

Walker County, Georgia

September 22 – 26, 2003



Quality Growth
Resource Team Report

How to Use This Report

This report has been formatted for use as a workbook by your community to assist with implementing quality growth projects. Use the icon key below to find specific information as described:

ICON KEY

 Funding Sources

 Technical Assistance

 Tools

 Valuable Information

 Workbook

Community Resource Team visits and final presentation reports are coordinated and produced by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The electronic version of this publication (PDF) may be found online at:
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Introduction

What is Quality Growth?

Quality Growth, in many ways, means returning to the way we used to build our communities and neighborhoods: places where people could walk to school or the corner drugstore, pursue recreational activities at a nearby park, or just sit on the front porch and get to know their neighbors. The following principles, adopted by DCA, embody the ideals that quality growth practices are intended to promote.



Quality Community Objectives

REGIONAL IDENTITY

Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

GROWTH PREPAREDNESS

Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

APPROPRIATE BUSINESSES

The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.

EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION

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

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OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.

SHARED SOLUTIONS

Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

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

SENSE OF PLACE

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

Does Quality Growth Matter?

Quality growth can yield a number of benefits for your community:

- Residents will enjoy an improved quality of life, more affordable housing, cleaner water and air, more walkable neighborhoods, and reduced commuting times.
- Developers will experience reduced infrastructure and land costs and more predictability in the development approval process.
- Your local government will benefit from reduced service delivery costs, increased tax revenues, and enhanced economic development potential.

COST SAVINGS

Studies show that sprawling development costs government in terms of provision of public services like water and sewer, emergency services and transportation. Research by the Real Estate Research Corp. shows that compact growth can be as much as 70 percent cheaper for governments than in areas with more dispersed growth patterns. Comparing the costs for governments in 10 counties, the University of Kentucky found that police, fire, and school services cost less in those counties where growth was concentrated and highest in those with scattered growth. In South Carolina, a study concluded that planned development could save 12 percent in infrastructure costs that would be spent providing the same infrastructure under sprawling growth projections. The development community saves costs as well through reduced per-unit costs for power and telephone lines, small streets, and more efficient service delivery.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Implementing quality growth principles like compact development, greenspace protection, better street connectivity, and greater opportunities for using alternative transportation lead to less urban runoff into streams to pollute our waters and less traffic exhaust to pollute our air. A 2000 study by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of three California neighborhoods suggested that the environmental benefits of quality growth are real and can be measured. A more recent study by NRDC and EPA in Nashville corroborates this study and further suggests that the combination of better transportation accessibility and a modest increase in land-use density can produce measurable benefits even in automobile-oriented suburban communities. These studies are the first to evaluate actual neighborhoods rather than conceptual models. In the Nashville study, a more densely populated neighborhood closer to downtown Nashville out performed a suburban, lower density neighborhood in terms of land consumption, water consumption, air pollutant emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, and stormwater runoff.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The quality of life offered by quality growth development is important to residents, and contributes to economic development. Corporations are more mobile than ever, and quality of life is a big location factor for business. A case in point is Hewlett Packard's decision not to construct a second office tower in the Atlanta region because of its traffic congestion and air quality. Research also shows that perceived decline in quality of life leads to lower retention of skilled workers. Recent surveys in Austin, Texas show that the more educated residents are, the more likely they are to perceive decline, and skilled residents who do perceive decline are more likely to leave the area.

PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

Quality growth is an emerging issue in the public health field where significant research is starting to focus on the relationship between sprawl and obesity related diseases like diabetes and heart problems. Such research is underway now at the Centers for Disease Control and at Boston University's School of Public Health and is expected to demonstrate that better development patterns improve health on community residents. Active Living by Design, a joint program of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is devoted to issues of public health and the built environment, financing both research on the issue, and actual projects testing the impact of community design that fosters daily activity.

What is a Quality Growth Resource Team Visit?

The Quality Growth Resource Team for Walker County was brought together in September 2003 through a collaboration with Walker County, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership (GQGP), a state-wide coalition of government agencies, universities, non-profits and business groups working to provide technical assistance on “smart growth” issues to Georgia communities. The resource team focused their study on a project area that included all of Walker County.

The multidisciplinary team was made up of specialists in city planning, real estate development, urban design, historic preservation, architecture, resource conservation, and housing. Team members were chosen with the area’s particular concerns in mind, which were initially defined in a meeting with the local officials held weeks in advance of the actual team visit.

The team spent approximately a week in the project area. The visit began with a facilitated meeting involving a broad cross section of community representatives, designed to give the team members a deeper understanding of development issues and needs of the project area. During the week the team toured the project area by bus, visited area buildings, spoke with local officials, reviewed local ordinances, conducted field surveys, prepared schematic design solutions, and formulated policy recommendations. The visit culminated with a review of the team’s recommendations to the local officials on Thursday, September 26th. The team’s recommendations were then passed to DCA staff for formatting into this final report.

The team would like to thank the Walker County staff, elected officials and citizens for making us feel so welcome in the area. The ideas and solutions proposed here are only a beginning – intended to stimulate interest in redeveloping Walker County so that residents may enjoy living in a vibrant and beautiful area.

Why Have a Quality Growth Resource Team Visit?

A Quality Growth Resource Team Visit is an important first step toward achieving more desirable development patterns in your community. If your community is experiencing symptoms of unplanned development, a Quality Growth Resource Team can help determine why, and what factors are under your control to change. Planning commissions, other local officials, community leaders, citizens, civic organizations, and the media can use the results of this report to guide planning and decision-making that will promote more quality growth in the community.

What Resources Are Available to Implement Quality Growth Resource Team Recommendations?



Quality Growth Funding Sources

A variety of funding sources are available to assist with the implementation of quality growth best practices on the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership (GQGP) website. The link below will take you directly to the GQGP website Financial Sources Directory.

<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/FinancialSources.asp>



Quality Growth Technical Assistance & Training Opportunities

A variety of resources are available to assist with the implementation of quality growth best practices on the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership (GQGP) website. The links below will take you directly to the GQGP website Technical Assistance Directory and Training Opportunities page.

Technical Assistance - <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/directory.asp>

Training Opportunities - <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/training.asp>



Quality Growth Toolkit

The Quality Growth Toolkit provides advice to local governments on tools that may be used to put quality growth principles into practice at the local level. The link below will take you directly to the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership (GQGP) website Toolkit page.

<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/toolkit/toolkit.asp>



Other Resources

Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Law

http://www.legis.state.ga.us/cgi-bin/gl_codes_detail.pl?code=36-61-1

Georgia's Housing Source

[http://www/housing/HOUSING at DCA.pdf](http://www/housing/HOUSING_at_DCA.pdf)

Meet the Quality Growth Resource Team

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Georgia Quality Growth Partnership



The Georgia Quality Growth Partnership (GQGP) is collaboration among diverse public and private organizations formed out of the desire to coordinate their efforts at promoting “quality growth” approaches throughout the State of Georgia. The primary purpose of the GQGP is to facilitate local government implementation of quality growth approaches by:

1. Disseminating objective information on the various approaches.
2. Developing tools for implementing these approaches.
3. Sharing of best practices learned from other places, times, and cultures.
4. Promoting acceptance of quality growth by the general public and community leaders.

Founded in March 2000, the GQGP has grown to more than forty organizations, each contributing time, in kind services, or financial resources to fostering Partnership efforts.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The GQGP members believe that fostering livable communities requires innovative solutions that:

1. Ensure equitable access for all citizens to a range of options for education, transportation, housing, employment, human services, culture, and recreation.
2. Create opportunities for citizens to learn more about community planning and actively encourage their involvement in public decision-making.
3. Respect and protect our natural resources – wildlife, land, water, air and trees.
4. Shape appealing physical environments that enhance walkability and positive social interaction.
5. Recognize that community decisions have an impact on neighboring jurisdictions and, therefore, must be made from a responsible regional and statewide perspective.
6. Incorporate practices learned from our local experience as well as from other communities and cultures.
7. Preserve and enhance our cultural and historic places for future generations.
8. Provide for the efficient and economical use of public infrastructure.
9. Employ the principles of sustainability and balance to ensure the economic viability of all communities and to enhance the state’s economic competitiveness.

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Recommendations



Overall Development Concept

The Resource Team identified six separate development focus areas within the county and recommends unique development strategies for each of these areas. The focus areas are described below and mapped in **Illustration 1**:

- **Conservation Areas** consisting primarily of flood plains, wetlands, wildlife management areas and other sensitive areas not suitable for development of any kind.
- **Agricultural Areas** reserved exclusively for agricultural and forestry uses. These areas are not recommended for large-scale or even minor residential subdivision development.
- **Rural Residential Areas** where a substantial proportion of land is likely to face development pressures for lower density (one unit per two or more acres) residential development.
- **Suburban Areas** consisting primarily of the extreme northern portion of the county and areas adjacent to the city limits of Walker County's municipalities, where pressures for the typical types of suburban residential subdivision development are greatest (due to availability of water and sewer service).
- **Town Centers** corresponding to Walker County's existing municipalities and a few major highway intersections. Each of these areas should be considered a "node" of higher intensity development.
- **Major Highway Corridors** including U.S. Hwy. 27 and Ga. Hwy. 193, which face the prospect of uncontrolled strip development if growth is not properly managed.

The Resource Team recommends that new residential and commercial development in the county be concentrated in and around the Town Centers (which include well-designed new town centers at major highway intersections). New industries or other major employers should be directed to the existing abandoned industrial sites in the county or to well planned new sites along the Major Highway Corridors as near as possible to Town Centers. The Town Centers should be linked by attractive highways (perhaps protected as Scenic Byways) and a countywide network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreation purposes. Outside the Town Centers, every effort should be made to encourage and maintain the existing rural and scenic character of the County. This does not mean that no development would occur outside the Town Centers – but any new development should be designed to blend with the rural landscape that makes Walker County a desirable place to live and a unique tourist destination.

Recommended specific development strategies for each focus area are summarized in the following table:

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Focus Area	Development Strategy
Conservation Areas	Maintain rural character by not allowing any new development. Widen roadways in these areas only when absolutely necessary and carefully design the roadway alterations to minimize visual impact. Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.
Agricultural Areas	Maintain scenic rural character by strictly limiting new development and protecting farmland and open space. These areas can be protected by maintaining large lot sizes (at least 10 acres) and promoting use of conservation easements by land owners. Residential subdivisions should be severely limited, but if minor exceptions are made, they should be required to follow conservation subdivision design requirements. Any new development should be required to use compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character, and should not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture. Widen roadways only when absolutely necessary and carefully design the roadway alterations to minimize visual impact. Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.
Rural Residential Areas	Maintain rural atmosphere while accommodating new residential development as “conservation subdivisions” that incorporate significant amounts of open space. Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character, and should not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture.
Suburban Areas	Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions. Each new development should be a master-planned community with mixed-uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision. Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and should not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture.
Town Centers	Each Town Center should include relatively high-density mix of retail, office, services, and employment to serve a local market area. Tourist facilities (hotels, visitor centers, etc.) should be concentrated in the Town Centers. Residential Development should be targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums. Design for each Town Center should be very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses. Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear. Include direct connections to the proposed countywide greenspace and trail network.
Major Highway Corridors	Maintain a natural vegetation buffer (at least 50 feet in width) along major corridors. All new development should be set-back behind this buffer, with access roads, shared driveways or inter-parcel road connections providing alternate access to these developments and reducing curb cuts and traffic on the main highways. Ban all new billboards to protect scenic quality.



Leadership & Organization

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
1	Form an advisory board to focus on issues and set policy for quality growth. (see Illustration 2)	There is a need for a coordinated effort among key leaders in Walker County. This board would determine the issues facing Walker County and set the recommended policy for resolution. This board would cover a broad spectrum of issues pertaining to issues not directly related to, but relevant to, quality growth.			
2	Hire a consultant to identify best practices, examples, and model processes for selling to citizens and neighborhood groups on quality growth concepts. Preferably these should have proven effectiveness and be relatively simple to implement.	To enable Walker County to more easily implement the various quality growth recommendations of this report.			
3	Create a non-profit, 501c(3), foundation for coordination of Quality Growth Advisory Board policy. (see Illustration 2)	A non profit foundation could provide additional sources of funding and be used as the primary tool of the advisory board to disseminate its policy. The board of the foundation would be comprised of the chairpersons, presidents, and directors of all entities involved in economic development.			
4	Hire an executive director for the non-profit entity. (see Illustration 2)	Coordinates and advises ongoing project information and policy recommendations of the non-profit board of directors. Funded by contributions from activities engaged in by the non-profit and pro rata share of all development authorities, Chamber of Commerce, and Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB).			
5	Activate and invigorate all statutory development authorities. (see Illustration 2)	These entities are the primary conduit for current state funding programs. DCA's Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund and the parallel Georgia Cities Foundation funds require development authority involvement.			

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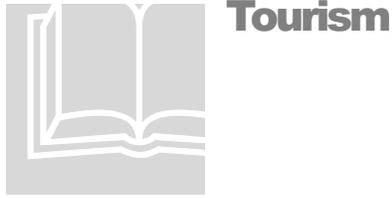
	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
6	Maintain the existing Constitutional Development Authority. (see Illustration 2)	This authority has powers that surpass statutory development authorities and cannot be recreated once dissolved. Statutory development authorities can be activated in addition to the constitutional authority if boundaries are an issues, or for any other reason.			
7	Organize a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) in Chickamauga to work with merchants to enhance commercial vitality on the downtown while protecting the historic resources. Activate DDAs in other cities if existing; if not, create.	DDAs can accept property as well as grants and provide for continuous, viable uses in the area. An organized program of downtown support enhances the retail/commercial base, which in turn increases tax revenues. Downtown Chickamauga has a golden opportunity to draw the visitors from the battlefield into downtown to eat, shop and sleep, but needs an organization set up to guide.			
8	Raise the community level of interest in education.	From primary through secondary education levels, all students, parents and guardians should be taught the value of education as a tool for personal and community growth.			
9	Support existing and create new, innovative programs to drastically reduce the drop-out rate.	The work force needs to advance their level of core competencies to at least the basic level. Currently drop-outs are eligible for entry level jobs only. The requirements for these jobs are growing.			



