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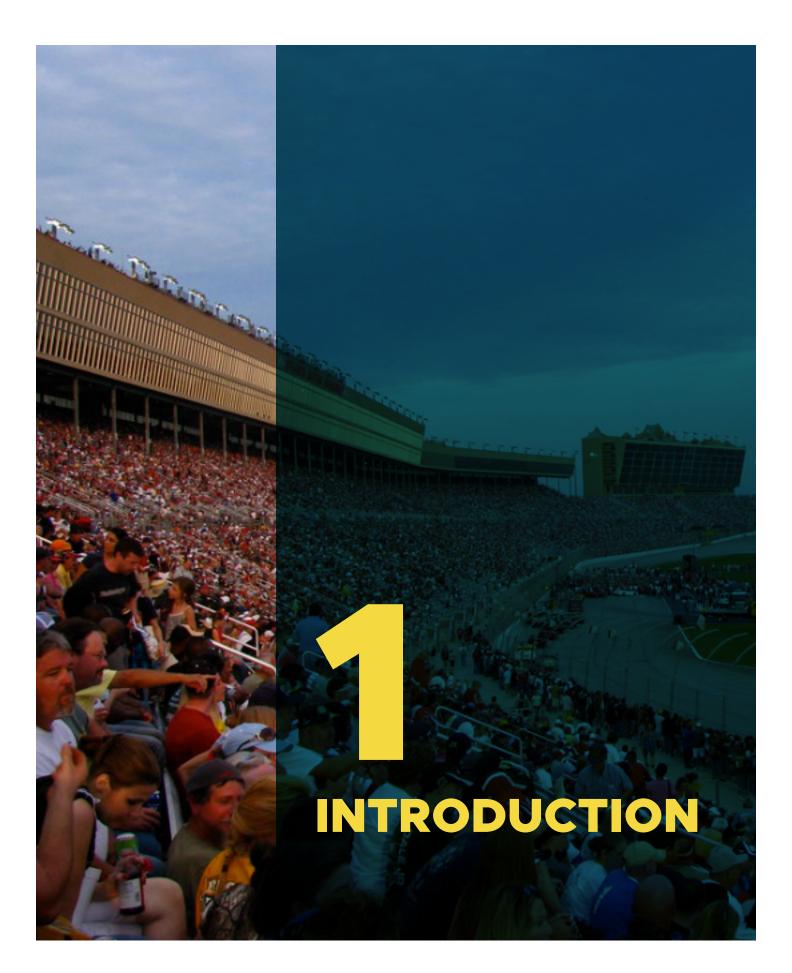
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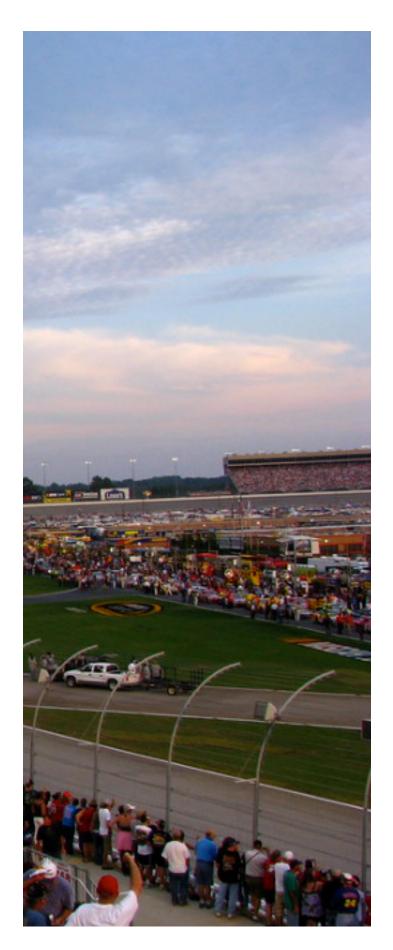
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## >> 1.1. OVERVIEW + **PLAN INTENT**

A comprehensive plan is a roadmap that describes how a community's long-range vision and how to achieve it over time. In Georgia, Comprehensive Plans typically have a 20-year outlook and are updated every 5 years. They are required by the State of Georgia for a jurisdiction to retain its Qualified Local Government (QLG) status, which provides numerous opportunities for funding and support.

The minimum requirements differ by jurisdiction, depending on their size and complexity. For Henry County, the Comprehensive Plan must include:

- » Community Goals
- **Needs and Opportunities**
- » Community Work Program (CWP)
- » Land Use Element
- » Transportation Element
- » Broadband Element
- » Capital Improvements Element (CIE)

One of the major challenges of comprehensive plans is that they tend to be too broad and—they touch most topics very lightly but with little detail. Although this is good from a breadth perspective, it often translates into policies and recommendations that are vague and difficult to implement.

The Henry County Comprehensive Plan 2023 Update takes a different approach. Rather than trying to cover everything at a very high level, this plan seeks to tackle a handful of the County's most pressing challenges comprehensively and across disciplines.

This is particularly important when it comes to guiding growth in the coming years: how can we balance density, infrastructure, and the preservation of more rural areas?

This plan addresses the coming growth in a proactive, thoughtful way by:

- » Evaluating recent development patterns
- » Analyzing existing plans, particularly around infrastructure
- » Working with the community on a vision for growth
- » Providing an action-oriented plan to put Henry County in the driver's seat

### >> 1.2 PLAN PROCESS

This comprehensive plan update occurred from March 2023 through October 2023, detailed below in Figure 1.

#### FIGURE 1. PROCESS + SCHEDULE

## PROJECT INITIATION

March to April 2023

- Kick-Off Meeting
- Consultants analyze 2018 comprehensive plan and supporting documents
- Report of Accomplishments
- Public Hearing #1
- Stakeholder interviews
- Introduce plan to the community
- Identify key assets and challenges

# LAND USE UPDATE + OTHER ELEMENTS

April to June 2023

- Land use analysis, including a public workshop focused on specific parts of the County
- Steering Committee #2
- Future Community
   Map and Land Use Map updates
- Steering Committee #3

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

June to July 2023

- Develop actionoriented implementation strategies to address the key assets + challenges
- Create the Community Work Program (your to-do list!)

## FINAL PLAN + ADOPTION

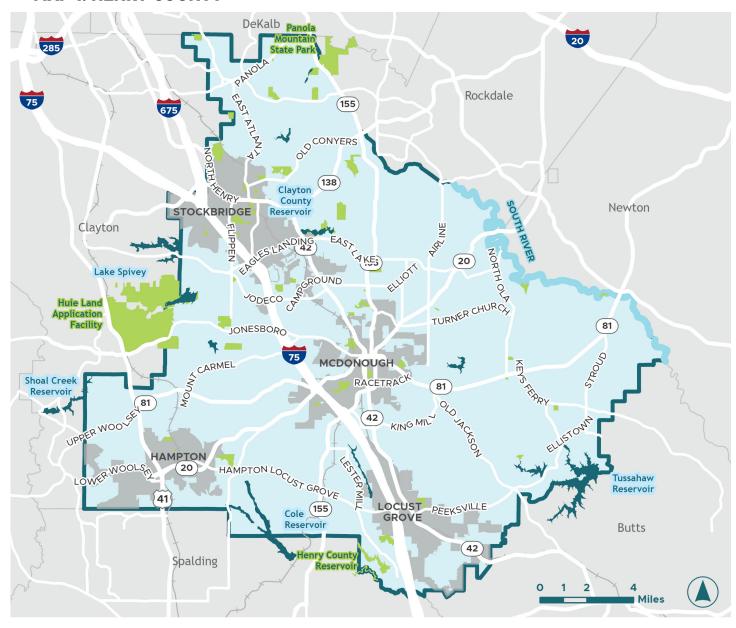
August to October 2023

- Create and share Draft Comprehensive Plan Update
- Once blessed by the community and Commission at Public Hearing #2, shepherd plan through state and regional approval process
- Adopt the plan by its deadline in October

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**



### >> MAP 1. HENRY COUNTY



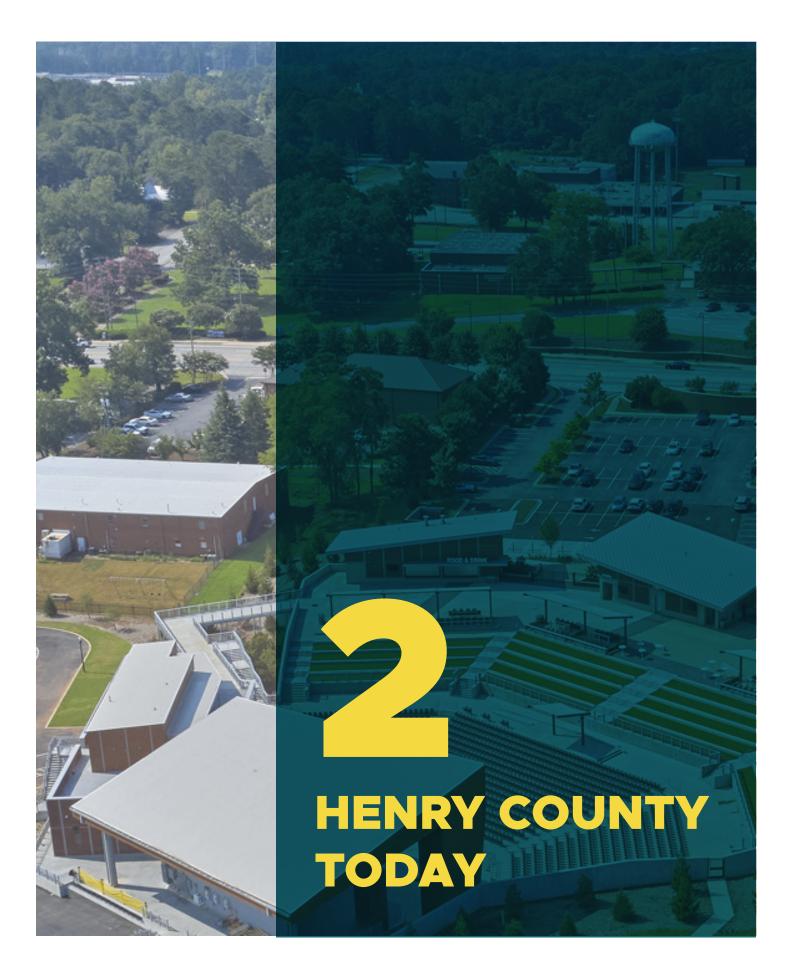
### **LEGEND**

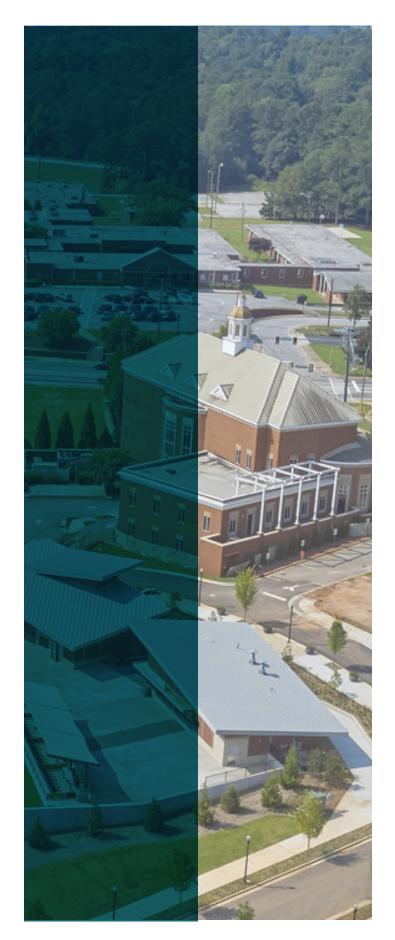
**Incorporated Areas** 

**Neighboring Counties** 

Lakes and Reservoirs

Parks AND Greenspace





## >> HENRY COUNTY **TODAY**

Since the last comprehensive plan update in 2018, Henry County has undergone remarkable changes. The county has been growing at a pace that outstrips its neighbors; development is happening in all corners, particularly new residential growth; and its warehousing and distribution centers are busier than ever. Layer in the impacts of the COVID pandemic and a worrisome shortage of attainable housing, and it is important to understand where the County stands today before charting a path for its future.

This section provides an overview of the following:

- » 2.1 Demographics
- 2.2 Jurisdictions and Neighboring Counties
- 2.3 Related Plans
- 2.4 Land Use
- 2.5 Housing
- 2.6 Transportation
- 2.7 Economic Development
- 2.8 Quality of Life

### >> 2.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

### POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

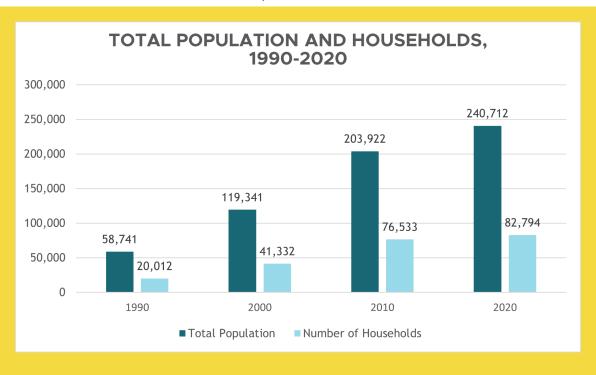
One of the roles of a government is to provide for the wellbeing of its constituents. This is done by providing services such as public safety, community services, economic programs, and land use regulation, the latter of which is utilized to manage and direct growth within a jurisdiction. To effectively manage this role, there needs to be an understanding of who lives within a place. One of the best ways to find this information is to use demographic data. Not only does this data paint a picture of the residents within an area, but it can also provide insight into patterns and trends into how and why people choose to live in Henry County.

At the time of the 2020 Census there were 240,712 people living in Henry County in approximately 82,794 households, making it the 9th most populous county in Georgia. During the 2010 Census the county had 203,922 residents, an increase of 36,790 people, or 18%, for the decade between the two census counts. By 2022, the

population was estimated to be 248,364. In terms of geographic area, Henry is around 322 square miles in size. Using the 2022 population projections, this equates to a population density of roughly 771.3 people per square mile.

Since its initial population boom leading up to the 21st century, the number of people residing in Henry County has continued to steadily increase. From 1990-2007, Henry saw annual population growth rates between 6 and 9%. The economic downturn and housing bust of the Great Recession slowed the pace of growth in Henry, but the county's population has still been increasing at an average rate of 1.8% annually over the past 15 years, much more aligned with national trends. That annual rate of growth since 2018 has risen slightly to 2.2%, with 2020 alone seeing a 3% increase. For comparison, nearby Newton and Butts Counties had average rates of growth for the same period of 1.7 and 2.2 percent, respectively.

FIGURE 2. POPULATION + HOUSEHOLDS, 1990-2020



Not only is the population growing, it is changing. When the county began its expansion in 1990 most of the residents were White (87%), while the remaining residents were largely Black (10%). Within the past three decades the county transitioned to be much more racially and ethnically diverse—as of 2020 the largest racial group in the county was the Black population, constituting 49% of residents, with the White population comprising around 37% of the population, Hispanics and Latinos representing 7.7%, and the remainder identified as Asian or another race/ethnicity.

Since the last comprehensive plan update in 2018, these population and demographic trends have continued in a similar pattern. The county grew by an additional 6% overall, up to approximately 245,235 residents by 2021 (per the American Community Survey). The population has continued to diversify, and by 2021 over 50% of residents in the county were Black. Figure 3 provides a picture of how the racial and ethnic demographics changed over just a three-year period.

The median age for a person living in Henry County is currently 37.1 years old according to Census data from 2020. This number is higher for females than for males, with the median age for each being 38.1 and 35.7, respectively. The county as a whole skews younger, with residents between the ages of 0-19 comprising 28.2% of the total population. In contrast, those of retirement age (aged 65 years and older) are 12.4% of the population (Figure 4). However, when adjusted to include people who are approaching this demographic by adding people aged 55 and over, this number increases significantly to just over a quarter of the population. As this population continues to age, there will be a need for the county to provide support to them aging in place.

FIGURE 3. POPULATION BY RACE

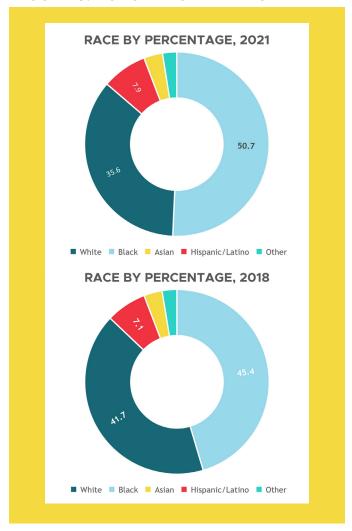
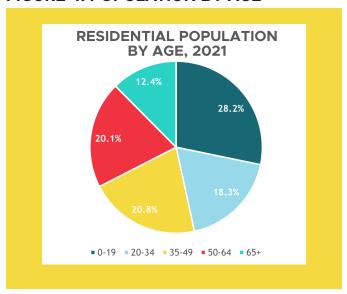


FIGURE 4. POPULATION BY AGE



### **FUTURE PROJECTIONS**

The next few decades appear to hold steady with the current rate of growth, at least based on projections by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). While not exact, these projections have been shown to be reasonably accurate and are a good measure of what to expect using recent trends as a model. For example, in 2015 the ARC projected a 2020 population for Henry County of 246,317 people--only slightly below the population count collected during the 2020 Census.

With that in mind, by the year 2030 the ARC projects an additional 50,000 people will reside in Henry County. For 2040 that number increases to a total of 92,000 additional people, and by 2050 the projection is for roughly 370,000 total people living in Henry County—a difference of nearly 130,000 compared to the current population. These projections are based on the rate of growth staying at its current pace of 1.8 to 2.0% and do not consider the outcome if the county were to modify its land use policies.

### >> 2.2 JURISDICTIONS + NEIGHBORS

### **LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES**

Within Henry County there are four incorporated cities: McDonough, the county seat; Hampton, Locust Grove, and Stockbridge. McDonough and Stockbridge are the largest of the four cities based on population, as each city can lay claim to more than 28,000 residents at the time of the 2020 Census. Hampton and Locust Grove are smaller but expanding cities experiencing rapid growth within the past decade, though both places still have fewer than 10,000 residents according to the latest Census data. It should be noted that some of these population increases do not represent true growth, but are a reflection of recent annexations.

In this comprehensive plan update cycle, the cities of Henry County elected to develop their own individual plans. These plans were still underway and/or in draft form at the time of the county's update, but all of the cities were invited to participate in the County's Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to encourage coordination and collaboration.

### **NEIGHBORING COUNTIES**

Henry County shares its borders with six different counties. To the north and west are DeKalb and Clayton, respectively. Due in large part to their proximity to the City of Atlanta and Hartfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, these two counties trend slightly more urban and urban-suburban in their character, especially in comparison to the other neighboring counties. To the east of Henry County are Rockdale and Newton Counties and to the south are Butts and Spalding Counties. These four counties are generally more suburban and rural in nature, and more closely echo the varying composition of Henry itself.

As part of the planning process, each of Henry County's neighbors' comprehensive plans were reviewed with an eye towards land use policies at the border with Henry. In general, most of these plans are consistent with the county's land uses, and show rural or low density suburban uses near Henry County. The exception is Lovejoy in Clayton County, which is growing rapidly with growth pressure spilling over into southwestern Henry.

FIGURE 5. CITY POPULATIONS IN HENRY COUNTY

	HAMPTON	LOCUST GROVE	MCDONOUGH	STOCKBRIDGE	UNINCORP. HENRY COUNTY
2000	3,968	2,402	8,224	9,658	95,089
2000 - 2010 GROWTH %	76.1%	124.9%	168.5%	165.4%	51.2%
2010	6,987	5,402	22,084	25,636	143,813
2010 - 2020 GROWTH %	19.8%	65.6%	31.5%	13.0%	15.0%
2020	8,368	8,947	29,051	28,973	165,373

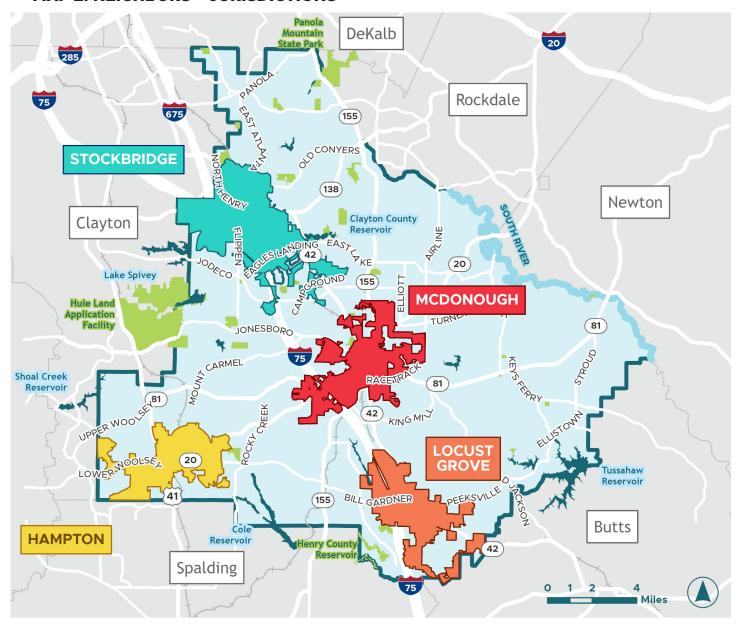
SOURCE: US CENSUS

FIGURE 6. NEIGHBORING COUNTY POPULATIONS

	BUTTS	CLAYTON	DEKALB	NEWTON	ROCKDALE	SPALDING	HENRY
2000	19,522	236,517	665,865	62,001	70,111	58,417	119,341
2000 - 2010 GROWTH %	21.2%	9.7%	3.9%	61.2%	21.5%	9.7%	70.9%
2010	23,655	259,424	691,893	99,958	85,215	64,073	203,922
2010 - 2020 GROWTH %	7.5%	14.7%	10.5%	12.5%	9.8%	5.0%	18.0%
2020	25,434	297,595	764,382	112,483	93,570	67,306	240,712

SOURCE: US CENSUS

### >> MAP 2. NEIGHBORS + JURISDICTIONS



#### **LEGEND**



### >> 2.3 RELATED PLANS

#### 2018 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The county's previous comprehensive plan was completed in 2018 and highlighted several strengths, such as proximity to the Interstate; the history and appealing character of the local cities and neighborhoods; and the amount of land available and suitable for new development. The plan also discussed a few areas of concern that are still relevant topics in Henry County today including traffic congestion, the lack of housing options, needed infrastructure improvements (specifically roadways), and uncertainties regarding the rapid rate of growth.

Additionally, the 2018 plan discussed the ongoing expansion of the industrial and warehousing sectors in the county and how residents felt that there should be more emphasis on attracting professional or office jobs. While these identified strengths and areas of concern may seem at odds with each other, it highlights the often complex and dichotomous nature of growth and development and the community expectations that arise during the planning process.

Another aspect of the 2018 comprehensive plan was the creation of a Future Community Map. This map was a high-level overview of the county and established character areas based on projected growth and anticipated development types. The Future Community map was essentially a very generalized picture of future land uses in the county. These 11 land use categories laid out a vision for the type and intensity of development within the county.

### **HENRY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2022 UPDATE**)

In 2022 Henry County and its municipalities collaborated on a comprehensive transportation plan (CTP) Update. The plan reviewed and analyzed the data that contributes to travel demand and how future transportation projects will meet the needs of the county. An overarching theme focused on the projected urbanization through population growth and the expected travel demand from new residential, commercial, and economic centers through the I-75 corridor. It also referenced the information contained in 2018 comprehensive plan and other localized plans and studies. The goal of the plan was to provide a centralized, coordinated guide for recommendations on the future of transportation improvements in Henry County.

The CTP identified several transportation-related needs for the county to consider moving forward. Given the rapid growth in the county since the 1990s it is not surprising that the plan focused largely on the shortcomings of the roadway system, as the county's population explosion has outpaced its infrastructure investments. Because of this, most of the recommendations from the plan concentrate on increasing roadway capacity.

There were several recommendations from the CTP that will play a large part in how Henry County should focus its investment to move forward over the next few decades. The CTP identified short-term, mid-term, and long-term transportation projects to alleviate current and projected traffic concerns.

### **2022 TRANSIT PLAN**

Similarly, and in tandem with the CTP, the Transit Master Plan (TMP) presents an overview of the existing conditions, analyzes the needs, and provides a guide for recommended projects, but focuses specifically on a transit vision for the county. The existing conditions reviewed current and past transit capabilities in Henry County, while the needs assessment reviews socioeconomic data and land uses to identify the most advantageous transit projects to support the residential community's demands.

Henry is currently served by two transit systems: Henry County Transit, which provides on-demand service to residents during the weekdays, and The ATL, which operates four commuter bus routes at fixed park-andride locations. The ATL provides service to Downtown and Midtown Atlanta from McDonough, Stockbridge, and Hampton. The TMP recognizes the importance of the framework these two transit services have established in the county as a major asset to the future of transit within Henry. Continued population growth and development patterns provide an opportunity for the expansion of current transit programs like the Henry County Transit service to provide a safe and dependable high-quality transit system that enhances the quality of life and delivers mobility options for more county residents.

The TMP recommends that higher density developments be focused around proposed future transit hubs, and that an emphasis on increasing the availability of sidewalks in tandem with a more robust trail network will be crucial to the overall health of the transportation systems within the county.



SPLOST roadway project under construction



Future bus branding for Henry Connect Image Source: mhfnews.org

### **HENRY COUNTY TRAILS PLAN**

Concurrent with the Henry County CTP, a separate document was produced focusing entirely on the county trail system. Though the findings of the Henry County Trails Plan were incorporated into the overall CTP, it should be regarded as its own document with a comprehensive focus on needs and opportunities related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

The plan details the desire of the county and its cities for expanding the trails network within Henry and is supported by both residents and elected officials. At the time of the study, there were only a handful of existing trails in the county: one located within Stockbridge, one in McDonough, one in Hampton, and a small segment of the Panola Mountain Greenway in the northeast. The trails plan also recognized certain areas within the county which—due to factors such as current land uses and proximity to local cities, schools, parks, activity centers, and other services—were established as the highest propensity areas for potential pedestrian/bicycle needs and the focal point in the future development and expansion of the trail network. Advice on wayfinding and branding, funding, preservation of trail right of way, and a future trail map were all offered as part of the study.

