.
Table 5: Housing type, supply versus demand

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Hall County Housing Inventory, 2000&lt;sup&gt;37&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Projected Housing Demand, 2030&lt;sup&gt;38&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>43,826</td>
<td>106,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family</td>
<td>6,048</td>
<td>14,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplex</td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>2,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total housing units</td>
<td>51,046</td>
<td>123,860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To best meet demand, the planning process should seek to identify redevelopment opportunities in areas already served by public infrastructure and should encourage compact development patterns, like traditional neighborhood design (see page 19).

It is important to note that Hall County’s 2003 adoption of lower residential densities indicate that the County wishes to limit residential capacity, therefore the 2030 demand may not be met.<sup>39</sup>

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<tr>
<td>Residential projects are not integrated into larger community.</td>
<td>Follow livability principles on page 7 to accomplish the integration within and among the communities.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The use of overlay districts will be the simplest and most effective way to build in requirements for implementing the guiding principles of quality places. Overlay districts create another layer of zoning over one or more conventionally zoned districts and can provide the kind of regularity and flexibility that allows smart growth in greenfields (previously undeveloped land).<sup>40</sup>

Hall County’s inclusion of a mixed use category in the proposed Future Land Use Map illustrates an effort to connect residential areas with other land uses. The Hall County, Georgia Unified Development Code: Diagnosis of Land Development Regulations also addresses some of these issues, especially related to subdivision regulations.<sup>41</sup>

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown centers are no longer hubs (eg., Lula, Clermont, Gillsville).</td>
<td>Revitalize these areas by encouraging commercial and residential growth in downtowns. Use a regional visioning process and develop a plan to implement the results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Development along the 365 corridor could negatively impact the already deteriorating city centers of places like Lula, which has many vacant commercial buildings. A regional visioning process that includes the incorporated Cities of Lula, Clermont, and Gillsville, as well as Gainesville, can result in a plan and implementation strategy that capitalizes on the history and sense of place present in these old activity centers. Complementary land use planning among these jurisdictions will prevent unnecessary competition and conflicting land uses. Such a visioning process should include the

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A quality growth study of Hall County, Georgia

consideration of issues regarding quality growth, green infrastructure, and economic development opportunities, especially tourism, discussed in the Economic Development Institute’s report.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of Hall County’s major cities have historic districts. However, in their present state, they are underappreciated.</td>
<td>Implement streetscape improvements to improve people’s perception of the place and encourage local businesses to locate there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Design suggestions include:

- focus community effort on core commercial areas and significant intersections,
- explore the possibility of converting unused vacant spaces to pocket parks,
- use colored pavers to mark sidewalks,
- use appropriate landscaping to enhance the downtown experience, for example, use focal plantings at the entrances of historic districts, screen industrial uses and parking lots, and plant street trees along major roads,
- adopt a directional sign system with a consistent underlying theme capturing the spirit of the place.

The following photographs and graphic enhancement illustrate the development patterns and opportunities for the visual enhancement of historic districts.
Clermont: The structure of the town has a rectangular network of streets but cul-de-sac subdivisions are developing on its periphery.
Lula: Developed as a railroad town, Lula has a strong rectangular network of streets and presents great potential for repeating that pattern outwards in new development.
Existing: Downtown Lula is a historic district with a well laid out rectangular grid of streets. However, it needs streetscaping to be a more attractive and inviting place.

Conceptual Proposal: Through a few streetscaping changes, downtown Lula can be made more livable.
**Finding**
The Northeast Hall Subregion is expected to continue to grow in population and employment.

**Recommendation**
Develop objectives and goals to preserve and enhance livability in the subregion.

Livability can be broadly defined by reference to the primary characteristics most people want for their neighborhoods—such as a good school system, a low crime rate, and affordable housing. But it is a very subjective term. What one person considers livable—a low density, all-residential neighborhood, for example, or being surrounded by extended family and friends—might not appeal to someone who prefers a more active and diverse neighborhood, or who prefers privacy and independence. Whatever people’s specific requirements for livability, it always means a comfortable environment with essential support for everyday life.