Economic Development

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
10	Define economic development strategy based on identified community values.	Provide basis/rational for future economic development investments and a plan of action to make these investments. Use an open and public process to develop the strategy.			
11	Expand definition of economic development to include services for existing industry, entrepreneurs, and tourism.	Recognize the positive job and tax benefits of all forms of economic development while preserving historic and cultural resources.			
12	Leverage unique local assets (historical/cultural/natural) for value-added activities that create job opportunities for county residents.	Take advantage of local resources while preserving them.			
13	Economic Development organizations should work closely with businesses to enhance their productivity.	Businesses that are focused on productivity will remain competitive and have the best opportunity to grow, thereby creating jobs in Walker County. Economic development organizations can provide valuable education and create effective regional networks to allow local industries to maximize productivity and profitability.			
14	Use existing industry as a springboard to target new industry.	Existing industry suppliers and customers are a natural target market for future business locations.			
15	Take full advantage of Development Authority capabilities.	Development Authority can provide creative financing opportunities that can spur private investment and job creation. Currently the Joint Development Authority is not authorized to the full extent allowed by state law. Additionally, local Development Authorities exist on paper but are not intimately involved with efforts at development.			

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
16	Create financing mechanism to address small business needs, existing business needs, and to re-use existing sites.	A Revolving Loan Fund targeted towards specific industry sectors will incentivize development of businesses reflecting community's character and values. For example: a micro-enterprise program could be used to develop tourism related and eco-tourism businesses which leverage local natural/historical assets.			
17	Develop strategy to reuse empty industrial buildings. (see Illustrations 3 & 4)	The county has a number of existing sites that may provide locations for new businesses or for adaptive reuse: incubator, mixed-use development, office-space, and retail.			
18	Develop new industrial sites as needed, based on critical analysis of available sites and market potential. (see Illustrations 3 & 4)	To generate tax revenue and job growth, thereby offsetting the costs of residential development. New industrial sites should be developed after the county has a clear view of what kinds of industry it hopes to attract and how it will attract these kinds of industries.			
19	Make decisions related to economic development in coordination with all economic development parties and stakeholders.	Decisions made unilaterally will mitigate future opportunities for economic development and will diminish value of public investments.			
20	Complete a labor study of Walker County residents; incrementally raise the bar for workforce.	High-skill residents seem to be out-commuters, in-commuters appear to be low skill; industry will inevitably require higher skill workers, and recommendations would involve accelerating this requirement. Establish voluntary minimums for education, reward creativity, quality and dedication in the workplace and classroom, enhance school-work connections, promote literacy, adult/continuing education, and General Education Diploma (GED).			



	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
21	Investigate the potential benefits of forming a tri-county Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) with Catoosa and Dade Counties.	Walker County Chamber does not have enough staff to focus on tourism at the required level of detail. Operating expenses could be shared in a cost effective manner and working regionally. The CVB would have a critical mass of attractions to attract many callers and internet inquiries. A regional CVB would be the first in Georgia and could receive state support for being an innovative model.			
22	Get professional assistance in creating a "brand" for Walker County - a memorable idea or image that can be used as a basis for logos, tag lines, and coordinated ad campaigns.	People have no mental image of the county and its attractions.			
23	Hiking is important to region from Economic Development tourism perspective. Trails need to be on one map for easy use. Development of additional trails needs to be encouraged, or even sponsored by local government. These need to show connectivity to adjacent jurisdictions as well (Cloudland Canyon, Pinhoti Trail continuance, etc.).	Can't tell how they connect; can't tell what is available.			
24	Develop lodging types for a variety of visitors – from camping to hotels which serve upper end market, including hike-in facilities.	Having a variety of choices will help keep the visitors overnight in the county rather than having them drive back into Chattanooga or other nearby counties.			
25	Maintain a focus on preserving the rural character of Walker County's resources as tourism-oriented development and linkages occur.	The public has identified this as a high priority with whatever development and growth occurs.			

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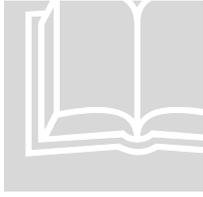
	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
26	Focus on attracting entrepreneurs and private capital for tourism to the county.	Government funding alone will be inadequate to accomplish the county's tourism goals; however, private investors would be easily attracted if the county marketed existing resources and the 6000+ annual visitor base generated by the battlefield.			
27	Hire a top notch tourism and marketing firm to develop a comprehensive Tourism Development Plan around two major themes, nature-based tourism and heritage-based tourism.	These two themes encompass the main tourism-oriented strengths of Walker County.			
28	Request that the Chamber's new tourism specialist develop/update a comprehensive inventory of all existing natural and historic resources with potential tourism interest. Use this inventory to generate a variety of thematic tour packages/maps for county visitors. (see Illustration 5)	Having this inventory completed will help cut the cost of the Tourism Development Plan.			
29	Nature-based tourism will include high adventure activities such as hang-gliding, ATV trail-riding, rappelling and rock climbing, and caving.	The high adventure activities listed are already present in the county and can be expanded and enhanced to attract new tourist dollars.			
30	Nature-based tourism will also include family oriented activities such as walking, hiking, horseback riding, camping, biking, hunting and fishing, canoeing, nature programs and activities, and eco-agriculture.				
31	Heritage-based tourism will focus on sites relating to native Americans, early settlers, Civil War, and the heritage of Walker County communities.	Will support tourism while, at the same time, promoting preservation of cultural traditions and resources in Walker County.			
32	Plan for linkages to regional trail systems, using existing trails or building trail connectors whenever possible to link sites and expand recreational venues. (see Illustration 6)	This will encourage trail users to explore and enjoy more of Walker County's amenities.			

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	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
33	Review directional/destinational signage throughout county. Develop a coordinated wayfinding scheme for directing visitors to downtown areas and major attractions. (see Illustration 7)	Will help visitors create a mental map of the county, create more distinct identities and increase visitation to historic downtowns and encourage preservation and maintenance of out-of-the-way but important heritage resources. Currently, many sites are difficult to locate due to lack of signage or improperly placed signs. Visitors get frustrated when they can't find what they want to see.			
34	Encourage preservation of the natural resources by those who are using them through appropriate educational signage at facilities and trailheads.	Helping visitors understand that their actions have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural resources and offering them positive ways to help will help minimize thoughtless degradation.			
35	Review a list of existing festivals and special events to identify seasonal gaps and themes that could potentially be the focus of new tourist oriented events.				
36	Consider the feasibility of new attractions such as music and folklore venues.				
37	Coordinate with approximately 47 organized camp facilities in Walker County to explore possibility of special event outings around themes such as art, native crafts, music, and family reunions.	These expanded opportunities for our visitors will bring benefits to Walker County's tourism development efforts and to the participating Camps as well.			
38	Plan for creation of an Eco-Retreat facility which will become the hub of outdoor recreational activities, offering a site for corporate retreats and organized adventure opportunities.	An Eco-Retreat could incorporate an upscale hotel with corporate meeting rooms, performance spaces, a new age health spa, native animal and bird preserve and also serve as a trailhead for adventure tours. This facility could become a revenue generator, serving as a weekend and extended stay site in Walker County.			
39	Request assistance from the GA Council for the Arts in setting up an organizational structure to support all sorts of fine arts in the tri county area.	The arts are a missing link in the county's tourism strategy. Arts could fill vacant downtown with galleries, theaters and lively street activity. Encouraging local artists could help attract arts, crafts and musical attractions and events. Arts activities appeal to all ages.			

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	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
40	<p>Use blank walls on buildings for art works and murals depicting scenes from Walker County's history or unique scenery. (see Illustration 8)</p>	<p>Art work can be used as points-of-interest to bring people into a community. Also can be showcased in advertising and marketing information. Artwork on blank walls beautifies local areas and provides opportunities for local artists, children, etc. to showcase their talent.</p>			



Greenspace, Trails, & Natural Resources

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
41	Protect the natural resources and viewsheds with such mechanisms as easement programs, greenspace minimums in regulations, etc. (see Illustrations 9 & 10)	Development destroys natural resources while answering other needs. People who will spend money in the county don't come to the county to see development, so resources must be enhanced and protected, but NOT improved.			
42	Connect all important historic resources (Coke ovens, Ross House, Chattooga School, Chickamauga Battlefield, Villanow, McLemore Cove) by trails for hiking, biking and possibly horseback riding. Don't forget Villanow is there. (see Illustrations 6, 11, 12 & 13)	This is an opportunity for development of an extensive trail system to attract visitors who will eat and stay in Walker County (spend money).			
43	Abandoned rail beds need to be purchased/granted through easements for use as trails for rails-to-trails program. (see Illustrations 6, 11, 12 & 13)	This would provide connectivity to trails system; could provide county-wide loops as well as connect to adjacent jurisdiction programs; would be good way to conserve greenspace for public use.			
44	Add crosswalk between Gordon Lee House and Crawfish Springs so pedestrians can safely cross. Enhance signage at Springs.	Because there is no safe way to cross from one to the other.			
45	Work with Chickamauga Battlefield/National Park Service to identify bike routes through park or encourage use by bikes. (see Illustrations 6, 11, 12 & 13)	There is bike activity in the park, but no specific bike lanes delineated. Road is narrow and needs to stay that way, with 35 mph speed limit which can be used for Share-the-Road biking. Signs can be small and attached to speed limit signs.			
46	Connect sidewalks to trails leading from communities.	To provide connectivity with trails throughout the county. This will also help to connect schools to neighborhoods allowing students to bike or walk to school via the trail system.			

WALKER COUNTY

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
47	Work with local health officials to evaluate the health impacts of planning decisions. Use health and medical officials to help encourage walkable neighborhoods and retail areas.	Obesity rates are climbing throughout the country and primarily in the rural and fast developing areas of the Southeast. CDC now considers this to be one of the fastest growing epidemics. Children are especially vulnerable due to inability to walk or ride bikes to school or in their neighborhoods.			
48	Protect steep slopes from erosion with stricter enforcement of Soil, Erosion, and Sedimentation regulations and storm water regulations.	Keep sediment out of waterways and aquifer. Lessening sediment in waterways will protect water quality and habitat for fish. This will enable fishing and keep utility costs down.			
49	County should seriously limit inappropriate grading and implement best practices for hillside development.				
50	Add vegetative buffers along waterways. Encourage wetland protection/enhancements.	Buffering and wetlands slow down waterflows reducing erosion and filters pollutants and sediments out of runoff. This is an issue that is important in both agricultural and urbanizing areas. Increases in impervious surfaces (roofs, parking lots, and roadways) create more water runoff and greater pollution and sediment loads. Also ties into stormwater Phase 2 program.			

WALKER COUNTY

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
51	<p>The county should aggressively promote public/private partnerships to revitalize and improve the appearance of the gateways to battlefield park.</p>	<p>The county should provide developers with a host of tax incentives (e.g., land assemblage, demolition, seed money for preliminary design fees, access to state & federal Brownfield redevelopment funds, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), wave sewer and water tap fees, etc.) to redevelop existing commercial/residential areas currently encroaching on battlefields. Requirements for these incentives should require the developer to remove any existing structures on the subject property; create Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND) (see standards under Nodal Development) and increase the buffer between the developer’s new project and the battlefield. Additionally, developers willing to redevelop these existing encroaching commercial areas should have their project “fast-tracked” through the permitting process (i.e., move to the head of the review line and fast reviews by each department).</p>			



Corridor Management

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
52	Corridor management is critical to preserving the rural character of Walker County's resources and growing tourism-oriented development. Equal attention should be given to guiding the appearance of new growth, retrofitting unattractive parts of older corridors and putting special controls in place on defined scenic routes. (see Illustrations 9 & 14)	The public has identified scenic resource protection as a high priority with whatever development and growth occurs. Corridor management is also the key to downtown economic revitalization in the county. Water quality is of particular concern. See environmental recommendations for reducing silt run-off and improving fishing opportunities.			
53	Institute county wide sign regulations to protect mountain scenery. Sign standards should be coordinated with zoning districts and based on traffic speed and volume and type of road (parkway versus urban commercial, for example). (see Illustration 14)	Billboards are not a good marketing tool in tourist areas. Current billboard proliferation is a serious threat to the long-term goal of promoting Walker county's scenic roadways. Current sign regulations should be reviewed cooperatively by all jurisdictions to create a level playing field. Attention should also be paid to light pollution issues and to ensuring on premise signs are of reasonable size and attractive materials. Size bonuses might be given for rustic or hand crafted signs over conventional plastic.			
54	Utilities (i.e., electrical, gas lines) should be located underground or at the rear of the properties. Phone and electrical lines should be buried in new subdivisions.	Utilities (i.e., electrical, gas lines) should be located underground or at the rear of the properties. Loading dock areas should be located at the rear of the property and should be able to be secured during off-hours.			

