

HICKORY FLAT AREA PLAN



Second Draft — June 2, 2021

Cherokee County
1831
GEORGIA



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hickory Flat Community

Cherokee County

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Holly Springs

Mayor and City Council

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Area Plan Background
- 1.2 Plan Highlights

2. Vision into Action

- 2.1 Vision Statement
- 2.2 Future Land Use Map
- 2.3 Trails and Roads Map
- 2.4 Implementation Process
- 2.5 Short Term Work Program

3. Community Context

- 3.1 Geography
- 3.2 History
- 3.3 Demographics

4. Planning Process

- 4.1 Preparation
- 4.2 Outreach and Engagement
- 4.3 Meeting Summaries
- 4.4 Community Preference Survey
- 4.5 Land Use Charrette

5. Coordination

- 5.1 Public Facilities
- 5.2 Transportation

6. Appendices

- 6.1 Full Activity Results
- 6.2 Reference Maps
- 6.3 Case Studies
- 6.4 Market Study



Executive Summary

1.1 Area Plan Background

Background

As part of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update, Hickory Flat was one of six specific areas in the County identified as having unique circumstances and urgent needs. A Target Area Workshop was held in the summer of 2017 for community stakeholders to convey issues and opportunities. Here the public communicated that this community is close-knit with pride for its agricultural heritage and natural environment, but has seen increasing congestion and suburban-style development in recent years, specifically residential subdivisions. Traffic, growth, lack



2017 Target Area Workshop

of physical cohesion and no central gathering point for the community were all expressed concerns. The primary goals that were identified by the public in the Target Area Workshop were to create a more connected community that encourages the protection of natural resources, supports agribusinesses and other local amenities, works to fix existing infrastructure and increases sidewalks and trails. Proactively coordinating with other entities present in the area, such as Cherokee County School District and the City of Holly Springs, was also communicated as an urgent need. The conclusions from the Target Area Workshop became part of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update and accompanying Short Term Work Program. This Hickory Flat Area Plan was identified as a key implementation project in the Comprehensive Plan to help the community address these issues.

Purpose of the Plan

While the Comprehensive Plan and the Target Area Report provided a broad overview of Hickory Flat's past, present and future, this Area Plan provides a more thorough understanding of current trends, issues and opportunities. The overall purpose of the Hickory Flat Area Plan is to engage the community and develop a consensus on the best path forward related to the various matters of local importance and create executable action items for implementing the shared vision.

Area plans are small in scope when compared to a comprehensive plan but are just as reliant on public input through a bottoms up planning approach. The process starts with identifying public wants and needs before feasibility is explored through research, case studies and a market analysis. This plan combines public input with careful examination of trends to establish a vision, set goals and determine implementation steps to carry out community ambitions.

1.2 Plan Highlights

Introduction

This section will provide an overview of the key findings and takeaways from the area planning process. It presents the Community's opinions on Hickory Flat's present situation and future aspirations, details key issues with recommendations to resolve them, presents tools to guiding this desired future —The Future Land Use Map and The Trails/Roads Map— and finally, what steps need taking to implement this shared vision for the community.

Community Vision

Throughout the initial in-person feedback and the later virtual meetings, there were words and phrases that community members used to describe Hickory Flat, both the current state and their vision for the future. The table to the right gives a comparison of the most common terms used to describe the area today and in the future. Sections 2.1 and 4.3 provide more detail about this input. With these clear community ideas in mind, planning staff developed a vision statement and a list of community values to guide the Hickory Flat Area Plan.

Hickory Flat Today	Hickory Flat Future
Traffic Issues	Walkable
Close-knit Community	More Cohesiveness and Definition
Great Schools	Low Density Developments
Fast Food	Traffic Issues
Rural Heritage	Close-knit Community
Rapid Growth/Crowded	Green/Farms

Vision Statement	Community Values
<p>The Hickory Flat Community is:</p> <p><i>Deeply rooted in its history of rural and natural open space.</i></p> <p><i>Connected through strong social networks that enhance the family-friendly, village feel.</i></p> <p><i>Centered on great local institutions, such as schools, recreation, the library, churches and the fire station.</i></p> <p><i>Growing in a managed way that preserves the unique elements of the community, while bringing desired amenities and infrastructure improvements.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family Friendly Community• Small Town/village• History and Preservation• Rural Character• Local Institutions• Improved Amenities and Infrastructure

Key Issues

From the community meetings, it was clear that the critical issues for the Hickory Flat Area are related to the following:

Slowing the significant residential growth of the past 20 years

A number of residential developments have been built in the area with the pace increasing in the last 5 years. The community can impact this process by creating a clear plan that lays out areas that are suitable and unsuitable for different types of development. The Hickory Flat Area Plan can serve this purpose, especially if it is adopted by both Cherokee County and Holly Springs elected leaders as a Comprehensive Plan amendment and utilized in future decision making.

Need for transportation improvements to address traffic problems and include sidewalks

The increasing residential development and the growth of traffic through the area along Hickory Flat Highway as a state route have definitely created traffic problems, especially at peak times. Cherokee County has a number of projects identified to improve the situation with some of them designed, funded and under construction. Others are regularly studied for possible future improvements. It is also important for the community to look for opportunities to add new road connections since these will give alternative routes around the major intersections that are often traffic bottlenecks.

Cherokee County and Holly Springs are also working together on a project to create continuous sidewalks along Hickory Road and Stringer Road. This effort needs to be expanded along other major roads to provide a network of sidewalks for recreation and transportation. A plan showing all of these routes could quickly move these projects forward toward completion.

Desire for upgraded retail options, sit-down restaurants, and public gathering spaces to support a sense of community

We had many lively discussions about the existing commercial uses and the need for public gathering places throughout this planning process. The community is particularly disappointed in the number of fast food restaurants and having to travel outside the area for anything besides daily needs items. There is demand for additional retail development in this area but the community needs to be selective in order to “raise the bar” in Hickory Flat. One way to accomplish this would be through the addition of public gathering spaces in new developments to provide meeting places and more of a village feel.

Creating greenspace and passive recreation options along with greater pedestrian infrastructure and connections.

Hickory Flat is blessed with 2 existing parks and 1 future park property. These can provide a limited amount of opportunities to walk/hike and enjoy natural areas. Residents and business owners have a vision for preserving more greenspace and creating a network of trails that would connect the community together. With a plan in place, regulations can be created to support the development of this trail network.

Lack of a cohesive look and feel to the Hickory Flat area

Since development happens on individual sites over time, there is a strong need for design regulations and guidelines in order to make changes for future development. Both Cherokee County and Holly Springs have some standards in place which could serve as a starting point for developing a set of design regulations that would be unique to Hickory Flat. There are also opportunities to build the community identity through branding or signage that would let people know that you are in a unique place.

Map Development Process

The Future Land Use Map that follows is the result of significant input on the existing and possible land uses plus their appropriate locations. The development of this map was driven by the following ideas:

- Limiting suburban residential encroachment into rural residential areas
- Providing opportunities for smaller-scale commercial sites for office, specialty retail and sit-down restaurants
- Creating transitions in the scale & intensity of development from the center of Hickory Flat to the edges

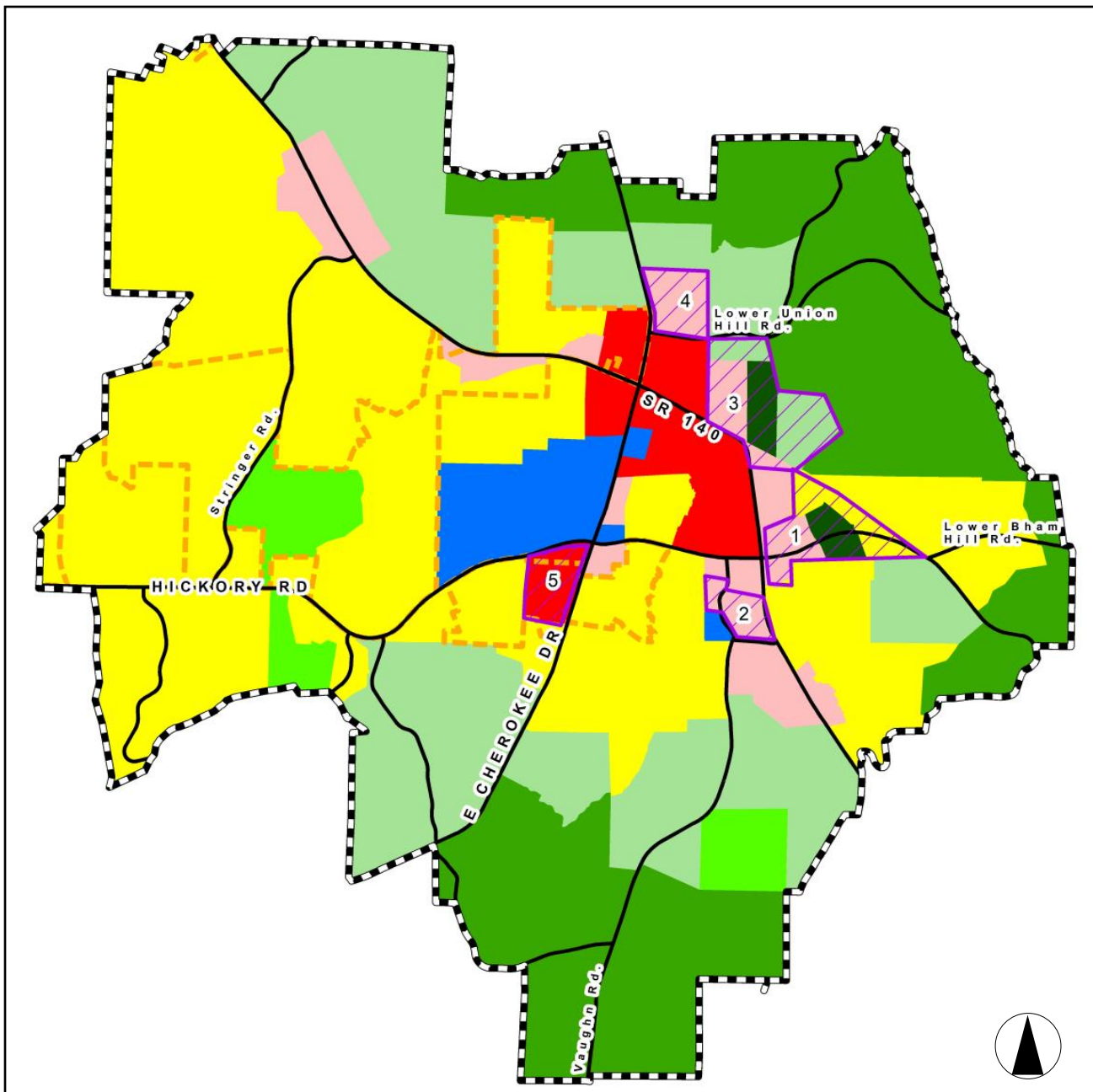
With the virtual meeting format, there were two options for the public to give input on the map with an number of people choosing to do both. First, Planning staff identified 5 vacant sites around the core of Hickory Flat that are likely to be developed in the next 1-3 years. The website offered survey-type questionnaires on each of these Charrette Sites to gather community input anytime during the 3-week virtual public meeting. The second option allowed anyone interested to sign-up and participate in one of 5 live Zoom charrette sessions. These were limited to a maximum of 6 participants to allow a true small group discussion. Two staff members facilitated these meetings but the conversation often moved back and forth between the 5 sites and the overall study area. There was also an opportunity to talk about trails and road connections plus draw them on top of base maps. This input lead to the creation of the Trails & Roads Map .










This Future Land Use Map helps to protect the most rural areas of Hickory Flat by establishing a minimum 2 acre lot requirement in the Rural Residential areas, consistent with agriculture and rural living. Furthermore, the Transitional Residential category is intended to buffer these more sensitive rural areas from the, mostly existing, suburban residential subdivisions. The areas shown on the map as “Suburban Residential” are, for the most part, already developed as suburban residential subdivisions, with the exception of necessary infill to clear up gaps. For example, smaller areas that are already surrounded by suburban residential subdivisions are most compatible with these surrounding uses. Limited expansion of the Suburban Residential area addresses the Community’s desire to protect the rural areas of Hickory Flat and slow growth.

Hickory Flat has many existing commercial uses but the Community want’s more variety, notably new sit-down restaurants with outdoor seating, small scale retail and small offices. The Map reserves land for these uses in the Small Commercial areas and limits the big box retailers to the areas shown as Large Commercial.

For more information on the Future Land Use Map, see Section 2.2 of this document.

Future Land Use Map



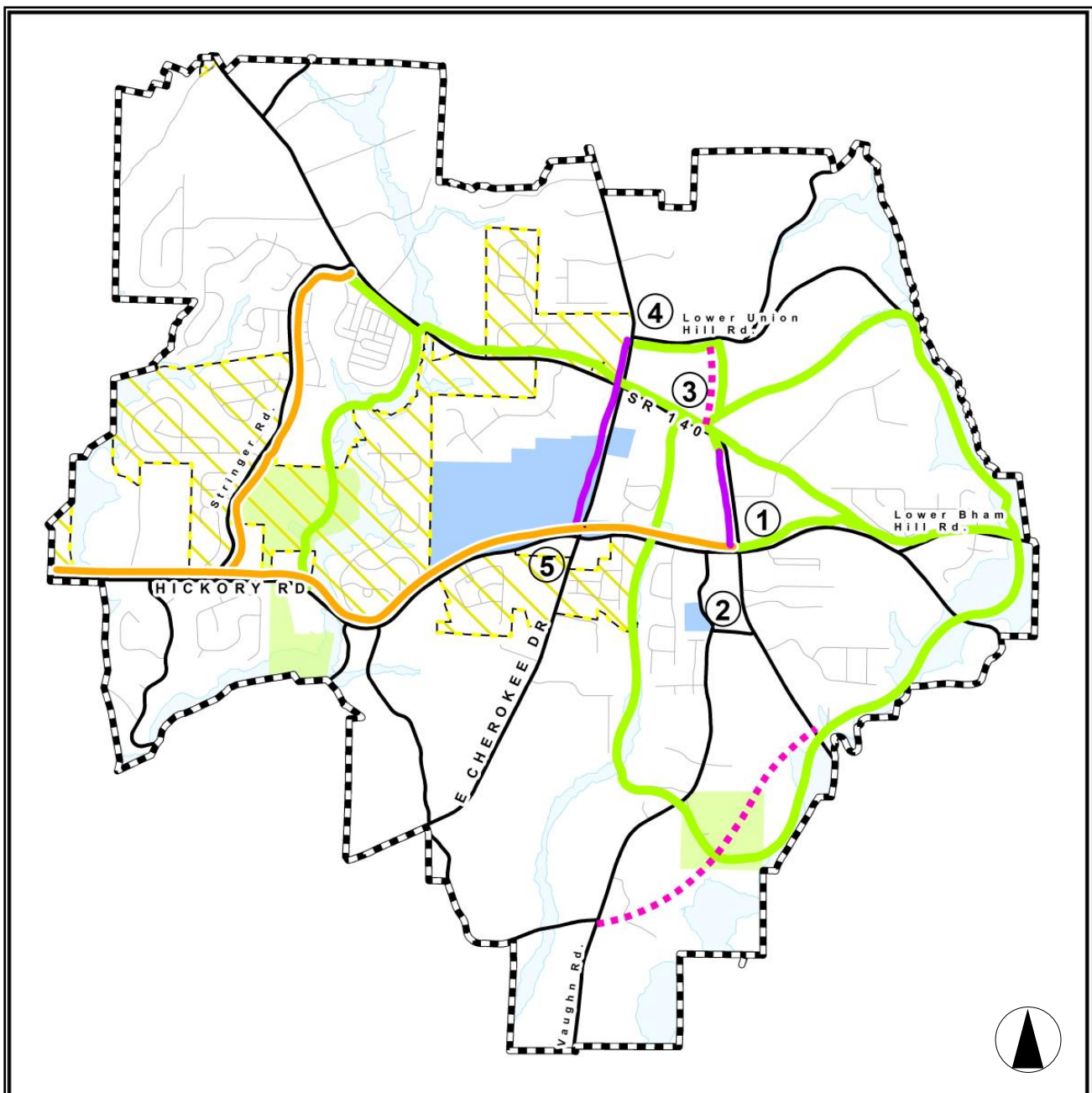
Land Use	Description	Size/Density
 Civic	Community uses such as schools, libraries, police/fire stations and post offices	N/A
 Parks	Existing parks and land dedicated for future parks, both active and passive	N/A
 Natural Space	Areas to be left undisturbed for natural space preservation and recreation	N/A
 Rural Residential	Historic or working farms, open space and large lot single-family subdivisions	Minimum 1 unit/ 2 acres
 Transitional Residential	Single-family subdivisions that create a transition between suburban residential and rural residential areas	2 units/acre to 1 unit/2 acres
 Suburban Residential	An area that is typical of and mostly encompasses the newer, suburban-style residential subdivisions.	Typically 2-3 units/acre
 Small Commercial	Neighborhood uses indicative of a small-town main street, such as local retailers, sit-down restaurants and small offices	Buildings 10,000 sf and smaller
 Large Commercial	Larger developments such as anchor tenant shopping centers and office complexes	Buildings larger than 10,000
 Charrette Site	Five unique sites that the public gave input on during the charrette process	N/A

Trails & Roads Map

The Hickory Flat community expressed an overwhelming desire for more places to walk, enjoy nature and preserve greenspaces. There are already opportunities within the existing two County parks and the future Holly Springs park property to have some of these experiences but there are more opportunities in the area. Participants in the virtual meetings identified the look/feel and locations for trails that will connect residents to community assets and provide more passive recreation opportunities. Proposed trails are shown in green, while existing major sidewalks are purple and planned/under construction sidewalks are shown in orange.