Enhancing livability involves consideration of community development patterns, transportation alternatives, historic preservation, and social and economic conditions, among other issues. Following is a brief list of characteristics that promote livability:

- Traditional neighborhoods with a mix of uses and a walkable scale
- Infill development to recycle existing buildings and sites
- Transportation alternatives to allow a greater range of travel choices
- Open-space preservation to protect environmental resources and provide parks and recreation areas
- Heritage preservation to enhance historic areas and buildings
- A sense of place and community identity by maintaining traditional downtowns and other central places
- Employment options to provide a range of job opportunities
- Housing choices to provide a range of housing size, cost, and density options for existing and future residents
- Educational and training opportunities for community residents
- Regional identity based on shared experience and common linkages

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<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling is not a feasible mode of transportation in most of the Northeast Hall Subregion.</td>
<td>Consider transportation and park improvements that make bicycling a viable means of transportation, where appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bicycling is a major mode of transportation in many places throughout the world where it is used for commuting and shopping as well as for leisure trips. A 1999 survey conducted for the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that bicycle ridership in the United States increased by 20 percent between 1991 and 1999 (approximately three times the national population increase during the same period). Despite this increase in bicycle use, bicycling still remains an under-utilized form of transportation. The potential exists to convert some short-distance vehicle trips to bicycle trips if routes can be made more direct, convenient, safe and attractive.

Because of the undulating terrain of Hall County it is important to limit bikeway grades. Ideally, bikeways intended for transportation should have a grade of no greater than five percent, unless otherwise specified. Opportunities for bike amenities exist within the incorporated cities of Hall County and along rivers and rail corridors, where grade changes are more subtle, to make bicycling a viable means of transportation.

The National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse has more information on funds from the federal government to expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{42} National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, managed by the Federal Highway Administration and Rails-to-Trail Conservancy, http://www.enhancements.org/.
SECTION 5: THE 365 CORRIDOR

The 365 Corridor was designated to explore economic development and transportation issues and to consider strategies to promote livability.

Findings, Recommendations, and Case Studies • The following sections provide background, findings, and recommendations related to transportation and economic development in the 365 Corridor.

Economic Development

The economic development of the SR365 Corridor is envisioned by Hall County stakeholders to result in a live-work-play corridor with ample industrial and commercial growth, high quality development, and the preservation of green space and other rural attributes. At present, the SR365 Corridor is one of Hall County’s greatest unrealized assets for pursuing targeted, sectoral development strategies. We can distinguish between sectoral strategies that target existing industries and seek to increase their productivity and grow their size versus those that identify new growth industries that could be attracted to or created within the local economy.

The stakeholder interviews conducted by the Economic Development Institute indicate a strong preference for light industrial/assembly activity in the corridor, along with high tech-type industries. There seems to be little interest in pursuing sectoral strategies that target the primary existing industries. There is interest in pursuing sectoral development of the commercial/retail sector, as well as the tourism sector. The validity of this interest is supported by the Hall County ED Report Card, which indicates Hall County is experiencing selective retail leakage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hall County has significant retail leakage in the categories of “Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliances” as well as “Food &amp; Drinking Establishments.”</td>
<td>Designate development nodes along the corridor which permit Big Box retailers and food &amp; drinking establishments and create design guidelines to ensure these businesses do not detract from the corridor’s scenic attributes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today’s retail outlets that sell furniture, home furnishings, electronics and appliances are almost exclusively Big Box retailers. In fact, the Big Box retailer is the dominant form of all new retail construction. In recent years, localities have become skilled at

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using planning tools to ensure that Big Box development fits better within their areas and minimizes negative environmental and transportation impacts. Design standards that have been established to ensure that community identity does not yield to corporate identity include:\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{itemize}
\item Prohibition of long blank walls that discourage pedestrian activity
\item Breaking up building facades with recesses
\item Requiring ground-floor facades to have arcades, display windows, awnings, or some other feature to add visual interest to the structure
\item Requiring stores to be accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists, and to have several entrances to reduce walking distances from cars where stores border two or more public streets
\item Requiring stores to provide amenities, such as patio seating areas, kiosks, or fountains
\item Allowing no more than half of the store’s parking to be located between the store’s front façade and the abutting street
\item Requiring landscaped sidewalks
\item Requiring clearly defined entrances, with canopies, porticos, or arches
\end{itemize}

Seeking some Big Box retail along the corridor will ensure that existing road infrastructure is used instead of creating new roads to accommodate the traffic, will provide jobs for the large low-skilled population within the county, and will help to curb the loss of retail dollars to areas outside the county. Big Box development can be located in specific focal points of intense development along the corridor interspersed by less or undeveloped areas. Beyond the retail categories listed above, targeting Big Box retail that builds on the outdoor recreation opportunities associated with the corridor may yield “destination retail” that attracts non-county customers. For example, an REI-type outlet, which sells outdoor gear.

