

SOUTHWEST CHEROKEE CORNERS URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



March 2009

Prepared by
Cherokee County Planning Department

PLAN CHEROKEE
DIRECTIONS · DIALOGUE  DECISIONS · DESTINY

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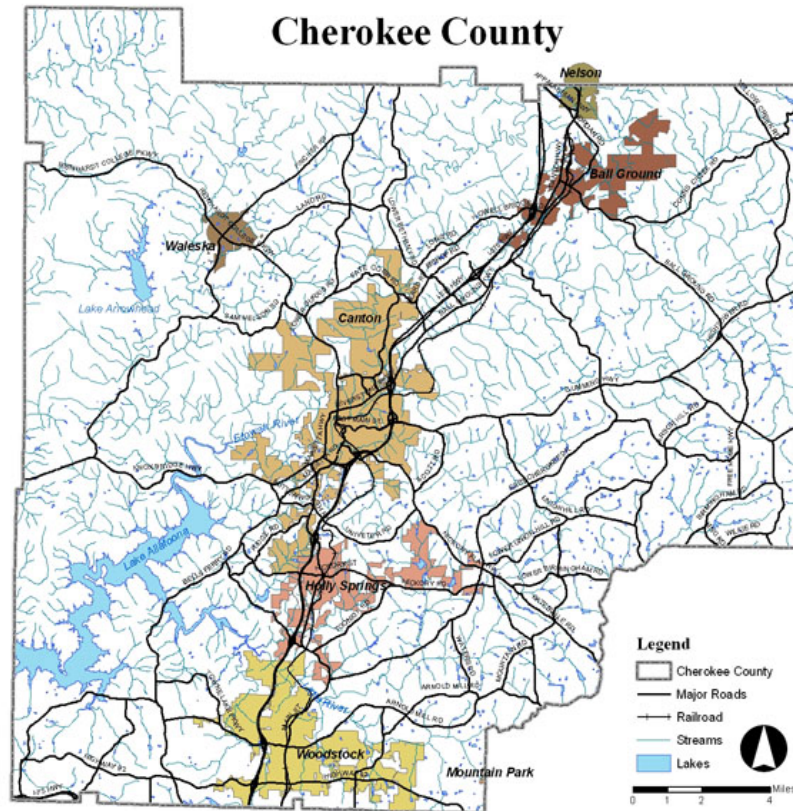
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INTRODUCTION

Perspective on Cherokee County

Over the past 30 years, the County has undergone a transformation from a primarily rural county to a full-fledged Atlanta suburb because of proximity to jobs, its abundance of vacant land and availability of affordable housing stock. This change has translated into significant population growth from 141,903 people in 2000 to 204,363 (estimated) in 2007. The population is projected to more than double - for every five people in the county today, there will be 11 by 2030. The current economic conditions have certainly slowed growth for the moment but the population and employment are still expected to increase significantly over the next ten to twenty years.

Four of the five municipalities, Ball Ground, Canton, Holly Springs and Woodstock, are located along I-575. Waleska is located in Northwest corner of the County at the intersection of SR 140 & 108. The county also contains portions of the cities of Mountain Park and Nelson, which are planning separately. Each of the five cities has its own character. Canton has always been the center of government. Ball Ground is known for its gems and minerals. Waleska is home to Reinhardt College. Woodstock has worked to revitalize their downtown with new development. Holly Springs has a quaint downtown surrounded by residential neighborhoods.



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Cherokee County is rich with natural resources. The Etowah River and Little River supply water to Lake Allatoona in the Southwest corner of the county. This lake is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control, power generation, water supply and recreation. Lake Arrowhead, west of Waleska, is a private lake within the Lake Arrowhead master-planned development. The NW corner of Cherokee County is the most mountainous with several recognized peaks above 2200 ft.

Served by excellent Interstate roadways, the Georgia Northeastern Railroad, and the Cherokee County Regional Airport, residents and businesses have convenient and efficient access to multiple modes of transportation. The County is bisected by Interstate 575, which runs from Marietta north, ending at the Pickens County line into Georgia 515. The Georgia Northeastern Railroad operates freight service on the former L&N tracks, roughly parallel to this route. The expansion of the Airport is underway as a result of a the groundbreaking federal-state-local partnership. This \$25 million dollar project is an opportunity to attract significant economic development around the airport and link it to the Bluffs of Technology Park, which is designed to create a major regional employment center along I-575 between Canton and Ball Ground. Population growth follows the same general pattern as well, with new suburbs in the south following the highway toward rural areas further north.

The majority of residential development in Cherokee County has been, and is anticipated to be single-family residential units at a variety of prices and sizes. This attracts a mix of younger family households with children, first time homebuyers, and opportunities for move-up and, to a much lesser extent, executive housing in a suburban setting. Density is increasing in the cities where services exist and a more “urban” character is developing. With this dramatic household growth has come support for a significant amount of new local-serving retail and local-serving office development of moderate to high quality. Most commercial centers are clustered in Woodstock and Canton and along I-575

Vision for Cherokee County

Cherokee County’s future begins with a clear statement of its identity and competitive position in the marketplace. As the Atlanta metropolitan region continues to expand, being the most accessible, the most attractive or even the most affordable does not guarantee a community’s success. The Vision is based on choices and opportunities. Today the community stands poised between the old and the new; between remaining a bedroom community to the Atlanta Metropolitan Area and becoming a destination on its own; between the choice to continue its current growth patterns or to embrace a variety of lifestyles and life cycles.

Cherokee County Vision Statement

Our unique character blends natural beauty and a proud heritage of diverse cultures and lifestyles making Cherokee a desirable and sustainable community.

The pace of life is quiet with an overarching commitment to thrive and grow responsibly. The rich agricultural foundation and extensive equine activities are a critical part of our past, present and future that is preserved and enhanced through careful and deliberate community design.

Lake Allatoona and the Etowah River provide our essential natural water supply as well as expanding recreational opportunities. Special care must be exercised to preserve water quality and quantity to support community expectations.

Success is sustained through thoughtful planning – an executable plan and consistent implementation. As we progress toward 2030, there is a recognizable ‘balance’ between housing options, employment opportunities, quality education, shopping, recreation, infrastructure, transit options, public safety and exceptional services.

Source: Cherokee County Community Agenda

Overall, Cherokee County and its Cities are envisioned as a thriving community, where its rural heritage is preserved. Retail services and employment are concentrated in walkable villages that have occupants in every storefront. People ride bicycles or walk in their neighborhoods and stop to chat. Accessibility and transportation choices are provided to all levels of citizens no matter what their economic status or age. Children have the choice to walk to school, and seniors can continue to be active. Shopping and services are neighborhood based. Employment opportunities allow people to make their living within their community. The Vision seeks a healthy community that nurtures a community member's health and spiritual well-being. In addition to wise land use choices, services and institutions such as churches, temples, hospitals, senior homes and childcare centers are abundant. The mind is challenged and souls are nurtured with schools, theaters, museums and galleries; places to kick back and rest or engage in recreation. Above all the Community Vision is about the desires and values of the people who live there.

***Guiding Principles from
Community Agenda***

- 1 Growth should be guided to preserve and enhance the unique character of our communities.
- 2 New development should not cause undue burden on public services, infrastructure and community facilities.
- 3 The continued economic development of our area depends on a variety of new commercial and industrial development in appropriate locations.
- 4 An array of housing choices is important to address the diverse needs of the population within our communities.
- 5 The county includes natural areas, critical water resources, and animal habitats that should be preserved while respecting the rights of private property owners

Source: Cherokee County Community Agenda

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Background

The SW corner of Cherokee County was primarily developed prior to 1980. Since then the area has been overlooked by the development community. This has resulted in a serious lack of investment and reinvestment by property owners along Hwy 92. The existing properties and structures are beginning to show signs of blight. Despite this trend, there are a number of public and private investments aimed at reviving this area. The future for the Southwest Cherokee Corners and the Bells Ferry Redevelopment Areas is bright because of this coordinated public-private effort to spur investment in this area.