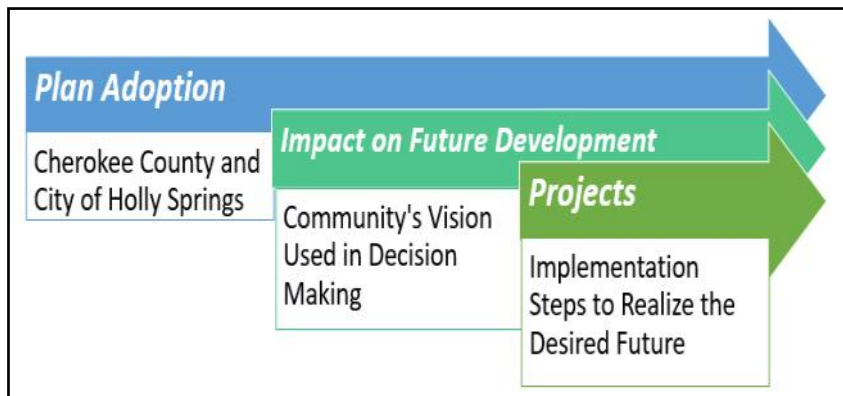
Also discussed was the possibility for new road connections (pink dotted lines) that can help shorten local trips and possibly relieve existing congestion by providing routes around the major intersections.

For more information on the Trails and Roads Map, see Section 2.3.



Implementation

To create the future for Hickory Flat that matches the vision described by the community, there are three critical steps to follow. First, adopting this plan as an amendment to both the County and Holly Springs Comprehensive Plans is very important. This adoption facilitates the second step of using this plan to evaluate



applications for zoning decisions (rezonings, special use permits, etc.). While there may be other factors in these decisions, local elected officials can be confident that they are taking the community's vision into account. Finally, there are a series of implementation projects that will help to create the desired future for the Hickory Flat area in the next 5 years. These are tasks that can be accomplished by a combination of County and Holly Springs resources.

Project Description	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	Cost (Est.)	Responsible Party
<i>Develop Branding, Wayfinding and Signage</i>	X					\$3,000-5,000	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs
<i>Trail Network Feasibility Study</i>	X	X				\$15,000-20,000	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs
<i>Public Charrette for Site #3 Master Plan</i>		X				\$25,000-35,000	Cherokee County, Property Owners
<i>Update Future Development Map</i>			X			Staff Time	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs
<i>Create Design Guidelines</i>		X	X			TBD	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs

Listed first, developing branding, wayfinding and signage for Hickory Flat will help build community connections and a sense of place. Next, the trail network feasibility study is the first step towards developing a system of trails for Hickory Flat. By refining the trail locations and understanding any inherent challenges, the trails can move toward design, funding and construction. Third, a public design charrette on a master plan for Site #3 will allow the Community to have considerable input into the development of this key site, which may be best opportunity to create a central gathering space with sit-down dining, retail, park space and more. With the 2023 update to the Comprehensive Plan, there will be a clear need to modify the Future Development Maps of both Cherokee County and Holly Springs to reflect this area plan. This will help to solidify these recommendations and influence future decision making. Finally, the public has a strong desire for Hickory Flat to be a connected and cohesive village with a unified look and feel. The development of design guidelines that set standards for building architecture and site layout including building styles and materials, parking areas and landscaping.



Vision Into Action

2.1 Vision Statement

The Hickory Flat Community is:

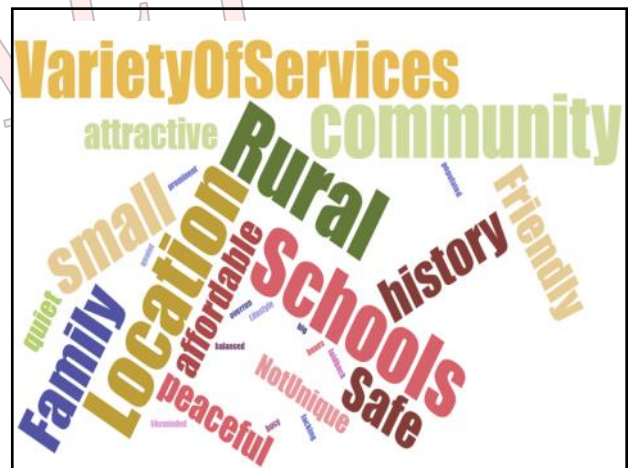
Deeply rooted in its history of rural and natural open space.

Connected through strong social networks that enhance the family-friendly, village feel.

Centered on great local institutions, such as schools, recreation, the library, churches and the fire station.

Growing in a managed way that preserves the unique elements of the community, while bringing desired amenities and infrastructure improvements.

This “Vision Statement” above was created from input from the public meetings and discussions with the Advisory Committee. For example, participants on the website were asked a series of questions about Hickory Flat. The results, seen here in these word diagrams were then used to formulate this Vision Statement. Staff drafted the statement between the first and last public meeting. When it was presented to the public, about 90% of responses indicated that the Vision Statement was on target.



"What makes Hickory Flat unique?"



“What words describe Hickory Flat in 2020?”



"What words describe Hickory Flat in 2040?"

This matrix separates the Vision Statement into four parts, demonstrating how each portion of the statement addresses the specific discussion points that have been prevalent through the planning process. This helps us to verify that the overall statement is tied back to the original community input.

<i>VISION STATEMENT MATRIX</i>				
The Hickory Flat Community is:				
Community Values	<i>Deeply rooted in its history of rural and natural open space.</i>	<i>Connected through strong social networks that enhance the family-friendly, village feel.</i>	<i>Centered on great local institutions, such as schools, recreation, the library, churches and the fire station.</i>	<i>Growing in a managed way that preserves the unique elements of the community, while bringing desired amenities and infrastructure improvements.</i>
History and Preservation	✓		✓	✓
Family-Friendly Community	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rural Character	✓			✓
Local Institutions		✓	✓	
Improved Amenities and Infrastructure		✓		✓
Small-town, Village	✓	✓	✓	

The feedback from the community also identified a series of 5 key issues/challenges that need to be addressed through this plan and the future implementation projects in order to achieve the community's vision. They are as follows:

- Significant residential growth in the past 20 years
- Need for transportation improvements to address traffic problems and include sidewalks
- Community desire for upgraded retail options, sit-down restaurants, and public gathering spaces to support a sense of community
- Lack of greenspace and passive recreation options along with a shortage of pedestrian infrastructure and connections.
- Lack of a cohesive look and feel to the Hickory Flat area

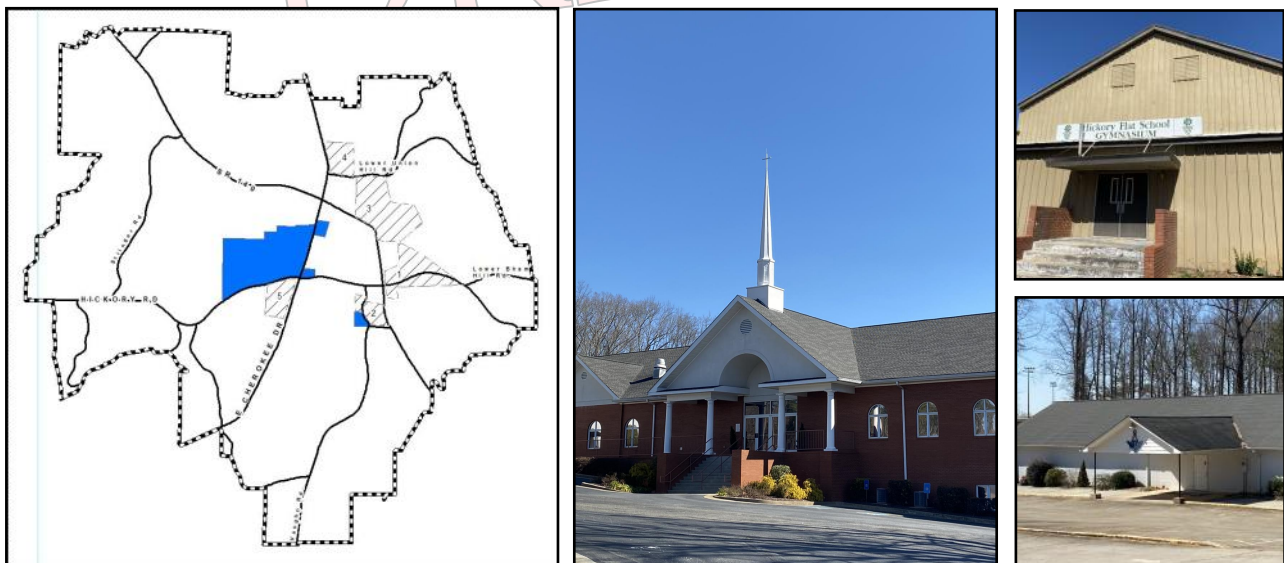
2.2 Future Land Use Map

Background

One of the strongest planning tools available to a community to shape their future is a map that illustrates their vision for the future. This map serves many purposes but the most important one is the way that the map can quickly communicate the vision to people interested in the community like developers and non-local property owners. The Future Land Use Map that follows was created using the public feedback provided throughout the planning process, notably the responses from both charrette meeting formats, along with the knowledge of existing development and zoning.

For the five charrette sites, the land uses shown are not meant to serve as the exact locations for these, but are representative of the Community's vision as expressed in the charrette process. Master plans for each of the sites are strongly encouraged to ensure the vision of the community is properly fulfilled. For more information, see Section 4.5. The following are brief descriptions of each land use shown on the map images of that use in Hickory Flat:

Civic



Civic areas, colored blue on the map, are for community uses such as schools, libraries, police/fire, post offices, and clubs. These are to be centrally located to provide the Community with easy access to services.

Parks



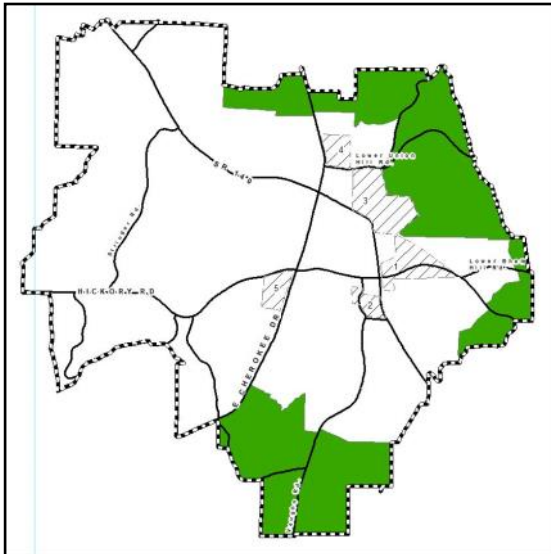
Existing parks, and land dedicated for future parks, are shown on the map in a bright green color. These include both active facilities, such as sports fields, and passive elements, such as natural areas with trails, and may be expanded.

Natural Space



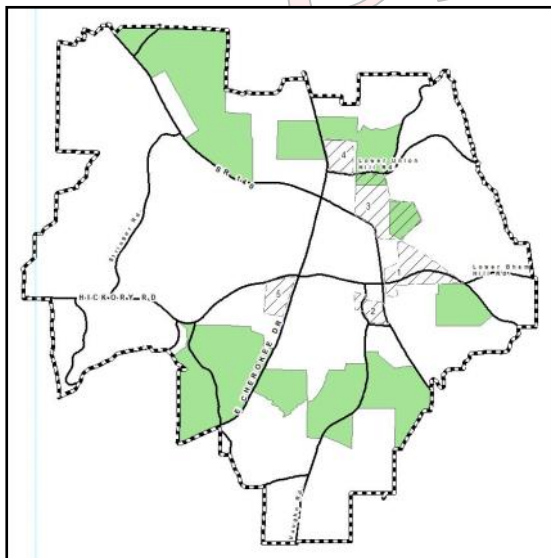
Areas colored dark green are to be left undisturbed for natural space preservation and passive recreation opportunities. These areas were identified during the charrette meetings as places that should be preserved within the two sites. These may be activated as passive park space and connected to adjacent areas by trails. Examples of appropriate improvements in these areas are walking paths, seating, shelters, and similar.

Rural Residential



Rural residential areas are those currently or recently under agricultural uses, forested areas and large lot subdivisions of single-family detached homes. Future land uses shall be similar to those currently present, such as farms, open space and single-family subdivisions on lots 2 acres or larger. Community uses commonly found in rural areas, such as churches and parks, may also be appropriate in these areas.

Transitional Residential



Intended to create a buffer between rural residential and suburban residential areas, Transitional Residential areas are intended for medium sized, single-family lots. Lots are to range in size from 0.5-2 acres.

Suburban Residential



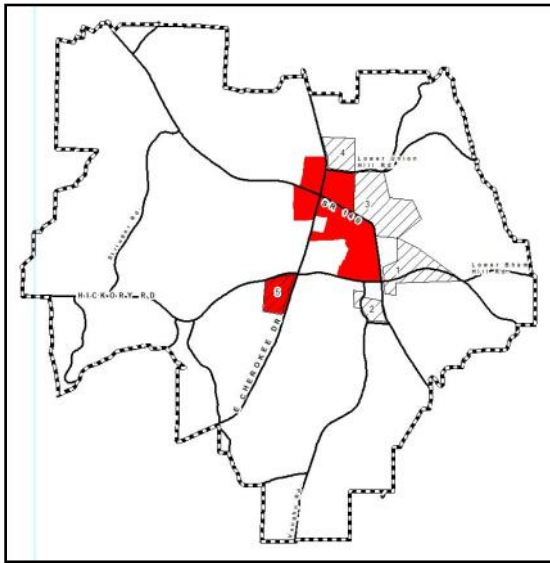
Suburban residential areas, yellow on the map, are the most intense in Hickory Flat. A few undeveloped areas were added to this category to fill in gaps for consistency. The existing residential development in this area is typically developed at 2 to 3 units per acre. Densities above 2 units/acre would only be considered on infill sites that are surrounded by higher density residential or commercial development.