Other forms of retail to consider for the corridor that can incorporate community scale-sensitive Big Box retail are Lifestyle Retail Centers.\textsuperscript{45} Essentially, these are open-air shopping centers built on a smaller scale than a shopping mall and which combine a mix of uses (residential, office, hotels, religious or municipal facilities along with retail). This type of center can also help to meet Hall County’s need for multi-family housing and/or workforce housing.

\textbf{Workforce housing:} The need to create workforce housing in Hall County is suggested by the current income distribution of households, combined with the growing Hispanic labor force of primarily low wage earners. It is increasingly being recognized that lack of affordable housing is not just a problem for those in poverty or on fixed incomes, and that an insufficient supply of affordable housing for working families threatens adequate labor force supply and continued economic development in many communities.\textsuperscript{46} Hence, development nodes along the corridor should seek to incorporate multi-family workforce housing.

\textbf{Tourism and marketing:} A number of tourist attractions associated with the SR365 Corridor have been identified and there is a need to market the tourism assets more

\textsuperscript{44} Op. cit., pp 144-145.
\textsuperscript{45} The February 2004 issue of \textit{Urban Land} provides an extensive discussion of the lifestyle retail trend.
strongly. Possible approaches include a map of the tourism sites as well as a strategically placed Visitor’s Center along the corridor. Additionally, a stronger identity for the Corridor can be created by naming and creating identifying markers for it (for example, The Mountain Gateway). A key tourism asset that has been identified is the Head’s Mill. Beyond the preservation and restoration of the Mill as a public site, there is potential to maximize its economic development contribution by siting a restaurant and bakery facility. This could be leased to a private entrepreneur and would generate repeat customers rather than simply one-time visitors to see the Mill. These repeat customers could be Hall country residents as well as travelers through the region. The creation of a restaurant/bakery is also justified by the retail gap in eating establishments.

**Government support:** The low level of coordination among different government units affecting the SR365 Corridor and the difficulty of doing business have been cited as two weaknesses in the stakeholder study. In the case of business development, Gainesville already has a Small Business Development Center that can be tapped to provide business startup and entrepreneurial assistance. Taking steps to insure that this Center also has a minority business focus could help to maximize the development potential among the growing Hispanic population. At the same time, county and local government may want to consider the development of a One-Stop Permitting and Business Development Center. These centers can be found at local and state levels throughout the country and are created to simplify and speed up the business development process.
Transportation

This report examines State Route 365 (SR365) from just south of Gainesville to the Hall County border with Habersham County. The corridor is approximately three miles wide bounded by Old Cornelia Highway on the eastern side and the Chattahoochee River on the western side.

The purpose of examining the corridor is to understand the potential role it plays in all forms of economic development, including industrial, commercial, and tourism. The importance of this element is underlined by the stakeholders in the community. Over 75 percent of them say they do not like the corridor’s current traffic and safety conditions. Secondly, they are concerned about lack of limited access along the road. These concerns far outweigh others identified in the stakeholder comments.47

State Route 365 is a symbol of all Hall County has to offer. Driving south on the corridor through Gainesville motorists pass through the gateway to Atlanta and to bustling metropolitan life. The drive from Gainesville north provides some of the most breathtaking views in Georgia. SR365 is the gateway to the North Georgia Mountains with lush vegetation, gently rolling peaks, and the sounds of rushing water. Along 365 there are beautiful historic and cultural resources, quaint towns, and newer residential development.

Hall County was recently designated as an urbanized area by the 2000 U.S. Census. “Urbanized areas are required to establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and comply with the federally regulated metropolitan planning process.”48 This process requires the development of a “short range transportation improvement program based on a long range transportation plan.”49 Hall County has also been designated as a non-attainment area for air quality standards. These two recent changes will strongly affect the corridor.

Hall County employment and population projections for 2030 continue the trend toward urbanization. The projected growth of the corridor is concentrated on the west side of SR 365 from Joe Chandler Parkway to the northern county line. Projected growth on the east side of SR 365 is bounded by the county line on the north and east and the southeastern boundary follows SR 52 from Gillsville to Old Cornelia Highway, then follows Old Cornelia to Gainesville. Most of the change projected on the eastern side of the corridor is due to employment growth around Lula. The population growth is expected to occur east of SR 365 and south of Lula to Gainesville.

