



Northeast Georgia Plan 2035

Regional Agenda

DRAFT, January 2012

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Regional Plan Overview

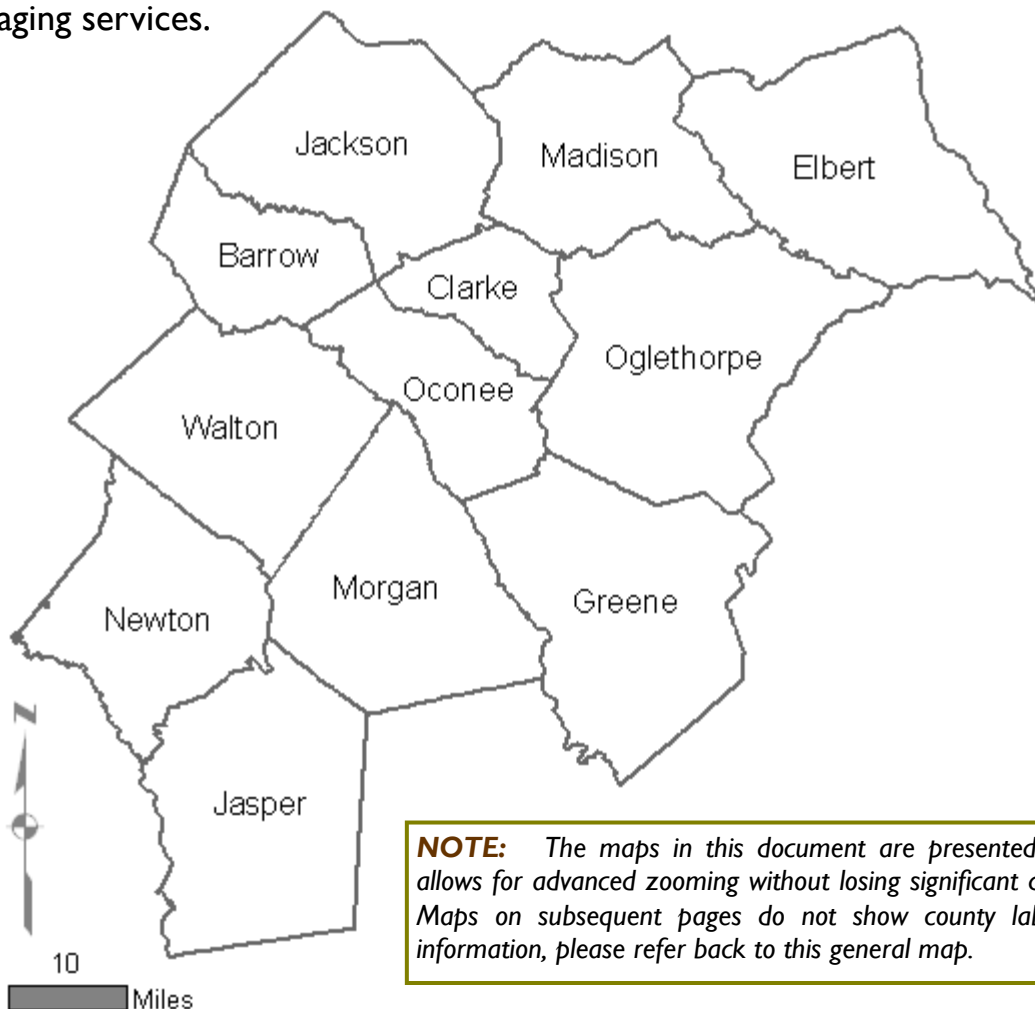
The Northeast Georgia region comprises twelve counties, covering approximately 3,260 square miles. Largely rural in nature, the region experiences development pressures from the Atlanta metropolitan region to the immediate west.

Northeast Georgia Plan 2035 is the long-range plan for managing the region's projected growth. The process is divided into three distinct parts, per the *Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning* established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

- **Regional Assessment**
Identification and analysis of existing conditions using available data
- **Stakeholder Involvement Program**
Strategy for regional participation in the development of the Regional Agenda
- **Regional Agenda**
Regional vision and implementation program

About the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) serves the twelve counties and 54 municipalities in Northeast Georgia. Created in 1963, the agency is a resource for planning, economic development, grant writing, workforce training, and aging services.



NOTE: The maps in this document are presented in a format that allows for advanced zooming without losing significant detail or resolution. Maps on subsequent pages do not show county labels; to view that information, please refer back to this general map.

“The Regional Vision is intended to paint a picture of what the region desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged.”

(Georgia Department of Community Affairs: Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning)

A Vision for Northeast Georgia

This chapter of the Regional Agenda presents a multi-part vision for Northeast Georgia. Components include a General Vision Statement that identifies goals for the region, a Regional Development Map (RDM) and an Areas Requiring Special Attention Map (ARSAM) that illustrate desired future land use patterns, and a Defining Narrative that helps describe and frame these desired development patterns.

Note: On the next page, you will find the **General Vision Statement** for Northeast Georgia. Many plans offer paragraph-form vision statements that can be difficult for readers to follow or process. This Regional Agenda presents a vision statement comprised of ten major concepts (distilled directly from stakeholder input), each of which is listed with applicable impact areas (classical areas of planning, development, and community). The intent of this format is to provide a simple, concise vision that accurately portrays the concepts identified by stakeholders.

GENERAL VISION STATEMENT

Responsibility

Jobs
Education/Training
Health
Natural/Historic
Resources
Population

Playground

Recreation
Jobs
Health
Natural/Historic
Resources

Marketplace

Jobs
Education/Training
Cooperation
Agriculture
Transportation/
Infrastructure
Natural/Historic
Resources

Self-Supporting

Agriculture
Jobs
Education/Training
Natural/Historic
Resources

Livability

Recreation
Cooperation
Jobs
Health
Education/Training
Transportation/
Infrastructure
Housing
Natural/Historic
Resources
Population

Breadbasket

Agriculture
Jobs
Education/
Training
Natural/Historic
Resources

Innovation

Agriculture
Cooperation
Jobs
Education/
Training

Attractive

Recreation
Jobs
Health
Education/Training
Transportation/
Infrastructure
Housing
Natural/Historic
Resources
Population

Mobility

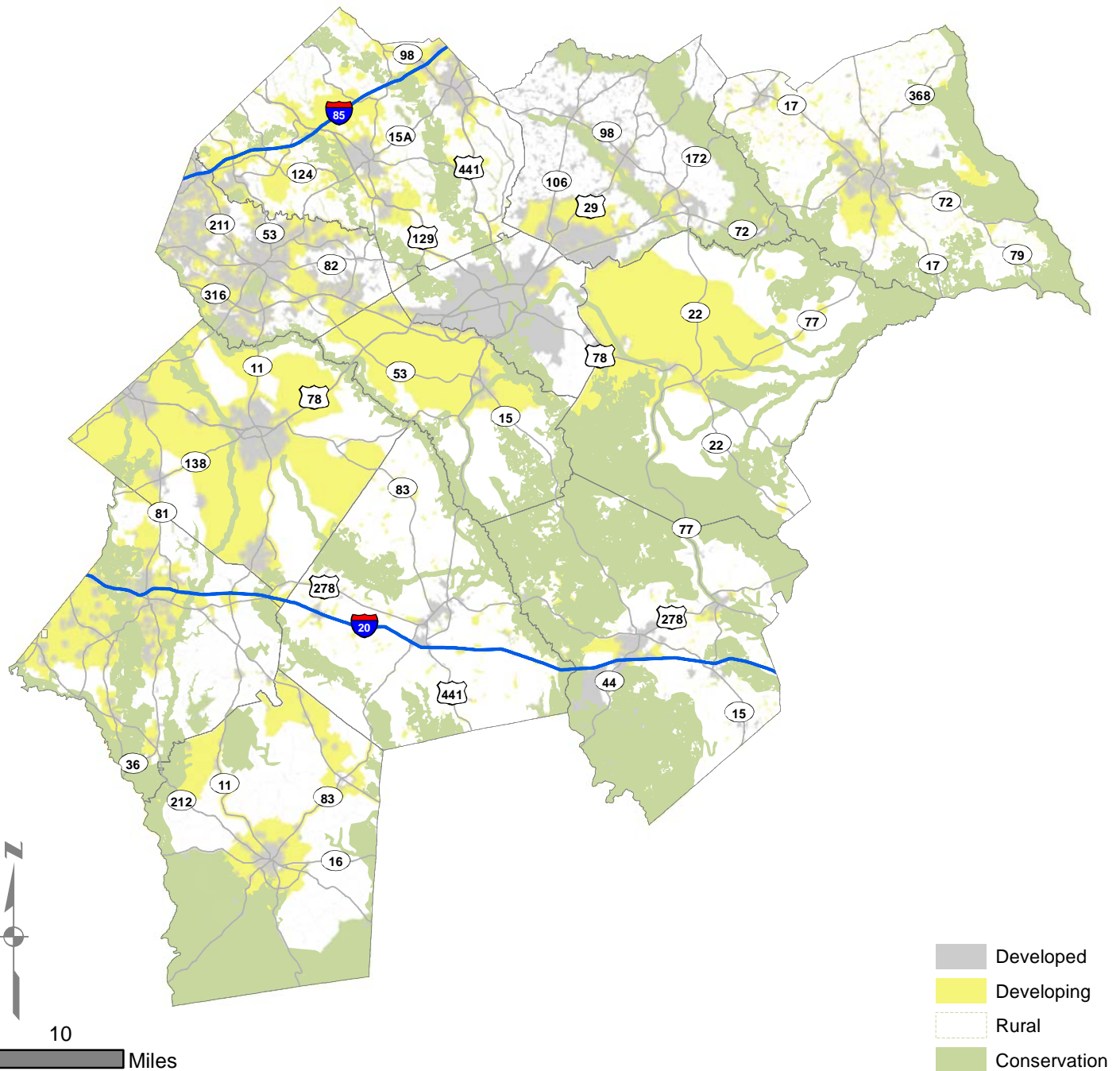
Jobs
Health
Transportation/
Infrastructure
Population

