

PARTIAL UPDATE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
ROCKDALE COUNTY, GEORGIA

October 8, 2008

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CHAPTER 1 ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes an assessment of the 15 quality community objectives (QCOs) promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The partial update of the comprehensive plan is required to provide an assessment as to how policies and development patterns of the local government either meet, or do not meet, these objectives. This assessment lists a particular QCO, and then the assessment follows. Where applicable, the assessment describes existing policies adopted in the comprehensive plan, regulations (Rockdale County Code), and existing development patterns based on some analysis in the field.

The assessment is useful in terms of identifying additional issues and opportunities that need to be addressed in the county's implementation program. In some cases, similar QCOs are grouped and discussed together. Also, in some instances, additional data have been compiled and are provided as a part of this assessment. The assessment method considers the Department of Community Affairs' tool for conducting QCO assessments, as well as the smart growth checklist provided in the Planning Advisory Service Report, *Smart Growth Audits* (2002).

GROWTH PREPAREDNESS

“Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.”

Overall Conclusions

While there are some shortages with regard to infrastructure, especially roads and schools, Rockdale County has prepared sufficiently for the future growth it will experience, and signs are that the county will not witness as much population growth as some prior projections would indicate.

Population and Housing Trends

During this decade, Rockdale County's population has increased by an annual average of approximately 1,640 persons, and slightly less than 700 housing units, according to estimates provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. See Table 1.

Table 1
Population and Housing Unit Estimates, 2000-2007
Rockdale County

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total Population	70,567	71,734	73,053	74,760	76,476	77,983	79,764	82,052
Total Housing Units	26,022	26,022	26,794	27,780	28,634	29,222	30,189	n/a

Source: Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau. Table 1: Annual Estimates of the Population for Counties of Georgia: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2007 (CO-EST2007-01-13). Release Date: March 20, 2008. Table 4: Annual Estimates of Housing Units for Counties in Georgia: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006 (HU-EST2006-04-13). Release Date: August 15, 2007. Figures are July 1st of the year.

In order to prepare for growth, the county obviously must have some notion of its expected future growth potential. Population projections were prepared as a part of the December 2003 comprehensive plan. Projections of population ranged from a low of 105,400 to a high of 119,700 in the year 2020. If Rockdale County were to sustain its current trends of population and housing growth, it would add only 21,320 persons by the year 2020, for a total of 103,372. That figure is close to the “low” population projection of 105,400 provided in the adopted comprehensive plan.

The planning staff suggests that the high projections (prepared by the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District in 2002) are not likely to be attained given the existing densities of housing units permitted and a lack of sewer infrastructure in certain parts of the county. Planning staff adds that, while there remains some residentially zoned land to be developed, many of those lots that have been left over are either difficult to develop, or they are not likely to be released for development. For these reasons, the “low” projections of the comprehensive plan are considered the most appropriate to use in this analysis.

Employment

With regard to employment, a special tabulation of the Census Bureau showed total employment in Rockdale County in the year 2000 was 31,524, of which 13,627 were in the City of Conyers.¹ The adopted comprehensive plan refers to employment projections by Woods and Poole Economics, Inc. (2002), which indicate an employment of 48,647 in the year 2005 and 68,680 in the year 2020. These numbers include federal, state, and local government employment totaling less than 4,000 jobs. These projections, like the medium and high population projections in the comprehensive plan, are also considered unrealistic. As indicated in Table 3, Rockdale County’s employment was estimated to be approximately 31,617 in the year 2004. That figure does not include government employment or self-employed persons. Nonetheless, employment, if it has increased at all during the past several years, is expected to be less in 2008 than the 2005 projection in the comprehensive plan, even after accounting for government employees and self-employed persons. While it is probable that Rockdale County will not attain the employment

¹ Census 2000 PHC-T-40. Estimated Daytime Population and Employment-Residence Ratios: 2000.

projection for 2020, there appears to be much capacity in existing commercial and industrial areas of the county to attain significant increases in employment.

Infrastructure

Rockdale County's Water and Sewer Authority completed an extensive water line extension program in 2000 and 2001. A master plan for water and sewer has been in process since 2007, but the authority has not yet adopted the master plan. An expansion of the sewage treatment plant is currently underway from 6 MGD to 9 MGD. The county is also investigating the feasibility of providing a second sewage treatment plant. One particular issue is that the county has five community wastewater treatment systems in the county, each of which is at least 30 years old. Rockdale County is also under a consent order from the Environmental Protection Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to take three of these systems off-line. The county does not at this point plan to expand its sewer service area (Comprehensive Plan, p. V-11), and unserved areas are very low density, suggesting that sewer extension is probably not feasible to most low-density residential subdivisions currently unserved.

Rockdale County has extended water lines to 75 percent or more of the county, and plans call for extension of water to remaining unserved areas within approximately five more years (Comprehensive Plan, p. V-7). The county has sufficient water supply but needs to continue planning for additional water supply to meet needs in the year 2030. One area of infrastructure that is hardly recognized in the comprehensive plan is the potential provision of grey water for non-potable uses,² which could help decrease the need for additional water supplies.

Rockdale County currently has seven fire stations and at this time an eighth station is under construction in southern Rockdale County near Klondike Road and McDaniel Mill Road. Also, a ninth fire station in the Walker Road area of southern Rockdale County is anticipated to be needed (Comprehensive Plan, p. V-6). There are some pockets of land in southern Rockdale County with ISO ratings of 9. Parts of southern Rockdale County will be better served by these fire stations when they are constructed.

Though current data appear limited, Rockdale County has had some significant challenges keeping up with public school enrollment. Two of three high schools, two of three middle schools, and five of 11 elementary schools exceeded their capacities earlier in this decade (see Figure V-14 of the 2003 comprehensive plan). New schools have been constructed by the Rockdale County Board of Education in an effort to keep pace with development. Rockdale County's library system is taxed by demands of recent population growth, but as noted below, the county is collecting an impact fee for libraries which should help it maintain its adopted level of service for libraries.

Rockdale County prepared and adopted a Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan in 2006. It finds that the overall distribution pattern of the parks is centralized or clustered along Interstate 20 within the city limits of Conyers. It also finds that the population has grown significantly beyond the boundaries of the City of Conyers, and that higher population growth in

² The infrastructure subcommittee of the 2003 comprehensive planning effort suggested implementation of grey water systems in new developments (p. 1-5 comprehensive plan).

the unincorporated sections of the county has left some unincorporated areas underserved by parks and recreation (pp. 7.15-7.16 of the master plan). Figure 7-16 of the master plan shows areas within the county that are currently underserved with park and recreational facilities.

Development Impact Fees

Rockdale County has prepared a development impact fee program and adopted development impact fees for libraries, parks and recreation, and fire protection.

Development Trends

Rockdale County has made a conscious effort to attain a “nodal” commercial development pattern as opposed to a “strip” or linear commercial pattern. The county has also sought to keep population growth out of its sensitive water supply watershed in the northern part of the county, as well as maintain low population densities in the southern end of the county, where sanitary sewer does not exist. This has led to a desired pattern of concentrating most of the population and employment growth in the center of the county, along Interstate 20, and within the urban area of greater Conyers. More is said about existing development patterns and trends in Chapter 2, “Areas Requiring Special Attention.”

Future Growth Areas

Rockdale County has completed detailed plans for two areas in the county that are expected to witness considerable growth and development. These include the Salem Road Corridor and the Stonecrest area. Currently, the Salem Road Corridor planning effort has been thoroughly integrated into the Rockdale County Code of Ordinances, with special zoning districts corresponding to the plan’s recommendations. The Stonecrest Area Study was drafted and public meetings were held, but property owners opposed the study’s recommendations and the planning effort has been delayed.

APPROPRIATE BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

“Appropriate Business Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.”

“Employment Options Objective: A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.”

Overall Conclusions

There is a reasonably good match of the job skills available via the labor force in Rockdale County and the types of jobs available in the county. Employment is not growing significantly in Rockdale County, but there are opportunities to increase industrial development. The industry sectors that Rockdale County should promote, if it wants to promote employment of the sort that

most closely matches its resident labor force, are manufacturing, finance and insurance, and construction.

The comprehensive plan identifies efforts by the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council to attract businesses in the “thinking sectors.”³ The plan acknowledges that the county’s economy is heavily reliant upon three sectors (services, retail, and manufacturing), but it does not identify policies or strategies for diversification.



Golden State Foods

Labor Force

Rockdale County’s labor force has remained relatively stable, actually declining slightly over the past eight years. Employment of Rockdale County’s resident labor force has declined in numbers over the past eight years. While the labor force actually decreased from 2000 to 2008, unemployment doubled during the same time period. Similarly, the unemployment rate of Rockdale County’s residents more than doubled from 2.4 percent before 9/11/01 to a recent estimate in early 2008 of 5.5 percent.

**Table 2
Rockdale County Labor Force Estimates, 2000, 2004, and 2008
Place of Residence, Persons 16 Years Old and Over**

	August 2000	August 2004	February 2008
Labor Force	41,205	40,550	40,915
Employment	40,209	38,756	38,666
Unemployed Number	996	1,794	2,249
Unemployment Rate	2.4%	4.4%	5.5%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Information and Analysis, 2000 and 2004. County Labor Force Estimates, 2008.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2006 American Community Survey (Table B08007; sample data subject to significant sampling error), 19,983 of 35,902 working residents ages 16 years old or above worked outside of Rockdale County – this is a significant percentage of the resident labor force (55.6 percent) that commuted outside the county. Note that the American

³ Thinking sector businesses identified in Rockdale County’s comprehensive plan are: biotechnology; clean technology; consulting; and communications.

Community Survey is lower in terms of estimated labor force than the figures provided by the Georgia Department of Labor in Table 2.

It is not surprising that there is substantial commuting out of the county, however, given that Rockdale is a fringe county of metropolitan Atlanta and its core base consists more of residential development than non-residential (employing) establishments. One cannot assume that every working resident would want to work in his or her own home county, due to a diversity of preferences. However, this statistic suggests that there are employees in the county that could fill job positions and forego commuting out of the county, if more jobs were made available inside Rockdale County.

Employing Industries of Rockdale County’s Labor Force

**Table 3
 Employment by Industry by Sex, 2000
 Civilian Population 16 Years and Over
 Rockdale County**

Industry	Male	Female	Total	Percent of Total
Total All Industries	18,289	15,322	33,611	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	43	44	87	2.6%
Construction	3,044	394	3,438	10.2%
Manufacturing	3,687	1,591	5,278	15.7%
Wholesale trade	889	357	1,246	3.7%
Retail trade	1,935	1,692	3,627	10.8%
Transportation and warehousing	1,361	447	1,808	5.4%
Utilities	246	73	319	0.9%
Information	1,086	530	1,616	4.8%
Finance and insurance	520	887	1,407	4.2%
Real estate and rental and leasing	227	357	584	1.7%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	845	638	1,483	4.4%
Management of companies and enterprises	17	13	30	0.1%
Administrative and support and waste management services	503	479	982	2.9%
Educational services	614	2,373	2,987	8.9%
Health care and social assistance	498	2,464	2,962	8.8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	201	153	354	1.1%
Accommodation and food services	722	972	1,694	5.0%
Other services (except public administration)	853	832	1,685	5.0%
Public administration	998	1,026	2,024	6.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census. Summary File 3, Table P49.

In order to fully evaluate employment options, one has to look closer at the characteristics of the resident labor force and the types of jobs available in Rockdale County. There is no perfect method of making such an assessment, but policy makers can be informed by a more detailed comparison of occupations of the resident labor force (Table 3) and employment by industry (place of work) in Rockdale County (Table 4).

Employment by Industry in Rockdale County

**Table 4
 Employment by Industry in Rockdale County, 2004**

NAICS Code	Description	Establishments	Employees	Percent Total Employment
All	Total for all sectors	2,077	31,617	
11	Forestry, fishing, hunting, agricultural support	2	n/a	n/a
21	Mining	3	66	0.2%
22	Utilities	6	n/a	n/a
23	Construction	306	2,816	8.9%
31-33	Manufacturing	93	4,482	14.2%
42	Wholesale trade	119	1,009	3.2%
44-45	Retail trade	297	5,493	17.4%
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	60	6,390	20.2%
51	Information	38	2,242	7.1%
52	Finance and insurance	118	637	2.0%
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	89	342	1.0%
54	Professional, scientific, technical services	217	1,411	4.5%
55	Management of companies and enterprises	4	n/a	n/a
56	Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	130	2,469	7.8%
62	Health care and social assistance	181	3,277	10.4%
71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	26	394	1.2%
72	Accommodation and food services	153	3,516	11.1%
81	Other services (except public administration)	210	1,389	4.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *County Business Patterns*, Georgia, 2004. Issued June 2006.

Comparison of Labor Force and Jobs Available

Table 5 provides a comparison of the jobs in Rockdale County with the resident labor force by industry type. Due to missing data, a full comparison is not possible. For instance, *County Business Patterns* does not report public administration employment. Further, the years of comparison are different, although the differences do not appear to be of major significance.

Although it is an approximation, Table 5 enlightens policy makers with regard to the types of jobs that should be recruited to better serve Rockdale County's resident labor force.

Table 5
Comparison of Jobs (2004) and Resident Labor Force (2000) by Industry
Rockdale County

Industry	Labor Force in 2000	Jobs in 2004	Net Difference in Jobs
Total All Industries	33,611	31,617	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	87	n/a	n/a
Construction	3,438	2,816	-622
Manufacturing	5,278	4,482	-796
Wholesale trade	1,246	1,009	-237
Retail trade	3,627	5,493	+1,866
Transportation and warehousing	1,808	6,390	+4,582
Utilities	319	n/a	n/a
Information	1,616	2,242	+626
Finance and insurance	1,407	637	-770
Real estate and rental and leasing	584	342	-242
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1,483	1,411	-72
Management of companies and enterprises	30	n/a	n/a
Administrative and support and waste management services	982	2,469	+1,487
Educational services	2,987	n/a	n/a
Health care and social assistance	2,962	3,277	+315
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	354	394	+40
Accommodation and food services	1,694	3,516	+1,822
Other services (except public administration)	1,685	1,389	-296
Public administration	2,024	n/a	n/a

Source: See prior tables.

From Table 5, it can be determined that the industry sectors that Rockdale County should promote, if it wants to promote employment of the sort that most closely matches its resident labor force, are manufacturing, finance and insurance, and construction. It is apparent that resident workers leave the county for those types of jobs.

Table 5 also shows that, when compared with the occupational profiles of its labor force, Rockdale County has a surplus of jobs in the following industry sectors: transportation and warehousing, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and administration and support and waste management services. From the standpoint of trying to match the industry sectors of the resident labor force, there is no need to recruit businesses in those industry sectors. And, it means that many employees commute into Rockdale County for work in those four industry sectors.

Technical Skills of Labor Force

DeKalb Technical College annually graduates workers in numerous program fields. Table 6 shows the programs with the largest numbers of recent graduates during the last three years. These program graduates indicate where the Rockdale area's strengths are greatest with regard to skill levels of recent graduates.

Table 6
Skill Areas of Graduates of DeKalb Technical College
By Most Frequent Program Area, 2005-2007
(Ranked by Largest Number of 2007 Graduates)

Program	Number of Graduates		
	2005	2006	2007
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operation	70	122	171
Legal Assistant/Paralegal	37	56	83
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	21	41	89
Heating/AC/Ventilation/Refrig. Maint. Technology/Technician	92	103	82
Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications	113	113	60
Data Entry/Microcomputer Applications, General	39	33	57

Source: Georgia Department of Labor. *Rockdale County, Georgia, Area Labor Profile*. Version 2.0, Updated May 1, 2008.

Programs and Tools

The Conyers-Rockdale Economic Development Council is the major entity responsible for economic development activities. The Council seeks to promote and enhance the economic vitality of the community through the retention and/or expansion of existing businesses and the resources appropriate to attract new business.⁴ The Conyers-Rockdale County Chamber of Commerce is also a major player in the county in terms of promoting economic development. According to the Chamber's 2007 Annual Report, it has completed a number of significant accomplishments, including: national distribution of the Conyers-Rockdale *Quality of Life* Magazine, focused on encouraging business relocation and expansion; a small business education program called OPEN (Opportunities for Promoting Entrepreneurship and Networking) which graduated 41 students in 2007; and continued offering of a networking program called "Business Builder Luncheon," and printing a third edition of the publication "Starting a Business in Rockdale County."⁵

⁴ Conyers-Rockdale Economic Development Council. Website. Accessed May 14, 2008.

⁵ Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce. 2007. Annual Report. <http://www.conyers-rockdale.com/AboutUs/AnnualReports/tabid/59/Default.aspx>

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

“Educational Opportunities Objective: Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.”

Overall Conclusions

Workforce training programs that strive to provide citizens with skills that match available jobs are discussed in the comprehensive plan, and the plan also identifies regional training opportunities. Overall, it is apparent that Rockdale County has adequate educational opportunities to meet this QCO.