47 Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: Interviews with Community Stakeholders [Draft]. Georgia Tech EDI. July 2004.
MAP 3: SR365 Corridor population change, 2000-2030

MAP 4: SR365 Corridor employment change, 2000-2030
The projected increases in population and employment affect the volume of traffic and the performance of the roadway. These issues can be analyzed with Level of Service ratings (LOS) and Volume/Capacity Ratios (V/C), described below:

**Level of Service:** According to the Federal Highway Administration, LOS describes the quality of transportation service. It incorporates characteristics such as travel time, travel cost, interruption, freedom to maneuver, driver comfort and convenience, and indirectly, safety and operating costs. It is expressed as LOS “A” through “F.” Level “A” is a condition of free traffic flow where there is little or no restriction in speed or maneuverability caused by presence of other vehicles. Level “F” is when the roadway operates at low speed with many stoppages due to the presence of other vehicles.

**Volume/Capacity Ratio:** The Volume/Capacity Ratio is the hourly number of vehicles expected to use a roadway in the busiest hour, divided by the number of moving vehicles the roadway can safely accommodate in an hour.

The 365 corridor is an arterial roadway, which “provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control.” In 2000, the base year for our analysis, the transportation network, including collectors and local roads, performed well. Volume/Capacity (V/C) ratios in 2000 from north of Gainesville to the county line perform at Level of Service (LOS) A-C. The only exceptions are Bill Wilson and a portion of Jesse Jewel Parkway, which perform at LOS D-E. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) does not currently have any projects planned for the study area portion of SR365 or any that immediately affect the corridor performance in the near future.

In 2030, the system performance changes dramatically. The vehicle miles traveled (VMT) more than doubles. The number of lane miles at Level of Service F increases by 1,631 percent, and the average speed on urban arterials drops eight percent.

**Table 6: system performance, 2000 and 2030**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMANCE MEASURE</th>
<th>BASE (2000)</th>
<th>2030 PLAN</th>
<th>% CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VMT</td>
<td>3.54 million</td>
<td>8.4 million</td>
<td>137%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V/C Equal to or greater than 0.7 but less than 1.0</td>
<td>51.2 lane miles</td>
<td>264.3 lane miles</td>
<td>416%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V/C Greater or equal to 1.0</td>
<td>6.1 lane miles</td>
<td>105.6 lane miles</td>
<td>1631%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Speed - Urban Arterial</td>
<td>31.5 mph</td>
<td>29.9 mph</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following roads have an increase in V/C ratio in 2030.

**Table 7: level of services, 2030**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROAD</th>
<th>LEVEL OF SERVICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill Wilson Road</td>
<td>D-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR365 between Lula Road and Pea Ridge Road</td>
<td>D-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Cornelia Highway just south of the City of Lula</td>
<td>D-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portions of Old Cornelia Highway from Joe Chandler Road to Greenway Road</td>
<td>D-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portion of Jesse Jewell Parkway just east of 365 to downtown Gainesville</td>
<td>D-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Sulphur Road from SR365 to Old Cornelia Highway</td>
<td>D-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR365 from Jesse Jewell Parkway to White Sulphur Road</td>
<td>D-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pea Ridge Road at intersection with 365</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cagle Road</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portion of Old Cornelia Highway from E. Hall Road to White Sulphur Road</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR365 between Cagle Road and Lula Road</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MAP 5: SR365 Corridor volume/capacity ratios, 2030**

Source: Day Wilburn Associates, Inc.
It is important to note how the changes over the next 25 years will affect the corridor. The recommendations explore how to incorporate other modes, including bicycles, pedestrians, and public transportation, into the corridor, and more context sensitive design approaches to development outlined in a corridor management plan.

**Findings and Recommendations**  
While SR365 has potential to be a spectacular scenic route, it is at a transitional point where it can also become a typical sprawl arterial road. The New Urbanism movement has defined a set of characteristics associated with the worst streets in North America. These are characteristics that should be avoided in the SR365 corridor:

- many numerous and different signs without standards for size, height, materials, etc.;
- parking lots in front of stores,
- uninteresting architecture for stores—one story, rectangular boxes,
- inadequate landscaping,
- extremely wide right-of-way, and
- no accommodations for other modes of travel.51

The expected population growth and the non-attainment status of Hall County suggest consideration be given to alternate modes and development. The following section outlines recommendations for implementation and suggests case studies which can inform planning for SR365.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recent MPO formation and non-attainment air quality status.</td>
<td>Formation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of a TDM Plan is to reduce single occupancy vehicles. The benefits include reducing congestion and improving air quality. This is important for Hall County because of the projected growth and because it is now part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s non-attainment area. Some possible strategies include:

1. **Increase Commute Alternatives**
   a. **Transit**
      i. Promote the Red Rabbit (Hall County’s public transportation system) through advertising and marketing.
      ii. Begin a guaranteed ride-home program.
      iii. Survey residents and employers to understand if routes need to be added or updated or if hours of operation need to be changed or extended to fit with shift work.
   b. **Encourage bicycle commute, where appropriate**
      i. Build appropriate infrastructure.
      ii. Add signage to have cars share the road. Target signs for downtown Gainesville and other areas with high job density.

iii. Provide appropriate bicycle parking.
iv. Sponsor bicycle safety classes for people of all ages and skill levels.