Regional Identity

Agriculture
Recreation
Cooperation
Jobs
Education/
Training

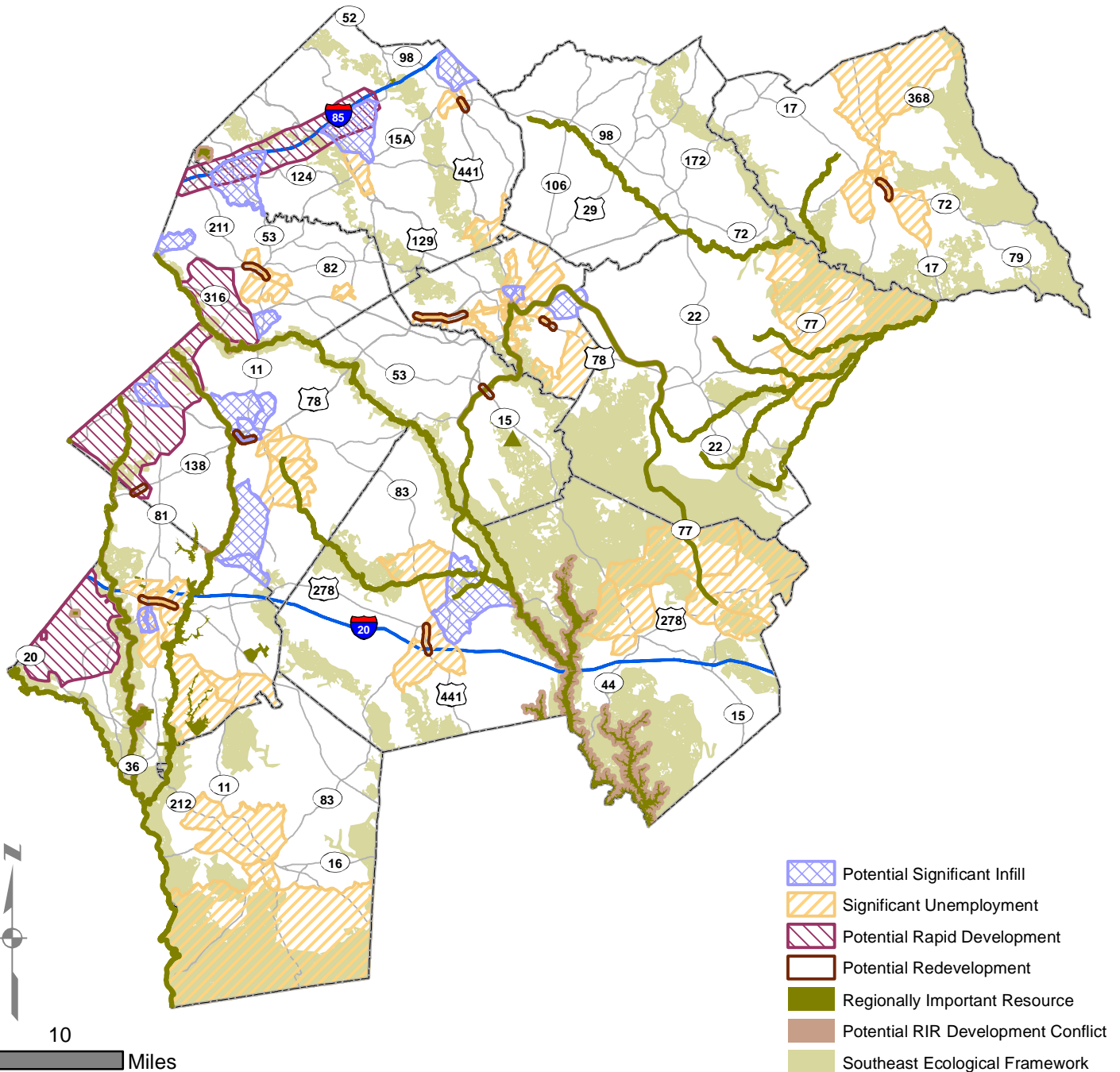
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MAP

The Regional Development Map represents Northeast Georgia's desired development patterns. Per Georgia planning standards, the following classifications are used: Developed, Developing, Rural, and Conservation. Also per state rules, Regionally Important Resources are included within the Conservation category.



AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION MAP

The Areas Requiring Special Attention map is used to uncover potential conflicts between desired future development patterns and identified natural and cultural resources, as well as opportunities for quality growth. This map is based on a similar map of the same name, found in the Regional Assessment, but includes refinements taken from stakeholder input and further geographic analysis.



DEFINING NARRATIVE - INTRODUCTION

The Defining Narrative provides context and meaning to the development patterns illustrated on previous pages. Specifically, every classification from the Areas Requiring Special Attention map will be detailed, including a description of desired development patterns, a list of compatible land uses, an inventory of Quality Community Objectives (published by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs), and a menu of implementation measures that may be useful to achieve the desired development patterns (the DCA also publishes guidelines on this subject).

*For ease of use, the **Quality Community Objectives** are described here and identified by name only in the proceeding text:*

- Traditional Neighborhoods** – Human scale, compact development, mixing uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity
- Infill Development** – Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional core of the community
- Sense of Place** – Community focal points (downtowns and other activity centers) should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather
- Transportation Choices** – Options to walk, bicycle, carpool, use transit, etc.
- Regional Identity** – Promote and preserve a regional “identity,” or sense of place, defined in terms of common architecture, economic linkages, or other characteristics
- Heritage Preservation** – Preserve and revitalize historic areas, ensuring new development that is compatible with traditional features and protecting what defines a community’s character
- Open Space Preservation** – Minimize the amount of land consumed, and set aside open space from development for conservation and public use
- Environmental Protection** – Protect sensitive areas from negative impacts of development; whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved
- Growth Preparedness** – Identify the pre-requisites for desired growth, including improved infrastructure, education and workforce training, and utilize growth management mechanisms
- Appropriate Businesses** – Recruit and cultivate businesses that will help meet local and regional economic development goals and that match the capabilities of the workforce
- Employment Options** – A range of job types should be available to meet the diverse needs of local workforces
- Housing Choices** – Diverse housing options would enable all who work in a community also to live there, promote a mixture of income and age groups, and meet market needs
- Educational Opportunities** – Educational and training opportunities would permit workers to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, and pursue entrepreneurial ambitions
- Regional Solutions** – Regional solutions often result in greater efficiency, including cost savings
- Regional Cooperation** – Regional cooperation should be encouraged by setting shared priorities, identifying common needs, and finding collaborative solutions

DEFINING NARRATIVE - REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES

Desired Development Patterns

The NEGRC Council adopted the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources* in November 2010. This document outlines appropriate development practices, general policies, and protection measures for the designated Regionally Important Resources (RIRs) in three categories: Conservation Resources, Heritage Resources, and Water Resources.