### **2010 HUDSON BRIDGE -JONESBORO ROAD LCI**

In 2010 Henry County was awarded a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grant from the ARC to study the area along I-75 between Hudson Bridge Road to the north and Jonesboro Road to the south, concentrating on parcels roughly ½ mile to the east and west of the Interstate corridor. Most of the area in the study was in unincorporated Henry County, though a portion to the north contained small sections of the City of Stockbridge. In total, more than 1,300 acres of land were included in the LCI, much of it undeveloped.

The results of the LCI echo themes from the 2018 comprehensive plan and still rings true today. There are needs in the employment sector, with many of the jobs in the area being related to the service or industrial uses. The plan discussed the assets of nearby natural resources and encouraged the protection of these areas, recommending the creation of a multi-modal trails system. The LCI study noted that there was a strong existing retail framework-47% of the 555 developed acres in the study area was commercial—but lacked the nearby density to support it. The report advocated for the county to focus on investing in pedestrian-oriented developments with a broader mix of uses, suggesting that more multi-family residential be constructed in the areas close to the retail.



Boardwalk trail at Panola Mountain State Park; Image Source: Visit Henry County

### >> 2.4 LAND USE

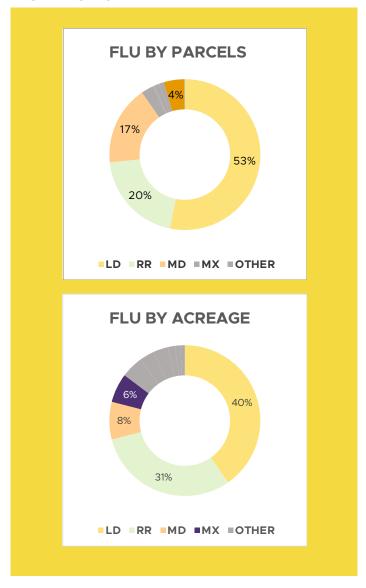
Henry County spans a large geography and includes a growing diversity of land uses. The regions in the north and northwest are closer to the heart of the Atlanta region; as such, the built environment is much more suburban, especially around Stockbridge. Lot sizes are typically smaller when compared to those areas in the southern part of the county, which have maintained a more rural character. There is also a stronger commercial presence along major arterial and collector roads.

I-75, which enters the county in the northwest near Stockbridge and exits south of Locust Grove, has had a significant impact on land use, giving rise to areas of dense retail around the Interstate exits and attracting an industrial and warehousing sector in the area south of McDonough near Highway 155. Meanwhile the eastern part of the county mimics somewhat the built environment of the south, with larger, rural residential lots and less commercial development.

The county also has several State Routes, many of which lead to McDonough. This convergence of major roadways, the presence of the county seat in McDonough, and the historic importance of the railroad there, has led to more density in the area surrounding McDonough. The same is true of the areas near Stockbridge, though for reasons that can be attributed more to its proximity to Atlanta and spillover growth. Meanwhile, Hampton, Locust Grove, and their surrounding environs have mostly avoided the transition to a suburban character and have largely maintained their more rural nature. The exception to this is the Atlanta Motor Speedway in Hampton, a large area of land devoted to larger scale entertainment uses.

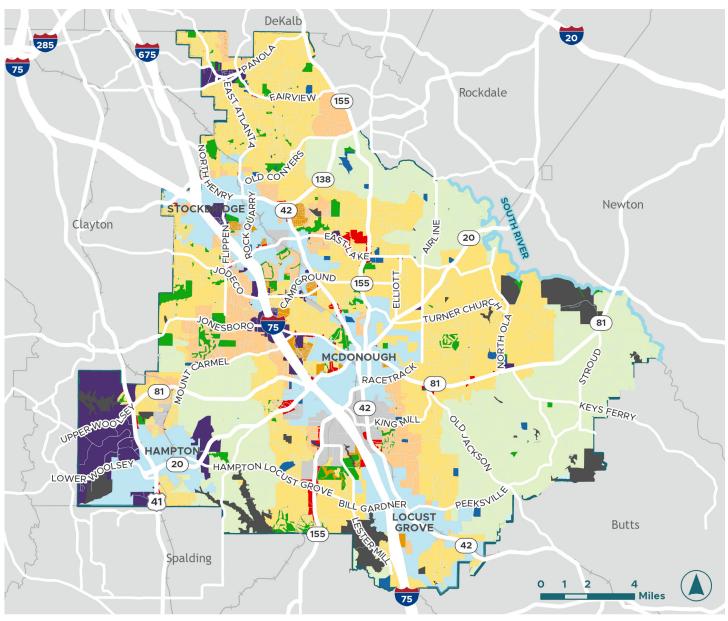
The current future land use (FLU) map, adopted with the 2018 plan, has 11 different future land use categories. However, four of those land use designations account for 94% of all the parcels and 80% of the total acreage within the county. These are the Low Density (LD), Medium Density (MD), High Density (HD), and Rural Residential (RR) land use categories, all of which are specified solely for residential uses. When combined, the two lowest

FIGURE 7. FUTURE LAND USE (FLU) DISTRIBUTION



density designations, LD and RR account for 73% of the parcels and 71% of the acreage in the county (Figure 7). With so much of the county dedicated to a single use, the remaining areas bear the burden of servicing the residents of Henry County with non-residential uses. This includes commercial, retail, and restaurants as well as healthcare, parks, and community centers. The Mixed Use designation, which allows a variety of commercial and residential uses, is a majority of the remainder but still only accounts for 2.5% of the total land use by parcels, while the industrial designation accounts for 1% by the same metric.

### >> MAP 3: 2018 FUTURE LAND USE MAP



Note: This is the Future Land Use Map as submitted in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and does not show map changes made since then; the intention of this map is to show our starting point as the baseline for evaluating changes since.

### **LEGEND**





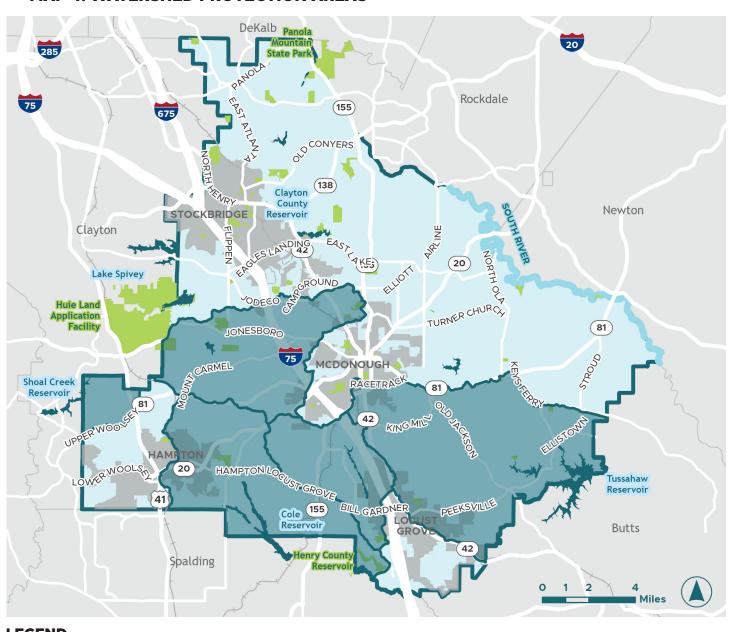
Tussahaw Reservoir; Image Source: Henry County Water Authority

The county also has an area designated for lower density uses that supersedes the future land use map. This is regulated in part by the Watershed Protection Ordinance. The ordinance is intended to limit development inside its boundaries and offer an additional layer of protection against higher density developments within the Tussahaw, Indian Creek, Long Branch Creek, Towaliga Creek, and Shoal Creek watersheds. The watershed protection ordinance augments the zoning standards by placing restrictions on uses allowed within the watershed areas, increasing the minimum lot size requirements in these areas, enhancing site design standards and placing additional regulations on the use of impervious surfaces and septic tanks. It also creates buffers to watersheds and streams that are more restrictive than what the State of Georgia requires.

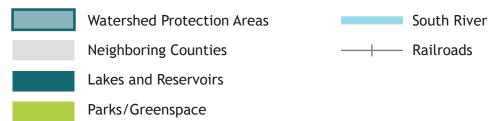
While the future land use tells part of the story, it is important to remember that the future land use map is really a policy instrument to guide zoning—specifically rezoning requests.

Zoning is the tool that regulates improvements that can be made on a piece of property, sets standards such as minimum lot sizes and setbacks or yards, and implements regulatory aspects of the comprehensive plan's land use policy. Theoretically, land use and zoning are aligned in such a way that multiple zoning districts are compatible with a single land use category, offering flexibility in the land use policy to adapt over time as conditions in the county evolve.

### >> MAP 4: WATERSHED PROTECTION AREAS



### **LEGEND**



### **REVIEW OF MAJOR PROJECTS**

Since the last comprehensive plan update in 2018, Henry County has developed rapidly. In the past five years alone (as of April 2023), there were 96 major new development projects in the unincorporated area including large-scale developments of both single and multi-family residential uses, commercial and retail developments, and industrial or manufacturing based uses.

Developments permitted since 2018 were generally comprised of new residential communities on formerly undeveloped land, or the occasional re-establishment of previously approved or platted residential subdivisions that had gone dormant. Of the 96 major projects, more than two-thirds (65 total) were single-family residential developments, with an additional 9 projects recognized as multi-family residential. In all, residential land uses accounted for approximately 77% of the major projects

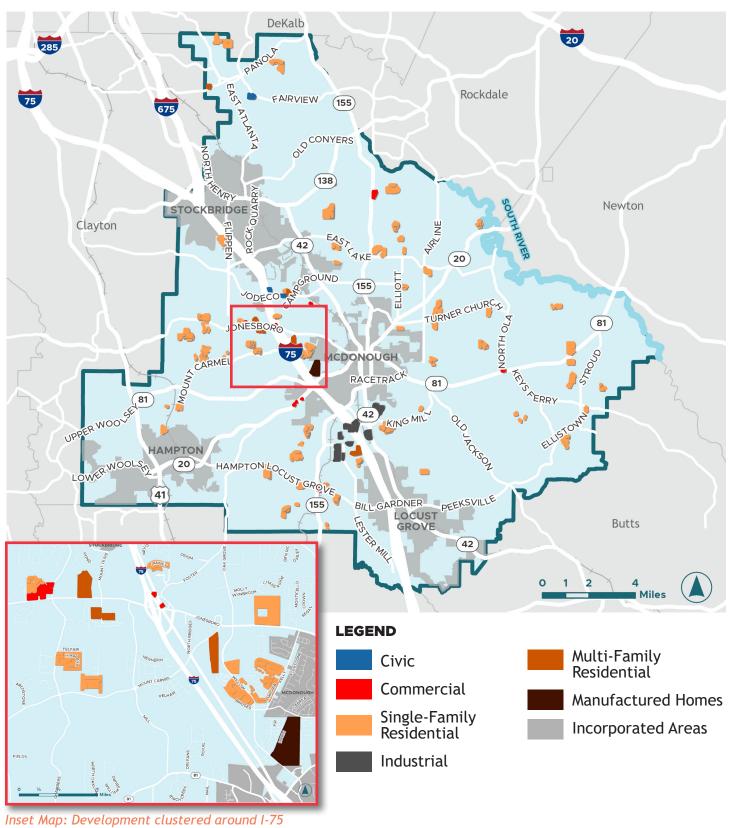
during the 5-year time frame—a number consistent with current land use and zoning policies. Another 20% (19 total), split nearly evenly in number, were commercial or industrial land uses. The remaining 3% were identified as being associated with either healthcare or civic/institutional uses.

Geographically there were major land use changes dispersed throughout the county, though Map 5 shows the largest concentration of new development happened in the areas closest to I-75 and within the approximate geographic center of the county. It is within this development "hot zone" where much of the non-residential growth occurred. With the exception of a few commercial developments in the Kelleytown and Ola communities, the major land use changes in the county outside of this hot zone are predominately residential in nature.



New apartment development on Mount Carmel Road near I-75; Image Source: Carmel Vista Apartments

### >> MAP 5: LAND DEVELOPMENT PERMITS BY TYPE, 2018-2022





The Grove Master Plan—a proposed high-impact development; Image Source: Geosam Capital

### PIPELINE PROJECTS

Along with the major land use changes that were revealed by the building permit data, several other projects were identified which will have a future impact on land use within the county. These projects are being referred to as "pipeline" projects as they have not yet finalized the entitlement or permitting process and are typically in the preliminary design stage. In total there are 19 projects considered impactful enough to qualify as pipeline projects.

Apart from the construction of the Birch Creek Elementary school, the pipeline projects are mostly residential and include a mix of multi-family apartments, attached single-family townhomes, and detached single-family houses. Using information gathered from recent rezoning cases it does appear that several of the pipeline projects will be mixed-use, with plans to incorporate a

variety of non-residential uses such as retail and office spaces. In a similar pattern to what emerged during the major projects analysis, the pipeline projects are generally clustered immediately north and south of Jonesboro Road and within approximately 1.5 miles of I-75 (Map 6).

Another high-impact project in the pipeline is The Grove, located in the far southwestern corner of the county at the former location of the "Megasite." As currently proposed, The Grove would add about 670,000 square feet (SF) of retail/commercial, 1.32 million SF of commercial multi-use, a hotel, 3,760 multi-family units, and 3,400 single family units across 1,278 acres. This is a massive development that, if it is implemented, would fundamentally alter the development trajectory of this now-rural part of the county, and the relatively undeveloped areas between it and I-75.

### >> MAP 6: PIPELINE PROJECTS JONESBORO ROAD AND I-75



### **LEGEND**

Pipeline Residential/Mixed Use Projects

Incorporated Areas

### >> **2.5 HOUSING**

Henry County experienced a surge of population growth beginning in the 1990s and continuing into the mid-2000s. The availability of undeveloped land, the accessibility of I-75, and the proximity to regional employment centers available in nearby Atlanta were a major attraction for the development of housing, contributing in large part to the overall population increase.

The effect of this growth has been the transition from what was once a rural and agriculturally based county to a suburban bedroom community. Although there are still parts of Henry County that retain the rural nature that once dominated the landscape, the proliferation of residential development has spread throughout the county, drastically altering the character of the built environment and the lives of people who reside there.

Housing in Henry County since the 1990s can generally be characterized by the rise of suburban single-family subdivisions as developers have taken advantage of this rural to suburban transition. The availability of large tracts of land that were once agricultural or retained by family-/estate-owned properties has been a significant contributing factor in the change.

According to the US Census American Community Survey (ACS), there were approximately 88,830 total housing units in Henry County by the end of 2021. Out of these units an estimated 84.7% are single-unit detached structures, the typical single-family house type. This number has been consistent over the past few years as a similar percentage of the total housing units in 2018 were also in single-unit detached structures (86.9 %per the ACS). These single-family units are generally located in neighborhoods which have been developed as selfcontained developments, resulting in a pattern of growth with little connection to adjacent communities, both physically and socially.

Of the housing units available in the county in 2021 there

were roughly 84,978 occupied, meaning about 4% of the total units in the county were vacant. A majority of these occupied units, or 76.4%, are owner-occupied, with the remaining units accessible for rental occupation. This is well above both the national average of 64.6% and the metro Atlanta average, which is more closely aligned with the national average at 64%.

The inclination towards larger housing is commonplace, as 86% of all the available housing units within Henry County have three or more bedrooms. Given the high rates of detached single-family houses and current policies this is not surprising, though it does suggest that there is a large proportion of the population whose housing needs are not being met by the existing housing stock.

While in the past the tendency has been a preference for the development of detached single-family houses, there has been a recent trend towards more dense housing. Since 2018 the county has issued permits for the construction of nine apartment-style multi-family developments and several other attached single-family housing types (i.e., townhouses). There are also guite a few recent proposals in the pipeline that diverge from the traditional housing development in terms of their construction type and density.

However, because of the current land use policy—which has been guided in part by traditional definitions on what is considered a "typical" home—the frequency of detached single-family developments is still the predominant housing option. As the county quickly approaches a quarter of a million residents, the timing is optimal to review and adjust the policies that have created the current housing environment and ensure that a variety of housing is being offered that can cater to the diversifying population and changing viewpoints on how people are choosing to live.



Aerial photo of Henry County, circa 1993. (Source: Google Earth)



Aerial photo of same location, 2022. The effects of decades of suburban growth are clearly visible. (Source: Google Earth)

### >> 2.6 TRANSPORTATION



Intersection improvement at Campground Road and Winbrook Drive

Henry County's existing transportation system reflects its changing position in the Atlanta region—a once rural, bedroom community transitioning into a more urban-suburban place. The County is currently working diligently to expand its rural transportation bones into a system that can better accommodate more intense growth pressures, from widening roadways to becoming incrementally more multi-modal with better sidewalks and a future transit system.

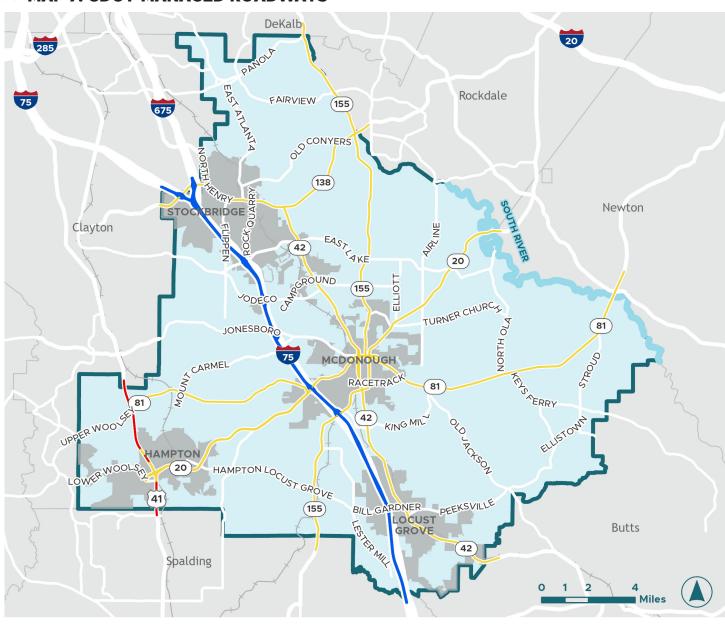
#### **ROADWAYS**

Henry County has a range of functionally classified roadways that include the Interstate (I-75 plus its interchange with I-675), principal arterials, major and minor collectors, and local roads. These classifications represent factors such as the access they provide to residential and other land uses, the number of lanes, and the speed limit. The amount of centerline miles varies from 25.8 miles of Interstate (1.6% of the total) to 1,278 miles of local roads (76.7% of the total).

### **Roadway Management**

Responsibility for the planning, operations, and maintenance of the roadways is influenced by the governmental agency whose control they are under. The Interstates, US Routes, and State Routes (SR) are under the purview of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) while local roads such as Jodeco Road and Eagles Landing Parkway are the responsibility of Henry County. In addition, roadways within incorporated city limits are the responsibility of that city. Further complicating matters is one of the State Road and Tollway Authority's (SRTA) facilities operated and maintained in coordination with GDOT, the managed lanes that are in the median of I-75 through Henry County.

### >> MAP 7. GDOT-MANAGED ROADWAYS



### **LEGEND**

Interstate

**US** Highway

**State Routes** 

**Incorporated Areas** 

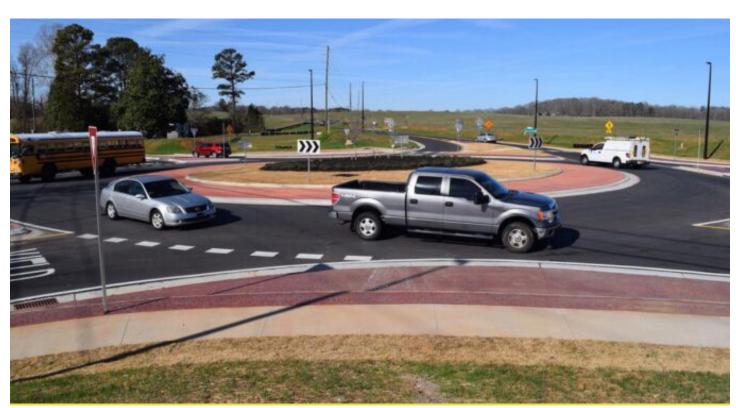
### **Traffic + Level of Service**

Like most parts of the Atlanta region, traffic is a major consideration in Henry County. Traffic volume data is collected and then reported via GDOT's Traffic Analysis and Data Application (TADA). The highest daily volumes are at the northern end of I-75 and average more than 170,000 cars per day. Although volumes do decrease further south on I-75, they are still high at the southern end of the county, with approximately 90,000 vehicles per day. On surface streets the traffic volumes are highest in proximity to the interchanges with I-75. Many of these are within the county's cities such as SR 138 in Stockbridge (which reports approximately 40,000 vehicles per day) and parts of Jonesboro Road in McDonough (approximately 30,000 vehicles per day).

One way to simplify traffic data is to look at Level of Service (LOS). This measure consolidates congestion and delay data into six categories, A through F, with LOS A being the least congested and LOS F being the most congested. The information is most often reported for the morning and evening peak commuting times. Although there is congestion in many parts of the county, it is the State Routes that experience the highest level of congestion and delay (LOS E and F) during one or both peak commuting periods.

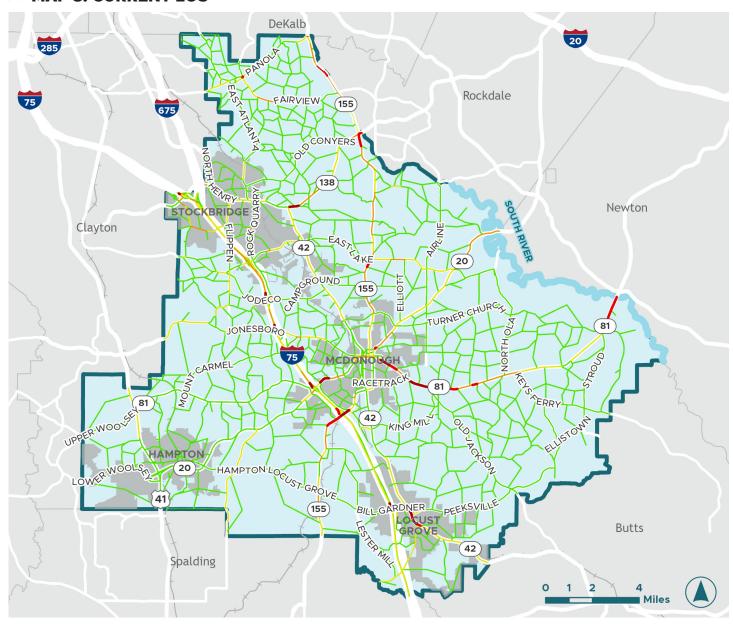
### **Crashes**

Crash record data is collected and then reported via GDOT's Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS). Crashes occur more frequently where there are higher speeds and higher volumes. In Henry County the crash hotspots are centered around the interchanges on I-75. From a recent analysis the highest percentage of crashes are the rear end type; fatal crashes were 0.2% of the total crashes that occurred in Henry County.



Henry County's recent roundabout investments through SPLOST Image Source: mhfnews.com

### >> MAP 8. CURRENT LOS



### **LEGEND**



### **FREIGHT**

Because of its location between the Port of Savannah and the core of the Atlanta region, Henry County is one of the most important centers for warehousing and distribution in Georgia, resulting in large amounts of truck traffic. This not only impacts I-75, but also all the State Routes in the county, which by law cannot prohibit truck traffic. The increase in heavy vehicles has impacted traffic operations and pavement quality, and has contributed to an increase in crashes.

In addition to trucking, the railroads play a role in freight in Henry County. Norfolk Southern has three lines in the county: one through Hampton that roughly parallels US19/US 41 to the east; one that parallels SR 155 which then merges; and a third which parallels SR 42/US 23 and goes through Locust Grove, McDonough, and Stockbridge. There are 42 public railroad at-grade crossing associated with these lines. The trains can cause delays as they have the right-of-way; this condition is anticipated to be exacerbated as more freight is transported by rail from the increased activities at the Georgia ports.

## SIDEWALKS, BICYCLE FACILITIES + GREENWAYS

Henry County recently completed an inventory and analysis of the available sidewalk network. Even though sidewalks have been added in recent years, in unincorporated Henry County sidewalks are primarily within residential subdivisions. There is very little pedestrian infrastrucutre along arterials and collectors, and between residential subdivisions.

Bike facilities can take a number of forms such as shared travel lanes marked with sharrows, on-road bike lanes, multi-use side paths, and greenways. As it stands today Henry County has very few bicycle facilities; those that



Wayfinding signage on the Panola Mountain Greenway Image Source: Path Foundation

exist are isolated and do not connect with each other.

One of the strongest facilities is a multi-use greenway trail extension from the Panola Mountain Trail system provides an extension as a pedestrian bridge over SR 155 to Austin Road Middle School.

### **TRANSIT**

Transit in Henry County is currently limited. Fixed route transit service was started a few years ago in a specific area of northern Henry County but was discontinued because of very low ridership. MARTA currently only provides local service to the Henry County line.

However, the Henry County Transit Department operates an on-demand service with reservations required. The for-fee service operates Monday through Friday from 6 am to 6 pm. The Transit Department also coordinates with the Georgia Department of Human Services to provide human services transportation for eligible individuals.

Additionally, the regional transit authority, The ATL, offers express routes from four park and ride lots in the county. The morning inbound routes are destined to Downtown and Midtown Atlanta, while in the afternoon/ evening the outbound trips return to the park-andride lots. Commuters can also access vanpool services provided by SRTA with Georgia Commute Options providing ride matching services.

