

City of Milner

Comprehensive Plan

2024-2044

Adopted May 2024



Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Needs and Opportunities..... 4

Goals and Policies..... 11

 Vision Statement 11

 Community Goals 12

 Community Policies..... 13

Character Areas and Land Use 17

 Character Area Map..... 17

 Downtown..... 18

 Gateways..... 20

 Historic Neighborhood 21

 Light Industrial..... 22

 Rural Residential Development..... 23

Economic Development..... 24

Broadband 25

Community Work Program 26

 2019-2024 Report of Accomplishments 26

 2024-2028 Community Work Program 27

Appendix..... 28

Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

A local comprehensive plan establishes a vision for the local community and serves as a guide for future decision making.

To support the community vision the plan includes a list of needs of opportunities, goals and policies, character area and land use narrative, and a community work program that includes specific projects that the City wishes to complete to help implement the community vision.

Planning Process

The comprehensive plan process follows the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Minimum Standards for Local Comprehensive Planning. The basis for planning in Georgia was established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Public Participation and Community Involvement

The process to complete the comprehensive plan starts with a public hearing which informs the citizens of the purpose of the plan and the process for completion. A steering committee made up of local stakeholders was formed to guide the update of the plan. A community survey was developed and distributed to gather additional citizen input.

Mayor and Council

Kathy Buffington, Mayor

Skip Seda

David Selstad

Emily Vining

Rickie Fallings

Christopher Eady

Steering Committee

Katie Smith, Resident

Jessica Johnson, Local Business Owner

Bob Hurd, Resident

Tausha Grose, City Administrator

Skip Seda, City Councilmember

Three Rivers Regional Commission

Paul Jarrell, Interim Planning Director

Stephanie Wagner, Planner

Shari Selch, GIS Planner

Needs and Opportunities

The following is the list of needs and opportunities which were identified by using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis. The SWOT can be found in the appendix.

Population Needs

Population Growth Milner's future population is expected to continue to grow. Various factors will determine the extent of this future growth including the area's public education system, infrastructure capabilities, community services and amenities, housing opportunities and economic development trends.

Proximity to Metropolitan Atlanta and its small hometown character is an attractive draw for new residents. Population growth includes senior citizens who will need additional services.



Economic Development Needs

Local Economy Milner has a number of small businesses and needs to attract additional businesses. Overall, Milner has a limited economy and depends heavily on Lamar County and region for employment and services. As the population increases, demand for services will increase and the local economy will respond with new businesses and employment opportunities.

Healthcare Accessibility Most health care services are found outside of Milner. Citizens of Milner need increased access to healthcare services.



Economic Development Opportunities

Downtown Development Authority The Downtown Development Authority is a tool to revitalize the core of the city of Milner as it encompasses downtown and the major corridors within the city.

Downtown Revitalization and Infill Downtown Milner contains structures and vacant lots that offer opportunities for reuse and new commercial infill and contribute to the areas ongoing revitalization.

Promote Downtown with Marketing Festivals and Events – A marketing campaign consisting of advertising and events will help to raise the profile of the community and its interest to future entrepreneurs and investors.

Enhance Overall Quality of Life Quality of life is important to a local community and key to creating a sustainable economy. This includes preserving the rural and small town character, maintaining open space, improving access to healthcare and educational opportunities, keeping the community safe and expanding its parks and recreation areas.



Housing Needs

Traditional Neighborhood Zoning District A TND district is needed that would allow a developer to develop in the tradition of historic Milner. This includes creating residential developments that have variable lot sizes on a street grid with a mix of religious, civic and commercial uses.

Neighborhood Accessibility An expanded sidewalk network is needed to connect existing and developing housing neighborhoods to community amenities and promote overall connectivity within the City.

Housing Opportunities

Appropriate Infill Housing Vacant lots within residential neighborhoods offer the opportunity for appropriate infill that seeks to maintain style and scale of surrounding homes.

Future Annexation Residential growth along the periphery of the City of Milner offers potential for future expansion of the city limits.