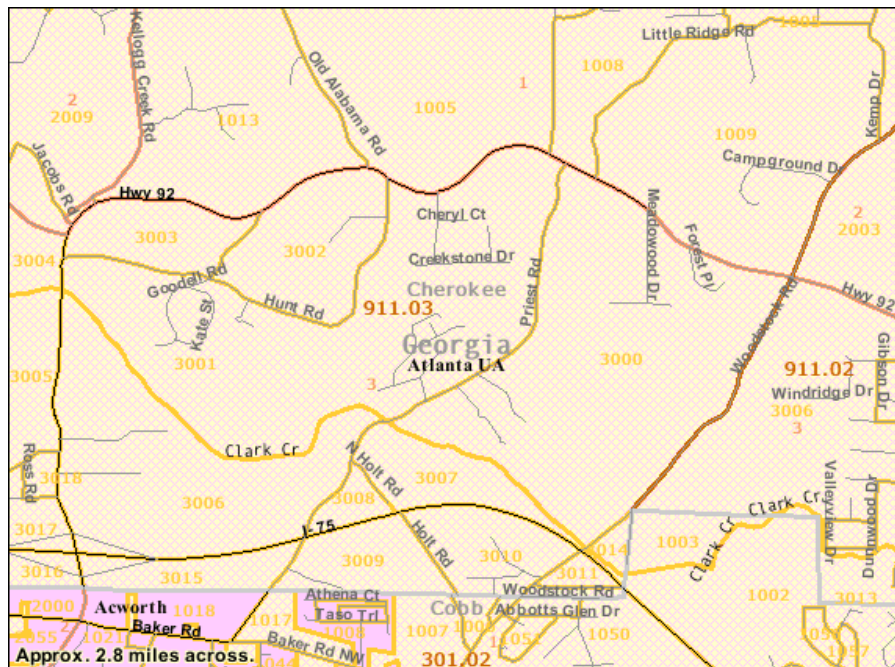
Purpose and Intent

The Southwest Cherokee Corners Urban Redevelopment Plan is intended to communicate the adopted policies for current and future development and redevelopment of properties within the target area. The purpose of this plan is to outline the actions necessary to produce an environment where residents can live, work and play in a pleasant and sustainable environment.

Boundaries of the Redevelopment Area

The Southwest Cherokee Corners is formed by the intersection of Cobb, Bartow and Cherokee County where State Route 92 cross over Interstate 75. State Route 92 is one of a very few east – west arterials in the North Metro Atlanta area. The route travels from I-75 crossing I-575 in Woodstock, GA 400 in Roswell, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard in Norcross and intersecting I-85 in Gwinnett County. Bells Ferry Road intersects SR 92 and forms a significant gateway into Cherokee County from Cobb County.

The Southwest Cherokee Corners Area includes all of the 2000 Census Tract 911, Block Group 3 as well as adjacent parcels along Hwy 92 and Woodstock Road. Along Hwy 92, the Redevelopment Area also stretches approximately ½ mile east to meet the western boundary of the Bells Ferry Redevelopment Area. The map below shows the boundaries of the Census Block Group and the major roads. A more detailed map of the boundaries of the Redevelopment Area can be found in the Maps section of the document.



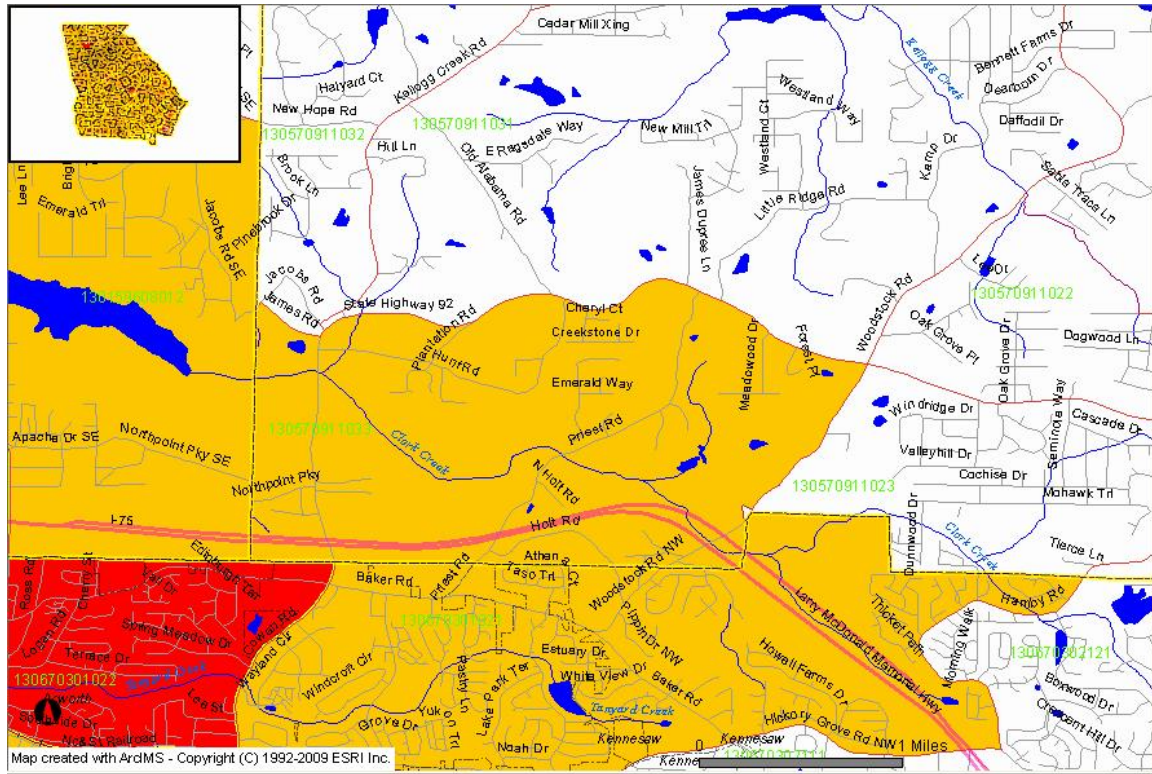
2000 Census Tract 911.03, Block Group 3

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Negative Conditions within the Redevelopment Area

Pervasive Poverty

The map below (DCA website) shows the proximity of the Southwest Cherokee Corners area to the immediately adjacent Census Tract 301.02, Block Group 2 (# 130670301022) with a resident population of 20% or greater who are living in poverty.



Compared with the Atlanta MSA and Cherokee County, the population of this Block Group reflects many of the characteristics of poverty. Overall, the median household income and per capita income is significantly lower than the comparison areas. The residents have remained in their homes at a much greater rate. Rents and median asking price for homes is very different than values for Cherokee County and the Atlanta area as a whole.