Trail Creek Trestle (Firefly Trail), Athens-Clarke County

Land Uses

- Natural, Cultural, and Historic areas
- Parks and Passive Recreation
- Trails, Greenways, Blueways
- Agriculture

Quality Community Objectives

- Sense of Place
- Transportation Choices
- Regional Identity
- Heritage Preservation
- Open Space Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Regional Solutions
- Regional Cooperation



Madison Historic District, Morgan County

Implementation Measures

The primary implementation mechanism in this area will be the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources*, which is described above.

Other measures that may be useful include:

- Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
- Identify and improve waterways that do not meet established standards
- Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.



Elder Mill Bridge, Oconee County

DEFINING NARRATIVE - POTENTIAL RIR DEVELOPMENT CONFLICTS

This area represents the intersection between adopted RIRs and the ‘Developed’ and ‘Developing’ Character Areas identified in the Regional Assessment’s Projected Development Patterns map.

Desired Development Patterns

- Facilities for bicycles, including bikeways or bike lanes, parking racks, etc.
- Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses
- Reduced parking requirements for commercial and residential developments, particularly when nearby parking or public transit is available
- Parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavement
- Clustering development to preserve open space within the development site
- Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) as amenities that shape identity and character of the development
- Preserving environmentally sensitive areas by setting them aside as public parks, trail corridors, or greenbelts
- Site plans, building design, and landscaping that are sensitive to natural features of the site, including topography and views
- Using infrastructure availability to steer development away from areas of natural, cultural, and environmentally sensitive resources

Land Uses

This Area requires less attention to which specific land use classifications are encouraged (or discouraged) than to the nature of development and how it could impact the RIR in question. Although the land uses listed above in “Regionally Important Resources” could be applicable within the Potential RIR Development Conflict Areas, certain RIRs might be too sensitive for even agriculture or trail development while others could easily accommodate more intensive uses nearby. When changes are proposed, or to establish or maintain protection status, local governments should evaluate these areas on a case-by-case basis, and they should always refer to the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources*.

Implementation Measures

The primary implementation mechanism in this area will be the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources*, described previously. Other measures that may be useful include:

- Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
- Identify and improve waterways that do not meet established standards
- Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.
- Low-Impact Development – protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs
- Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development, cluster development, etc.
- Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)

Quality Community Objectives

- Infill Development
- Sense of Place
- Transportation Choices
- Regional Identity
- Heritage Preservation
- Open Space Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Growth Preparedness
- Regional Solutions
- Regional Cooperation



Yellow River

DEFINING NARRATIVE - SOUTHEAST ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The Southeast Ecological Framework (SEF) was developed from 1998-2001 to serve as a “useful first step for identifying the areas potentially most important for maintaining water quality, air quality, flood control, and storm protection.” The project includes Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Northeast Georgia communities and organizations may consult these data to identify future submissions for potential Regionally Important Resource (RIR) designation.



Alcovy River Greenway

Desired Development Patterns

- Clustering development to preserve open space within the development site
- Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) as amenities that shape the identity and character of the development
- Very large minimum lot size requirements (25+ acres) to limit development density and protect farmland and rural character (*may only be applicable in limited circumstances*)
- Preserving environmentally sensitive areas by setting them aside as public parks, trail corridors, or greenbelts
- Site plans, building design, and landscaping that are sensitive to natural features of the site, including topography and views
- Using infrastructure availability to steer development away from areas of natural, cultural, and environmentally sensitive resources

Land Uses

Goals and objectives identified for the SEF project included the identification of primary ecological areas that are currently protected and a green infrastructure network that connects these areas. The SEF is composed of the following:

- Existing Conservation Lands
- Open Water
- Uplands
- Forested Lands
- Agricultural Lands

Implementation Measures

The primary implementation mechanism in this area will be the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources*, described previously. Other measures that may be useful include:

- Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
- Identify and improve waterways that do not meet established standards
- Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.
- Low-Impact Development – protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs
- Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development, cluster development, etc.
- Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)

Quality Community Objectives

- Sense of Place
- Regional Identity
- Heritage Preservation
- Open Space Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Growth Preparedness
- Regional Solutions
- Regional Cooperation



Big Haynes Creek

DEFINING NARRATIVE - AREAS OF POTENTIAL RAPID DEVELOPMENT

The western portion of Northeast Georgia has exhibited tremendous growth in recent years. Potentially Rapid Development areas are the locales in which significant growth may be most likely to take place. In certain instances, it is possible that development could outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including recreation.

Desired Development Patterns

- Addition of neighborhood commercial centers on appropriate infill sites to serve surrounding neighborhoods
- Developments that have easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily
- Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- Structures (shopping, warehouses, offices, etc.) located near the street front, with parking in rear of buildings, making the corridor more attractive and more pedestrian-friendly
- Addition of new uses to single-use sites (e.g. restaurants and shopping added to office parks)
- New developments that contain a mix of residential and commercial uses and community facilities at small enough scale and proximity to encourage walking between destinations
- Brownfield redevelopment that converts formerly industrial/commercial sites to mixed-use developments
- Greyfield redevelopment that converts vacant or under-utilized commercial strips to mixed-use assets
- Facilities for bicycles, including bikeways or bike lanes, parking racks, etc.
- Distribution of affordably-priced homes throughout locality/region
- Residential development that offers a mix of housing types (single-family homes, town homes, live/work units, lofts, over-the-shop, and apartments), densities, and prices in the same neighborhood
- Residential development with healthy mix of uses (corner groceries, barber shops, drugstores) within easy walking distance of residences
- Clustering development to preserve open space within development site
- Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) as amenities that shape the identity and character of the development
- Integrating appropriate mixed-use and/or housing development with new school construction to increase walkability and reduce trip generation



Covington Historic District, Newton County

Land Uses

- Residential
- Commercial (office and retail)
- Mixed-use
- Light industrial/warehouses
- Public/Institutional
- Natural, Cultural, and Historic areas
- Parks
- Trails, Greenways, Blueways
- Agriculture (small-scale)

Quality Community Objectives

- Traditional Neighborhoods
- Sense of Place
- Transportation Choices
- Heritage Preservation
- Open Space Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Growth Preparedness
- Appropriate Businesses
- Employment Options
- Housing Choices
- Educational Opportunities
- Regional Solutions
- Regional Cooperation

DEFINING NARRATIVE - AREAS OF POTENTIAL RAPID DEVELOPMENT, Cont'd.

Implementation Measures

- Effective, intentional recruitment and planning – recruit businesses that suit the community, match training to workforce needs (current and future), control big-box development, form a business incubator, etc.
- Utilize existing economic programs and opportunities – Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), enterprise zones, opportunity zones
- Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
- Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.
- Low-Impact Development – protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs
- Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development, cluster development, etc.
- Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- Overlay Districts – mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied
- Public Facilities and Services – adequate public facilities standards, appropriate school siting, “Fix it First” policy, strategic location of public facilities, urban service areas
- Quality, diverse housing stock – provide housing options for all income levels and ages, allow accessory dwelling units, establish Urban Redevelopment Areas (OCGA 36-61-1), etc.
- Subdivisions and Land Development regulations – contributes significantly to the geography and geometry of the community (DCA Model Code 2-2)
- Plan for and implement multi-modal transportation – corridor studies, bikeability/walkability audits, bicycling and walking plans, complete streets policies, appropriate facility design, transit- and bicyclist-/pedestrian-oriented development, transportation demand management, etc.
- Intergovernmental Coordination – coordinated development review processes, Intergovernmental Service Agreements (DCA Model Code 7-5), service delivery strategies, etc., to increase efficiency and cost savings

*Compact Development Patterns*

DEFINING NARRATIVE - AREAS OF POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

Identified using 2010 aerial imagery, these are primarily road corridors that contain significant strip developments often composed of numerous small commercial properties, each with its own driveway.