Natural Resources Needs

Tree Protection and Canopy Cover A tree ordinance may be needed in the future to protect existing trees and require street trees in new developments.

Preservation of Open Space Develop a plan to preserve greenspace for future park and trail development and land within developments through conservation programs such as conservation subdivisions.

Cultural Resources Needs

Historic District Designation for Downtown The City of Milner has a downtown that is rich in heritage and culture. Designation of Downtown Milner as a historic district would preserve the community's historic assets. The City could do this as a National Register of Historic Places nomination, adopt a local historic preservation ordinance, and various other methods including overlay zoning districts.

Cultural Resources Opportunities

Establishing Downtown Milner Historic District This designation would encourage future preservation and assist to maintain the historic character within the City of Milner. If the district were National Register listed, properties would be eligible for historic tax incentives and other funding for rehabilitation.



Community Facilities and Services Needs

Future Services Thoughtful planning is required to ensure adequate services are available over the next 20 years as demands for public services increase. Public safety, such as increased fire protection is one of the most important.

Park and Recreation Facilities There is a need to expand recreation space in Milner. The City is currently enhancing existing recreational property. The City must also seek opportunities to expand its facilities at additional locations.

Community Facilities and Services Opportunities

Library The community library is now complete and offers area residents space for programs, meetings and computer accessibility.

City-wide WIFI The small land area of the City of Milner and the increased access to broadband allow for the potential for city-wide wifi for both businesses and residences.

Intergovernmental Coordination Needs

Coordination Between City and County Coordination between Milner and Lamar County will continue to further the implementation of each local government's long-range goals.

Intergovernmental Coordination Opportunities

Planning Commission The Planning Commission in Lamar County now includes members from the City of Barnesville and the City of Milner. This will enhance coordinated growth and development across the county.



Land Use Needs

Highway Development Proper planning for commercial uses along Highway 41 is needed to avoid strip development.

Rural Residential Rural residential development continues to increase within the City of Milner. Development standards should be strengthened and consistently enforced to ensure quality development.

Downtown Downtown is the commercial heart of the City. Reinvestment within this area and increased access is important in terms of future development and maintaining a sense of place.

Land Use Opportunities

Revitalization of Downtown The City of Milner should encourage and continue revitalization of its downtown through various programs and appropriate infill that seek to preserve the small and rural downtown area.

Development Codes There is a need for the City to conduct council training on the existing development codes and work towards an updated and unified development code.



Transportation Needs

Pedestrian and Bike Network There is a very limited number of sidewalks in the City of Milner. The City needs to expand the sidewalk network and seek additional funding sources. Future street widening projects will allow for the expansion of pedestrian facilities and parking.

There is a need to increase bike infrastructure to allow for bike accessibility, connectivity and safety.

Railroad Intersections Railroad intersections improvements are currently underway at local roads that intersect with the Norfolk Southern rail line.

Transportation Opportunities

Street Improvements The existing street patterns offers opportunities to improve street connectivity within and between developments. Street widening and upgrading will allow for the accommodation of wider sidewalks and bike facilities.

Trail Development Multi-use trail development that builds upon current walking trails would increase connectivity to various community facilities and amenities while offering additional recreation opportunities. Utilizing sewer right of way would be one avenue to expanding trail facilities.

Goals and Policies

Community-wide goals begin with an overall vision:

Vision Statement

Milner seeks to be a vibrant, dynamic small town with a feeling of peaceful rural living. Located in the heart of Georgia, there is convenient, uncongested access to and from major traffic thoroughfares. People of all ages prefer Milner's small town sense of place and healthy living environment, which the City will work to enhance by focusing on downtown revitalization, accessibility and connectivity, and the expansion of recreational amenities and community facilities. The City welcomes thriving professional and commercial services that focus on small business and local entrepreneurs.

Community Goals

The objective of a Comprehensive Plan is to guide public decision-making and leverage private investments to achieve an overall community quality of life. The following goals and policies are intended to guide the City of Milner toward the realization of the vision.