### SPLOST + TSPLOST

An integral part of planning for future improvements is to identify funding sources to pay for preliminary engineering, environmental mitigation, utility relocations, property acquisition, and construction. Henry County has two major revenue generating mechanisms in place: SPLOST and TSPLOST.

Henry County voters have approved a 1 cent sales tax to fund improvements including those related to transportation. The Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) projects are intended to improve quality of life, levels of service, protect public safety, and control environmental impacts. Voters have also approved another 1 cent sales tax as a Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST). This additional sales tax on goods and services, raises money to fund only transportation projects in Henry County and its municipalities.



**Image Source: Henry County** 

### >> 2.7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By many measures, Henry County is economically healthy-its high level of residential growth and increasing traffic are testaments to that. But it also has it challenges, such as a lack of job diversity and a higher unemployment rate that the broader metro region. This section provides a high-level profile of key economic factors, such as employment and income, types of businesses in the county, educational institutions, and the tax base.

### **EMPLOYMENT + INCOME**

In 2021, an estimated 120,813 Henry County residents were in its civilian labor force. Henry County's unemployment rate was 7.5% in 2021, which exceeded

the Atlanta region (5.4%) and State (5.5%). Henry County's median household income was \$74,614 in 2021, just shy of the Atlanta region (\$77,589) but well above the State's (\$66,559). However, it should be noted the income gains in Henry County since 2011 have been more modest than the Atlanta region and Georgia as a whole (Figure 8).

In 2021, Henry County had a greater percentage of its population earning incomes between \$50,000-\$99,999 than the Atlanta region and Georgia as a whole, but had a much lower percentage of households in the highest income brackets than the region (Figure 9).

#### FIGURE 8. MEDIAN INCOME COMPARISON

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	2011	2021	% CHANGE
Henry County	\$57,258	\$74,614	30.3%
Atlanta Metro. Statistical Area (MSA)	\$52,639	\$77,589	47.4%
Georgia	\$46,007	\$66,559	44.7%

SOURCE: US CENSUS

#### FIGURE 9. HOUSEHOLD INCOME COMPARISON

2021	HENRY COUNTY		ATLANTA MSA		GEORGIA	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total households	84,978		2,277,482		4,001,109	
Less than \$10,000	3,491	4.10%	112,178	4.90%	251,693	6.30%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2,462	2.90%	65,529	2.90%	148,871	3.70%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4,802	5.70%	144,370	6.30%	317,526	7.90%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7,153	8.40%	162,636	7.10%	338,118	8.50%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	8,696	10.20%	236,630	10.40%	456,582	11.40%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	16,052	18.90%	380,313	16.70%	697,251	17.40%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	16,863	19.80%	313,095	13.70%	532,753	13.30%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	14,835	17.50%	401,290	17.60%	626,536	15.70%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5,596	6.60%	204,682	9.00%	293,865	7.30%
\$200,000 or more	5,028	5.90%	256,759	11.30%	337,914	8.40%

SOURCE: US CENSUS

In 2020, the top four industries with the most jobs in Henry County were Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, and Educational Services. Typically these sectors—particularly Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Serviceshave lower wages than others, and can reflect a lack of office/"white collar" job opportunities nearby.

In 2020, Retail Trade industries in Henry County represented 10,801 jobs—the most of any sector. However, the classification that earned the most total wages was the Healthcare and Social Assistance garnering over \$497 million; Transportation and Warehousing sector (48-49) was a close second, earning nearly \$421 million. This underscores the importance of looking beyond the quantity of jobs, and considering the how well paid these jobs are.

Another economic development data point is the Location Quotient (LQ). The LQ measures how concentrated a specific type of industry or cluster is in a place compared to the rest of the nation, and can signal a competitive

FIGURE 10. 2020 JOBS BY SECTOR

JOBS BY NAICS INDUSTRY SECTOR, 2020	COUNT	SHARE
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	27	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	59	0.1%
Utilities	777	1.1%
Construction	2,180	3.2%
Manufacturing	3,279	4.8%
Wholesale Trade	2,846	4.2%
Retail Trade	10,801	16.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	6,506	9.6%
Information	1,470	2.3%
Finance and Insurance	1,438	2.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	901	1.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,765	2.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	592	0.9%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and	5,415	8.0%
Educational Services	705	10.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	9,091	13.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	695	1.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	7,932	11.7%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1,356	2.0%
Public Administration	3,117	4.6%

SOURCE: ONTHEMAP.CES.CENSUS.GOV

advantage or an element that makes a local economy unique. Unsurprisingly, the sector in Henry County with highest LQ is Transportation and Warehousing.

Although there are many components to a local economy, employment, income, and industry sectors are important markers in understanding Henry County's economy at a high level.

FIGURE 11. 2022 EMPLOYMENT DATA

HOOKE	FIGURE 11. 2022 EMPLOYMENT DATA							
NAICS	INDUSTRY	ESTABLISH- MENTS (#)	JOBS (#)	TOTAL	AVG. WEEKLY WAGES	AVG. ANNUAL PAY	ESTABLISH- MENTS (LQ)	JOBS (LQ)
23	Construction	407	2,170	\$5,412,816	\$ 1,200	\$62,395	0.97	0.58
31-33	Manufacturing	115	3,872	\$43,969,610	\$1,212	\$63,006	0.65	0.63
42	Wholesale Trade	183	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.62	-
44-45	Retail Trade	665	11,386	\$386,291,193	\$652	\$33,928	1.35	1.52
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	287	8,726	\$420,572,961	\$995	\$51,748	2.24	1.28
51	Information Sector	56	1,987	\$147,789,820	\$1,017	\$52,855	0.44	1.24
52	finance and Insurance	228	1,139	\$82,660,465	\$1,396	\$72,578	0.87	0.38
54	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	387	1,850	\$115,373,292	\$1,768	\$91,916	1.10	0.24
53	Real Estate and Rental Leasing	224	1,033	\$61,584,194	\$1,146	\$59,612	1.02	0.91
55	Management	13	464	\$43,936,760	\$1,822	\$94,759	0.32	0.38
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management	389	6,830	\$241,006,905	\$679	\$35,287	1.27	1.48
61	Educational Services	117	6,295	\$302,878,420	\$801	\$41,646	1.40	0.99
62	Healthcare and Social Assistance	614	7,627	\$497,991,166	\$1,084	\$56,382	1.15	0.48
71	Arts, Recreation and Entertainment	65	903	\$28,627,599	\$610	\$31,720	0.81	0.81
72	Accommodation and Food Services	550	9,531	\$195,897,844	\$395	\$20,554	1.55	1.47
81	Other	358	1,432	\$59,629,568	\$801	\$41,646	0.89	0.67
92	Public Admin	171	5,859	\$391,759,430	\$3,245	\$168,716	1.52	3.10
99	Nonclassifiable Establishments	657	350	\$19,414,890	\$1,066	\$55,432	3.94	2.29

SOURCE: QCEW

# >> 2.8 QUALITY OF LIFE



Panola Mountain State Park; Image Source: Explore Georgia

#### PARKS AND RECREATION

Henry County owns and manages 33 parks. Over the last five years, the county has expanded its park services with four additional event venues, as well as a newly acquired recreation space formerly owned by the YMCA that allows for indoor events and activities. A highly anticipated aguatic center is underway with construction set to begin in September 2023. This two-story facility will be located on the Cotton Fields Golf Course property and will feature competitive swim lanes as well as an outdoor water park designed to meet accessibility needs.

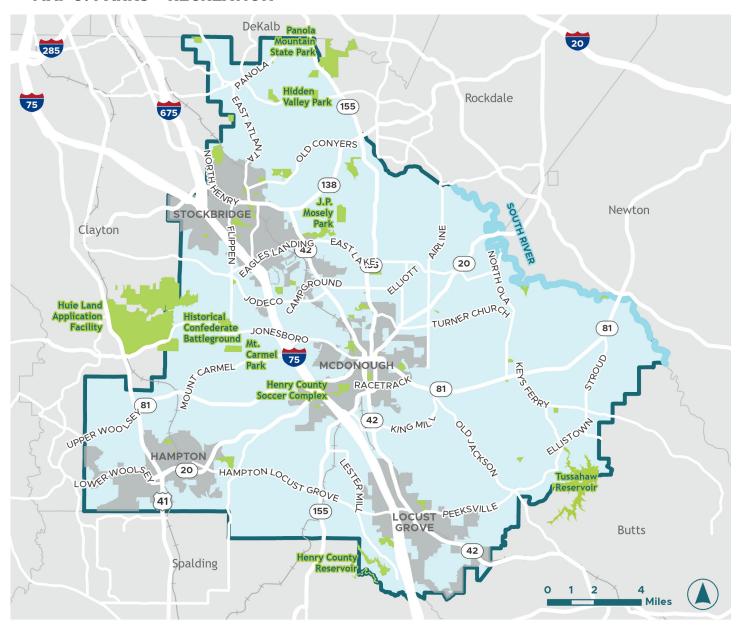
Across all county facilities, amenities are available for several sports including disc golf, basketball, archery, soccer, lacrosse, golf and tennis. Additionally there are over 11 miles of walking trails, community garden space, rentable picnic pavilions and dedicated bird watching

locations. On top of providing space for community members to meet and explore activities within their community, the Parks and Recreation Department supports numerous programs that encourage mental, physical, and social growth for residents.

Henry County residents also benefit from proximity to Panola Mountain State Park. It is part of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area, a partnership between Henry, Dekalb and Rockdale counties. The 100-acre granite outcropping offers many ranger-led programs and hikes that draw visitors from around the metro Atlanta area. Another large area that's popular for passive recreation is the Tussahaw Reservoir.

The South River located on the county's eastern boundary is a beautiful natural feature but is a largely untapped resource for recreation.

#### >> MAP 9. PARKS + RECREATION



#### **LEGEND**

Major Parks/Greenspace

Incorporated Areas

South River

\_\_\_\_\_ Railroads

#### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Crime rates in Henry County are similar to other Georiga counties with a similar population size. 2021 crime statistics report Henry County as having a crime index of 17.88 per 1,000 residents; in comparison, Clayton County's crime index was 24.42 and Dekalb County's was 36.07 for the same year. More crimes are reported within the cities where populations are concentrated compared to unincorporated areas.

The county is dedicated to improving public safety and employs numerous techniques to lower crime rates. The county police department works in tandem with the police departments of the cities to support all residents. Recently the city of Stockbridge welcomed a new team of officers that took over duty from the county-wide police department as their population neared 30,000 residents.

With the population across the county growing, innovative methods were needed to better serve and protect residents. The county police department hosts a database that allows residents and businesses to connect private cameras to a linked system to better monitor the county. This allows investigators to gather evidence in case of incidents and rapidly respond to emergency situations. The department also focuses on crime prevention education through various social media

accounts and the Citizen Connect Crime Mapping tool. These strategies have been proven to increase public safety within the county.

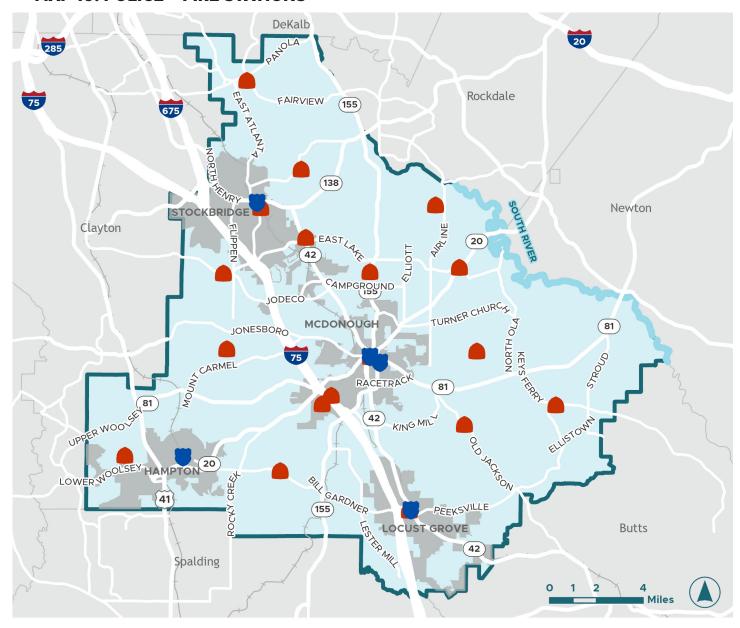
The Henry County Fire Rescue department also does tremendous work towards improving the quality of life for residents. Sixteen stations across the county work together to provide an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class 2 rating, putting Henry County in the top five percent of all fire departments across the nation. This top-quality service not only gives residents peace of mind during emergency situations, but it also reduces homeowners insurance premiums by up to 6% from the previous Class 4 rating levels. Of the 36,995 calls that were received by the department in 2022, 72% were for emergency medical services.

Since the previous comprehensive plan in 2018, the emergency medical services division has experience an increased volume of calls. To alleviate this pressure on the department, 170 paramedics or firefighter medics have been hired in the last 4 years. The department has also worked with the public on an educational campaign on what types of illnesses or injuries are best handled with various levels of care. One example of this is a fact sheet that residents can use to determine if a doctor, urgent care, or emergency room is needed.



Image Source: J.R. Bowman

#### >> MAP 10. POLICE + FIRE STATIONS



#### **LEGEND**

Fire Stations

**Police Stations** 

#### ENTERTAINMENT

Henry County offers numerous opportunities for the public to connect to local art, culture, and entertainment events. The Atlanta Motor Speedway is a year-round multipurpose facility that hosts events for the NASCAR Cup Series and is the site of the Georgia State Fair as well as the Atlanta Air Show.

A report done on the Americans for the Arts Creative industries in 2011 showed that 373 art related business were based within Henry County. These businesses employed around 800 people and together with the 43 cultural non-profits in county brought in around \$2.5 million of annual revenue.

A key facility is the Henry County Performing Arts Center. This facility, which opened in 1998, providing meeting and performance space for the Henry County school system as well as for many other organizations. On average, about 60,000 people attend events there ever year.

The Henry Arts Alliance is one non-profit that strongly promotes the arts within the county. The alliance hosts fourteen programs that provide a range of programs for dance, theater, music, and visual arts for the community. Many programs offer scholarships and meet accessibility demands to meet community needs. The Alliance offers free events so that county residents are not excluded from performance because of financial restraints. A common theme between the programs is to display or perform art in unusual places to touch various parts of the county. This has led to art showings in funeral homes and the emergency department of the hospital on a rotating schedule to help brighten visitors' days. The Parade of Pumpkins is one such program that invites local artists and staff from the library system to paint a pumpkin inspired by a children's story book. These pumpkins travel between the library branches and the

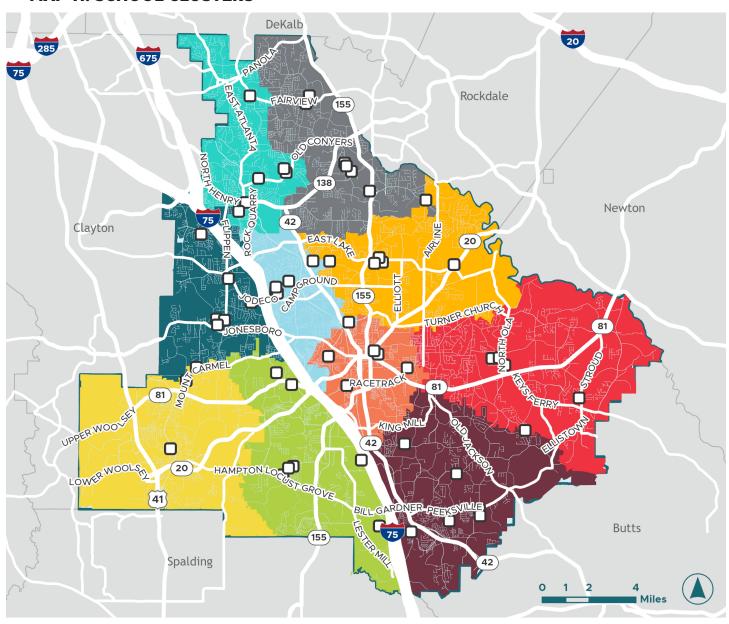


Art installation on the Bushv Tail Art Trail Image Source: Get Lost in the USA

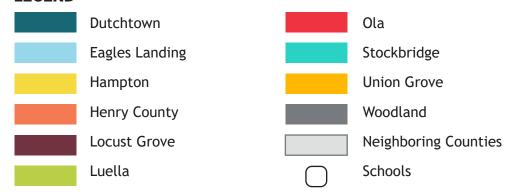
Piedmont Henry Hospital to spread literacy and fun art to visitors. These art pieces are then raffled to raise money for more programs within the Henry Arts Alliance.

Another popular public art installation is the Bushy Tail Art Trail which allows local artists to collaborate on projects that are spread throughout the county. Residents are then able to use maps and geocached information to find the installations and share their experience on social media. These destinations, events, and installations allow members of the community to grow the county's cultural footprint and invite tourism from neighboring counties in a way that is fun, accessible, and constantly evolving.

#### >> MAP 11. SCHOOL CLUSTERS







#### **EDUCATION**

Education is an important service with immense quality of life impacts on families within Henry County. In the county's public school system, currently 42,000 students are being served across 49 schools and 4 academies. These schools are divided into ten clusters across the county. The county offers 29 Career, Technical & Agricultural Education (CTAE) Pathways with 8 that lead to industry certifications for students upon graduation. For students interested in higher education, a dual enrollment program is available that allows high school students to earn college credit at little to no costs. These programs help the county achieve their mission statement of success in a global society for all students.

The public library system is also a resource for continued education for Henry County residents. Among the five public libraries within the county, numerous digital and physical resources, books and classes are available. The library system also hosts events that help foster education, creativity and community building for residents of all ages.

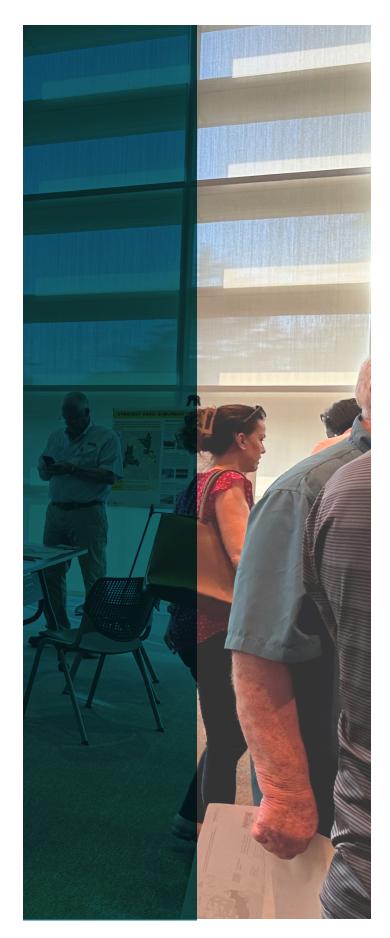


1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Challenge Image Source: henrylibraries.org



Henry County Public Library Image Source: Wehr Constructors, Inc. arning, Creating & Connecting





Public engagement was a critical component of updating Henry County's comprehensive plan. The goals of all outreach efforts were to engage with the broader community and stakeholder groups in a meaningful way and to encourage their participation in guiding the comprehensive plan process.

The public engagement process included:

- » Establishing a timeline, including phasing
- Identifying creative methods for engaging key groups
- » Presenting an outline of how the County incorporated feedback from the public and key groups to support the decision-making process

To collect input from the public, the planning team conducted:

- » Stakeholder Interviews
- Three Steering Committee meetings
- Three public meetings
- Two online surveys

This section is a summary of the engagement process; a full report and supporting materials can be found in the Appendix.

### >> 3.1 OUTREACH METHODS

To get the word out about the comprehensive plan process, Henry County maintained a project website with updated information supplied by the planning team, and the planning team implemented an awareness campaign using social media, Henry County Department of Transportation (DOT) electric signage, and email blasts. The planning team created a digital collateral package that included details of the in-person public updates to include a digital flyer, postcards, and social media graphics.





# >> 3.2 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The County identified a list of vested stakeholders consisting of elected officials, business owners, County staff, public service leaders, and various representatives from community groups. The team conducted 21 individual stakeholder interviews to gather input and help identify key needs and opportunities. These interviews provided valuable insight as to what major changes have occurred within the past five years and what the top needs and opportunities are for the County right now. Feedback from stakeholders helped inform the preparations for the public meetings.

The main takeaways included the following:

- » Traffic is the number one problem
- » The development process feels unpredictable
- » There is a need for more entertainment and things to do
- » People want more amenities, trails, and connectivity
- » Fayette County is a good example of what to do
- » There is a misalignment of jobs and residents

## >> 3.3 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

#### THE COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee was comprised of over 30 individuals identified by Henry County. This group included local experts and stakeholders whose diverse roles within the community strongly correlate with longrange comprehensive planning and visioning. The Steering Committee consisted of members from the following organizations:

- » Henry County Board of Commissiones
- Henry County Board of Education
- Henry County Chamber of Commerce
- Henry County Water and Sewage Authority
- Henry County Tax Commissioner's Office
- » Henry County Development Authority
- Department of Transportation
- Public service leaders
- Transit agencies
- Non-profit organizations
- MHF News
- Staff from the cities of Stockbridge, Locust Grove, McDonough and Hampton



Members of the Steering Committee considering future land use ideas

#### STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #1

The first steering committee meeting was held virtually on March 29, 2023, and served as an introductory kick-off. The meeting included an overview of the comprehensive plan update, discussion of the committee's role in the process, and a review initial work completed thus far.

After reviewing the purpose of the plan and the goals, the planning team gave an update on their progress, including sharing initial feedback from the stakeholder interviews. The team also shared the report of accomplishments from the previous comprehensive plan and the results of analysis conducted to-date. The biggest challenges shared with the planning team included:

- Traffic
- » Growth outpacing infrastructure and services
- Lack of housing options
- Need for more entertainment

The final agenda item was a discussion about public engagement, including key dates for public engagement opportunities and how the Steering Committee could assist with promoting the plan to their community and their networks by utilizing a Partner Toolkit. The toolkit included social media graphics and narratives to help spread the word. The meeting ended with a brief Q&A period, along with what to anticipate as next steps.

#### STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #2

The second steering committee meeting was held inperson on May 17, 2023. The goal of this meeting was to provide an update to the Committee on project progress and also test run an intensive mapping activity to be used at Public Meeting #2.

The exercise that the Steering Committee test drove was "Sim County"--essentially, a simplified simulation on decisions around development and the associated tradeoffs. Committee members were divided into small groups and given different colored bingo chips to represent different land uses. They were asked to place the chips on the map where they most wanted to see growth occur within each land use category. The planning team shared with the committee their plans to facilitate the same exercise with the community at the next public meeting to be held the following week.

During the meeting, committee members shared their concerns with traffic congestion as it related to new development and existing land uses. The committee expressed that further analysis and review of transportation options to support density needs was needed. Committee members also had meaningful discussions with the planning team about their vision and concerns related to future land use. The planning team received positive feedback from committee members about the meeting format. The meeting was concluded

after a brief Q&A, a reminder about the second public meeting scheduled for May 17, 2023, and updates on next steps.

#### **STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #3**

The third and final steering committee meeting, held on June 28, 2023, was focused on additional conversations around future land use and reviewing the what had been accomplished to-date:

- » Land use analysis
- » Analysis of existing plans
- » The future land use map focus group;
- » Two public meetings
- » Online surveys
- » Stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings
- » Development of future land uses

The planning team also shared outcomes from the May 23rd, 2023 in-person public meeting, as well as a review



Presentation at the second Steering Committee meeting

of draft implementation strategies. Next, the planning team led a review of future land use map designations and presented the information to be shared with the public for the third and final public meeting scheduled for July 11, 2023. Lastly, a list of next steps along with timelines was shared with the committee.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Steering Committee members were thanked for their participation and support throughout the comprehensive plan process and ensured them that their feedback and input was critical in shaping Henry County's vision, goals, and strategies for the community to focus on over the coming years.

#### **OVERVIEW**

# >> 3.4 PUBLIC MEETINGS

The planning team hosted three public meetings throughout the process, summarized in the table below. Each meeting had an in-person and virtual option through livestreaming. The table also summarizes total attendance.

#### FIGURE 12. PUBLIC MEETINGS

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS	JOINED VIA LIVESTREAM
Monday, April 17, 2023	6:30pm - 8:30PM	Henry County Administrative Building	75	1,141
Tuesday, May 23, 2023	10:00am - 11:00am	Henry County Administrative Building	46	Not available
Tuesday, July 11, 2023	6:30PM - 8:00PM	Henry County Administrative Building	64	744
		185	1,885	



#### **PUBLIC MEETING #1**

On April 17, 2023, the planning team hosted the initial public meeting to kick off conversations about the community's needs and desires for Henry County's future. 75

participants attended the public meeting in person, and over 1,100 people participated online via livestream. The planning team began the meeting with an initial overview of what the County was seeking to accomplish, along with the timeline and schedule.

Following a brief presentation, the planning team facilitated breakout sessions with meeting participants that addressed the future needs for Henry County. Everyone was grouped in five separate tables. The planning team spread out to each table to facilitate deep discussions around the county's main areas of needs and participants gave their recommendations on their vision for the future of Henry County.

The following points were raised during the meeting:

- » A clear vision for development and land use is needed—something predictable that respects the current community context;
- » Traffic and congestion are problems for almost everyone, but particularly around I-75 and its ramps;
- » There are not enough destinations nor things to do;
- » There are mixed feelings around housing there is a need for more affordability, but a desire to curb the quick pace of new housing development; and
- » The community wants greater transparency on development decisions and better access to elected officials and leaders.

During the meeting, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. The first online survey was announced and launched during the meeting to provide opportunities for the general public to share additional feedback and insight.