Workforce Training

There are two major training opportunities available for current and prospective employees of industries and businesses in Conyers and Rockdale County. Georgia’s Quick Start Program, active since 1967, provides customized training for employees of businesses and industries throughout the state. At company locations or at the college campus, DeKalb Technical College provides customized training and workforce development programs for business, industry and non-profit organizations that are seeking to increase the skill levels of their existing employees. The Georgia Department of Labor also partners with other organizations to provide education and training programs.⁶

Conyers and Rockdale County recently earned the designation of a “Certified Work Ready Community.” This designation means that the community has earned certification with regard to this state program, which is designed to improve the job training and marketability of Georgia’s workforce and stimulate future economic growth in the state.⁷ Another entity that contributes to workforce training is the Rockdale Career Academy. It allows students to choose 18 different technical areas of study. Students may also participate in mentorship, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities.



Rockdale Career Academy

⁶ Conyers-Rockdale Economic Development Council. Workforce Training. On Website. Accessed May 14, 2008.

⁷ Conyers-Rockdale Economic Development Council. Work Ready Certification Overview. On Website. Accessed May 14, 2008.

Colleges, Universities, and Technical Schools

Because Rockdale County is a part of the Atlanta metropolitan region, it has access to numerous colleges and universities. The Georgia Department of Labor in its Area Labor Profile for Rockdale County⁸ lists, in neighboring DeKalb County alone, 17 colleges and universities, including DeKalb Technical College, Georgia Perimeter College, DeVry University-Georgia, and Emory University. A satellite campus of DeKalb Technical College is located in neighboring Covington-Newton County. DeKalb Technical College currently has more than 4,500 students in Clarkston and Covington, and Georgia Perimeter College has over 17,500 students (Conyers-Rockdale Economic Development Council website, under “Education.”). The state’s major universities are within 60 miles in Atlanta (Georgia State University and Georgia Institute of Technology) and Athens (University of Georgia).

HERITAGE PRESERVATION

“Heritage Preservation Objective: The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.”

Overall Conclusions

Rockdale County does not have any significant concentrations of historic resources outside the City of Conyers, with the exception of Milstead Village, which has generated interest in terms of special attention status (e.g., a possible historic district). However, there are some other significant, scattered historic resources acknowledged in the comprehensive plan. The overall assessment of comprehensive plan policies is that Rockdale County only partially supports the heritage preservation QCO.

Comprehensive Plan

A historic resources inventory was conducted previously in Rockdale County, and such resources are mapped in the comprehensive plan (p. IV-17). The comprehensive plan lists the following strategies to preserve Rockdale County’s historic resources: completing (or updating) a historic resources inventory; adopting ordinances that protect historic resources (not completed), including Milstead; and developing an educational map and exhibit that highlights historic resources in the County.

Rockdale County could strengthen its heritage preservation program by including a clear statement of the County’s support for the protection, reuse and rehabilitation of the County’s historic resources. Further, a local strategy to encourage the listing of eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places could also stimulate local interest, encourage heritage tourism, and be a step towards potential funding of historic building reuse and rehabilitation.

⁸ Georgia Department of Labor. *Rockdale County, Georgia, Area Labor Profile*. Version 2.0, Updated May 1, 2008. <http://explorer.dol.state.ga.us/mis/profiles/Counties/rockdale.pdf>

The current goals and strategies do not address the heritage preservation QCO of encouraging new development that is compatible with traditional features, nor the issue of protecting character-defining natural or scenic features. The issue of character is a significant one since the county has areas that are rich with a distinct rural landscape.

Milstead Historic Village

The Milstead Historic Village is the most significant concentration of historic or cultural resources in unincorporated Rockdale County. At one time, the county was pursuing the preparation and adoption of a historic overlay district to facilitate preservation; however, that effort has not been accomplished due primarily to a lack of interest and support among property owners in the village. Rockdale County's code (Sec. 210-4) provides for a "Milstead Historic Area Overlay District," but no regulations have been adopted to implement this special area. Due to prior interest in preserving this village, the village boundaries should be shown on the map or maps of "areas requiring special attention."



Milstead Village Sign

Smyrna Campground

Located at SR 138 and Smyrna Road, this campground was the first Presbyterian campground in Georgia and has hosted camp meetings for more than 173 years. It includes overnight cottages. Due to its historic significance, the campground should be shown on the map or maps of "areas requiring special attention."



Smyrna Camp

Trappist Monastery of the Holy Sprit

Monks built the first structure on the site of some 2,000 acres in the late 1940s. Due to its historic and cultural significance, the Monastery property should be shown on the map or maps of “areas requiring special attention.”



**Trappist Monastery
of the Holy Sprit**

Dial Mill

Dial Mill is the only building in unincorporated Rockdale County that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Due to its historic significance, the National Register district or property boundary should be shown on the map or maps of “areas requiring special attention.”

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OPEN SPACE

“Environmental Protection Objective: Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.”

“Open Space Preservation Objective: New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.”

Overall Conclusions

The framework provided in the comprehensive plan has been expanded with adoption of the Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan (2006). That master plan for parks and recreation facilities does not include a detailed open space network or greenway component to the plan. Rockdale County has adopted several ordinances in its Code that address environmental protection and open space. It has done an above average job in the assessor’s opinion of putting into place all the regulations needed to protect the environment and facilitate the preservation of open space. This assessment identifies additional recommendations for possible improvement toward meeting these QCOs.

Environmental Protection in the Comprehensive Plan

The comprehensive plan outlines a series of strategies to meet its goal of restoring the county’s impaired waterways, including the implementation of stricter local ordinances regarding stream buffers, water quality performance, and low-impact development guidelines, as well as the monitoring and enforcement of erosion, sedimentation and septic tank performance. Further, the

county indicates in the plan that it will (and it in fact did, in late 2006) revise land development regulations so as to create a more sustainable pattern of development.

The county's goals and strategies as stated in the plan are consistent overall with the objective of protecting and preserving the county's air, water and environmentally sensitive areas, and the comprehensive plan meets the QCO for Environmental Protection.

The county's environmental protection goals could be advanced by looking at the positive effects of limiting mass grading in an effort to protect vegetation, limit erosion and encourage ground water infiltration, as specified in the QCO. Admittedly, this is a difficult objective to achieve, however. Finally, with the recent heightened awareness of the potentially devastating effects of drought on the state and county, it would seem prudent to include strategies in the plan to implement effective water conservation measures.

Open Space Preservation in the Comprehensive Plan

The county's plan for continuing to provide open space focuses on the adoption of a conservation subdivision ordinance (which has been completed), the development of a greenway master plan with a focus on river corridors, a revision of low-impact development ordinances (not fully assessed in this document) and a re-application for state funding for greenspace acquisition. To meet the QCO, the plan should also state its intent to support a percentage of total land area to be acquired or preserved as open or greenspace. Open Space Preservation in the 2006 Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, prepared by Lose & Associates, Inc. is addressed in the following section.

2006 Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan

According to the master plan, the Rockdale County Parks and Recreation Department oversees 15 parks and one undeveloped parcel on over 1,200 acres of land. Facilities are found throughout the county, but the majority of the parks are concentrated in the center of the county along the Interstate 20 corridor. There are few multi-use greenways and paths in Rockdale County at this time. The Master Plan does not contain a detailed plan for open space; rather, it focuses on active recreational facilities and recreational program considerations.

Community input was received on the parks master plan, and a review of the results reveals that passive or individual activities received the second strongest support; greenways scored second (105 votes) in terms of the most frequent responses of support, after swimming (116 votes) (p. 3.11). That input also indicates that the highest priorities (expressed in part of the participation process) are: walking trails within existing parks (92%), renovate existing parks to provide multi-use amenities (89%), improve level of maintenance (88%), develop bike trails (84%), and develop multi-use/multi-purpose parks throughout county (84%) (p. 3-16).

In the context of classifying park and recreational facilities, the master plan provides useful information with regard to greenways, excerpted below.

Greenways have become one of the most popular family recreation activities across the country. The value of greenways in terms of recreation, education and resource protection is invaluable. Greenways serve as linkages between cities, parks, schools, commercial areas and neighborhoods. They provide a safe mode of transportation that preserves the environment. Typically, greenways can be anywhere from 10 to 12 feet wide and can be paved or natural surface. When developing a greenway system, corridors should be identified where people will access the area easily and connect elements within the community and incorporate all the characteristics of the natural resource areas. Greenway corridors should be no less than 50 feet in width except in neighborhoods, where 25 feet may be acceptable. In his article published in 1995, Julius Fabos, a professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Massachusetts, divides greenways into three categories: Ecological, Recreational and Cultural. Greenways can be located in a variety of settings and can be utilized for active and passive recreation activities. Ecologically speaking, they are typically located along natural environments such as rivers, ridgelines and coastal areas. These trails provide connections to nature, protect and maintain biodiversity, minimize development, and provide for wildlife migration across natural and manmade boundaries. Recreational greenways commonly link elements that have diverse and significant landscapes. Many link rural areas to more urban locales and range from local trails to larger systems. Most are paved trails that accommodate pedestrians, skaters and bicycles. Another type of greenway is the cultural trail, which connects areas of significant historic value and culture. Economic benefits from these types of trails may be significant if linkages can be directed toward areas of commerce to provide an infrastructure for commuting (p. 7.5 of the master plan).

Of all the park and recreation facilities in relation to the standards recommended by the steering committee heading the master planning effort, the largest existing deficit is for a trail system. Applying the recommended community standard developed for trails, there is a current need for 34 miles of trails. The only park with a true trail system is South Rockdale Community Park. This is a nature trail that was primarily built by volunteers and is not designed for high volume use. Reducing the trail deficiency as previously discussed should be a high priority for the County (p. 7.11).

The executive summary calls for Rockdale County to develop a greenways master plan and construct over 10 miles of greenways throughout the County over the next ten years.⁹ The estimated cost to prepare that plan is \$150,000 (p. 8.1). The master plan suggests that the development of the South Rockdale River Trail (currently underway along the South River), as part of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area, is a good start in providing more diverse recreation opportunities through the development of multi-use greenway trails (p. 7.16).

⁹ There is a 1999 Master Trails Plan for Rockdale County which calls for an extensive system of trails which would serve bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian users (Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 6). However, there appears to be no reference that the 1999 plan was adopted and the 2006 made its recommendations presumably with knowledge that this prior trails plan had been prepared.

Panola Mountain State Park

This 1,026-acre Georgia State Park is located in the southwestern corner of Rockdale County. The park was created to protect a 100-acre granite mountain and is designated as a National Natural Landmark. The park includes an Interpretive Center, playground, picnic pavilions, two miles of self-guided nature trails, a one-mile fitness trail and over three miles of guided trails. The park, which is home to rare plants of the Piedmont region, also offers interpretive programs and special events (Source: Rockdale County Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, p. 7.7).



Panola Mountain Trailhead

Zoning

Rockdale County has established zoning categories for the purpose of environmental protection, including a watershed protection district and conservation subdivision zoning districts. The purpose of the CRS zoning classification (Sec. 206-5) is, among others, to preserve conservation space and valuable view sheds in perpetuity that include sensitive natural resources such as streams, creeks, lakes, groundwater, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, woodlands, exceptional trees, and wildlife habitat. The CRS zoning classification is available only within the conservation subdivision land use category as designated on the Rockdale County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map. The minimum required conservation space is 30 percent of the gross parcel area prior to subdivision, as further specified in Sec. 206-5. The CSD, “Conservation Subdivision Development District,” may only be applied to property located in the Salem Road Corridor Overlay. The CSO, “Conservation Subdivision Ordinance” (Sec. 206-18) applies to the conservation subdivision category of the comprehensive plan future land use map. The minimum open space required is 40 percent of the gross parcel area.

Subdivision and Site Development

Rockdale County’s subdivision regulations require that “land physically unsuitable for subdivision or development because of flooding, poor drainage, topographic, geological, or other features that may endanger the health, life, or property, aggravate erosion, increase flood hazard, or necessitate excessive expenditures of public funds for supply and maintenance of services shall not be approved for subdivision or development unless adequate methods are implemented in the site design for solving these problems” (Sec. 302-8).

Environmental Planning Criteria

Rockdale County has adopted the state’s Environmental Protection Criteria in Chapter 324 Environmental Planning Criteria, of the Rockdale County Code of Ordinances (Ord. No. 0-2006-32). Those code provisions address groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, and protected river corridors.¹⁰

In addition, the county has adopted regulations for the protection of the water quality of the Big Haynes Creek Reservoir (now called Randy Poynter Lake) (Chapter 62 of the Code of Ordinances, Sec. 62-31 et seq.). The primary function of the reservoir is that of supplying a safe and reliable source of drinking water, which requires that a comprehensive approach to water quality protection is assured (Sec. 62-36) (Ord. No. 0-1999-09). The provisions of this article supersede all other provisions of the Code relative to the watershed protection zoning district (Sec. 62-42).



**Randy Poynter Lake
(formerly Big Haynes Creek Reservoir)**

Tree Protection

Chapter 328, “Buffers, Landscaping, and Tree Protection,” contains provisions for tree protection and tree replacement. Formally the ordinance is titled “Rockdale County Tree Protection and Replacement Ordinance.” One of the purposes of this ordinance is to “require the preservation and replacement of trees in certain areas within the county” (Sec. 328-15). This ordinance also has as one of its purposes the improvement of air quality: “To provide improved atmospheric quality by reducing airborne particulates and carbon monoxide and by increasing oxygen through adequate tree cover” (Sec. 328-15).



Tree Protection

¹⁰ Sec. 324-3 of the Rockdale County Code, “Protected River Corridor Regulations,” does not specifically indicate which rivers, if any, are protected. The comprehensive plan (p. IV-10) indicates that “there are no state-designated “protected rivers” within Rockdale County.

Flood Damage Prevention

Chapter 320, Flood Damage Prevention, covers flood plain management and flood damage prevention.

Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control

Rockdale County's soil erosion ordinance is codified at Chapter 306 of the Code of Ordinances.

Stormwater Management

Chapter 310, "Stormwater Management" of the Rockdale County Code provides the county's adopted version of model ordinances required by the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, including Illicit Discharge and Illegal Connections, Post-Development Stormwater Management, and Stream Buffer Protection. Significantly, Rockdale County has also adopted a Stormwater Utility via Article 5 of Chapter 310 of the Rockdale County Code of Ordinances (Ord. No. 0-2006-32).



Detention Pond

Scenic Views

The comprehensive plan (p. IV-16) notes that there are several views of stream corridors, conservation areas, the Monastery, Stone Mountain, and the rural landscape that should be considered in development review processes. However, the county's regulations do not fully emphasize scenic viewshed protection in the subdivision or site plan approval processes.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

“Transportation Alternatives Objective: Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged.”

Overall Conclusions

Rockdale County has engaged in detailed, multi-modal master planning for its transportation system. Its regulations are adequate, and above average in some instances in the opinion of the assessor, with regard to promoting development accessible by multiple modes. However, regulations only facilitate but do not guarantee development that is accessible via alternative modes of travel. Presently there is little development in the unincorporated areas of the County that truly meets this QCO.

Transportation Planning Generally

Rockdale County adopted an updated comprehensive plan December 30, 2003, including a transportation element. As an adopted plan, the policies in the plan are considered a valid, current expression of policy by the Rockdale County Board of Commissioners. A separate Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) was developed by URS Corporation at the same time that Jordan Jones and Goulding prepared the comprehensive plan. While done by two separate consultants, the two efforts were coordinated.

Small-area transportation studies were also prepared at the time of comprehensive planning and comprehensive transportation planning. Those studies were done for Salem Road (SR 162) and the Stonecrest Area (Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 6, Transportation). Those two studies, respectively, are titled “Salem Road (SR 162) Corridor Summary Report, May 23, 2003;” and “Stonecrest Area Study Summary Report, July 30, 2003.” Importantly, by reference in the comprehensive plan, these studies are adopted as policy.

Roads and Bridges

Congestion of several of the county’s roadway facilities is projected by the year 2025. See Figure 6, Congestion Management Systems (predicted 2025). Rockdale County’s bridges are in adequate condition, but additional maintenance is needed (Rockdale County and City of Conyers Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Existing Condition Technical Report, URS Corporation, August 2003).



Approaching Interstate 20

One area of particularly deficient road infrastructure appears to be the Stonecrest Mall area, which is located in the southeast corner of Turner Hill Road and Interstate 20. The comprehensive transportation plan also notes the importance of coordinating road improvements with DeKalb County since Rockdale County’s road network crosses into DeKalb County (Rockdale County and City of Conyers Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Short Term Needs Analysis, URS Corporation, August 2003, re-printed May 2004).