Small Commercial



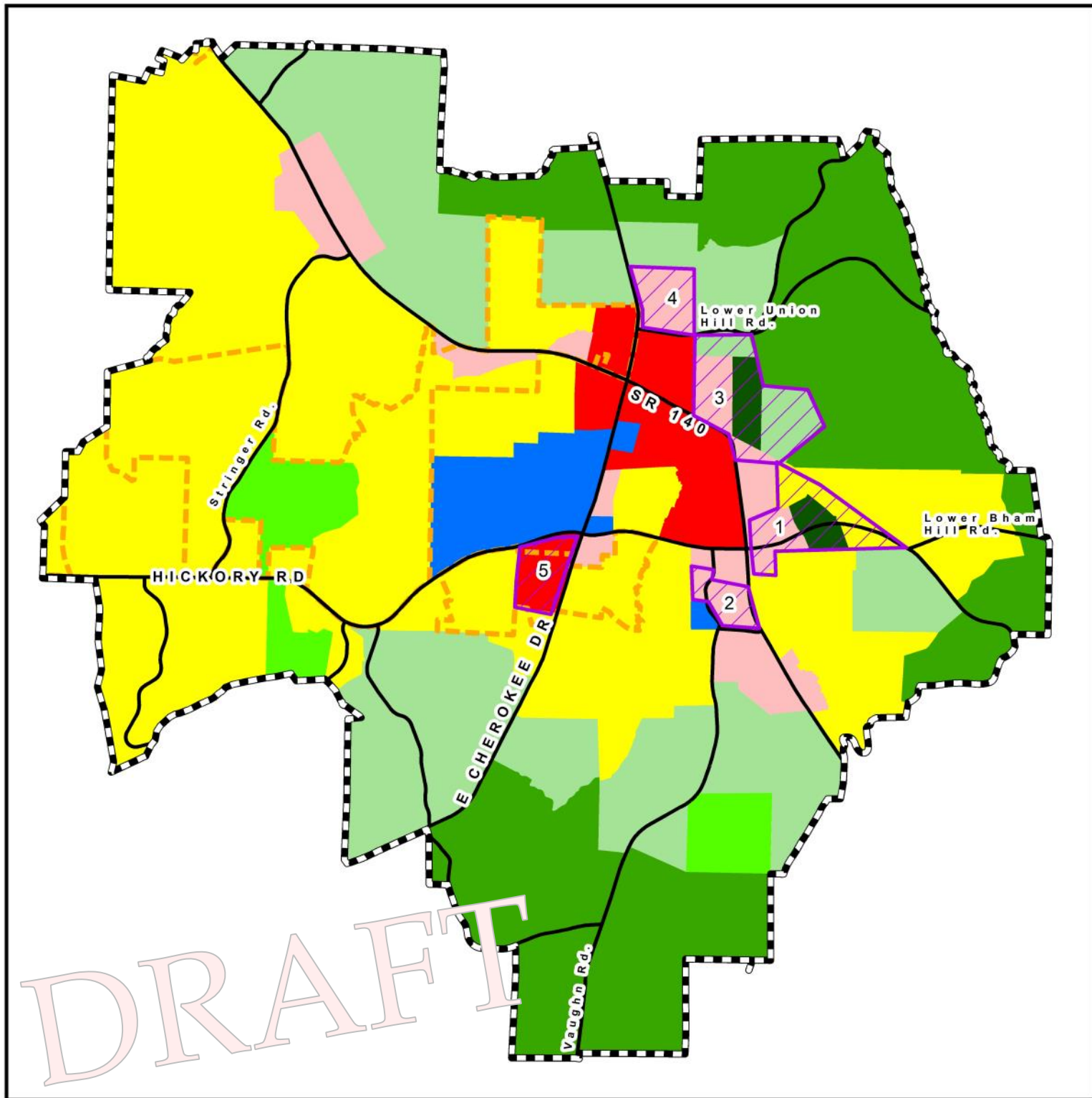
This area is suitable for smaller, neighborhood uses such as retailers and offices under 10,000 square feet/acre, full-service restaurants with outdoor dining and services such as banks and salons. These should be developed in a manner consistent with traditional “Main Streets” with focus on walkability, gathering spaces, landscaping and quality architecture. Big box stores, larger shopping centers with multiple outparcels, vast parking areas and office parks are not appropriate. Small commercial areas are located near the Study Area’s core and are easily accessed from the main roadways.

Large Commercial



Large commercial areas are those with anchor-tenant shopping centers, retailers and offices over 10,000 square feet per acre and developments characterized by numerous outparcels. These areas are mostly internal to the study area and reliant on the major roadways and intersections. Preference shall be given to sit-down restaurants with options for outdoor dining.

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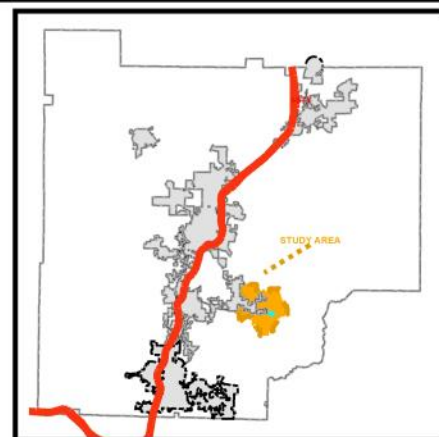
Hickory Flat Future Land Use



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Legend

- Study Area
- Holly Springs City Boundary
- Type**
 - Civic
 - Parks
 - Natural Space
 - Rural Residential
 - Transitional Residential
 - Suburban Residential
 - Small Commercial
 - Large Commercial
 - Charrette Site



2.3 Trails and Roads Map

The Trails and Roads Map was created as a result of input from the community during the Charrette meetings. Participants were anxious to visualize the connections that could be made with both trails and new road segments. Trails shown on this map were identified through the public input and then expanded to create a complete network using already planned pedestrian improvements, undevelopable stream corridors and floodways, and road right-of-way. Proposed road connections are shown linking State Route 140 to Lower Union Hill Road, through Charrette Site #3, and a connection between Vaughn Road and Hickory Flat Hwy (SR 140). Both the trails and road connections are drawn conceptually with no specific planned alignments at this time.

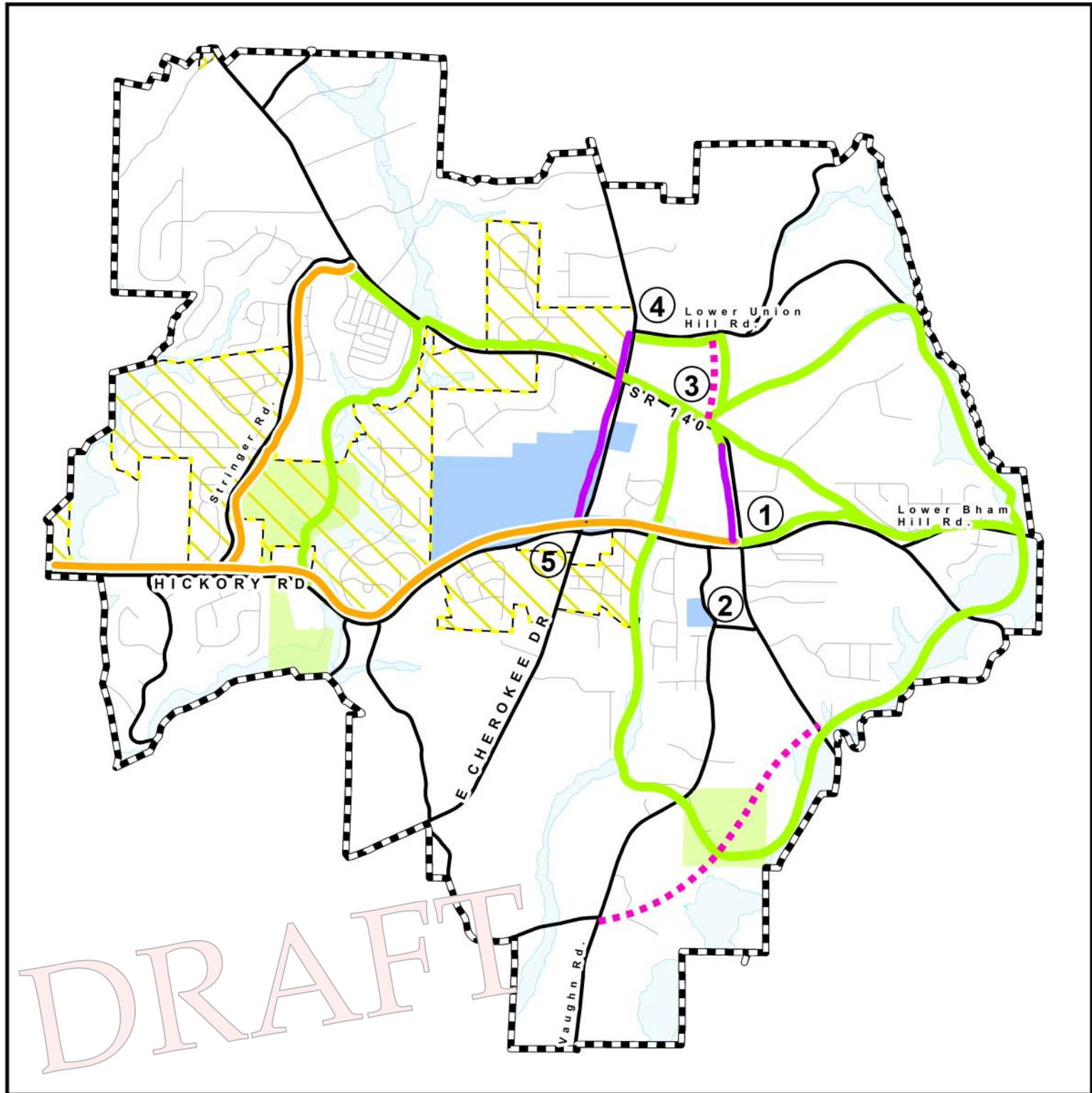
Trails



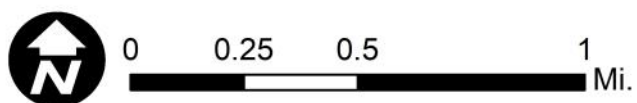
Trails are intended to connect people to points of interest, allowing for greater mobility and leisure. The trails on this map are conceptual but are shown following the stream corridors in the Study Area. The reason being is that floodplains around streams are undevelopable and relatively flat, with interesting features such as the streams themselves, wetlands and natural areas providing wildlife habitat. Other line segments are drawn along roadways in conformance with the Comprehensive Transportation Plan's suggestions for street-side trails. Lastly, smaller segments were shown to link destinations such as Sequoyah Park and to also create loops and avoid dead ends.

Streets

Two potential street connections have been shown: one connects State Route 140 with Lower Union Hill Road and the other connects Vaughn Road with State Route 140. These connections are intended to relieve congestion within the core of the Study Area by providing alternative routes around the existing busy intersections. The second connection is currently shown passing through Sequoyah Park but the final location is still to be determined. Any new roadways, even in the vicinity, will require close coordination with the park.

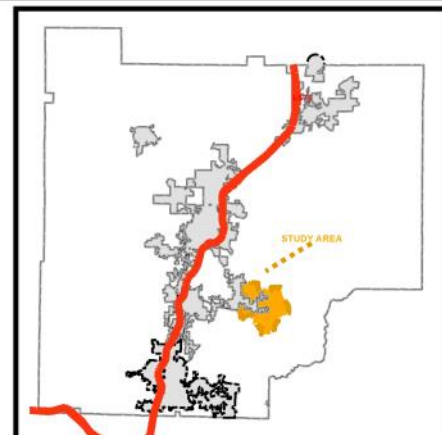


Hickory Flat Trails and Roads



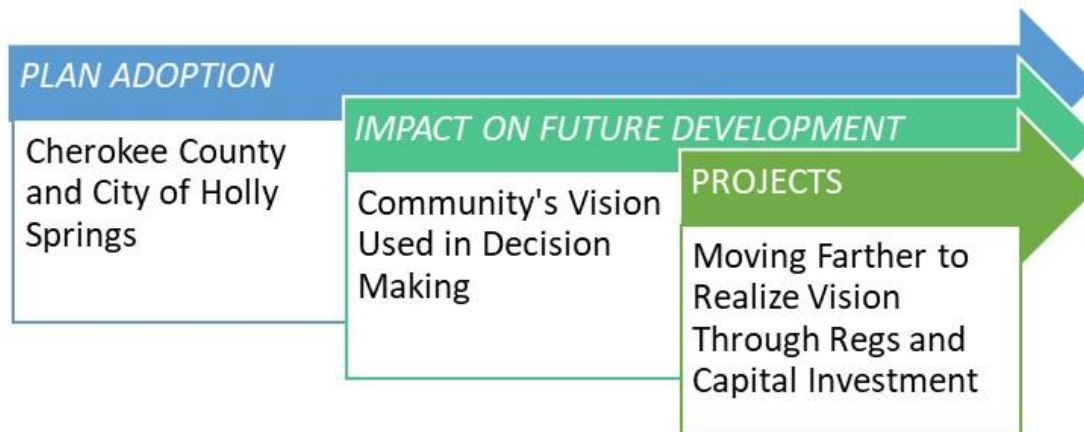
Legend

- Study_Area
- Holly Springs Boundary
- Future Floodplains
- Civic
- Parks
- Streets
- Proposed Trails
- Planned Sidewalks
- Existing Sidewalks
- Proposed Road Connections
- Charrette Sites



2.4 Implementation Process

The adoption of this Area Plan is not the end but the beginning of the implementation process to translate the community vision into reality. This process consists of three steps that represent the best way to ensure that the future of Hickory Flat is consistent with this plan.



First, making the Area Plan an amendment to a community's Comprehensive Plan is very helpful since this signifies that the document is now the default policy for the area. It would be ideal for both Cherokee County and Holly Springs to adopt this document so there is a clear, shared vision for both jurisdictions. This first step opens the door for the Plan to become a primary tool for evaluating rezoning requests, special use permits, variances and other zoning decisions. All too often, jurisdictions adopt plans but fail to use them in their everyday processes so this is critical.

The diagram to the right shows how the Area Plan works within the overall framework of a jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plan to provide more detail on a specific area. Often an Area Plan can lead to design regulations that are even more specific in order to implement the vision.



Finally, there are additional projects needed to address particular issues identified by the Hickory Flat community. The Short Term Work Plan on the following page gives more detail about these initiatives. These specific projects were identified based on their potential to address the key issues described through the public input process.

2.5 Short Term Work Program

The projects and initiatives identified in the Short Term Work Program are designed to further develop or implement the vision for the community. This chart provides a timeline, estimated project costs and responsible parties. More detailed project descriptions are shown below.

Project Description	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	Cost (Est.)	Responsible Party
Develop Branding, Wayfinding and Signage	X					\$3,000-5,000	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs
Trail Network Feasibility Study	X	X				\$15,000-20,000	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs
Public Charrette for Site #3 Master Plan		X				\$25,000-35,000	Cherokee County, Property Owners
Update Future Development Map			X			Staff Time	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs
Create Design Guidelines		X	X			TBD	Cherokee County, City of Holly Springs

Branding, Wayfinding and Signage -

One way to enhance the sense of place is to clearly identify Hickory Flat with signage, perhaps utilizing the county sign kiosks. A unique, community-developed logo could be used on the signage but also be at the center of a campaign to recognize Hickory Flat.