Images from the first public meeting held in April 2023



#### **PUBLIC MEETING** #2

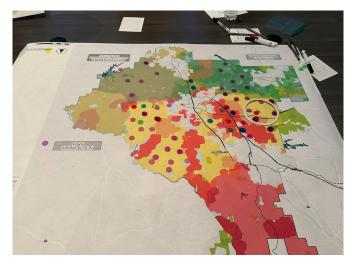
On May 23rd, 2023 the team hosted the second public meeting. Forty-six participants attended the public meeting in person. Following

introductions, the planning team shared the outcomes from the first public meeting along with the first online survey results.

The goal of this meeting was to focus on future land use planning. Participants were split into breakout groups of ten. Much like the second Steering Committee meeting, the focus of the conversation was to discuss development density and the feasibility of what could be established throughout the county. Throughout the activity, the planning team reminded participants that while it is impossible to stop growth, they have the power to decide where it goes, how it's used, and how it looks. Participants were able to have engaging conversations about their needs and concerns with the planning team and amongst their groups. Although the outcomes varied between tables, most groups added growth to the areas with the most infrastructure availability. No group added enough density to "qualify" for the destination entertainment center, and only a handful of groups elected to invest in transit.







Images from the second public meeting held in May 2023



# PUBLIC MEETING #3

The third and final public meeting was held on July 11, 2023, as a public open house. 64 people attended in person. For this meeting, no formal

presentation was given so that allotted time could be used to present recommendations, capture any potential last-minute ideas and feedback, and answer participants' questions.

The planning team set up nine boards that illustrated the recommendations. For more detailed input, the planning team provided draft future land use maps set up as "coloring book" exercises to gain feedback on the types of land uses the community thought were most appropriate. Participants were able to have conversations about their priorities and generally seemed optimistic when others shared similar ideas.

The recommendations shared with the community were received positively, and participants stated their appreciation for the opportunity to see how the whole county could develop while also having the option to just focus on just their neighborhoods. Two boards were set up for the public to write down their thoughts on sticky notes to place on one of the boards, while another board was utilized for a voting exercise on the priorities for infrastructure improvements and amenities in the Central District (results are in the Appendix).







Images from the final public meeting held in July 2023

# >> 3.5 ONLINE SURVEYS

#### **SURVEY #1**

To reach a broad audience, the planning team created an online survey to get input on residents' key needs and their perspectives on development patterns. The survey was open through May 2, 2023 and attracted 1,779 participants. Many participants agreed there has been sizeable growth in Henry County without commensurate investment in infrastructure.

The community expressed that their top priority for transportation within the next 10 to 20 years is to increase investments in its roadways. The majority of respondents also agreed they would like to have more relaxed, local destinations throughout the county where they can spend quality time over a meal or in a park with family and friends.

There were differing opinions regarding housing. Most of the responses indicated a preference for limiting new housing options as much as possible while respecting property rights. However, in terms of housing options, the preference was to increase the number of single-family homes of all sizes and limit the amount of higher-density housing options, such as apartments or condominiums.

Other ideas for Henry County in the next 10 to 20 years include trails, roadway lighting, a local transit system, and connecting cities through sidewalks and trails. Additionally, respondents mentioned a focus on clean water and more green space with activities that are inclusive of all ages. Lastly, the desire to receive continuous updates on the plan was expressed, along with the county making information easily accessible for the public.

#### SURVEY 1 AT-A-GLANCE

The comprehensive planning process aimed to hear as many voices and perspectives as possible--and 1,779 people obliged! People learned about the first survey through the following channels:

- » Henry County's website
- » E-mail blasts
- » Social media
- » The Steering Committee
- » Henry County staff
- » Word of mouth

#### WHO WE HEARD FROM

#### RACE

- » 52% identified as White
- » 17% identified as African American / Black
- » 4% identified as being of 2 or more races
- » 3% identified as Hispanic / Latino
- » 3% identified as something that was not listed

#### AGE

- » 3% were under the age 25
- » 17% were between the ages of 25 and 34
- » 25% were between the ages of 35 and 44
- » 26% were between the ages of 45 and 54
- » 22% were between the ages of 55 and 70
- » 5% were over the age of 70

#### THE KEY TAKEAWAYS

- » People want to see less traffic on the road
- » People want more restaurants with outdoor eating spaces
- » People desire a live/play environment
- » They think Henry County is a great place where children who grew up there would want to return to

#### **SURVEY # 2**

Ahead of the final public meeting, the planning team launched and promoted the second online survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect detailed feedback on land use and development across specific areas in Henry County.

Taking into consideration the initial thoughts and feedback from the public on growth, land use, and county-wide issues, the survey questions focused on the draft Development and Infrastructure Strategy Map. The survey was open for two weeks, beginning June 30, 2023 and closing on July 14, 2023, with a response of 251 participants. Key takeaways included:

- » About 60% of respondents indicated that they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed to allow the southeastern region of Henry County to remain rural and relatively underdeveloped, allow limited sewer expansion, and prioritize roadway safety and maintenance improvements.
- » For the "Bedrock Residential" area, the proposed vision is for it to remain largely the same with some low intensity growth that would only require more roadway capacity due to its anticipated higher volumes of traffic.
- » Over 60% of respondents indicated that they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that land use development in the "Suburban Mix" area should be dedicated to single-family residences of different sizes and suburban-style retail and workplaces, allow expanded sewer capacity, and prioritize both a variety of roadway improvements for capacity purposes and investment in a trail system. Nearly 25% of respondents indicated that they either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed on the proposed vision for Suburban Mix.

#### SURVEY 2 AT-A-GLANCE

The comprehensive planning process aimed to hear as many voices and perspectives as possible. People learned about the second survey through the following channels:

- » Henry County's website
- » E-mail blasts
- » Social media
- » The Steering Committee
- » Word of mouth

#### WHO WE HEARD FROM

The planning team received input from 251 participants:

#### AGE

- » Less than 2% were under the age of 25
- » 8% were between the ages of 25 and 34
- » 20% were between the ages of 35 and 44
- » 28% were between the ages of 45 and 54
- » 26% were between the ages of 55 and 64
- » 16% were over the age of 65

#### RESIDENCY & EMPLOYMENT

- » Nearly 50% of respondents live, work, or own a business in Henry County
- » Almost 30% of respondents live in Henry County but work outside of the county
- » Nearly 20% of total respondents are either retired or do not work

#### THE KEY TAKEAWAYS

- » People want to see enhanced landscaping throughout the county
- » People would like to see roadway intersections and sidewalks improved
- » Traffic congestion needs to be resolved

Participants also had the opportunity to provide openended feedback. Common themes of the open-ended feedback included:

- » Infrastructure needs should be prioritized before enabling more growth in the county
- » A variety of residential options should be ensured while prioritizing the number of single-family homes across Henry County
- » Prioritize attractive building facades, landscaping, and communal gathering areas
- » Safer and more effective traffic intersections, sidewalks, and well-kept, widened roadways should be a focus moving forward
- » Henry County should continue sharing key information with the public as much as possible

# >> 3.6 PUBLIC HEARINGS

In addition to the methods described above, the planning team conducted two Public Hearings: one at the beginning of the process on March 21, 2023 and one on August 14, 2023 to request approval to submit the plan for regional and State view. Both hearings following public advertising rules and met the State's requirements for comprehensive plan engagement.





After evaluating existing conditions (Section 2: Henry County Today) and findings from community engagement (Section 3), the planning team identified the major issues and opportunities facing the county:

- 1. Traffic congestion
- 2. Development feels unpredictable and unplanned
- 3. Lack of destinations and things to do
- 4. Housing development lacks diversity
- 5. A need for more accessible, transparent communication

This is not an exclusive list—there are many other issues worthy needs and opportunities in Heny County. However, these are the five major needs and opportunities that continued to bubble up through the planning process. Section 4 explains each topic area in more depth, with the ultimate goal of developing more detailed, multidisciplinary strategies for addressing them (Sections 5 and 6).

## >> 4.1 TRAFFIC CONGESTION

#### **GOAL: ADDRESS EXISTING TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND** PLAN AHEAD FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

#### **OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGE**

Roadway infrastructure does not meet the capacity expectations of residents and visitors. The community has expressed a high level of frustration with travel time delays and stop-and-go traffic. Multiple intersections and I-75 ramps have bottlenecks during peak hours and projected 2050 LOS on SR 155, SR 138, SR 81, SR 20, and Flippen Road all have poor levels of service (LOS) of "E" or "F" (Map 12). Multiple stakeholders noted that they avoid going near I-75 if they can, and public safety has designated service areas that avoid crossing the interstate altogether. One stakeholder called the area "the devil's triangle."

Part of the challenge is that the county's existing roadway network has a proportionally fewer arterial and collector roadways compared to other jurisdictions. It is a roadway system that reflects Henry County's rural legacy rather than its urbanizing present. This lack of county roads providing substantial east-west and north-south connections decreases route options, condensing demand onto limited roadways. Additionally, local curvilinear and cul-de-sac roadways contribute to the traffic congestion by limiting available routes and through-streets that could alleviate congestion.

Another consideration is that most of the major roadways used for intra-county travel are state or federally owned (Map 13), typically adding delays for responsive project improvements that can bring relief. The situation is further complicated by insufficient right-of-way (ROW) on many roadways that curtails the ability to add travel lanes.

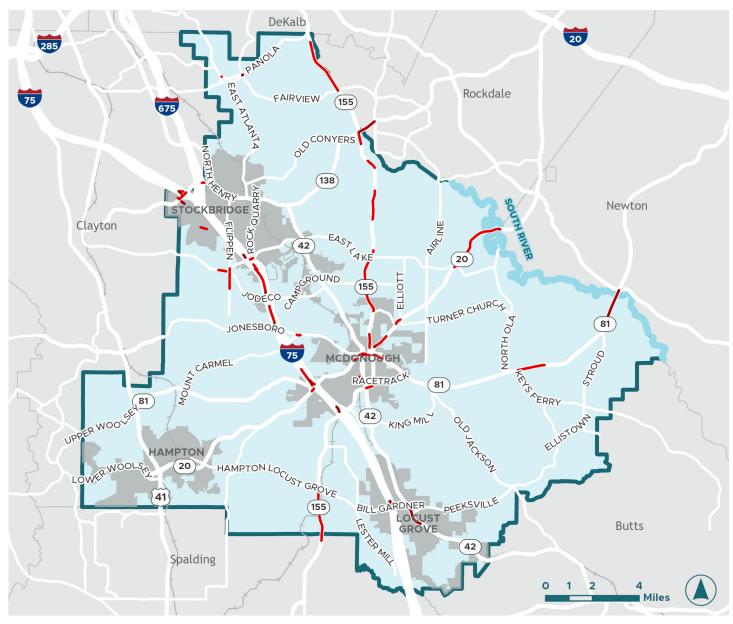
#### A lack of mobility options increases personal vehicle travel and the demand on roadway infrastructure.

For the vast majority of trips in Henry County, there are currently no viable options for transportation beyond driving. The Xpress bus routes operate service from Henry County to Atlanta but ridership is low, and it does not provide options for intra-county trips or "last mile" connectivity to and from the park-and-ride locations.

Walking and biking is not a option for most trips in the county. Sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure is inconsistent and disconnected, and not developed enough to offer alternatives to shorter trips.

Map 14 illustrates the proposed trails and transit system from current transportation plans. However, even if these facilities existed, the low-density, auto-oriented development and land uses currently in the county-which lack concentrations of density and destinations-would struggle to support this system.

#### >> MAP 12. FUTURE HIGH CONGESTION

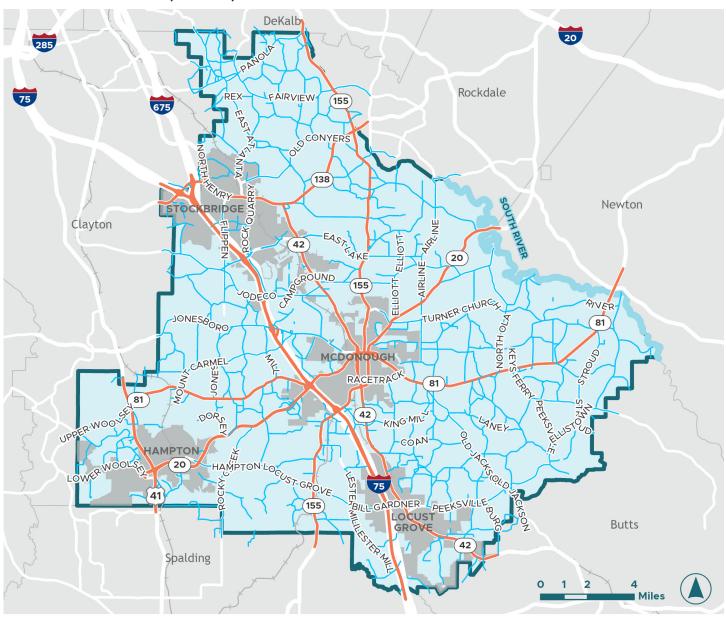


#### **LEGEND**

PROJECTED LEVEL OF SERVICE:

E

#### >> MAP 13. FEDERAL, STATE, + COUNTY ROADS

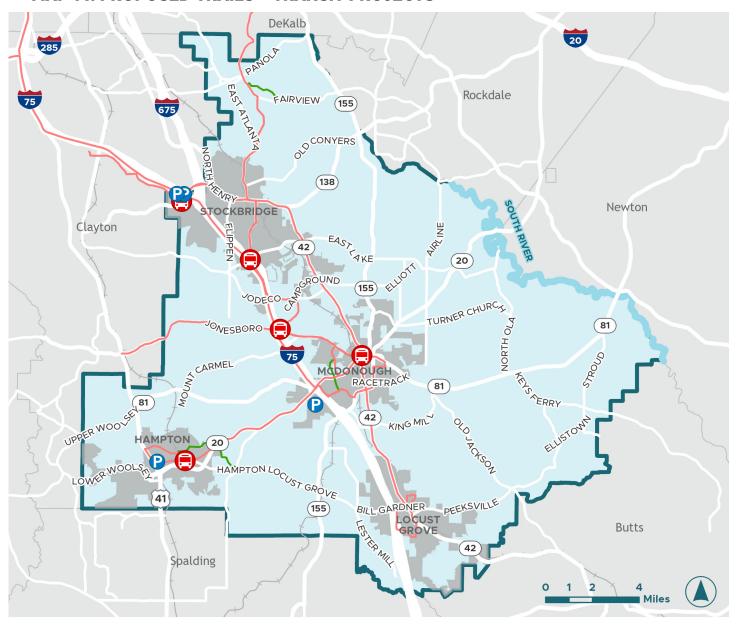


#### **LEGEND**

State or Federal Roads

**County Roads** 

#### >> MAP 14. PROPOSED TRAILS + TRANSIT PROJECTS



#### **LEGEND**



**Xpress Park-and-Ride Locations** 



**Recommended Transit Stations** 



**Proposed Transit Routes** 



Model Miles Trails



Public input and stakeholder interviews have exposed a lack of coordination between residential, commercial, and industrial development and the available transportation infrastructure. In some parts of Henry County, the pace of development has outstripped the roadway network's capacity to handle additional trips—and development continues to occur on these congested roadways. This is present particularly closer to I-75, but is beginning to occur in outlying areas as well. For example, building large commercial uses in traditionally rural areas has pushed two-lane roads like SR 81 to a poor LOS of D; even if the road is widened to four lanes, it is still only expected to function at an LOS of C by 2050.

Meanwhile, the increase in industrial and warehouse development has led to an increase in commercial vehicle traffic. Without the proper roadway infrastructure in place—like surface durability, wide turn lanes/

entrances, and enforced truck routes—the maintenance requirements of roadways and curbs that are damaged will increase.

Henry County relies on SPLOST and TSPLOST funding for roadway infrastructure projects and maintenance. The real cost of driving due to cheaper vehicles, more efficient mileage, and relatively cheaper gas no longer generates enough tax revenue to maintain and construct roadway infrastructure without additional tax.

Like many parts of the Atlanta region, Henry County is largely dependent on funding sources like SPLOST to complete major roadway improvements. If the residents of Henry County were to reject future SPLOST or TSPLOST projects, the available funds for roadway projects and maintenance would not cover the necessary projects to keep up with increased population and development.



Example of truck damage on Highway 81; Image Source: Google Street View

# >> 4.2 DEVELOPMENT FEELS UNPREDICTABLE

#### **GOAL: IMPROVE LAND USE POLICIES AND PROCESSES** FOR BETTER TRANSPARENCY AND ALIGNMENT WITH **INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGE

#### Many developments in the past five years have deviated from the future land use map in significant

ways. An analysis of major developments in the past five years revealed that about 20% of developments approved significantly deviated from the future land use map (Map 15). Some were complete departures, but more commonly there were changes that typically resulted in higher-than-envisioned densities and the relaxing of mixed use standards.

Not only has this caused issues in planning accurately for services and infrastructure, it has also bred an environment of distrust and sense of futility in the planning process. Many stakeholders have noted "why even do a plan if we won't follow it?"

Recent development in traditionally rural areas is concerning to many community members. Some of these projects are also perceived as not following the future land use map and as threats the quality of life of residents. Examples include the two recently constructed Publix shopping centers at Ola and Kelleytown. These were projects that did not follow the future land use map and are now poised to catalyze additional suburban-style growth nearby, but do provide desired services closer to home—it is an example of one of the many common development tradeoff discussions that need to occur in Henry County.

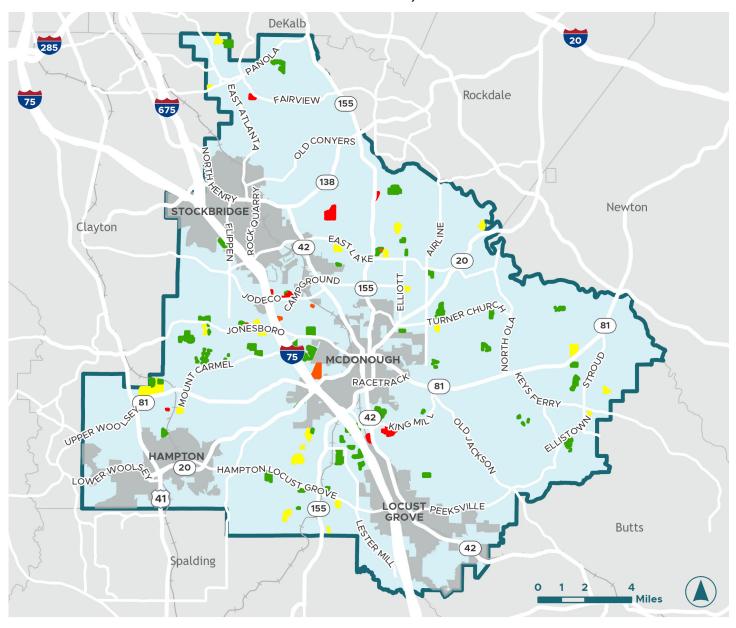
The situation is further strained by the state of agriculture in Henry County. Many farmers are aging, and their heirs have no plans to continue farming. As a quickly growing county on the fringe of the Atlanta region, the "highest and best use" of land is no longer agriculture as property owners can make considerable money by selling their land for development. Even if they did continue agricultural practices, the support infrastructure for agriculture in the County is no longer there. According to residents currently engaged in agriculture, there are very few suppliers nearby, and markets to sell their products are becoming more and more distant.

#### There is a long lag between when development occurs and when infrastructure is improved. For

many years, few major roadway improvements occurred in Henry County. According to some stakeholders, this was an intentional decision by leadership at the time to discourage additional growth. The strategy did not work as intended. Growth continued to arrive in Henry County and the backlog of roadway improvements only grew. Multiple projects such as the widening of SR 81 are funded and moving forward, but the process is lengthy and completed construction is still years away.

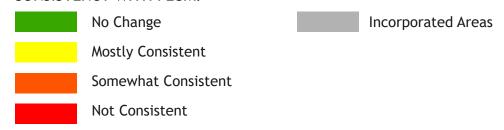
One major concern for residents is that high density growth is clustering on roads that are essential links to

#### >> MAP 15. LAND DEVELOPMENT + USE CHANGES, 2018-2022



#### **LEGEND**

#### **CONSISTENCY WITH FLUM:**



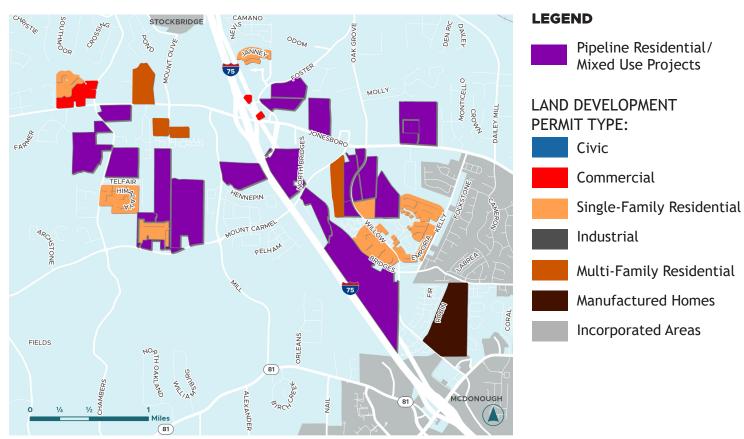
I-75. A prime example is the Jonesboro Road area with over 3,000 recently approved residential units (Map 16). The addition of these new units will together generate about 25,000 new vehicle trips every day. This is highly likely to further compound the existing bottlenecks at the I-75 Jonesboro Road Exit 221, which according to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) can have queue lengths of up to 7 miles in length.

The development process is lengthy—sometimes it can take up to two years for approvals—and projects are typically beset by pages of conditions. Although there is great developer interest, many people in the development community expressed deep frustration at the current state of doing business in Henry County. Specifically, stakeholders are weary of the lengthening

timeframes for getting projects approved and the sense of unpredictability.

One of the major sources of frustration is the number of conditions put on projects. Although placing some conditions on projects is the norm in many jurisdictions, the average number of conditions in Henry County is very large. In a review of 46 recent rezoning cases, the number of conditions per case ranged from 4 to 40, with an average of 19. Many of these conditions are repeated across cases, including significantly higher minimum square footage of residential homes than the zoning mandates and requiring two-car garages. Lengthy lists of conditions add more cost and time to the development process, and the conditions themselves lead to larger, more expensive homes.

#### >> MAP 16. NEW DEVELOPMENT + PIPELINE PROJECTS JONESBORO ROAD AND I-75



# >> 4.3 A LACK OF DESTINATIONS + THINGS TO DO

#### **GOAL: EXPAND OPTIONS FOR RETAIL AND** ENTERTAINMENT CLOSER TO HOME

Community members expressed a desire for higher caliber restaurant and retail experiences close to Henry County. The types of activities that Henry County

residents want vary widely from walking on multi-purpose trails to enjoying cultural experiences like concerts and performing arts. Residents have also expressed interest in a range of experiences such as enjoying professional and collegiate sporting events and fine dining.

Better restaurants are very high on the community's wish list; one restaurant brand frequently mentioned as desirable was The Cheesecake Factory, which can be examined as a case study. Why are there no Cheesecake Factory Restaurants in Henry County now? According to The Cheesecake Factory's 2023 Annual Report, the company seeks to "operate in the upscale casual dining segment, which is positioned above core casual dining, with standards that are closer to fine dining." When evaluating sites for potential new restaurants, The Cheesecake Factory considers the trade area's average household income and population density. Site-specific characteristics like visibility, accessibility, and proximity to activity centers such as shopping centers and competitors also play a role.

FIGURE 13. CHEESECAKE FACTORY TRADE AREAS IN REGION

SITE	2022 POPULATION	DENSITY (RESIDENT/ AREA)	2022 MEDIAN HH INCOME	2022 MEDIAN NET WORTH
Lenox Mall	346,656	4,416	\$109,886	\$138,000
Cumberland Mall	213,093	2,715	\$89,458	\$126,485
Perimeter Mall	264,150	3,365	\$102,724	\$174,457
North Point Mall	199,118	2,537	\$120,507	\$340,324
Henry Marketplace	95,108	1,212	\$77,892	\$142,888
Henry County	249,258	762	\$79,309	\$176,830

The Cheesecake Factory currently has four restaurants in metro Atlanta, located at the Perimeter Mall, North Point Mall, Lenox Mall and Cumberland Mall. Each location is in relatively affluent and/or denser communities. Looking at their 5-mile trade areas, these locations average 3,258 people per square mile and have a median income of \$105,600. Contrast these market characteristics with that of a 5-mile trade area around Henry Marketplace, with a population density of 1,212 people per mile and a median household income of \$77,892.

Figure 13 details the demographic characteristics of the corresponding 5-mile trade areas surrounding each metro Atlanta Cheesecake Factory location in comparison to Henry County. Despite strong community desire, Henry County does not yet have the residential density with the necessary income levels to attract and support higher-end dining establishments such as The Cheesecake Factory.

Beyond shopping and retail, community members expressed a desire for more recreation options though it is unclear whether there is a need for more, or a need to better communicate what is already on **offer.** Group conversations with community members revealed that there were existing cultural experiences

that other members within the community were unaware of. Venues like the Stockbridge Amphitheatre and gatherings like the Henry County Geranium Festival were not commonly known by all of the participants. Just about everyone knew of at least one farm to visit—but at least one member of each Public Workshop break-out table was introduced to at least one farm that they had not yet heard of. The overarching point became clearer as the conversations continued: Henry County and its cities would enhance the quality of life for their residents by improving the coordination and communication of recreational events and venues amongst each other.

Though communication and promotion is perhaps one barrier, there is likely a need to better serve young people (school-aged) and seniors in terms of quality activities. The publicly offered programs by the local government and school system frequently lack the capacity to support Henry County residents wanting to participate. This lack of capacity of programs—especially youth programs in the summer months—is particularly concerning to some families who need affordable options to keep kids in productive activities.