2. Park and Ride
   a. Designate areas for Park and Ride lots for Atlanta commutes.
   b. Start an Internet based ride sharing program.

3. Promote flex time or telecommuting

4. Start a Transportation Management Association (TMA) to incorporate private sector businesses into transportation solutions.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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</table>

A successful plan for limiting access and managing the corridor must provide sufficient arterial and collector capacity off of exits. The following are recommendations for the transportation network based on traffic projections for 2030 and employment and population growth.

- Cagle Road is currently classified as a local road. It is surrounded by significant projected population and employment growth, and can be expected to be a key entry onto SR 365. Cagle Road should be improved.
- Old Cornelia Highway has relatively low projected volumes for a collector in 2030, although it does have LOS problems. It may require focusing on improved signalization.
- Bill Wilson Road has high projected traffic volumes with high projected growth (both employment and population). Alternatives include possible parallel routes or improved capacity.
- A corridor management plan (CMP) would address the issues the stakeholders have with traffic, safety, and access. A CMP brings together stakeholders in the community to address short and long term concerns for the corridor. It provides a plan of action for signage, maintenance, and other improvements necessary to maintain the corridor performance while being sensitive to the context of the area. Some recommendations for corridor management include:
  - Landscape and development buffers along the road and for development off of the road (100’ +)
  - Traffic signals with appropriate warning signage (blinking light)
  - Street lighting especially at intersections
  - Parallel access roads and appropriate street network in corridor outside of SR 365 to manage getting on and off the interstate.
  - Inter-parcel connectivity
  - Limit curb cuts (every 1000’)
  - Bike paths along Heritage Trail and linear parks (long, narrow parks ideal for bicycling, hiking, nature study, horseback riding, etc.)
To ensure that roadways are situated to best accommodate development, the county and state should work together to develop plans for the designation and preservation of the 365 transportation corridor. Then solicit the cooperation of the city, county, or state to implement corridor protection (CP) through land-use controls or other available means. Furthermore, it is useful to establish transportation-priority funding area (TPFA) to prioritize improvement and investments within the 365 corridor. Such improvements might include pedestrian and bicycle facilities and enhanced transit.

Finally, consider transportation design to facilitate bicycle and pedestrian mobility encourages these forms of travel. The provision of a well-connected system of facilities is necessary to promote bicycle and pedestrian travel. Bicycle paths separated from roadways will maximize the safety for riders, but may not provide optimal continuity for commuter cyclists at intersections. Bikeways in the form of specially marked street lanes may provide maximum continuity.

Recent advances in transportation engineering, such as context-sensitive design, stress the importance of flexibility in adapting engineering standards based on location, safety and conditions. The layout and design at both the local and regional facility level can affect adjacent land use, traffic volumes, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and consequently, vehicle emissions and air quality.

Following are additional suggested corridor design guidelines:

- Avoid disruption of unique vistas along corridor by preventing leap frog, or scattered, strip development.
- Avoid big box development that is not in scale with the larger community.
- Use landscaping and signage to indicate arrival in major cities—Gainesville, Lula, Clermont, and Gillsville.

The following photographs illustrate the potential consequences of unregulated development in the corridor.
Existing viewshed along corridor

The 365 corridor has several viewsheds both towards the north and south. The viewsheds range from narrow to wide perspective and take advantage of the topography of the terrain and the visibility of the mountains in the distance.

Example build out scenario

Unrestricted strip development along the corridor can destroy the scenic vistas creating an indecipherable commercial landscape. Scattered commercial and industrial development line both sides of the corridor and the forest land is gradually replaced in totality.
Existing view along rural road
Like many roads in the study area, this photograph illustrates the rural character of the area.