Trail Feasibility -

To move forward with building sidewalks and trails, it is important to evaluate the routes based on cost and constructability. This will allow the County and City to prioritize trail segments for further development.

Site #3 Master Plan -

This site from the Charrette meetings was identified as critical to the future of Hickory Flat so a more specific Master Plan that involves the community is needed. This effort will bring together the public, multiple property owners and developers as partners to shape a development that successfully builds a better community.

Update to Future Development Map -

In 2023, both jurisdictions are required to update their Comprehensive Plans. This is the perfect time to update the Future Development Map and related text to reflect the adoption of the Area Plan.

Design Guidelines -

To create a built environment to match the vision, there needs to be a concise set of guidelines and requirements for site and building design in the commercial areas. These will help transform Hickory Flat into a place with a unique but unified look and feel.



Community Context

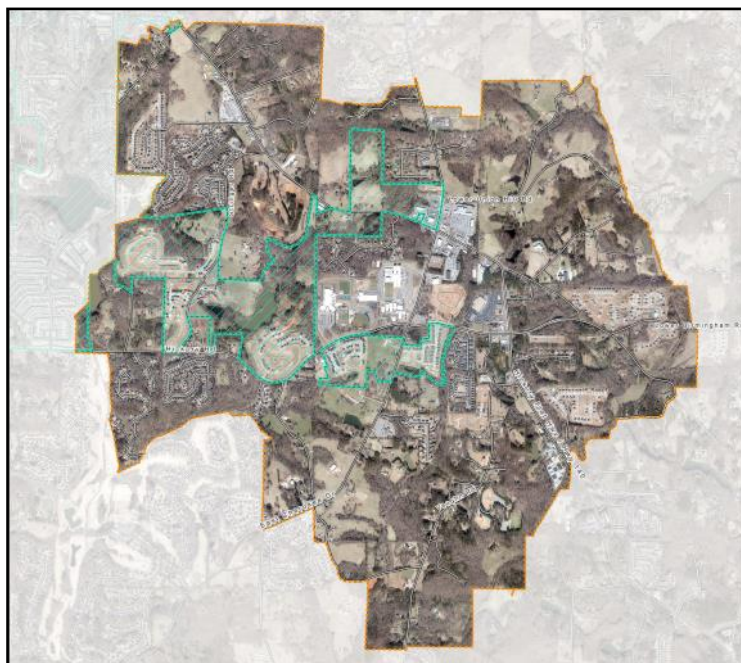
3.1 Geography

Location and Extent

The Hickory Flat community is located approximately five miles from Canton, 25 miles from Atlanta, and ten miles or less from the regionally significant cities of Roswell, Alpharetta and Woodstock. Only five miles from Interstate 575 and crossed by State Route 140, the area is well connected to regional job centers. Hickory Flat centers on three major intersections: State Route 140 and East Cherokee Drive, State Route 140 and Hickory Road and East Cherokee Drive and Hickory Road. Some refer to the area between these intersections as “The Triangle.” Most commercial and civic operations are near these major intersections, with some additional development further out along the most prominent local roadway, State Route 140.



Study Area Context



Area Plan Boundary

While no official boundary exists for the Hickory Flat community, the study area boundary for this project encompasses 3,643 acres and is approximately three miles wide and three miles long. The area covers about 2% of the County’s total land area and a comparable percentage of its population. Of the nearly 4,000 total acres in the study area, about 500 (14%) are in the City of Holly Springs.

Physical Features

The natural landscape of Hickory Flat is characterized by gentle topography with large wooded areas and rolling pastures typical of rural

Hickory Flat. Not navigable waterways, Avery Creek and Mill Creek create the western and eastern boundaries of the study area, respectively, both flowing to the Little River and eventually Allatoona Lake. Smaller streams cross the study area and scattered ponds provide practical agricultural purposes, or more commonly, amenities to residential subdivisions.

There are two major shopping centers anchored by national chain grocers and four smaller commercial centers without anchor tenants. Amongst these are approximately 30 restaurants, three banks, 11 medical or dental practices, and various other commercial uses such as retailers, salons, fitness facilities and car washes. Additionally, many residents of Hickory Flat live within the 21 residential subdivisions and the five senior residential developments/ assisted living facilities. Community facilities that serve the Hickory Flat area include three public schools with grades K-12, a library, a police/fire station, two parks with another planned for, six churches and a Mason's lodge.



3.2 History

Early History

The Hickory Flat community is one of the oldest settlements in Cherokee County. First inhabited by Native Americans, the area was a crossroads of the Cherokee people's regional trading routes. Additionally, the origin of the name *Hickory Flat* is not entirely clear but some sources believe it to be an English translation of the Native American name for the area, stemming from the abundance of hickory trees and moderate topography.

Early in the 19th Century and possibly prior to the establishment of neighboring Canton, European-descendent settlers founded their own community in Hickory Flat around these Cherokee crossroads. Following the removal of the natives, land was sold to settlers through a government lottery and agriculture began to thrive. As one of the most successful farming communities in the County with several stores, churches, a school and cotton gin, it was notable enough to be considered for the County seat. This honor was ultimately bestowed upon nearby Canton.



Old Hickory Flat Store

Education

A defining characteristic of Hickory Flat is the steadfast presence of local education. Hickory Flat Academy was founded in 1838 and was only the second school of its kind in the County, formed after Etowah Academy in Canton. Academies were significant as they were the most permanent form of schooling at the time and were considered "higher education." Only three were formed in Cherokee County.



Hickory Flat School

With modest origins, the Academy required both children and parents working together to build the school and keep it functioning. Adults handled construction and maintenance while children were given daily tasks such as chopping wood to keep warm and cleaning the classroom. Furthermore, with children needing to periodically help at home on the farms, school was held seasonally during those early days.

Hickory Flat Academy was eventually renamed to Hickory Flat School and numerous buildings and additions have replaced the old school building as the community has grown.

Agriculture



Local Agriculture

Like many places in the 1800's, agriculture was the primary form of local employment and the dominant land use in Hickory Flat. Early settlers made a living growing cotton and corn, with some raising cattle and swine. Cotton was a major cash crop in the area and Hickory Flat was noteworthy for having its own gin. This gin eventually burned in the 1940's just as poultry was expanding throughout the area, and the local cotton industry never recovered. Poultry dominated the second half of the 20th century but that has now seen a sharp decline too. Recent changes in the agriculture industry, along with suburban development pressure, have left few family farms in Hickory Flat.

Pastimes

Considering the hard work required of daily life in the early days of Hickory Flat, people found ways to recreate. During the 1930's the school building was remodeled to feature gymnasium space and basketball became a major part of the community. Local teams are reported to have had much success early on, with some winning County championships.

In the 1950's plans called for the County to consolidate elementary schools. Locals banded together, supplied their own materials and built a standalone gym at Hickory Flat Elementary School in hopes of setting it apart from the other schools. This strategy must have worked as the school remained open and the "vintage gym" still stands to this day.

Besides basketball, there were other ways folks gathered to spend time with one another or to relax. 4H club was a part of life for school children and allowed them the opportunity to raise animals, can food and even build a pump house for the school.



Construction in Hickory Flat

Church Life

Another core part of early life in Hickory Flat was church. Early on, most people attended either Mount Zion Baptist Church or Hickory Flat Methodist Church. Members of these churches established the historical Hickory Flat Cemetery and still oversee this through a collective board.

Recent History

Hickory Flat has changed considerably since the early days of an agricultural economy and a one room school house. Three waves of development have passed through the community, bringing about a shift from an entirely rural and sparsely populated settlement to one with characteristics indicative of suburbs. Proximity to Atlanta and transportation corridors, along with desirable assets such as local schools, Hickory Flat has long attracted newcomers. Major changes to the local landscape have involved residential, commercial and civic development.

1980's & 1990's

The Late-1980's to 1990's brought about Bradshaw Farm, one of the larger, well known residential subdivisions in the community. Other, large lot residential subdivisions were finished during this time period as well. Additionally, the Hickory Flat Village shopping center anchored by Publix was developed with numerous outparcels, bringing the first, large-scale shopping center to the community.

Dean Rusk Middle School opened in 1986 welcoming 7th and 8th graders from Hickory Flat Elementary and other elementary schools nearby while Sequoyah High School followed in 1990 with its inaugural class.

Hickory Flat Elementary School, formerly Hickory Flat Academy, underwent numerous physical changes up to this point and the 90's proved no different. Thirty-nine classrooms, new administrative offices, a media center and a cafeteria were complete in 1995.



Sequoyah High School

2000 – 2010

Growth continued into the new millennium with the development of the first residential subdivision comparable to Bradshaw Farm: Harmony on the Lakes. This time period was also marked by the City of Holly Springs annexations in the area which led to several suburban-style

residential subdivisions. Furthermore, a second shopping center anchored by Kroger was completed in the middle of the decade. Smaller shopping centers popped up around the intersection of East Cherokee Drive and State Route 140 and other commercial outparcels were also developed throughout the core area of Hickory Flat.

2010 – 2020

From 2010 to 2020, Hickory Flat experienced a new wave of residential development not yet seen locally: Age restricted and age targeted living. Standard residential subdivision development picked up following the economic downturn of 2008 and new commercial operations utilized smaller properties near the core of Hickory Flat.



The Orchards of Cherokee Station



Kroger Shopping Center

By this time, Dean Rusk Middle School and Sequoyah High School outgrew their original buildings, with Dean Rusk locating to a new site in 2016 and Sequoyah expanding into the old middle school for what is now called “Sequoyah East.”

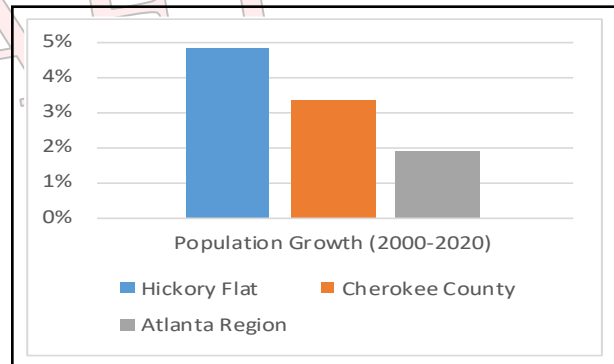
3.3 Demographics

Overview

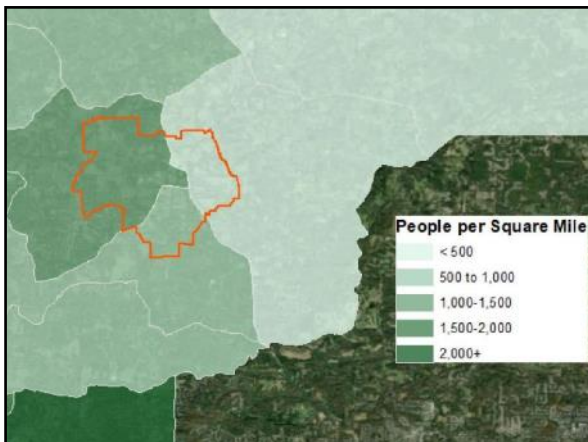
The demographics of Hickory Flat have changed significantly since the early days of the settlement with this trend set to continue in the coming decades. The last 20 years have been marked by dramatic population growth due to community amenities, like great schools, along with the proximity to regional jobs and relative affordability. The characteristics of the new residents are somewhat different from earlier generations in terms of income and education. The local economy has also undergone a monumental shift from agricultural to the service, retail and government sectors. The market study section that follows will provide a detailed analysis of the existing housing and commercial land uses as well as future demand in the Hickory Flat area.

Population

Hickory Flat is growing at a faster rate than the County and the Atlanta region, with population increasing more than 140% since 2000. This chart compares the rate of growth between Hickory Flat, Cherokee County and the Atlanta Region. At nearly 5% annual growth, the area grew at almost twice the rate of the Atlanta region. In addition, Hickory Flat's share of the County's population has increased steadily since 2000 when it was 1.3% to its current level of 1.75% and is expected to reach 1.8% by 2025. That said, growth rates are expected to slow in the coming years.



Population Growth Rate Between 2000 & 2020



Population Density

Population density is greater in the western and central portions of the study area when measured by Census Tract. Here there are 1500-2000 people per square mile, compared to the less dense southern areas that have 1000-1500 people per square mile and the even more sparsely populated eastern areas that have less than 500 people per square mile.

Age

The age distribution of the Hickory Flat population is similar to the rest of the County except for a sizable deficit of “Millennial” residents between the ages of 24 and 39. This can be attributed to the lack of available rental housing and the higher cost of for-sale housing. Furthermore, a larger than average share of residents come from the Baby Boomer generation, ages 56 to 74, likely due to the abundance of Senior living options. This brings the average age in Hickory Flat to be 1.9 years older than the County’s average age and 4.3 years older than the Atlanta region.

Racial Composition

The population of Hickory Flat is less racially diverse than the County and Region with over 90% of residents falling in the category of “White.” Minority groups include: “Black” at 4.1%, “Two of More Races” at 2.2%, “Asian” at 1.5% with other group percentages falling below these. The percentage of the local population identifying with Hispanic ethnicity is 5.2%, less than half that of the County and the Region.

Income

Hickory Flat is one of the more affluent communities in the Atlanta area with the majority (52.2%) of households earning over \$100,000 per year. This figure is 24% higher than the County and 45% higher than the region. The area also has much smaller levels of lower-income households when compared to the County and Region.



Education

Correlating with income levels, the levels of education attainment are high in Hickory Flat. Only 3.9% of the population has less than a high school degree while nearly half of the population has a four year college degree or advanced degree. These levels of education attainment exceed both the County and Atlanta region.



Employment

There are approximately 1,650 jobs in the Study Area, exceeding the number of local residents in the labor force (1,519) by roughly 9%. Hickory Flat is a net “importer” of workers, a rarity for similar sized locations in Cherokee County. About 98% of employees working in Hickory Flat travel from other locations while 98% of employed residents commute to jobs elsewhere. Only 2% of Hickory Flat residents also work in Hickory Flat.

The largest group of jobs in Hickory Flat are related to the school complex with 320 employees, or 20% of local jobs, across the three schools. The remaining area jobs are in service, retail, transportation, manufacturing and utilities sectors. These types of jobs are typically held by younger people that are paid lower wages which may indicate that the majority of these jobs are held by secondary wage earners.

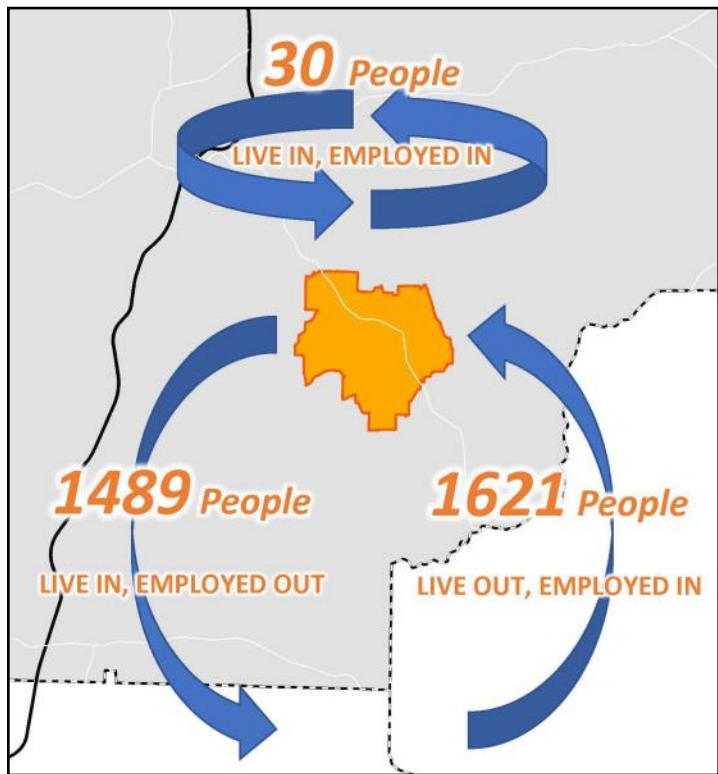
It is important to note that these employment numbers do not capture residents who are working from home.