Desired Development Patterns

- Accommodation of “big box” retail in a way that complements surrounding uses, such as breaking up the façade to look like a collection of smaller stores
- Commercial structures (shopping, warehouses, offices, etc.) located near the street front, with parking in the rear of buildings, making the community more attractive and more pedestrian-friendly
- Improvement of sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers
- Redevelopment of older strip commercial centers in lieu of new construction further down the strip
- Infill development on vacant sites closer in to the center of the community; these sites, with existing infrastructure in place, are used for new development, matching character of surrounding neighborhoods in lieu of more development on greenfield sites
- Driveway consolidation and inter-parcel connections between parking lots
- Developments that have easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily
- Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses
- Use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large expanses of paved parking
- Brownfield redevelopment that converts formerly industrial/commercial sites to mixed-use developments
- Greyfield redevelopment that converts vacant or under-utilized commercial strips to mixed-use assets
- Revitalization of existing neighborhood commercial centers to capture more market activity and serve as community focal points
- Reuse of existing vacant or underutilized structures (e.g. commercial centers, office spaces, warehouses) to accommodate new community facilities



Potential Redevelopment Area (Example Outside NE GA)

Land Uses

- Commercial (office and retail)
- Mixed-use
- Light industrial/warehouses
- Public/Institutional

Quality Community Objectives

- Traditional Neighborhoods
- Sense of Place
- Transportation Choices
- Regional Identity
- Open Space Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Growth Preparedness
- Appropriate Businesses
- Employment Options
- Housing Choices
- Educational Opportunities
- Regional Solutions
- Regional Cooperation

DEFINING NARRATIVE - AREAS OF POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT, Cont'd.

Implementation Measures

- Effective, intentional recruitment and planning – recruit businesses that suit the community, match training to workforce needs (current and future), control big-box development, form a business incubator, etc.
- Utilize existing economic programs and opportunities – Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), enterprise zones, opportunity zones
- Brownfield Site Remediation – clean-up of contaminated properties; can be initiated by property owners or local governments
- Strategies for Reuse of Greyfields – reusing sites such as abandoned shopping centers for transit-oriented, mixed-use development
- Business Improvement District (BID)/Community Improvement District (CID) – self-taxing entity formed by property owners and/or businesses within a specific geographic area; can be formed to provide additional services, increase safety and attractiveness, etc.
- Rehabilitation Codes – reuse older buildings, leading to reinvestment in blighted areas
- Targeted Corridor Redevelopment – using public incentives or urban redevelopment powers to encourage revitalization of problem properties, such as declining shopping centers or abandoned “big-box” stores
- Utility Relocation – remove overhead utilities from public view, either below ground or at the rear of lots
- Adaptive Use – conversion of a building for new uses
- Public Nuisance Ordinance – control nuisances such as loud noises, stagnant water, abandoned vehicles, accumulation of junk, and tall weeds and grass
- Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- Overlay Districts – mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied
- Plan for and implement multi-modal transportation – corridor studies, bikeability/walkability audits, bicycling and walking plans, complete streets policies, appropriate facility design, transit- and bicyclist-/pedestrian-oriented development, transportation demand management, etc.
- Access Control Measures – restricts entry/exit to sites to increase safety and attractiveness
- Intergovernmental Coordination – coordinated development review processes, Intergovernmental Service Agreements (DCA Model Code 7-5), service delivery strategies, etc., to increase efficiency and cost savings



Positive Redevelopment Attributes (Example Outside NE GA)

DEFINING NARRATIVE - AREAS OF POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT INFILL

NEGRC identified U.S. Census block groups lying within or adjacent to existing incorporated cities with capacity for infill residential growth.

Desired Development Patterns

- Buildings in centers architecturally integrated with the site and one another, and developed at a scale sufficient in size, bulk and height to provide image identification for the center and the surrounding community
- New development matching typical densities of older center of community
- Infill development on vacant sites closer in to the center of the community; these sites, with existing infrastructure in place, are used for new development, matching character of surrounding neighborhoods in lieu of more development on greenfield sites
- Street layouts that match those in older parts of the community and connect to the existing street network at many points
- Distribution of affordably-priced homes throughout locality/region
- New housing opportunities that are created out of former, underused commercial, warehouse, or industrial spaces
- Residential development that offers a mix of housing types (single-family homes, town homes, live/work units, lofts, over-the-shop, and apartments), densities, and prices in the same neighborhood
- Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) as amenities that shape the identity and character of the development
- Integrating appropriate mixed-use and/or housing development with new school construction to increase walkability and reduce trip generation



Infill (Existing And Potential), Athens-Clarke County

Land Uses

- Residential
- Commercial (office and retail)
- Public/Institutional
- Parks
- Passive Recreation
- Trails, Greenways, Blueways

Quality Community Objectives

- Traditional Neighborhoods
- Infill Development
- Sense of Place
- Transportation Choices
- Open Space Preservation
- Growth Preparedness
- Appropriate Businesses
- Housing Choices



Example Infill House Plan

Implementation Measures

- Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, cluster development, etc.
- Infill Development Program – comprehensive strategy for encouraging infill in particular areas while regulating its execution (related: DCA Model Code 3-10)
- Overlay Districts – mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied
- Quality, diverse housing stock – provide housing options for all income levels and ages, allow accessory dwelling units, establish Urban Redevelopment Areas (OCGA 36-61-1), etc.
- Subdivisions and Land Development regulations – contributes significantly to the geography and geometry of the community (DCA Model Code 2-2)

DEFINING NARRATIVE - AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT UNEMPLOYMENT

Areas of Significant Unemployment are represented by U.S. Census block groups in which unemployment was greater than 15% in 2010. This represents roughly 150% of the national and state rates from that year.

(Since this Area is delineated by virtue of block group-level unemployment data, these lines could change markedly if the unemployment criterion changed from 15% to 10% or 20%. As such, the specific areas noted on the map are to be seen as a general guide for those seeking to understand unemployment within the region. See map on page 7.)

Desired Development Patterns

Specific physical development patterns are less important in these Areas than is awareness by community leaders, economic development professionals, and workforce trainers that significant unemployment exists – this knowledge would ideally lead to appropriate recruitment, education, and investment.

In general, however, planners and decision-makers should be mindful of proximity to housing, access by various modes of transportation, street connectivity, on-site day-care, and other attributes that might enable currently unemployed workers to realize employment opportunities. Additionally, the vision laid out in this plan indicates a heavy reliance on agriculture and recreation; development, investment, and policies that encourage employment in these sectors would be especially appropriate.

Land Uses

As in the *Development Patterns* section, identifying specific desired land use classifications may not be the best way to characterize desired actions within this Area Requiring Special Attention. However, a mixture of uses within communities and neighborhoods could provide various types of jobs and living-quarters with relatively easy access to one another; in more rural areas, predominant land uses will likely continue to be agricultural.

Quality Community Objectives

- Infill Development
- Regional Identity
- Growth Preparedness
- Appropriate Businesses
- Employment Options
- Regional Cooperation

Implementation Measures

- Effective, intentional recruitment and planning – recruit businesses that suit the community, match training to workforce needs (current and future), control big-box development, form a business incubator, etc.
- Utilize existing economic programs and opportunities – Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), enterprise zones, opportunity zones
- Core Economic Development Sales Team – citizens that market your community to prospective businesses
- Public Facilities and Services – adequate public facilities standards, appropriate school siting, “Fix it First” policy, strategic location of public facilities, urban service areas
- Quality, diverse housing stock – provide housing options for all income levels and ages, allow accessory dwelling units, establish Urban Redevelopment Areas (OCGA 36-61-1), etc.
- Plan for and implement multi-modal transportation – corridor studies, bikeability/walkability audits, bicycling and walking plans, complete streets policies, appropriate facility design, transit- and bicyclist-/pedestrian-oriented development, transportation demand management, etc.

What are Issues and Opportunities?

The Regional Assessment includes a presentation and analysis of Potential Issues and Opportunities that provides an objective, professional analysis of the region (not based on public or stakeholder input). In the Regional Agenda, Issues and Opportunities have been refined and finalized to reflect stakeholder knowledge and input. The items that appear here are addressed through implementation measures in this document's Implementation Program.