Comparison Statistics

	Atlanta MSA	Cherokee County	Tract 911.03, Block Group 3
Population	4,112,198	141,903	1,551
Households	1,049,680	49,495	531
Median HH Income	\$51,948	\$60,896	\$44,191
Per Capita Income	\$25,033	\$24,871	\$17,968
Same House in 1995	44.6%	48.1%	64.9%
% below poverty level	9.4%	5.3%	7.6%
Median Year Structure Built	1982	1988	1981
Median Contract Rent	\$644	\$622	\$566
Median Price Asked	\$130,900	\$165,200	\$37,500

Source: US Census 2000

Underdevelopment

There is significant underdevelopment in the Southwest Cherokee Corners area. Despite the overlay zoning which permits a broad range of permitted uses and the advantageous access along SR 92, development of the area has been sporadic resulting in a hodge-podge of dissimilar and disparate uses. In spite of a growing population and affluence in other areas around Southern Cherokee and Northwest Cobb counties, this area remains underserved by retailers, as indicated by the Bells Ferry Livable Centers Initiative Plan and the Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan prepared for Cherokee County by Sizemore Group and Huntley Partners, respectively. The following are excerpted from those documents as evidence of the underdevelopment and general blight conditions which continue to exist in Southwest Cherokee County.

The Bells Ferry Community Design District qualifies as a redevelopment area under the Redevelopment Powers Law and the Urban Redevelopment Act because of several factors including, without limitation, the following:

Structural Age and Deterioration: The majority of the retail buildings and apartments were constructed between 25 and 50 years ago and have experienced only minor improvements since that time. Consequently, they are out of date and have become somewhat dilapidated as a result of the passage of time and frequent use.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: With the exceptions of the Kroger Shopping Center, portions of the “Hobby Lobby” Shopping Center, the recently completed Wal-Mart Supercenter and a handful of freestanding retail such as the Woodstock Furniture Outlet, the commercial centers and freestanding structures along Bells Ferry Road between the Cherokee-Cobb county line and approximately one-half mile north of Eagle Drive, as well as along SR 92 are inefficient with respect to site use and density.

Most are considered unattractive with respect to current retailer standards and obsolete with respect to consumer market appeal. Parking is inefficient, and store frontage and signage are below current market standards and design.

Lack of Retail Market Appeal: As reflected in both rent and sales, retail tenants within the Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan do not have the brand recognition, product offerings, marketing capacity, pricing, merchandising or basic critical mass to appeal to the increasingly affluent potential customer within either the primary or secondary retail markets. When developed as contemplated in this redevelopment plan, the area in question will accommodate large, primary market retailers and service providers whose business operations will significantly benefit Cherokee County and encourage the patronage of individuals and entities located throughout North Metro Atlanta.

Lack of Rental Revenue Generation: Commercial rental rates in the Bells Ferry Corridor and in the Southwest Cherokee Corners area are significantly below those achieved in newer developments less than two miles east around the I-575 and SR 92 interchange and three miles west immediately south of the Cherokee County line at the I-75 and SR 92 interchange.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: A significant proportion of developable land within the area is underutilized with respect to potential density, type of development and/or resulting market and taxable values.

Congested Access and Egress: The current design and layout of not only Bells Ferry Road and SR 92, but also the area’s internal network of feeder roadways are not conducive to the efficient flow of traffic into and out of the existing or contemplated retail, office and mixed-use projects in that area. While SR 92 will undergo significant improvements over the next several years (demonstrating the State’s *de facto* conclusion as to the area’s current congestion), the currently inadequate network of interior and residential streets within the area will become even less capable of handling both community and pass-through traffic.

Underachievement as Employment Center: Current employment opportunities are limited in the proposed Bells Ferry Corridor TAD and the Southwest Cherokee Corners area. There are few professional

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or business services offered in the area, nor are there any corporate or professional firms. Retail and service industry employment is constrained by the lack of competitive retail offerings and restaurants.

Lack of Public Amenities and Facilities: The Bells Ferry Corridor and the Southwest Cherokee Corners area has no public park or open spaces. There are no public services facilities such as libraries, senior or community centers, amphitheaters, transit centers or recreation centers.

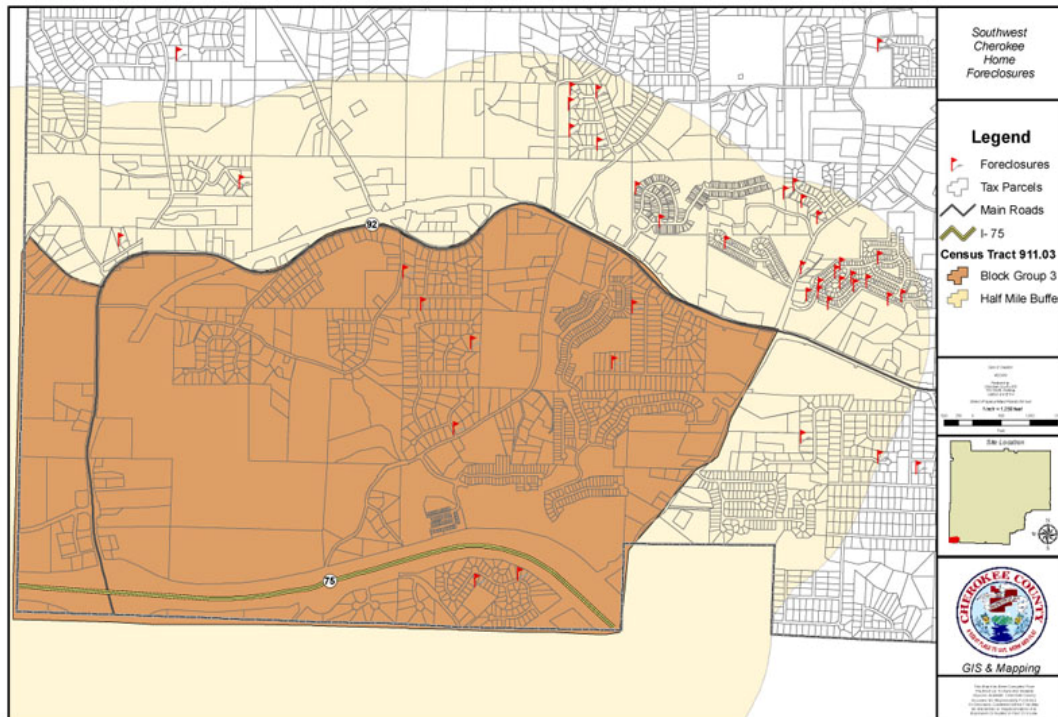
General Distress and Blight

The decline in the housing market nationally has affected many of the families in Cherokee County as the construction industry and its various subsidiary industries provide their income. Those who are not connected to the housing or construction industry have experienced frustration and financial distress at being unable to market or sell their homes at an acceptable price. The crisis in the national economy has even claimed the storied homebuilder Leavitt & Sons as developer of the Seasons community in Canton.

The examination of building permits issued by Cherokee County over the past few years demonstrates the dramatic effect of the downturn in our economy. In December of 2008, the Census reports 928 privately owned residential units were permitted in Cherokee County, compared to 2,231 similar units permitted in December 2007, or a 58.4% decrease. In December of 2006, the County permitted 3,580 units and in 2005 permitted 3,658 which represent a decrease of 75% from the permits issued in December of 2008. A check of the www.foreclosuredatabase.com website indicates in January 2009 there were 79 residential properties in the 30102 ZIP code which covers the SW Cherokee Corners area.

Home Foreclosures

The SW Cherokee Corners area is not immune to the national home foreclosure trend. The map below illustrates the location of foreclosures in the last ___ months. The significant concentration of foreclosures in the Northeast corner of the Redevelopment Area is located in several new home developments.