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
55	<p>Encourage nodal development at crossroads over conventional strip development patterns. (see Illustrations 15 - 21)</p>	<p>To make goods and services more accessible to patrons while minimizing commercial sprawl. Nodal development will provide for more one-stop shopping and a positive walking environment for patrons. Incorporating Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) principles will allow for a more aesthetically appealing environment that will help to encourage more use; in turn, providing for more revenue for retailers in the node. Additionally, providing for the mixed-use (i.e., residential above business) provides two key benefits. The first is that it creates a captured patron base for the businesses located in the node. The second key benefit is that it provides for a more safe physical location by creating more of a 24-hour environment. This method of urban planning/design creates a natural “eyes on the street” method of safety. Cluster commercial development around the four or five intersections of existing major intersections versus creating endless strips of commercial development along corridors. These commercial nodes should have complimentary signage on the buildings and the signs at the property edge should be low profile verses pylon style. These properties should include buffering landscaped berms (slope max. 4:1) including street/ornamental trees.</p>			
56	<p>Create a new zoning category called "Rural Commercial" or "Scenic Roadside Commercial" to ensure attractive neighborhood-scale commercial nodes along scenic route and avoid sprawl and visual clutter. (see Illustrations 15 - 21)</p>	<p>As development occurs along rural roadways it should be clustered at two- or three-mile intervals preferably at existing crossroads, leaving natural area in between - not a steady stream of sprawl. The standard range of commercial activities can be accommodated if rustic design materials are required in building design, signage, etc. This district should control total square footage and that of individual uses. In addition, land uses should be limited providing conveniences to nearby neighborhoods or tourist specialty businesses. Regulations should include signage and material guidelines. Some design review process would be helpful. Use</p>			

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
		Richard Rothman’s visual preference survey data to set design standards.			
57	Provide legal support for corridor management in the county's Comprehensive Plan update and define specifically how development regulations need to be updated and what development incentives should be provided to accomplish corridor goals.	Officially declaring corridor management as a major focus of the county's economic development strategy in the plan will increase eligibility for many grants.			
58	Existing strip commercial should have a buffer added between the property & adjacent road(s). (see Illustration 22)	These buffers should incorporate sidewalk and landscaping (low shrubs max. ht. of 30 inches) that doesn’t obstruct views to and from the commercial businesses and trees on the property side of the strip. This maintains parking on the front of the strip commercial, however, the parking lot to street edge boundary is softened and made more pedestrian friendly.			
59	Some existing parking lots should be relocated to rear or side of buildings. (see Illustration 23)	In cases where the front of the parking lot is within 100 feet of the building and where space is available behind the buildings, existing parking lots should be moved to the rear of existing strip commercial. The former parking lot should be reconfigured to become a landscaped buffer and functional space for the retail shops.			
60	Existing commercial area should be retrofitted with defined outdoor amenity areas (sidewalk dining areas, kiosks, sidewalk seating areas, pedestrian walkways and enhanced plantings). (see Illustrations 24 & 25)	Creating a more attractive physical environment for pedestrians, visitors, and merchants. Allows for a stronger pedestrian friendly shopping environment by allowing patrons to visit multiple shops without walking out into a parking lot area. The buffer area also allows for socializing space(s) in front of the shop for eating, drinking coffee, reading, etc.			
61	Special attention should be given to redeveloping "big box" sites for more productive uses - especially on the outskirts of cities and at gateways to the battlefield park.	Configuring parking lots - subdivide existing parking lot into city size blocks (300ft x 600 ft. +/-) with interior streets. Subdivided (if necessary) these newly formed blocks into smaller parcels for infill mixed-use (commercial, retail, & residential) buildings inside existing parking lots with wider setbacks for buffers to accommodate landscaping and pedestrians and bicycle movement. Newly created internal streets should allow for on-street parking on one side and sidewalks on each side.			

WALKER COUNTY

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
62	Promote conversion of older shopping centers to a more town center type environment that has more pedestrian friendly blocks and to provide more mixed use development space to increase economic opportunities and revenue for the county. (see Illustration 26)	Subdivide existing parking lot into city size blocks (300ft x 600 ft. +/-) with interior streets. Subdivided (if necessary) these newly formed blocks into smaller parcels for infill mixed-use (commercial, retail, & residential) buildings inside existing parking lots with wider setbacks for buffers to accommodate landscaping and pedestrians and bicycle movement. Newly created internal streets should allow for on street parking on one side and sidewalks on each side.			
63	As a demonstration project in corridor retrofitting, redevelop a declining strip center as a family fun center that would serve both overnight visitors and local population. (see Illustration 26)	The actual existing (abandoned) big box retail building should be rehabilitated and reused for family orientated entertainment functions (e.g., Run & Shoot, bowling, US Play, movie theaters). An alternate function is to convert the newly created big box site into a liberal arts college campus.			



Housing

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
64	Conduct a countywide housing inventory and assessment.	The 2000 Census identified 67% of all housing units in Walker County (including all municipalities) are in excess of 20 years old. 33% were identified as being older than 40 years. This indicates an aging housing inventory that will need to be addressed in order to maintain these properties as safe and sanitary housing units.			
65	Encourage housing rehabilitation and home ownership.	The county and cities should take advantage of state and federal programs to encourage housing rehabilitation and home ownership. Encourage the local housing authority to: (1) directly access funding for affordable housing programs itself; or (2) establish a Community Housing Development Corporation (CHDO) to access these funds. Possibilities include: improving the existing housing stock to provide more affordable housing; maintaining the traditional character and appearance of each community. A cohesive decision-making body should be created to address economic development issues to ensure public investments have a high return-of-investment.			

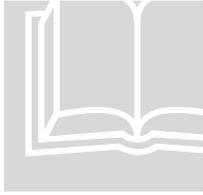


Historic Preservation

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
66	Adopt county wide historic preservation ordinance to protect resources and designate local districts throughout the county. Empower Historic Preservation Commission. (see Illustration 27)	This ensures that all resources are protected equitably.			
67	Create design guidelines appropriate for the differing contexts of the historic resources throughout the county.	There are many different ages of historic resources here and many different themes, i.e., rural and Civil War. They must be treated differently in rehab, development, etc.			
68	Adopt historic preservation ordinances for each municipality and create locally designated districts in their historic areas, particularly in the downtowns to protect resources. Empower Historic Preservation Commission. (see Illustration 27)				
69	Expand listing of Civil War sites historic resources on National Register of Historic Places. This could be a thematic/multi-property nomination.	These resources throughout the county are of state and national importance and should be recorded and honored by listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, the county should provide protection for these sites through historic zoning oversight. This doesn't limit use or property nor does it require that the property be open to the public.			
70	Create historic districts in downtown Chickamauga, Lafayette, and Rossville with design guidelines for development, rehabilitation and infill construction. (see Illustration 27)	This will allow for protection and enhancement of these areas to attract visitors and increase tax revenues. National Register of Historic Places listing also enables owners of income producing properties to receive federal tax credits for rehabilitation of these properties.			

WALKER COUNTY

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
71	Provide protection for the historic barns scattered throughout the county. Provide information and education on Barn Again! program. (see Illustration 27)	Increases interest and appreciation for the fabulous historic barns scattered throughout the county on historic farmsteads. Preserving rural character of the county is an overarching theme.			
72	Do thematic/multi listing for historic barns located throughout the county. Do driving tour of barns, complete with educational materials. (see Illustration 5)	Increases interest and appreciation for the fabulous historic barns scattered throughout the county on historic farmsteads. This is a great tourism attractor. Preserving rural character of the county is an overarching theme.			
73	Create historic preservation commission oversight for McLemore Cove Historic District with zoning overlay district and design controls to ensure maintenance of the historic and scenic character of the area. (see Illustration 27)	This very important historic resource needs to be protected from being over-developed. Rural character is an essential part of the importance of the Cove. Additionally, McLemore's Cove can be a very important tourism attractor, with proper controls and marketing, like Cade's Cove.			
74	Continue update to historic resources survey. With information, create driving tour/educational materials for historic resources throughout the county. (see Illustrations 5 & 27)	This is a valuable way to ensure protection of these resources as well as educate the local and visiting public to their importance on the local, state and national scene.			
75	Ross House needs to be protected, yet used to full potential as tourism attraction. Stop the encroachment of contemporary development around house; remove if possible to present house in more of a historic context. (see Illustrations 28 - 31)	Ideally, house would be in public ownership or given to the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation with an endowment for maintenance, protection, and operations. This site is much too valuable to be kept in hiding or only open on sporadic occasions. The view needs to be opened up both to and from the House, with removal of the fencing and cleaning up of landscaping.			



Development Regulations

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
76	<p>Utilize the update of the Comprehensive Plans for Walker County and its cities (due for completion in late 2005) to crystallize a vision and related development goals and policies for the county.</p>	<p>The comprehensive planning process provides an excellent opportunity for the county and its cities to 'formalize' a vision, and related development goals and policies, for the whole county. The process of updating the plan should become the vehicle to engage stakeholders throughout the county in defining local preferences on the type and style of growth and development that is desired. The updated plan should target sub-areas throughout the county and identify the specific type(s) of development (e.g., low density residential, mixed use, clustered commercial, etc.) that is desired for these areas. In this way the updated plan can be used as a reference in evaluating the appropriateness of future development proposals. The county and cities should then assess local development controls (e.g., capital improvement budgets, zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, etc.) and modify these items as needed to ensure they promote/support the desired type/style of development as identified in the updated plan.</p>			
77	<p>Proposed Conservation Subdivision regulations are good but should be revised to be mandatory in ecologically sensitive areas. Development incentives must be provided in areas of the county where conservation subdivisions are voluntary or they will not be an effective rural character preservation tool. (see Illustration 32)</p>	<p>Incentives might include density bonuses for conserving over 60% of site. Assistance with infrastructure costs, relaxation of curb and gutter requirements, streamlined permitting process, assistance with up front design costs and other measures. These should be developed as part of the comprehensive planning process.</p>			

WALKER COUNTY

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
78	Encourage larger lots in the rural areas of the County. (see Illustration 1)	While a large portion of unincorporated Walker County has zoning that allows 1 housing unit per acre, the county should encourage developers to use deed restrictions and covenants to establish larger minimum lot sizes [10 - 20 acres] to preserve the rural character in targeted areas. This is an appropriate method for protecting farmland, undeveloped forested areas, and critical riparian areas from development pressures.			
79	Adopt tree preservation requirements for new developments.	Site clearance restrictions should be included in a general tree preservation ordinance [or coupled with existing zoning provisions] designed to save the maximum possible number of mature native trees on all new development sites.			
80	The county should revisit existing tree ordinance and require developers to provide a 1 to 1 tree replacement policy. Incentive should be provided for maintaining native vegetation, even in conventional subdivisions.	The county has experienced a huge net tree loss over the last five years. Development practices must be changed to avoid clear cutting development sites.			
81	Revise existing County Subdivision regulations to promote more innovative design.	Appropriate subdivision regulations will be needed to ensure that new developments follow the principles of conservation subdivisions and traditional neighborhood developments recommended throughout this report. These include elements such as connective grid street patterns, mixing of uses, smaller street widths, smaller lot sizes and reduced building setbacks.			

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
82	Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) principals should be integrated into all development regulations including subdivision regulations.	Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) elements should be incorporated into each development. These TND principles should include pedestrian friendly designs that allow for useable sidewalks not less than 8 feet wide; pedestrian level street lights should be added, not produce glare and should be of an “aesthetically pleasing” design character; building heights and entryways (doorways) should be at a human scale; shading devices (e.g. awnings, balconies, colonnades, etc.) should be an integral part of buildings; uniform building signage should be provided; mixed uses (i.e., commercial, residential, and retail) should be provided with the residential component located above shops/storefronts; and territorial reinforcement through the clear demarcation of public space (i.e., sidewalks & parking lots) and semi-private spaces (e.g., outdoor seating cafes for patrons) should also be provided to allow for added safety.			
83	Instead of eliminating Planned Unit Development (PUD) regulations, these should be rewritten to embody neotraditional elements. PUD districts should be used to create livable pedestrian oriented, village centers with low environmental impact.	Conservation subdivisions and rural village PUDs can be easily intermingled. Some PUDs should be located on the zoning map based on desired land use pattern and available infrastructure (sewer in particular). Floating PUD designations could be allowed in non-sewered areas if the county would aggressively pursue permission to have shared septic tank fields, especially for neighborhood commercial elements. Active recreation and permanent greenspace should be required in all PUDs.			
84	Encourage agricultural areas that maintain the county's rural character. (see Illustration 1)	Agricultural areas that maintain the county's rural character are an asset. The county should use its capital budgeting for infrastructure improvements and land use regulations to direct growth away from valued agriculture areas. In addition, any new development should be required to use compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character, and should not include “franchise” or “corporate” architecture. Widen roadways only when absolutely necessary and carefully design the roadway alterations to minimize visual impact.			