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Rockdale County and City of Conyers Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Long-Term Recommendations (URS Corporation, August 2003, re-printed May 2004) provides a recommended bike plan. The plan is proposed to be implemented on an incremental basis with facilities “systematically provided as a small incremental cost of roadway construction as corridors are reconstructed or upgraded.” Figure 12 of the Long-Term Recommendations shows one recommended project, including bicycle routes, bicycle lanes and/or multi-use facilities, for the Main Street corridor north of Interstate 20 from county line to county line, through the City

of Conyers. Typical roadway sections in Appendix B of the Long-Term Recommendations do not show any cross-sections that involve bicycle lanes or paths, or multi-use paths. However, the small area study for the Salem Road Corridor contains design standards, cross-sections, and intersection designs for a street network that includes appropriate locations for bike lanes, sidewalks, bulb-outs and on-street parking. Similarly, the small area study for the Stonecrest Area specifies sidewalks and bike paths for many new and existing streets in the study area.

There is support for better options for residents to use bicycle and pedestrian facilities that can serve both recreational and transportation needs (Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 6). The comprehensive plan (Figure VI-8) details six recommended bicycle and pedestrian projects. Rockdale County's Code of Ordinances has as one of the purposes of Chapter 302, Subdivision and Site Development (i.e., "Rockdale County Subdivision Regulations"), "to ensure the adequate provision of safe and convenient traffic access and circulation, both vehicular and pedestrian, in land developments" (Sec. 302.1).



Sidewalks Required in Subdivisions

The county's code requires sidewalks as follows: along the street frontage of all commercially zoned property; along the existing street frontage of any new development; within a 1/2-mile radius of any public school and on one side of all streets in any residential subdivision except in the A-R and W-P zoning districts (Sec. 332-9. Sidewalks and Bikeway Requirements).

The county code requires that where bicycle improvements or multi-purpose trails are required a bicycle plan shall be submitted (Sec. 302-65). The code also addresses specifications for them, including a minimum of four feet in width and placement between the outside lane of a roadway and the curb or shoulder. Lanes shall also be delineated with appropriate markings, as required by Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Standards. Bikeways and bicycle lanes must be pre-approved by the department and meet the requirements of AASHTO "Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities," latest edition.



Sharing Roadway with Bicyclists

The Salem Road Corridor Overlay specifically supports the provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities as a part of the land development process. When development occurs in the overlay, applicants are required to submit a “multi-modal access plan showing connections from the system of streets, alleys, sidewalks and multi-use paths shown in the conceptual transportation plan to the entrances of all occupied buildings within the subject property.”

Public Transportation

Public transit service is currently not available in Rockdale County (Rockdale County and City of Conyers Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Existing Condition Technical Report, URS Corporation, August 2003; see also Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 6). The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) provides express bus service from the Sigman Road Park and Ride Lot in Rockdale County and from a new Park and Ride Lot in Conyers to downtown Atlanta.

Express bus service provides a lower cost alternative to the automobile for commuting to downtown Atlanta. Additionally, express bus service will result in other benefits to Rockdale County and the region, including improved air quality and decreased auto emissions/ improved air quality (Rockdale County and City of Conyers Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Short Term Needs Analysis, URS Corporation, August 2003, re-printed May 2004).

Commuter Rail Possibilities

Studies and planning by the Georgia Department of Transportation have identified six feasible routes for commuter rail, one of which would pass through the City of Conyers. While these six commuter rail routes continue to be studied, and funding for routes has not been secured, the implementation of commuter rail through Rockdale County would contribute to the transportation alternatives QCO.

Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning for Smart Growth

In 2003, Rockdale County completed a Salem Road Corridor Study. That corridor spans from Interstate 20 to the Newton County line along State Route 162. That study process involved a design charrette and resulted in a conceptual transportation and a definitive land use plan for the corridor. Recommendations of the study included (1) developing a grid-style roadway network; (2) improving pedestrian facilities; and (3) beautification of roadways. That study has been implemented and thoroughly integrated into the land use regulations of the county.

Transportation Goals, Policies and Regulations

The Rockdale County and City of Conyers Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Evaluation Framework Technical Report, URS Corporation, August 2003, articulates certain transportation policy objectives. These are “suggested” and, by virtue of preparing the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, were not officially adopted by Rockdale County and Conyers. However, by adopting the transportation element of the comprehensive plan, Rockdale County did adopt similar policy statements. Several of the objectives and policy statements are consistent with

QCOs. For instance, the county’s goal, to attain “a more balanced multi-modal transportation system that offers alternatives to the automobile,” is clearly consistent with the Transportation Alternatives QCO. It also defines a “multi-modal system” as one that combines transit, buses, vehicles, bikes, trucks and pedestrian walkways to provide a comprehensive transportation system.”

As another example, the plan’s policy to coordinate with the plans of adjoining counties demonstrates consistency with the Regional Cooperation QCO. As a third example, the county’s objective, “utilize context sensitive design principles in planning, designing, and constructing transportation infrastructure, is consistent with the QCO pertaining to sense of place. As yet another example, Rockdale County’s Code of Ordinances required that new streets interconnect with the larger street system (see Sec. 302-10). Also, Sec. 332-2 requires interparcel access among individual office and commercial land developments along collector and arterial roads. Rockdale County’s Code (Sec. 332-2) also provides detailed regulations for access management. Taken as a whole, Rockdale County has adopted goals, policies, and implementation objectives that clearly support the state’s Quality Community Objective (QCO) for transportation alternatives.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AND TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS

“Housing Opportunities Objective: Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.”

“Traditional Neighborhood Objective: Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.”

Overall Conclusions

Plan policies support the affordable housing objective, but Rockdale County faces increasingly significant challenges in meeting these objectives “on the ground.” Prospects for traditional neighborhood development (TND) are therefore limited, yet the county has put in place some regulations to allow TND to occur. Rockdale County has affordable housing, particularly with regard to its existing housing stock. Providing new affordable housing is challenged by factors of high land costs, a lack of sewer infrastructure (i.e., septic tank use means larger lots and higher costs), and an increasingly short supply of developable residential land.

Plan Policies

The comprehensive plan establishes a policy of providing for a wide range of housing types (detached single-family, duplex, manufactured home, apartment, etc.). The comprehensive plan establishes a policy of providing for the housing needs for all income levels, as determined by a housing needs assessment, and the housing element of the comprehensive plan contains a housing needs assessment. The comprehensive plan’s housing needs assessment is not specific with regard to current and future housing needs by income or unit type.



Higher End Housing Under Construction



**Milstead Village is Characteristic of a
Traditional Neighborhood**

The vast majority of housing activity (approximately 80 percent) has occurred in the unincorporated areas of Rockdale County, and such trend is expected to continue throughout the planning horizon (Comprehensive Plan, p. II-14). Since housing in unincorporated Rockdale County is mostly detached, single-family, stick-built housing, within conventional subdivisions, the county's zoning regulations have led to less-diversity in terms of the stock of housing. Income levels are declining in the county in relation to Georgia as a whole and the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (Comprehensive Plan, p. II-15). A decline in income levels can only mean that more and more households face significant challenges with regard to securing affordable housing. While 80 percent of housing needs are expected to be met with detached single-family dwellings, the remaining 20 percent are not clearly identified but are most likely to be met through rental units or manufactured housing.

Zoning Ordinance

Rockdale County's zoning code contains a RM, "Residential Multi-family District" (Sec. 206-8). Multi-family dwellings are permitted, and the RM zoning district allows up to 12 units per acre. Rockdale County's MUR, "Mixed-use Residential District (Sec. 206-7) was adopted with the purpose of providing for the needs of a diverse population with well-designed and human-scale, attached single-family and multi-family structures that are compatible with other residential neighborhoods. This zoning district may be applied only to property located in the Salem Road Corridor Overlay. The minimum lot size is 2,500 square feet for individual fee-simple townhouse lots, and multi-family dwellings are permitted. The maximum density in the MUR zoning district is 8 units per acre.

Traditional Neighborhood Development Opportunities

The primary opportunity for traditional neighborhood development in unincorporated Rockdale County is within the Salem Road Corridor Overlay. Also, as a part of a 2001 study financially supported by the Atlanta Regional Commission for the City of Conyers, there are some

unincorporated lands within designated activity centers primarily in the City of Conyers that provide opportunities for traditional neighborhood development.¹¹

Tools for Encouraging Housing Affordability

There are many tools available to promote more affordable housing. Such tools include but are not limited to allowing a variety of housing types in residential zones, reduced or flexible minimum lot sizes and dimensions, inclusionary housing programs, allowance for accessory dwelling units, density bonuses for affordable housing, allowing housing in commercial zones, removing excessive public improvement requirements in subdivision codes, and retention of manufactured home parks and allowances for compatible manufactured homes on individual lots.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

“Infill Development Objective: Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.”

Overall Conclusions

It is the consensus of the County’s planning staff that there are few, significant opportunities for the infill of residential development in developed areas. As a mature fringe suburban county to metro Atlanta, most of the opportunities for residential development have already taken place, and the remaining lots in residential areas are difficult to develop or are unlikely to be placed on the market for development. On the other hand, there are significant opportunities for industrial infill development, and to a lesser degree, commercial development.



Commercial Infill Potential at I-20

For more information on infill development, see Chapter 2 (areas requiring special attention).

SENSE OF PLACE

“Sense of Place Objective: Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.”

¹¹ *Activity Center/Town Center Investment Policy Study (ACTIPS), City of Conyers, Georgia, May 2001.* (Atlanta Regional Commission, by Robert G. Betz, AICP, Inc., John D. Edwards, PE, and The Jaeger Company).

Overall Conclusions

Because Rockdale County only has one municipality, and the only downtown area is within the City of Conyers, this objective appears more applicable to Conyers than Rockdale County. However, Rockdale County through adoption of the Salem Road Corridor Overlay District has demonstrated a commitment to foster a “sense of place” consistent with this objective. Aside from the Salem Road Corridor, Rockdale County has not implemented any significant efforts to maintain and foster a desired sense of place. The Rockdale County Comprehensive Plan is only partially consistent with this Quality Community Objective, and there are activities it could consider undertaking to better facilitate this QCO.

Comprehensive Plan

The treasures of Rockdale County can be put into two broad categories: natural and built resources. The natural resources of Rockdale County are numerous and include mountains, lakes, rivers and woodlands, among others. Several elements of the plan address strategies to protect environmentally sensitive areas, as noted elsewhere (see assessment of environmental protection objective).



Horses in Rural Areas



Yellow River

However, there may be room to address culturally sensitive—or built—areas of the county. For instance, Rockdale County has several types of community focal points that help define community character. Examples include the walkable, mixed-use character of historic Milstead Village; the numerous rural “crossroads” marked with a convenience store, business and/or church; and the newer commercial areas serving suburbanized residential areas. All of these areas contribute to the character, or sense of place, of Rockdale County. Therefore, the County’s plan to designate certain land use areas (Historic Village, Neighborhood Commercial, Special Mixed-Use Activity Center) supports the continuation of these types of community focal points. Significantly, these designations emphasize the potential for notable gathering places that attract people for a variety of reasons, be it work, shopping or eating.



Rural Scene at Monastery



Accessible Recreation

Establishing aesthetic regulations that address compatible new site and building development in the county could help protect these resources, and other, significant places of character in the county. Local regulations can also help shape new communities into character-defining places of their own, such as creating traditional, mixed-use neighborhoods.

There may be other opportunities to better foster the sense of place that is unique to Rockdale County. For example, with the Georgia International Horse Park, which was developed for the 1996 International Olympic Games, and an abundance of horse farms, an equestrian theme in the outlying parts of the county is one possible strategy for bolstering a unique sense of place. In addition, the existence of the Monastery in Rockdale County and a high-quality (low density) rural environment are other characteristics that could be formally recognized and nurtured as a unique sense of place in metropolitan Atlanta.

Salem Road Corridor Overlay District

Sec. 210-2 of Rockdale County's code is the "Salem Road Corridor Overlay District (SRCO)." This overlay district was specifically intended to promote a unique sense of place. The purpose of the overlay is "to create a *sense of place* that is aesthetically appealing, walkable and environmentally responsible" [emphasis added]. It is also intended to encourage a balance of uses for living, working, shopping and playing that are accessible within a convenient walking distance, and to promote safe and efficient movement within the SRCO for persons using all modes of travel - motorized vehicles, public transportation, bicycles and walking.

REGIONAL QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

“Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.”

“Regional Cooperation Objective: Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to the success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.”

“Regional Solutions Objective: Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.”

Overall Conclusions

Rockdale County appears to have exercised virtually every opportunity to plan and deliver services in a way that is cooperative with the City of Conyers. The many examples of countywide service delivery, particularly with regard to water and sewer services, demonstrate that Rockdale County has acted consistently with the regional solutions objective. Furthermore, Rockdale County has coordinated services, such as water supply, with adjacent county governments. A prime example of intergovernmental coordination and cooperation is the multi-government agreement to protect the Big Haynes Creek water supply watershed. That agreement has been cited as a model for other local governments to follow, and it demonstrates consistency with the regional cooperation objective. The “regional identity” objective appears to have little applicability.

Planning

The comprehensive plan for Rockdale County and the City of Conyers (1991) was a joint city-county plan. Conyers and Rockdale County have a combined City-County Planning Commission. When an update of the comprehensive plan was due in 2003, the City of Conyers elected to proceed individually rather than collectively with that planning effort. With regard to the partial updates of the comprehensive plan, the city and county are proceeding separately and individually, although they have both used the same planning consultant to help prepare the partial updates. Conyers participated in the countywide transportation planning process sponsored by Rockdale County, and that plan covers both the county and city.

Rockdale County’s comprehensive plan refers to certain intergovernmental coordination opportunities, but does not in itself contain a separate intergovernmental coordination element. As one example, the land use plan supports pursuing a “memorandum of understanding” with Newton County, DeKalb County, and Conyers to coordinate land use planning, zoning and other land use-related activities (p. VIII-35). As another example, the adopted comprehensive plan calls for establishment of an intergovernmental planning committee (p. VIII-39).

Provision of Facilities and Services

Service responsibilities are set forth in the *Comprehensive Service Delivery Strategy for the City of Conyers and Rockdale County*. The strategy was completed almost ten years ago now.

Rockdale County and Conyers are served with water and sewer facilities by the Rockdale County Water and Sewer Authority. The authority purchased the City of Conyers water and sewer systems on November 12, 1996. Schools are provided by one countywide system, as are libraries. Similarly, emergency medical services and fire protection are also delivered by Rockdale County on a countywide basis including the City of Conyers. The consolidation of fire services dates back to June 28, 1990. Other facilities and services that are provided on a countywide basis include but are not limited to voter registration and elections, tax assessment, detention (jail) services, tourism, senior services, health and social services (Hospital Authority of Rockdale County), and animal control.

Rockdale County and the City of Conyers maintain separate planning and building inspection departments. Conyers also provides its own police/public safety, security alert (residential and commercial alarm service), E911 communications (part of Police Department), public works, municipal court, economic development, and solid waste collection services. With regard to parks and recreation, the adopted Service Delivery Strategy indicates that the city will provide its own passive parks and recreation services within its incorporated boundaries, as well as cemeteries. While separate provisions may continue to be made for city and county parks and recreation facilities, there are going to be several opportunities for the county and city to provide the joint-delivery of park and recreation facilities. As one example, community participation during the comprehensive planning process in 2003 revealed the opportunity for Conyers and Rockdale County to provide a greenway linking Randy Poynter Lake (county owned) with the Georgia International Horse Park (city owned) (p. 1-4, Comprehensive Plan).

Dispute Resolution

As a part of the process of preparing the service delivery strategy, Conyers and Rockdale County evaluated the land use plans of the city and county and found that there were no incompatibilities. Furthermore, a dispute resolution process was jointly agreed to and effectuated July 1, 1998. Discussion with county planning staff reveals that there have been few if any issues with regard to the annexation and “upzoning” of properties by the City of Conyers in a manner inconsistent with the county’s land use plan.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Although many instances cited above suggest that Rockdale County has succeeded with efforts to cooperate regionally, its comprehensive plan does not include a chapter specifically related to intergovernmental coordination.

CHAPTER 2 ANALYSIS OF AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION

This chapter constitutes a second required component of the partial update of the comprehensive plan for Rockdale County. It consists of a narrative description of “areas requiring special attention” per the partial plan update requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Generally, this component is an assessment of existing land use conditions and trends, with attention toward identifying specific areas that deserve additional policy formulation or regulation. The discussion in this component is divided into the categories of areas of special attention as outlined in the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (Local Planning Requirements). Rather than provide a single map of all areas, separate maps are provided. Prior to discussing possible areas requiring special attention, however, an overview of existing land use patterns and trends is provided. This analysis also includes an evaluation of consistency issues between the county’s adopted Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and zoning districts.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Description of Existing Patterns of Land Use

As of 2003, Rockdale County was approximately 76 percent developed; some 20,000 acres or 24 percent remained undeveloped, but as noted elsewhere, the development potential for the remaining vacant land is less than one would expect given natural limitations, the lack of infrastructure, and low-density zoning. Rockdale County is best characterized as predominantly low-density, suburban residential in terms of generalized land use.