Properties with Environmental Concerns

A number of the properties in the SW Cherokee Corners and Bells Ferry Area have a history of land uses that cause environmental concerns. This is true for properties that have been in use for industrial businesses, gas stations, auto/machinery repair and inert landfills prior to environmental regulations. Prior to the late 1960's, these land uses were largely unregulated and likely to have areas of soil or groundwater

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contamination. Since the first wave of commercial development occurred between 1950 and 1970, this is a significant problem for this part of Cherokee County.

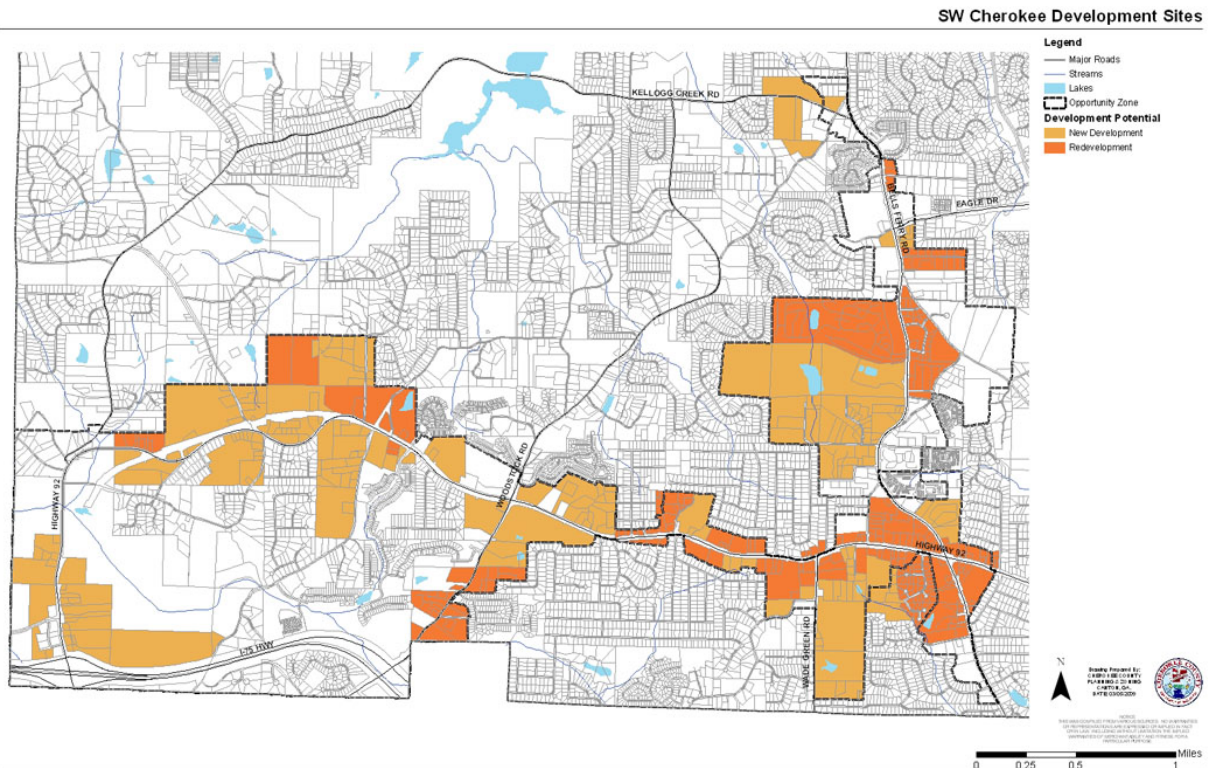
While the real extent of the problem may not be known, the potential for environmental issues is often enough to cause real estate deals to fall apart without even starting the environmental assessment. These potential brownfields can affect the property values of surrounding parcels because of the uncertainty about contamination and cleanup costs.

Economic Outlook

The outlook for SW Cherokee area is strong because of the tremendous development potential, abundant workforce housing, and significant public investment.

Development Potential

The SW Cherokee Corners and Bells Ferry Areas are filled with sites that are either primarily undeveloped or ripe for redevelopment. The map below illustrates the location of these sites. The yellow areas are largely vacant land and the orange areas could be easily redeveloped.



Surrounding Workforce Housing

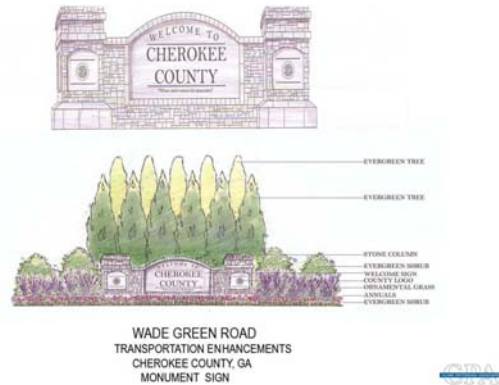
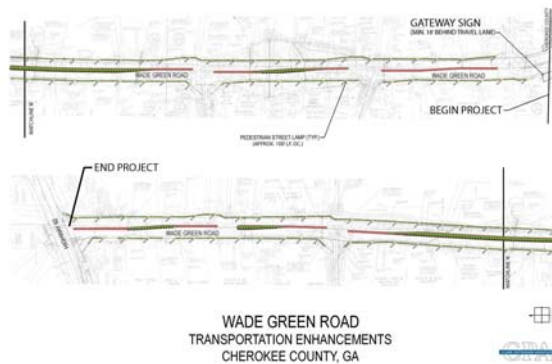
The existing residential neighborhoods offer a full range of workforce housing, from affordable apartments to modest townhomes to detached single-family homes. Several of the apartment complexes in the Bells Ferry area were built with Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) so they contain units that are limited to individuals with incomes below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). There are existing townhomes well as some under construction in the area that would suit the needs of households near AMI. The range of options in single-family detached is very wide in this part of the County. There are homes built in the 70's, 80's and 90's as well as brand new homes. The older homes offer larger wooded lots while the newer homes are in neighborhoods with amenities for families with children. The variety of housing options in SW Cherokee is a strong asset for attracting employers and commercial development.

Leveraging Public Investment

Recognizing the problems in the SW Cherokee area, county leaders have worked for nearly a decade to make investments in capital projects and infrastructure to address the critical needs. This Redevelopment Plan aims to leverage these projects to bring private economic development investment to this part of Cherokee County.

Federal & State Funded Projects

- Hwy 92 Widening
Designed in the 1970's, the nearly \$70 million widening of Hwy 92 between I-575 and I-75 will be complete in the next 6 months. This major road project will make a significant impact on the SW Cherokee Corners and Bells Ferry Area. The modern 4-lane road will make this area more accessible and desirable for development.
- Wade Green Road Streetscape
This Transportation Enhancement project is intended to beautify the segment of Wade Green Road within Cherokee County. This is a major gateway into the county from Cobb County. The project includes landscaping improvements to the median and sidewalk areas, a gateway sign and pedestrian lighting. This is intended to set a higher standard for the whole Bells Ferry Area.



Local Investment

- New Public Safety Facility
Opened in Fall 2006, the new Cherokee County Community Services Center at Oak Grove is a modern fire station, sheriff's precinct and community room located just West of the Hwy 92 / Woodstock Rd intersection. This \$1.5 million dollar project has brought improved emergency response to this part of the county.
- New School (Public/ Private Partnership)
Several years ago, Cherokee County School District recognized that the existing Woodstock Elementary was significantly overcrowded. They have purchased a site off of Hunt Rd for a new elementary school in this area and are slated to begin construction in Fall 2009. Unfortunately, Hunt Rd is not suited for the car and bus traffic created by a school facility. Working with the developer on the nearby Centennial Lakes community, Cherokee County developed a plan to provide access for the school out on to Priest Rd, which will only require minor improvements to accommodate the traffic. This innovative Public-Private Partnership has provided a cost-effective solution to provide adequate access to the school site.



CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PLANS

The vision for the SW Cherokee Corners area is reflected in the county-wide Comprehensive Plan as well as the Oak Grove Master Plan, the Bells Ferry LCI Plan and the Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan. Demonstrating their commitment to this vision, all of these documents have been adopted by the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners.

Comprehensive Plan

In 2008, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners adopted the Community Agenda and a Future Development Map completing the 10th year Major Update and fulfilling its obligation as a Qualified Local Government in the State of Georgia. The Community Agenda is the “roadmap” for the future of the community. It was developed through an extensive public planning process involving community leaders, major stakeholders, public officials and citizens from all walks of life, all of whom make key decisions within the community.

The Community Agenda is perhaps the most important part of the three parts of the Comprehensive Plan as it includes the Community’s Vision. It is intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community, to communicate what is unique and important about the community and to provide the implementation program for achieving the community Vision. Within the Community Agenda, are policies and strategies developed by the community to guide decision makers on the issues of growth and redevelopment.

The Cherokee County Comprehensive Plan adopts five Core Issues around which policies and implementation strategies have been conceived. The five Core Issue areas are Sustainable Growth, Sense of Place and Historic Character, Aging In Place, Promoting Connectivity and Mobility and Housing Choice. Four of the Core Issues are directly applicable to the Southwest Cherokee Corners Redevelopment Plan.

Sustainable Growth Policies

- Encourage growth in areas where it will be the most beneficial to the County and its cities. New development should be consistent with the Future Development Plan Map and the long range planning goals and policies.
- Focus denser levels of growth within existing City boundaries and targeted growth areas within the County where there is adequate infrastructure;
- Coordinate transportation improvements, school locations, parks and open spaces, and other public uses to enhance neighborhoods throughout the County
- Encourage mixed-use village developments to provide for a diversity of economic opportunities in a walkable environment.

Implementation Strategies

- Align goals and strategic actions of the Economic Strategic Plan with the Transportation Improvement Plan and Regional Transportation Plan.

Preserve and Enhance Sense of Place and Historic Character

- The historic downtowns, Regional Centers, Bells Ferry Corridor and Development Corridors need to be developed as lively interactive mixed-use environments to provide viable live, work, shopping and entertainment choices.
- To enhance the existing historic environment, new development and redevelopment should be of the highest quality and incorporate design and site elements that address the community's Vision and Character Area intent.

Implementation Strategies

- Offer information and assistance to property owners who may be interested in having their potentially eligible property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and to the development community regarding redevelopment and adaptive reuse.
- Investigate preservation incentives and preservation tools such as easements, transfer of development rights, and overlay zoning.

Create Land Use Patterns that Promote Connectivity and Mobility

- Improve traffic flow in and around the Bells Ferry Road, Highway 92 and Towne Lake Parkway, and Sixes Road, and overall connectivity within the County. Developments should not be built in isolation; developments should connect with the existing transportation network and adjacent properties.
- All roadways should be designed to be context sensitive and integrated with adjacent land use.
- Public facilities and infrastructure should be able to support new development and redevelopment efforts, particularly in the areas of circulation, access and linkages.
- Encourage neighborhood-serving retail and services in or near neighborhoods to reduce travel time and number of cars on our roads

Implementation Strategies

- Investigate the potential for federal, state and regional grants and funding sources to further develop pedestrian connections and bike facilities.
- Continue to identify, fund and implement LCI projects.

Housing Choice and Spirit of Inclusiveness

- As employment opportunities diversify in our communities, ensure adequate amounts, types and densities of housing needed to support desired commercial and industrial growth.
- Encourage a variety of housing stock to serve a range of incomes, age groups and lifestyles to provide choices and opportunities.
- Promote the development of affordable housing by supporting such development with information on funding sources, appropriate locations and the zoning and development process

Implementation Strategies

- Continue the use of creative planning techniques such as mixed-use development, traditional neighborhood development, small area plans, Downtown Master Plans, Overlay Zones, and Character Areas as a means of enhancing housing diversity and choice.
- Establish a redevelopment agency for redevelopment areas to utilize public funding options, a portion of which could be set-aside to encourage for affordable housing development.

Goals and Strategies for SW Cherokee Corners

The Southwest Cherokee Corners Redevelopment Plan serves as a vehicle by which the vision of the community, as expressed in the Community Agenda, will be implemented. It is the overall goal of this Plan to address the conditions of blight, redevelopment and underdevelopment which plague the area currently. The following are long term goals the County aspires to achieve through the implementation of this plan.

Goal

Encourage new development to take place around SR 92 and within the Bells Ferry Community Design District to create a vibrant mixed use environment with convenient access to a wide range of commercial, recreational, workplace and residential uses.

Strategies

- Focus economic development efforts to encourage growth within the Southwest Cherokee Corners and Bells Ferry Community Design District to create a community of choice and link more stable areas to those areas of less affluence.
 - Designate the Southwest Cherokee Corners and the Bells Ferry Community Design District as an Opportunity Zone for the purpose of recruiting business in the area.
 - Development and adoption economic development incentives for developers to build adjacent to SR 92 or Bells Ferry Road
 - Enhance Article 16 Highway 92 Village Overlay to expand the Permitted Use to include business uses and to add clarity to regulations.
 - Develop guidelines for development based upon the Oak Grove Master Plan for the intersection of SR 92 and Woodstock Road.
-

Goal

Avoid inefficient use of land and underdevelopment of property in the target area by encouraging current and future commercial and business development to develop at its fullest potential.

Strategies

- Promote redevelopment and reuse of currently developed commercial areas
 - Encourage businesses to reuse “greyfields” by rehabbing structures to house those uses which contribute to the character of the area
 - Support the development of wide range of commercial uses
 - Eliminate substandard or obsolete commercial building conditions
 - Designate the Southwest Cherokee Corners and the Bells Ferry Community Design District as an Opportunity Zone for the purpose of recruiting business in the area.
 - Encourage business development in the area to be a driver for commercial, cultural, governmental, employment and entertainment activity
 - Promote the area as a prime area for business development
-

Goal

Insure the creation of a variety of housing options to meet the needs of the community

Strategies

- Enhance Article 16 Highway 92 Village Overlay to ensure a variety of housing types can be constructed
 - Promote the Southwest Cherokee Corners and the Bells Ferry Community Design District as “communities of choice”
 - Promote programs, such as the HOME program, to area residents who may be eligible to take advantage of the assistance to rehab their residence
-

Other Small Area Plans Adopted in Target Area

Oak Grove Master Plan

The intersection of State Route 92 and Woodstock Road is identified as a Node by Cherokee County that is of significant importance. The proposed widening of State Route 92 from a two lane road to a four lane road will have an impact on this node and on the businesses and the development of this node, especially in terms of accessibility, curb cuts, ingress/egress and connectivity.

Recognizing this, the County leadership took proactive steps to develop a master plan for this node integrating land use, transportation and urban design issues. The master plan seeks to ensure development at this node be in line with the vision of the community and the County. The plan forms a vision for this specific node, and is a model for other nodes within the county.

The proactive approach focuses on developing an integrated master plan looking at land use, transportation and urban design issues that would set the character and image for the node.