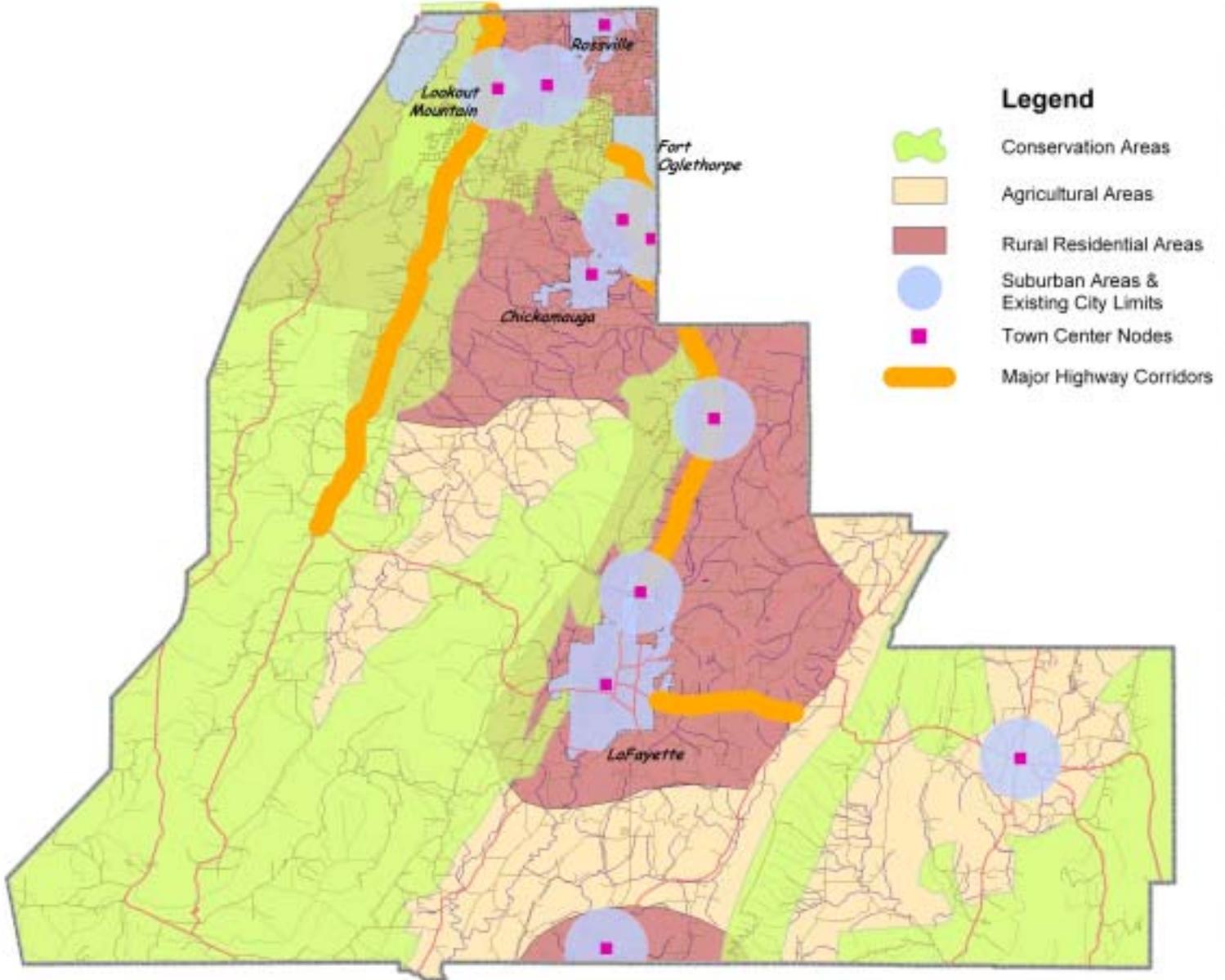
WALKER COUNTY

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
85	The county and its cities should use utility siting [particularly future road improvements and sewer collection lines] as a growth guidance tool.	Public investment in infrastructure improvements send strong messages to the development community and citizens. The county and its cities should use the siting of future infrastructure improvements as an incentive to encourage growth/development only in desired areas. In sub-areas where the county and cities want to protect 'rural character' (e.g., McClemore Cove, lands adjacent to the Battlefield, etc.) the county and cities should withhold infrastructure improvements.			
86	Walker County should evaluate the use of Impact Fees as a means to: (1) guide growth into desired sub-areas of the county; and (2) allow new residents to pay their share of infrastructure improvement costs.	Impact Fees are used by approximately 30 cities/counties in Georgia. By establishing service areas and service levels as called for under the Impact Fee law, the county can create incentives in certain sub-areas of the county where growth is desired [and conversely disincentives in other sub-areas where growth is not desired]. Additionally, the revenue generated by the impact fees themselves allow new residents moving into the county to pay their fair share of the infrastructure costs they consume.			
87	The county should define priority infrastructure expansion areas consistent with its overall economic development and preservation goals. Any other infrastructure expansions should be paid for primarily by the private developer.	This policy would keep taxes and utility rates low and discourage sprawl without having to totally ban rural development.			
88	As a general policy, new development should not create an unfair burden on existing residents. New development should absorb 100% of the infrastructure development costs that result from creating sprawl into rural areas.	While school construction costs cannot be recovered from impact fees, many water, sewer, roads, parks, fire, EMS and police expenses can.			
89	Implement a differential development impact fee system that guides growth into areas defined by the county's comprehensive plan. The system should reward developers for locating where excess infrastructure already exists and keep county taxpayers from subsidizing	Developers should be required to pay the full cost of greenfield development that would include but not be limited to permitting fees for water and sewer taps.			

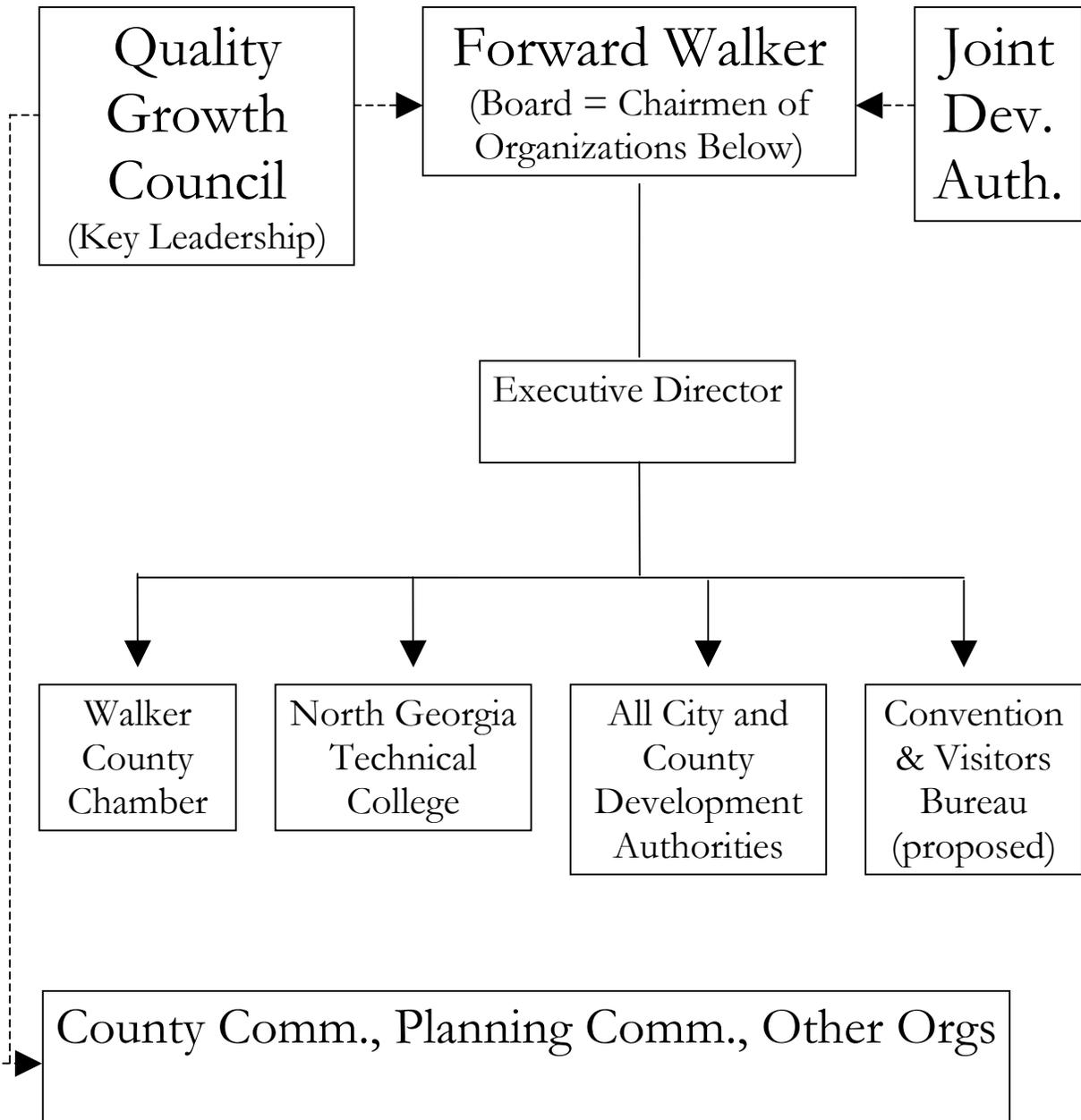
WALKER COUNTY

	Recommendation	Why Necessary	Status	Responsible Party	Notes
	<p>the high public costs of extending infrastructure into remote rural areas with environmental limitations.</p>				
<p>90</p>	<p>To prevent leapfrog development, the county should consider requiring conventional greenfield subdivisions developments of over 10 units to be on sewer versus septic system. Only conservation subdivisions should be allowed to use shared community septic fields.</p>	<p>This requirement should take phasing into account. Sewer requirements should be based on estimated final buildout numbers for all phases of a project.</p>			