Rockdale County has a distinct land use pattern. The bulk of industrial and commercial properties is concentrated along the Interstate 20 corridor, which includes Conyers. The entire length of the I-20 corridor, from DeKalb County to Newton County, is developed. The comprehensive plan (p. VIII-5) notes that land uses in the I-20 corridor have “limited spatial separation for dissimilar land uses, resulting in conflicting and contentious issues.” Within the city limits of Conyers, which lies mostly within the I-20 corridor, a more urbanized pattern is evident.

The north and south parts of Rockdale County, well outside the interstate corridor, are primarily suburban and rural with detached, single-family residences being the predominant land use type. In northern Rockdale County, coincident with the Big Haynes Creek watershed, land use is very low density residential; the county regulates that watershed with a minimum lot size of three acres for residential development, to keep densities (and water quality impacts) low.

Evaluation of the Overall Development Pattern

The adopted comprehensive plan (p. VIII-8 to VIII-12) includes a description of urban sprawl and compact development. It indicates that Rockdale County’s pattern is one of urban sprawl, given its large expanses of low-density, single-purpose (residential) development. It also notes that

Rockdale County has “strip” commercial development. While these observations may be accurate, one should recognize that Rockdale’s *urban* pattern is largely contained within the Interstate 20 corridor and that the commercial development along state highways has been largely confined in a nodal pattern to intersections, as opposed to creeping out in a linear fashion. Rockdale County has been successful at confining commercial uses to nodes and the Interstate 20 corridor. Furthermore, due to the needs for watershed protection, Rockdale County has justifiably set residential densities low in the north part of the county. Also, because of the lack of sanitary sewer in parts of southern Rockdale County, the low-density residential pattern of land use is to be expected.

Anticipated Growth Trends

With regard to future trends, the comprehensive plan (p. VIII-13) indicates that growth and development through the year 2020 is expected to consume almost 18,000 acres (which would be 90 percent of the remaining vacant land, if the development spread across the county).¹² As noted in the assessment of Quality Community Objectives (see Chapter 1), the projections of population in the comprehensive plan are higher than now anticipated. Rockdale County will probably not need 18,000 acres to accommodate its growth and development through the year 2020. Furthermore, Rockdale County has embraced a concept of more compact development within the Interstate 20 corridor through adoption of the Salem Corridor (SR 162) overlay which provides for a smarter development pattern in the future. The comprehensive plan (p. VIII-21) assumes that 80 percent of development will occur on new sites and 20 percent of development will be redevelopment.

Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

Rockdale County’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM) (4th Revision, 2006-2007) divides the county into 18 categories, including water and the City of Conyers. The northern part of the county, within the Big Haynes Creek water supply watershed, is designated “watershed protection” and is governed by zoning that requires three acres minimum per dwelling unit. In many parts of the county, low-density residential is planned, with a maximum density of one unit per acre. The county’s future land use map has a “conservation residential” category, where conservation subdivisions are encouraged (but not required) at densities ranging from 1 to 2.72 units per acre (3.1 units per acre in conservation residential subdivisions). Only small amounts of land are designated as “high-density” residential, mostly within or adjacent to the Interstate 20 corridor.

There are two major “Special Mixed-Use Activity Centers” designated on the FLUM – one is the Salem Road (SR 162) Corridor and the other is the Stonecrest area.¹³ There are three commercial designations – one is, simply, “commercial,” another is WP Country Store (small “crossroad” areas comprised of convenience stores which are mostly nonconforming) within the

¹² A figure of 14,000 acres needed for land development and redevelopment, is provided on p. VIII-20 of the comprehensive plan. That figure includes the City of Conyers. The comprehensive plan “inflates” that figure by 25 percent to provide for market flexibility; hence, the estimate of almost 18,000 acres needed for development.

¹³ There is a third area designated in this category, in the Parker Road and Flat Shoals Road area – that area is very small and was the subject of a Georgia Conservancy Blueprints workshop during July 2003. It is an older strip commercial center which was envisioned to be redeveloped with mixed uses at a pedestrian scale (p. VIII-30, comprehensive plan).

Big Haynes Creek watershed, and neighborhood commercial, which is applied to selected intersections in the midst of residential areas throughout the county. There is also an office-professional land use designation, which is applied selectively in areas mostly for purposes of providing a transition between residential and commercial or mixed use areas.

Rockdale County's future land use map also has three industry/manufacturing categories: Light industrial, which applies to lands on the north side of Interstate 20, west and east of the City of Conyers; manufacturing, which is much more limited in its application but is generally in the same areas as light industrial land uses; and "Office/Distribution/Technology." The latter designation applies in the eastern part of unincorporated Rockdale County, north of Interstate 20 (currently undeveloped land). That third industrial designation includes warehousing, distribution, and limited industrial operations and proposes that they be developed in a "campus-like" setting with restrictive covenants and controls on building appearances. According to planning staff, this category was a deliberate attempt to distinguish the type and look of development from other existing industrial parks and manufacturing operations in the county.

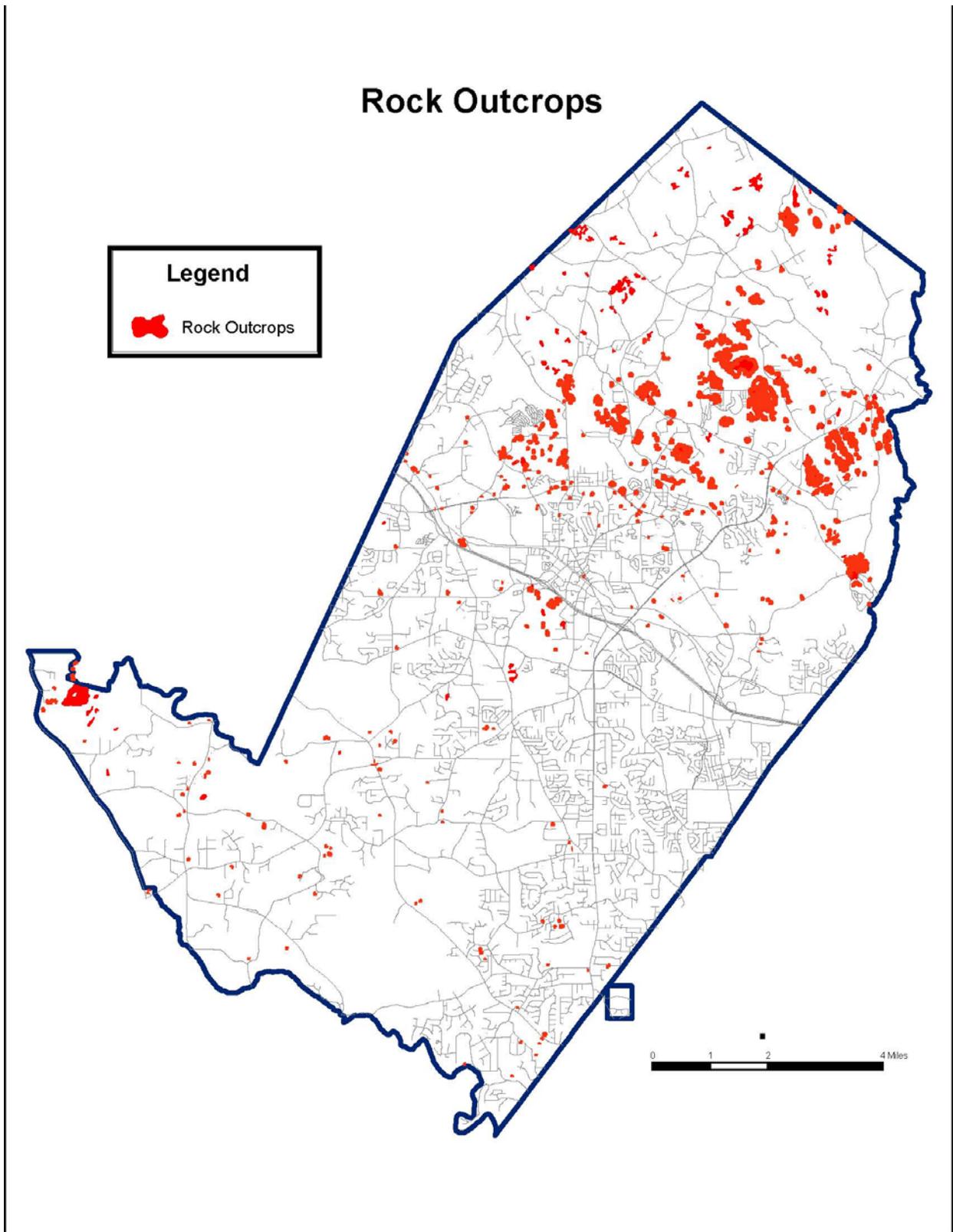
Zoning in Relation to Future Land Use

Rockdale County has established a land use management system that ties its zoning districts to the future land use plan map categories. As such, the county is able to ensure consistency between the comprehensive plan and zoning districts. As a part of this analysis, the planning consultant systematically compared existing zoning districts with the future land use map (4th revision, 2006-2007) to determine where they are not consistent with one another (see later section of this Chapter).

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL OR CULTURAL RESOURCES

Rock Outcrops

The comprehensive plan, natural resources element, discussed "group 1" soils which have severe soil limitations for development, due to rock outcrops and/or flood plains. Rock outcrops were not previously mapped, however. The comprehensive plan indicates that most of the native species of plants and animals that are considered endangered, threatened, rare or unusual (i.e., designated as "protected species" make their homes on granite outcroppings common within the County (p. IV-14). A map of rock outcrops, prepared by Rockdale County, is provided in this chapter. This map is included for three reasons. First, as just noted, the rock outcrops provide important habitat. Second, these areas place significant limitations on development. Third, rock outcrops are a unique natural feature that may be worthy of preservation in terms of Rockdale County's unique quality of place.



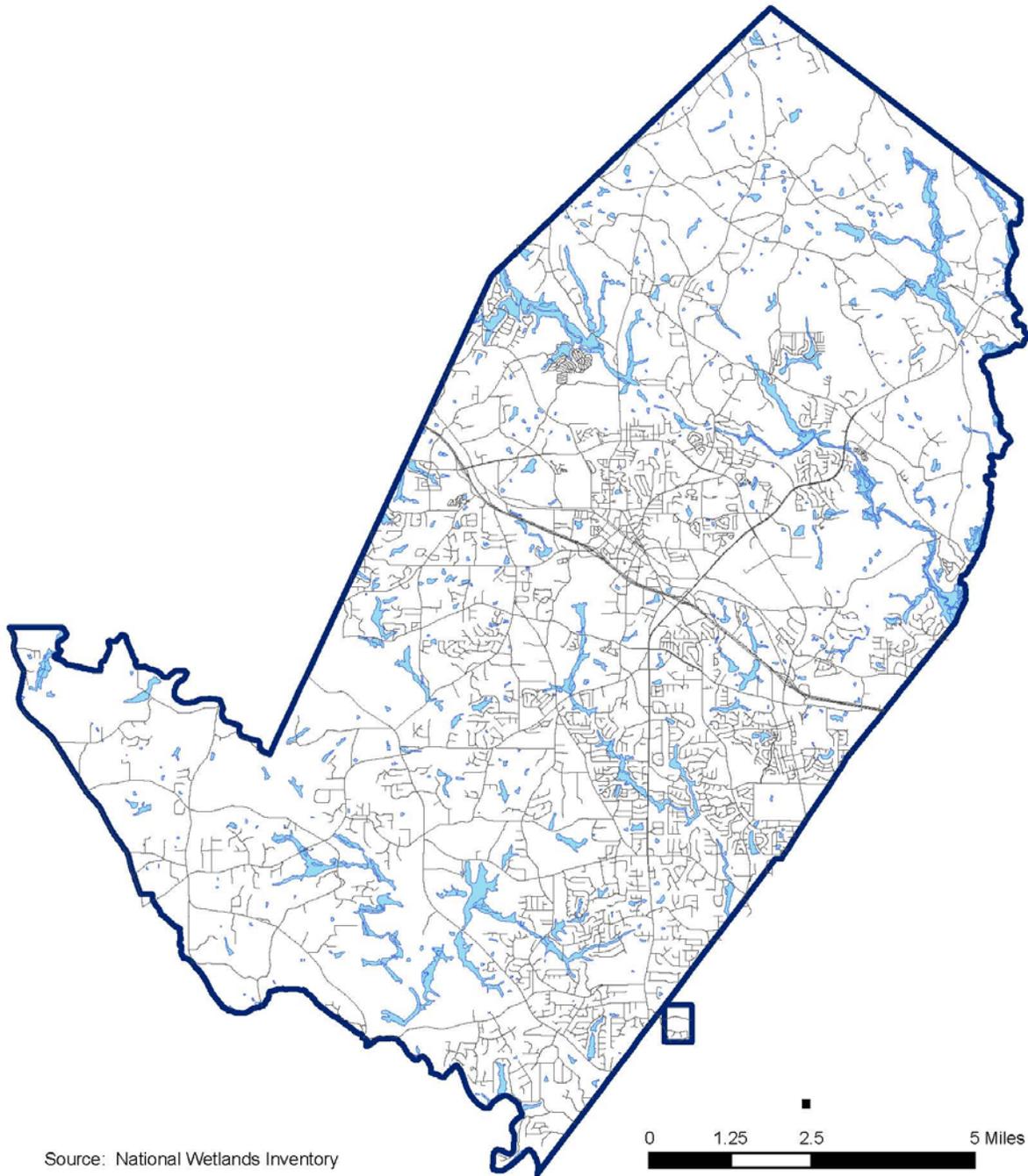
Wetlands, Groundwater Recharge Areas and Water Supply Watersheds

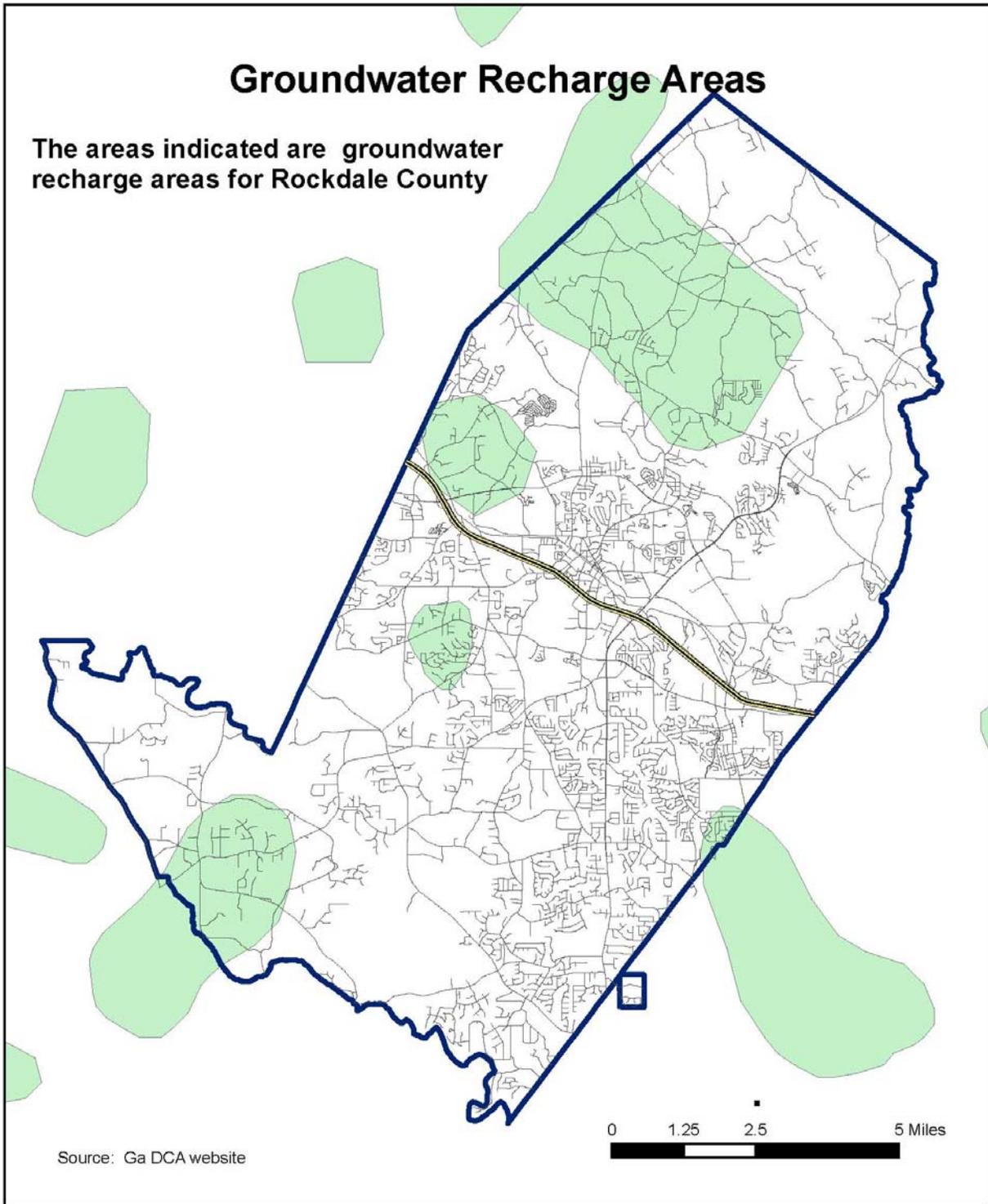
Wetlands, which are also mapped in the comprehensive plan, are significant natural resources that are required to be protected to some extent, or their loss mitigated, by federal and local laws. Groundwater recharge areas and water supply watersheds are adequately addressed in the comprehensive plan and the county's code with regard to regulatory protection as promulgated by the state. Maps of these resources are provided here in this partial plan update. For groundwater recharge areas, this plan update shows both the groundwater recharge areas identified on the website of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and those that are "probable thick soils" as identified in the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Hydrologic Atlas 18.