- Preserve the distinctive features of Milner, including its historic small town character and sense of place.
- Focus development at specific activity centers and gateways such as the downtown commercial district, highway corridors, and other appropriate areas.
- Match the location and capacity of infrastructure and community services to Milner’s vision.
- Diversify the tax base and expand business to improve the overall community quality of life.
- Designate neighborhoods and rural residential areas to accommodate a wide range of density, cost, size and type.
- Encourage development techniques that support sustainable and quality community developments.

Community Policies

Economic Development

- The City of Milner will encourage economic development strategies that focus on the creation and expansion of businesses.
- The City of Milner will target reinvestment opportunities in the downtown area and on vacant and underutilized sites.
- The City of Milner will seek funding opportunities for the revitalization of the downtown district.
- The City of Milner will ensure quality and adequate infrastructure is available to serve future businesses.
- The City of Milner will promote the availability of broadband accessibility to attract economic development, business expansion, and new residents.
- The City of Milner will encourage the utilization of the Downtown Development Authority increased downtown revitalization and expansion of business.

Housing

- The City of Milner will encourage infill housing development in traditional and historic neighborhoods.
- The City of Milner will promote quality housing opportunities for its citizens at all stages of life.
- The City of Milner will encourage a compatible mixture of housing types, and densities.
- The City of Milner will seek opportunities increase owner occupied housing.

Community Facilities and Services

- The City of Milner will invest in parks and open space to enhance the quality of life for our citizens.
- The City of Milner will seek opportunities to expand infrastructure and community facilities by utilizing appropriate development and planning techniques.
- The City of Milner will seek opportunities to expand its tax base and promote quality growth within the City.
- The City of Milner will seek to offer city-wide wifi accessibility.
- The City of Milner will seek to expand existing trails and construct new trails to increase connectivity and recreation.
- The City of Milner will seek to utilize sewer right-of-way to construct trails within the City.
- The City of Milner will continue to encourage conservation and alternative energy use throughout the City.

Transportation

- The City of Milner will promote connectivity of its existing road network.
- The City of Milner will seek to improve pedestrian access and safety by expanding the sidewalk network, adding and improving crosswalks at important intersections and community facilities.
- The City of Milner will seek to develop a plan for the development and expansion of public parks and trails.
- The City will prioritize streets for re-paving and other improvements.

Natural Resources

- The City of Milner will take into account preservation of natural resources in the decision-making process.
- The City of Milner will seek ways to protect and maintain its tree canopy.
- The City of Milner will utilize buffer requirements to protect environmentally sensitive areas when necessary.
- The City of Milner will enforce appropriate Part V Environmental Criteria regulations and participate in regional water planning efforts.
- The City of Milner will seek ways to increase park space.

Land Use

- The City of Milner will review, update, and enforce the development code.
- The City of Milner will encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- The City of Milner will encourage development that fosters quality design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale that is aesthetically appealing in community.
- The City of Milner will effectively utilize land to prevent adverse development patterns associated with urban sprawl.
- The City of Milner will preserve the rural, small town character of the community.
- The City of Milner will create gateways and corridors that provide an inviting entrance into the community.
- The City of Milner will support appropriate residential and non-residential in-fill development that is compatible with existing uses.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- The City of Milner will collaboratively work with neighboring jurisdictions to expand and share services and facilities that jointly benefit both municipalities.
- The City of Milner will coordinate efforts with public entities in the area to enhance the decision-making process, increase economic development, improve education, implement efficient land use techniques, provide quality housing, and preserve natural resources.
- The City of Milner will activity partner with the Lamar County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority for the promotion of business and other initiatives.