This chapter, presented in divisions relating to classical planning analysis areas such as housing and transportation, presents a final catalog of focal points to guide the forward-looking, implementation-based components of the Regional Agenda.

Methods

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) publishes a list of typical issues and opportunities as part of the *State Planning Recommendations*. This list, in addition to an evaluation for the region's consistency with the DCA's *Quality Community Objectives*, was used as the starting point for developing the Potential Issues and Opportunities list found in the Regional Assessment. Further issues and opportunities were identified as part of a thorough analysis of regional datasets and regional development patterns (see chapters 3 and 4 of this document). Finally, these were amended based on direct stakeholder input.

POPULATION

The population growth illustrated in historical trends is expected to continue over the twenty five-year horizon of this planning project. This can be both advantageous and potentially problematic, and the region's ability to capitalize on opportunities and respond to issues depends heavily on its level of growth preparedness. Irrespective of growth or decline, issues related to age, income, and special populations affect needs and service provision.

- By 2035, the twelve-county region is projected to account for 1.15 million people, an increase of approximately 250% over the observed 1990 population of 328,223. This increase will have implications on housing, jobs, transportation, leisure, natural resources, and infrastructure.
- As the Northeast Georgia region grows, it will also age rapidly: while the portion of residents under twenty years old is projected to decrease by 4.6% between 1990 and 2035, the share of residents 65 years or older is expected to increase by 6.4%. Needs associated with aging include transportation and medical services; if adequately anticipated and planned for, this could present a significant economic opportunity. At the same time, it would be worthwhile to evaluate potential ways to attract and retain young adults, who are more likely to invest in communities and contribute to the workforce. While some of their expectations might overlap with those of seniors (walkable communities, public transportation, etc.), other needs (for example: employment opportunities for a skilled workforce and recreation improvements) could require more targeted planning approaches. Attendees of Regional Agenda stakeholder meetings indicated that aging readiness and responsiveness should be regional priorities.
- In 2009, seven of the region's twelve counties exhibited poverty rates higher than the national average of 14%; the same seven counties also exceeded the U.S. rate (21%) for children living in poverty.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Northeast Georgia region's economy is diverse, and many communities strive to attract new business. However, coordinated economic development planning and promotion could be strengthened, both on a region-wide scale and between proximately-located communities.

- NEGRC serves as a local Economic Development District (EDD) in coordination with the Economic Development Administration (EDA), and encourages cooperation between local government officials, community-based organizations, and the private sector. Per EDA requirements, NEGRC developed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in 2007; the document soon will be updated, presenting a key opportunity to craft a regional development vision.
- Northeast Georgia lags behind the state in educational attainment, including high school graduation, college and/or university graduation, and post-graduate studies. This fits with the observed lack of employment opportunities in professional, scientific, and technical services sectors in the region. Workforce development professionals note, however, that training and employment in the trucking industry present opportunities for Northeast Georgia's labor pool.
- Stakeholders, economic developers, and anti-poverty advocates cite lack of workforce training in appropriate fields as a major problem, especially in the small-business sector.
- From 2008 to 2009, unemployment within the NEGRC area increased by 55.7 % to 9.5%, in line with the state-level situation (54.8% increase to 9.6%). This accompanies a 6.6% loss in jobs region-wide.
- The most recent available dataset (2000) shows that fewer than half of Northeast Georgia work trips were made within the region, meaning that workers are forced to find employment opportunities outside their county and/or the region. Stakeholders indicate that this is a serious problem for both individual communities and the region on the whole.
- Although many tourism opportunities exist in Northeast Georgia, concerted promotion is lacking. The region's twelve counties are split among three of Georgia's nine designated travel regions. However, since no travel region-level or NEGRC-level tourism promotion plan exists, this sector could represent a significant untapped economic development opportunity.
- The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has identified four Opportunity Zones in the Northeast Georgia region, all of which are located on the western edge of the NEGRC area, close to metro Atlanta. These zones exist in Covington, Monroe, Social Circle, and Walton County, and are meant to counter "pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, general distress, and blight." Employers within these designated areas are eligible for a Job Tax Credit of \$3,500 per eligible job they create, and communities must apply to DCA for designation. Businesses in other communities are eligible for somewhat reduced tax credit options.
- Construction and development have until very recently represented significant employment sectors in Northeast Georgia's economy. NEGRC staff compiled a status report on Developments of Regional Impact from 2005 to 2010 to determine what types of projects represent opportunities for the region. A significant majority of the projects *completed* during this timeframe were categorized as Wholesale & Distribution or Industrial, while the bulk of *abandoned* projects were described as Housing or Mixed Use.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, Cont'd.

- Nine of Northeast Georgia's twelve counties are certified as "Camera Ready Communities" by the Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office. Certified locales offer liaisons to assist production companies with upcoming shoots, and communities gain promotional opportunities and increased business for their hotels, stores, and restaurants. Some productions also directly employ local residents.
- At stakeholder meetings, attendees regularly cited local-based agriculture as a significant potential economic development generator, both through direct commerce and indirect tourism promotion opportunities; this was referred to with the term, "Breadbasket."
- Likewise, stakeholders would like to see the region become a "Playground" for recreation that attracts residents and visitors to the many businesses, parks, and other outlets that Northeast Georgia offers.
- Another common thread at stakeholder meetings was the idea of not sacrificing regional identity, quality of life, or other aspects of the vision laid out in this document for economic development. Stakeholders see innovation in economic development and community and regional planning as ways to achieve this balance.
- Stakeholders indicate that access to Atlanta is both a major current impediment to economic development and a future opportunity for increased two-way trade.
- Finally, stakeholders indicated that many Northeast Georgians lack access to jobs due to inability to afford private automobile ownership; they suggested increasing investments in other transportation choices to ameliorate this problem.

HOUSING

Although the region's stock of housing is consistent with observed statewide conditions and averages, housing and related costs represent a major portion of Northeast Georgians' budgets.

- Little attention has been paid to housing issues on a regional scale, specifically related to the quality and availability of workforce housing, and few data exist to assess current and projected needs. A formal study inventorying Northeast Georgia's housing stock, analyzing projected trends, and recommending action items should be considered.
- Regional plan stakeholders identified an opportunity to develop a greater mix and distribution of housing options throughout the region, especially for members of the workforce.
- Cost-burdened households are defined as those in which housing costs represent 30%-49% of income; severely cost-burdened households spend over 50%. The average rates for Northeast Georgia's counties in 2000 were 9.7% cost-burdened and 7.5% severely cost-burdened. The region's two most populous counties, Clarke and Newton, are also the two most cost-burdened: both exhibit figures that exceed state and national rates.
- Adding transportation costs to housing yields aggregate figures that may provide a more realistic impression of true household outlays and burdens. As housing costs decrease further from employment centers, the expense of getting to work is likely to rise, potentially offsetting presumed savings. Although data only exist for six Northeast Georgia counties (Barrow, Clarke, Madison, Oconee, Newton, and Walton), they show that, compared to income, housing and transportation represent a significant portion of residents' finances. Together, these counties represent 73.5% of the region's population, and the portion of households spending at least 45% of income on housing and transportation closely approaches or exceeds one-half in each of them. (Note: Data for only these six counties are available, as they are included in the two metropolitan planning organizations that operate within Northeast Georgia's boundaries.)
- In a 2008-2009 reporting period, 21,095 homeless persons were reported to live in Northeast Georgia. This far exceeds the 10,139 total shelter beds available in the region, and while all twelve counties were shown to contain homeless individuals, six lack facilities for sheltering them.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & TRANSPORTATION

The region's physical infrastructure is extensive and diverse, featuring state and federal highways (including two Interstate Highways), hospitals, facilities to manage solid waste and wastewater, and other resources. Water and sewerage service varies by locale, as does availability of transportation options aside from single-occupancy vehicle travel. Possibly due to fragmentation of decision-making duties, transportation, infrastructure, and land use planning are not always in accordance with one-another. This phenomenon could cause inefficient investment, direct growth toward areas of a community in which development was not intended, or expose sensitive areas to potential impacts from infrastructure.

