

Chapter 11: Future Land Use

FUTURE LAND USE

1.1 Introduction

Future land use is a central component of the Comprehensive Plan. It is an extension of the general goals and policies of the community. Future land use decisions are a reflection of previous development decisions and the physical and environmental capabilities of the land to support development.

Future land use development patterns are based on a number of factors. Oconee County and Northeast Georgia RDC staff conduct an inventory of the physical conditions and development trends existing in the county and its cities. This inventory establishes a basis for determining the capability and feasibility of land to support development. Manmade facilities such as the local road system and the location and capacity of public water and sewer systems are also surveyed. Future population demands are considered with the physical inventory to determine future land use. The goals and policies established for each planning element also assist in shaping the future land use plan.

The future land use maps show proposed land use patterns for the county and its cities. The areas shown on these maps are conceptual. The boundaries and acreage are estimates of potential land development types. It is important to understand that the land use maps are not zoning maps. Land use maps are only one factor used in evaluating specific rezone applications and one should therefore not assume that a particular parcel of land can be automatically rezoned to said uses at any given time.

There are many mechanisms available to implement a land use plan. Regulations (i.e., zoning, subdivision regulations, sign regulations, etc.) are the most common methods. Concentration of infrastructure improvements in these areas is also effective. An absence of regulations or inconsistent enforcement of regulations would sometimes invite uncontrolled and undesirable growth. Therefore, in order to implement the plan's policies, the county must sometimes commit to adopting new ordinances or amending existing ordinances that further the goals of this plan. Successful implementation also requires a commitment to impartially review land use decisions and consistently enforce the ordinances.

1.2 Oconee County

As is evident from the Future Land Use Map, county officials wish to manage growth by concentrating new development in the northern 1/3 of the county. This area of the county has been experiencing the most development pressure, as it is in close proximity to the University of Georgia, the GA 316 corridor, and Athens-Clarke and Barrow counties. Localizing development to a specific area will help the county accomplish two very important objectives. First, it will limit the necessary expansion of water and sewer infrastructure as well as roadways. Capacity will need to be increased as a result of growth, but, ostensibly, lines will not need to be extended into the rural parts of the county. Secondly, much of the county's rural character and agricultural land can remain intact if most new development occurs in the northern portion of the county. Finally, residential areas will be closer to schools, shopping areas, employment centers, and county services, thus reducing the costs of government services, transportation and environmental impacts.

The largest land use change will be the estimated addition of 8,033.26 acres of residential land. This is generally consistent with the projected population growth over the plan's 20-year period. Most of this new development will be low-density single-family, which is defined as lots of one acre or more. Much of the land that will be needed for this new development is currently classified as undeveloped/unused. It is common for undeveloped/unused land to be located adjacent to residential land, which allows for an easy conversion. This type of infill development preserves the county's agricultural land which is part of the appeal of Oconee County. Although there is some development in the southern part of the county, it is generally individual estate single-family homes on large lots.

The county has recently been experiencing increased commercial development. The most notable of which has occurred at the intersection of GA 316 and the Paul Brown Parkway. Additional commercial construction is expected to continue along the future Epps Bridge Parkway and the GA 316 Corridor. Increased commercial development is also anticipated along U.S. 441 immediately north of Watkinsville. Overall, the county anticipates a 1,255 acre increase in commercial development over the next twenty years, most of which will be retail commercial and general business to meet the needs of new residents, tourists and regional shoppers.

A new land use classification, office/professional, is intended to identify future commercial development that will include professional office suites, medical and personal care centers and other similar uses as distinguished from general retail-commercial. This new development will be in the same vicinity as the expanded commercial areas and will serve the new residential neighborhoods proposed on the map. It will also act as a buffer between the more dense retail commercial and the surrounding residential use.

The increased population will require additional schools and other public facilities. The county has recognized this by designating 1,662 additional acres as public/institutional. The majority of this development will occur in the northwest area of the county between Watkinsville and Bogart due to the influence of GA 316 and U.S. 441.

Table 11-1

Future Land Use - Oconee County 2017		
Land Use	Acreage	Net Change From Existing (Acres)
Residential	8,077.46	-2,036.74
Low-Density	10,074.79	10,074.79
Total Residential	18,152.25	8,033.26
Agriculture	84,562.05	2,359.40
Retail/General (Commercial)	1,623.78	1,254.65
Office/Professional	1,131.91	1,131.91
Industrial	570.35	52.92
Public/Institutional	2,074.65	1,662.27
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	3,933.05	516.16
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	1,314.76	-525.03
Government	206.03	53.72
Undeveloped/Unused	48.64	-12,369.70
Unclassified	44.99	-32.77
Source: NEGRDC, Geographic Information System (GIS), 1997.		

1.3 Bishop

Land use in Bishop is anticipated to change very little over the next twenty years. The predominant land use will still be agriculture and most residential development will continue to be located along U.S. 441, Price Mill Road and Old Bishop Road. Additional retail, neighborhood commercial and office/professional development is expected due to population growth and the widening of U.S. 441 and subsequent increases in travel along this corridor. Preserving the historic and small town character of Bishop is very important to city officials and residents alike. The city has been working with the Department of Transportation to design a 441 bypass around the eastern part of Bishop thereby avoiding any substantial new development in the center of town. It is understood that some commercial development will result as a byproduct of residential growth. However, it is the city's goal to meet the commercial and business needs of it's residents through infill development and the adaptive use of existing buildings. Strip mall-type development and new businesses catering solely to through traffic should be avoided.