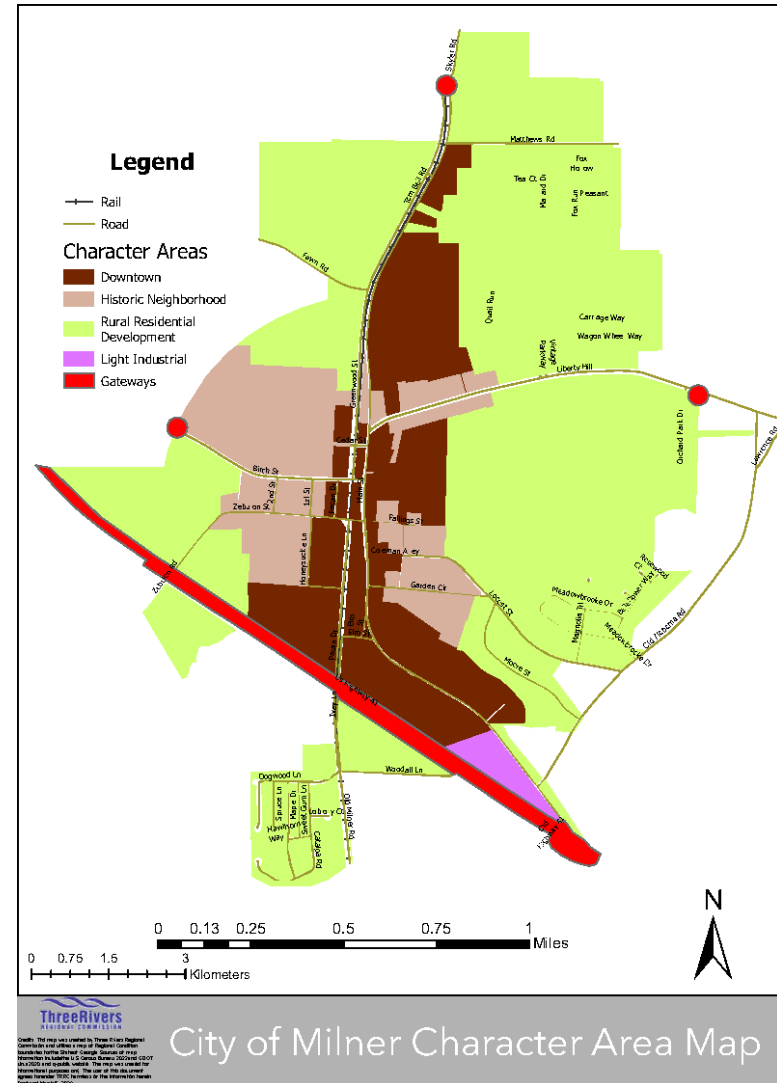
Character Areas and Land Use

Character areas are defined as areas which have distinct development patterns, function, and land uses. Each area is used for the promotion of locally desired types of growth, development, and methods of preserving the community’s unique sense of place.

The City of Milner has designated four character areas which comprise particular land use patterns and future growth potential.

- Downtown
- Gateways
- Historic Neighborhood
- Light Industrial
- Rural Residential Development

Character Area Map



Downtown

This area roughly encompasses the City of Milner’s Downtown Development Authority boundary. The area contains several highly-traveled corridors through the city that create a downtown network and high visibility for people riding along SR 36 and US 41. These roads have adjacent lots that range from developed to undeveloped. Many of these lots contain residences, churches, and small-scale commercial buildings. Other lots are vacant or have dilapidated buildings. Downtown lots have water and sewer infrastructure and may offer opportunity for thoughtful and impactful redevelopment that aligns with the local vision for an attractive, small-town character.



Development Patterns

The priority for this area is to maximize livability and economic development through a diverse mix of well-designed and maintained homes, places of worship, community buildings, and small-scale businesses that serve residents and attract visitors.