Commuting Patterns

With most Hickory Flat residents working jobs outside of the study area, surprisingly few travel beyond the borders of Cherokee County. Most commute to places of employment along the Interstate 575 corridor in Canton, Woodstock and areas in between. Fewer numbers commute to North Fulton or the Interstate 75 corridor in Cobb County. Even fewer Hickory Flat residents commute as far as the City of Atlanta, Forsyth, Gwinnett and DeKalb counties.

Filling most of the local jobs are the commuters from elsewhere and the majority of these aren't coming from far outside the Study Area; few come from outside of Cherokee County. Most commuters into Hickory Flat are coming from areas within Cherokee County immediately to the north.



Approximately 30 people, or 2% of the area workforce, lives and works within Hickory Flat

The image shows the exterior of Hickory Flat Elementary School, a brick building with large windows. A tall flagpole stands in front of the building, flying the American flag and a smaller flag. The school's name is displayed in large white letters on the brick facade. A large, semi-transparent white number '1' is overlaid on the image, centered vertically and horizontally. A dark teal horizontal band crosses the middle of the image, containing the text 'Planning Process' in white serif font.

HICKORY FLAT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Planning Process

4.1 Preparation

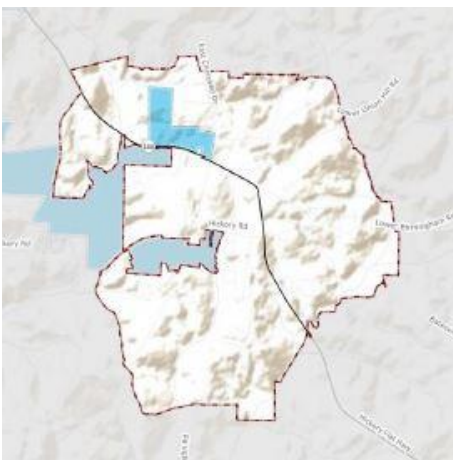
Background and Research

In a sense, the Hickory Flat Area Plan process began with the Target Area Workshop in 2017 but the project began internally with the creation of a project plan and timeline, compiling of necessary information, research into other area plans, establishing the official study area, meeting with the City of Holly Springs and County officials, publicity and more. The official public introduction was made before the Board of Commissioners in late 2019 and a single in-person public meeting was held before the COVID-19 pandemic paused these activities. The public participation portion of the Hickory Area Plan restarted in October 2020 and ran until February 2021.



Establishment of the Study Area

An area plan requires a defined boundary for study. As Hickory Flat is not an incorporated community, there is no official boundary to use for this purpose and no informal boundaries were found during research into the matter.



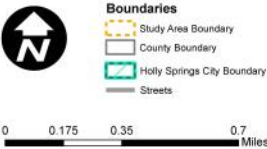
2017 Target Area Boundary

Area plans are small by nature so the “core” of Hickory Flat had to be identified on which to focus planning efforts. A boundary used for a previous Hickory Flat study was used as a starting point and then many different maps and boundaries were compiled and layered with intent to find a pattern or common area. Examples of these maps and boundaries that were used include: Hickory Flat Elementary School district boundary (the only local school that serves the Hickory Flat area ONLY), place names with the words “Hickory Flat,” natural features such as creeks, transportation networks and parcel lines. Once a common area was determined from all of these layers, it was further refined by removing areas that may be considered parts of other communities, such as Avery, Arnold Mill and Sugar Pike. Additionally, large subdivisions like Bradshaw Farm may be wholly tied to the Hickory Flat community but these were excluded from the boundary as no major changes are expected to occur here.

Study Area Map



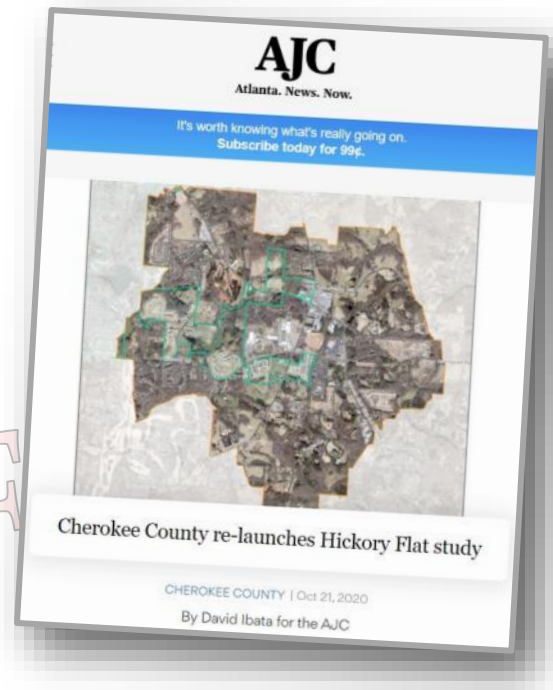
HICKORY FLAT AREA PLAN



4.2 Outreach and Engagement

Publicity Plan

Prior to the first public meeting in January 2020, staff developed a plan to publicize the launch of the Area Plan and announce specific meeting dates. For this, in-house methods were used, such as website notices, social media postings and printed flyers, but the Plan was also promoted by local media through their channels. Additionally, the Advisory Committee was tasked with spreading the word within their own networks such as schools, the library system and businesses. Later in 2020, Planning staff partnered with Cherokee County's new Communications Division to further develop publicity efforts and reach greater audiences with news on the Area Plan. Throughout the planning process, the public was consistently informed of developments in the process, meeting announcements and more through these means as well as direct communication with the sizable list of contacts that had been compiled.



Alternative Input Methods

Understanding that in-person meetings are difficult to attend for many due to the fixed time and location, besides other contributing factors, staff developed an alternative to allow for more flexible public participation. A “Meeting in a Box” was developed to include printed presentations along with the participation activities and other necessary materials. This was placed at the library for the public to “checkout” with staff periodically collecting submissions. Additional accommodations were made for anyone requiring special assistance with these types of “meetings.” Following the pause of in-person activities and the shift to online meetings, the “Meetings in a Box” were no longer available at the library but were offered to the public via print and mail for those that were unable to partake in the new website format.

Student Engagement

The Chick-fil-a Leader Academy is a selective student organization at Sequoyah High School that seeks to transform their community through service projects. Students are a major demographic in Hickory Flat whose opinions and observations are often overlooked. They have a profound and direct impact on the community, working local jobs, spending money, using



County staff with Sequoyah High School students

local infrastructure and living with parents that pay local taxes, so engaging this group is highly beneficial to the planning process. After all, these same students may one day be opening businesses and buying homes in Hickory Flat so a long-range plan should incorporate their thoughts and ideas on their community.

Staff met with these students in March 2020 to overview the plan and begin dialogue on Hickory Flat. At that time, this group was developing their own local sustainability projects so discussions touched on pedestrian opportunities, local food, habitat preservation and recycling.

Discussing how students interact with the Hickory Flat community, many hang out at local restaurants, parking lots and each other's homes but frequently leave the area for larger commercial developments like Avalon, Woodstock or Canton Marketplace. Students pointed out the abundant options for leisure during the warmer months but the drop off in available activities during the winter. They primarily work in local restaurants, some in seasonal jobs such as lifeguarding and others informally like babysitting. Asked what Hickory Flat is missing, the responses were often centered on entertainment options: music, movies and performing arts spaces. As expected, students also desire more options for retail shopping.

Words coming to mind when asked for a current assessment of Hickory Flat, students responded with the familiar observations of "traffic", "friendly" and "fast food," echoing what the perception of the greater public. Similarly, students also want what older generations want: less traffic, protected land, more variety with restaurants and retail and a central gathering place. Aspirations unique to this group were for additional recreational opportunities, events and festivals and environmentally-friendly projects and practices.

WHAT SHOULD HICKORY FLAT BE LIKE? NOT BE LIKE?

... What works well here? ... What can be improved? ...
 ... What matters to you? ... What's missing? ... What should be avoided? ...

Sit-down restaurants	Less traffic
Less housing	More sidewalks
Protected land	Environmental - friendly
Paintball	More winter activities
Bigger businesses	More relevancy
Identity	Parks
Annual festival	Uniqueness
Dog park	Public gathering place
	add more athletic fields/courts

Student response board

Virtual Planning Research

Considering the unknowns surrounding the COVID-19 public health situation, staff explored virtual plan making solutions following the cancellation of the second Public Meeting in February 2020. Two case studies were reviewed and influenced the new direction of this project. Missoula, Montana conducted a plan notable for its online public participation options. This example was used to virtually recreate the fundamentally collaborative charrette process for the Hickory Flat Area Plan, setting up "office hours" where small groups could video

conference with staff and review maps to establish future land uses for the area. Also, Alpharetta, Georgia's Alpha Link project influenced the framework for the Hickory Flat Area Plan website. This project helped staff understand how to develop video presentations and surveys, then organizing them within the website to be user friendly.

Following this research, staff developed a stand-alone website for the Hickory Flat Area Plan. The purpose of this site was to be a "One Stop Shop" for everything related to this Area Plan, providing background information such as the established goals and objectives, maps and planning resources, staff contacts and the calendar of events. All public meetings were hosted directly on this website and were designed to flow as a typical in-person meeting. Staff was focused on creating a simple, intuitive website that allowed the public to easily participate when and where they were most comfortable. By removing time and location restrictions with this new method, staff hoped to increase and diversify participation.



Advisory Committee

A major component of the planning process designed to help connect the public to the plan and assist staff with their efforts is the Advisory Committee. This body is comprised of local residents, business leaders, elected officials, and representatives of civic functions in the area such as churches, police, schools, parks and the library.



The Advisory Committee acts as a bridge between planning staff and the general public, responding to previous public meetings and then setting the course for upcoming

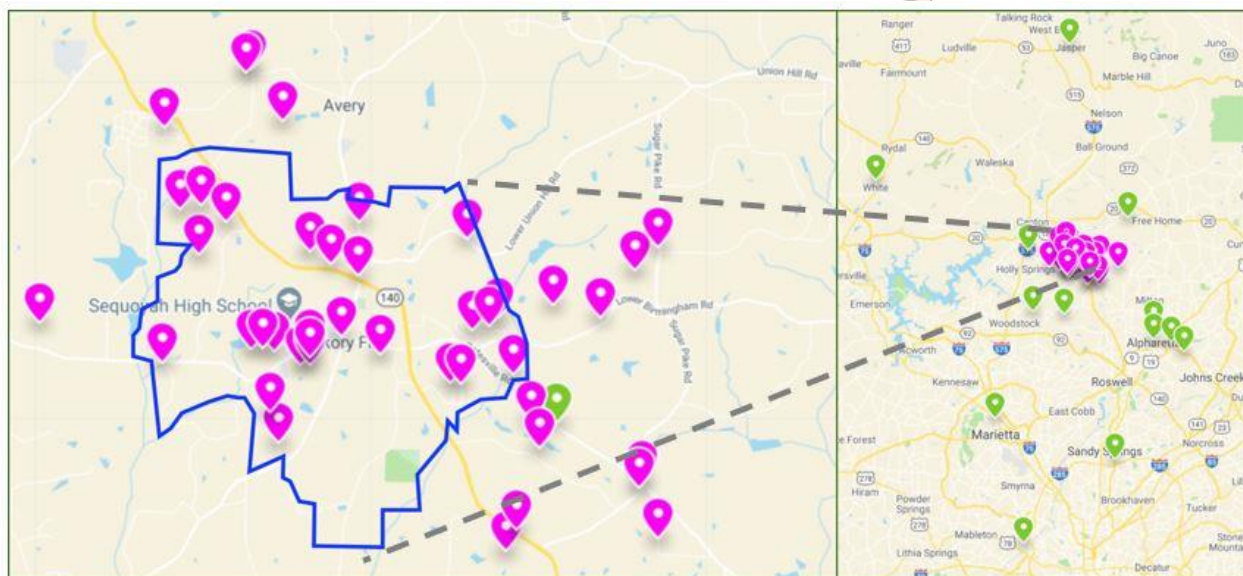
public meetings. They engaged their unique networks within the community to help spread word about the area plan and details of the process such as public engagement opportunities. Advisors heard concerns and ideas for solutions while contemplating their own ideas for how Hickory Flat could be improved to better serve their specific organizations or networks.

Meetings with the Advisory Group were scheduled between each public meeting to allow discussion on results from the earlier public meeting and to set up the next one. The first in-person Advisory Committee meeting was held in November 2019 ahead of the opening public meeting scheduled for January 2020. A second in-person meeting was held following this public meeting before the project was paused due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. After this break, the project was restarted later in 2020 through virtual means and the Advisory Committee reconvened for four meetings in conjunction with public meetings.

4.3 Meeting Summaries

Public Meeting #1

Following the project restart in early October 2020, the first virtual public meeting was held over three weeks, initially open from October 21st to November 4th and then extended another week to November 11th. Similar in format to an in-person meeting, three video presentations were given followed by participation activities. The Area Plan Kick Off presentation introduced the project team, provided an overview on the origins of the Area Plan in the previous Comprehensive Plan update, laid out the timeline and set goals of the planning process. The second video presentation detailed local history and recent growth, then explained the establishment of the Study Area Boundary. Lastly, the Market Study was introduced and important local trends and existing conditions were conveyed for the first of three presentations on the local economy.



Pink dots represent where participants live and green dots for where they work

In conjunction with the presentations, virtual feedback activities engaged the public like those conducted face-to-face. A mapping activity asked participants to place pins where they lived and worked in relation to the study area. Most “Live” pins were placed inside or near the study area while most “Work” pins were outside, sometimes at substantial distances. This is consistent with the findings of the Market Study.

Three Word Exercises followed the mapping activity. The “Vision 2020” word association activity asked participants to use single words to describe Hickory Flat at present with common responses involving traffic, fast food, schools, and heritage. The “Envision 2040” exercise asked participants to generate words for how they perceive the future of Hickory Flat resulting in a clear community wish for more walkability and better connections. Many felt that traffic and

congestion will still be part of the area while others see a more defined and connected area with additional amenities and services as well as greenspace preservation.

Similarly, a word exercise asked the public “What makes Hickory Flat unique?” when compared to other communities. This activity helped us understand what qualities stand out and should be further strengthened. Respondents noted the central location and easy access to services as well as the rural character and great schools.

The last activity was the “Community Wish List.” Participants choose community features from a list that they would like to see in Hickory Flat. The majority favored passive parks and greenspace, multi-use pathways, sidewalks, large lot residential developments and outdoor dining. The bottom of this list were apartments, offices, parking lots and fast food.


Public Meeting #2


Public Meeting #2 took place December 2nd to 23rd and comprised four presentations and one participation activity with formatting comparable to the previous meeting. The first video presentation served to open the meeting, introduce the latest presenters and what each would discuss, recap the previous public meeting, share participation figures and introduce the public participation activity. The second presentation highlighted the various transportation improvements in the Study Area, providing specifics on the work to be done, what these projects are expected to accomplish and related timelines. A presentation on public facilities provided information on the planned upgrades for local parks and the Hickory Flat gym, status of the schools, planned expansion of the library and the current focus of Holly Springs on their downtown and park property. Lastly, the second of three Market Study presentations covered market demand indicators for residential, commercial, office and industrial development.