- Three-quarters of the region's counties contain hospitals within their boundaries; the three counties without hospitals all immediately border Clarke County, which contains two major medical centers. However, stakeholders indicated that as the "baby boomer" generation ages, access to health care will become critical, both in terms of the availability and quality of care, particularly in rural areas.
- Public water service availability closely relates to population. The region's less populous counties have far lower rates of service (as low as 17.2% of population served) than those with the most residents (as high as 99.8%). Recent major droughts have demonstrated the need for increased water availability and/or conservation measures, and stakeholders confirmed this resoundingly by linking availability of sufficient quantities of potable water to health, economy, and the overall image the region projects.
- Solid waste was a topic of stakeholder concern: reduction, recycling, and reuse will become critical as the population increases.
- Northeast Georgia contains one urban transit system (Athens-Clarke County), four county-based rural systems (Elbert, Greene, Jackson, and Morgan), and one municipal rural system (Social Circle). Outside of these communities, public transportation does not exist, although special-needs transportation is available throughout the region.
- Stakeholders consistently noted that bicycling and walking facilities are lacking in the region, and that investing in a more diverse transportation system will not only improve mobility for all residents, but will also create economic development opportunities.
- The Northeast Georgia Regional Transportation Roundtable, established under House Bill 277, has developed a proposed transportation improvements package to present to voters for a 2012 referendum.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, which has existed under various names since 1963, offers member governments many avenues to coordinate on planning, economic development, workforce development, and aging services. Other instances of coordination take place between municipalities within a given county, between counties, from region to region, and with state and federal government agencies.

- The Upper Oconee Water Basin Authority was created in 1994 to develop a drinking-water reservoir serving Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, and Oconee counties. The project was completed in 2002, and serves as a prime example of regionalism as well as an opportunity for extension into other parts of Northeast Georgia and beyond.
- NEGRC serves as the Local Development District for the four counties included under the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC): Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison. For 2011, ARC has designated Elbert County as “at-risk,” while Barrow, Jackson, and Madison are listed as “transitional” (other classifications include distressed, competitive, and attainment). ARC offers these counties funding opportunities in job creation, infrastructure investment, and workforce development.
- Air quality in four of the region’s counties does not meet federal standards; this may require collaborative mitigation planning with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Environmental Protection Division and other agencies. Stakeholders wondered how this will impact the region’s economy, in particular.
- NEGRC hosts and coordinates activities of the Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force, which, with staff, was responsible for developing the *Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking* (adopted by the NEGRC Council in August 2010). The task force continues to meet quarterly to discuss infrastructure, planning, programming, and policy opportunities in support of plan implementation.
- NEGRC assists the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority, which represents ten of the region’s twelve counties, with coordination and planning activities. An updated Solid Waste Management Plan is due to be completed in 2013.
- NEGRC assists the Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia (JDANEG), which represents five counties: Clarke, Elbert, Jackson, Madison, and Oglethorpe. The JDANEG is engaged in forging strategies and partnerships that result in economic development opportunities on a regional level. Other northeast Georgia counties can seek membership in the JDANEG.
- NEGRC reviews and comments on applications for federal and state grant, loan, and permit assistance submitted by local governments and other applicants within the region. This is known as the Georgia Intergovernmental Consultation Process (Executive Order 12372), and is intended to offer comment on a proposed project’s consistency with local and regional comprehensive plans.
- The NEGRC Council submitted the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources* to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in September 2010. This document will serve as a guide for governments, developers, landowners, and NEGRC staff reviewing Developments of Regional Impact.

Implementing the Regional Vision

For any plan to be successful, it must go beyond simply stating what goals the community or region would like to realize; it must outline specific ways to achieve its desired future.

This chapter of the Regional Agenda identifies measures that regional leaders, developers, local governments, and other agencies can take to implement the Regional Vision as presented at the beginning of this document. If the Regional Vision answers the question, “Where do we want to be?”, the Implementation Program responds to “How will we get there?”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Development Patterns

1. Development and infrastructure decisions will contribute to, not take away from, Northeast Georgia's character, sense of place, and historic nature.
2. Agricultural and forestry activities will remain a vital part of the regional fabric, and will not be compromised by new development.
3. Walkable, safe, and attractive communities will allow residents easy access to schools, parks, services, and employment without being dependent on automobile travel.
4. Planning and development decisions will encourage walking, bicycling, car-pooling, and transit ridership (if applicable), especially pertaining to design of new and reconstructed roadways.
5. Future development planning will guide infrastructure investments.
6. Public greenspaces, parks, and other recreational facilities will be available throughout the region, and natural resources will be protected.

2. Resource Conservation

1. Protection and conservation of natural and cultural resources will play an important role in regional growth patterns, including the location of new infrastructure.
2. Impacts to air and water quality will be a component of decision-making, especially regarding transportation and development.
3. The region will promote preservation of existing trees and topography in new development.
4. Pressure for growth will be directed away from farmland in order to preserve the critical economic and cultural benefits agriculture brings to the region.
5. Protecting ground and surface sources will ensure safe and adequate supplies of water.
6. Solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives will reduce the need for additional landfill capacity.

3. Community Facilities and Infrastructure

1. Infrastructure expansion strategies will coincide with comprehensive plans' future development maps and other related mechanisms such as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
2. Investment in parks and open spaces will enhance quality of life for both citizens and visitors.
3. Local governments will encourage boards of education to situate new schools in areas that support the community's vision for growth and development patterns.

4. Social and Economic Development

1. Economic development efforts will focus on retention, expansion, and creation of job opportunities that suit the region's current workforce while being mindful of future opportunities in potential growth sectors.
2. Education and training programs will improve the quality of the workforce in Northeast Georgia while increasing opportunity and the region's competitiveness.
3. Enabling workers to live close to their places of employment through a balance of jobs and housing will reduce household transportation costs, congestion, and impacts to air quality.
4. A compatible mixture of housing types, densities, and costs will accommodate the region's diverse population (aging in place, workforce housing, etc.).
5. Housing strategies that promote homeownership will increase opportunities and investment in communities.

5. Government Relations

1. Local governments will consult other communities when making decisions that are likely to impact them, and input will be provided when requested.
2. Communities will work together to develop solutions for shared regional issues.
3. Neighboring jurisdictions will seek opportunities to share services and facilities.
4. Governments and school boards will communicate when appropriate, especially as related to new school locations, community/school partnerships for recreation and education, and Safe Routes to School programs.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The following Performance Standards will be used by local governments to ensure implementation of the Regional Agenda across Northeast Georgia. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) expects all communities to meet the Minimum Standards within three years of adoption of the Regional Agenda. Since these Minimum Standards are seen as essential to implementing the Agenda, the Regional Commission and the DCA will assist governments in achieving them. Excellence Standards are deemed desirable for implementation of the plan, and typically refer to best practices in planning and development; communities that meet this threshold will be eligible for the “Regional Steward Incentives Package” through DCA.

Communities must meet ALL Minimum Standards. At least TWO of the Excellence Standards from each category must be met to qualify for the state Incentives Package.

Minimum Standards

- Update the local Comprehensive Plan, including the Future Development Map and/or Future Land Use Map, at regular intervals as required by the State of Georgia.
- Utilize the Future Development Map and/or Future Land Use Map to steer new development to appropriate areas of the community.
- Update the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) and Capital Improvements Element (CIE), where applicable, as required by the State of Georgia.
- Submit potential Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) to the Regional Commission per the Development Thresholds established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- Comply with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Part V Environmental Planning Criteria by adopting appropriate ordinances for Groundwater Recharge Areas, Wetlands Protection, and River Corridor Protection, where applicable.
- Update the local pre-disaster mitigation plan per the standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Share updated Tax Assessor’s data tables and land parcels with the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission annually, where applicable.

Excellence Standards

Development Patterns

- Develop and adopt a zoning ordinance that is revised and updated regularly to reflect the community vision.
- Develop, adopt, and implement policies and regulations to preserve agricultural land and activities.
- Incentivize redevelopment and the enhancement of existing commercial and industrial areas over development in outlying areas through mechanisms such as TDRs, Opportunity Zones, Enterprise Zones, etc.
- Develop, adopt, and implement policies and regulations to encourage connectivity within the community.
- Maintain a geographic information system (GIS) that utilizes in-house staff or a third party, such as the Regional Commission.
- Develop GIS data for address points and/or building footprints.