Example build out scenario
As population increases, commercial development pressures will grow. If policy and design guidelines are not instituted, undesirable patterns of growth may be the result, as seen in this photograph. In this illustration, the scenic quality of the corridor has been destroyed, sidewalks and other pedestrian accommodations are lacking, and signage and front-of-building parking lots create visual clutter.
Case Studies: Hall County has a wealth of information to draw on as model examples for corridor management plans. The following are a few examples:

The Bluegrass Corridor Management Planning Handbook
The Bluegrass Corridor Management Planning Handbook by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet is a good example of context sensitive design in a rural setting struggling with growth issues. This management plan stresses public involvement and outlines a six step process for corridor management planning.
Web site:  http://transportation.ky.gov/Multimodal/Access.asp

Northwest Corridor Development Approach
This study was put together by the Design Center at the University of Minnesota. The Northwest Corridor is located outside Minneapolis in an area experiencing typical suburban pressures of congestion, aging infrastructure, and development. The inventory focuses on the road network, transit, land use, and natural systems. The Northwest Corridor Development Approach is a good example of how to inventory a corridor, and it provides clear detailed recommendations. A fiscal impacts model is also included.
Web site:  www.designcenter.umn.edu/projects/current/nwcorridor_02-03/pdfs/TOC_intro.pdf

Corridor Management Plan for the Ridge and Valley Scenic Byway
The corridor management plan for the Ridge and Valley Scenic Byway includes Chattooga, Floyd, and Walker County Georgia. It was prepared for the US Department of Agriculture and Forest Service with additional funds from GDOT and FHWA. The Jaeger Company, Mary Means and Associates, and Wilbur Smith Associates prepared the plan. This CMP was prepared for the corridor’s scenic byway designation. The purpose is to balance tourism and preservation of the corridor. The recommendations for the corridor and specific implementation strategies are highlights of the plan, in addition to its proximity to Hall County.
Livability

Livability is maintained and enhanced by planning for the short- and long-term future of communities.

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<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased urbanization is at odds with the natural and environmental features of the corridor.</td>
<td>Implement programs and policies to preserve and enhance the character of the 365 Corridor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopt policies to maintain and enhance SR365 as a scenic corridor. Scenic corridors enhance the quality of life and improve local economies. The 1994 American Traveler Survey, for example, found that Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, Vermont, Colorado, Washington, and Montana, all known for protecting their natural beauty, were the most popular domestic destinations.

Scenic tourism stimulates economic development. A 1996 study in Colorado found that scenic corridor designation increased traffic on eight of 21 new corridors, leading to sales increases of about 10 percent. Another study that analyzed the potential benefits of designating US 89 near Glacier Park, Montana as a scenic corridor estimated that designation, coupled with a strong local marketing program, could create as many as 20 new jobs for the region.

Scenic byways are a source of local pride and a chance for citizens to showcase the beauty of their region. Moreover, scenic byways provide communities with what one activist has called a "road map to the future," a way for stakeholders to determine what they like about their communities and how to preserve these qualities while encouraging economic growth.

Goals for Scenic Byway:

- expand opportunities for people to experience and learn about the natural and cultural history in the region,
- support projects and initiatives that build local efforts to protect livability and expand economic activity through the promotion of nature and culture based economic and tourism development,
- promote a safe and pleasant experience for all users of the corridor,
- support efforts to improve access to recreational amenities while protecting most important natural scenic and cultural resources,
- encourage public and private investments that improve the visual quality of the roadside environment.
- encourage regional cooperation, stewardship and economic development through corridor-related partnerships,
- encourage byway considerations in existing and future land sue plans and development regulations for the region.
Signage along the corridor should facilitate traveler safety, traveler orientation, and inform public about the natural and recreational resources adjacent to the corridor. Classify signage based on their functions:

- **byway signs** (*The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* standard (section 2H.04) indicates that recreational and cultural interest area symbol signs shall be square or rectangular and shall have a white symbol message and white border on a brown background.)

- **direction signs** (*The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* standard (section 2H.04 and 2H.09) suggests that destination guide signs can be rectangular with a white legend and border on a green/brown background, or trapezoidal with a white legend and border on a brown background; and symbols signs shall be square or rectangular in shape and have a white symbol or message and white border on a brown background. These signs help orient motorists and provide directions to points of interest.)

- interpretation signs,

- regulatory signs (speed limits, street numbers, mileposts, and warning signs). Installed and maintained by Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

[See Section 7: Model Ordinances for more information on sign ordinances.]