Trails


Below are a series of images that display different types of nature trails. Make as many selections as you wish. Please remember that this is a RAPID-FIRE exercise so try not to dwell on any particular image. We want to know your "gut reaction" to what you see so plan to spend about 10 seconds per slide.

Which trail(s) are you likely to use? Select all that apply or choose the "None of the Above" option.


☐ Option 1


☐ Option 2


☐ Option 3


☐ Option 4

☐ Other: _____

An example of the Community Preference Survey format

A “Community Preference Survey” was this meeting’s activity and built on the participation of the first meeting. The public had previously demonstrated what they want and don’t want in Hickory Flat. With this quick, visual exercise, planners gain more understanding of that public “Wish List” by seeing how these items look and feel or the types of places or things people are

inclined to use and visit. Inversely, this allows planners to better understand what the public doesn't want for Hickory Flat. For example, the public communicated a need for more connectivity and pedestrianism in the first meeting. This "Wish List" item was more clearly understood in this exercise as highly rated images of trails showed wide, curvilinear thoroughfares through preserved nature and sidewalk images showed separation from roadways by either distance or barriers.

Public Meeting #3

The final public meeting ran from January 13th to February 3rd and the first video presentation recapped the presentation, activities, public responses and participation figures of the previous public meeting before introducing Meeting #3. The final installment of the Market Study presentations focused on forecasting for the Hickory Flat Area.

In the first two meetings the public communicated wants and needs for Hickory Flat, or those that aren't as desirable. With a better understanding of sought-after land uses, especially how these should look, feel and function in the community, the last exercise asked the public to put these land uses on the map. This is the public creating the land use map that will be used for future decision making in Hickory Flat.

Future land uses were placed on the map through a charrette process. Charrettes are usually open discussions around a table with maps and markers. To accomplish this virtually, we created a two-part charrette. Available 24/7, a more flexible and less time consuming option was featured on the Public Meeting webpage. A questionnaire asked participants to select the appropriate future land uses for five specific sites in Hickory Flat that are under immediate development pressure. The public was provided highly rated images from the Community


Section 2 of 6

Site 1: Hwy 140 and Batesville Rd.

Site Information:

- East of the Kroger shopping center (Hickory Flat Commons) and Hwy 140, west of the Batesville Rd. and Old Batesville Rd. intersection.
- Bisected by Batesville Rd. and
- Most of this property is already rezoned to either General Commercial (GC), Neighborhood Commercial (NC) or Office Institutional (OI) zoning districts.
- Rezoned in 2006 as part of the Ruby Forest project

Image title



What is/are the appropriate future land uses for this site? Select all that apply. *

☐ Smaller Commercial, similar to this image
 ☐ Larger Commercial, similar to this image

☐ Developed Public Space, similar to this image
 ☐ Undeveloped Public Space, similar to this image

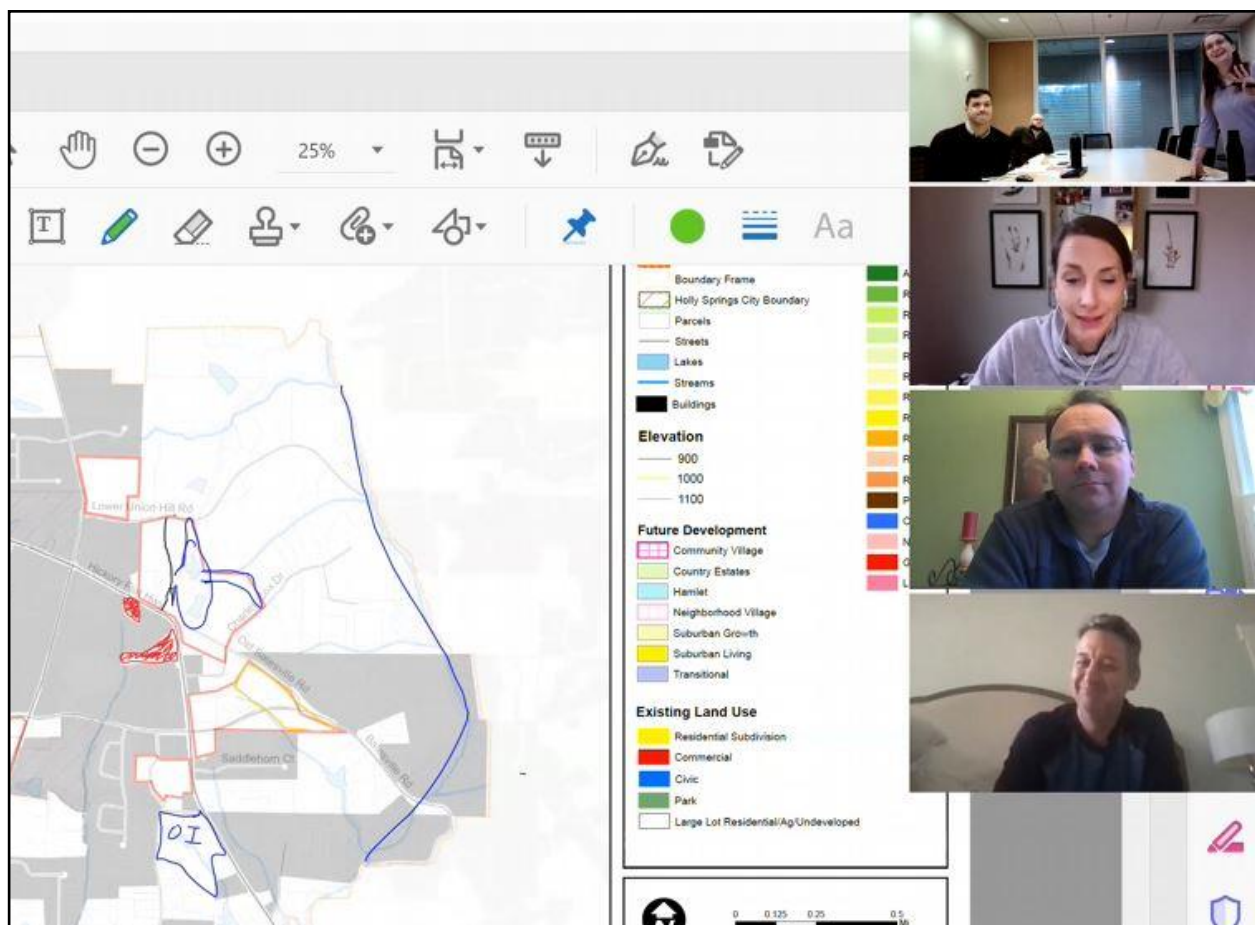
☐ Rural Residential, similar to this image
 ☐ Suburban Residential, similar to this image

☐ Other:

A snapshot of the "Survey" portion of the Land Use Charrette

Preference Survey and asked to select the ones that were appropriate future land uses for each site. The option to select none or provide a different submission was given as well.

In addition to this survey-style charrette, we encouraged participants to register for a video conference charrette that was more similar to those conducted at in person meetings. With this format, individuals were able to see the maps that were normally available in person and direct staff to draw appropriate land uses on the screen for all to see instantaneously. This format was more flexible and allowed open discussion on not only the five sites mentioned previously, but the Study Area as a whole. Vehicle and pedestrian connections were also discussed in the video conference option.



A screenshot of a "Virtual" meeting for the Land Use Charrette

4.4 Community Preference Survey

As mentioned in the overview section for the virtual public meetings, the Community Preference Survey was a participation activity that generated identifiable details from the public's desired land uses. Participants viewed images to make a quick determination on whether or not what was shown is suitable for Hickory Flat. The results allowed staff to better understand what was mentioned previously by the public, regarding the specific types of buildings, activities and land uses. There were seven sections covering commercial/retail, residential, dining, offices, public spaces/parks, street-side sidewalks and nature trails.

Commercial Areas with Retail, Restaurants and Offices



Images of commercial-type uses often portrayed areas with a rhythm of small-scale buildings that congregated on public space, similar to small town main streets or squares. These areas oftentimes appear to place priority on the pedestrian over the automobile with wide sidewalks, outdoor dining areas, street trees, landscape planters, shade structures and street furniture such as benches and kiosks. Building heights were typically one to two stories and never more than three. Public preference is for new restaurants to be typical of those offering full service: sit-down and outdoor dining, no drive-thru's, and high quality architecture and landscaping.

Public Spaces and Parks



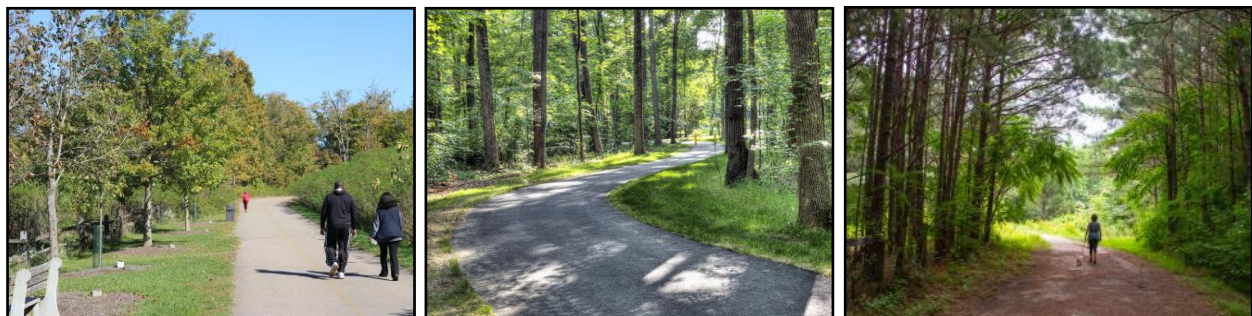
The top voted public spaces or parks images were those that showed passive uses such as lawns, landscaping, some hardscapes and structures such as gazebos, small amphitheaters and shade structures. Commonly identified features were lamp posts, string lighting, fountains, seating, picnic tables and paved walkways.

Sidewalks Along Roadways



Highly rated sidewalk images presented hard surfaced pathways, wide enough to accommodate multiple users simultaneously and different users such as bikes and pedestrians. These images also demonstrated substantial separation from vehicular travel, some with physical protective barriers as well. Lighting, seating, landscape beds and turf were also prominent.

Nature Trails



Nature trails that received the most votes were ones that meandered through minimally developed natural areas. These were quite wide and either hard surfaced or loose material such as fine gravel. Many existing trees appear to have been protected during the development of these trails. Little to no structures are present in these images with benches and trash cans being the few signs of human presence.

Residential Areas

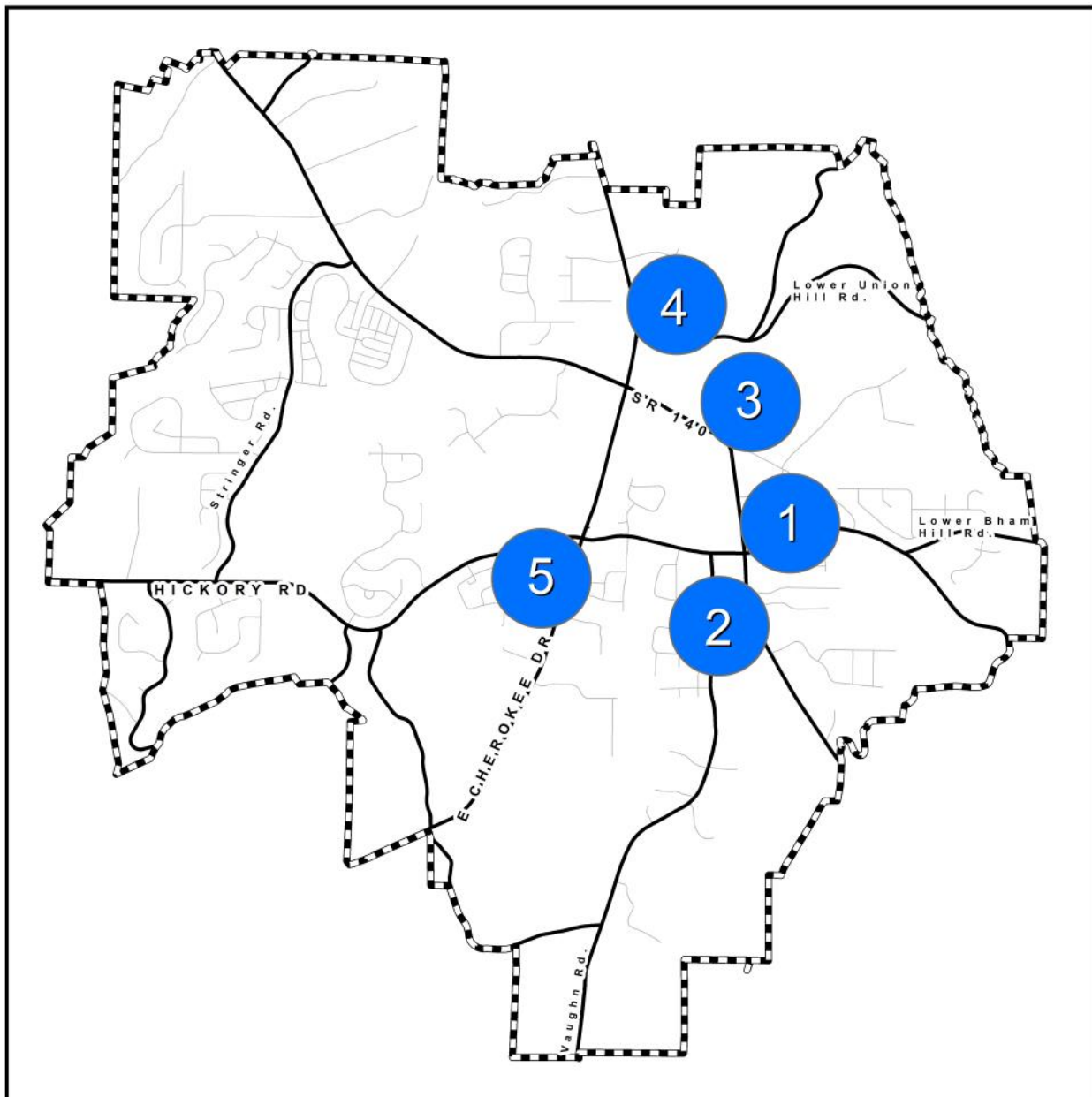


The highest rated images of residential areas were ones that exemplified rural or agricultural character and building design. Suburban style homes also elicited a positive response. These were often marked by sidewalks, low fencing, scattered trees, and open fields or grassed lawns. The automobile did not appear to have a dominating influence on homes or neighborhoods.