Resource Conservation

- Maintain current electronic inventories of environmental and historic resources in the community.
- Adopt a tree ordinance.
- Adopt a water conservation policy.
- Monitor impaired streams and rivers to determine pollution sources and implement mitigation strategies.
- Designate a local historic district and establish an active historic preservation commission through the adoption of an historic overlay ordinance.
- Actively seek state and/or federal historic designations for districts and/or properties.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS, Cont'd.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

- Develop and adopt a Capital Improvements Element (CIE) according to state law.
- Develop and adopt an impact fee ordinance according to state law.
- Partner with local boards of education to identify new school locations in areas connected by appropriate infrastructure.
- Develop, adopt, and implement local bicycle and/or pedestrian plans.
- Develop, adopt, and implement plans to protect and create public greenspaces such as parks, greenways, and other recreational facilities.
- Become an official partner with the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center.
- Develop and adopt a local Transit Development Plan.
- Participate in regional transit initiatives.

Social and Economic Development

- Maintain a current and navigable community website.
- Participate actively in regional tourism planning and promotion efforts.
- Maintain a working relationship with the local chamber of commerce to encourage economic development activities that support the community's vision.
- Develop and adopt an Urban Redevelopment Plan, where applicable.
- Seek and/or maintain the Opportunity Zone designation for an applicable portion of the community from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- Seek and/or maintain the Certified Work Ready Community designation from the State Workforce Investment Board.
- Seek and/or maintain the Entrepreneur-Friendly Community designation from the Georgia Department of Economic Development.
- Develop and implement plans, policies, and regulations to address blighted areas within the community.
- Actively seek to achieve a diverse supply of rental and ownership housing options to accommodate households of all income levels within the community.
- Seek assistance from the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) to address specific housing needs.
- Participate in the Certified Literate Community Program of the Technical College System of Georgia.
- Develop and implement an Existing Industry Program (EIP) or a Business Retention and Expansion Program (BREP).

Government Relations

- Establish formal agreements with neighboring communities for sharing utilities, transportation, recreation, solid waste management and other services, resources, and facilities.
- Provide input and feedback during neighboring communities' comprehensive plan processes and the DRI review process, when applicable.
- Participate regularly in the Northeast Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force.
- Communicate with school boards for locating new schools, creating partnerships for recreation and education, and/or establishing Safe Routes to School programs.
- Participate in the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Northeast Georgia region.
- Participate actively on the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority.
- Participate actively in multi-county economic development efforts (e.g. Joint Development Authorities, Work Ready regions, etc.).

STRATEGIES

The following recommended activities are those which actors outside of the NEGRC may take to implement the Regional Vision.

* A list of acronyms used in the Strategies and Regional Work Program sections is available on page 33.

#	Activity	Time-frame	Responsible Party	Est. Cost	Funding Source	Guiding Principle
1. Development Patterns						
1.1	Review DRI, RIR, transportation, and other planning measures to ensure consistency with the Regional Agenda	2012-2016	Local governments, NEGRC, MACORTS	None	N/A	1.4, 3.1
1.2	Ease development pressure on farmland through land conservation tools such as land trusts, TDR, and low-impact development ordinances where appropriate	2012-2016	Local governments	Varies	GDCA, USDA	1.1, 1.2, 2.4
1.3	Maximize efficiency by utilizing existing infrastructure, reinvesting in existing development, and adapting properties for reuse	2012-2016	Local governments, private sector	Varies	GDCA	1.5, 3.1
1.4	Promote pedestrian- and bicycle-accessible communities and schools through planning, development regulations, and government investment	2012-2016	Local governments	Varies	GDCA, GDOT	1.3, 1.4, 3.3, 4.3
2. Resource Conservation						
2.1	Protect water supply through identification of non-compliant waterways, Environmental Impact Review ordinances, and other appropriate regulatory tools	2012-2014	Local governments, GEPD, NEGRC	\$5,000-10,000	GEPD, GDCA	2.1, 2.2, 2.5
2.2	Review, update, adopt, and/or enforce local tree preservation and mass grading ordinances	2014-2016	Local governments, GDCA, NEGRC	Varies	GDCA	2.1, 2.3
2.3	Protect air quality through targeted development regulations and multi-modal transportation planning	2012-2016	Local governments, GDOT	\$5,000-20,000	GDCA, GDOT	2.1, 2.2
2.4	Investigate and implement appropriate ways to reduce and recycle solid waste in communities	2014-2016	Local governments, NEGRSWMA	Varies	GDCA	2.1, 2.6
3. Community Facilities and Infrastructure						
3.1	Invest in public greenspace, park, and trail networks	2012-2016	Local governments, NEGRC, GDNR, GDCA, GDOT	Varies	GDNR, NPS, GDOT	1.6, 2.1, 3.2
3.2	Prioritize reuse of existing, in-town assets over construction of new facilities and infrastructure (example: "Fix it First")	2012-2016	Local governments, water and sewer authorities, BOE, GDOT, GDOE	Varies	BOE, Authorities, GDOT	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 3.3, 5.1, 5.4
3.3	Ensure that land use, development, infrastructure, and transportation decisions are made in accordance with one another	2012-2016	Local governments, water and sewer authorities, GDOT, MACORTS	Varies	GDOT, Authorities	1.5, 3.1
3.4	Review infrastructure development proposals to ensure consistency with Regional Agenda	2012-2016	Local governments, water and sewer authorities, GDOT, MACORTS	Varies	GDOT, Authorities	1.5, 3.1

STRATEGIES, Cont'd.

#	Activity	Time-frame	Responsible Party	Est. Cost	Funding Source	Guiding Principle
4. Social and Economic Development						
4.1	Use identified economic development tools to pursue business development that enhances the existing community	2012-2016	Local governments, chambers of commerce, industrial development authorities	Varies	GDED, GDCA, ARC, EDA	1.1, 4.1
4.2	Pursue Georgia "Camera Ready" certification, if desirable	2012-2016	Local governments, GDED, chambers of commerce	Minimal	GDED, GDCA	4.1
4.3	Assist individuals in search of appropriate employment training	2012-2016	Local governments, NEGRC WDD	Varies	DOL	1.1, 4.2
4.4	Implement planning and development measures to encourage availability of a variety of housing options within communities, including workforce housing	2012-2014	Local governments, housing authorities	Varies	GDCA, HUD	1.3, 4.3, 4.4
4.5	Provide assistance to residents seeking to pursue homeownership	2012-2016	Local governments, development corporations, HUD	Minimal	GDCA, HUD	4.5
5. Government Relations						
5.1	Coordinate development review processes through programs such as Intergovernmental Service Agreements	2012-2016	Local governments, NEGRC	Minimal	GDCA	5.1, 5.2, 5.3
5.2	Work with other communities to coordinate and seek input on planning and development decisions, shared facilities and services, regional marketing strategies (see Newton County's "The Center")	2012-2016	Local governments, BOE, water and sewer authorities, chambers of commerce, MACORTS	Varies	GDCA, Authorities, BOE	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4
5.3	Work with boards of education, other communities, and appropriate state offices to situate new schools near existing infrastructure and encourage safe bicycle and pedestrian access	2012-2016	Local governments, BOE, GDOT, GDOE	Varies	BOE, GDOT	3.3, 5.4

REGIONAL WORK PROGRAM - PLANNING AND COORDINATION

Regional Work Program Planning and Coordination activities are those which the Regional Commission will undertake to assist local governments and other regional partners to act in accordance with the Regional Agenda.