Goals of the Oak Grove Master Plan

- Create a great gateway node to the community with quality, character and image
- Be a model for other nodes
- Envision a mix of uses; broader based retail, community services and variety of housing options (life-cycle housing)
- Create good accessibility, traffic flow, connectivity between inter-parcels, ingress/egress, curb cuts for smooth traffic flow and business operations.
- Create pedestrian friendly environment and an environment that encourages alternative modes of transportation.
- Increase tax base for the county
- Be a catalyst for growth.
- Gain public support for infrastructure and implementation
- To coordinate the efforts with the GDOT widening project

Bells Ferry LCI

The vision of the Bells Ferry Corridor community is to redevelop the greyfield commercial properties and under-utilized areas into a 'community of choice' that can offer diverse choices and activities for the whole community. The goal is to create high quality development that offers 'quality of life' to its residents.

The primary concern to the area residents, business owners and county officials is the grey field redevelopment of declining shopping and service centers. The corridor has a large number of existing



older commercial, office and service uses in dire need of redevelopment. Several of these shopping centers and commercial buildings have experienced significant turnover, declining rents and revenues and increasing vacancies. There are several mobile home parks, under utilized parcels and infrastructure in the area. The declining economic activity and disinvestment has had a significant impact on the tax revenues of the County. Some of the recent new developments both residential and retail are independent and disconnected developments that do not integrate with each other and the urban fabric. They are developed in the traditional segregated sprawl development pattern. This mode of development further strains the urban infrastructure. There is no provision made for pedestrians or alternative transportation modes/connections. This will further segregate the community rather than integrating and developing a cohesive community.

Goals of the Bells Ferry LCI Plan

- To create this corridor as the 'gateway' to Cherokee County.
- To provide diverse choices in shopping, housing, entertainment and recreation that not only serves this community but as a destination choice for the region.
- To increase job opportunities for residents and improve the jobs to housing balance.
- To provide the residents with transportation alternatives and modes for traveling within the area.
- To support diversity of people of all incomes, ages, social and cultural backgrounds.
- To change the image of the community from an unsafe and declining neighborhood to a thriving and vibrant community.

Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan

As a part of the LCI plan for the Bells Ferry area, the Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan was created in accordance with the Redevelopment Powers Law, Title 36, Chapter 44 of the Georgia Code for establishing a Tax Allocation District. The Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan seeks to promote the County's current policy of pursuing local means for making the County a more desirable and competitive environment. The plan seeks to foster partnerships among the public and private sectors and to:

- Allow for the development of infill and mixed-use projects to eliminate the development gaps that divide the communities in this area.
- Promote the development of infrastructure and amenities such as parks and plazas to encourage and support all elements critical to building a sustainable community.
- Allow for roadway, streetscape and other improvements throughout the TAD area, including improvements that augment the widening of SR 92 by the State Department of Transportation.

Additionally, the creation of the Redevelopment Plan and the Bells Ferry TAD would support the economic development goals and policies of the County as enumerated in its successful application to the ARC for a *LCI Corridor Study* grant. The goals of the Redevelopment Plan for the proposed Bells Ferry TAD are as stated in the LCI application, as follows:

- Connecting homes, shops and offices;
- Enhanced streetscaping and sidewalks;
- Emphasizing the pedestrian;
- Improving access to transit and other transportation options; and
- Expanding housing options.

COMMUNITY'S LAND USE OBJECTIVES

The Urban Redevelopment Plans for SW Cherokee Corners and Bells Ferry are consistent with the land use objectives for Cherokee County. Existing land uses in the redevelopment areas include agricultural, commercial, industrial and residential uses. Along Hwy 92 and in the Bells Ferry area, additional requirements from the overlay districts are intended to raise minimum standards of development.

Zoning

Zoning in the redevelopment area spans 12 different zoning districts, including several different residential products. (See SW Cherokee Zoning Map found in Appendix)

Southwest Cherokee Corners

AG Agriculture
R-40 Residential Single Family
R-20 Residential, Single Family
RD3 Residential, Single Family
R-10 Residential Single Family
RZL Residential, Single Family Zero Lot Line
RTH Residential Townhomes
RM 10 Residential Multi Family
PUD Planned Unit Development
GC General Commercial
NC Neighborhood Commercial
OI Office Institutional
LI Light Industrial

*Hwy 92 Village Overlay

Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan

AG Agriculture
R-40 Residential Single Family
R-20 Residential, Single Family
RZL Residential, Single Family Zero Lot Line
RTH Residential Townhomes
RM 10 Residential Multi-Family
RM 16 Residential Multi-Family
TND Traditional Neighborhood Development
GC General Commercial
NC Neighborhood Commercial
OI Office Institutional
LI Light Industrial

*Bells Ferry Community Design Dist. Overlay

General Agricultural District (AG). The purpose of this district is to maintain the integrity of agricultural activities predominate in the rural area of Cherokee County. The regulations are to discourage the subdivision of land for urban development and to encourage the maintenance of the general rural characteristics of openness, low density residential use, appropriate agri-business and extensive agricultural and livestock production

Single-Family Residential Districts (R-40, R-30). The purpose of these residential districts is to enable residential development of a low density urban character. The regulations are designed to permit and encourage residential development in areas where urbanization is taking place

Single-Family Residential Districts (R-20). The purpose of this residential district is to permit and encourage development of medium density single-family residential uses in a moderately spacious surrounding. The R-20 development district shall be served with an approved community water system

Single-Family Residential (R-15, RD-3, RZL). The purpose of these residential districts is to permit and encourage development of high density single family residential uses in a moderately spacious surrounding. These development districts shall be served with an approved community water system and a central sewerage system.

Single-Family Attached Residential Districts (RA, RTH). The purpose of this district is to provide for intermediate housing types and densities between single-family detached and multi-family dwellings. Such development may include duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes or townhouses to be located in the urban portion or suburban portion of the county where apartment buildings would not be compatible. Innovative design with cluster development is encouraged. Such development districts are intended to be served with central sewerage system except for lot sizes exceeding 20,000 square feet

SOUTHWEST CHEROKEE CORNERS

Multi-Family Residential District (RM-10, RM-16). The purpose of the residential districts is to permit development of high density multi-family residential dwellings. These zoning districts are to be located where public water supply and sewerage facilities are available or can be obtained and where there is convenient access to collector streets or major thoroughfares. The use of these districts can be developed as a transition zone between residential districts and commercial districts

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND). Traditional Neighborhood Development is a floating district which may be located within any residential district if it meets all the standards for a Traditional Neighborhood Development. The purpose of this district is to encourage flexible and innovative design in site planning and building arrangements under a unified plan of development regulation instead of standard zoning regulation. Traditional Neighborhood Developments shall be planned as integral units and may be residential, commercial or a combination of land uses. The developer benefits from better land utilization, economy in the provision of roads and utilities and flexibility in design. The community benefits from efficient use of land, preservation of natural amenities and environmental sensitive areas and lower development and housing costs. Review and approval of the development plan provides the opportunity to assure that the development will be in harmony with the character of the neighborhood in which it is located

Office/Institutional District (OI). The purpose of this district is to provide a location for office, institutional, medical and educational development. Limited related retail business and service activities may be permitted but not involved with storage and processing.

Neighborhood Commercial District (NC). The purpose of this district is to provide for limited retail activities, commercial sales, personal services and professional offices to serve the general need of a residential neighborhood. Development of commercial uses is regulated for compatibility with the surrounding residential areas. Districts are located to create commercial centers or clusters and to discourage commercial strip development. In addition, these uses shall have a maximum allowed floor space of 10,000 square feet per acre of total building floor space.