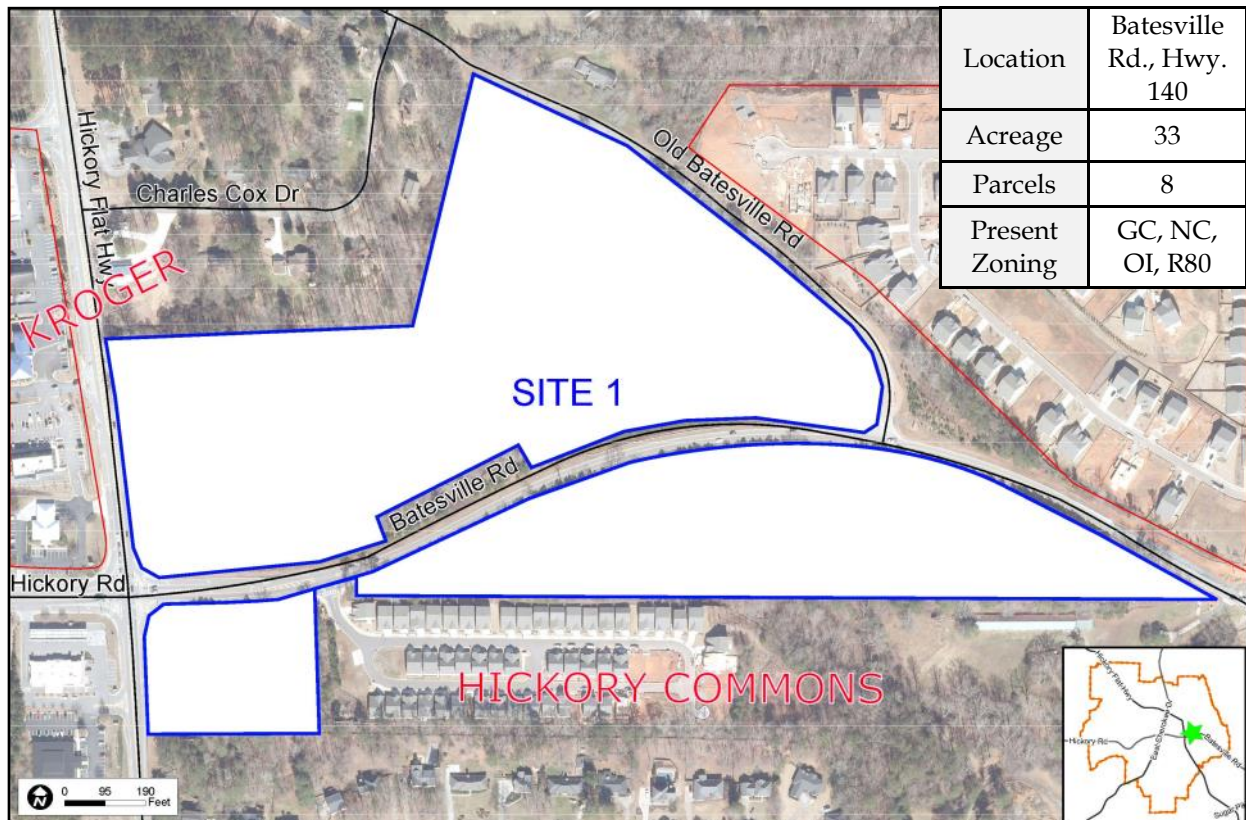
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4.5 Land Use Charrette

The final public meeting featured two charrette formats; the “Questionnaire” format and the “Video Conference” format. The former focused on the five specific sites under development pressure and could be accessed 24-7 through the website. The latter covering the entire study area with a live discussion facilitated by Planning staff. The sites are: 1) State Route 140, Batesville Road and Old Batesville Road, 2) Vaughn Road and State Route 140, 3) State Route 140, Lower Union Hill Road, Old Batesville Road and Charles Cox Drive, 4) East Cherokee Drive and Lower Union Hill Road, 5) East Cherokee Drive and Hickory Road.



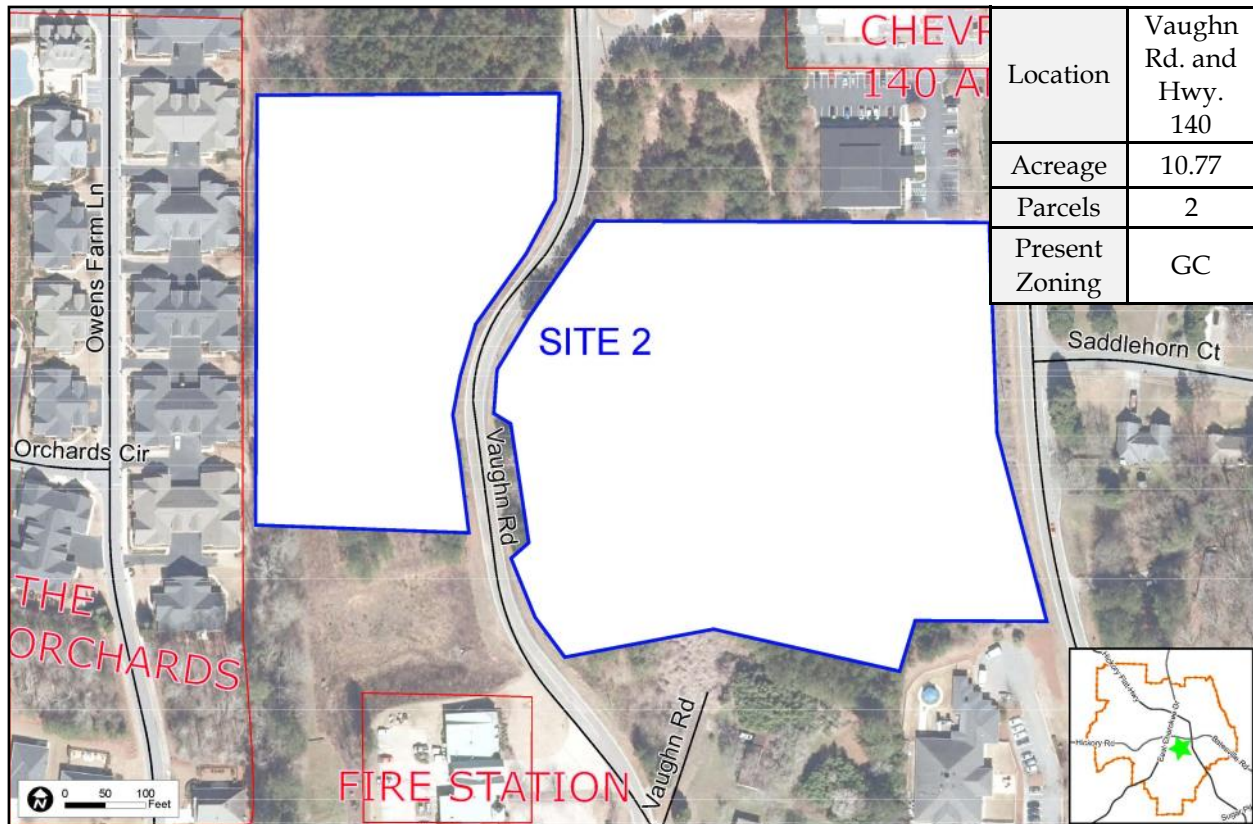
Site #1



The first site is east of the intersection of State Route 140 and Hickory Rd. /Batesville Rd. It is bisected by Batesville Rd and basically in three separate pieces. The parcels are currently zoned GC, NC, OI and R80. According to the results of the "Questionnaire," the public was supportive of this site accommodating more than one land use exclusively. Commercial and public space uses were the preferred future land uses for this site with votes coming in even. To be more specific, the data appears to indicate that smaller scale commercial uses paired with developed public spaces are what is sought at this location. Residential uses for this site only received about 15% of the votes with most of these preferring a rural style of residential in conjunction with other forms of development.

The "Video Charrette" results were even more specific with most groups favoring small commercial such as sit-down restaurants and retail along State Route 140, small office to the rear of this and a swath of preserved greenspace along the creek in the middle portion. This would create a natural buffer between commercial uses along State Route 140 and the remaining areas to the east that groups suggested for suburban residential. Pedestrian connections should link this greenspace to Site #3, utilizing Old Batesville Rd. right of way.

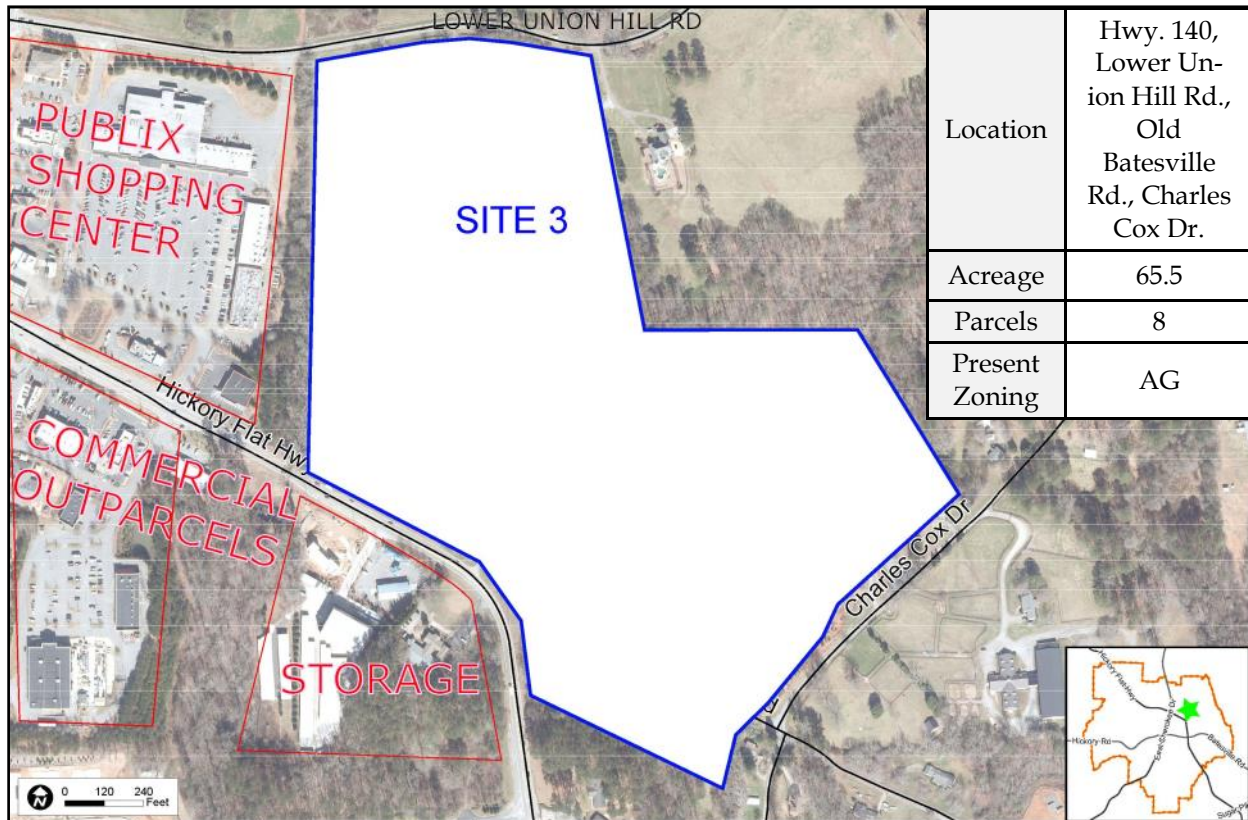
Site #2



Site #2 is split in two portions by Vaughn Rd and lies southwest of the intersection of State Route 140 and Hickory Rd./Batesville Rd. The two parcels are zoned GC. Public sentiment again favored more than one single use throughout Site #2 with most votes going to public space options and then, secondly, commercial uses. As the site is already zoned GC and the leading individual vote was for small scale commercial, it is likely that the site should be developed to accommodate both land use types. Rural residential development received a moderate vote total but this use is impractical due to the existing zoning, major intersection/highway location and adjacent suburban or commercial land uses.

As with site #1, the groups participating in the video charrette suggested that commercial uses cover the eastern portion of the site between State Route 140 and Vaughn Rd but none should immediately back up to the residential development adjacent to the west. Furthermore, the site should provide pedestrian access along the Vaughn Rd. corridor and tie in to the Hickory Rd. network.

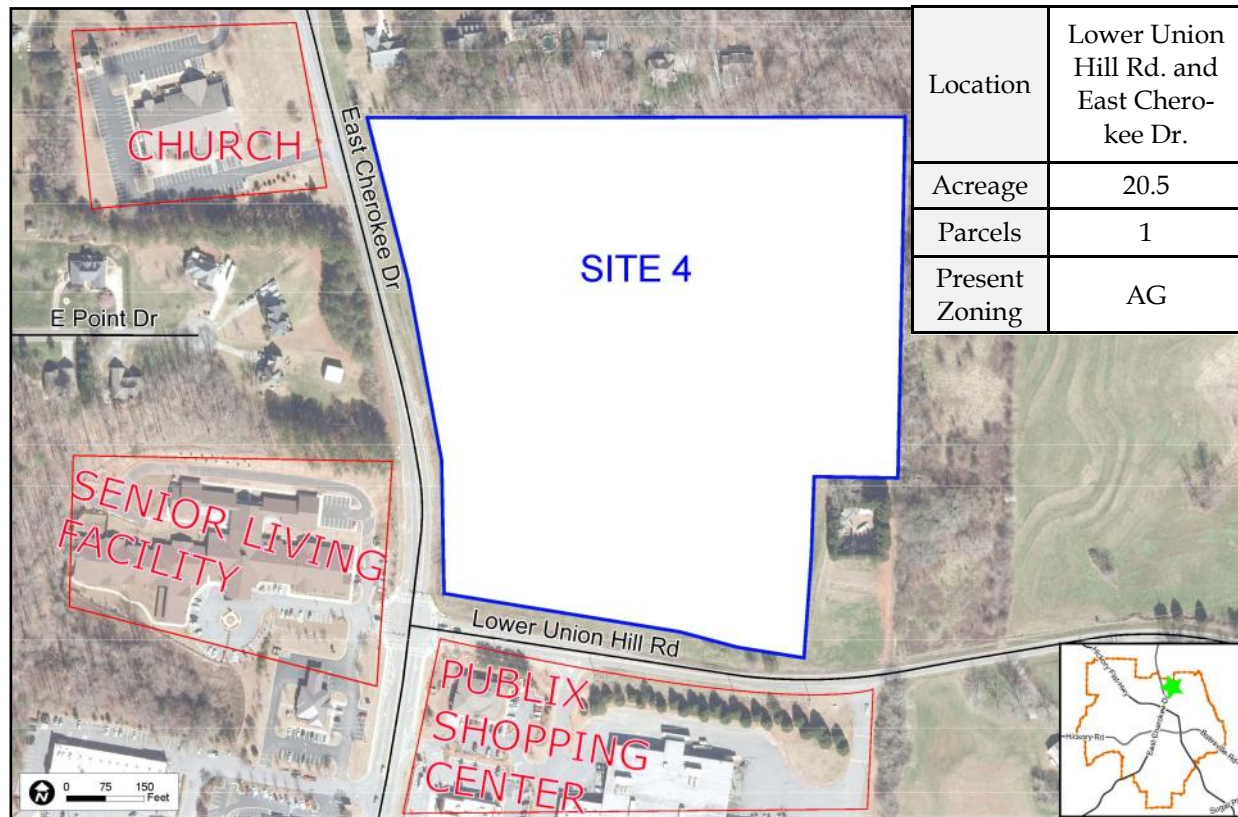
Site #3



Site #3 is between State Route 140 and Lower Union Hill Rd. east of the Publix shopping center, with other frontages on Old Batesville Rd. and Charles Cox Dr. Again, commercial and public spaces were favored more so than residential ones and no single land use was chosen to cover the entire site. The public indicated a strong desire for both developed and undeveloped public space at this location, along with small commercial uses such as retail, sit-down restaurants and offices. Rural residential was a leading vote getter and this land use may be appropriate along the boundaries shared with the existing farms and large lot residential uses.