Table 11-2

Future Land Use - Bishop 2017		
Land	Acreage	Net Change From Existing (Acres)
Residential	95.21	95.21
Low-Density	36.79	-43.96
Medium -Density	-	-19.47
Total Residential	132.00	31.78
Retail/General (Commercial)	9.80	3.61
Office/Professional	9.11	9.11
Industrial	7.67	-0.16
Public/Institutional	8.36	0.16
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	27.15	0.00
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	9.32	0.00
Agriculture	292.04	-20.28
Government	0.06	0.00
Undeveloped/Unused	0.68	-24.22
Source: NEGRDC, Geographic Information System (GIS), 1997.		

1.4 Bogart

Over the next twenty years, most of the land in Bogart is expected to be classified as residential. Approximately 424 additional acres of residential land is planned, most of which will be located north of U.S. 29. Most residential lots will be one acre or less, with some concentrations of larger lot residential development in the northwestern part of the city. Commercial land use is projected to remain somewhat constant, with additional development anticipated along the U.S. 29 corridor. Bogart's industrial land use classification will change considerably, due to the conversion of the large industrial area in the southeastern part of the city to office/professional. This type of development is seen to be more appropriate in this location. No other significant land use changes are projected in Bogart.

Table 11-3

Future Land Use - Bogart 2017		
Land	Acreage	Net Change From Existing (Acres)
Residential	785.33	785.33
Low-Density	224.53	-101.64
Medium -Density	-	-106.96
Total Residential	1,009.86	423.74
Retail/General (Commercial)	42.89	14.51
Office/Professional	150.95	150.95
Industrial	56.06	-102.51
Public/Institutional	28.98	-3.25
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	111.64	0.00
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	20.62	0.00
Agriculture	201.78	-206.37
Government	6.42	0.00
Undeveloped/Unused	1.21	-277.07
Source: NEGRDC, Geographic Information System (GIS), 1997.		

1.5 North High Shoals

Future land use in North High Shoals is expected to remain very similar to existing classifications. The main change that is projected is the conversion of undeveloped/unused land to residential use. Most of this undeveloped/unused land is currently located near existing subdivisions, which will allow for a natural transition with little threat of incompatible land uses. The only other land use change is the addition of some retail/general commercial development near the intersection of GA 186 and Plantation Road.

Table 11-4

Future Land Use - North High Shoals 2017		
Land Use	Acreage	Net Change From Existing (Acres)
Residential	435.13	435.13
Low-Density	46.25	-138.30
Medium -Density	-	-28.66
Total Residential	481.38	268.17
Retail/General (Commercial)	1.66	1.66
Industrial	-	0.00
Public/Institutional	7.97	-6.27
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	89.76	0.00
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	74.65	48.69
Agriculture	931.36	-71.93
Government	1.98	0.00
Undeveloped/Unused	-	-240.32
Source: NEGRDC, Geographic Information System (GIS), 1997.		

1.6 Watkinsville

Due to Watkinsville’s proximity to major thoroughfares, Athens-Clarke County, available land and public water and sewer, the city of Watkinsville has been developing largely as a residential community. This trend is expected to continue over the next twenty years. Approximately 400 acres of undeveloped/unused and agricultural land will be converted to residential uses. In general, residential development will be on one acre lots or smaller, due to the availability of public water and sewer systems. Most of this new development will be located in northern Watkinsville, between U.S. 441 and Whitehall Road. Additional commercial development is most likely to occur along U.S. 441 and GA 15, to accommodate the growing population. This new development will be classified as retail/general and will include convenience and neighborhood stores as well as service businesses. Much of southwestern Watkinsville will be classified as industrial. Although much of this area is currently undeveloped or agricultural, it is zoned as industrial and is expected to develop accordingly. No other significant land use changes are planned.

Table 11-5

Future Land Use - Watkinsville 2017		
Land Use	Acres	Net Change From Existing (Acres)
Residential	986.75	986.75
Estate	-	-10.96
Low-Density	-	-215.14
Medium-Density	-	-359.23
High-Density		-1.92
Total Residential	986.75	399.50
Retail/General (Commercial)	56.18	2.67
Office/Professional	2.63	2.63
Industrial	313.31	208.40
Public/Institutional	66.48	22.31
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	188.84	14.75
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	17.88	-24.98
Agriculture	369.72	-390.25
Government	28.59	0.00
Unclassified	5.43	0.00
Undeveloped/Unused	-	-235.03

Source: NEGRDC, Geographic Information System (GIS), 1997.

Insert Map 11-1 Future Land Use, 2016, Oconee County

Insert Map 11-2 Future Land Use, 2016, Bishop

Insert Map 11-3 Future Land Use, 2016, Bogart

Insert Map 11-4 Future Land Use, 2016, North High Shoals

Insert Map 11-5 Future Land Use, 2016, Watkinville