"303(d)" List of Impaired Waters

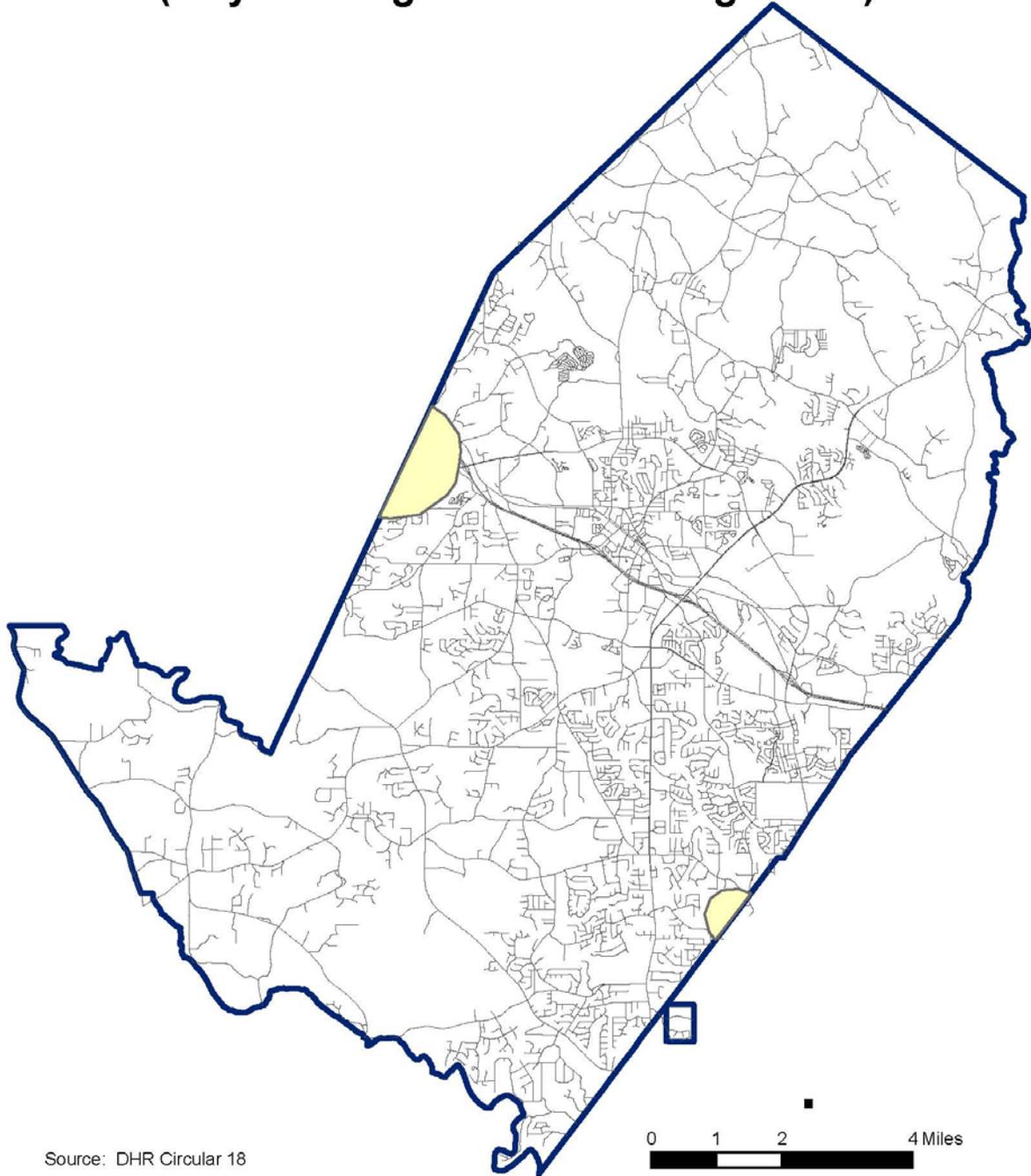
Several streams and rivers in Rockdale County are identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as "not supporting" or "partially supporting" the Clean Water Act mandate of being "fishable or swimmable" (Comprehensive Plan, p. IV-7; see Figure IV-5 on p. IV-9 for complete listing). That list is referred to as the "303(d) list." The comprehensive plan indicates that, unless changes occur to development regulations, the impact and severity of urban runoff and nonpoint source pollution will increase in the coming decades. While new and additional regulations have been put in place in Rockdale County as a result of mandates of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, it is appropriate that Rockdale County consider the rivers and streams on the "303(d) list" as areas requiring special attention. A map of the 303(d) rivers and streams is provided here.

Wetlands



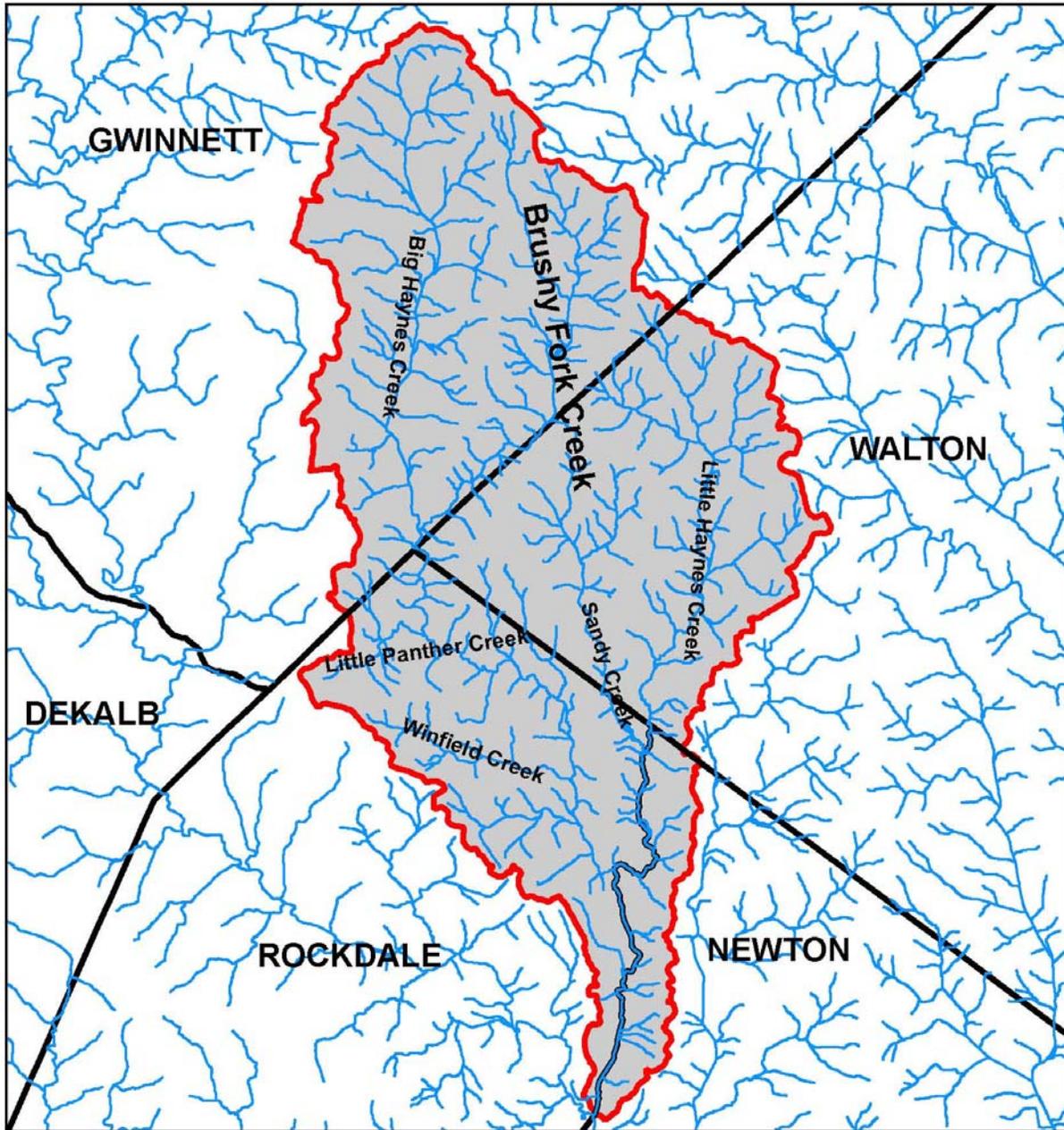


Probable areas of Thick Soils (May be a significant Recharge Area)



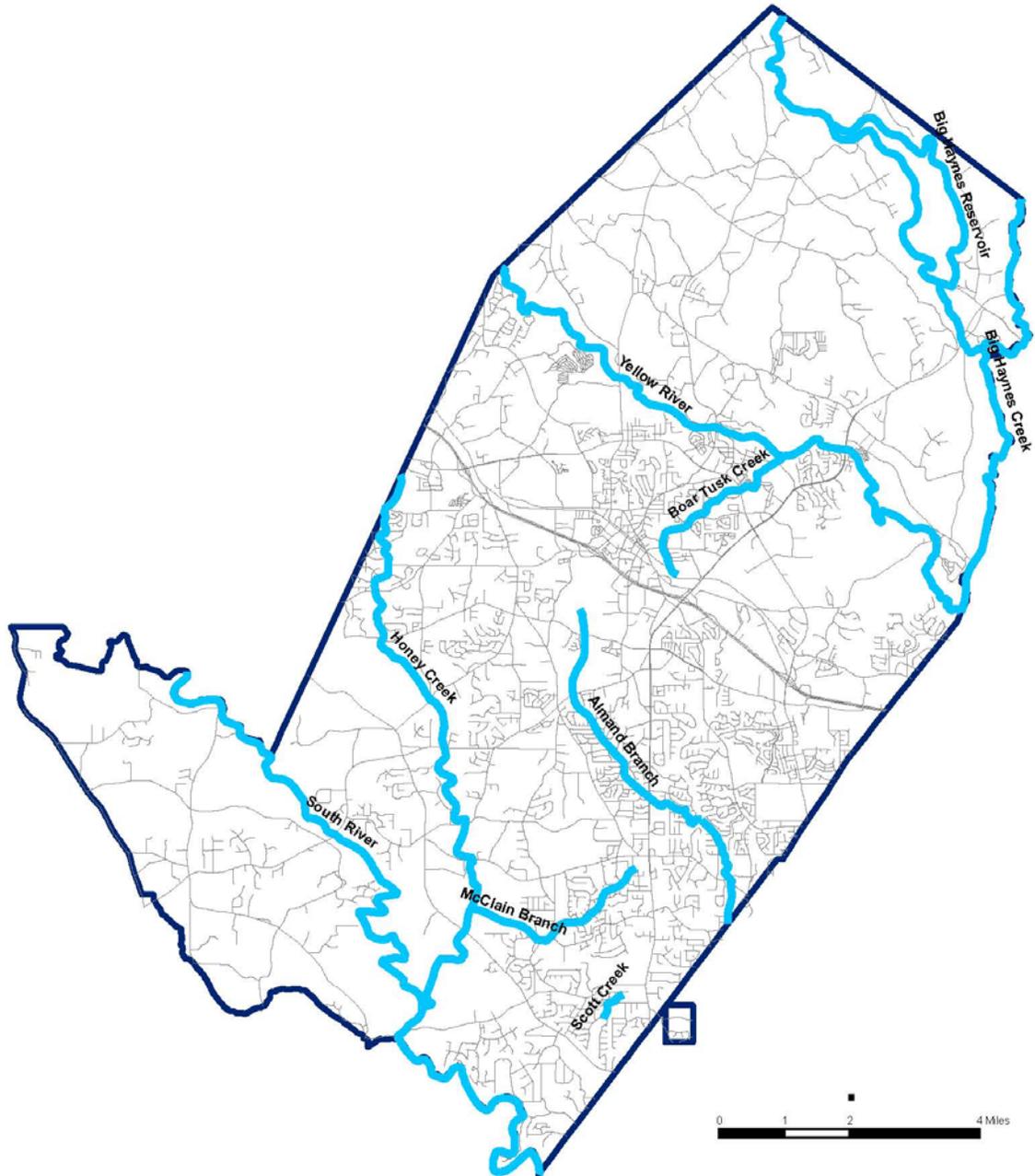
Source: DHR Circular 18

Water Supply Watershed



Area depicted is Rockdale County's
only Water Supply Watershed

303(d) Impaired Waters



Historic Resource: Milstead Historic Village

A historic resources inventory was conducted previously in Rockdale County, and such resources are mapped in the comprehensive plan (p. IV-17). As noted in the Assessment of Quality Community Objectives, the Milstead Historic Village is the most significant concentration of historic or cultural resources in unincorporated Rockdale County. At one time, the county was pursuing the preparation and adoption of a historic overlay district to facilitate preservation; however, that effort has not been accomplished, given lack of support among property owners.¹⁴ Due to prior interest in preserving this village, the village boundaries are shown on a map of key historic resources included here.

Historic Resource: Smyrna Campground

Located at SR 138 and Smyrna Road, this campground was the first Presbyterian campground in Georgia and has hosted camp meetings for more than 173 years. It includes overnight cottages. Due to its historic significance, the campground is shown on the map of key historic resources included here.

Historic Resource: Dial Mill

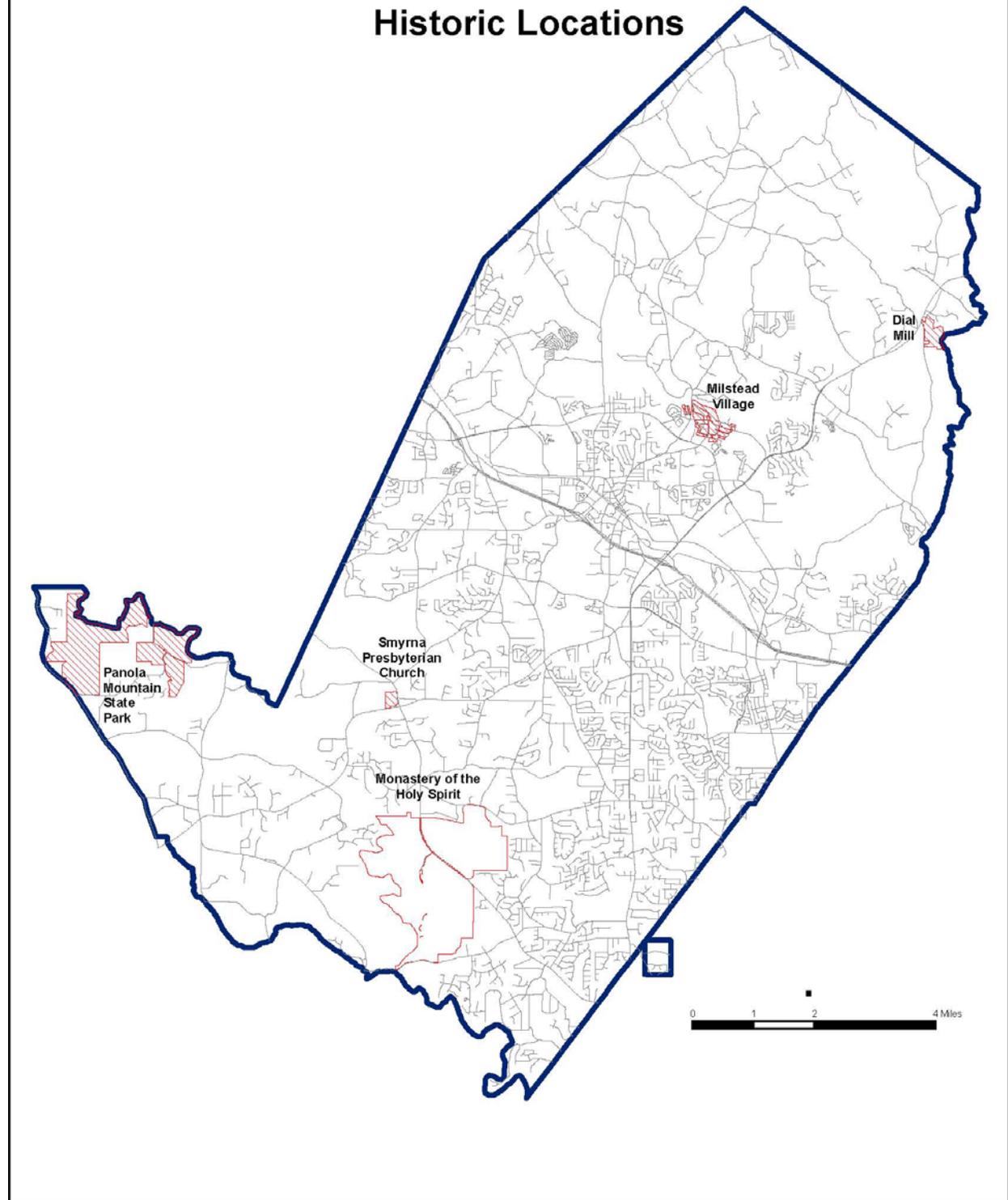
Dial Mill is the only building in unincorporated Rockdale County that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Due to its historic significance, the National Register district boundary is shown on the map of key historic resources included here.