The public was intently focused on the immense potential this site has for meeting the Community's needs, such as a central gathering place. Large, well-connected and with two sizable ponds, Site #3 was envisioned as supporting various interconnected uses with ample public greenspace. Adjacent to the Publix shopping center and fronting State Route 140, commercial uses like retail and sit-down restaurants could cluster and provide developed gathering space like outdoor eating areas. Other parts of the site may be designated for residential uses or small offices to provide a step-down from the commercial areas to the existing residential. Groups frequently mentioned a new, internal roadway from State Route 140 to Lower Union Hill Rd. that new uses would address. This new street could tie into the adjacent center, creating a grid to build a central gathering space around. Areas around the ponds were suggested as undeveloped greenspace to buffer any commercial uses in the west to residential uses in the east. Outside the site are stream corridors that could act as a future greenway network and connect with any development. This being the most central and visible site with the greatest potential for meeting numerous community desires, a master plan should be created for the entire site.

Site #4



Site #4 is a single parcel at the northeast corner of the East Cherokee Dr. and Lower Union Hill Rd. intersection. This transitional piece of property has commercial uses to the south and west with residential uses to the north and east. The charrette survey results from Meeting #3 again indicated a public preference for more than one dedicated use for the entire site. Public space and commercial uses were again favored but the residential uses received a sizable amount of votes. More specifically, small commercial uses paired with other land uses was the overall vote getter. These other uses to pair with small commercial are, according to the votes, developed public space and rural residential.

Groups participating in the video charrette agreed that small commercial uses, including small office, were appropriate at this site and some form of public space should be included. There was no consensus on where to locate public space internally but only that it should be featured. Public participants also thought residential uses to the north and east of the site could provide a step down to the existing residential areas.”

Site #5



The final site that was examined was Site #5 at the southwest corner of the East Cherokee Dr. and Hickory Rd. intersection. Already zoned for commercial uses and under the jurisdiction of Holly Springs, the majority of respondents chose public space land uses for the primary use for this site. While a possibility exists to incorporate these uses into future plans, this outcome for exclusive public space is unlikely due to the location, context and zoning. Secondary preferences for Site #5 were for small commercial and rural residential.

The video charrette groups had a different opinion on Site #5. They believe the site was best suited solely for small commercial uses, with sit-down restaurants and retail near the roadways and small offices more appropriate towards the rear.

Other Areas

In addition to the five specific sites, the video charrette groups discussed land uses for the entire study area. In general, these groups thought that commercial uses should congregate in the core of the study area, near where existing commercial uses are. Suburban residential uses also may be appropriate in these central areas of Hickory Flat. Also, utilizing stream corridors and accompanying future floodplain's to establish a greenway network was discussed favorably by the video conference participants.

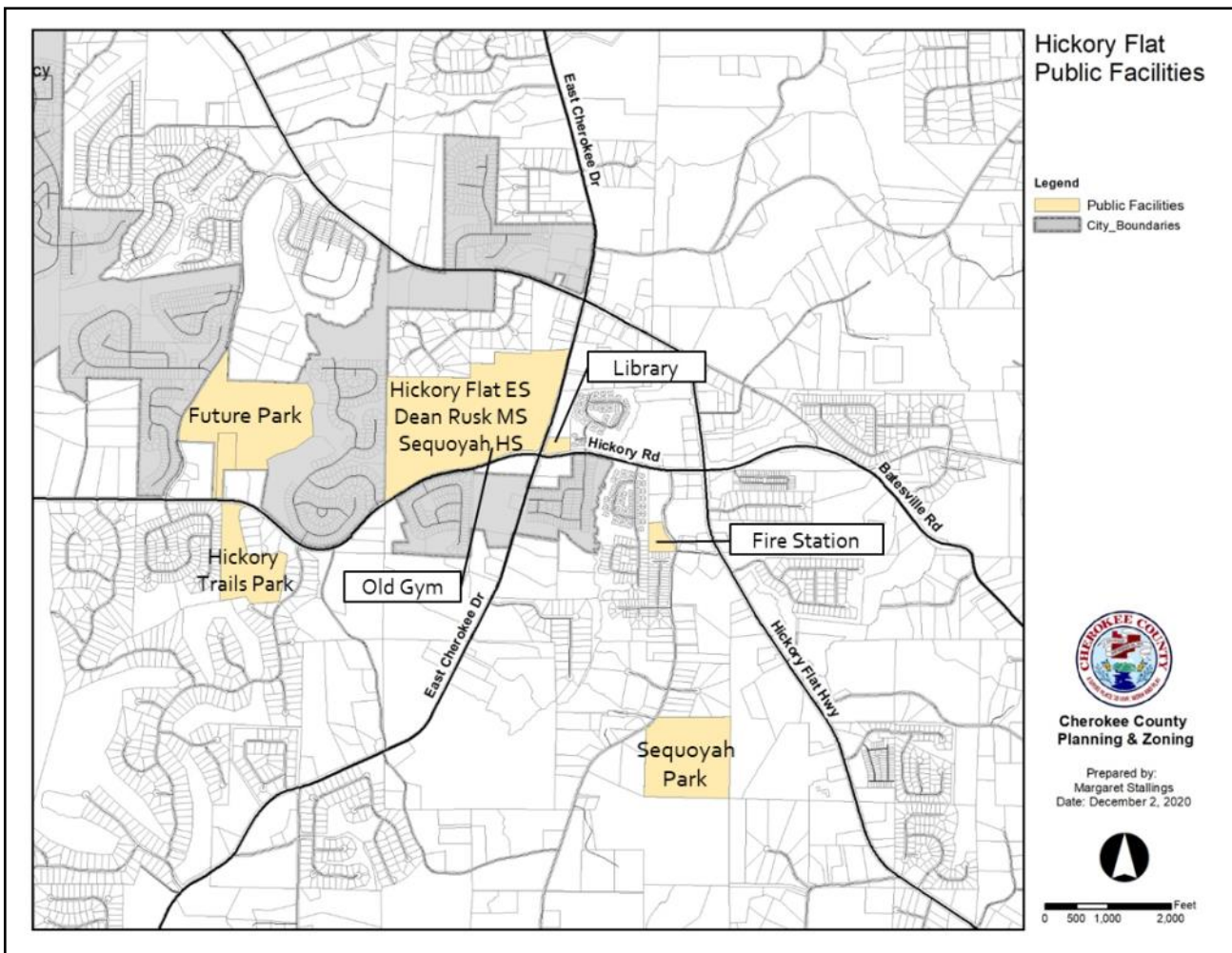


Coordination

5.1 Public Facilities

Public Facilities are a critical part of the Hickory Flat area. Much of the life of the community involves these three schools, multiple parks, a library and a fire station/sheriff's precinct. When planning for the future of the community it is important to coordinate the area plan with the plans for the future of these facilities. We have gathered information about plans for these facilities so we can integrate these changes into the Area Plan.

Schools



According to the Cherokee County School District (CCSD) Facility Planning staff, all three of the schools are currently below maximum capacity so there are no additional expansion plans at this time. The construction of the new Dean Rusk Middle School and the subsequent expansion of Sequoyah High School into the old middle school building in 2017 was the most recent major project for this cluster of schools.

Parks

The Hickory Flat area is well-served for parks with the two existing County parks (Sequoyah and Hickory Trails) as well as a future Holly Springs park property. In 2016, the City purchased 58.6 acres of the old Cagle Dairy property on Stringer Road for a future park. No plans or funding are in place at this time. Holly Springs does have an agreement with the Cagle family to lease the property for an annual corn maze. This future park property is an opportunity to expand the recreation offerings in the Hickory Flat Area.



Sequoyah Park

The County Recreation and Parks Agency has plans and projects that will also impact the Hickory Flat area. In 2018, the agency completed a county-wide master plan for park facilities. This document identified necessary improvements at both Hickory Trails and Sequoyah parks. At Hickory Trails, plans call for ADA access improvements, renovating pavilions, paving the parking lot and possibly adding other passive park uses like a dog park. For Sequoyah, there are several projects planned, such as converting the athletic field to synthetic turf, adding parking, improving the field lighting, replacing the playground equipment and renovating the pavilions. At this time, the County is working on funding for these enhancements to the existing parks. To address the lack of indoor facilities, the Recreation and Parks Agency has also partnered with CCSD to renovate the historic Hickory Flat Gym for use as a community center.



Hickory Flat Gym

Library

In the past few years, the Sequoyah Library System has been developing plans for the expansion of the Hickory Flat Library. The goal of the project is to increase the capacity of the library to service the community by expanding the building and the parking lot. This additional building square footage will be used to add areas for study and quiet reading while also improving spaces



Concept plan for the library expansion

for large meeting and programs. This addition and renovation project will also expand the areas for books and technology while working to connect the building to the growing network of sidewalks in Hickory Flat. They are looking to break ground on this project in the summer of 2021 and to be complete in 10-12 months.

5.2 Transportation

With Hickory Flat Highway (SR 140) cutting through the middle of the study area, this state route is critical to the transportation network of the area. At this time, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) lists the widening of this road to 4 lanes as a long-term project. This means that project is at least 15-20 years in the future. Cherokee County completed a study in 2019 of SR 140 from Canton to the Fulton County line to identify short and mid-term road projects that could improve conditions along the corridor. The consultant studied the next 20 years' worth of growth and the impacts on the transportation system. The study identified the road segment between East Cherokee Drive and Hickory Road/Batesville Road as the most congested between Canton and the Fulton County Line.

Based on the study, the County has already begun to obtain funding through GDOT and the County SPLOST, complete design work and begin construction on these projects. The chart below shows the status of the SR 140 projects within the Hickory Flat Area:

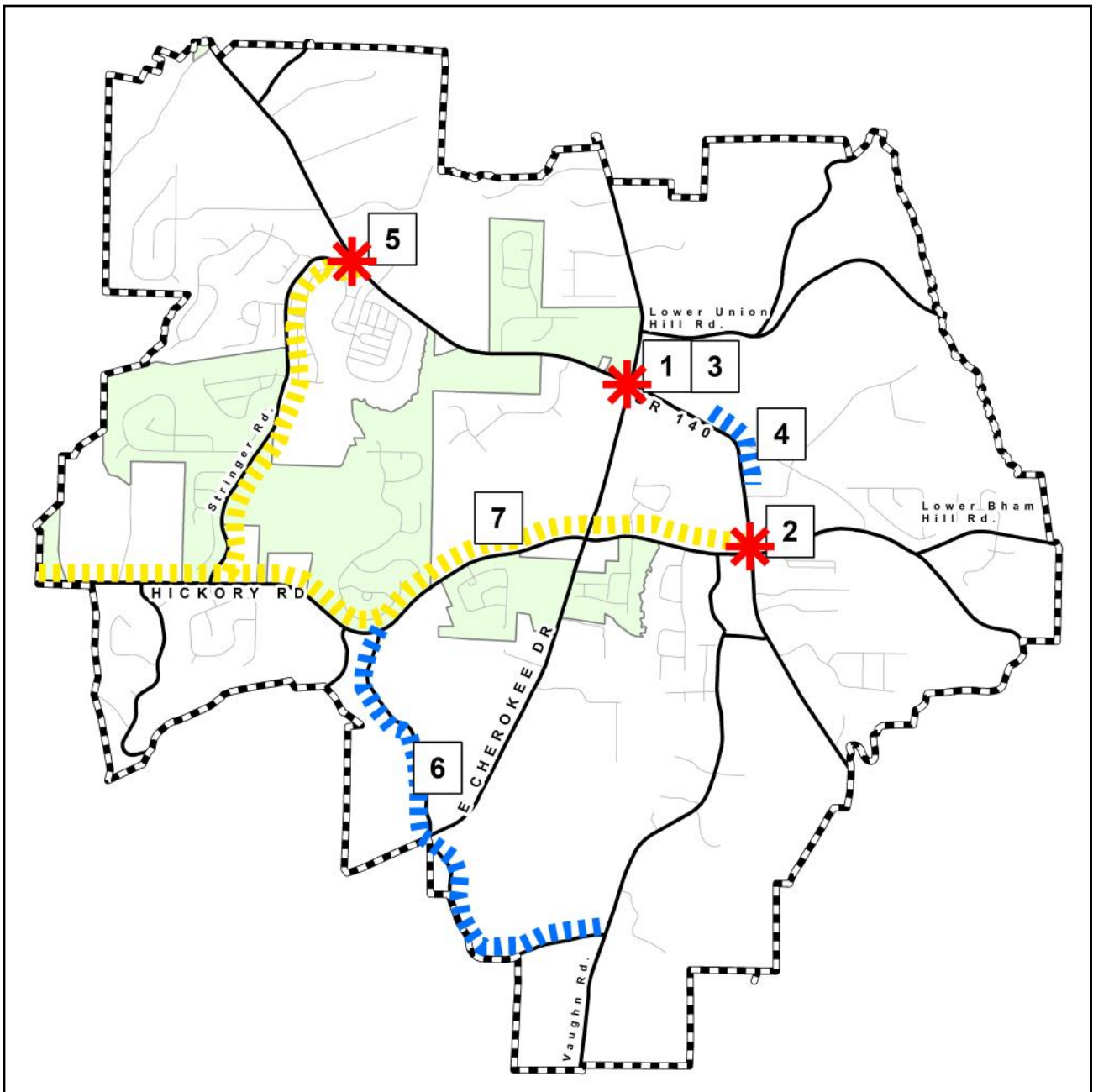
	Status	Location	Project Description
1	Under Construction	SR 140 @ East Cherokee Drive – Phase 1	Add right-turn lanes on 3 of 4 quadrants and left -turn lane storage
2	Design Phase	SR 140 @ Hickory Rd/ Batesville Rd	Add thru lanes on SR 140 and Hickory Road/ Batesville Road.
3	Submitted for Funding	SR 140 @ East Cherokee Drive – Phase 2	Convert right-turn lanes to shared through/right -turn lanes
4	Submitted for Funding	SR 140 @ Old Batesville Curve	Additional travel lanes and rebuild horizontal curve
5	Not Yet Warranted	SR 140 @ Stringer Road	Traffic Signal – County continues to evaluate.

**These projects are illustrated on the map on the next page.*

Outside the Study Area, five other SR 140 projects will also improve conditions in the whole corridor. These improvements are located at Northside Cherokee Boulevard, Scott Road, Avery Road, Univeter Road and the Sugar Pike Road intersections.

There are two other transportation improvement projects of note within the Hickory Flat Study Area. In 2020, Cherokee County began reconstructing Little Road [6] between Hickory Road and Vaughn Road with our internal Public Works resources. The section between Hickory Road and East Cherokee Drive is substantially complete. The remainder of the project will be finished in 2021. The new roadway is designed for low-speed (25 MPH) with 6-foot shoulders to discourage cut-through traffic and maintain the rural character of the road. The County is also working on a project to connect all the existing sections of sidewalk along Hickory Road [7], from New Light Road to SR 140, and Stringer Road. This is a significant improvement to the pedestrian infrastructure in the Hickory Flat Area.

Building on the success of the SR 140 study, the county is wrapping up a similar study along East Cherokee Drive. This will involve analyzing the intersections at Bradshaw Club Drive, Little Road and Hickory Road within the study area.



Planned Transportation Improvements:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) SR 140 @ East Cherokee Drive Improvements | 4) SR 140 @ Old Batesville Curve Improvements |
| 2) SR 140 @ Hickory Rd/Batesville Rd Improvements | 5) SR 140 @ Stringer Road Improvements |
| 3) SR 140 @ East Cherokee Drive Improvements | 6) Little Road Reconstruction |
| | 7) Hickory & Stringer Road Sidewalks |



Appendices

6.1 Full Activity Results

Community Preference Survey—Complete Results

DRAFT

&

Land Use Charrette—Complete Results

6.2 Reference Maps

Aerial
Community Facilities
Hydrology
Land Use

DRAFT

6.3 Case Studies

DRAFT

Case Studies

6.4 Market Study

DRAFT

Complete Market Study Prepared by Bleakly Advisory Group