Henry County Geranium Festival. Image Source: Henry County Times

# >> 4.4 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT LACKS DIVERSITY

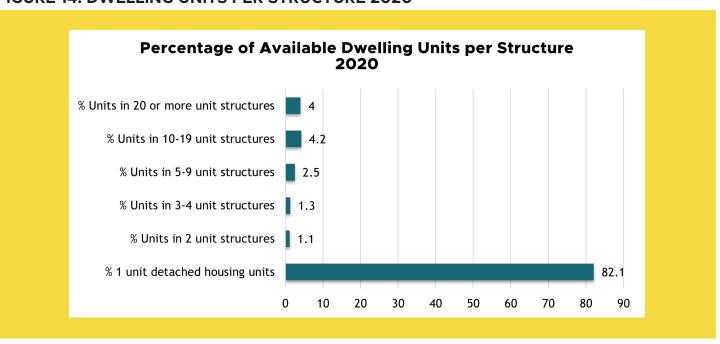
#### **GOAL: DIVERSIFY HOUSING OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS**

#### **OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGE**

Approximately 82% of housing in Henry County is single-family detached, but only 46% of households in Henry County are married couples with children—the typical household type that prefers single-family homes. According to the ARC, in 2021 the household composition of Henry County was 46% married family, 26% single parent-family, and 28% non-family. This is not to say that only married couples with children want to live in single-family homes, but with high housing prices the costs of many traditional homes are out-of-reach for households on a single income.

This high percentage of single-family detached homes does not seem likely to change considerably if current policy remains in place. The developments identified during the land use analysis show that almost 68% of the major projects developed or currently under construction between 2018 and 2022 are comprised exclusively of single-family residences, compared to just 9.5% of the projects offering multi-family residential options.

#### FIGURE 14. DWELLING UNITS PER STRUCTURE 2020



It's not just the real estate market causing the issue—current land use policy and regulations contribute to this imbalance. The 2018 Comprehensive Plan's future land use map designates nearly 71% of the area of the county as either Low Density or Rural Residential, uses that can only be developed with singlefamily detached dwellings. Along with the land use designation, the county zoning ordinance sets minimums for single-family dwelling sizes in all residential districts of 1,500 - 1,800 square feet. Examination of rezoning cases for the county over the past five years shows that the County Commission often enacts conditions of zoning which increase the minimum required square footage, typically between 2,200 - 2,500 square feet. The outcome of these policies is an absence of smaller detached dwelling units within the county. Options are limited for persons or families who do not desire, or cannot afford, to reside in a large single-unit detached housing type.

The high percentage of single-family homes fuels issues around housing affordability-not just for the households with the lowest incomes, but those with middle incomes as well. Using data published by the real estate website Zillow, known as the "Zillow Observed Rent Index," or ZORI, the ARC released a series of reports in the fall of 2022 detailing the increased housing cost for renters in metro Atlanta. These reports indicate that Henry County saw a 45% increase in monthly rental rates from January 2020 to September 2022, going from roughly \$1,400 to slightly over \$2,000. The good news is that this number is lower than the average increase across the entire metro region, which saw a 53.3% spike in rental costs. However, the increase in housing cost has created a void in the attainability of lower cost housing, especially for renters. For the period between 2014-2022 for all 11 counties included in the ARC research, the total number of rental units available at a monthly rate of less than \$1,250 decreased while rental rates of \$1,250 and above increased. Homeowners in the county are not

exempt from the rising cost of housing either. The median home sale price in Henry County in 2020 was \$220,000; by April, 2023 this number had risen dramatically to \$328,000, a 49% increase in just three years.

One of the best ways to combat inflation in rental rates, according to research by the Pew Charitable Trust, is to add new market-rate housing. In a study of four cities which have in recent years loosened their zoning ordinances to allow for more by-right density, the Trust's research indicates that the four cities saw rental rates increase by an average of just 3.5% between 2017-2023, much lower than the national average of 31%.

With the rising cost of housing, it is not surprising that nearly 45% of all rental households and 29% of all owneroccupied households within Henry County fall under the classification of being "cost-burdened" according to the 2020 Census. Cost-burdened households are identified as households that are spending more than 30% of their income on rent, mortgage, and other housing needs. Given that this data was collected prior to the spike in rental rates between 2020-2022, and subsequently paired with the stagnation in wage growth and increased transportation costs, it is likely that number is even higher today with a disproportionate impact on renters.

Seniors are a particularly vulnerable population, and the lack of housing options that meet their needs make it difficult to age in place. Another concern raised by the community was the lack of available housing for seniors. Currently approximately 1/3 of all residents within Henry County are aged 50 or older, according to estimates by the 2021 ACS. As this demographic continues to age it will be important that housing is available for people to relocate to communities and facilities that can offer the amenities and services needed to support them.

## >> 4.5 MORE ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION

#### **GOAL: IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE** COMMUNITY

#### **OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGE**

Many community members expressed frustration at what they see as a lack of clear communication from the County and a sense that their elected officials were inaccessible. Transparency between governments and their communities is defined by the federal government as being transparent, participatory, and collaborative. These values are all meant to ensure public trust and establish a system of openness that strengthens trust in the government and make the government processes more efficient and effective for its constituents. During the comprehensive planning process, participants have commented on many ways that they would like to improve communication with their elected officials.

The first challenge that residents relayed was the lack of general communication from the elected officials. Currently, Henry County has numerous ways to communicate with residents including a website, a county news page, and a television channel. Despite the many methods of digital outreach, residents attending the first public workshop remarked on how they would also like the opportunity to regularly meet with their commissioners and other elected officials outside of public hearings. Community members felt like these hearings didn't leave enough time to ask questions about specific projects or gain more knowledge about the planning processes happening in the county.

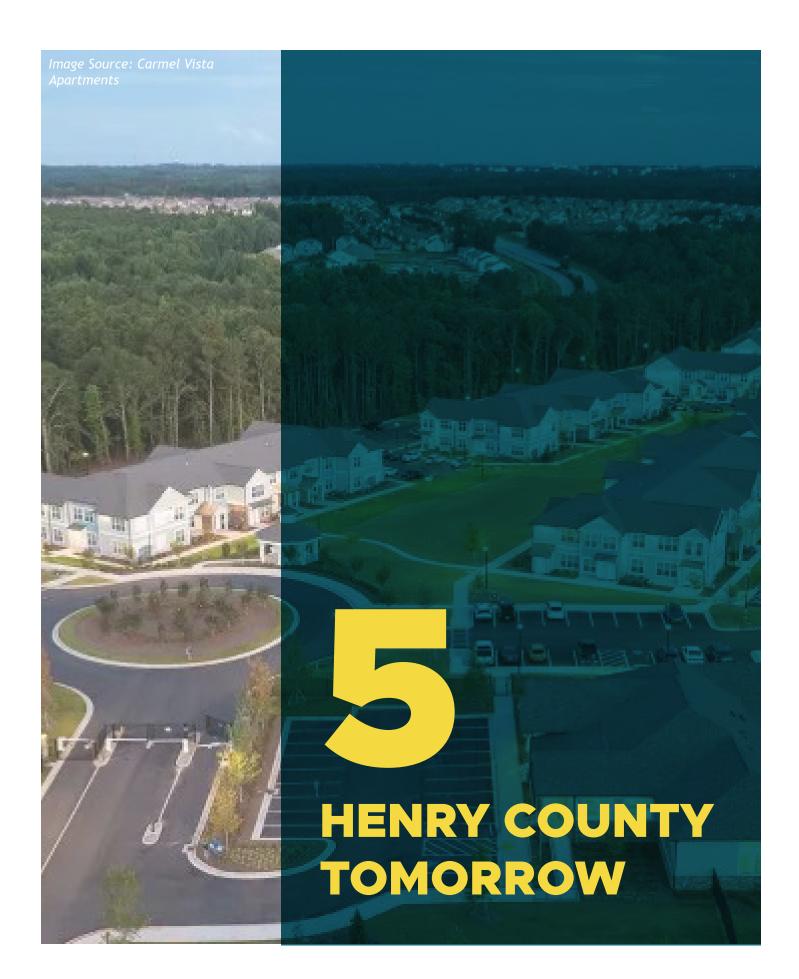
Residents want an easier way to learn more about the projects impacting their communities. For many residents who mentioned concerns about specific projects, their questions centered around the lack of communication on the progress of these developments. To them, it seemed as if certain projects approved even years prior were now suddenly beginning construction even though the existing site conditions were no longer relevant. At the same time, other projects that weren't an immediate need for residents seemed to be quickly approved and constructed. Many participants at Public Workshop #1 insisted that even a consistency of code enforcement would make it much easier to expect changes in their built environment and ask questions in real time.

It is time for Henry County, Stockbridge, McDonough, Hampton, and Locust Grove to communicate with one another and collaborate for the greater good. Transparency is also needed in how Henry County communicates with the cities. During an interview with the Main Street coordinators, they noticed how communication affected local centers of commerce. With a confusing tapestry of city- and county-owned properties being reviewed with sometimes conflicting land use maps, many areas appeared to not have clear jurisdiction. This confusion impacted general maintenance, infrastructure, and overall connectivity within the county. These impacts then continue to tourism within the county.

A similar disconnect is seen in the provision of essential services. One example is in public safety with providing fire services. Recently the jurisdictions have appointed their own fire chiefs, who oversee building plans and ensure that they meet fire safety standards. The County no longer reviews these plans nor sees them, yet the County Fire Department is still responsible for responding to calls in these jurisdictions that could involve these structures. This lack of sharing information critical to public safety is a major vulnerability that could have disastrous consequences.



Groundbreaking for road improvement of Peeksville Road in Locust Grove in April 2023. Image Source: Henry Herald





Henry County Tomorrow focuses on the two biggest drivers of development and quality of life in Henry County: land use and transportation. It is not just a vision for the future, but provides a clear, transparent process for County officials, staff, and the community.

# >> 5.1 LAND USE ELEMENT

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, residents consistently expressed frustration over how fast development is occurring and how the infrastructure does not seem to be keeping up.

To address this concern, the planning team revamped the county's approach to future land use planning by replacing the 2018 plan's Future Community Map with a stronger tool, the Development and Infrastructure Strategy Map.

### **DEVELOPMENT + INFRASTRUCTURE** STRATEGY MAP

In the 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update, the Future Community Map showed high-level policy direction for growth. The map included special interest areas such as the Megasite and the Henry Global Gateway, an area with industrial focus between McDonough and Locust Grove centered along I-75. The remainder of the county was shown predominantly as "rural area" or "suburban area" with a handful of "Activity Centers" and "Town Centers" connected by "Main Street Henry" and "Planned Paths."

This map illustrated a generalized vision for Henry County, but in practice was rarely used by staff or the community. Additionally, projects such as the Megasite and "Main Street Henry" are no longer moving forward, rendering these aspects of the map obsolete.

The need to overhaul the Future Community Map in general posed an opportunity to better-and more clearly—address the community's concerns about growth outpacing infrastructure. Instead of just updating the Future Community Map using the areas established in 2018, this plan completely reconfigured the map to more closely tie growth policy with infrastructure investment. It also serves as a framework for guiding the evaluation

of how appropriate each land use types is within specific areas.

### **GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

Another reason for the revised approach is that infrastructure investment is one of Henry County's best and most powerful tools for guiding growth. New roadways, roadway widenings, and sewer capacity expansion very frequently attract growth, as they make land more valuable for development.

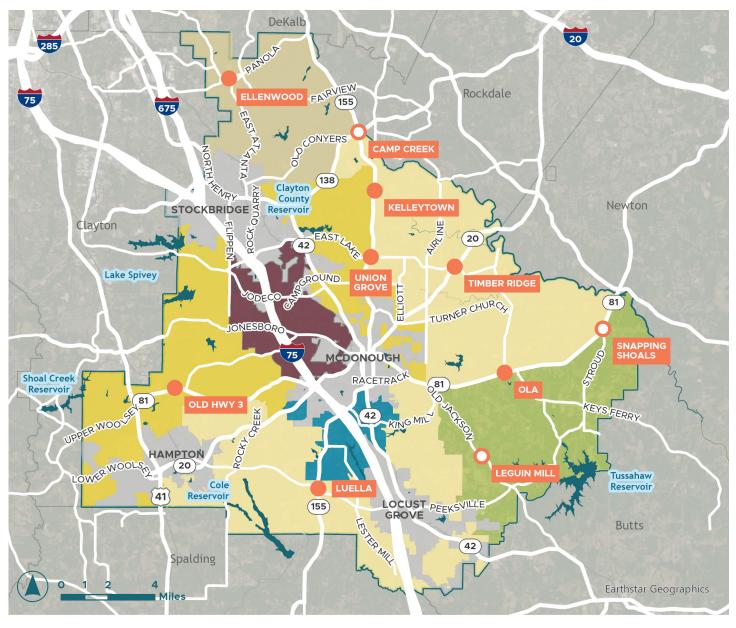
The new Development and Infrastructure Strategy Map (Map 17) shows six major areas of growth and infrastructure policy:

- » Rural Reserve
- » Rural Communities
- » Panola Mountain
- » Suburban Mix
- » Central District
- » Workplace Center

It also shows ten community centers (nodes).

The following section is an overview of each of the six main areas, their general strategy for providing transportation and sewer infrastructure, and more detailed guidance on the most appropriate land uses that align with this infrastructure. Descriptions of each land use can be found in the following section.

### >> MAP 17. DEVELOPMENT + INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY AREAS



#### **LEGEND**

DEVELOPMENT + INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY AREAS:

Central District		Rural Communities	Lakes + Reservoirs
Rural Reserve		Workplace Center	Incorporated Areas
Suburban Mix		Community Center	
Panola Mountain	0	Future Community Center	

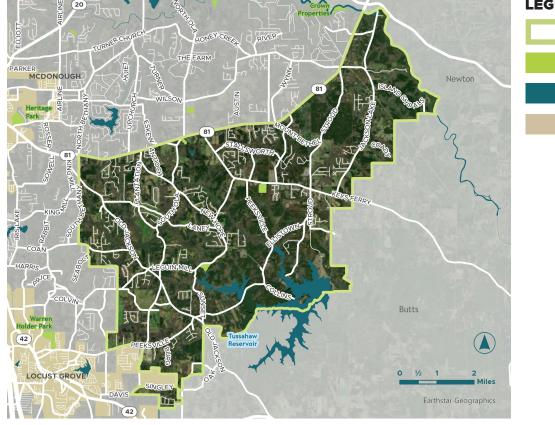
### **RURAL RESERVE**

The Rural Reserve (Map 18) is located in southeastern Henry Country. It is roughly bounded by Highway 81 to the north, Old Jackson Road/Bethany Road to the west, and the Butts County line to the south.

The vision for the Rural Reserve is to remain relatively undeveloped over the next 10+ years, which is already largely regulated by the presence of the Watershed Protection Overlay. To re-enforce this slow growth policy, transportation improvements should be limited to very targeted roadway improvements such as addressing safety and maintenance issues. Roadway widenings in particular are not recommended in this area.

Sewer expansion into this area is not expected in the next five years but it should be noted that the county does have future plans for a wastewater facility on the Tussahaw Reservoir. However, this area plays an important role in maintaining the rural feel of Henry County; future growth should be very slow and sensitive to both watershed protection needs and the community's desire to retain more natural and rural areas.

#### >> MAP 18. RURAL RESERVE



### LEGEND

- Rural Reserve
- Parks/Greenspace
- Lakes and Reservoirs
  - •
  - Incorporated Areas

### **RURAL RESERVE AT A GLANCE**



### **SEWER CAPACITY INVESTMENTS:**

Little to none in next 10 years; slow expansion longer term



### **TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS:**

Limited to addressing safety concerns and maintenance needs; no roadway widenings (adding lanes)



### LAND USE GUIDE

	LAND USE	CONDITIONS
APPROPRIATE	<ul><li>» Rural Residential</li><li>» Parks and Greenspace</li></ul>	N/A
	<ul> <li>» Low Density Suburban         Residential</li> <li>» Medium Density Suburban         Residential</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>» Must be able to safely operate on an onsite wastewater system</li> <li>» Should have a wide vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect rural character or be designed as neighborhood conservation district</li> <li>» Should maintain at least 50% open space</li> </ul>
APPROPRIATE	<ul><li>» Commercial</li><li>» Village</li></ul>	» Should be more than 3 miles from a designated Community Center
IF MASTER PLANNED* AND CONDITIONS ARE MET	INED* AND NOITIONS	<ul> <li>Should have a wide vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect rural character</li> <li>Should be located on a designated truck route</li> <li>Should be within a 2-mile trip of I-75</li> <li>Must be able to safely operate on an onsite wastewater system</li> <li>Should maintain at least 50% open space</li> </ul>
		» Should have operational reason/requirement to be located specifically in the Rural Reserve
	» Utilities	» Shoulad have operational reason/requirement to be located specifically in the Rural Reserve
NOT APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» High Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» Urban Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Mixed Use</li> <li>» High Density Mixed Use</li> <li>» Office-Institutional</li> </ul>	N/A

<sup>\*</sup>For sites under 10 acres in size, the County may waive the Master Plan requirement

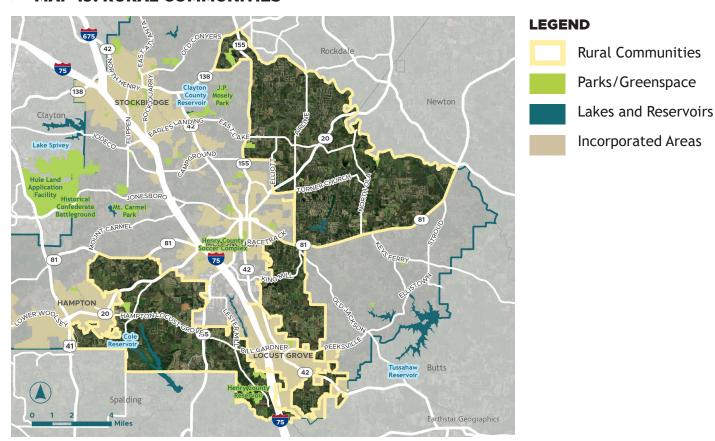
### **RURAL COMMUNITIES**

The largest of the six Development and Infrastructure Strategy Areas, Rural Communities is a growth policy area that applies primarily to two parts of the county:

- » East of I-75, Rural Communities is shown as the area largely east of Highway 155 and City of McDonough, and north of Highway 81
- » In the south, it is an area surrounding the City of Locust Grove and extends west to Hampton, but south of Highway 81

Most of these areas have some access to sewer and are experiencing pressure for residential growth. However, the vision for Rural Communities areas is to maintain a rural environment that accommodates some low-intensity residential growth. Sewer capacity should be expanded slowly in targeted amounts, and roadway improvements should focus on projects that address safety and maintenance issues. Roadways should only be widened if experiencing very high congestion levels (LOS E or F). Investment in multi-use trails in this area is recommended but primarily for recreation purposes.

#### >> MAP 19. RURAL COMMUNITIES



### **RURAL COMMUNITIES AT A GLANCE**



Slow, targeted expansion



Limited to addressing safety concerns and maintenance needs; intersection improvements; roadway widenings only for extreme congestion (LOS E or F)



	LAND USE	CONDITIONS
APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» Rural Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» Parks and Greenspace</li> </ul>	N/A
	<ul><li>» Medium Density</li><li>Suburban Residential</li></ul>	<ul> <li>Should have a vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect rural character or be designed as a conservation subdivision</li> <li>Should be at least 30% open space</li> </ul>
	» Low Density Mixed Use	<ul> <li>Should only to be used for enlargening/enhancing a designated Community Center that requires more design flexibility</li> <li>Should be supported by a majority of property owners within 1 mile of the site</li> </ul>
APPROPRIATE IF MASTER	<ul><li>» Commercial</li><li>» Village</li></ul>	» Should be more than a 2-mile trip from the nearest designated Community Center
PLANNED* AND CONDITIONS ARE MET	» Industrial	<ul> <li>Should have a vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect rural character</li> <li>Should be located on a designated truck route</li> <li>Should be within a 2-mile drive of I-75</li> </ul>
	» Office-Institutional	» Should have a vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect rural character
	» Public-Institutional	» Should have operational reason/requirement to be located specifically in the Rural Communities
	» Utilities	» Should have operational reason/requirement to be located specifically in the Rural Communities
NOT APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» High Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» Urban Residential</li> <li>» High Density Mixed Use</li> </ul>	N/A

\*For sites under 10 acres in size, the County may waive the Master Plan requirement

### PANOLA MOUNTAIN

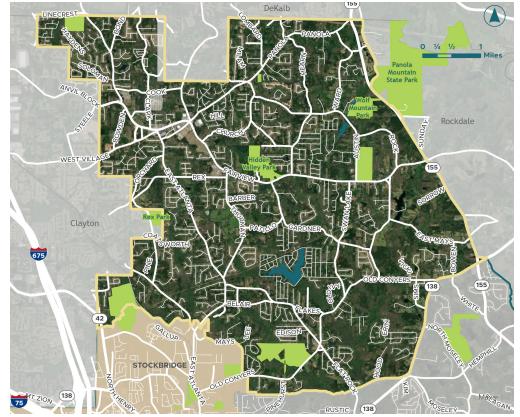
One of the most unique areas in Henry County is its northern section. This area—roughly everything north of Highway 138—lies atop a foundation of dense, hard rock making it very expensive to expand sewer and build densely. However, because it is the area of Henry County closest to Atlanta, it has still experienced growth. It is not exactly rural, but it is not totally suburban either, and its geology will make it very costly for this area to grow substantially.

The vision for Panola Mountain is to remain largely unchanged. Some low intensity growth is anticipated, but not at a quantity that would require expansion of sewer. The exception to this would be the desired expansion and redevelopment of the low-density mixed-use center at Ellenwood.

Although growth itself in this area would not likely require more roadway capacity, its proximity to Clayton, Dekalb, and Rockdale Counties means higher volumes of traffic than other parts of Henry County. Improved roadway and sidewalk connectivity is recommended in the Ellenwood area, linking the commercial area with surrounding neighborhoods, parks, and schools. A high-quality, multi-use path connection to Panola Mountain State Park is also recommended.

It should be noted that Henry County currently purchases wastewater services from DeKalb County and Clayton County to service this area. Although this works from a functional perspective, it is financially very costly and undesirable. Therefore, only low-density uses are recommended for future development to avoid increasing the amount of wastewater services the County must purchase from its neighbors.

#### >> MAP 20. PANOLA MOUNTAIN



#### **LEGEND**

- Panola Mountain
- Parks/Greenspace
- Lakes and Reservoirs
  - Incorporated Areas

### PANOLA MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES AT A GLANCE





### **TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS:**

Limited to addressing safety concerns and maintenance needs; intersection improvements; roadway widenings only for extreme congestion (LOS E or F)



	LAND USE	CONDITIONS
APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» Rural Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Suburban</li> <li>Residential</li> <li>» Parks and Greenspace</li> </ul>	N/A
	» Medium Density Suburban Residential	<ul> <li>» Must be able to operate safely on an onsite wastewater system</li> <li>» Should have a wide vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect rural character or be designed as conservation subdvision</li> </ul>
APPROPRIATE IF MASTER PLANNED*	» Low Density Mixed Use	<ul> <li>» Must be able to operate safely on onsite wastewater system or on sewer that is already available</li> <li>or</li> <li>» Enlarging existing Low Density Mixed Use area at Ellenwood</li> </ul>
AND	<ul><li>» Commercial</li><li>» Village</li></ul>	» Should be more than 2 miles from a designated Community Center
ARE MET	» Industrial	<ul> <li>Should have a wide vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect rural character</li> <li>Should be located on a designated truck route</li> <li>Should be able to operate safely on septic systems or on sewer that is already available</li> </ul>
	» Public-Institutional	» Should have operational reason/requirement to be located specifically in the Rural Reserve
	» Utilities	» Should have operational reason/requirement to be located specifically in the Rural Reserve
NOT APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» High Density Suburban         Residential</li> <li>» Urban Residential</li> <li>» High Density Mixed Use</li> <li>» Office-Institutional</li> </ul>	N/A

<sup>\*</sup>For sites under 10 acres in size, the County may waive the Master Plan requirement

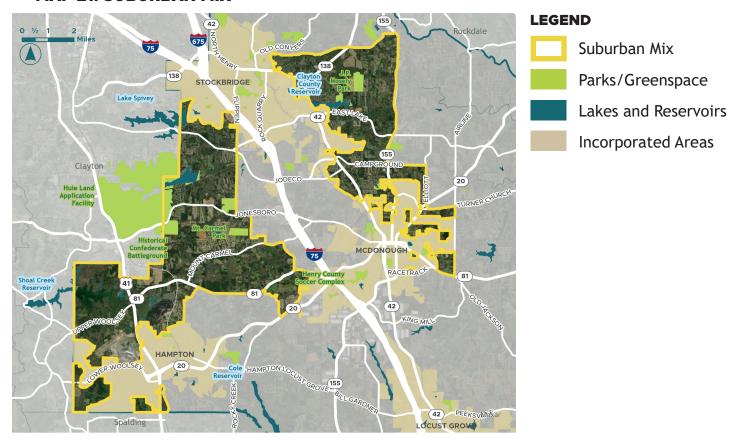
### **SUBURBAN MIX**

Suburban Mix areas are largely already developed in a suburban style many single-family neighborhoods and strip commercial centers. This pattern is seen in the area between Highway 23/42 and Highway 155 in the eastern part of the county, and the area to the west of I-75 between Stockbridge and Highway 81. West of Highway 41 is also shown as Suburban Mix to reflect anticipated development that will be at this scale.

The vision for the Suburban Mix area is to accommodate a variety of types of residential neighborhoods that are

predominantly single family, as well as some supporting areas for retail (shopping) and workplaces. Sewer capacity should be expanded to support suburban-level intensities of development, and the roadway network should be improved to accommodate expected trip numbers. A system of multi-use trails supports both transportation and recreation goals, and sidewalks should be prioritized around schools, parks, and designated Community Centers.