Historic Resource: Trappist Monastery of the Holy Sprit

Monks built the first structure on the site of some 2,000 acres in the late 1940s. Due to its historic and cultural significance, the Monastery property is shown on the map of key historic resources included here.

¹⁴ Historic district ordinances require “certificates of appropriateness” for any “material change in appearance of existing structures within an established local historic district. This type of regulation was reportedly considered too onerous to residents of the Milstead Village.

Historic Locations



AREAS WHERE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGE IN LAND USES IS LIKELY TO OCCUR

Active agricultural land uses are likely to be threatened by conversion to residential subdivisions. The comprehensive plan indicates that over the planning horizon (i.e., to the year 2020), agricultural land use is likely to continue. Such lands are perhaps no longer economically significant, but they are “culturally important” according to the comprehensive plan (p. IV-5). The plan also indicates that “their existence enhances resident’s perception of their community and quality of life” and that “it is within the County’s interest to seek the preservation of the few remaining farms and forests within the County” (p. IV-5). Additionally, the Quality of Life objective of the state (see Chapter 1) suggests that the equestrian character of Rockdale County is important to maintain. A map of prime agricultural soils is included in this partial plan update.

Rockdale County has 9,347 acres of land in conservation easements (see map). These areas are not necessarily all agriculture, and because they are under conservation easement they may not be threatened by development; however, as conservation easements are not necessarily permanent or “in perpetuity,” they are included on a map here.

AREAS OUTPACING AVAILABILITY OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

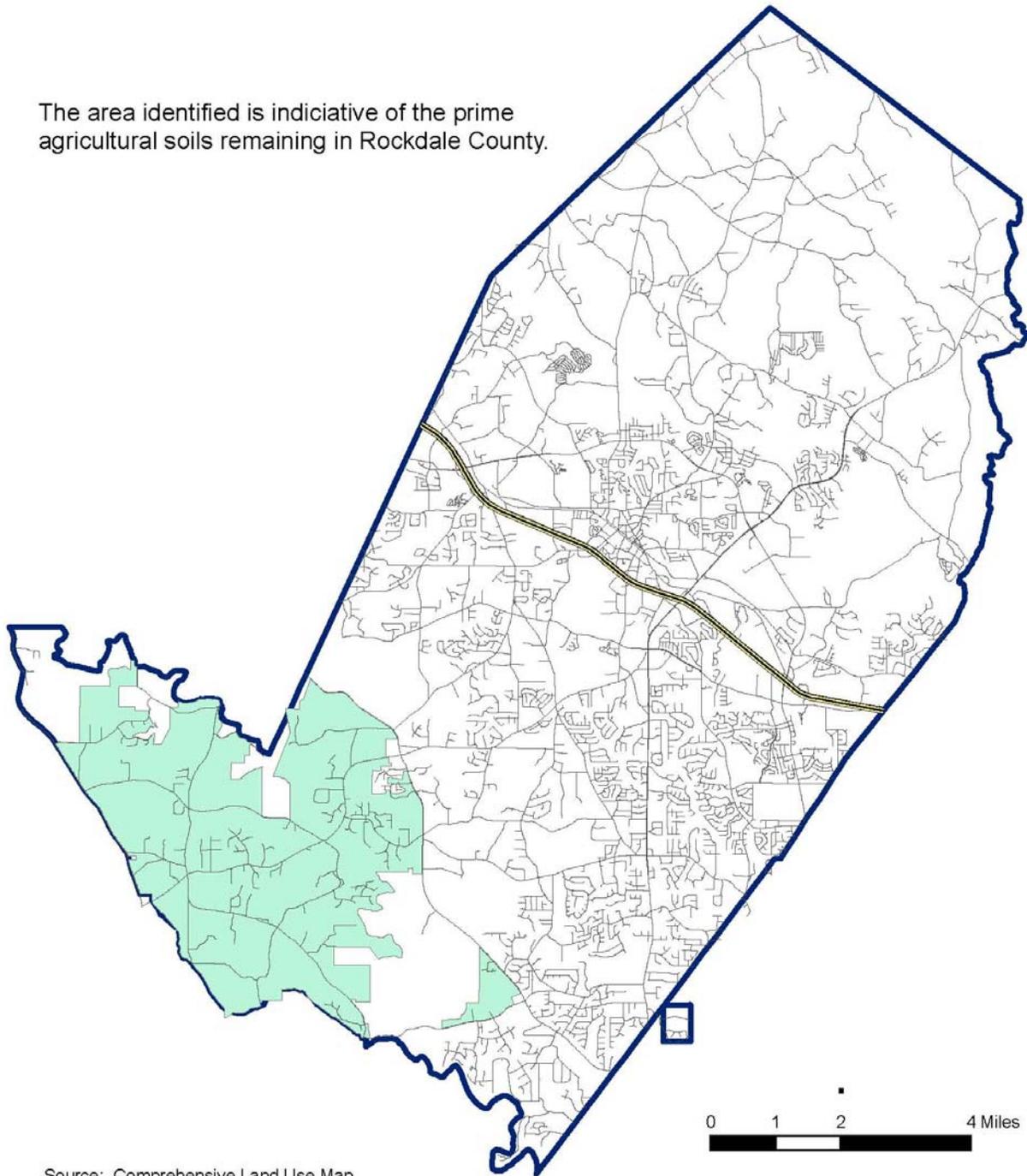
Infrastructure limitations, including roads, water, sewer, parks, and schools, are discussed in the Assessment of Quality Community Objectives. Sanitary sewer is concentrated in the center of the county, around Conyers; sewer lines are shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map (4th Revision, 2006-2007) and therefore do not require mapping here. Rockdale County generally does not desire to extend sanitary sewer to outlying, low-density residential parts of the county, though a master plan for sewer is still in the stage of preparation. Rockdale County is generally well served by public water throughout the county.

Rockdale County and City of Conyers Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Existing Condition Technical Report, URS Corporation, August 2003, provides a map of Congestion Management Systems (predicted 2025) (see Figure 6); this map is probably the best representation of areas with congested corridors in Rockdale County.

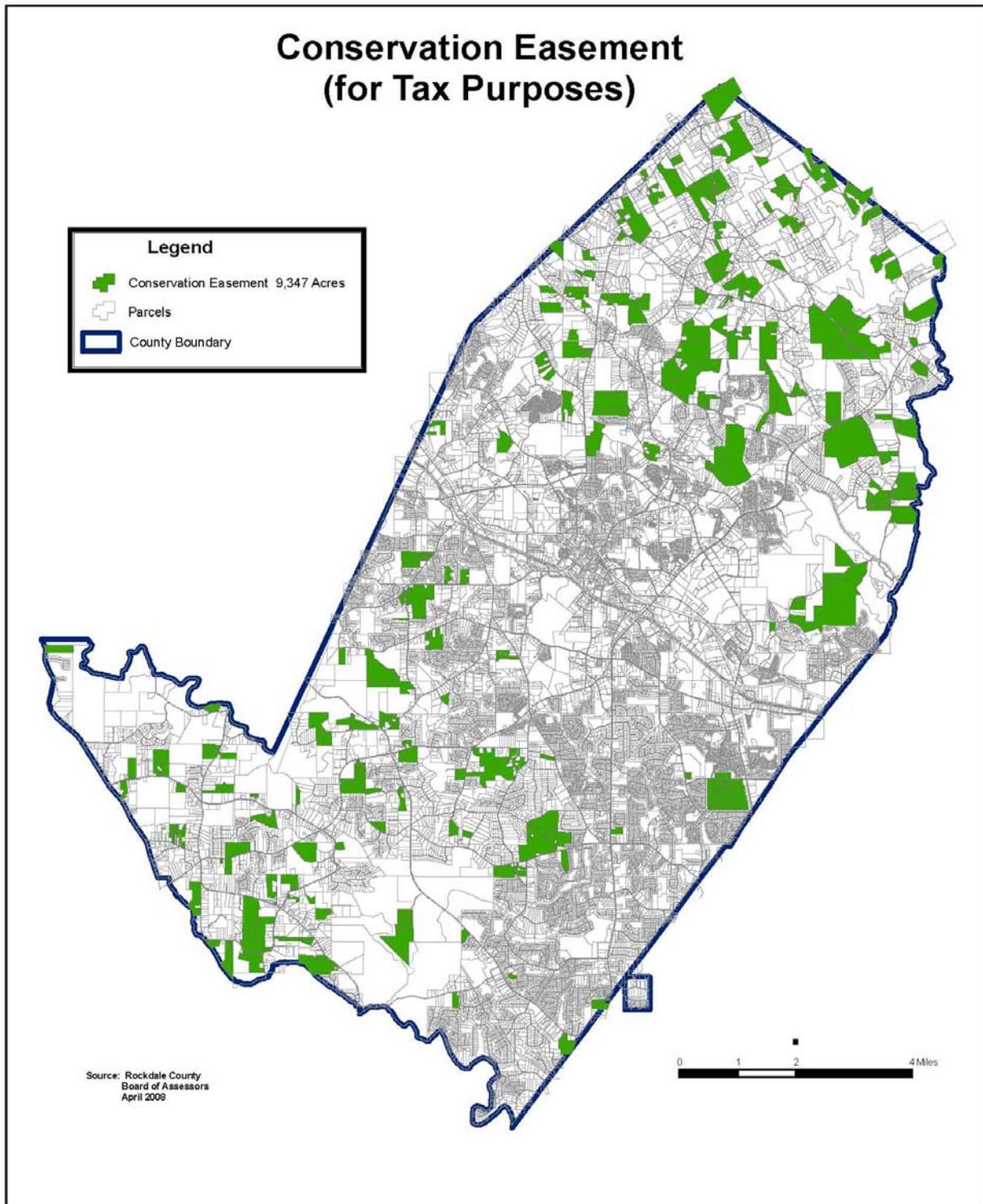
One area that has been identified as lacking infrastructure but subject to extensive development pressure is the Stonecrest area south of Interstate 20 in western Rockdale County. The area is experiencing substantial development pressure as a result of spillover from Stonecrest Mall in DeKalb County. As noted below, Rockdale County completed a small area study of the Stonecrest area but has not yet adopted special regulations for that area, as proposed in the plan.

Prime Agricultural Soils

The area identified is indicative of the prime agricultural soils remaining in Rockdale County.



Source: Comprehensive Land Use Map



AREAS IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT OR SIGNIFICANT AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan notes that Rockdale County (like most suburban communities that had commercial development dating back to the 1970s) has a number of older commercial areas that are aging and in need of revitalization. One of the primary areas in need of revitalization is the Salem Road (SR 162) corridor (discussed below), for which the county has already adopted a plan and regulations designed to address revitalization objectives.

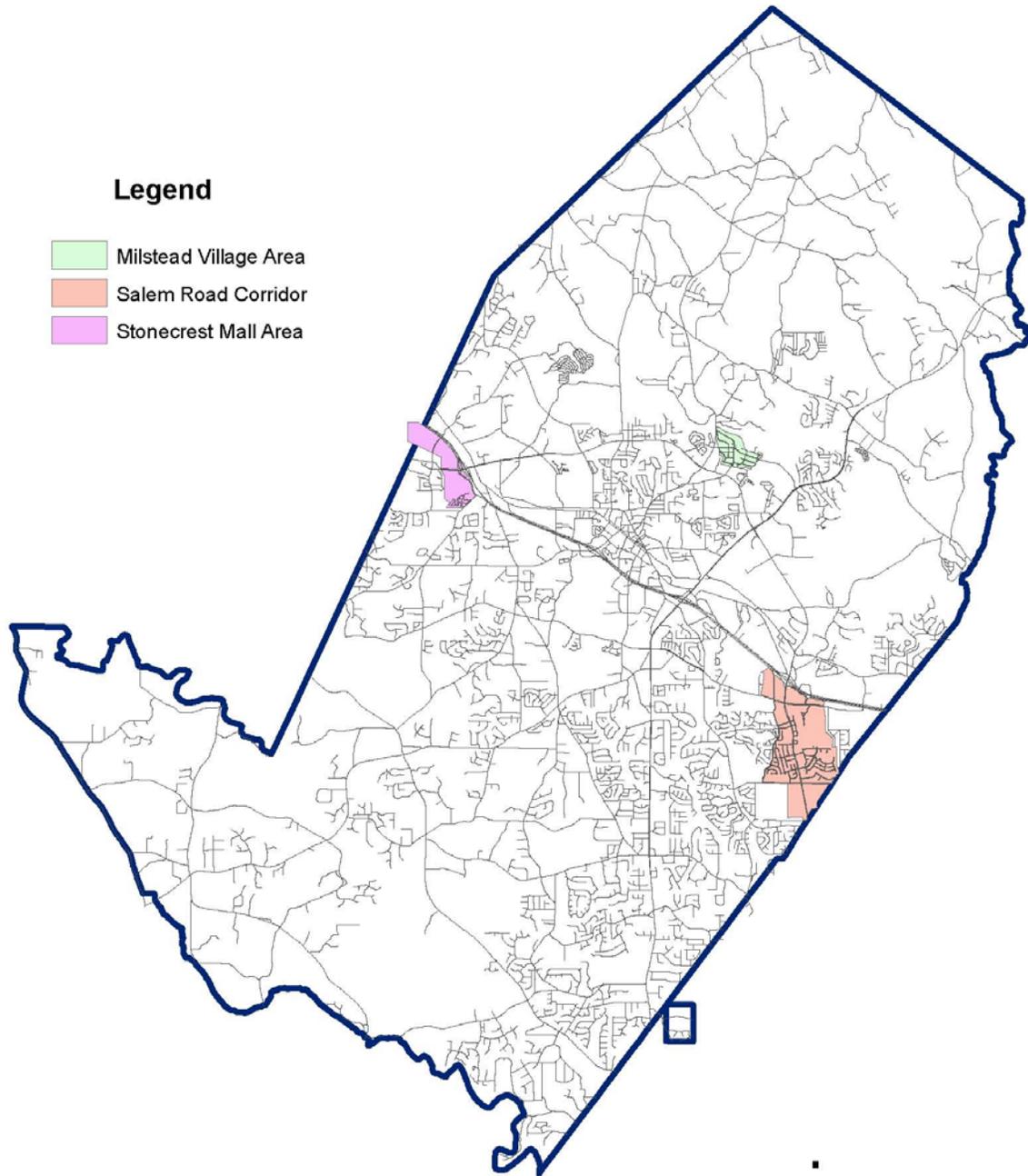
As noted in the Assessment of Quality Community Objectives (Chapter 1), there are two areas that have been identified by Rockdale County as appropriate for special treatment in terms of aesthetics. The first is the Salem Road Corridor overlay, which is already mapped on the county's zoning map. The second is the Stonecrest area, which was mapped for study purposes but has not been implemented. According to the comprehensive plan, there has been discussion about redeveloping the former Milstead Historic Village mill site as a regional park. These three areas are shown on a map in this partial plan update. The county also contains some scattered commercial and industrial sites that are vacant and need of redevelopment, but they are too scattered and sparse to be mapped.

LARGE ABANDONED SITES OR STRUCTURES

Like other jurisdictions, there are scattered commercial sites that have been abandoned (see example photos below). However, there are no large sites that are significant enough to be mapped here. Figure IV-8 of the comprehensive plan (p. IV-13) identifies six properties which are significant sources of groundwater contamination – which generally qualify as abandoned sites. A map of those properties is included in this partial plan update.