**Recommendations:**

1. **Signage** on 365 should be related to the scenic corridor’s recreational and natural features. All the directional signage should be checked with MUTCD standards and additional directional signage should be installed in both directions. To a driver unfamiliar with the 365 route, the current inconsistency of directional signage causes confusion and disorientation.

2. **Gateways** should be located at several key locations along the scenic corridor. Identifying these gateways with appropriate signs and landscape features will help visitors to experience a heightened sense of arrival at the entry points of the corridor.”

3. **Secondary gateways** are not serving as major entrances, but rather as directional features to assist travelers when making turns along the scenic 365 corridor or directing visitors to the corridor.

4. **Access to points of interest** is via pull off or access roads. New pull off locations at appropriate areas are suggested. In addition, improvement of a large parking lot providing access to a park is suggested through a change in use. Native planting restoration for the banks surrounding the lots and improved circulation patterns should be accommodated in parking lots of the parks along the corridor.

5. **Develop a landscaping plan** for the entire corridor that incorporates native, drought and salt tolerant vegetation. Protect and restore the native vegetation, wildlife habitat and water quality of the natural areas along the corridor.

6. **Partner with local businesses** to implement the landscaping plan, including requiring commercial entities adjacent to the corridor to develop landscaping as part of the regulatory code.

7. **Initiate a drainage improvements study** to identify needed improvements.

8. **Develop an environmental education center**, with interactive exhibits, meeting space and a resource center to promote the resources along the corridor and in the region.
9. **Promote special events** that highlight the unique resources of the corridor.

10. **Pursue grant opportunities** and partnerships for environmental education.

11. **Limit number of the billboards** on the corridor to promote the integrity of the scenic corridor.
SECTION 6: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is a complete summary of all of the findings and recommendations contained in this report.

NORTHEAST HALL SUBREGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Infrastructure</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FINDING</td>
<td>RECOMMENDATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many natural, historic, and cultural resources in the Northeast Hall subregion.</td>
<td>Compile an inventory of all natural, historic, and cultural resources in the subregion and assemble information in a geographic information system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many government jurisdictions and organizations are involved in the development of the subregion.</td>
<td>Establish a Green Infrastructure Task Force composed of representatives from all stakeholder groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are approximately 55,000 acres of undeveloped (or vacant) land in the subregion, and over 31,000 acres of agricultural land. Single land owners hold two large agricultural tracts of land, one more than 4,000 acres and the other just over 1,000 acres.</td>
<td>Identify properties that have environmental, agricultural, historic, or cultural significance and properties that provide connections between hubs. Working with stakeholders, prioritize properties for acquisition or other forms of preservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New development patterns are resulting in disconnected residential subdivisions that are causing green space fragmentation.</td>
<td>Promote compact development that preserves green space and allows for the efficient provision of public infrastructure and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few trails or green corridors connect the existing hubs.</td>
<td>Identify potential links and protect them from development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are several historically significant sites in the subregion. Increasing development pressures may threaten their preservation.</td>
<td>Adopt an historic preservation ordinance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The subregion lacks a coordinated plan to preserve important resources and protect the area’s sense of place and history.</td>
<td>Develop and implement a green infrastructure master plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even though Hall County has enormous waterfront resources, they are fully utilized due to critical design flaws at various junctures. In the present situation, the waterfront areas are more vehicle friendly than they are people friendly.</td>
<td>Implement a waterfront improvement program that creates places for people and vehicles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livability</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FINDING</td>
<td>RECOMMENDATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing stock is not varied and relies heavily on manufactured housing.</td>
<td>Implement zoning changes to encourage variation in housing in the activity centers and lower density in agricultural centers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Residential projects are not integrated into larger community. | Follow quality places principles on page 7 to accomplish the integration within and among the communities.

Downtown centers are no longer hubs (i.e., Lula, Clermont, Gillsville). | Revitalize these areas by encouraging commercial and residential growth in downtowns.

Regional planning addressing stakeholders’ concerns are not reflected in land use. | Use a community visioning process, and follow through with it.

All of Hall County’s major cities have historic districts. However, in their present state, they are underappreciated. | Implement streetscape improvements to improve people’s perception of the place and encourage local businesses to locate there.

The Northeast Hall Subregion is expected to continue to grow in population and employment. | Develop objectives and goals to preserve and enhance livability in the subregion.

Bicycling is not a feasible mode of transportation in most of the Northeast Hall Subregion. | Consider transportation and park improvements that make bicycling a viable means of transportation.