#	Activity	Time-frame	Responsible Party	Est. Cost	Funding Source	Guiding Principle
1. Development Patterns						
1.1	Facilitate local government greenway, bicycle, and pedestrian planning and education	2012-2016	NEGRC, local governments	\$15,000 -30,000 per plan	GDOT, GDCA	1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 2.2, 3.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4
1.2	Catalog, assess, and plan for recreation, cultural, agricultural, and tourism resources, including farmland protection	2012-2013	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4
1.3	Assist communities with downtown revitalization efforts, especially Urban Redevelopment Plans	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$5,000-10,000 per plan	GDCA	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 3.1, 3.2
2. Resource Conservation						
2.1	Review RIR designations annually and assist communities with implementation of RIR management plan as requested	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$2,000+ annually	GDCA	1.1, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 3.2
2.2	Develop and implement water quality plans and programs	2012-2016	NEGRC, local governments	\$10,000 -15,000 per plan	GEPD, GDCA	2.2, 2.5, 2.6
2.3	Continue to develop planning-level datasets of water and wastewater collection systems	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$10,500 per set	GDCA	2.2, 2.5, 2.6
2.4	Assist local governments with conservation funding opportunities, as requested	2012-2016	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA, GDNR, NPS	1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5
2.5	Assist local governments in assessing historic resources and pursuing related funding opportunities, as requested	2012-2016	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA, DNR, GDOT	2.1
2.6	Engage in collaborative mitigation planning with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to address air pollution issues, if necessary	2012-2016	NEGRC	Minimal	NEGRC, GDNR	2.1, 2.2
2.7	Assist with regional solid waste planning efforts	2012-2016	NEGRC	Varies	NEGRSWA, GDCA	2.6
3. Community Facilities and Infrastructure						
3.1	Encourage local governments to implement Northeast Georgia Plan 2035	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$22,000 annually	GDCA	All Guiding Principles
3.2	Provide technical and staffing support for local and multi-jurisdictional transportation planning efforts	2012-2016	NEGRC	Varies	GDOT, GDCA	3.1, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3
3.3	Assist local governments with hazard-mitigation planning and implementation, as requested	2012-2015	NEGRC	\$22,000 per plan	GEMA	2.5, 5.1, 5.2

REGIONAL WORK PROGRAM - PLANNING AND COORDINATION, Cont'd.

#	Activity	Time-frame	Responsible Party	Est. Cost	Funding Source	Guiding Principle
4. Social and Economic Development						
4.1	Assist local governments with economic development planning and funding opportunities	2012-2016	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA, EDA, ARC	4.1
4.2	Assist local governments with housing programs such as Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) and Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), as requested	2012-2016	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA	4.5, 4.4, 4.5
4.3	Quantify regional need for workforce housing and recommend action items for increasing its availability near jobs	2012	NEGRC	\$21,000	GDCA	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
4.4	Update Northeast Georgia's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to guide future planning and investment	2012-2016	NEGRC	TBD	GDCA	4.1, 4.2, 5.1
4.5	Develop community-level plans, strategies, and inventories to promote and protect local agriculture and local food assets	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$15,000 -25,000	GDCA, USDA	1.2, 2.1, 2.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3
5. Government Relations						
5.1	Evaluate the potential for regionally coordinated rural public transportation	2012-2013	NEGRC, GDOT, GDHS, consultant	\$50,000	GDOT, GDHS	1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4
5.2	Market the Planning and Government Services (PGS) Division and educate local government officials through PGS e-newsletter and in-house training programs and workshops	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$10,000 -20,000 annually	GDCA	5.1
5.3	Host and coordinate Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$2,500 annually	GDOT	1.3, 1.4
5.4	Disseminate historic preservation information pertaining to Section 106 Reviews to local governments	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$4,000 annually	GDNR	2.1, 5.1

REGIONAL WORK PROGRAM - REVIEW

Regional Work Program Review activities are those for which the Regional Commission will provide advisory review and comment to outside actors.

#	Activity	Time-frame	Responsible Party	Est. Cost	Funding Source	Guiding Principle
R.1	Review and comment on developments that meet the established criteria to be considered Developments of Regional Impact	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$10,000 annually	GDCA	1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 4.4, 5.1, 5.3
R.2	Review and comment on developments that could impact Regionally Important Resources	2012-2016	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA	1.1, 1.2, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 5.1, 5.3
R.3	Respond to requests for Intergovernmental Consultation Reviews	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$1,500 annually	GDCA	1.1, 5.1, 5.3
R.4	Coordinate with MACORTS transportation planning efforts, including review of and comment on long- and short-range plans and other documents.	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$2,000 annually	GDOT	1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 5.1, 5.3
R.5	Respond to requests for comment on Historic Resources Support inquiries (GDOT)	2012-2016	NEGRC	\$2,000 annually	GDOT	1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 5.1, 5.3
R.6	Review local government application for EDA funding for consistency with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)	2012-2016	NEGRC	Minimal	EDA	1.5, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1

Strategies and Regional Work Program

Acronyms:

ARC: Appalachian Regional Commission
Authorities: Sewer and Water Authorities
BOE: Local Boards of Education
DOL: US Department of Labor
DRI: Developments of Regional Impact
EDA: US Economic Development Administration
GDCA: Georgia Department of Community Affairs
GDED: Georgia Department of Economic Development
GDHS: Georgia Department of Human Services
GDNR: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
GDOE: Georgia Department of Education
GDOT: Georgia Department of Transportation
GEMA: Georgia Emergency Management Agency
GEPD: Georgia Environmental Protection Division

HUD: US Department of Housing and Urban Development
JDANEG: Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia
MACORTS: Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study
NEGRC: Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
NEGRC WDD: Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Workforce Development Division
NEGRSWMA: Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority
NPS: US National Park Service
RIR: Regionally Important Resources
TDR: Transfer of Development Rights
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

Maintaining the Regional Agenda

This brief chapter outlines the activities that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission will undertake to ensure that the Regional Agenda is accomplishing its intended results. Responsible parties include the NEGRC, local governments, other agencies, and planning stakeholders.

NEGRC will meet most of the required Evaluation and Monitoring guidelines through the execution of the Plan Promulgation element of the FY12 Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) contract, as follows:

NEGRC will consult with all local governments in the region over a two-year period to explain the contents of the Regional Agenda. The RC will encourage each government to:

- Coordinate identification of local character areas in local comprehensive plans with the Regional Development Map.
- Coordinate decisions about investments in new or upgraded public facilities with the Guiding Principles.
- Follow the Performance Standards in developing and implementing local comprehensive plans. This includes fitting local character areas into the larger regional development patterns context and adopting implementation measures (such as new or revised local development regulations, incentives, public investments, and infrastructure improvements) to achieve the desired development patterns for the region.

NEGRC will work with other key regional stakeholders and state agencies annually to explain the contents of the Regional Agenda and to encourage them to coordinate their activities to achieve the desired development patterns for the region.

In addition to meeting the requirements of the aforementioned DCA contract, NEGRC staff will conduct Quality Growth Effectiveness assessments of each community in the region to determine the standing of local governments in regard to the Performance Standards outlined in this plan.

Finally, the Regional Commission will conduct an annual analysis of the Regional Agenda's effectiveness in consultation with the Planning and Government Services Committee of the NEGRC Council. Results of this survey of regional leaders will be included in the Report of Accomplishments section of the annual Regional Work Program update, and will identify any challenges to implementation as well as possible solutions or necessary amendments to the Regional Agenda.

Ensuring Effective Input

Stakeholder involvement is critical to any regional planning process. The Northeast Georgia Plan 2035 Regional Agenda was developed with the assistance of a variety of stakeholders who were drawn from among the following fields, professions, or other areas:

- Agriculture
- Economic development
- Energy
- Environment
- Finance
- Hazard mitigation
- Historic preservation
- Housing
- Human services
- Law
- Law enforcement
- Local government
- Planning
- Public health
- Recreation
- Tourism
- Transportation
- Utilities

Techniques used to elicit input included:

- Working closely with the plan’s steering committee (the NEGRC Council’s Planning & Government Services Committee)
- Holding stakeholder meetings
- Developing a public questionnaire
- Targeting specific stakeholders for their expert opinions
- Maintaining a regional plan page on the NEGRC website
- Publishing articles in the NEGRC’s monthly newsletter (the Update) and the Planning & Government Services Division’s e-newsletter (Planning Ahead)
- Posting large-format informational displays at the NEGRC headquarters and elsewhere in the region
- Using “email blasts” to convey information to identified stakeholders
- Holding a regional hearing to present the key elements of the Agenda

The stakeholder input that was generated during this process is noteworthy for being creative, thoughtful, and (concerning many of the central, large-scale matters that were brought up at stakeholder meetings), virtually unanimous. Northeast Georgia’s regional planning stakeholders should be commended for their excellent work; the NEGRC thanks them sincerely.