General Commercial District (GC). The purpose of this district is to provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a wide variety of commercial sales and service activities which generally serve a wide area. The permitted uses are generally located along the major thoroughfares of the county. Activities with limited storage may be permitted. Districts are located to create centers or concentrations of commercial activities and to discourage commercial strip development.

Light Industrial District (LI). The purpose of this district is to provide suitable areas for light industrial operations. The district should be accessible to major arterial. Residential and retail uses are prohibited. Permitted uses are restricted to those which are not characterized by extensive open storage, or the nuisance factors such as smoke, dust, fumes, gas, heat, glare, fire hazards, noise, vibrations and other objectionable influences. Fenced outside storage is permitted.

Highway 92 Village Overlay District

In 1997, the Cherokee County BOC adopted an overlay district running 1,000 ft. on either side of the centerline of State Route 92 called the Highway 92 Village Overlay District. The district establishes permitted uses, standards for architectural design, landscaping and signage along the corridor. The intent of the ordinance was to create an environment where mixed use development could occur easily but within uniform standards. It seeks to encourage a pattern of commercial and industrial buildings in an 18th and 19th architectural style, with the desire of attracting high quality development.

State Route 92 passes through the City of Woodstock so the City also adopted similar regulations in order to create a consistent corridor throughout Cherokee County. The result of the Highway 92 Village Overlay has been development on the portion of State Route 92 at the intersection and east of I-575. A majority of the development has been national retailers in scattered shopping centers with some office and residential development located just behind commercial development sited adjacent to the roadway.

Highway 92 Village Ordinance

Legislative Purpose

This ordinance shall be known as the Highway 92 Village Ordinance (hereinafter referred to as the "Highway 92 Village Ordinance"), and shall serve to encourage developing as one project, tracts of land that are sufficiently large to allow a mixed-use development consisting of uses permitted under this Article, and only such permitted uses, while maintaining compatibility with the existing areas and creating an attractive, efficient and stable environment. It encourages a mixture of prominently sited office/institutional, commercial establishments, civic or community buildings and housing types to provide a balanced mix of activities and public spaces.

Legislative Objectives

The Highway 92 Village Ordinance serves as a development standard for the Highway 92 Corridor. This development standard provides for a uniform landscape and design theme along this improved road. The specific design and land use policies are a comprehensive plan for the Highway 92 Corridor of Cherokee County Georgia.

The Village District calls for a pattern of commercial / industrial buildings constructed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century architectural styles. The regulations recognize and are intended to protect and preserve the established residential areas located to the north and south of the improved road. The incorporation of buffering techniques seeks to assist in the preservation of adjoining residential areas by providing a unique transition zone rather than the traditional descending density theory.

The Highway 92 Village Ordinance is intended to generate quality development along the expanded Highway 92 thoroughfare while promoting economic, cultural, open space, and safety features to promote the public welfare. This orderly planning system is intended to attract quality development as described in the permitted uses of this ordinance.

Boundaries

There is hereby created the Highway 92 Village Ordinance, the boundaries of which shall extend 1000 feet to the north of the centerline of Highway 92 and 1000 feet south of the centerline of Highway 92 from its intersection with Interstate 75 eastward to the Cobb County line. The Highway 92 Village Ordinance applies to all properties located in this Corridor, with the exception of residential platted subdivisions, deed restricted residential subdivisions and residential neighborhoods established as a result of the creation of a homeowners association or a petition to the County Commission.

Source: Cherokee County Zoning Ordinance, Article 16 Overlay Districts

The Highway 92 Village Overlay district allows a property owner to develop their property without having to "rezone" as long as the permitted use is consistent with the list of uses by the statute. In addition, the ordinance provides a set of site, architectural, signage and landscape standards all development within the district must abide.

Permitted Uses within the Highway 92 Village Ordinance:

The following uses, and only the following uses, shall be permitted within any development permitted pursuant to this ordinance.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Antique Shops | Grocery, General Merchandise Stores |
| Apparel and Accessory Stores | Hardware, Paint and Wallpaper Stores |
| Appliance Sales and Repair Shops | Health Clubs and Facilities |
| Bakeries | Hobby, Toy and Game Stores |
| Bank or Financial Institutions | Ice Cream Parlors |
| Bicycle Shops | Jewelry Stores |
| Books, Cards and Stationary Stores | Laundry/Dry Cleaning Facilities (Pick-Up) |
| Barber Shops and Beauty Salons | Office Supplies |
| Carpentry Shops | Office (Businesses) |
| Churches | Professional Offices |
| Clinic (Public and Private) | Parks |
| Community Centers | Pet Shops and Dog Grooming Shops |
| Cultural Facilities | Printing, Publishing and Engraving Shops |
| Curio and Souvenir Shops | Restaurants |
| Day Care Facilities | Retail Stores, Common Merchandise |
| Drug Stores, Pharmacies | Schools |
| Equipment Supplies (medical, dental, art) | Shoe Repair Shops |
| Florist Shops | Service Stations |
| Farmer's Markets | Single Family detached dwelling units |
| Garden, Landscaping Supplies | Single Family attached dwelling units |
| Greenhouse and Plant Nurseries | |

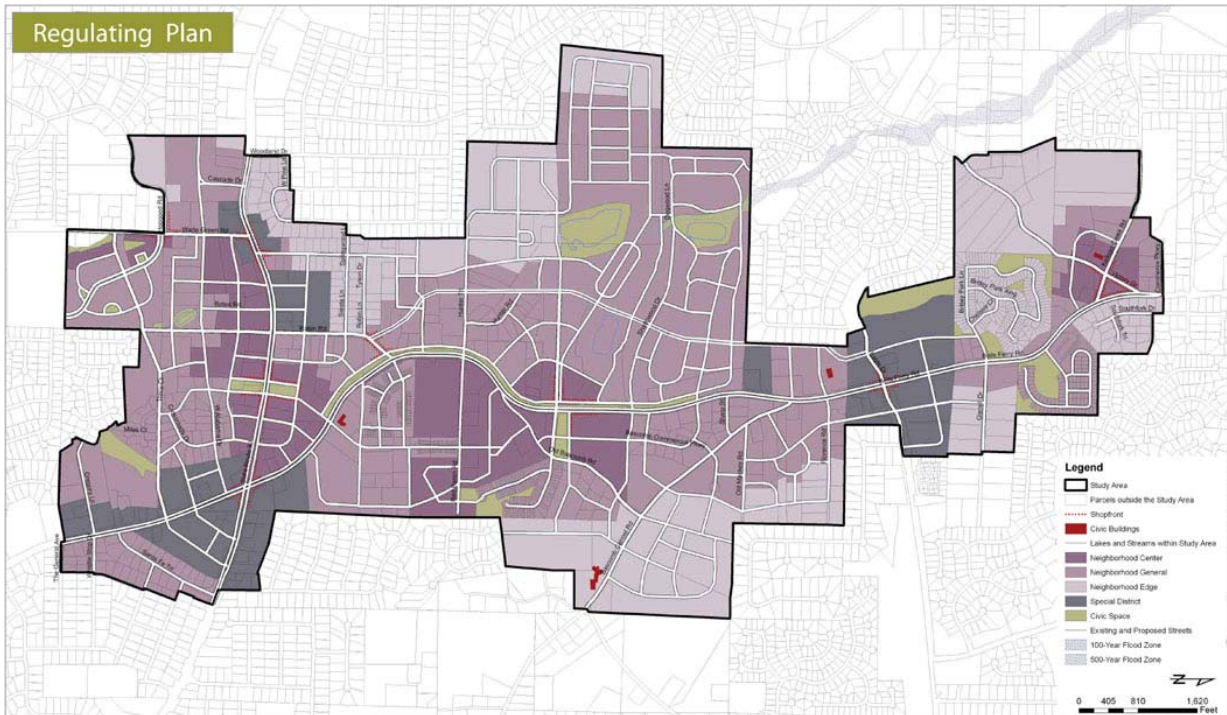
Prohibited Uses within the Highway 92 Village Ordinance:

