

KEY FEATURES OF THE CONCEPT PLAN

1. Enhanced local economy

The plan recommends the inclusion of a wide array of employment and business opportunities that enhance the local and regional economies and maintain a positive balance between commercial and residential tax revenues.

2. Balance between jobs and housing

The plan seeks an appropriate balance between available jobs and housing to provide residents with increased local employment opportunities reducing the impacts of commuting on the city's transportation network.

3. Housing variety

In order to meet the diverse needs of the existing and future residents a mix of housing types and values are encouraged throughout the city. The concept plan discusses the need for various housing types at various densities and illustrates a conceptual transition from higher to lesser intense land uses as a means to ensure compatibility between new or re-development projects with adjacent neighborhoods.

4. Complete neighborhoods

Complete neighborhoods include a number of factors including the provision of usable parkland and open space, walkable access to community facilities and neighborhood-scale commercial uses, and adequate access to a variety of transportation modes that service the neighborhoods.

5. Roadway improvements

In order to accommodate the proposed development concepts the road network should be enhanced and expanded as needed to accommodate increased traffic volumes minimizing congestion along major thoroughfares. The plan supports an interconnected, grid pattern street system designed to accommodate multiple forms of transportation.

6. Multi-modal accessibility

The plan supports the creation of a multi-modal master plan that includes greenway trails, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks prioritizing projects and coordinating new development with the construction of new facilities as well as providing connectivity to regional and statewide multi-modal facilities.

7. Park and recreation opportunities

In addition to the expansion of the existing community park the plan recommends two additional community parks to provide recreation opportunities within walking distance of the existing and future residents. The concept plan also envisions converting Rocket Field (within the downtown district) from its existing use as a baseball diamond to a community square available for passive recreation

and civic uses. Smaller neighborhood greens and playgrounds should be encouraged within new residential developments.

8. Greenway development

The plan supports the development of a multi-use greenway system utilizing stream and river corridors as well as the rail line that traverses Watkinsville. The provision of greenway trails increases the availability of recreational activities and connects to regional and statewide facilities.

9. Historic preservation

The plan seeks to retain and enhance the unique community character that creates Watkinsville's identity by incorporating the city's historic resources, to the extent possible, into the new community form. New development should be compatible with the community's existing scale and design and should build on the character and identity that has been established.

10. Protection and enhancement of natural resources

Natural areas should be incorporated into all new developments minimizing any negative impacts on environmentally sensitive resources. This includes retaining vegetative cover within new development, preserving floodplain zones adjacent to stream corridors, and minimizing stormwater impacts on waterways.

11. Adequate public facilities and services

The plan focuses on the need to continue to enhance and expand public facilities and services in order to adequately accommodate future growth. As such, the city should promote development patterns that efficiently utilize land in proximity to existing facilities and services.

12. Regional cooperation on service delivery

Watkinsville will continue to work with Oconee County in assessing the service delivery strategy and mitigate inefficiencies through strategic planning and cooperative aid agreements.

13. Gateway improvements

Aesthetic improvements are recommended along major entry and exit points in the city, including GA Highway 15, Old 441 Highway, GA Highway 53, and Simonton Bridge Road. The aesthetic improvements are intended to enhance the citizen's sense of identity and the visitor's community experience. Gateway characteristics can be improved through appropriate lighting, landscaping, and signage.

14. Buffers and landscaping

In order to provide an adequate transition between land uses of varying intensities vegetative buffers should be retained, or planted, mitigating the adverse impacts of incompatible land uses and protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

15. Downtown expansion and revitalization: The downtown should serve as a mixed-use community center that provides a wide variety of employment, cultural and social opportunities. The focus of the downtown should be commercial in nature, however a mix of compatible residential uses should be allowed. Downtown should be designed as a pedestrian friendly environment with landscaping, signage, and street furniture built to human scale. Traffic should be slowed through this area and on and off street parking should be provided to promote downtown patronage.

16. Flexible mixed-use environment: The concept plan recommends an appropriate mix of compatible uses that increases the convenience in the population's day-to-day lives. An increased mix of uses can allow an area of the city to be more functional throughout a longer period of the day and can increase the community's efficient use of land and public infrastructure. Additionally, an increased mix of uses can lead to a decrease in local traffic volumes. An increase in pedestrian convenience and accessibility reduces the need for automobile travel.