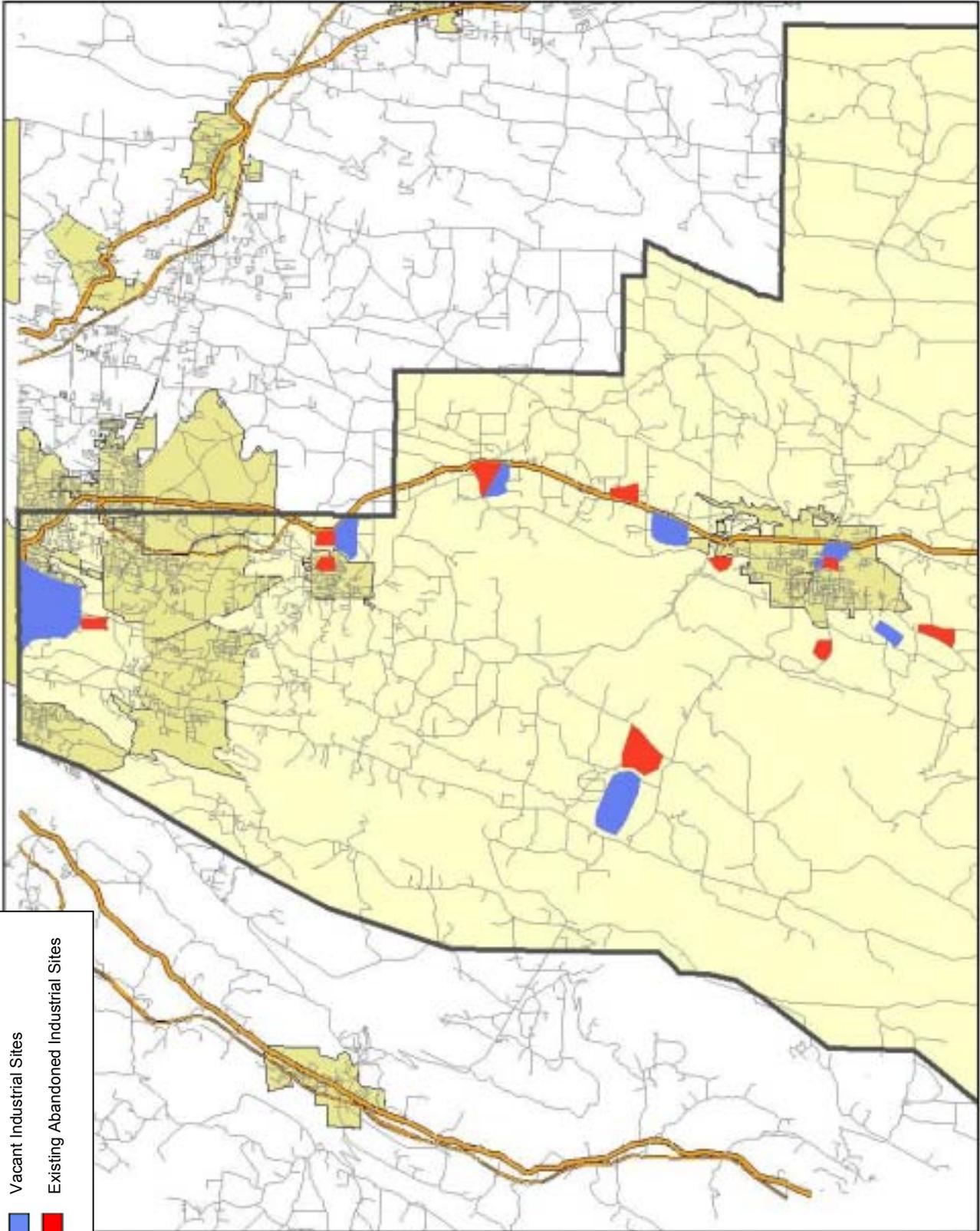
WALKER COUNTY



1 - Overall Development Concept



2 - Recommended Economic Development Organization Structure



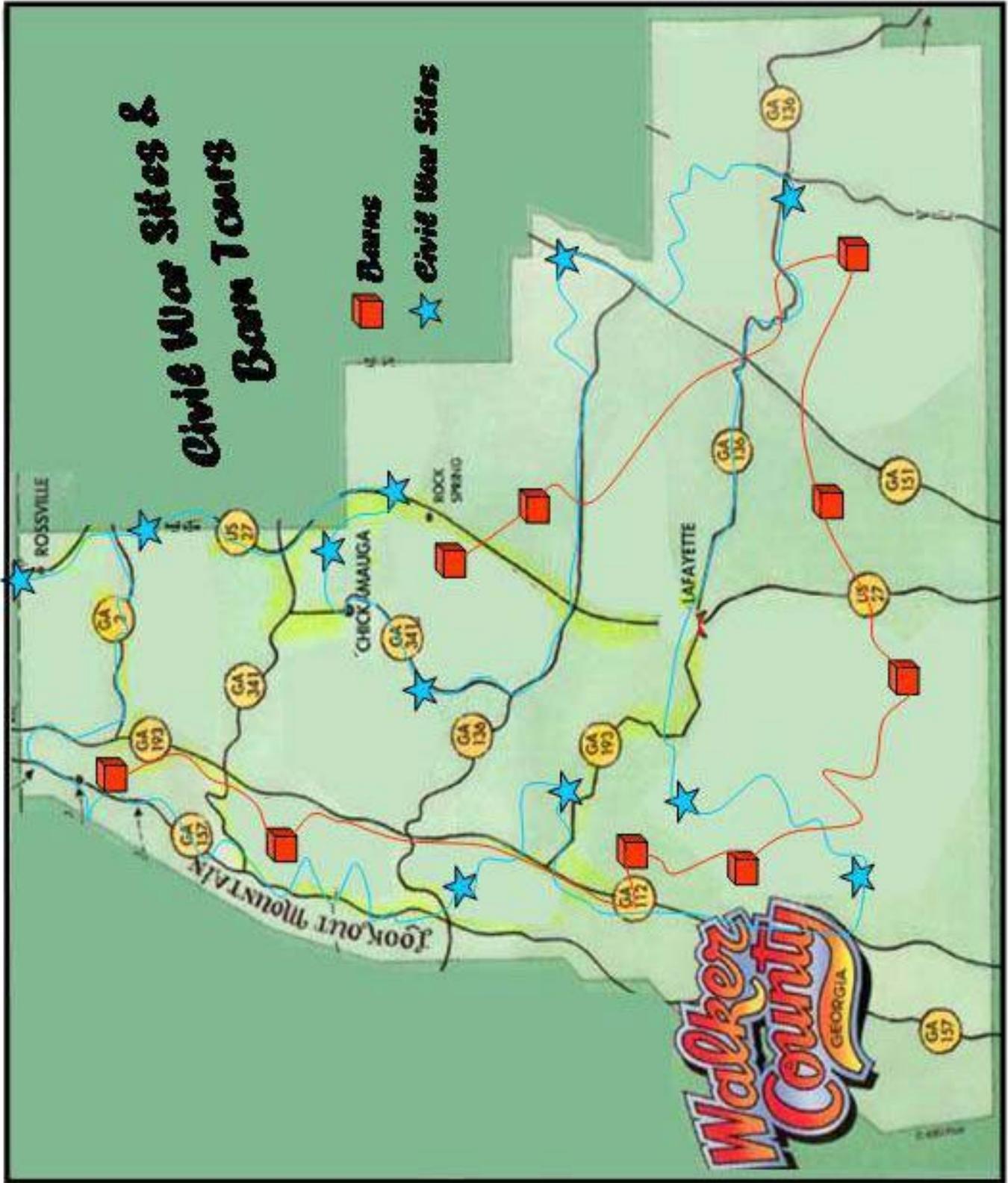
LEGEND

- Vacant Industrial Sites
- Existing Abandoned Industrial Sites

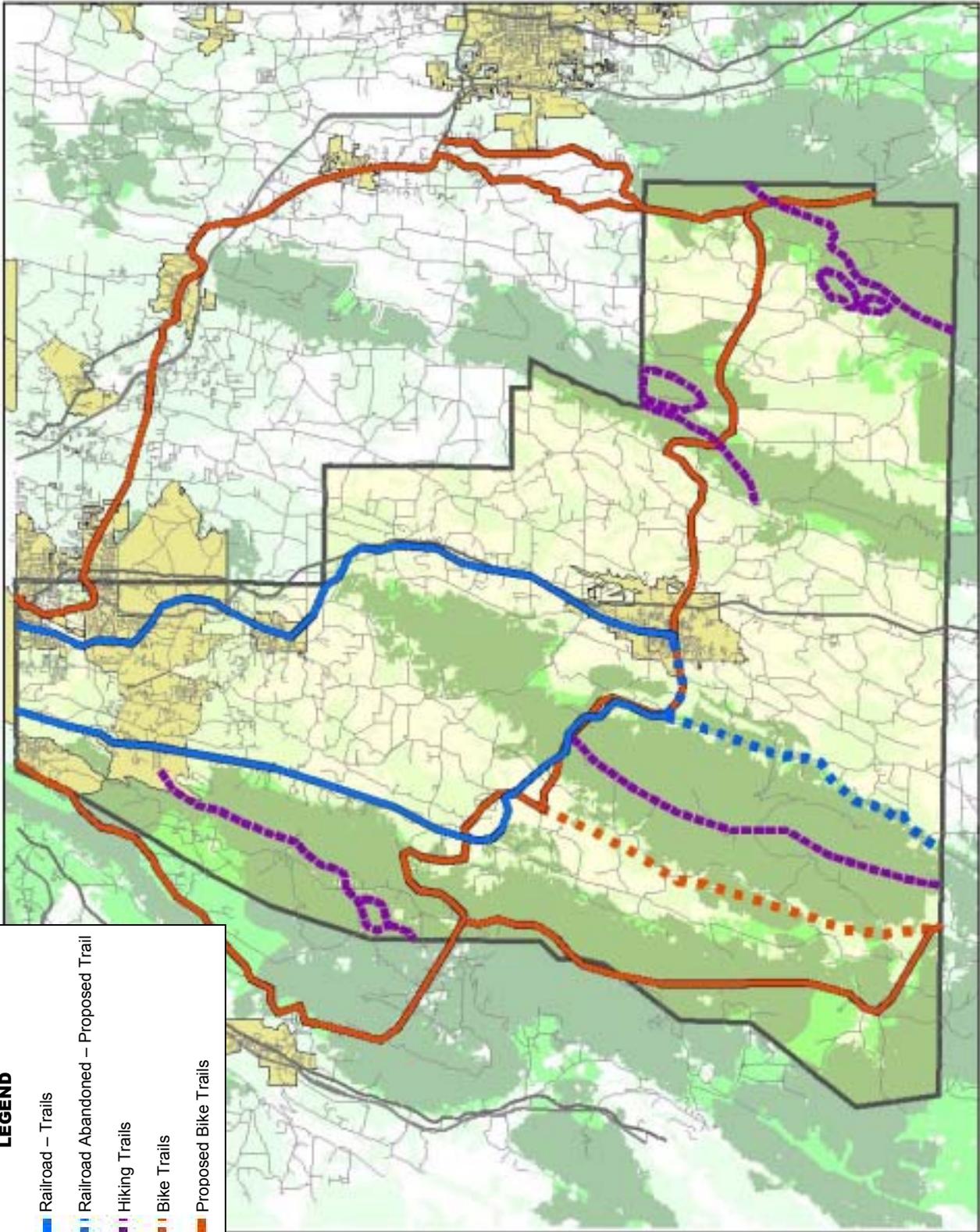
3 – Existing & Potential Industrial Sites



4 – Example of Industrial Site Reuse



5 – Example of Thematic Tourist Map



6 – Trail System Map



7 – Example of Directional Signage



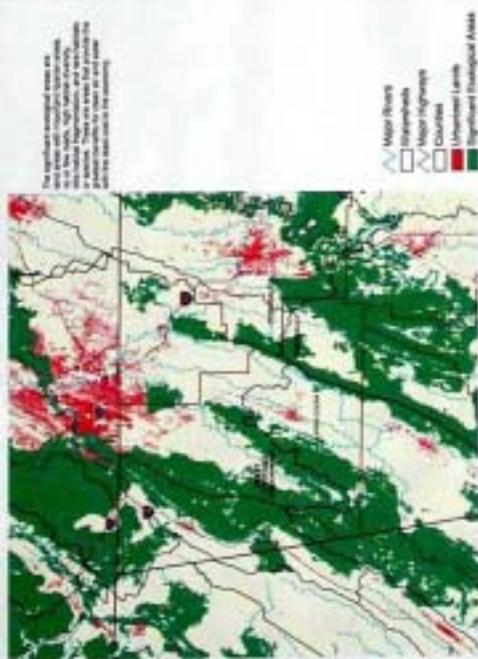
8 – Example of Wall Mural



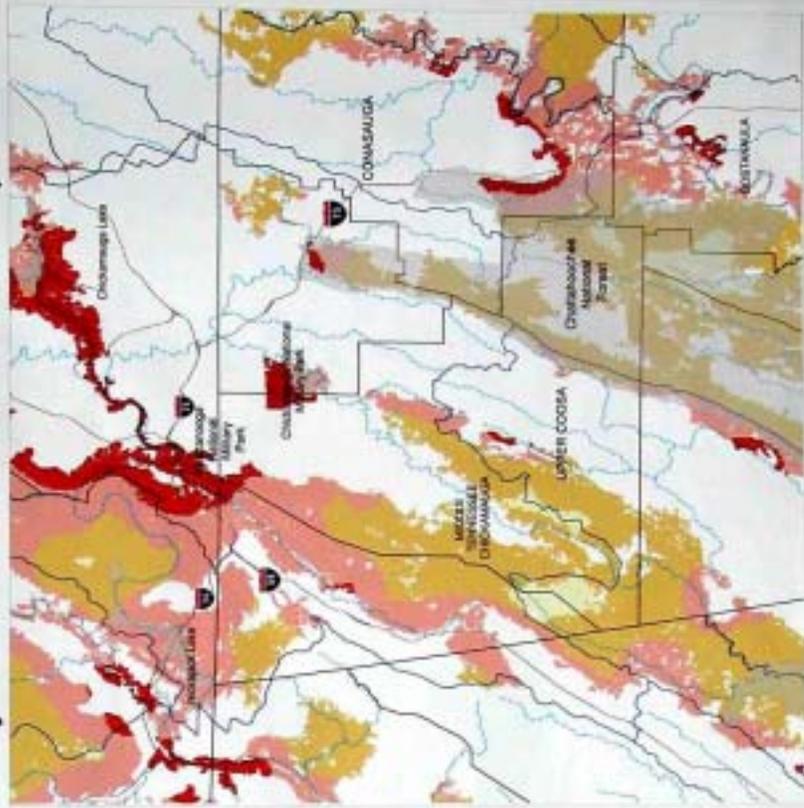
**9 – Viewshed Protection
with Signage Controls**

Growth-Related Threats to Significant Ecological Areas in Walker County

Significant Ecological Areas & Urban Areas



Ecological Areas Threatened by Potential Future Development

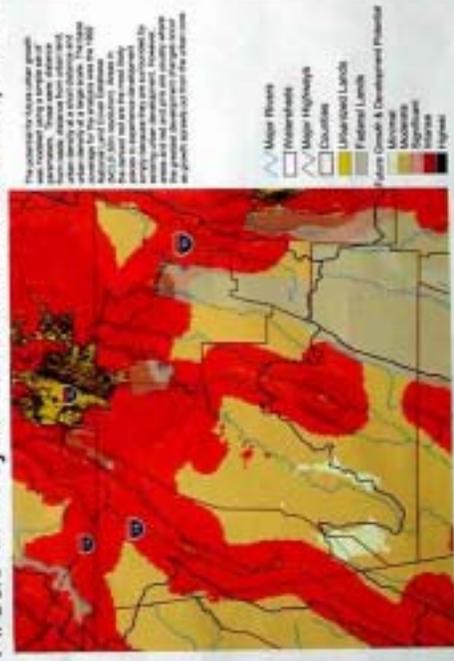


Future Growth & Development Potential

Minimal
Moderate
Significant
Intense
Highest

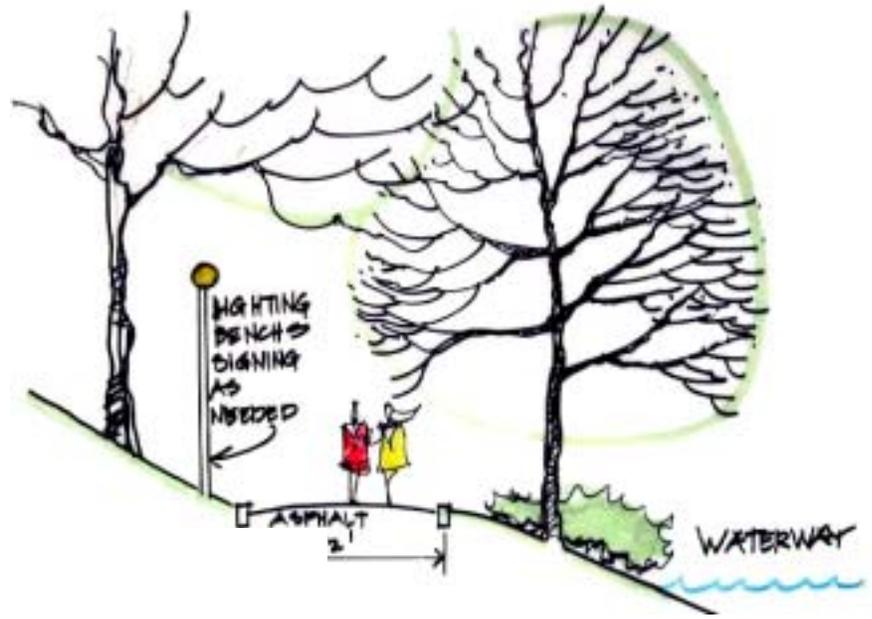
By merging the two maps on the left, you can quickly see where future growth and development could have the greatest impact on the county's most significant ecological areas.