No use which is not specifically listed above (including, without limitation, the following uses) shall be allowed within the Highway 92 Overlay District:

- Automobile Garages or Repair Shops
- Adult Video Shops
- Billiard Parlors
- Check Cash Services
- Drive-In theaters
- Farm Equipment Sales/Storage
- Mini-Warehouse Facilities
- Manufactured Home Sales
- Motels with Outside Entrances
- Nude/Semi-Clothed Dancing Establishments
- Itinerant Merchants
- Pawn Shops
- Recreational Vehicle Sales/Service/Repair Facilities
- Short-Term Loan Offices
- Truck Terminals
- Used Tire Sales/Repair Shops
- New and Used Automobile/Vehicle Dealerships/Salvage lots/Scrap yards

Bells Ferry Community Design District

The intersection of SR 92 and Bells Ferry Road in Southern Cherokee County forms a major node in the Bells Ferry Community Design District. The Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan was prepared as part of the Livable Centers Initiative grant to Cherokee County by the Atlanta Regional Commission as one of the first Corridor Plans to be produced in the LCI program. Subsequent to the preparation of the LCI Study Plan and the Redevelopment Plan the Cherokee County BOC adopted the Bells Ferry Community Design District as an amendment to Article 16 of the Cherokee County Zoning Ordinance. The overlay district is a form-based code which provides a regulating plan to direct future development of property within the district without the need to rezone the property.



Bells Ferry Community Design District

Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the Bells Ferry Community Design District is to implement the community vision expressed in the Bells Ferry LCI Study Plan adopted by the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners and further enhanced in the Bells Ferry Community Design Guidelines. The community envisions the redevelopment of under utilized, declining and major area properties into a community of choice offering diverse choices and activities for the whole community, with the ultimate goal of creating high quality development that offers a superior quality of life to its residents and business owners.

Bells Ferry Community Design District is intended to:

- Establish and define the physical boundaries of the district;
- Establish a set of Community Design Guidelines that provide site planning, design and building regulations for the future physical development of the corridor;
- Establish a Regulating Plan that serves as a framework for regulatory conditions governing the Study Area to insure development reflects consistent principles of good community design and creates an attractive environment inducing investment in the area.
- Create a 'sense of place' and a unique identity for the community that reflects the community's desire to be a place of diversity and choice;
- Create a strong urban structure that reflects sound urban design principles of creating the public realm; hierarchy of streets, open spaces, creating vistas and public and civic spaces, pedestrian friendly environment, and high quality architecture
- Improve traffic flow and convenient vehicular circulation throughout the area for both local and regional circulation
- Provide transportation alternatives and modes for the residents; good street grids, transit, bike and pedestrian pathways that not only offers alternative ways but encourages walking and biking
- Provide safe and convenient environment for pedestrian movement and access
- Provide enhanced arterial access and inter-parcel connectivity that enhances vehicular circulation
- Create the hierarchy of streets and appropriate traffic calming that promote appropriate vehicular speeds and safety
- Encourage 'diverse lifestyles' by promoting mixed use development that offers live / work / play environments
- Encourage appropriate densities that can support retail, entertainment and commercial activity which creates a successful community
- Provide flexibility in housing to support various product types; ie. condos, apartments, live / work units, town homes, and single family
- Provide adequate open spaces and civic / public spaces

Source: Cherokee County Zoning Ordinance, Article 16 Overlay Districts

PLAN IMPACTS

Description of Parcels to be Acquired

The Southwest Cherokee Corners Redevelopment Plan does not require any parcels to be acquired by Cherokee County at this time. If circumstances should change such that property acquisition becomes a probability, is desired or necessary, the plan will be amended to reflect these changes.

Structures to be Demolished or Rehabilitated

There are no structures anticipated to be demolished. The plan will be updated in the event any changes occur in future actions.

Strategy for Relocating Displaced Residents

Cherokee County has determined the need for a relocation strategy is not necessary at this time. Cherokee County is targeting only unoccupied blighted or underdeveloped areas and therefore no relocation of residents shall occur due to the plan. Should the need arise and the displacement of residents becomes necessary in the future, the Plan shall be amended to include a relocation plan/strategy for displaced residents meeting any and all local, state or federal statutory requirements.

Covenants and Restrictions to be placed on Properties

No covenants or restrictions will be placed on properties at this time.

PLAN TO LEVERAGE PRIVATE RESOURCES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Opportunity Zone:

Cherokee County has identified several resources by which to encourage development in the target area. Upon adoption of the Urban Redevelopment Plan, Cherokee County will seek to establish an Opportunity Zone to include the Southwest Cherokee Corners and connecting to the Bells Ferry Community Design District. From information obtained via the Department of Community Affairs website, Opportunity Zones are intended to encourage economic development and redevelopment in specific geographic areas being served by existing economic development programs. Resources from the State of Georgia are directed towards pockets of poverty and supplemented by federal programs administered by the Department of Community Affairs. The maximum job tax credit, the use of tax credits against 100 per cent of an entities tax liability and withholdings, and the application to all business development will be beneficial in creating the Opportunity Zone in the Southwest Cherokee Corners area.

Tax Allocation District

Tax allocation districts are authorized in Georgia under the Redevelopment Powers Law, Title 36, Chapter 44. A Tax Allocation District ("TAD"), which uses a financing method typically referred to as "tax increment financing," is a tool used to publicly finance certain redevelopment activities in underdeveloped or blighted areas. A TAD derives its funding from the increase in the area's ad valorem taxes levied by the County and the school system. These revenues are placed in a special redevelopment fund for the area and are used to directly pay for the redevelopment costs or to issue bonds to pay for redevelopment costs. Cherokee County offers several economic development incentives, including development impact fee exemptions and, if approved in a public referendum, tax increment financing. If it were to receive an affirmative vote, the proposed Bells Ferry TAD is planned to encompass similar geographic boundaries to those detailed in the Bells Ferry Redevelopment Plan.

NEEDED PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

State Route 92 is in the process of being widened and will provide a high level of access to and through the SW Cherokee area. This helps to alleviate some of the issues related to pass through traffic and creates a good access to I-75. However, the side streets may need to be upgraded to accommodate the neighborhood cross traffic created as local residents seek alternate paths to a lighted intersection to make a turn where otherwise is prohibited by the median dividing the travel lanes on SR 92. Additionally, to accommodate pedestrian access, sidewalks and street lighting may be necessary particularly on side streets connecting to SR 92.

Public water is readily available throughout the target area. However, sewer continues to be an issue. For the area to reach its fullest potential, public sewer is a requisite infrastructure. Cherokee County Water and Sewer Authority is responsible for the provision of both infrastructure in this area of the County.

STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Upon adoption by the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners, Cherokee County will be the implementing entity for the Urban Redevelopment Plan.

Implementation Schedule

Public Hearing	Spring, 2009
Adoption of Urban Redevelopment Plan	Spring, 2009
Establish Opportunity Zone	Summer, 2009
Promote and Offer incentive packages for new businesses	Fall, 2009
Evaluate local codes to promote redevelopment of area	Fall, 2009