#### >> MAP 21. SUBURBAN MIX



### **SUBURBAN MIX AT A GLANCE**



### **SEWER CAPACITY INVESTMENTS:**

Capacity expanded to meet demand



### **TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS:**

All types of roadway improvement projects (including capacity/widening projects), multi-use trails, and sidewalks within ½ mile of community facilities/ destinations



	LAND USE	CONDITIONS
APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» Medium Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» High Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Mixed Use</li> <li>» Village</li> <li>» Commercial</li> <li>» Office-Institutional</li> <li>» Public-Institutional</li> <li>» Parks and Greenspace</li> </ul>	N/A
APPROPRIATE IF	» Low Density Suburban Residential	» Allowable only if parcel shapes and sizes preclude feasibility of other single-family residential land use types
MASTER PLANNED* AND CONDITIONS ARE MET	» Industrial	<ul> <li>Should have a wide vegetated buffer along public roadways to protect suburban character</li> <li>Should be located on a designated truck route</li> <li>Should be within a 2-mile trip of I-75</li> </ul>
NOT APPROPRIATE	<ul><li>» Rural Residential</li><li>» Urban Residential</li></ul>	N/A

\*For sites under 10 acres in size, the County may waive the Master Plan requirement

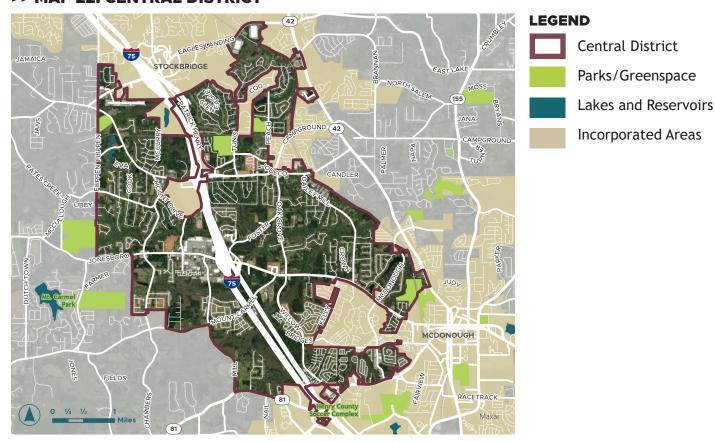
# **CENTRAL DISTRICT**

The Central District is the heart of unincorporated Henry County. It is delineated as the area between Stockbridge and McDonough between Flippen Road and the railroad line, encompassing much of the I-75 corridor in the county.

Many community members have expressed frustration about the high levels of growth in this area and its accompanying congestion. The development is not going away, and additional projects are expected—it is not an option to reverse course and make this area lower density. To meet this reality, the Comprehensive Plan Update recommends prioritizing significant sewer, transportation, and quality of life investments in this core area to make it more livable.

The vision for this area is to make concerted infrastructure and aesthetic improvements to support the recent and anticipated levels of higher intensity development. Land uses include a variety of residential neighborhoods (including multi-family and townhomes), retail, office (with a focus on medical uses along Patrick Henry Parkway), and buffered industrial uses. The sewer system will be expanded as necessary to accommodate the growth, and the transportation network will focus on creating a dense, interconnected system of "Complete Streets"—these are corridors that provide safe methods of travel for all types of users, whether they are driving, walking, bicycling, or taking transit.

#### >> MAP 22. CENTRAL DISTRICT



### **CENTRAL DISTRICT AT A GLANCE**





### **TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS:**

Prioritization of a well-connected, multi-modal network for corridors that support cars, pedestrians, cyclists and future transit.

	LAND USE	CONDITIONS
	<ul> <li>» Urban Residential</li> <li>» Office-Institutional</li> <li>» Public-Institutional</li> <li>» Parks and Greenspace</li> </ul>	N/A
APPROPRIATE	» High Density Mixed Use	» Max 50% of buildings should be all residential; a building can qualify as non- residential if at least 50% of its ground floor is a non-residential use (retail preferred)
IF MASTER PLANNED* AND CONDITIONS ARE MET	<ul><li>» High Density Suburban Residential</li></ul>	» Allowable only if parcel shapes and sizes preclude feasibility of other residential land use types; minimum of 6 dwelling units (du)/acre
	» Utilities	» Should have operational reason/ requirement to be located in the Central District
NOT APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» Rural Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Suburban         Residential</li> <li>» Medium Density Suburban         Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Mixed Use</li> <li>» Commercial</li> <li>» Industrial</li> <li>» Village</li> </ul>	N/A

<sup>\*</sup>For sites under 10 acres in size, the County may waive the Master Plan requirement

# **CENTRAL DISTRICT**

# AN AMENITY- AND INFRASTRUCTURE-RICH PLACE

With a higher density of development, it will be critical to make sure that the Central District is rich in strong infrastructure and quality of life amenities. These components are pictured at right, and represent a mix of both public and private investment.



Wide, Safe Sidewalks

Source: Pinterest



**Improved Roadway Intersections** 

Source: Austin American Statesman



**Multi-Use Trails** 

Source: Livable Buckhead



**Better Traffic Signal Timing** 

Source: LinkedIn



**Connected local roads** 

Source: City of Sacramento



**Transit Access** 

Source: MARTA



**Streetscape Improvements** 

Source: OHM Advisors



**Enhanced Landscaping** 

Source: Pinterest



**Better Designed Parking Lots** 

Source: Crowley Landscape



**More Parks and Open Space** 

Source: Discover Lehigh Valley



**Public Art** 

Source: Trees Atlanta



Parking Lots That Are Less Visible (not in front of buildings, etc.)

Source: Broken Sidewalk



**More Trees** 

Source: NC State



**Stricter Controls on Signage** 

Source: Molly's Cupcakes



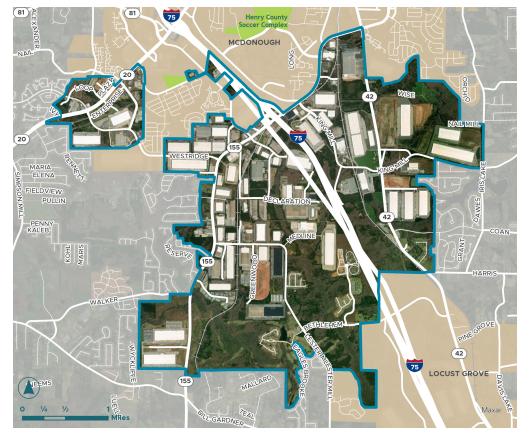
**Quality Building Materials** 

Source: The Surface Shop

# **WORKPLACE CENTER**

The area along I-75 between McDonough and Locust Grove is an established workplace center with an emphasis on light industrial uses—warehousing and logistics in particular. There is a need to augment this area with compatible, higher density residences that can house workers, as currently many of the employees in these businesses travel large distances from other areas to work in Henry. This is not only a quality of life issue for workers, but adds to the extreme traffic congestion of the area.

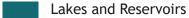
#### >> MAP 23. WORKPLACE CENTER



#### **LEGEND**









### **WORKPLACE CENTER AT A GLANCE**





### **TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS:**

Roadway improvements to improve the support of freight and safety and multi-use trails where appropriate



	LAND USE	CONDITIONS
	» Urban Residential	» Bonus density of up to 30 du/acre if at least 20% of units are priced at 80% Area Median Income (AMI) or below
APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» High Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» Industrial</li> <li>» Office-Institutional</li> <li>» Utilities</li> <li>» Parks and Greenspace</li> </ul>	N/A
APPROPRIATE IF MASTER PLANNED* AND CONDITIONS	<ul><li>» High Density Mixed Use</li><li>» Commercial</li></ul>	» Allowable if includes at least 5,000 square feet of retail to serve nearby businesses and residences
ARE MET	» Public Institutional	» Must have operational reason/requirement to be located in Workplace Center
NOT APPROPRIATE	<ul> <li>» Rural Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» Medium Density Suburban Residential</li> <li>» Low Density Mixed Use</li> <li>» Village</li> </ul>	N/A

<sup>\*</sup>For sites under 10 acres in size, the County may waive the Master Plan requirement

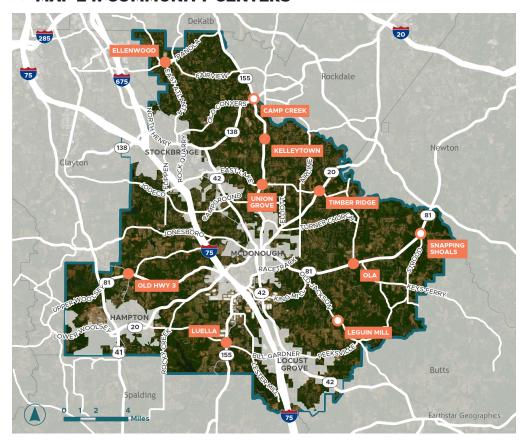
# **COMMUNITY CENTERS**

The ten Community Centers shown in the Development and Infrastructure Strategy Map are a key addition to this Comprehensive Plan Update. Throughout the process, residents consistently cited a need for access to commercial areas to serve their daily/weekly needs, such as grocery stores. This is supported by the market, as seen in the recent construction of small-scaled shopping centers in Ola and Kelleytown. It is not only an important component of the land use strategy, but part of the strategy to address roadway congestion by reducing trip lengths currently required by many residents to reach these services closer to the I-75 corridor.

These Community Centers should vary depending on their context. In the more rural areas, they should be lowintensity commercial concentrated at key intersections with well-connected, context-sensitive residential adjacent. In more established suburban areas, community centers are envisioned to be mixed use (vertical or horizontal) but with an emphasis on neighborhood-/ community-level commercial development and enhanced walkability.

Three of these community centers—Timber Ridge, Snapping Shoals, and Leguin Mill—are envisioned to be future, long-range developments that are unlikely to occur in the near future.

#### >> MAP 24. COMMUNITY CENTERS



#### **LEGEND**

Community Center

**Future Community Center** 

**Incorporated Areas** 

# **COMMUNITY CENTERS**



Community Center Character in Suburban Mix Source: Amenta Emma

### **COMMUNITY CENTERS AT A GLANCE**



### SEWER CAPACITY **INVESTMENTS:**

Determined by Development and Infrastructure Strategy Area



### **TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS:**

Intersection improvements, pedestrian improvements within 1/4-1/2 mile depending on size of the Community Center



### **FUTURE LAND USES**

Village in Rural Reserve and Rural Communities, Low Density Mixed Use in Suburban Mix; Bedrock Communities can vary

### **FUTURE LAND USES**

The Development and Infrastructure Strategy areas set the vision for how areas of the county should be developed using public infrastructure assets as the guide.\* The Future Land use categories are then employed as the mechanism for how the vision of these investment areas is implemented over time by establishing the desired land use on a parcel by parcel basis. The establishment of a future land use designation will further determine the zoning district which is appropriate for a parcel as it develops or redevelops,

and provides assistance to homeowners, developers, and County staff and elected officials. The zoning districts in this document will likely change when the County undergoes the recommended update to the ULDC.

The Comprehensive Plan Update includes 14 future land use designations, with the key 12 land uses summarized in Figure 15; additional detail follows. Note that density bonuses for affordable housing are not reflected in the table.

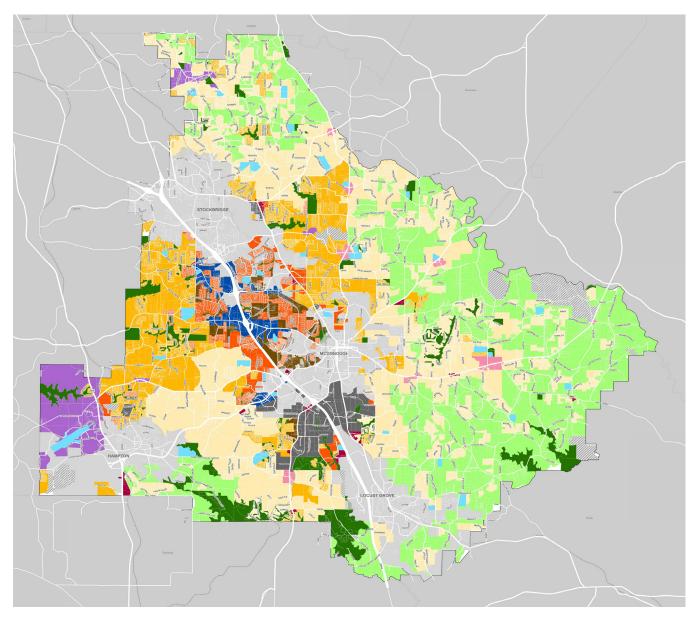
#### FIGURE 15. FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY CHART

COLOR	DESIGNATION	DESCRIPTION
	RURAL RESIDENTIAL 0-1 dwelling unit/acre (net)	This is the least developed of all future land uses and is characterized by agricultural and natural land uses, with scattered, very low density single-family homes. It has a rural transportation network of two-lane roadways.
	LOW DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL 0-2 dwelling units/acre( net)	This category consists of single-family homes on fairly large lots (mostly 0.5-1.0 acre in size) to maintain the lower density single-family character of unincorporated Henry County, but with improved aesthetics and roadway connectivity.
	MEDIUM DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL 0-4 dwelling units/acre (net)	This residential category is for single family attached or detached homes with public sewer and water service. New development should provide pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks and crosswalks, and have an appropriate streetscape.
	HIGH DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL 0-8 dwelling units/acre (net)	The highest intensity suburban residential category, this land use allows up to eight dwelling units an acre and requires access to both public sewer and water. The density can be reached using a number of housing types, including small-lot single-family residential, duplexes/triplexes, and townhouses. It is not intended to support lower intensity multi-family garden-style apartments.
	URBAN RESIDENTIAL 4-12 dwelling units/acre (net)	The Urban Residential use is intended to delineate areas within the Central District, specifically for higher density residential use. At a density range of 4-12 dwelling units per acre, this can still include small-lot residential neighborhoods, but is more geared towards housing products like townhomes and multi-family residences.

COLOR	DESIGNATION	DESCRIPTION
	LOW DENSITY MIXED USE 0-8 dwelling units/acre (net)	Low Density Mixed Use is a new future land use designation intended to support lower intensity mixed use developments. These areas can include a variety of uses, including commercial, office, and housing in a walkable, people-oriented environment.
	HIGH DENSITY MIXED USE 8-20 dwelling units/acre (net)	High Density Mixed Use is the most dense of all the future land uses. It is intended to support both vertical and horizontal mixed use projects, with a focus more on form and character rather than the use itself. This land use should have very strong pedestrian and bicycle facilities and high standards for streetscapes and building design.
	<b>VILLAGE</b> 1-2 stories	Village is a new future land use designation intended to support Community Centers in more outlying areas. These nodes can include a variety of uses in a walkable, people-oriented environment. Housing in these areas would be at the same density/intensity of the surrounding community with strong pedestrian connectivity to non-residential uses.
	COMMERCIAL n/a	This category includes suburban-style neighborhood and regional retail and commercial service activities, typically seen in shopping centers and plazas of all sizes. The higher number of stories is intended to accommodate uses such as hotels.
	OFFICE-INSTITUTIONAL n/a	This category includes small single-occupant structures for individual offices, as well as large office parks with a variety of tenants in multistory buildings, including medical and professional services.
	PUBLIC-INSTITUTIONAL n/a	This category includes public uses such as schools, colleges, hospitals, municipal community centers, cemeteries, municipal buildings, and post offices.
	INDUSTRIAL n/a	The purpose of this category is to provide for areas where industry can be located, with a preference for advanced manufacturing and logistics. Primary uses in this category currentlyinclude light manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale/distribution, and assembly. New developments within this category should provide substantial buffers, and screening from different adjacent uses.

<sup>\*</sup> Note: some designations on the Future Land Use Map are not in alignment with the Development and Infrastructure Strategy area guidance. These are legacy developments that are unlikely to change, but additional development in that future land use is not recommended going forward.

#### >> MAP 25. FUTURE LAND USE MAP



### **LEGEND**

### 2023 FUTURE LAND USE:



# **RURAL RESIDENTIAL**

### **DESCRIPTION**

The rural residential land use is the least developed of all future land uses in Henry County. These areas are characterized by agricultural and natural land uses, and a rural transportation network of two-lane roadways.

Lots can range from small (less than 1 acre) to very large; the main way they are distinguished from Low Density Suburban Residential land uses is their frontage on a local roadway, as opposed to being part of a subdivision.

### FIGURE 16. RURAL RESIDENTIAL DETAILS

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- » Although RA zoning allows 1-acre lots, larger lots should be encouraged
- » Where large-lot residential subdivisions are built:
  - » There should be significant buffers between them and active agricultural lands to prevent land use conflicts.
  - » Wide vegetated buffers (30 feet or greater) are encouraged along rural roadway frontages outside the neighborhood to screen new residential housing and help preserve the rural viewshed/character
  - Conservation subdivisions should be encouraged

Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	Rural Reserve, Rural Communities, Panola Mountain
Density/Intensity	0-1 dwelling units/acre (net)
Appropriate zoning district(s)	Residential-Agricultural (RA)
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY

Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

### LOW DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

### **DESCRIPTION**

This category is one of the largest land use in terms of acreage within Henry County and consists of single-family homes on fairly large lots (most between 0.5 and 1.0 acre in size). It is intended to maintain the lower density single-family character of unincorporated Henry County, but with improved aesthetics and roadway connectivity. If a project is near a proposed Henry County Trail segment, right of way or trail construction should be provided.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- » New curb cuts along streets and roadways should be discouraged when alternative access is available
- » Wide vegetated buffers should be required along existing roadways to help screen new residences and

- preserve the rural character of the corridor
- » As much as possible, larger subdivisions (over 50 lots) should contribute to local roadway connectivity by avoiding dead-ends/single entry points
- If the project is within 1 mile of a planned or existing multi-use trail, the development should provide a minimum 5-foot sidewalks with a minimum 3-foot grass buffer on the roadway; where applicable, as an alternative the development can provide a different method of access (minimum 5-feet wide) to a feeder trail system that does not use the roadway right-ofway
- No subdividing into flag lots
- Consider implementing residential design guidelines that reflect the desired character of houses within Henry County

#### FIGURE 17. LOW DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DETAILS

Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	Rural Communities, Panola Mountain
Density/Intensity	0-2 dwelling units/acre (net)
Appropriate zoning district(s)	Residential-Agricultural (RA), Single-Family Residence R-1, R-2, R-2 (S),R-3, RMH
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY

Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

### **MEDIUM DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL**

### **DESCRIPTION**

This residential category is for single-family attached or detached homes with public sewer and water service. New development should provide pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks and crosswalks, and have an appropriate streetscape. Lots typically are about 0.25 to 0.50 acres in size.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- » Sidewalks should provided internally in the neighborhood on at least one side of the roadway, with a minimum 5 feet of width
- » If the project is within 1 mile of a planned or existing

- multi-use trail or Community Center the development should provide a minimum 5-foot sidewalk with a minimum 3-foot buffer on the roadway that provides access to the development
- » No subdividing into flag lots
- » No dead-ends or cul-de-sacs; developments must contribute to overall connectivity of the local roadway network, with subdivisions of over 50 lots having at least two entry/exit points
- » Consider the implementation of residential design guidelines that reflect the character of houses within Henry County

#### FIGURE 18. MEDIUM DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DETAILS

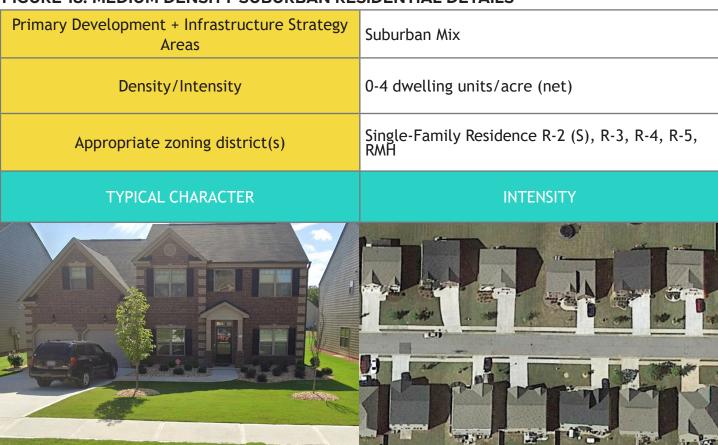


Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

# **HIGH DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL**

#### **DESCRIPTION**

The highest intensity suburban residential category, this land use allows up to eight dwelling units an acre and requires access to both public sewer and water. The density can be reached using a number of housing types, including small-lot single-family residential, duplexes/triplexes, and townhouses. It is not intended to support lower intensity multi-family garden-style apartments.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- » When applied to the Central District, a minimum of 6 du/acre should be required
- » Sidewalks should be provided internally in the neighborhood on at least one side of the roadway, with a minimum 5 feet of width

- » No dead-ends or cul-de-sacs; developments must contribute to overall connectivity of the local roadway network, with subdivisions of over 50 lots having at least two entry/exit points
- » Blocks within the subdivision should have perimeters no larger than 3,200 feet to promote walkable block sizes and a connected street network
- » If the project is within 1 mile of a planned or existing multi-use trail, Community Center, or public facility, the development should provide a minimum 5-foot sidewalk with a minimum 3-foot buffer on the roadway that provides access to the development
- » Consider the implementation of residential design guidelines that reflect the character of houses within Henry County

#### FIGURE 19. HIGH DENSITY SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DETAILS



Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

# **URBAN RESIDENTIAL**

### DESCRIPTION

A new future land use category, the Urban Residential use is intended to delineate areas within the Central Distarict and Workplace Center for higher density residential use. At a density range of 4-12 dwelling units per acre, this can still include small-lot residential neighborhoods, but is more geared towards housing products like townhouses and garden-style multi-family residences. Density bonuses for including workforce housing (units available at 80% AMI) are encouraged.

#### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- » Internal to the development, sidewalks should be provided on both sides of the streets with a minimum width of 5 feet and 3-foot landscaped buffers
- » External to the development along roadways, wide paths must be provided at least 8 feet in width with at least a 3-foot buffer between the path and the roadway
- No dead-ends or cul-de-sacs; developments must contribute to overall connectivity of the local

- roadway network, with subdivisions of over 50 lots having at least two entry/exit points
- Blocks within the subdivision should have perimeters no larger than 3,200 feet to promote walkable block sizes and a connected street network
- Require more usable greenspace in Urban Residential projects
- » Development must adhere to Central District design standards (to be developed through the recommended Central District Master Plan process) which include specifications for streetscape, landscape, parking and building design
- Prioritize a diversity of housing types within developments that can support a range of household incomes and sizes; up to 30 du/acre should be allowed if at least 20% of units are affordable at 80% AMI
- Consider the removal of minimum floor area requirements for residential uses to offer more flexibility in design and market driven dwelling size; alternatively, set a low a minimum such as an average floor area size of 600 square feet

#### FIGURE 20. URBAN RESIDENTIAL DETAILS

Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	Central District, Workplace Center
Density/Intensity	4-12 dwelling units/acre (du/acre net); up to 30 du/acre (net) with density bonuses
Appropriate zoning district(s)	Single-Family Residence (R-4), (R-5), Residential Duplex (RD), Multifamily Residential (RM), Residential Suburban (RS), Mixed Use (MU)
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY

Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

# **LOW DENSITY MIXED USE**

### DESCRIPTION

Low Density Mixed Use is a new future land use designation in Henry County. It is intended to support lower intensity mixed use developments primarily in the Suburban Mix area. These nodes can include a variety of uses, including commercial, office, and housing in a walkable, people-oriented environment. Housing in these areas is anticipated to be slightly denser than in surrounding areas to better support retail, but still no greater than 8 dwelling units per acre.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- Walkability is a key component of these areas, both within the mixed use development and in providing access to/from the area. As such, a strong, connected system of sidewalks and paths should be part of any site plan, including:
  - » Sidewalks with 6-foot width minimums, and

- 3-foot buffers from roadways minimum
- » A maximum block perimeter of 3,200 feet
- » Commercial uses, such as shopping centers, should be designed to include public plazas and semi-public spaces for outdoor seating, as well as enhanced landscaping and internal pedestrian connections
- » Vertical mixed use is preferred, but horizontal is allowed
- » No more than 70% of the site area (net) should be residential
- » Reduce front yard setbacks for neighborhood commercial districts so buildings can be placed closer to the street
- » Encourage the placement of parking areas to the side or rear of structures to create a more visually pleasing environment to foster pedestrian activity
- » Prioritize a diversity of housing types within developments that can support a range of household incomes and sizes.