Areas of Projected Growth & Development

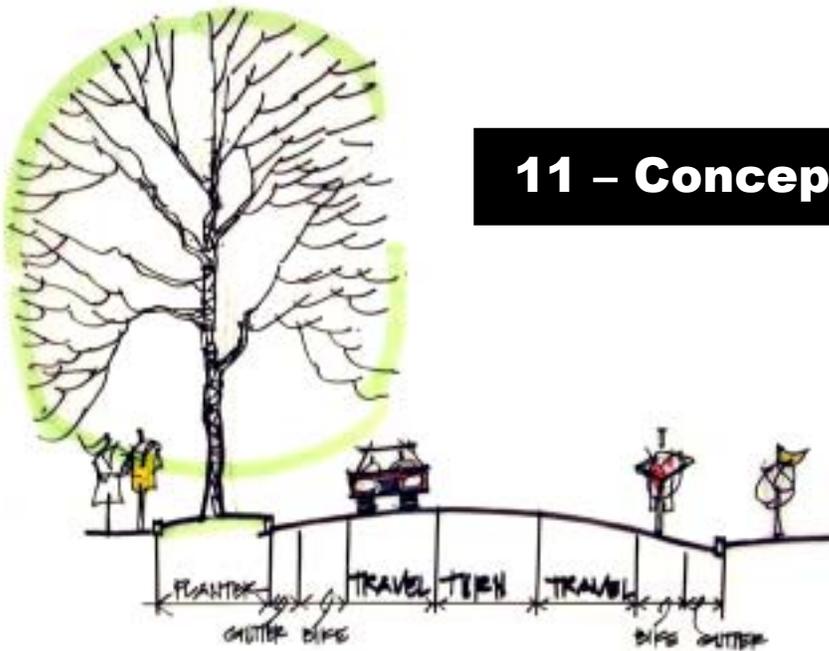


Future Growth & Development Potential

Minimal
Moderate
Significant
Intense
Highest



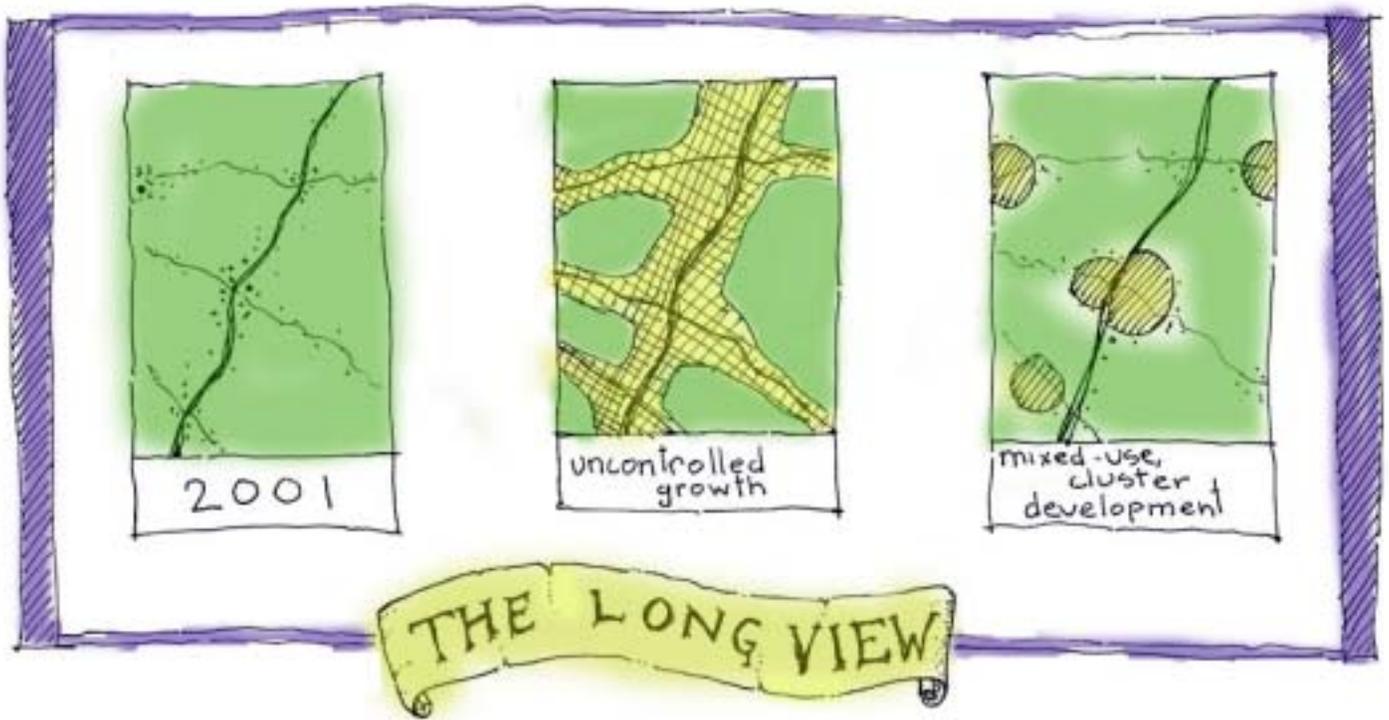
11 – Concept for Greenway Trail

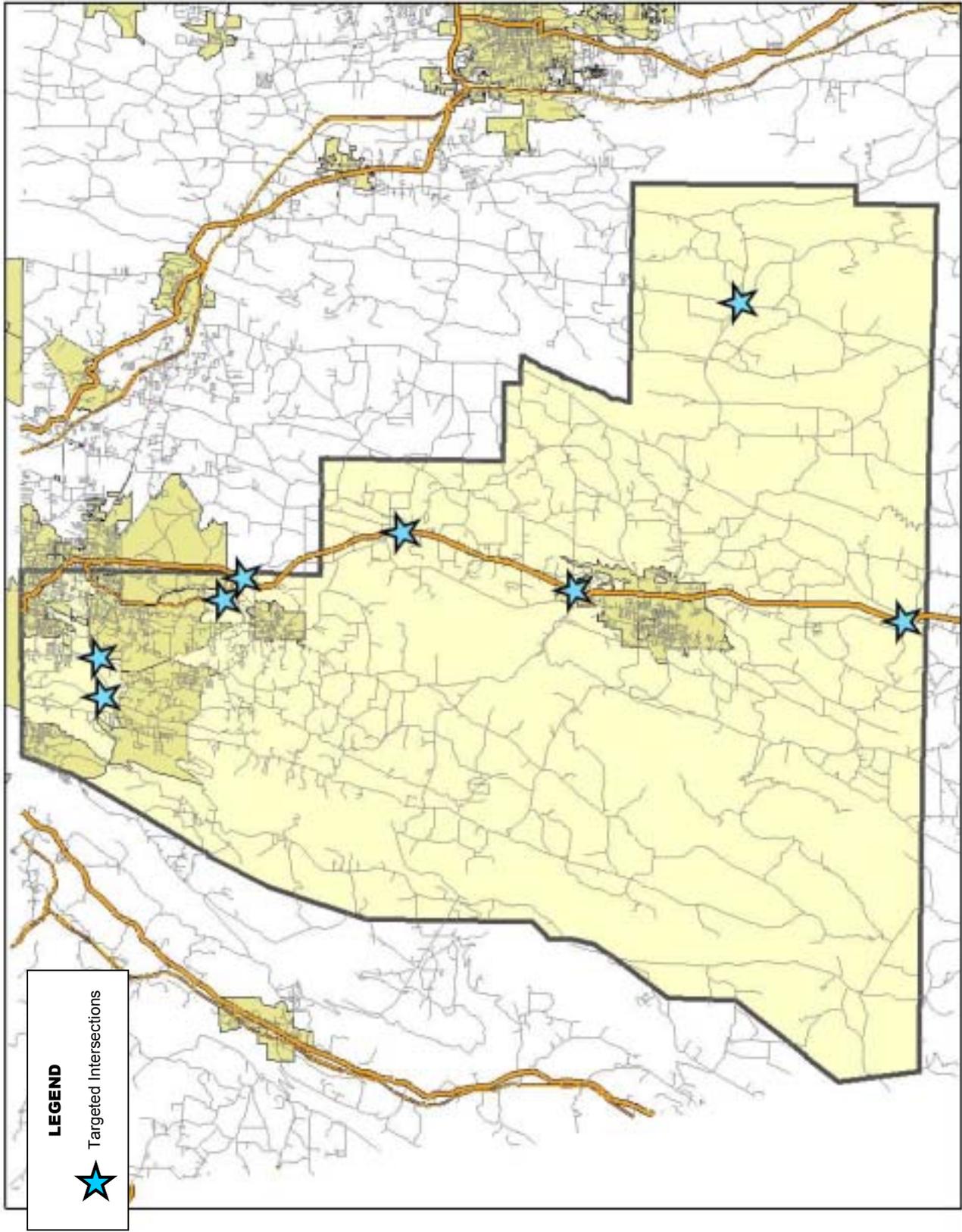


12 – On-Street Bikeway

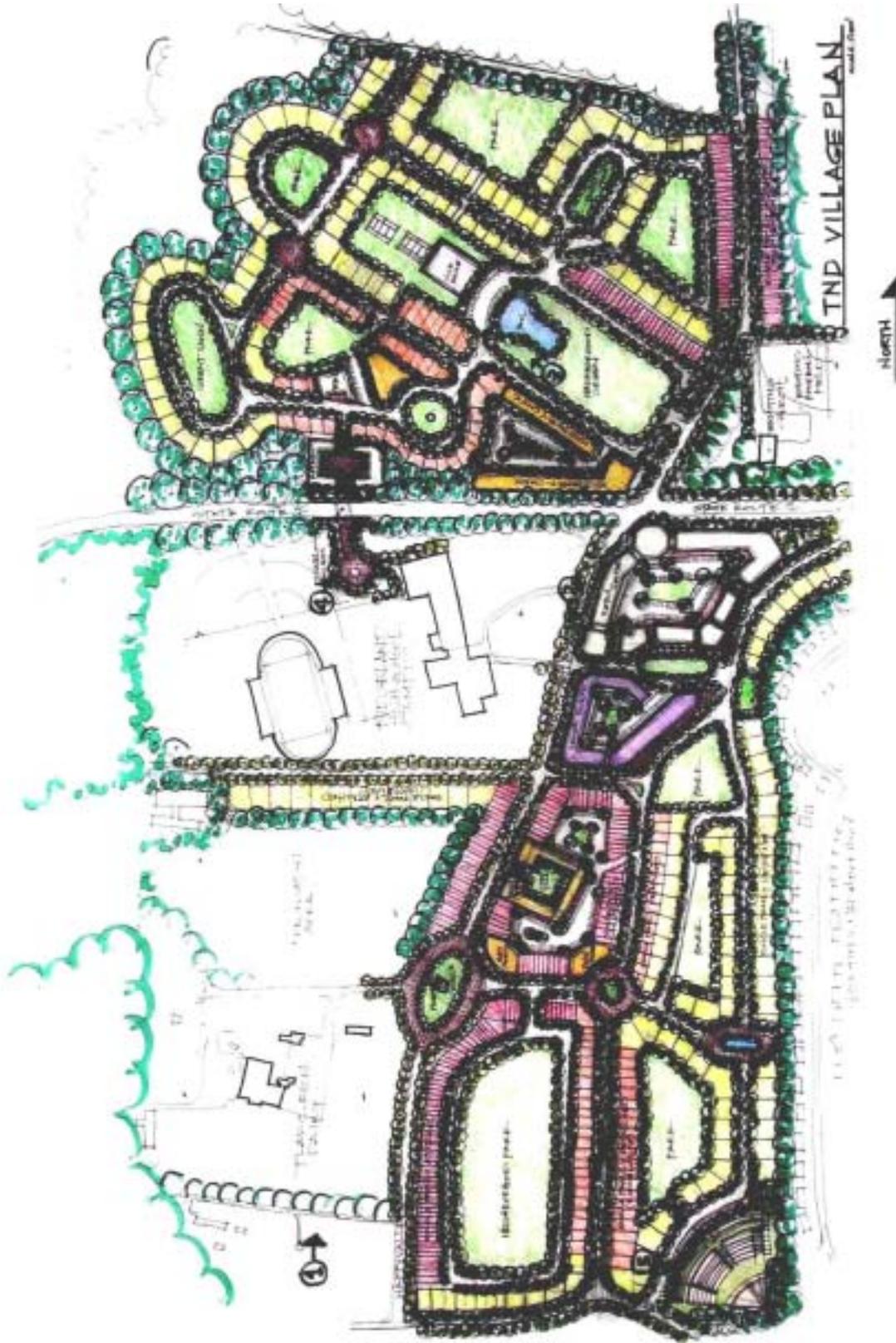


13 – Example of Greenway Trail





15 – Recommended Development Nodes



16 - Concept for Development at a Typical Node



**17 - Concept for Development
at a Typical Node**



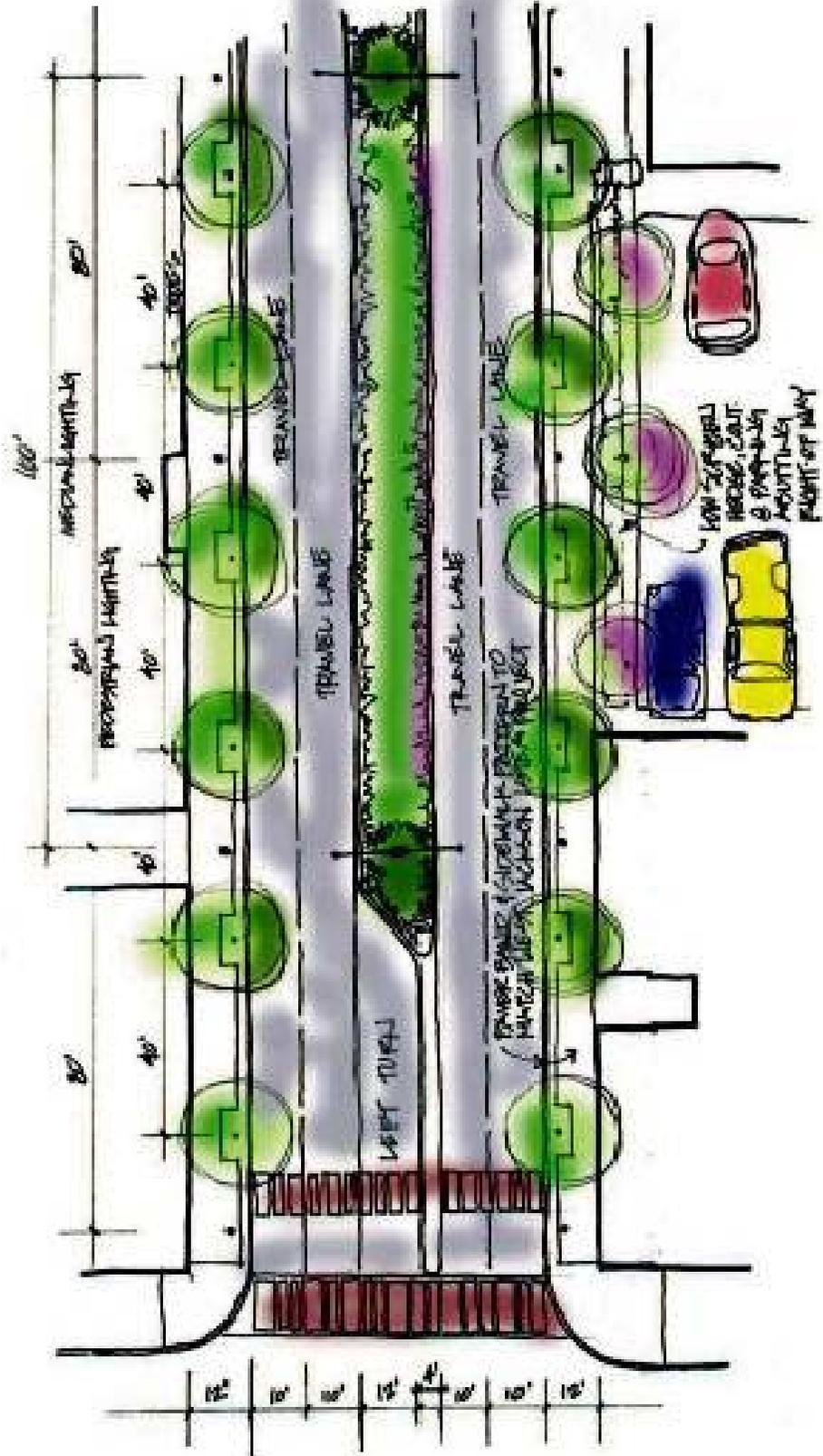
**19 - Concept for Development
at a Typical Node**