Land Uses

Residential, Public and Institutional, Commercial, Mixed-Use, Parks

Implementation Strategies

- Encourage appropriate and well-designed infill opportunities
- Encourage human-scaled design with minimal garages fronting the roads, parking behind structures, and limited setbacks from the right-of-way
- Protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation
- Require landscaped buffers between uses and adjacent to higher-speed roads (e.g. US Highway 41) to maintain viewsheds
- Require landscaping within parking lots
- Implement and enforce rules on parking in public lots for private uses
- Work with private entities to create additional parking lots to reduce the obstruction of public roads and parking spaces for private uses

- Implement a robust sign ordinance to achieve a unified appearance for downtown signs and wayfinding
- Enable residential buildings to be used for live/work buildings (e.g. where a business owner can live and have an office)



Gateways

Within the City of Milner, gateways are identified as specific entrance points and as linear corridors. There are three gateways delineated along smaller access roads and one linear corridor along U.S. Highway 41.

All gateways serve as first impressions into the community and provide a strong sense of identity. The City of Milner has utilized two entrances along U.S. Highway 41 as a way of welcoming those entering the City and promoting local businesses located within the City limits.

Development Patterns

Community identification that incorporates design elements, landscaping and signage that greets and directs the public and enhances the City's image.

Land Use

Wayfinding and informational signage, commercial, residential, public institutional.

Implementation Strategies

- Promote community pride and beautification.
- Strengthen and enforce the sign ordinance.
- Seek funding sources for gateway enhancement projects.



Historic Neighborhood

The Historic Neighborhood area of the City of Milner contains much of the historic residential surrounding the historic downtown area, traditional residential neighborhoods and other community landmarks.

Many commercial and residential structures are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and warrant protection and recognition.

Development Patterns

The priority for this area is to maintain the small town sense of place. This will be accomplished by promoting the preservation, promotion and reuse of historic structures and encouraging appropriate residential infill and development. Promoting mixed-use will also keep the area vibrant and the center of community activity.

Land Uses

Public and institutional, commercial, residential, park space.

Implementation Strategies

- Promote adaptive reuse of historic structures.
- Seek the use of protective measures such as historic districts or overlay zoning.
- Promote increased accessibility, connectivity and safety.
- Encourage appropriate infill housing opportunities.
- Implement wayfinding and informational signage.



Light Industrial

Within the City of Milner a small area is dedicated to small scale industrial and commercial operations. Its proximity to the 4-lane U.S. Highway 41 make it a viable area for promotion, access, and expansion.

Development Patterns

The area will be limited to small and medium-scale light industrial and commercial uses that will help diversify the tax base for the City of Milner.

Land Uses

Light industrial, commercial, office.

Implementation Strategies

- Promote landscaping and buffers between uses.
- Market the area for light industrial use
- Identify adjacent properties for expansion when appropriate.
- Ensure access to utilities and other services such as broadband.
- Utilize the Lamar County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority to partner and promote businesses.



Rural Residential Development

Transitioning outward from and surrounding the Historic Area in Milner is suburban style residential development. Residential development is single family and located in areas which are previously undeveloped and rural.

Development Patterns

This area will be utilized primarily for low to medium density residential development which maintains a rural small town aesthetic. Conservation subdivisions would be appropriate to preserve open space and forested land.

Land Uses

Single family residential, neighborhood commercial, parks.

Implementation Strategies

- Promote quality design and enforce local development codes.
- Promote the protection of tree canopy.
- Promote connectivity between developments and expand sidewalk network.
- Protect environmentally sensitive land and prime greenspace.



Economic Development

Economic Demographics

Below are key demographics, which depict the overall economic health of the City of Milner. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, population and household income continue to show increased growth.

Population		
2000	2010	2022 est.
522	610	772

Median Household Income		
2000	2010	2022 est.
42,222	51,914	66,125

Economic Development Goals and Priorities

The City of Milner has identified the following goals as priorities for the promotion of economic development:

- Infrastructure investment.
- Housing growth and development.
- Business promotion and expansion.
- Downtown revitalization.
- Recruit new commercial opportunities.
- Enhance overall quality of life by enhancing community facilities and amenities.
- Re-establishment and utilization of the Downtown Development Authority.