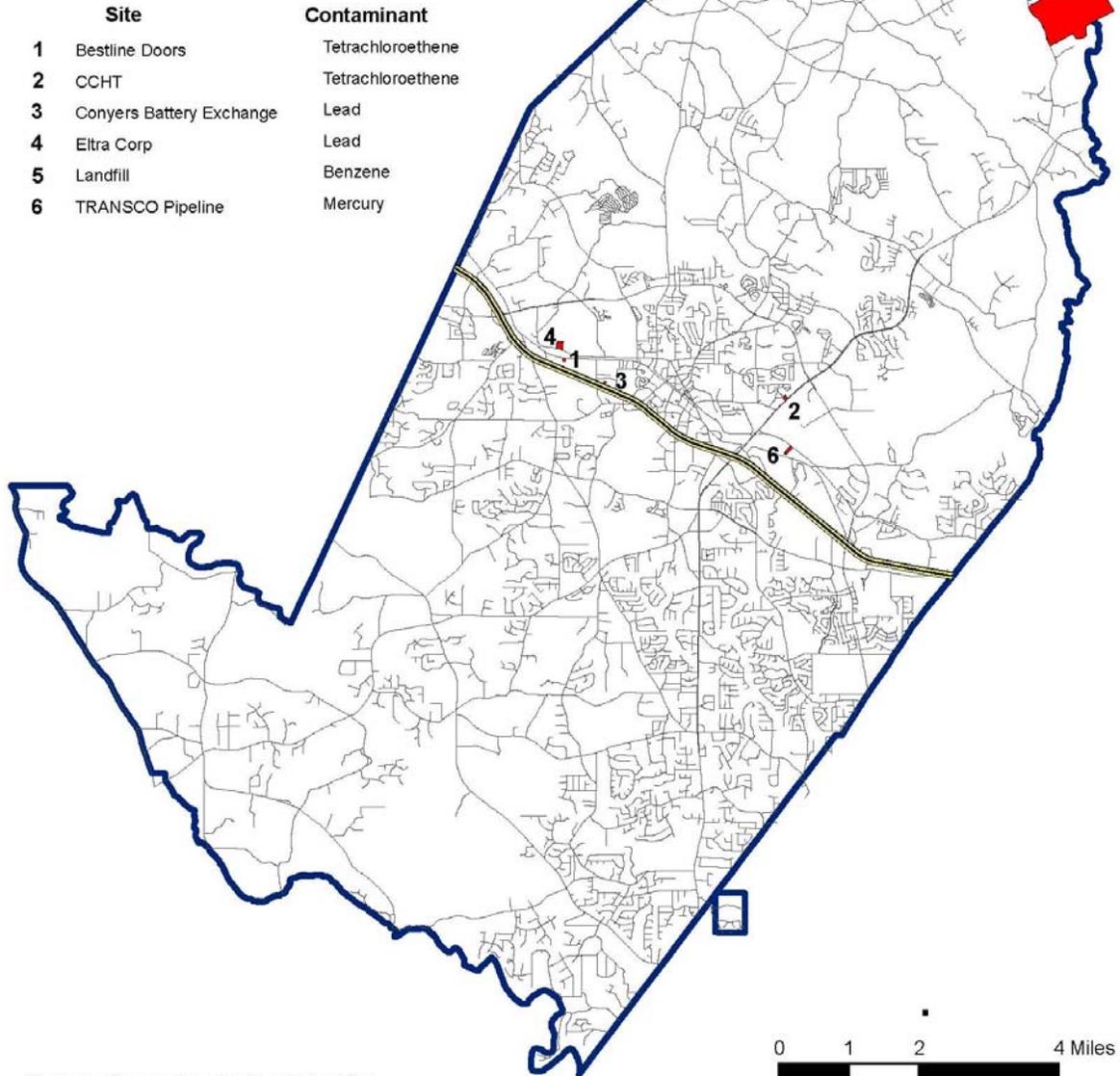
Areas in Need of Redevelopment or Significant Aesthetic Improvement



Source: Rockdale County Comprehensive Land Use Map

Significant Sources of Groundwater Contamination

Identified areas of monitored contamination sites are areas for potential redevelopment.



Source: Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Page IV-3, adopted 03/16/2004

AREAS WITH SIGNIFICANT INFILL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

As noted in the Assessment of Quality Community Objectives (Chapter 1), there is not a great deal of opportunity for residential infill development. Although there is significant undeveloped land in unincorporated Rockdale County (some 20,000 acres) (see map of vacant properties of five acres or more), many if not most of these sites are considered to be environmentally challenged, or difficult to develop. For those reasons, and infrastructure limitations, Rockdale County does believe it feasible to encourage residential infill development. The county does view opportunities to infill and redevelop in existing commercial and industrial areas to be appropriate, however.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT DISINVESTMENT, LEVELS OF POVERTY, OR UNEMPLOYMENT

An analysis of Census Data (2000) enables one to identify subareas of the county where concentrations of poverty or unemployment may exist. Rockdale County is divided into 15 census tracts as of the 2000 Census (see map).

Table 7 provides selected statistics by Census Tract in order to analyze this question. The table shows unemployment (with detail by sex), persons of poverty status in 1999, median and per capita incomes, and households with public assistance income in 1999.

Table 7
Unemployment, Poverty, and Income Statistics
Census Tracts in Rockdale County, Georgia, 2000

Census Tract	Male Unemployed 2000	Female Unemployed 2000	Total Unemployed 2000	Income in 1999 Below Poverty Level	Median Family Income in 1999 (Dollars)	Per Capita Income in 1999 (Dollars)	Households With Public Assistance Income in 1999
601.01	33	51	84	141	54,474	18,971	0
601.02	39	42	81	322	56,212	20,690	19
602.01	92	62	154	993	42,163	14,084	45
602.02	76	52	128	385	64,777	25,671	31
603.04	62	54	116	584	48,558	19,145	45
603.05	31	77	108	467	40,919	18,972	24
603.06	14	0	14	73	53,958	25,922	0
603.07	69	93	162	334	80,550	29,969	12
603.08	35	77	112	437	40,858	17,375	24
603.09	49	49	98	996	40,050	15,228	78
604.03	39	26	65	190	71,287	24,809	0
604.04	99	62	161	122	63,370	21,683	7
604.05	88	10	98	417	67,106	24,047	9
604.06	5	19	24	115	72,171	26,863	11
604.07	57	12	69	97	71,227	26,856	10

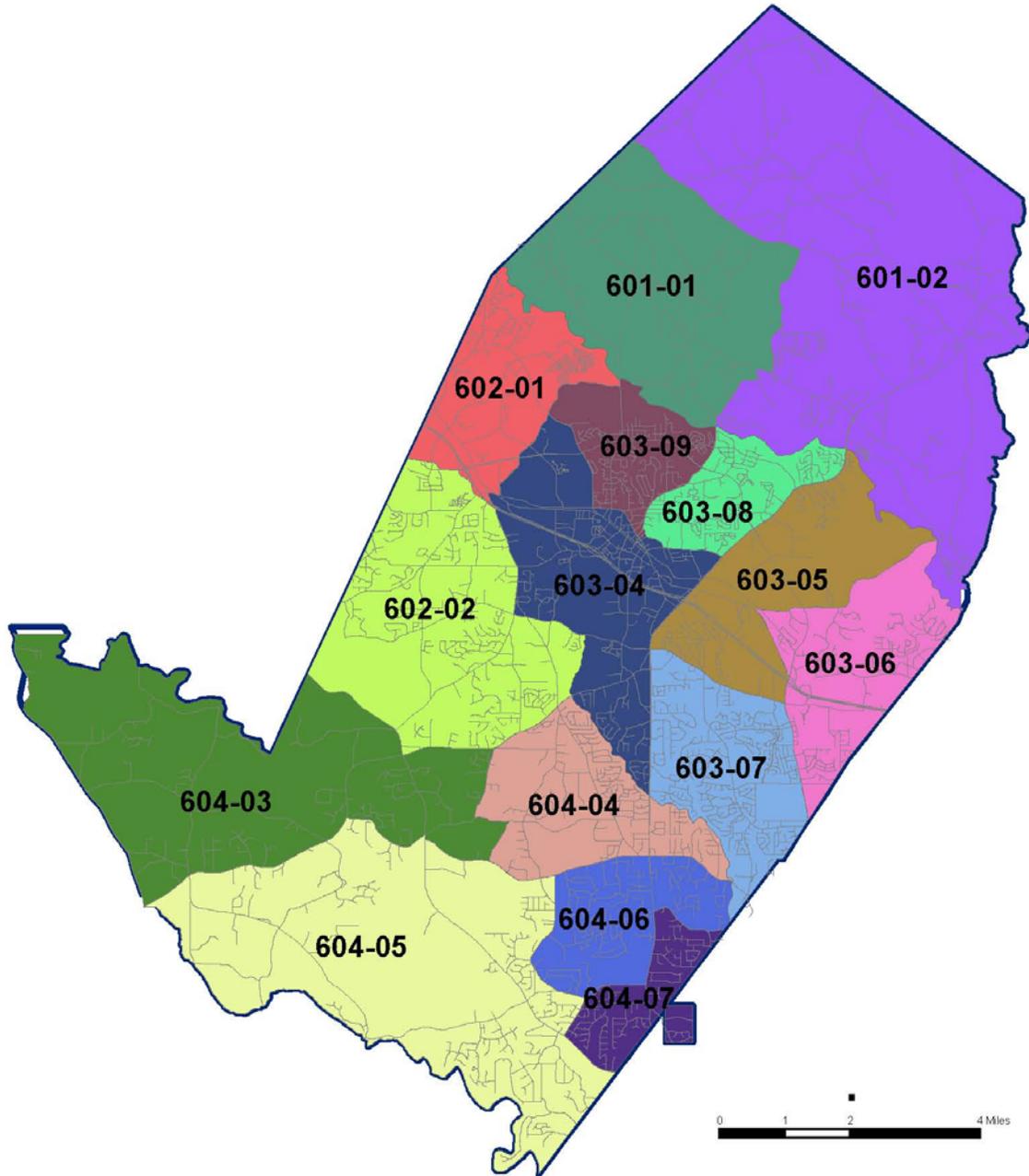
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data. Rockdale County Census Tracts. Table P43. Sex by Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over; Table P87. Poverty Status in 1999 by Age; Table P82. Per Capita Income on 1999 (Dollars); Table P77. Median Family Income in 1999 (Dollars); and Table P64. Public Assistance Income in 1999 for Households

Of the 15 census tracts in Rockdale County, two stand out with regard to poverty and low incomes. Census Tract 602.1, which is in western Rockdale County abutting DeKalb County and north of Interstate 20 (with a small portion south of I-20), and 603.09, which includes most of north-central Conyers and which abuts Census Tract 602.1 to the east. These two census tracts, 602.1 and 603.09, had significant numbers of households with public assistance income in 1999, with 45 and 78, respectively.

Both Census Tracts 602.1 and 603.09 had nearly 1,000 persons each of poverty status in 1999. Census Tract 602.1 had the lowest per capita income and the third lowest (of all Census Tracts) median family income in 1999. Census Tract 603.09 had the second lowest per capita income and lowest median family income in 1999.

There does not appear to be a significant correlation between income and unemployment. Three Census Tracts showed the highest numbers of unemployed in 1999 – Census Tract 603.07 (162 persons), Census Tract 604.4 (161 persons), and Census Tract 602.1 (154 persons unemployed). Of these three, however, only one Census Tract (602.1) correlates with lower than average income statistics or significant numbers of households with public assistance income.

Census Tracts



AREAS OF INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN PLAN AND ZONING

Rockdale County has a system that ensures zoning will not be of a higher intensity or density than that recommended on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), unless the FLUM is amended to support the zoning district requested. As a result of careful planning and zoning in the past, Rockdale County has relatively few differences between the FLUM and zoning categories that are of significance. The differences were identified so that they might be considered “areas requiring special attention” (though not in the literal sense of DCA’s rules) in the event the county sees reason to strive for greater consistency.

There are a number of types of so-called inconsistencies possible between a FLUM and the applicable zoning districts, as described in Rockdale County’s context in the following subsections. The paragraphs that follow are not necessarily exhaustive of the types of inconsistencies, but they are the major ones to bring to the attention of planning staff, in the consultant’s opinion.

Commercial Zoning Not Recognized on the FLUM

In some cases, if not frequently, the county’s planners and/or decision makers have made a conscious decision not to recognize certain existing zoning districts on the FLUM. Consistency between the FLUM and zoning is not always desirable, if decisions made in the past can be accurately characterized as “bad land use” or “not advisable today.” For instance, there are some small parcels, in most cases isolated, which are zoned commercial but not recognized as commercial on the FLUM. Zoning for isolated existing commercial structures that are in the midst of a residential area were consciously omitted in some cases, under the theory that the commercial zoning should not be recognized on the FLUM.

Land Use Change of Higher Intensity Inherent on the FLUM

Another type of so-called “inconsistency” between the future land use map and the county’s official zoning map¹⁵ are those instances where planners and/or decision makers decided that a future office or commercial use was likely during the 20-year planning horizon. Such instances should not necessarily be considered inconsistencies that require redress, since they may merely mean that at present the market has not demanded that the zoning be changed to reflect that future land use.

In Rockdale County, there are several instances of this sort which involve office-professional land use or commercial land use. Many of these instances occur around the small neighborhood commercial nodes south of I-20. The full potential of the neighborhood nodes designated on the FLUM has not been realized, since zoning of these areas has not been changed from a residential (or other) zoning district to accommodate the future land use shown on the FLUM. This finding has important implications. First, there is indeed some commercial expansion potential within

¹⁵ In the case of this analysis, the “unofficial” (compiled in GIS) zoning map was used. To the extent the “unofficial” version may differ from the “official” version, those differences are not captured in this analysis.

the neighborhood nodes designated on the FLUM, though that potential is small in terms of total acreage. Second, there are some significant office-professional designations, assigned on the FLUM as a “transition” between the neighborhood commercial node and surrounding residential neighborhoods, that are not yet zoned Office-Institutional.

Given that the zoning to Office-Institutional has not taken place on these parcels identified as O-P on the FLUM, it may mean that there is not a market for small-scale offices in neighborhood commercial nodes. Stated differently, while office designation may make sense from the “land use transition” standpoint, the market may not necessarily support that land use. If that is the case, the office designations can remain, and the fact that the zoning has not taken place for office development is not worrisome. From another perspective, if Rockdale County decides that it would like to support more commercial uses in selected neighborhood nodes, and it confirms that neighborhood offices are not supported by the market now or will not be in the near future, these office designations could perhaps be shown as neighborhood commercial on the FLUM instead.

Special Mixed Use Area Designations on FLUM Not Yet Implemented

The FLUM contains two areas mentioned frequently in this plan update, which are designated as special mixed use areas: The Salem Road (SR 162) corridor, and the Stonecrest area. The zoning has been changed for the Salem Road corridor to implement the special mixed use area designation. In the Stonecrest area, the comprehensive plan calls for zoning changes to be consistent with the FLUM’s recommendations in these designated areas, it is just that they have not yet been made.

Industrial and Office-Distribution-Technology Parcels on FLUM Not Yet Implemented

The FLUM indicates several properties near I-20 as appropriate for industrial use that have not yet been rezoned for industrial or manufacturing uses. The county could rezone these areas on its own initiative, to comply with the FLUM, if it found that that would facilitate additional industrial/economic development. Rather than being considered an inconsistency, however, the decision not to “pre-zone” these tracts for industrial and manufacturing uses may have been made deliberately. One reason why the county would decide not to “pre-zone” industrial areas is that it has greater control during the process when rezoning is requested by a property owner, since conditions of zoning approval (such as aesthetic controls) can be imposed at that time. On the other hand, if there is a need for additional industrial land,¹⁶ pre-zoning can facilitate economic development objectives. The fact that more industrial exists on the FLUM than is zoned could be the result of two different types of decisions (or both) – one being simply that the parcel is appropriate for industrial or manufacturing use, given its surroundings; the other is that the county consciously decided to add opportunities to its industrial and manufacturing base for future economic development.

¹⁶ Based on the analysis provided for this partial plan update, it does not appear that additional industrial land needs to be zoned by Rockdale County – that observation is offered in light of the slowing or leveling off of employment in Rockdale County, the perceived existence of vacant industrial buildings, and the possible desire to intensify existing industrial and manufacturing zones.

The largest single designation in terms of land area that has not been implemented on the official zoning map is the Office-Distribution-Technology (ODT) designation on the FLUM. There is one very large area east of Conyers, north of I-20, designated ODT. As already noted, the ODT designation is intended to provide a campus-style setting for land development that would be noticeably (architecturally) different from the industry and manufacturing establishments that are characteristic of Rockdale County today. This designation may deserve additional discussion among planners and decision makers for a couple of reasons. First, there are residential subdivisions abutting the ODT area, and at least one subdivision would be entirely surrounded by ODT development if it occurs per the FLUM's recommendation. Second, the ODT designation on the FLUM comes close to and may include some flood plains to the east, and it is desirable to keep industrial development out of frequently flooded areas. If the county needs additional industrial land and it is considered viable within the long-term, the ODT designation on the FLUM may appear to be well thought out and deserve to be reconfirmed; if it is not needed for future economic development, it might be reassigned to another land use, given some concerns about compatibility with adjacent residential neighborhoods, and potential impact on flood plains, not to mention whether access for trucks to the area is or can be appropriately provided.