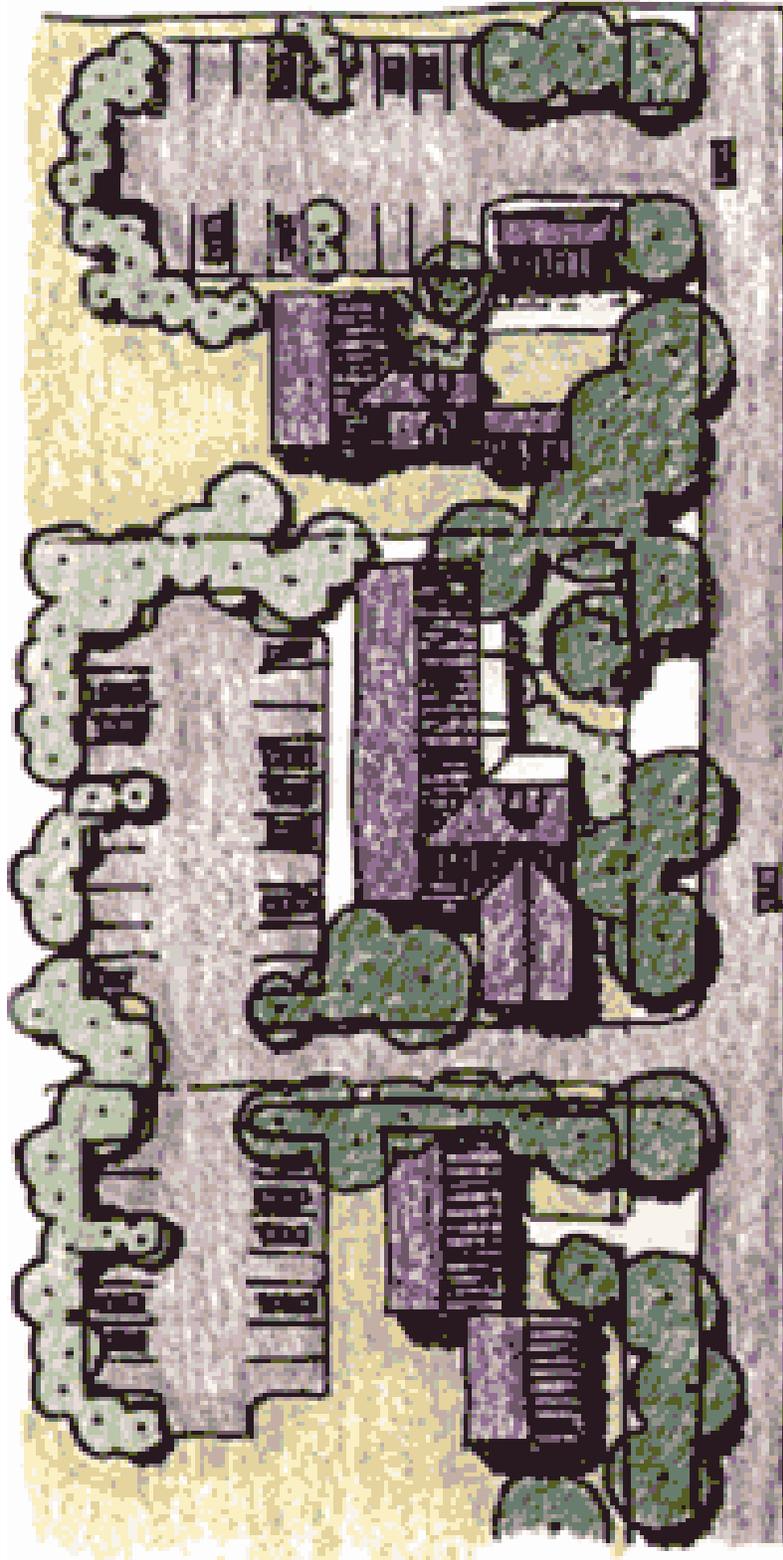
20 - Concept for Development at a Typical Node



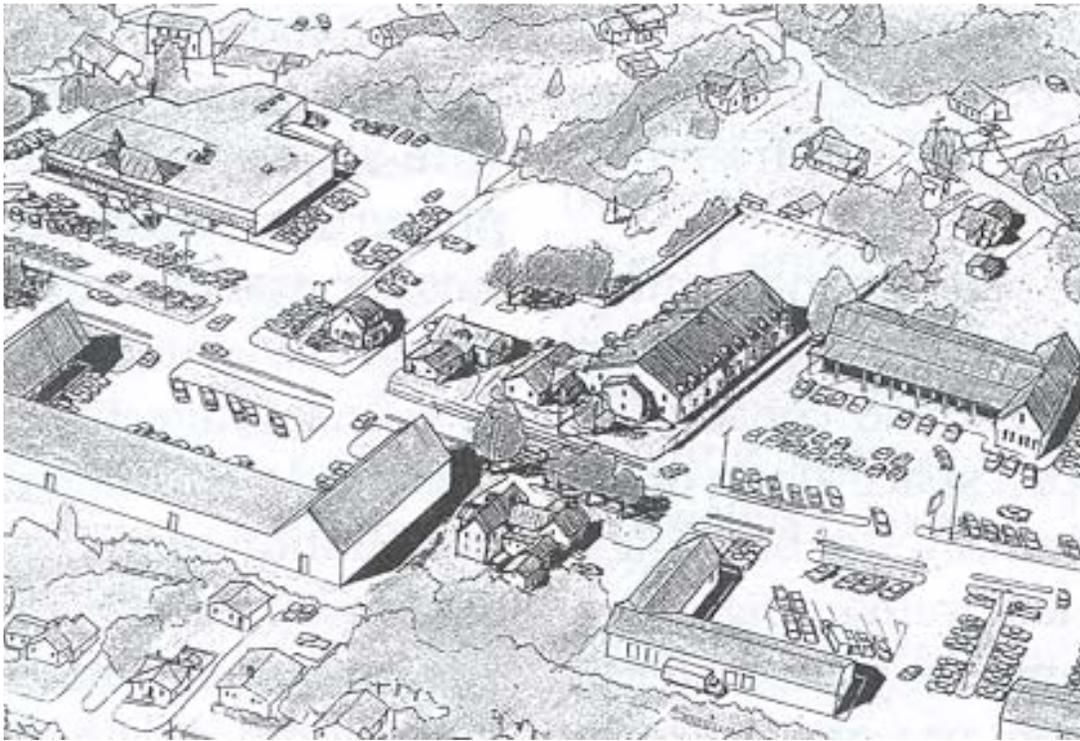
**21 - Concept for Development
at a Typical Node**