#### FIGURE 21. LOW DENSITY MIXED USE DETAILS

Density/Intensity  0-8 dwelling units/acre (net); up to 2 stories for non-residential  Mixed-Use (MU) Preferred, Neighborhood Commercial District (C-1), General Commercial district (C-2), Single-Family Residence (R-4), (R-5), Residential Duplex (RD), Residential Suburban (RS), Residential Multifamily (RM)	Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy	Suburban Mix
Appropriate zoning district(s)  Commercial District (C-1), General Commercial district (C-2), Single-Family Residence (R-4), (R-5), Residential Duplex (RD), Residential	Density/Intensity	0-8 dwelling units/acre (net); up to 2 stories for non-residential
	Appropriate zoning district(s)	Commercial District (C-1), General Commercial district (C-2), Single-Family Residence (R-4), (R-5), Residential Duplex (RD), Residential



Image Sources: Amenta Emma and Digital Twins

# **HIGH DENSITY MIXED USE**

### DESCRIPTION

High Density Mixed Use is the most dense of all the future land uses. It is intended to support both vertical and horizontal mixed use projects, with a focus more on form and character rather than the use itself. This land use should have very strong pedestrian and bicycle facilities and high standards for streetscapes and building design.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- » A maximum of 50% of buildings in a High Density Mixed Use development should be all residential; buildings with a ground floor of at least 50% nonresidential can be counted as non-residential (retail/ office preferred)
- » Development must adhere to Central District design standards (to be developed through the recommended Central District Master Plan process) which should include specifications for streetscape, landscape, parking, and building design
- » Green space and attractive landscaping is a high priority; developments in High Density Mixed Use areas should provide at least 10% of their sites as usable greenspace

- » Walkability is a priority; sites should have strong pedestrian networks internally and multiple links to the broader local sidewalk network
  - » Sidewalks with 8-foot width minimums, and 3-foot buffers from roadways minimum
  - » A maximum block perimeter of 3,200 feet (industrial exempted)
- » Surface parking should be placed to the side or behind buildings to create a more people-friendly environment; to this end, front setbacks should be decreased substantially to a maximum of 20 feet with 0-foot lot lines allowable
- » Encourage the use of shared parking across uses to reduce the impact of parking areas and promote walkability
- Reduce parking minimums and establish parking maximums to avoid an over-supply of surface parking and consider instating parking maximums
- Removal of minimum floor area requirements for residential uses to offer more flexibility in design and market driven dwelling sizes; alternatively, consider a low minimum average floor area are requirement of 600 square feet
- » Prioritize a diversity of housing types within developments that can support a range of household incomes and sizes

# **HIGH DENSITY MIXED USE**

### FIGURE 22. HIGH DENSITY MIXED USE

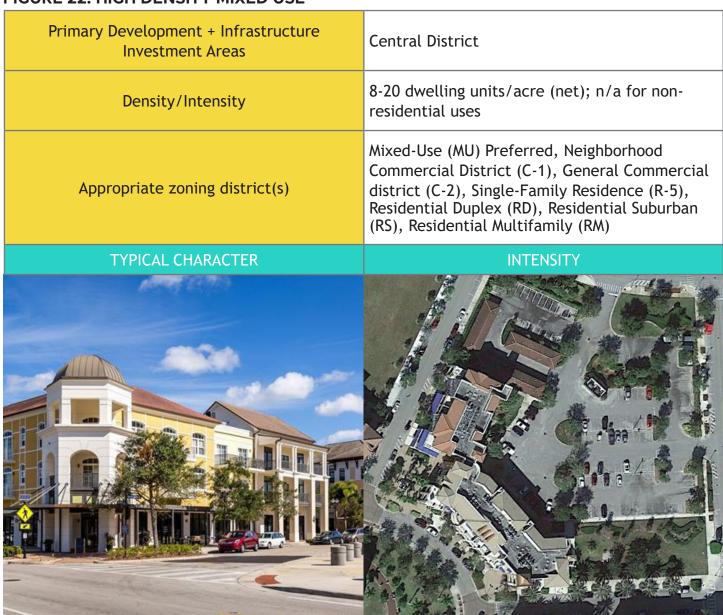


Image Sources: Redfin and Google Earth

### **VILLAGE**

### DESCRIPTION

Village is a new future land use designation in Henry County. It is intended to support Community Centers in outlying areas. These nodes can include a variety of uses, including commercial, office, and housing in a walkable, people-oriented environment. Housing in these areas would be at the same density/intensity of the surrounding community.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

» Only non-residential uses should be allowed within 800 feet of the main intersection of Community Centers; beyond an 800-foot radius, residential uses at a similar scale/density to the surrounding

- community should be allowed but with stronger roadway and sidewalk networks (see Figure 23)
- » Walkability is a key component of these areas, both within the mixed use development and in providing access to/from the area. As such, a strong, connected system of sidewalks and paths should be part of any site plan
  - » Sidewalks should be required at least 8 feet in width, with at least 3 feet of buffer space between the sidewalk and the roadway
  - » Maximum block perimeters of 3,200 feet
- » Commercial uses, such as shopping centers, should be designed to include public plazas and semi-public spaces for outdoor seating, as well as enhanced landscaping
- » Commercial buildings should face the street



FIGURE 23. VILLAGE COMMERCIAL CONCEPT

# **VILLAGE**

### FIGURE 24. VILLAGE DETAIL

	1
Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	Rural Reserve, Rural Communities, Panola Mountain
Density/Intensity	Maximum 2 stories
Appropriate zoning district(s)	Outside 800 ft from main intersection, single-family residential districts that match existing adjacent zoning are appropriate; Neighborhood Commercial District (C-1); General Commercial district (C-2)
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY
Publix	

Image Sources: Publix and Google Earth

# COMMERCIAL

#### **DESCRIPTION**

This category includes suburban-style commercial service activities, typically seen in shopping centers and plazas of all sizes.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

» Improving walkability and connectivity is important; new commercial developments should include a strong, clear network of pedestrian paths as well as

- wide sidewalks (at least 8 feet) with buffer strips (at least 4 feet in width) along major arterials and collectors
- Encourage the practice of shared parking across uses to reduce the impact of parking areas and promote walkability
- » Reduce the parking requirements to avoid an oversupply of surface parking and consider instating parking maximums

### FIGURE 25. COMMERCIAL DETAILS

TIOCKE 25. COMMERCIAE DE TAIES	
Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	Suburban Mix, Community Center
Density/Intensity	n/a
Appropriate zoning district(s)	Neighborhood Commercial District (C-1), General Commercial district (C-2), Highway Commercial District (C-3)
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY
PLOOMYSTOP INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPERTY OF T	

Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

# OFFICE/INSTITUTIONAL

#### **DESCRIPTION**

This category includes small single-occupant structures for individual offices, as well as large office parks with a variety of tenants in multi-story buildings, including medical and professional services. It also includes buildings and facilities used by private non-profit institutions such as houses of workship, private schools, and charitable organizations.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- Improving walkability and connectivity is important; new commercial developments should include a strong, clear network of pedestrian paths as well as wide sidewalks (at least 8 feet) with buffer strips (at least 3 feet in width) along major arterials and collectors
- » Office/institutional uses should be located near or connected to commercial and retail developments to reduce daytime vehicle trips by workers and employees

#### FIGURE 26. OFFICE/INSTITUTIONAL DETAILS

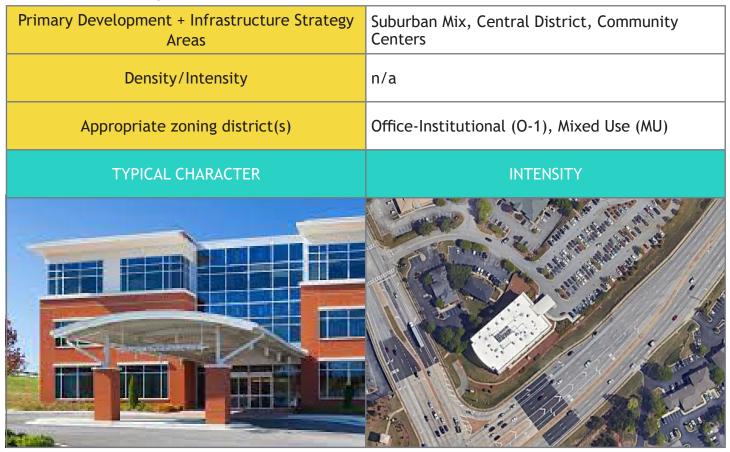


Image Sources: Ackerman & Co. and Google Earth

# **INDUSTRIAL**

#### **DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this category is to provide for areas where industry can be located, with a preference for advanced manufacturing and logistics. Primary uses in this category include light manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale/ distribution, and assembly. New developments within this category should provide substantial buffers, and screenings from different adjacent uses.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

» Industrial uses should have substantial vegetated buffers

- » New industrial uses should only occur where the roadway network can handle additional traffic from large vehicles and on designated truck routes
- Encourage the use of green/sustainable infrastructure and design to limit impacts of large-scale developments
- » Promote a variety of industrial uses to encourage a more diverse job base
- » Additional warehouses and distribution centers are not desired

#### EIGHDE 27 INDUSTRIAL DETAILS

FIGURE 27. INDUSTRIAL DETAILS	
Primarh Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	Suburban Mix, Central District, Workplace Center
Density/Intensity	n/a
Appropriate zoning district(s)	Light manufacturing (M-1), Heavy Manufacturing (M-2)
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY

Image Sources: Honor Froods and Google Earth

# **PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL**

### **DESCRIPTION**

This category includes public uses such as schools, colleges, hospitals, municipal community centers, cemeteries, municipal buildings, and post offices.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

» When there is a choice of where a facility can be located, Public/Institutional uses ideally should be located in the Central District or the Suburban Mix

- » Where a facility needs to be located in the Rural Reserve, Rural Communities, and Bedrock Communities, the preferred location is in or very close (within a ½ mile) to a Community Center
- » Outside the Central District, facility scale and intensity should be similar to the surrounding community with a maximum height of two stories
- » Sidewalks and pathways for pedestrians should be incorporated into site design. Facilities should connect to greenway/bicycle trails when available

#### FIGURE 28. PUBLIC/INDUSTRIAL DETAILS

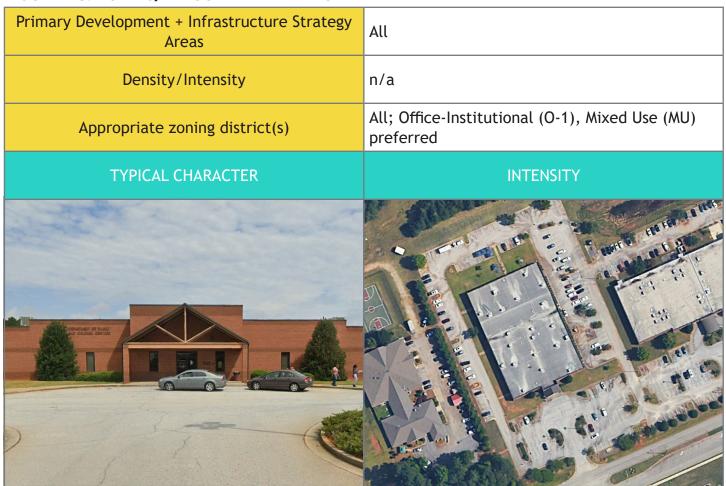


Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

# **PARKS + GREENSPACE**

#### **DESCRIPTION**

This category includes public parks, recreation areas, cemeteries, and open spaces, as well as areas to be preserved for greenways or land conservation. It is a land use that is appropriate and welcome in all parts of Henry County, but should be mindful of the context of the surrounding community.

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- Public parks should reflect the intensity/development character of the surrounding community; large active-use parks with lighted fields should be buffered from nearby residences
- » Smaller, passive parks should be considered as an alternative to large active-use parks where land may not be suitable or available for a higher intensity use

## EIGLIDE 20 DADKS AND CDEENSDACE DETAILS

FIGURE 29. PARKS AND GREENSPACE DETAIL	LS
Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	All
Density/Intensity	n/a
Appropriate zoning district(s)	All; Must be consistent with neighboring developments and character
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY
	THE POST OF THE PO

Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

# TRANSPORTATION/COMMUNICATION/UTILITIES

#### **DESCRIPTION**

This category includes such uses as landfills, water treatment plants, wastewater treatment plants, power substations, rail yards, mass transit facilities, airports, etc. These uses may be either public or private. Typically the locations for these facilities are determined by functional factors; when there is a choice on where these uses can be located, industrial areas are preferred.

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- » Where adjacent to residential and mixed uses, facilities should have dense buffers (at least 20 feet)
- » Additional landscape buffers along streets and roadways should be considered to visually screen utilities

## FIGURE 30. TRANSPORTATION/COMMUNICATION/UTILITIES DETAILS

Primary Development + Infrastructure Strategy Areas	All
Density/Intensity	n/a
Appropriate zoning district(s)	All, but Light manufacturing (M-1) and Heavy manufacturing (M-2) are preferred
TYPICAL CHARACTER	INTENSITY

Image Sources: Google Street View and Google Earth

## HOW THE LAND USE ELEMENT ADDRESSES THE FIVE KEY **NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The major focus of this comprehensive plan update was to provide better, more clear direction for land use in Henry County. But because land use impacts nearly every other aspect of long-range planning, it is also an opportunity to address all five of the key needs and opportunities noted in Section 4. By implementing the Development and Infrastructure Strategy and its land use recommendations, Henry County can also be addressing some of the challenges associated with its key needs and opportunities.

NEED/OPPORTUNITY	HOW THE LAND USE ELEMENT ADDRESSES IT
1. TRAFFIC CONGESTION	<ul> <li>» Matches development intensities with recommended types of roadway improvements</li> <li>» Emphasizes a Complete Streets, multi-modal approach for the Central District to encourage a shift away from cars for shorter trips</li> <li>» Adds Community Centers to meet more daily/weekly needs of residents in more rural areas, reducing trips into the more congested parts of the County</li> </ul>
2. DEVELOPMENT FEELS UNPREDICTABLE AND UNPLANNED	<ul> <li>Provides detailed charts designating if a land use is appropriate, appropriate with conditions, or not appropriate in a certain area</li> <li>Aligns development intensities with infrastructure investments</li> </ul>
3. LACK OF DESTINTATIONS AND THINGS TO DO	<ul> <li>Creates a foundation for density and infrastructure in the Central District for a future entertainment destination</li> <li>Creates opportunities for closer-to-home retail/restaurants in Community Centers</li> </ul>
4. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT LACKS DIVERSITY	<ul> <li>» Provides additional future residential land uses with more nuance</li> <li>» Includes density bonuses for workforce housing in Urban Residential areas</li> <li>» Policy considerations encourage lower minimum lot sizes and unit sizes</li> </ul>
5. A NEED FOR MORE ACCESSIBLE, TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION	<ul> <li>Provides detailed charts designating if a land use is appropriate, appropriate with conditions, or not appropriate in a certain area - giving greater clarity for what the community can expect.</li> </ul>

# >> 5.2 TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Transportation is a major component of daily life in Henry County. Throughout the study process, residents and stakeholders unequivocally agreed that congestion and poor mobility are major issues in the county. Although the county is making progress on much-needed improvement projects, there is more to be done—especially in terms catching up to development and making sure infrastructure investments are aligned with the land use vision.

## CTP RECOMMENDATIONS

Henry County completed its most recent CTP in 2022. The process included defining existing conditions, conducting a needs analysis, engaging the public through an extensive outreach program, developing a prioritization methodology, and preparing cost estimates for performing a fiscally constrained plan, a series of projects allotted over short-, medium-, and long-term timeframes.

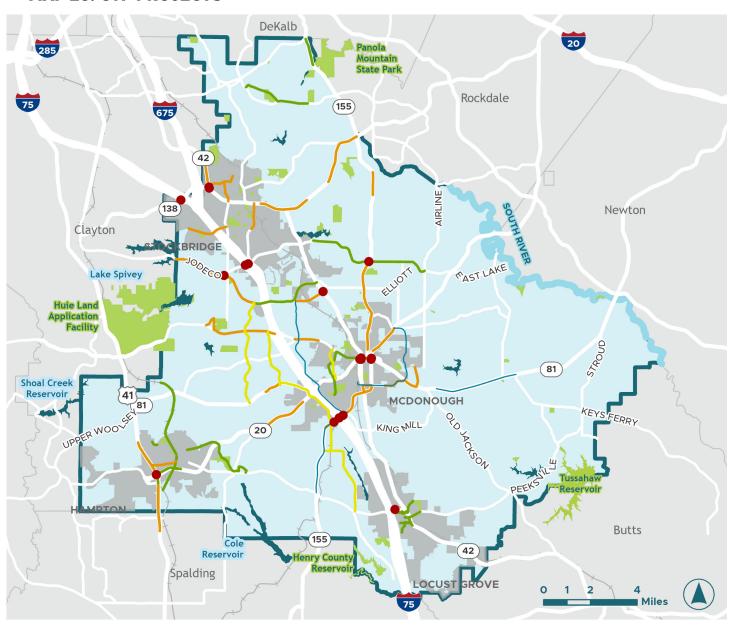
Although the bulk of recommendations focus on the roadway network, the CTP was multi-modal and developed a diverse typology of improvement projects. These projects span the next two decades and included road widenings, new connector roadways, operational and safety enhancements, arterial upgrades; intersection improvements, technology deployment considerations, sidewalk and multi-use trail construction; and transit. However, the projects that will have the most near-term impact are those currently programmed—and in some cases under construction—through the SPLOST program. Map 26 shows the short-range transportation projects.

In addition to specific project recommendations, the CTP also outlined potential policy recommendations that are supportive of this Comprehensive Plan vision. Among these were Complete Streets implementation; updates to the Unified Land Development Code in conjunction with dedicated sidewalk funding; street lighting policy; and updates to ARC's Regional Transportation Plan. For detailed information, reference the Henry County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, 2022 Update.



Image Source: LSM

## >> MAP 26. CTP PROJECTS



## **LEGEND**

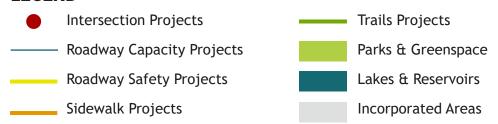
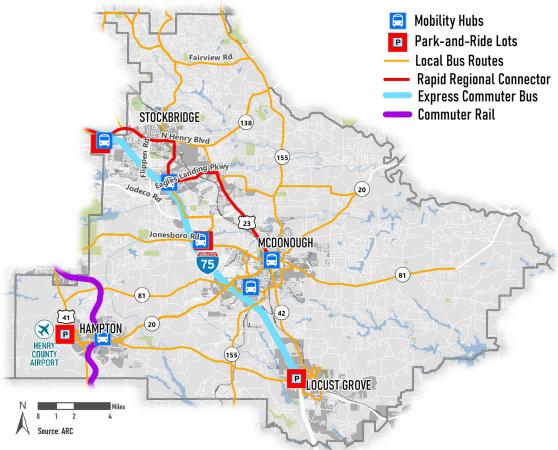


FIGURE 31. HENRY COUNTY TRANSIT VISION



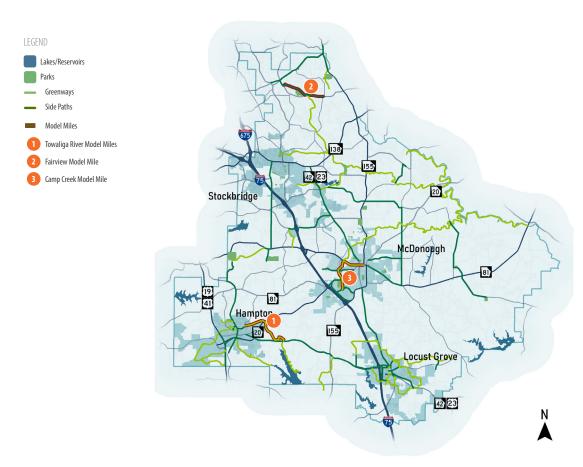
#### TRANSIT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

In the recently completed Henry County Transit Master Plan, the vision statement communicates an aspiration "to provide a safe and dependable high-quality transit system that enhances the quality of life and delvers mobility options for all county residents." With a robust system, identified needs that will be addressed include increased transit accessibility and connectivity, expanded multi-modal choices, support economic development, and providing a safe, equitable, and cost effective transit system.

A product of the transit study was a list of short-, medium-, and long-range recommendations for consideration to advance the transit network. Two examples of short-range projects within the next five years include conducting a Microtransit Feasibility
Study and Service Implementation plus complete
preparations for Xpress Commuter Bus Service from
Stockbridge to Hartsfield Jackson International Airport.
Medium-range recommendations for the ten year
period from 2027 to 2037 included developing transfer
facilities at the Henry Medical Center Mobility Hub and
constructing new operations and maintenance facility
for servicing expanding service fleet. The long-range
recommendations include establishing a bus transfer
facility at the Jonesboro Mobility Hub and creation of a
dedicated annual funding source for transit supportive
infrastructure.

The Comprehensive Plan Update recommends future land uses—particularly in the Central District and Workplace

#### FIGURE 32. HENRY COUNTY TRAILS VISION



Center—with higher densities that will support transit ridership. In addition to interconnected sidewalks and incorporating Complete Street design elements in these areas, a policy should be considered for new project developments to incorporate transit access into their design. One example would be space for and delivery of safe and attractive bus stops and/or rideshare facilities.

#### TRAIL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The recent Henry County Trails Master Plan identified a series of projects that provide opportunities for an alternative mode of travel, an economic development tool, social amenity, and support a healthy lifestyle. Through the study process alternative alignments were evaluated, and right-of-way and environmental impacts analyzed. The study identified three model miles that would be used to gain momentum to spur continued

future expansion of the trail network. These Model Mile proects were the Towaliga River, Fairview, and Camp Creek River Trails.

Information from public engagement did identify traffic congestion as the top priority but providing a targeted multi-modal system specific to the Development and Infrastructure Strategy Areas is important for the continued smart growth and quality of life envisioned for Henry County. It is recommended that Henry County not only annually commit funding for intentionally expanding the trail system but increase the parks maintenance and operations budget for upkeep of a quality system. Also, the Trails Plan should be a guide for private development to include delivery of the infrastructure within and abutting its property, but more detailed planning is needed to determine specific right-of-ways.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH DEVELOPMENT + INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**

These three recently completed plans—the CTP, the Transit Master Plan, and Trails Master Plan—are still still valid, but specific project recommendations and priorities should be re-evaluated in light of updated land use policies pegged to the Development and Infrastructure Strategy.

- » **RURAL RESERVE** As an area that will retain its rural character, substantial development is not projected and roadway widenings are not forecasted. The primary need for transportation improvements is to address developing effective crash reduction countermeasures and prioritizing ongoing maintenance needs, but there are no short-term projects in the CTP identified for these purposes.
- » **RURAL COMMUNITIES** Rural communities are areas of lower density development that cause less demand on the roadway network. As such, capacity and safety issues are typically going to occur at intersections and not along corridors. Therefore, capacity adding/ roadway widenings should not occur, but intersection improvements are appropriate (such those currently part of the SPLOST program). Transportation investment improvements should only occur where there are significant safety concerns and congestion (LOS E or F); some long-range general purpose capacity projects in the Regional Transportation Plan (RFP) should be given a second look to make sure they align with the Rural Communities infrastructure strategy direction.
- » PANOLA MOUNTAIN Like Rural Communities, the transportation strategy in Panola Mountain is to focus

- on addressing safety concerns and maintenance needs. Intersection improvements are appropriate but roadway widenings should only occur to alleviate extreme congestion (LOS E or F). Also in these areas, trail plans should be prioritized, such as the Fairview Model Mile and a stronger pedestrian/bicycle link to Panola Mountain State Park.
- » **SUBURBAN MIX** These suburban areas have the typical land uses of varying densities of residential development, supportive commercial, and office/ institutional. The transportation network is expected to remain auto-based, but should take on a more multi-modal system with sidewalks within ½ mile of community facilities/destinations, multi-use trails, and infrastructure supportive of transit operations. As safety issues and congestion emerges, all types of roadway improvement projects (including capacity/ widening projects) are appropriate and should be considered.
- » CENTRAL DISTRICT With anticipated higher intensity development, a diverse multi-modal network should provide increased non-vehicular connectivity. Although it is unlikely that many people will stop driving altogether, a multi-modal system can provide alternative options particularly for shorter trips and last-mile connectivity to future transit investments. The most important component is implementing Complete Streets strategies, which will create a safe and attractive network that support cars, pedestrians, cyclists and future transit. The recommended Central District Master Plan should identify specific "Complete Street" projects that will have the highest impact toward developing a more multi-modal network. The proposed mobility hub

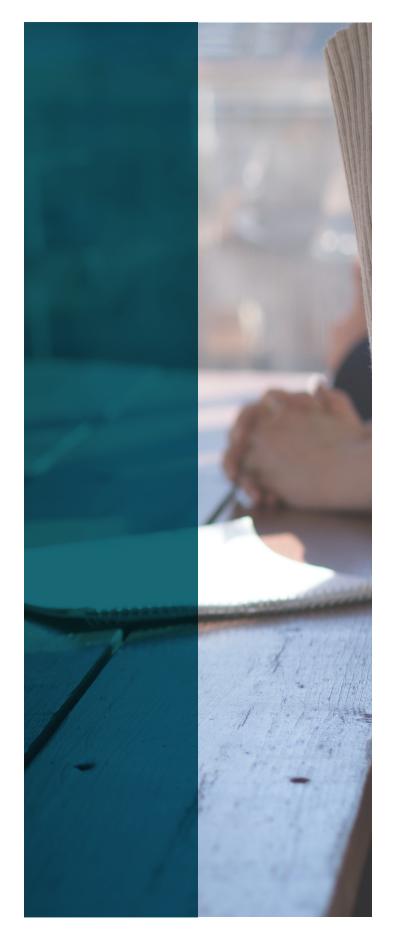
near I-75 and Jonesboro Road is potentially a key feature, and the county should consider prioritizing it for implementation.

**WORKPLACE CENTER** - The transportation strategy for this area should balance the needs of light industrial uses (particularly in accommodating freight) with livability considerations around work force housing. Maintenance of roadways in this area will be critical, as will be safely accommodating pedestrians on main corridors with sufficient protection from higher traffic volumes.



Edgewood Retail District in Atlanta is an example of a development that combines auto access and walkability Image Source: TSW





Many planning processes produce great visions, but lack reality-based strategies for implementation. In comprehensive plans, this can sometimes be due to the fact that they tend to be very high level and broad, trying to address everything. This often leads to overly generalized policies and actions that do not provide true direction to a jurisdiction's elected officials, staff, and constituents.

To avoid this issue, the Henry County Comprehensive Plan Update intentionally zeroed in on five key issues facing the County (see Section 4):

- 1. Transportation: traffic and congestion
- 2. Land use: development feels unpredictable and unplanned
- 3. Economic development: lack of destinations and things to do
- 4. Housing: housing products lacks diversity
- 5. Communications: a need for more accessible, transparent communication

This implementation strategy focuses specifically on these five issues from a multi-disciplinary perspective, as each of these challenges influences the others.

## >> 6.1 TRANSPORTATION

For communities in the Atlanta region, traffic is a common challenge with few clear universal solutions and no single silver bullet.

In general, areas with higher density and interconnected street patterns are better positioned to address congestion because they have more opportunities to introduce different modes of travel such as walking, biking, or transit. Areas outside the urban core with emerging transportation networks struggle to balance maintenance costs, widening projects, and new roadway construction to meet the demands of personal vehicles as populations increase and continue to spread out across longer and longer distances.

Henry County falls into the latter category: a transitioning suburban/rural county that is increasingly facing growth pressures and mounting congestion, but currently lacks the density and transportation network to better manage it. The best way to improve the transportation system is through an incremental, multifaceted strategy that is closely aligned with development types and needs.