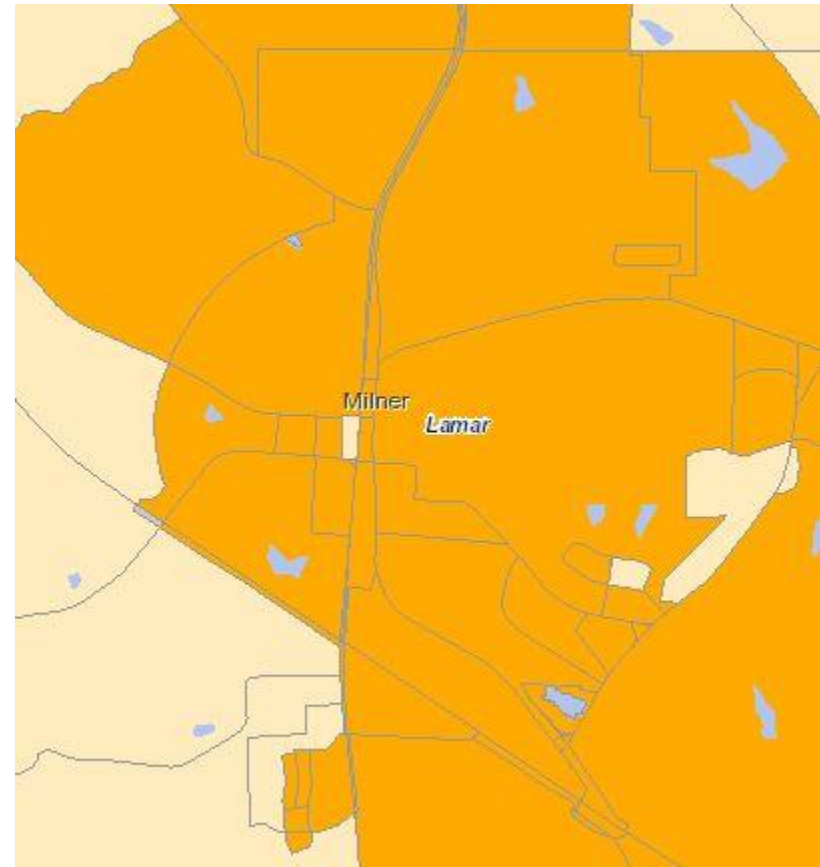
Broadband

A diverse and healthy economy relies on connectivity to information, markets, and consumers. In a digital world, this is achieved through access to broadband. Broadband access is also key to employment and as an educational tool.

The City of Milner is committed to broadband accessibility and is currently served by AT&T and Charter Communications service. According to the U.S. Census, the City of Milner has 262 households and 250 of those have broadband internet subscriptions.

Broadband Goals:

- Continue to partner with providers to ensure broadband services for all residents, businesses, and local government facilities.
- Promote the continued expansion of broadband service into surrounding areas for future growth.
- Partner and cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions, and state and federal agencies for intergovernmental initiatives for the expansion of broadband.



Community Work Program

2019-2024 Report of Accomplishments

City of Milner Community Work Program 2019-2024 Report of Accomplishments		
Project or Activity	Status	Explanation
Complete new library	Complete	
Milner City Park restroom	Cancelled	Cancelled. No longer a city priority
Milner City Park pavilion	Underway	Underway. Move to new CWP
Phase I walking trail and greenspace to Woodall	Cancelled	Cancelled. No longer a city priority
Greenwood Street widening and new sidewalks	Cancelled	Cancelled. No longer a city priority
Upgrade communication systems	Complete	
City Hall renovations	Complete	
Conduct a salary study and personnel plan	Underway	Underway. Move to new CWP
Improve and upgrade railroad crossing approaches	Cancelled	Cancelled. No longer a city priority