### THE 365 CORRIDOR

#### Transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recent MPO formation and non-attainment air quality status.</td>
<td>Formation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Economic Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hall County has significant retail leakage in the categories of “Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliances” as well as “Food &amp; Drinking Establishments.”</td>
<td>Designate development nodes along the corridor that permit Big Box retailers and food &amp; drinking establishments and create design guidelines to ensure these businesses do not detract from the corridor’s scenic attributes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Livability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINDINGS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased urbanization is at odds with the natural and environmental features of the corridor.</td>
<td>Implement programs and policies to preserve and enhance the character of the 365 Corridor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 7: MODEL ORDINANCES

Model ordinances are available from a variety of sources. Following are brief abstracts and sources of several ordinances related to the issues discussed in this report.

**Alternatives to Conventional Zoning:** The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) designed the “Alternatives to Conventional Zoning” model code especially for Georgia’s small and rural communities, but with specific modules for more urban communities as well. This document contains traditional zoning tools, as well as alternative and innovative approaches to growth management. The following modules could be of specific interest to Hall County: agricultural lands, agricultural buffer requirements, manufactured home parks, animal feeding operations, rural clustering, and scenic corridor overlay district.

*Source:* Georgia Department of Community Affairs
*Web site:* www.dca.state.ga.us/planning/modelcode.html

**Conservation Subdivision Model Ordinance:** Created by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the conservation subdivision model ordinance is part of their *Community Choices Quality Growth Toolkit*, which includes background information and model ordinances and design guidelines on a variety of topics. A conservation subdivision ordinance promotes the preservation of green space, clusters development to reduce infrastructure needs, and provides recreational opportunities.

*Source:* Atlanta Regional Commission
*Web site:* www.atlantaregional.com/qualitygrowth/toolkits.html

**Model Historic Preservation Ordinance and Design Guidelines:** A historic preservation ordinance establishes a local Historic Preservation Commission and adopts a procedure for designating and protecting buildings and sites of historic or cultural significance. Developed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (Historic Preservation Division), these model ordinances and design guidelines have been created to be in compliance with Georgia’s Historic Preservation Act.

*Source:* Georgia Department of Natural Resources
*Web site:* http://hpd.dnr.state.ga.us/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=53&txtPage=1

**Landscaping Ordinance:** Landscaping ordinances can be designed to protect and improve the visual character of a community, improve the environment by using plants that are suited to the climate, protect trees, and improve drainage and air quality. Such an ordinance can impact residential or commercial property, or both.

*Source:* Scenic America
*Web site:* www.scenic.org/communitydesign/modellandscaping.htm

**Overlay District Model Ordinance:** The overlay district model ordinance creates a second zone over existing zoning district. It can be designed to permit special regulations or to allow for fewer restrictions, depending on the needs and goals of the community. This model was developed by the ARC.

*Source:* Atlanta Regional Commission
*Web site:* www.atlantaregional.com/qualitygrowth/toolkits.html
**Sign Ordinance:** A sign ordinance is designed to regulate all signs that are visible from the public highway right-of-way, public facilities, trails open to the public, and navigable waterways. Because signs affect the visual quality experienced by residents and visitors, safety, and the character of the area, they impact economic development and public health, safety, and welfare. Development by Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin, this model ordinance regulates signage for agriculture, commercial, retail, industrial, manufacturing, neighborhood, government, and other uses.

*Source:* Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin  

**Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinance and Design Standards:**
This ordinance and associated design standards are intended to create compact neighborhoods that address the needs of pedestrians, but remain convenient for automobiles. Traditional Neighborhood Development also integrates parks and civic places within the communities.

*Source:* Atlanta Regional Commission  
*Web site:* [www.atlantaregional.com/qualitygrowth/toolkits.html](http://www.atlantaregional.com/qualitygrowth/toolkits.html)

**Transfer of Development Rights Ordinance:** A Transfer of Development Rights program allows property owners to sell their development rights, but maintain ownership of their property, which is preserved as a natural or agricultural resource. In April 2003, the Georgia Legislature passed an amendment to the TDR legislation (Senate Bill 86) making TDRs available to any county that adopts enabling TDR ordinances. Fulton County, and specifically the Chattahoochee Hill Country, may be one of the first area’s eligible for TDR transactions in the southeastern United States. The Chattahoochee Hill Country Alliance has provided background information, as well as the Fulton County TDR ordinance, online.

*Source:* Chattahoochee Hill Country Alliance  
*Web site:* [www.chatthillcountry.org/hot-topics/tdr.htm](http://www.chatthillcountry.org/hot-topics/tdr.htm)