Transportation best practices vary greatly among communities and between urbanized and non-urbanized areas. The amount of funding is limited for high-cost projects with stiff competition for internal and external funding sources and community needs. Projects that address multiple facets of community priorities, set the transportation network up for greater future success, and associated policy changes are all necessary to improve Henry County's transportation network.

## **RECOMMENDED GOALS + POLICIES**

- » Align transportation investments with the Development and Infrastructure Strategy
- » Avoid widening roadways and increasing capacity in areas where additional growth is not envisioned
- » Focus on roadway maintenance, bridge repairs, and safety improvements in more rural areas
- » Pursue and prioritize the creation of a dense multi-modal network of Complete Streets in the Central District
- » Require stronger connectivity in new developments, both internally and external to the development
- » Use technological improvements and travel demand management (TDM) strategies to improve the transportation network, avoiding large capital costs
- » Approach transportation infrastructure and funding incrementally, particularly the use of the SPLOST program
- » Regularly communicate the status of planned roadway and multi-modal projects, increasing public confidence

#### **KEY INITIATIVES**

**Evaluate proposed transportation projects for** alignment with the Development and Infrastructure **Strategy.** One of the first recommended actions is to evaluate the proposed transportation projects in the County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), Transit Master Plan (TMP), and Trails Plan. This does not imply that these plans are invalid—they were simply developed prior to the Comprehensive Plan Update and do not reflect the Update's shift in policy direction and the Development and Infrastructure Strategy. Many proposed projects in these plans will remain relevant, but others should be reconsidered such as capacity projects in lower growth strategy areas (like Rural Reserve and Rural Communities), and reprioritizing multi-modal, Complete Street projects that can have high impacts in the Central District.

Require stronger connectivity in the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC). One of the biggest transportation challenges in Henry County is the lack of a strong, interconnected network of local roadways. This is largely the result of a legacy rural roadway network paired with a development code with weak requirements for improving connectivity. The majority of development in Henry County is built as self-contained projects with limited connectivity to the rest of the transportation network. As a result, this funnels trips onto a limited number of historically rural roadways, with few options for alternative routes that help distribute these trips more broadly. When the County updates its ULDC (see 6.2), stronger measures for both roadway and sidewalk connectivity should be included.

Begin investing in the multi-modal network of the Central District as soon as possible. Also tagged to a key land use implementation strategy, the county should begin building its multi-modal network in the Central District as soon as possible. This will be a slow, incremental process that will take decades to complete but should begin immediately. The recommended Central District Master Plan should identify key corridor improvements, focusing on the roadways which the County controls, as well as identifying a realistic network of sidewalks, bikeways, and trails that the development community can also contribute to as additional projects come online.

Identify specific alignments for key greenways and **trails projects.** Beyond the Central District, there is a proposed network of greenways and trails from the County's Trails Master Plan. Currently this plan is very high-level and gives general guidance on the location of trails. While this is a helpful starting point, it does not provide the needed detail for where the trail's actual alignment will be—this makes it impossible to not only require developers to build segments or set aside rightof-way within their projects, but also endangers the entire greenway from being built as the County continues to develop and potential right-of-way disappears.

### Influence the demand side of transportation too.

Another effective tool is prioritizing travel demand management (TDM) policies. TDM seeks to reduce travel demand or to redistribute this demand by location in the county or time of day. It is most effectively applied with alternative incentives or financial consequences. TDM addresses the demand side of travel behavior by reducing the number of vehicles that travel on roadways through the promotion of alternatives to driving alone. Common TDM strategies include ridesharing (carpool and vanpool), transit, biking, walking, telecommuting, and flexible work-hour scheduling. It is a cost-effective alternative to increasing capacity. TDM can be used effectively in coordination with regional agencies such as Georgia Commute Options by implementing a focused, dataled strategy that targets the specific needs and travel demands of Henry County.

Complete current transportation projects on budget with clear and updated communication about project status. One of the common themes of the Comprehensive Plan Update is to improve transparency and access to information for the community. Although the community primarily raised this as an issue regarding development, it also applies to public projects as well. It is important that the county maintains and clearly advertises its Cleargov website so that the community can follow the process and gain confidence in the county's ability to make progress on congestion issues.

Address immediate concerns, but ultimately build towards the long view. Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), and the transportation focused TSPLOST, are a unique tool for Georgia cities and counties to generate additional funds for projects, including projects to improve transportation networks. Henry County is already utilizing this funding source. It is recommended that projects selected for this funding address the immediate needs while building towards a longer-range planning effort. This incremental and phased approach can help Henry County afford much larger projects over multiple SPLOST programs rather than all at once.



Multi-modal suburban street. Image Source: AARP

## >> **6.2 LAND USE**

Implementing the land use vision is already into the Development and Infrastructure Strategy and the updated future land use categories (see 5.1). By directly tying infrastructure and development types and providing more specific guidance and transparent flexibility in land use designations, Henry County and the community should be able to move forward with a more nuanced, predictable process for growth.

## **KEY INITIATIVES**

Commit to the Development and Infrastructure Strategy. Throughout the Update process, the community expressed their perception that the development process was unpredictable, lacked transparency, and was resulting in rapid growth without commensurate infrastructure. In response, the Comprehensive Plan Update team created a new, innovative Development and Infrastructure Strategy that provides clear guidance to both elected officials and the community, yet acknowledges the need for flexibility and nuance. However, this strategy is only as effective as the will to commit to it—to build better trust between the community and the County, as well as a more coordinated pattern of development, it is essential that a good faith effort is made to follow this strategy. This means resisting the temptation to support one-off projects that do align with the strategy, while also potentially reversing course on previously considered public projects that no longer reflect this new policy direction.

## Develop a more detailed plan for the Central District.

A more concrete initiative is the development of a Central District Master Plan. In the last five years alone, multiple projects have been approved in this area but there has been no coordinated effort to integrate them together into a functional, high-quality community. A Central District Master Plan should be undertaken as soon as possible and at a minimum should include the following:

» A single master plan vision for the Central District,

## **RECOMMENDED GOALS + POLICIES**

- » Clearly tie infrastructure investments with appropriate levels of development
- » Leverage sewer capacity investments as a way to guide growth
- » Invest in a dense, multi-modal network of Complete Streets in the Central District
- » Hold the development community to a higher standard of building to better reflect local character
- » In new development, prioritize the creation of high-quality, usable green spaces
- » Respect the Watershed Protection Overlay— "hold the line" on the development in this area to not only preserve the County's future water supply, but retain the traditional rural character of southern Henry County

showing how all of these new developments will fit in with current development, and a vision for how undeveloped/under-developed sites should be built out to enhance the community

- » Complete Street recommendations for corridors under the control of Henry County
- » Identification of specific pedestrian and bicycle projects to improve connectivity
- Improved roadway and streetscape standards
- » More detailed transit planning
- » A plan for public space and parks
- » A market assessment and recommendations for attracting high-quality retail and office uses (see 6.3)
- Recommendations for implementing the plan through regulations in the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC)

**Update the County's Unified Land Development Code (ULDC).** Second to committing to the Development and Infrastructure Strategy, the best way to implement the Comprehensive Plan update is to update the ULDC. At a minimum, this should include the following:

- » Updating zoning regulation to reflect the more nuanced future land uses, particularly around mixed use
- » Design guidelines for the Central District (as a potential overlay)
- » Higher standards for roadway and sidewalk connectivity in, to, and through new developments
- » Mechanisms for density bonuses for projects that provide workforce housing units (see 6.4)
- » Allowing uses to support a future entertainment district, such as allowing breweries

Streamline the development process. The current development process is sometimes characterized by unpredictability and multi-month delays. The Development and Infrastructure Strategy-and particularly the land use appropriateness tables-should help to provide clear expectations for development. However, there are opportunities to improve the process itself. As part of updating the ULDC, the County should also consider measures that would streamline process, including ways to reduce the number of projects tabled, as well as mechanisms to reach decisions more quickly so that more projects can be scheduled at a hearing. Not only would this make the process more predictable, but unnecessary delays in rezoning often result in higher costs for development projects that are passed on the end consumer and contribute to increasing housing costs.



Breweries as gathering places. Image Source: BringFido



Strong sidewalk requirements. Image Source: Where the Sidewalk Starts

# >> 6.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Henry County has unique assets that if properly branded and marketed could enhance the quality of life for residents. Additionally - if positioned properly as key amenities - these assets could also bolster the attraction of businesses to Henry County as well.

## **KEY INITIATIVES**

Leverage and Promote Existing Assets. There is no debate that Henry County has unique offerings such as the Atlanta Motor Speedway, agri-tourism destinations, and the Stockbridge Amphitheatre, amongst others. However, a lack of consistent promotion and attention results in these facilities often being forgotten and overlooked when Henry County residents look for things to do locally.

To encourage growth in its restaurant offerings in particular, it is vital Henry County leaders to support the businesses and places that already exist within its boundaries. The best indication for the future success of new restaurants and entertainment venues is to evaluate the current success of similar places. Intentionally and consistently supporting local establishments sends the demand signal that not only can Henry County support businesses like The Cheesecake Factory and Top Golf but, more importantly, that it will.

#### Conduct a Retail and Recreation Leakage Study.

It would be useful for county officials to conduct a focused Retail, Recreation, and Leakage study to have a greater understanding of the consumer needs of its residents. Where are Henry County residents spending their money? And how much are they spending? Answering these questions will help inform the county's leaders and prospective retailers of their current and future market base. This study can be specifically tied to the broader Central District Master Plan effort.

## **RECOMMENDED GOALS + POLICIES**

- » Lay the foundation for a long-range goal of attracting a destination retail use in the Central District
- » Expand the types of retail and entertainment uses that are explicitly allowed in the ULDC
- » Support the development of smaller community centers with close-to-home options for retail and entertainment
- » Improve coordination between Henry County, the cities, and allied organizations and partners in promoting existing assets

Align Policies and Incentives to Enable Destination **Development.** The primary barrier to attracting an entertainment destination is the lack of density in Henry County; this challenge can be addressed over time with the growth and enhancement of the Central District (see 6.1 and 6.2 above) and understanding current demands and leakage. In the meantime, there is an opportunity to remove policy barriers that are also preventing the development of places where Henry residents can gather and have fun without driving to Atlanta or Fayette County.

A good example is making breweries an explicitly allowable use in specific parts of the county, like the Central District. The boom of breweries in the Atlanta region over the last decade has been both a catalyst and anchor for major redevelopment projects. Similarly, pop-up markets, food truck parks, and other temporary vending operations have helped create gathering spots in the region. Presently, Henry County's ULDC does not explicitly support these activities - thus creating additional administrative hurdles to overcome. Aligning policies to encourage more flexible and non-traditional retail activities and entertainment would help advance the ability of the development community to meet this need.

Begin Activating the Central District. Activations bring positive attention and energy to places where they are held. They can be simple, community-scaled events like neighborhood cleanups, meetups, and "Screen on the Green" or more involved activities like music festivals and road races. Placemaking is unique in that it can provide an area with a greater feeling of safety and sense of being a place where people want to be. As such, renovating deteriorated facilities and adding artwork and people-scaled infrastructure (i.e., benches, tables, streetlights, etc.) help induce the senses of safety and interesting.

#### **Provide Retail and Commercial Options Closer**

**to Home.** Henry County is a target-rich environment with plenty of interesting things to do. While some of those unique opportunities are off the beaten path, most of the recreational, retail and restaurant options are clustered along the I-75 corridor. The public has been adamant and consistent with the need to develop activity nodes throughout the county, and this plan has responded accordingly. To address this need, the Update has identified ten community centers in less densely developed parts of the County; these areas have protected space for local-service commercial and retail options to serve the surrounding community.



Movies in the park. Image Source: Block Club Chicago

## >> **6.4 HOUSING**

The rising costs of housing and access to affordable places to live has become a familiar concern for communities across the country. There is an ongoing need to create housing that serves the needs of lower-income families and provides home-ownership opportunities for entry-level buyers. For several years now, local governments have been enacting a wideranging set of policies in an effort to curtail the effects of this increasing unaffordability. While not all these policies may be appropriate for Henry County there are several best practices that have been identified by the consultant team that could be a benefit to the county and community in the coming years.

In addition to taking an in-depth look at the best practices currently used by other governments to see what might be appropriate for Henry County, the consultant team is providing several other suggestions. These recommended goals and policies should be considered as additional measures the county can take to address and alleviate further pressure on the housing market.

## **RECOMMENDED GOALS + POLICIES**

- » Increase housing supply by permitting alternatives to traditional single-family housing and expanding areas where multi-family housing can be built by-right in concert with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan
- » Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures for potential housing developments and alternative solutions to standard building forms. This includes the potential conversion of non-residential structures into housing and the utilization of parking areas within existing developments which may be over-parked for residential uses
- » Create a cross-disciplinary task force to address housing within the county by working with partners and stakeholders from the public and private sector, including local municipalities within the county and adjacent jurisdictions
- » Revise ULDC to address zoning codes/polices that may be prohibiting the diversity of housing options
  - » Include missing middle housing typologies such as triplex, quadraplex, smaller apartments and cottage courts (amend "cluster housing" in current code)
  - » Reduce the minimum lot size requirements in certain zoning districts
  - » Reduce the minimum dwelling size requirements to offer flexibility in the sizes of new housing and allow the market to dictate housing size

## **KEY INITIATIVES**

Open more land within the county to the development of multi-family residential housing by revising the ULDC. One of the practices that is becoming more widespread across the country is the reduction of districts in which single-family zoning is the only permitted housing type. Several cities and states -such as Minneapolis, MN, Oregon, and Vermont-have gone so far as to eliminate single-family in its entirety. Although this does not appear to be a reasonable action for Henry, a pared down version of this policy, in which more housing types are permitted in zoning districts that were previously only single-family, might be considered. Typically, these new housing typologies are at a scale similar to the single-family typologies that are permitted, such as duplexes, triplexes, or other "missing middle" housing types. This allows the higher density infill housing to blend in with the existing character of an area. Revising a few of the existing zoning districts which have smaller lot sizes and are considered a more typical urban form, such as the R-4 and R-5 districts, to allow denser by-right housing is an option that the county should explore. Another option would be the creation of additional residential zoning districts in the ULDC which permit a variety of housing options and densities.

Allow Accessory Dwelling Units to be offered as an alternative to traditional housing. Another widespread policy change that has become commonplace is the acceptance of using Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as a form of housing. This comes in multiple forms, including detached ADUs, such as dwellings in an accessory structure, or attached ADUs, which are small dwellings incorporated the primary structure of a house, like basement apartments. ADUs have shown to have benefits to homeowners by providing an alternative source of income or even a separate living quarters for relatives who may need additional care, and also contribute to the available stock of affordable housing in a community due to their smaller footprint and floor area. While Henry County currently has Accessory Dwellings as a permitted

accessory use, the zoning code places limitations on who can reside in the dwelling, going so far as to prohibit the use of the dwelling as a rental property and making it a de facto guest house. Updating the policy around ADU's would be a simple way to for the county address housing affordability.

Create incentive programs for developers who incorporate workforce housing into multi-family developments. There are also tools available for a local government to enact that can contribute to the construction of affordable housing within its jurisdiction. One of the more frequently used of these tools is the implementation of incentives for developers who include housing at a percentage of the Area Median Income (AMI) or are willing to create developments with a mixture of housing types and price ranges. Examples of incentives offered to developers include density bonuses in which a developer is allowed to exceed maximum established densities, reductions in parking requirements, the expedited processing of permits, waivers in permitting fees, and tax abatements. Again, all of these options may not be a fit for Henry County—nonetheless it is worth investigating to determine what incentives could be implemented.

Reduce the impact of rising costs in construction to the end consumer. As the cost of construction has increased over the past few years, access to affordable housing has been harder to find as some of the burden of these rising costs has been passed on to the end consumer. Although it is not possible for the county to reduce the cost of construction, it is possible to potentially lower the overall costs on a project basis by reducing parking requirements, especially for multifamily or mixed-use development that includes housing. This is especially true if a development proposes structured parking, which only increases the construction cost of parking even more. Currently, Henry County requires that all residential dwelling units be serviced by a minimum of two parking spots. This is true regardless of the number of bedrooms, so that a one-bedroom

apartment requires the same parking as a 3-bedroom apartment. A 2018 presentation by the Bleakly Advisory Group to the Georgia Planning Association identified that reducing parking requirements for low-rise apartments to just 1.25 spaces per dwelling could save an estimated \$2,000 per unit in construction cost when in a parking lot. It is anticipated that this number would be even higher today given the rise in construction costs since that report was produced. By making incremental adjustments in parking requirements the county could lower overall construction costs and potentially reduce the burden on the end consumer.

**Conduct a Housing Needs Assessment and review** county policies to find additional ways to promote housing affordability. In order to effectively address issues of housing affordability an organization needs to have an understanding of the primary concerns affecting its community. One way to do this is by conducting a Housing Needs Assessment, which would create a comprehensive report of current housing conditions and areas of need within the county. The assessment takes inventory of current housing and projects the number of housing units that are needed to meet projected growth. It should survey and analyze current housing for potentially vulnerable areas and formulate a plan to preserve and stabilize any naturally occurring affordable housing for low to moderate income families that may be threatened. This document would also provide community leaders with the proper guidance on how to begin to address those needs, and tools the county can use to combat affordability such as the creation of a Housing Trust Fund or leveraging of publicly owned lands for the development of workforce housing.



Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). Image Source: Illinois Realtors



Homes on small lots in a cottage court style. Image Source: HUD User

# >> 6.5 COMMUNICATIONS

In order for Henry County to develop transparent communication with the community special attention needs to be focused on how information is shared, how the community can provide feedback and how the given feedback can be applied to decision-making processes. Below are a few best practices that the county can keep in mind moving forward to achieve this.

## **KEY INITIATIVES**

Improve the County's website. When sharing information, the main objective is to create a more accessible system of presenting information. Henry County's current website is a great resource of information on many topics of interest throughout the county. One way that this resource can become more accessible is to follow a consistent format across all documents and pages from all departments.

It is also essential the website is maintained and updated regularly. Specifically for the Planning and Zoning page. One example of this is a link that refers the public to courses on how to read the county's zoning map, but the link to this very important information is broken. Accessibility of the website can also be considered in the order that information is seen by visitors to the website. The 'Where to Start' and 'FAQs' tabs on the Planning and Zoning section of the website have great information for visitors, but neither is the first thing that viewers see when visiting the website. A focus on user design can help community members find information quickly and save county staff time on answering questions that are readily available on the website.

Communicate with the audience in mind. Another way to ensure that information is easily accessible is to focus on how the information could be interpreted by the audience. Information that is easily translated into various languages, or use assistive technology such as tools that can read text aloud or change the text format, will widen the audience that the County can reach. If

## **RECOMMENDED GOALS + POLICIES**

- » Provide clear, easily accessible channels for sharing information about County activities
- » Expand opportunities and methods for the community to provide input
- » Collaborate with Henry County jurisdictions to communicate as a single Henry community and help point residents and stakeholders in the right direction for information

these tools are not able to be supported by the County's website, checking that the information available can be supported by tools widely available will be essential. Staff developing the material should also keep in mind the literacy levels of their community. According to a study performed by the Program for the National Assessment of Adult Competencies, 54% of adults in the United States read below the equivalent of a sixthgrade literacy level. Avoiding acronyms and focusing on simplifying topics as much as possible will help eliminate any gaps in understanding the audience may have. Using clear graphics to explain topics as much as possible is another way to make information more accessible. By focusing information on fact sheets, simple graphics can be used to explain a topic and text can be added to further support the concept or explain the information.

Currently the Henry County Planning and Zoning Department has great process charts for Comprehensive Plan amendments, conditional uses, variances, and rezoning. These graphics would be much more helpful if there was supporting text tied to the image with an example of when each process is used for different types of projects. This would allow property owners to identify which process is best for their project and approach any county staff with more informed questions. If more information is needed, additional text or links to more

resources can be provided that answer any commonly asked questions. Each fact sheet would only cover one topic and by limiting the length of the document to one page, the most important information is shared without overwhelming the audience.

#### Clarify and expand opportunities for input.

Currently the County has inconsistent policies for the public to comment on its communications platforms. The County website, Henry County TV and the countrun social media accounts are great methods for sharing information but the way people engage with the information can be confusing. For instance, the recordings of the Board of Commissioners meetings are available on the county's Youtube Channel and the Facebook account. These same recordings are advertised on the website, but have not been consistently available since 2020. If someone were to watch a recording on the County's Youtube channel, they would not be able to comment on the content due to the current setting restrictions. If they attempted to watch the same video on the County's Facebook page, they would be able to comment on the video, but there is no moderator responding to any questions or to direct people to the appropriate locations within the website for more information on the topic.

Rather than trying to match engagement across multiple platforms, the County should consider reducing its services to just those that are most used by the community. By limiting the number and types of platforms, the County can invest more to each, potentially by moderating comments during feeds and making input mechanisms more consistent.

Beyond digital platforms, participants mentioned that they would like the opportunity to hear directly from their elected officials to learn about how decisions were made within the county. This opportunity for education and feedback could come in the form of expanded question and answering periods in public hearings or a new casual way to connect to elected officials such as

quarterly, casual "Coffee with a Commissioner" events.

Once the feedback has been given, finding ways to best implement the information and track progress will be important for the county to maintain transparency. One way to implement feedback from the public would be a dashboard system—ideally one where a development site with a zoning application sign containing a QR code would take interested parties directly to the pertinent information. This will allow the public to guickly see what projects or initiatives the county is working on, why they are important and what stage of the process the project is in. A great dashboard example is the one used by the District of Columbia, Open Data DC.

For developers, this tool could offer a chance to confirm what documents or conditions need to be met for permits. It could also give real-time updates on which projects will be discussed at each meeting and provide an anticipated timeline for approval processes. These practices will demonstrate to the public that the county is dedicated to transparency. It will also give the county a way to make their processes more efficient by seeing what topics the public has more questions about and how information can be shared differently for later projects.

# >> 6.6 COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

	EXPECTED IMPLEMENTATION YEAR(S)				
PROJECT NAME/INITIATIVE	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
LAND USE					
Central District Master Plan	X				
Full ULDC Update, and annual updates as needed	Х	Х	Х	Х	х
Ellenwood LCI			Х		
Develop a Greenspace, Parks and Recreation Plan	Х				
Prepare corridor plans for major corridors	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
TRANSPORTATION					
Evaluate CTP projects for their alignment with the Development and Infrastructure Strategy areas	Х				
Implementation of Complete Streets projects in Central District Master Plan		х	Х	Х	х
SR 81 Widening, Phase 1 (HE-005)		х			
Microtransit Feasibility Study	Х				
SR 155 Widening/South (HE-189)				х	
Western Parallel Connector (HE-179)			Х		
SR 81 Widening, Phase 2 (HE-205)					х
Planning/Engineering for Fairview Road Sidepath Model Mile					х
Trail Alignment planning for proposed greenways in Trail Plan			Х	х	х
Examine options to implement smart corridors and signals	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT					
Retail and Recreation Leakage Study	Х				

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	FUNDING SOURCE	ESTIMATED COST
Henry County - Planning and Development	General Fund	\$100,000
Henry County - Planning and Development	General Fund	\$200,000
Henry County - Planning and Development	ARC, General Fund	\$30,000 (local match)
Henry County - Parks & Recreation	General Fund	\$200,000
Henry County - Planning and Development	General Fund	\$200,000 per corridor
Henry County DOT	Staff time	n/a
GDOT/Henry County DOT	TBD	TBD
GDOT/Henry County DOT	FHWA/Henry County	\$33,970,000
Henry County DOT	Henry County	\$500,000
GDOT	GDOT	\$90,496,000
GDOT/Henry County DOT	Henry County	\$60,601,750
GDOT/Henry County DOT	FHWA/Henry County	\$39,000,000
Henry County DOT	TBD	\$1,101,898
Henry County DOT	Henry County	\$850,000
Henry County DOT	Staff time	n/a
Henry County	General Fund	\$50,000

	EXPECTED IMPLEMENTATION YEAR(S)			EAR(S)	
PROJECT NAME/INITIATIVE	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
HOUSING					
Establish a Housing Task Force	X				
Analyze administrative processes to identify potential obstacles to permitting	X				
Create a Housing Trust Fund	X	Х			
Establish incentive program for developers to include workforce housing	Х	Х			
Conduct a Housing Needs Assessment	X	х			
Revise ULDC to implement policies of the comprehensive plan	Х	х	х		
Identify public properties to be utilized for the creation of workforce housing	X	х	х		
Implementation of Housing Task Force and Housing Needs Assessment findings	Х	х	х	х	х

COMMUNICATIONS			
Standardize all layouts for information within the Planning and Zoning website	X		
Create a consistent format across all platforms for live streaming content	X		
Create a tab on the Planning and Zoning website to submit public comments ahead of the BOC meetings	X		
Create a digital dashboard system to track permit, code violations, zoning conditions and anticipated agenda timelines	х		
Prepare report illustrating how County implements the plan	Х		

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	FUNDING SOURCE	ESTIMATED COST
Department of Community Development	Staff Time	N/A
Department of Planning and Zoning; Department of Building and Plan Review	Staff Time	N/A
Department of Community Development	Grants, General Fund	\$350,000.00
Department of Planning and Zoning	Staff Time	N/A
Department of Community Development; Consultant	General Fund, Grants	\$75,000.00
Department of Planning and Zoning; Consultant	General Fund	\$200,000.00
Department of Planning and Zoning	Staff Time	N/A
Department of Planning and Zoning	Grants, General Fund	TBD

Henry County Planning and	Chaff Time	NI/A
Zoning Department, Henry County Communications Department	Staff Time	N/A
Henry County Planning and		
Zoning Department, Henry County Communications Department	Staff Time	N/A
Henry County Planning and		
Zoning Department, Henry County	Staff Time	N/A
Communications Department		
Henry County Board of		
Commissioners, Henry County		
Planning and Zoning Department,	Staff Time	TBD
Henry County Communications		
Department		
Henry County Planning and Zoning	Staff Time	N/A
Department	Jean Time	10.4



# APPENDIX