2024-2028 Community Work Program

City of Milner Community Work Program 2024-2028				
Project or Activity	Years	Responsible Party	Cost	Funding Sources
Milner City Park pavilion	2024-2028	City	\$15,000-\$20,000	Local, Grants (LWCF, AARP)
Conduct a salary study and personnel plan	2024-2025	City	\$1,000k	Staff time
New basketball court	2024-2025	City	\$15,000-\$30,000	Local
Parking lot improvements and expansions	2024-2028	City	\$10,000	Local
Water and sewer line upgrades	2024-2028	City	\$250,000	Local, Grants (USDA, CDBG, GEFA, SCRC)
Pump station upgrades	2024-2028	City	\$200,000	Local, Grants (USDA, CDBG, GEFA, SCRC)
Update zoning map	2024	City, RC	\$250	Local
Pay off water tower debt	2024-2028	City	\$1 million	Local, GEFA
Reactivate DDA	2024-2025	City	Staff time	Local
Fully staff police department	2025-2028	City	TBD	Local

Appendix

Steering Committee Sign-In Sheet

SWOT Analysis

Community Survey Flyer

Character Map



City of Milner 2024-2044 Comprehensive Plan Update
 Stakeholder Committee Meeting
 Milner Police Department
 February 15, 2024

Sign-In Sheet

Please print clearly

NAME	AFFILIATION	EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE
Katie Smith	City of Milner	ksmith@milnerga.gov	7703720601
Tausha Grose	City of Milner	tgrose@milnerga.gov	(678) 603-3079
Jessica Johnson	Georgia Superior Courts	gs/jess4@gmail.com	(678) 614-2001
Bob Hurd	Concord Cart Co.	bobhurd5@gmail.com	770-656-5447
Skip Seda (Photo)	Council member	sseda@milnerga.gov	(602) 575-8813

SWOT Analysis

City of Milner 2024 Comprehensive Plan

Assess the assets, needs, and issues in the community

S	STRENGTHS
	Traffic counts for retail
	Community fiscal stability
	Business community
	Downtown Development Authority
	Room for economic growth

W	WEAKNESSES
	Limited police force
	Limited city staff (public works) and retention
	Lack of fueling station
	Road conditions
	Parking is limited and affected by school
	Minimal accessibility and connectivity (roads and sidewalks)

O	OPPORTUNITIES
	Population growth
	Infill for new commercial downtown
	DDA re-activation
	Commercial growth potential along Highway 41
	Increased and formalized partnership with St. George's School
	Homeowner education
	Update to existing codes
	Renewed sense of community pride and identity (pecan tree history)

T	THREATS
	Aging and failing sewer system and not owned by the city
	School traffic
	Lack of community services hampers growth
	2020 Census numbers inaccurate which affects LOST and other revenue sources
	Lack of revenue sources for city projects

SWOT = ACTION ITEMS & GOALS

S	How can we use our strengths to help us succeed?
W	Which weaknesses can be worked on to help maximize success?
O	Which opportunities should we pursue?
T	What strategies can we put into place to be prepared for threats?

***Please take a few minutes
to complete the:***

PUBLIC SURVEY

for the

City of Milner

Comprehensive Plan

2024 Update



<https://arcg.is/0D14a9>

*Survey takes
approximately
5 minutes.*

Please complete this survey and deliver it back to city hall.

The City of Milner is completing an update to the Comprehensive Plan. Please answer the following questions to help the City of Milner establish its vision for the future.



1. What do you like most about the City of Milner?
(Are there qualities that should be kept, preserved, or maintained for the future?)

2. What changes could be made in the City of Milner?
(Are there needed improvements, lingering issues, or needed enhancements?)

3. How old are you? (circle one)
17 or below 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 Over 65

4. Do you live inside the city limits of Milner?
 Yes
 No

5. Describe your vision for the City of Milner for the next 5, 10, to 20 years.
(Key words: ideal place, livability, quality of life).