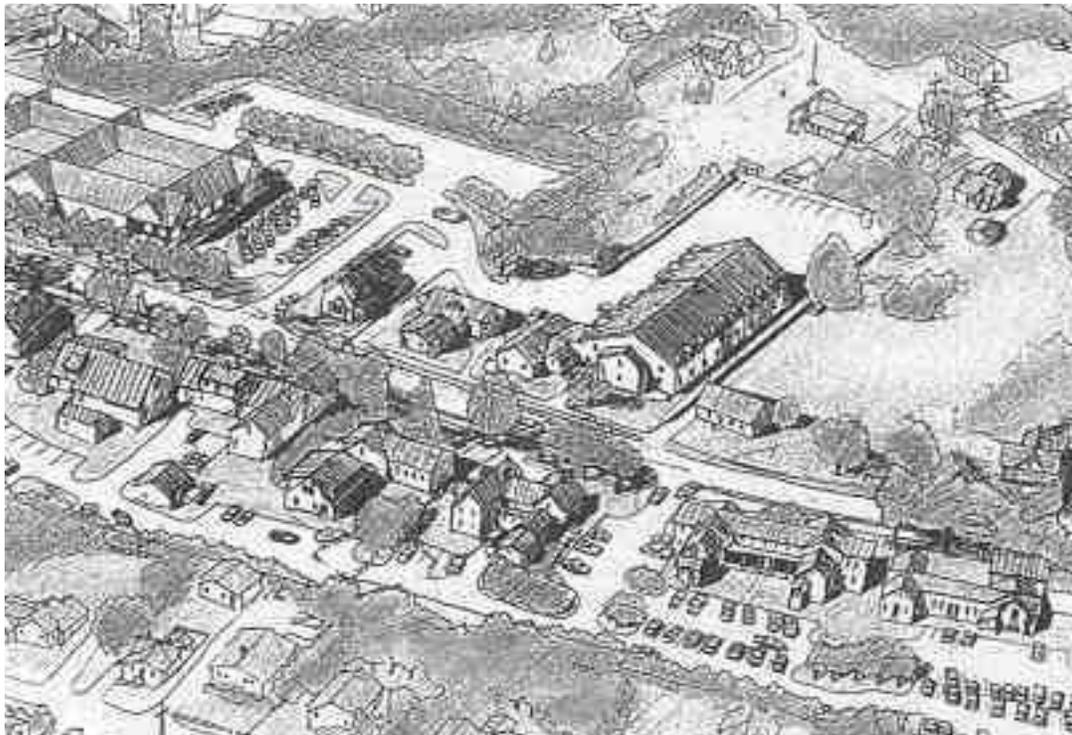
22 – Proposed Streetscape Improvements



23 – Parking at Side or Rear



24 – Strip Corridor – before

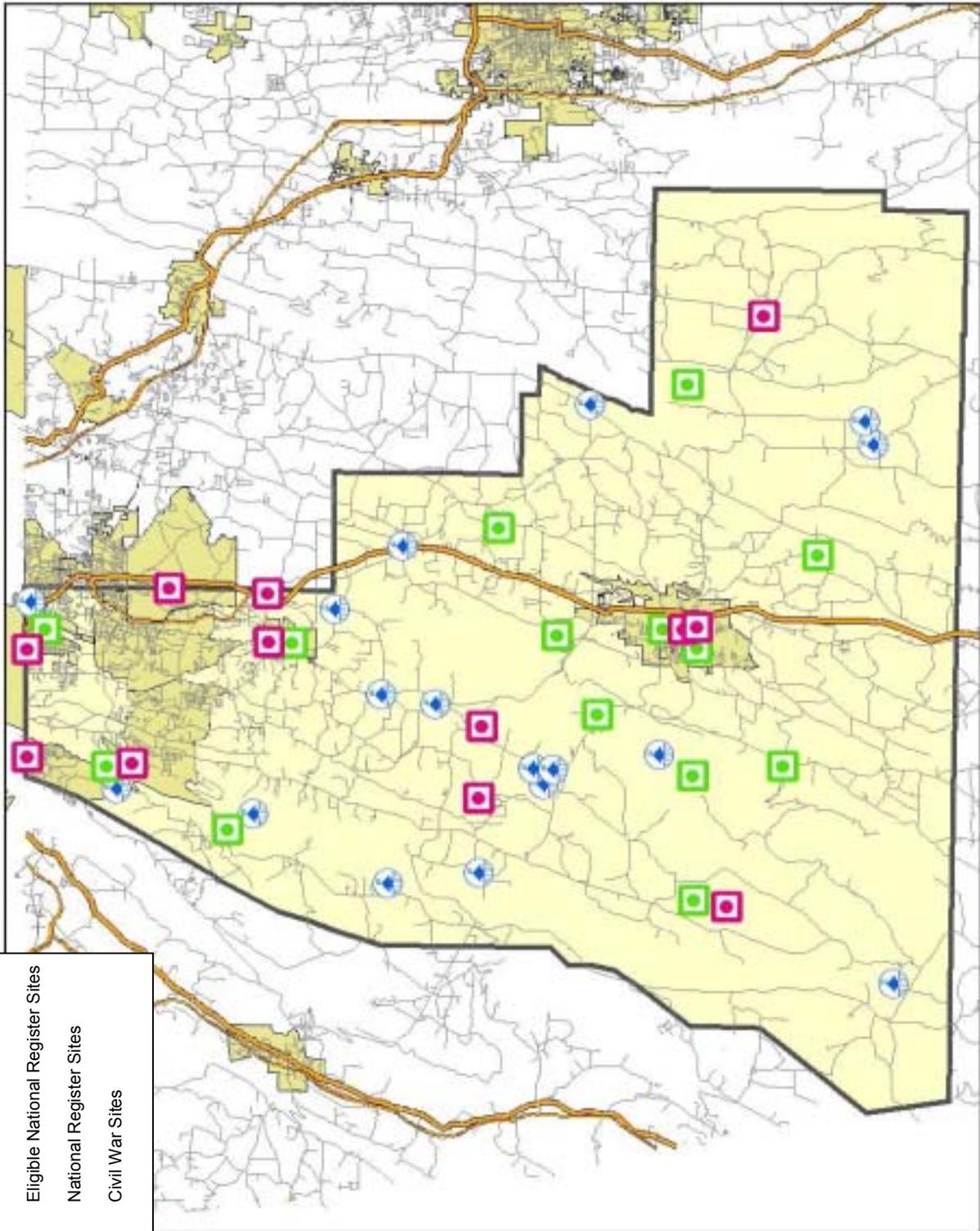


25 – Strip Corridor – after



Stages of Re-Development for Eastgate Mall

26 – Example of Big Box Retrofit

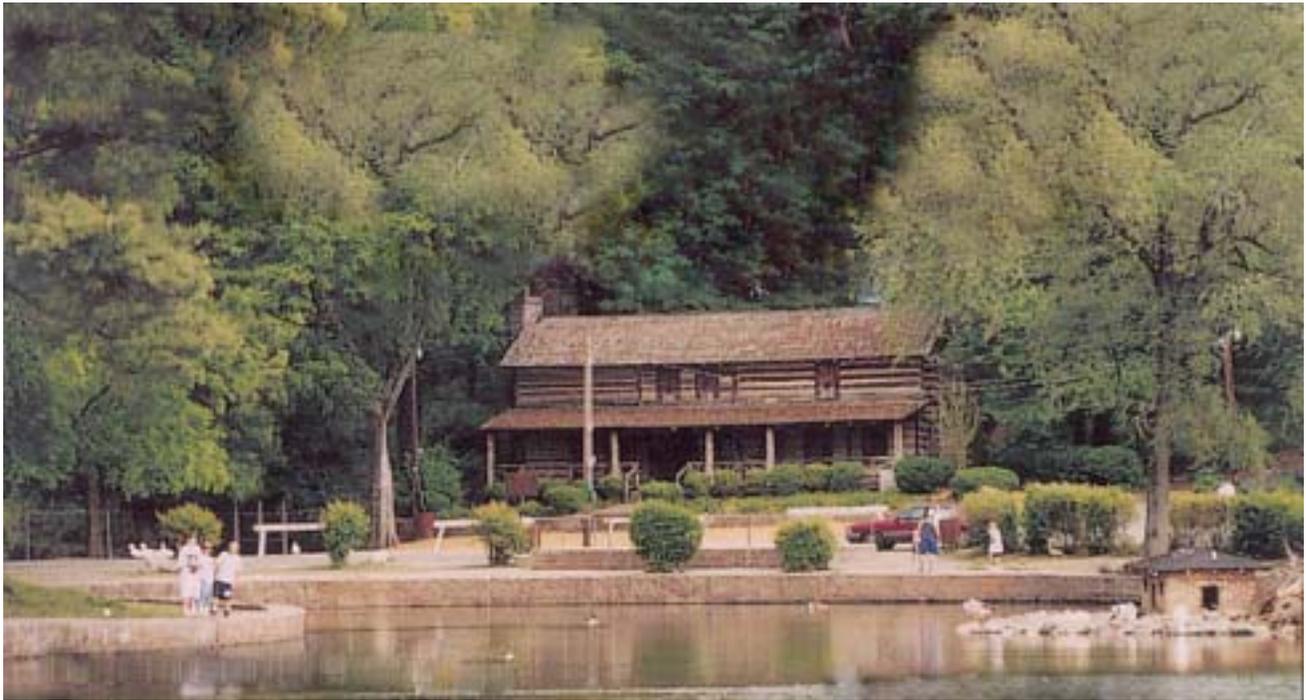


LEGEND

- Eligible National Register Sites
- National Register Sites
- Civil War Sites



27 – Historic Resources



28 – Ross House



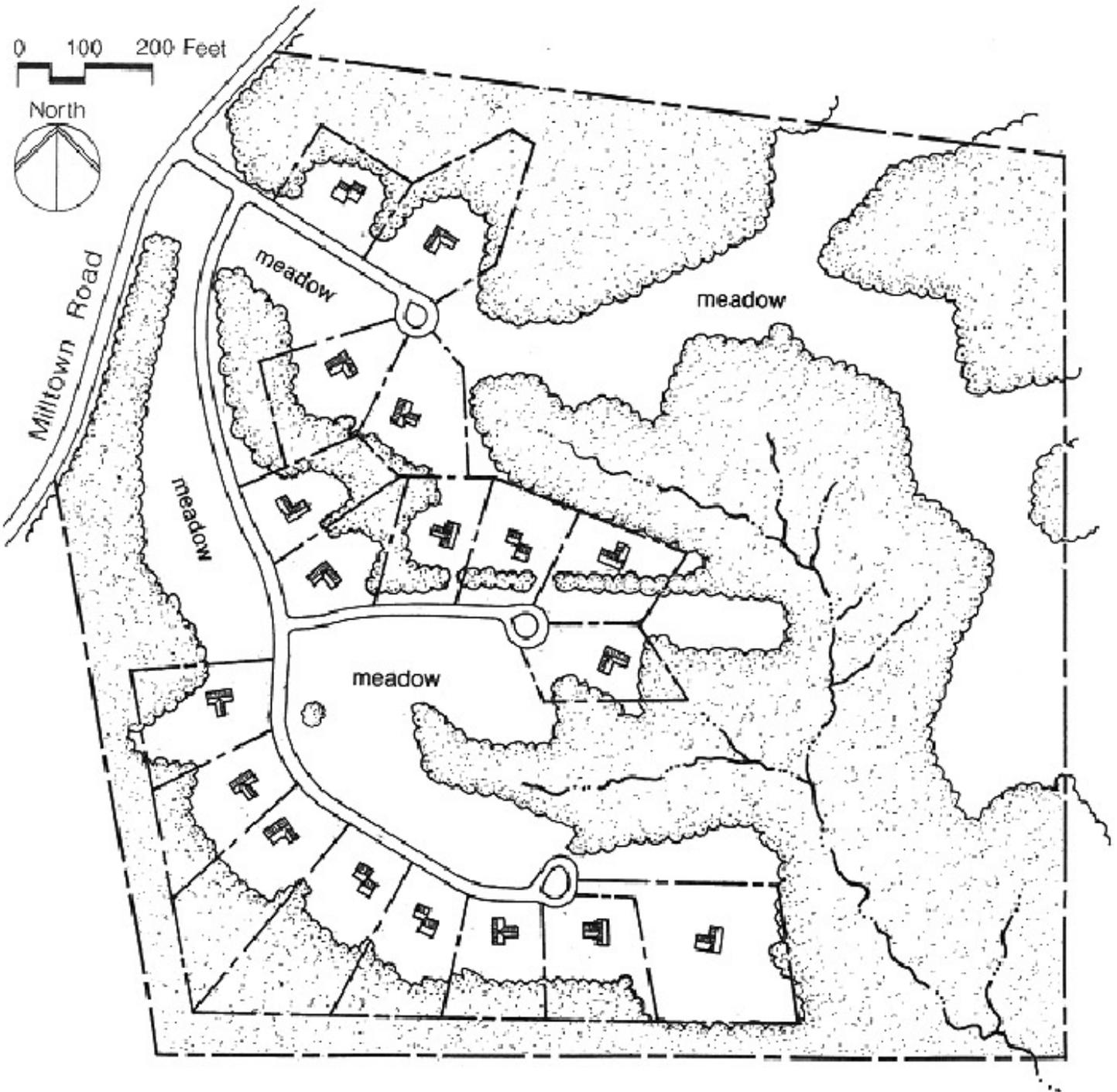
29 – Concept for Gateway Signage



30 – Duck Pond (before)



31 – Duck Pond (after)



32 - Conservation Subdivision Design



Appendix

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT BUCKET

Issue: Retro Fit Commercial (Strip Type)

Method One – Maintaining Parking on the Front of Commercial Strip:

Existing strip commercial should have buffer added between the property & adjacent road(s). These buffers should incorporate sidewalk, landscaping (low shrubs max. ht. Of 30 inches) that doesn't obstruct views to and from the commercial businesses, and trees on the property side of the strip. This maintains parking on the front of the strip commercial, however, the parking lot to street edge boundary is softened and made more pedestrian friendly.

Method Two – Relocating Parking to the Rear of Commercial Strip:

In cases where the front of the parking lot is within 100 feet of the building and where space is available behind the buildings existing parking lots should be moved to the rear of existing strip commercial. The former parking lot should be reconfigured to become a landscaped buffer and functional space for the retail shops. These buffers should incorporate sidewalk, landscaping (low shrubs) that doesn't obstruct views to and from the commercial, and trees

Reason:

Creating a more attractive physical environment for pedestrians, visitors and merchants. Method Two allows for a stronger pedestrian friendly shopping environment by allowing patrons to visit multiple shops without walking out into a parking lot area. The buffer area in Method Two also allows for socializing space(s) in front of the shop for eating, drinking coffee, reading, etc.

Issue: Retro Fit Abandoned Commercial (Big Box “Conner-Type Box”)

Reusing Parking Lots

Construct infill mixed-use (i.e., commercial, retail, & residential) buildings inside existing parking lots with setbacks for buffers to accommodate landscaping, pedestrians and bicycle

movement (see sketch number 2). Buffer should be added between the new infill buildings & any adjacent road(s). These buffers should incorporate sidewalk, landscaping (low shrubs) that doesn't obstruct views to and from the commercial, and trees on the property side of the buffer.

Reason:

To create a more town center type environment that has more pedestrian friendly blocks and to provide more mixed use development space to increase economic opportunities and revenue for the county. To also provide existing residents with more access to goods and services.

Issue: Retro Fit Abandoned Commercial (Big Box “Rear-Type Box”)

Configuring Parking Lots in to City Blocks:

Subdivide existing parking lot into city size blocks (300ft x 600 ft. +/-) with interior streets. Subdivided (if necessary) these newly formed blocks into smaller parcels for infill mixed-use (commercial, retail, & residential) buildings inside existing parking lots with wider setbacks for buffers to accommodate landscaping and pedestrians and bicycle movement. Newly created internal streets should allow for on street parking on one side and sidewalks on each side.

Adaptive Reuse of Abandoned Big Box Retail:

family orientated entertainment functions (e.g., Run & Shoot, Bowling, US Play, Movie Theaters). An alternate function is to convert the newly created big box site into a liberal arts college campus.

Reason:

To create a more town center type environment that has more pedestrian friendly blocks and to provide more mixed use development space to increase economic opportunities and revenue for the county.

To also provide existing residents with more access to goods and services.

The conversion/creation of a liberal arts college is to provide alternate educational (technical education) options for local high school graduates in hopes of keeping these young people in this area.

Issue: Nodal Neighborhood Development

Cluster commercial development around the four (five) intersections of existing major intersections versus creating endless strips of commercial development along corridors. These nodal commercial properties should have uniform signage on the buildings and the signs at the property edge should be low profile versus pylon style. These properties should include buffering landscaped berms (slope max. 4:1) including street/ornamental trees.

Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) elements should be incorporated into each development. These TND principles should include pedestrian friendly designs that allow for useable sidewalks not less than 8 feet wide; Pedestrian level street lights should be added, not produce glare and should be of an “aesthetically pleasing” design character; Building heights and entryways (doorways) should be at a human scale; shading devices (e.g. awnings, balconies, colonnades, etc.) should be an integral part of buildings; Uniform building signage should be provided; Mixed uses (i.e., commercial, residential, and retail) should be provided with the residential component located above shops/storefronts; and territorial reinforcement through the clear demarcation of public space (i.e., sidewalks & parking lots) and semi-private spaces (e.g., outdoor seating cafes for patrons) should also be provided to allow for added safety.

Utilities (i.e., electrical, gas lines) should be located underground or at the rear of the properties. Loading dock areas should be located at the rear of the property and should be able to be secured during off-hours.

Reason:

To make goods and services more accessible to patrons while minimizing commercial sprawl. Nodal development will provide for more one-stop shopping and a positive walking environment for patrons. Incorporating TND principles will allow for a more aesthetically appealing environment that will help to encourage more use in turn providing for more revenue for retailers in the node. Additionally, providing for the mixed-use (i.e., residential above businesses) provides two key benefits. The first is that it creates a captured patron base for the businesses located in the node. The second key benefit is that it provides for a more safety physical by creating more of a 24-hour environment. During the day the residence are at less risk for burglary because the shops in the node are open and active which will deter criminals. During the evening the business are safer because the residential units above the shops and in the node are occupied. This method urban planning/design creates a natural “eyes on the street” method of safety.

Issue: Encroachment of Development on Battlefield Development Incentives for Mixed-Use Development Near Battlefields vs. Impact Fees on Greenfield Developments

The county should provide developers with a host of tax incentives (e.g., land assemblage, demolition, seed money for preliminary design fees, access to state & federal brownfield redevelopment funds, CDBG, wave sewer and water tap fees, etc) to redevelop existing commercial/residential areas currently encroaching on Battlefields. Requirements for these incentives should require the developer to, remove any existing structures on the subject property; create TND developments (see standards under Nodal Development) and increase the buffer between the developers new project and the Battlefield. Additionally, developers willing to redevelop these existing encroaching commercial areas should have their project “fast-tracked” through the permitting process (i.e., move to the head of the review line and fast reviews by each department).

GreenField Impact Fees:

Developers should be required to pay the full cost of Greenfield development that would include but not limited to permitting fees for water and sewer taps. Additionally, Greenfield developments should be required to be on sewer versus septic system.

Reason:

To protect the historical character (visual and sound) and integrity of the Battlefield by encouraging developers to redevelop existing encroaching projects first before considering starting a Greenfield development.

GENERAL STANDARDS:

The County should revisit existing tree ordinance and require developers to provide a 1 to 1 tree replacement policy.

The County should keep its Planned Unit Development (PUD) Standards however revise it to focus on mixed use development (MXD), TND and Village Commercial development standards. However the PUD should be limited to sites that are accessible to sewer and water connections.

Walker County Quality Growth Resource Team Recommendations:
Economic Development

As Walker County experiences residential growth, it is necessary for County officials to develop significant economic development efforts that will offset the cost of providing services related to this residential growth. In so doing, the County should embark on a program that is well planned, reflective of community values and has the buy-in of relevant stakeholders. This process should be centered on the following core characteristics:

- Flexible, customized
- Specialized
- High-quality, NOT low-cost
- Networked, collaborative
- Lean, highly productive
- Locally-oriented
- Tech-savvy

Key Recommendations:

1. **Complete a Strategic Planning Process** that helps the community identify its core values, set priorities, and plan actions that will enhance economic development. This process should be one in which stakeholders from all parts of the community are intimately involved. What is “economic development?” What does economic development mean for Walker County, particularly considering its social, economic, and geographic situation?
 - a. Expand definition of economic development to include existing industry, services, entrepreneurs, and tourism—consider key characteristics
 - b. Specify ED team members, their roles and responsibilities
 - c. Consider an umbrella organization to guide ED efforts applying key characteristics to key recommendations
2. **Capitalize on unique local assets for value-added activities that create job opportunities for County residents.**
 - a. Create a revolving loan fund to micro-finance value-added activities that use unique local assets such as arts/crafts, natural/historical-tourism, etc.
 - b. Create a network of professional-service firms to provide technical assistance to small and developing businesses.
3. **Center ED strategy around quality-based productivity**
 - a. Start with firms that fit key characteristics
 - b. Work with other existing firms to develop key characteristics
 - c. Create networks of existing businesses to share information.
 - d. Invest in productivity gains through basic competencies and technology skills that support key characteristics

e. Create a revolving loan fund for technology investment, process improvement, and new product/service development

4. Make full use of development authorities capabilities

- a. Look at “global exemplars” that are similar to those in Walker County and fit key characteristics
- b. Develop capital finance mechanisms for projects that fit key characteristics (i.e., revolving loan funds)

5. Incrementally raise the bar for workforce

- a. Voluntary minimum educational achievement standards, e.g., high school graduate
- b. Reward workplace and classroom creativity, quality, and dedication
- c. Enhance school-work connections
- d. Promote literacy, adult education, GED, and continuing education programs

6. Conduct a hard-nosed analysis on available and required industrial sites

- a. Develop a strategy to adaptively re-use available sites
- b. Conduct a brown-fields inventory
- c. Create a revolving loan fund for and commercial/industrial site refurbishing
- d. Establish new industrial site *only if it fits with key characteristics*



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