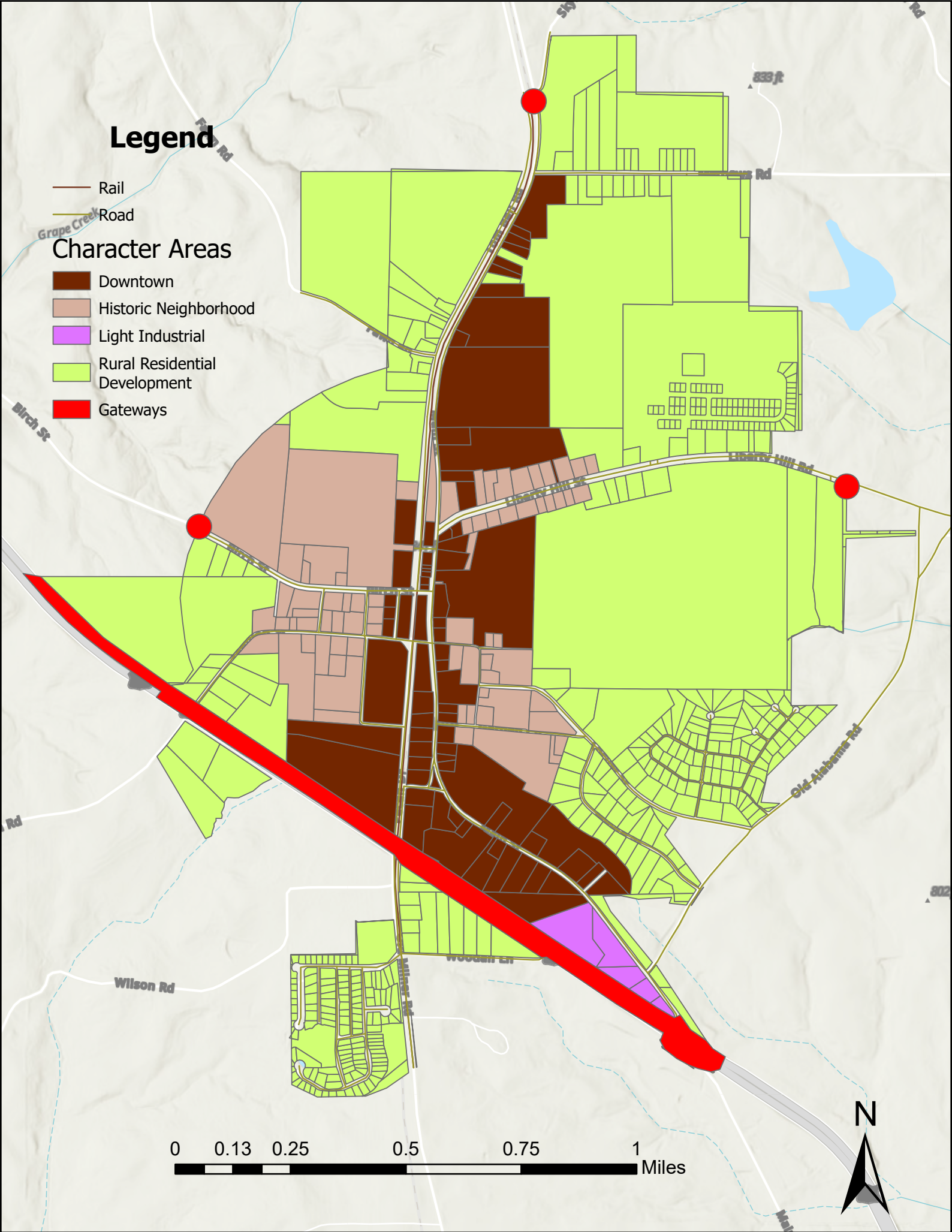
Please use back page if you need more room to express your vision.

Legend

- Rail
- Road

Character Areas

- Downtown
- Historic Neighborhood
- Light Industrial
- Rural Residential Development
- Gateways



Credits: This map was created by Three Rivers Regional Commission and utilizes a map of Regional Condition boundaries for the State of Georgia. Sources of map information include the U.S. Census Bureau 2022 and GDOT circa 2020 and q-public website. The map was created for informational purposes only. The user of this document agrees to render TRRC harmless for the information herein. Produced March 5, 2024

City of Milner Character Area Map