INTERFACE WITH THE CITY OF CONYERS

The analysis of consistency or inconsistency between the county's FLUM and zoning districts also raises another issue—compatibility or consistency among the future land use maps of Rockdale County and the City of Conyers, and the compatibility of zoning districts assigned. Due to the pattern of municipal annexation, there is a large “common” border between Conyers and unincorporated Rockdale County that weaves in and out of many areas; in the process of annexation, Conyers could elect to “upzone” land use in a way that is incompatible with existing land use in unincorporated “pockets” or “peninsulas.” However, there is no evidence in Rockdale County that this is a recurring problem. Additionally, Rockdale County could in some instances “upzone” such pockets and peninsulas under the assumption that they are urban and deserve commercial or industrial land use designations, without given much if any consideration to the consistency of land use in the City of Conyers. Similarly, however, there is no evidence of this being a problem or issue.

CHAPTER 3 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The purpose of this component of the partial update of the comprehensive plan is to identify the issues and opportunities that result from the assessment of Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) (Chapter 1) and the Areas Requiring Special Attention (Chapter 2). The issues and opportunities are divided into functional areas similar to the substantive components or elements of the comprehensive plan (housing, economic development, etc.). Attention is paid here, however, to how the various opportunities and issues interrelate with one another – cross references are made in this narrative concerning how one issue or opportunity can have an important impact on other substantive elements. As each issue or opportunity is discussed, the prospects for implementation are also explored. This narrative alludes to likely implementation strategies, but it does not definitively state what the implementation will be. In some cases, the most appropriate implementation measure is to adopt a policy statement; additional policy statements are provided in Chapter 4. Adopted implementation strategies and work program components are provided in Chapter 5 of this partial plan update.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (H-CD)

H-CD 1. Expanding the Range of Housing Options

Problem or Issue Statement. Housing in unincorporated Rockdale County is mostly detached, single-family, stick-built housing, within conventional subdivisions. Multi-family units are concentrated in Conyers, and 87 percent of housing units in unincorporated Rockdale County in 2000 were single-family. The county's zoning regulations have led to a less-diverse stock of housing that does not meet the needs of all income levels; such an observation is true not only for Rockdale County but for most if not all of the fringe suburban counties in metropolitan Atlanta. Also, Rockdale County is increasingly cognizant of its aging population, which is and will continue to demand a different sort of housing option than that which exists in unincorporated Rockdale County today.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. When housing does not match the needs of the moderate income local labor force, they must seek more affordable housing elsewhere. This has a direct impact on county-to-county commuting patterns – it is likely to increase traffic congestion. To the extent that the blue collar labor force moves out of the county, future economic development could be impacted, as the recruitment of new industry and manufacturing depend on a labor force being available.

Implementation Prospects. One could argue that Conyers, with a more urban pattern, centralized facilities, and higher densities, should continue to be the primary supplier of moderate income housing. But Conyers cannot, or should not, be expected to supply all of the affordable housing in the county. To date, the closest implementation strategy Rockdale County has put in place to address this problem or issue has been to encourage traditional neighborhood development and mixed use development in designated areas (especially the Salem Road Corridor), under the assumption or hope that such strategies will result in some additional

affordable (or at least more diverse) housing. Indeed, allowing moderate income housing in commercial zones may help to encourage additional affordable housing. While this strategy still has potential, it is largely unrealized so far.

Providing for diverse housing in redevelopment areas and mixed-use corridors remains one of the most politically acceptable implementation strategies, though it will probably fall short on its own in terms of fully addressing the problem/issue. Political limitations in the county probably dictate that additional implementation techniques are unlikely to be initiated. Some possibilities, however, include loosening up on manufacturing housing regulations (i.e., more flexible allowances), providing specifically for senior housing to meet the needs of aging baby boomers, and programs to preserve and enhance older, existing residential neighborhoods in unincorporated Rockdale County. The county's suburban character makes it unlikely to implement more effective housing affordability programs, beyond what has already been initiated, such as "inclusionary" housing, or specifically promoting "mixed income" housing.

H-CD 2. Pursuing Community Development

Problem or Issue Statement. Rockdale County also has some older or aging residential neighborhoods. As described in Chapter 2, of the 15 census tracts in Rockdale County, two stand out with regard to poverty and low incomes. Census Tract 602.1, which is in western Rockdale County abutting DeKalb County and north of Interstate 20 (with a small portion south of I-20), and 603.09, which includes most of north-central Conyers and which abuts Census Tract 602.1 to the east. The adopted comprehensive plan makes note of some other, isolated areas of housing in need of assistance or rehabilitation (e.g., Lake Rockaway Manufactured Home Park and Fieldstone Estate Subdivision).

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Care must be taken to ensure that aging or more obsolete residential neighborhoods in unincorporated Rockdale County do not experience disinvestment and blight conditions. If they do, the consequences are predictable – the units become renter occupied, owners decrease or discontinue maintenance, property values fall, and the neighborhoods become "affordable" for low and moderate income residents. While the filtering down of housing could be considered an unavoidable market process, and could be viewed as a positive in terms of providing necessary housing for the lower income segments of the community, the blighting of residential neighborhoods could have some terrible consequences. The census tracts cited above also contain the county's primary industrial and manufacturing areas – and they provide convenient housing opportunities via these older neighborhoods, if they are preserved and blighting conditions averted.

Implementation Prospects. The adopted comprehensive plan is basically silent on the issue of pursuing county community development. Community development efforts have long relied on federal assistance via the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Pursuing CDBG funds from the state is one small step that could be taken to help reverse the decline of certain residential neighborhoods and avert blighting conditions. Rigorous housing code enforcement programs can force property owners to reinvest toward the maintenance of structures that might otherwise not occur, absent public intervention.

Rockdale County can also expect that private and non-profit groups, such as community-based housing organizations, Habitat for Humanity, religious institutions, and private foundations have a role to play in community development. Rockdale County will need to monitor closely the conditions in its aging, unincorporated residential neighborhoods to see if a formal county response, in the form of a community development division or agency, is warranted. At minimum, Rockdale County should map the areas that are now or potentially in need of focused community development efforts and seek available state community development funds. At the present time, the two aforementioned census tracts should serve as the most representative example of areas with possible future needs for targeted attention.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ED-1. Pursuing Economic Development

Problem or Issue Statement. Employment in Rockdale County is not growing significantly, and the county despite formal business retention efforts has lost some of its larger employers. There are vacant commercial and industrial sites and additional capacity in existing commercial and industrial areas of the county to attain significant increases in employment. The analysis of Quality Community Objectives (see Chapter 1) reveals that jobs that should be targeted to match the needs of the resident labor force are manufacturing, finance and insurance, and construction. The adopted comprehensive plan suggests that job recruitment efforts should focus on “thinking” sectors. Specifically the plan calls on the county to focus recruitment efforts on businesses in the following fields and sectors: technology, biotechnology, clean industry, medical facilities, business and professional consulting, computer/data processing, communications, and state and federal agencies. Related to this concern is the finding that, for Rockdale County households as a whole, income levels have been declining in relation to Georgia and the Atlanta region.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Rockdale County must continue to grow its economy, since it will continue to witness considerable (if less than originally anticipated) population growth. A healthy and growing economy increases community pride and leverages additional investment. Reliance on existing industries and lower paying economic sectors will not result in increases in household incomes. If the county can target industries that closely match the needs of the resident labor force, it may have an appreciable impact on commuting patterns and at least marginally decrease traffic congestion.

Implementation Prospects. Conyers and Rockdale County have the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council, Inc., which are charged with economic development efforts. These organizations have a whole host of activities that are forging a path toward successful implementation of economic development activities. The council actively markets Conyers and Rockdale County for the purpose of attracting new businesses and industries. It is cognizant of the role that small businesses play in the local economy, and it supports entrepreneurs and the development of small businesses through financing, mentorships, business planning and technical assistance, small business incubators, incentives, and entrepreneur working groups.

One idea in particular that is on the drawing board is the proposal to expand industrial land uses eastward as a technology park emphasizing Office, Distribution, and Technology. This proposal is reflected on the future land use map. And the county has set its goals high, hoping to attract technology jobs. It also has emphasized the need to improve the aesthetics of its work places in recognizing that a more appealing built environment with quality architecture can enhance development and redevelopment prospects.

While specific strategies are best left to the professionals charged with economic development responsibilities to refine, it appears that at least two shifts in emphasis may be appropriate. First, the types of jobs sought to be recruited may be more appropriately focused on manufacturing (though it is admittedly a declining sector) and construction. It may be better for the county to target the filling of vacant industrial spaces prior to advancing a major initiative toward building new campus-style industrial complexes. If the county attempts to recruit technology industries and the labor force is focused more on “blue collar” occupations of manufacturing, production, and industry-type labor, the technology firms sought may not locate in Rockdale County despite the best efforts of economic development professionals. Of course, the county can offset that possible mismatch by initiating aggressive education and training efforts in those industries that the local resident labor force currently may lack.

While the current economic development efforts appear to be comprehensive in scope, more focused attention could be given to encourage Rockdale Hospital to become a regionally significant, sector of the county’s economy. County economic development organizations should also emphasize the county’s current assets, which include Georgia International Horse Park (1,400 acres) within Conyers. Economic development professionals should continue to pursue more efforts to increase beautification and architectural enhancement of the community, and the county could also consider the prospects of developing heritage tourism strategies.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

HP-1. Preserving Historic Resources

Problem or Issue Statement. The adopted comprehensive plan supports the county pursuing a historic preservation program. Some if not most of the historic resources have been identified. The comprehensive plan calls for historic district protection of Milstead Village, which is already recognized in the comprehensive plan as the most viable, remaining opportunity for historic preservation in unincorporated Rockdale County. The assessment of Quality Community Objectives (Chapter 1) reveals that this is one of the few QCOs for which Rockdale County does not receive a full and completely positive assessment.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. If Rockdale County loses more of its historic resources, it at the same time loses some of its most significant cultural heritage. The significant potential role of heritage tourism may deserve a second look in terms of the county’s economic development strategies. The county has thus far not taken formal initiatives to protect rural character and quality of life, and protecting remaining historic resources could be a logical first step.

Implementation Prospects. To date, Rockdale County has not fully implemented the adopted programs and recommendations of the comprehensive plan with regard to historic preservation. Implementation opportunities suggested in the adopted comprehensive plan include: completing (or updating) a historic resources inventory; adopting ordinances that protect historic resources, including Milstead; and developing an educational map and exhibit that highlights historic resources in the County. There is also an opportunity to encourage the listing of eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places, which could also stimulate local interest and encourage heritage tourism. These tasks interrelate, importantly, to economic development and sense of place objectives.

NATURAL RESOURCES

NR-1. Protecting the “303(d)” List of Impaired Waters

Problem or Issue Statement. Several streams and rivers in Rockdale County are identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “not supporting” or “partially supporting” the Clean Water Act mandate of being “fishable or swimmable” (Comprehensive Plan, p. IV-7; see Figure IV-5 on p. IV-9 for complete listing). A number of mandates are given by the federal and state governments to reverse the degradation of streams and rivers.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. The federal and state governments mandate that surface water quality be maintained and improved where it is degraded. Water quality maintenance is important for purposes of drinking water, as well as the maintenance of diverse species habitat.

Implementation Prospects. Rockdale County considers the rivers and streams on the “303(d) list” as areas requiring special attention (see Chapter 2). Federal and state regulations will continue to establish the framework for responding to the problem of degrading water quality in streams and rivers. Local regulatory programs in Rockdale County will follow suit. The county has done virtually everything it has been required to do with regard to environmental protection, including adoption of all mandatory model ordinances of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District. One of the few tasks that might address this problem/issue is to increasingly emphasize “Low Impact Development Practices and Guidelines” in future regulatory efforts.¹⁷

NR-2. Protecting and Capitalizing on Rock Outcroppings

Problem or Issue Statement. Rockdale County has mapped existing rock outcroppings as an area requiring special attention (See Chapter 2).

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Rock outcroppings present difficulties with regard to development. Of equal if not greater importance, most of the native species of plants and animals that are considered endangered, threatened, rare or unusual (i.e., designated as

¹⁷ For instance, see Richard Krier with Julie Westerlund, “The Art of Planning and Low Impact Development to Reduce Pollution and Improve Sustainable Neighborhood Character.” *Practicing Planner*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2007).

“protected species” make their homes on granite outcroppings common within the County (p. IV-14 comprehensive plan). Furthermore, the granite rock outcroppings are unique to the county, and the integration of them into conservation plans could contribute significantly to enhancing the county’s unique character and distinctiveness of place.

Implementation Prospects. Mapping the rock outcrops is a first step that has been accomplished in this partial update of the comprehensive plan. Next, Rockdale County must decide how it will use that inventory.

Generally, the map of rock outcrops could be used when applications for new subdivisions and land developments are received, with attention to protecting significant outcrop areas where possible. They can also be targeted for conservation in conservation subdivision plans, and they could also be considered in terms of delineating the locations of greenway trails (e.g., winding through boulder fields). Rockdale County could elect to promote an architectural theme for the more rural areas (where the preponderance of rock outcroppings exist) that involves retention and selective moving and placement of rocks at the entrances of subdivisions.



Use of Rock as a Defining Feature

NR-3. Protecting Scenic Views

Problem or Issue Statement. The county has not integrated rural scenic viewshed protection into its regulations or site plan approval processes. There is an opportunity for Rockdale County to better protect its rural character, which includes views of Stone Mountain, views of unspoiled streams and rivers, pastoral settings, rock outcroppings, horse farms, conservation areas, and rural historic resources. This opportunity correlates closely with the discussion of protecting rock outcroppings, historic preservation, and agricultural and conservation areas.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. The quality of life and sense of place in Rockdale County’s more outlying areas is not guaranteed to be maintained, without specific efforts directed at preserving rural scenic views. The private market, left to its own doings, does not have enough incentive to take measures that protect scenic views. Maintaining rural character makes Rockdale County a more viable place to attract corporate executives seeking unspoiled environments, and therefore, addressing this need could also contribute to the advancement of economic development objectives.

Implementation Prospects. To some extent, the promotion of conservation subdivisions in Rockdale County offers one way to preserve scenic views. Such conservation subdivisions

are only encouraged, however, and therefore views of rural scenes are possibly protected by them but such protection is not guaranteed. One view is that the county must learn more about what it has by way of rural scenic views, and articulate (based on some scientific or professionally based study) what exactly it wants to preserve. There may be a constituency of existing residents, living in rural areas that want the county to take stronger steps toward protecting the rural quality of place that is evident in Rockdale County. It may be that Rockdale County could support an effort to “maintain its rural place” that is equal to its effort to revitalize suburban and urban places. If so, this could lead to a thorough inventory of remaining rural scenic views, special overlay guidelines or regulations, and/or mandatory provisions for conservation subdivisions for properties containing rural scenic views.

LAND USE

LU-1. Monitoring Implementation of Salem Road (SR 162) Corridor Overlay

Problem or Issue Statement. The county’s existing plans and regulations already encourage and provide for the refurbishment or redevelopment of older commercial structures in the Salem Road corridor, and the development of new mixed-use communities there.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. The county has rewritten its regulations to provide for its intended development pattern in the Salem Road corridor. It has a lot riding on the success of this land use strategy. Success can lead to implementation in other parts of the county with similar or evolving conditions. Failure of this regulatory experiment could have an unintentional chilling effect on other special mixed use area planning efforts that have already been initiated. The county must take a proactive role in seeing that implementation of redevelopment in the Salem Road corridor actually occurs as intended.

Implementation Prospects. The planning staff of Rockdale County is best positioned to report on development projects and ongoing prospects that are being discussed with developers. During that process, the county is likely to become more aware of any limitations, complications, or problems associated with the regulatory scheme. Also, the Economic Development Council has a major stake in the success of redevelopment efforts in the target area of Salem Road, and it should be called upon to help facilitate redevelopment deals that will stimulate other private market reinvestment.

LU-2. Completing Regulations and Guidelines for the Stonecrest Area

Problem or Issue Statement. The county has identified the Stonecrest area as a major opportunity for smart development, capitalizing on its proximity to Stonecrest Mall in DeKalb County. A comprehensive approach to land use, infrastructure, and design is sought for this area.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. The comprehensive plan specifically calls for this action. It is strategically important from the economic development perspective, as it is in this area where Rockdale County may be able to introduce new development types such as “Class A” office buildings. Development of the area as envisioned promises at least some prospects for a more diverse mix of housing in the unincorporated area.

Implementation Prospects. The necessary “study” for putting into place what the county desires in this area has already been completed, and the plan supports, as an implementation measure, the adoption of regulations and guidelines to further the vision for the Stonecrest area. All that is left is to actually implement the study’s recommendations. Rockdale County has pursued implementation but ran into obstacles including some resistance from property owners in the area. Negotiations and additional efforts should continue during the short-term planning horizon.

LU-3. Promoting More Neighborhood Commercial Land Use and Zoning

Problem or Issue Statement. Rockdale County’s future land use map promotes, and the existing land use pattern to some extent reflects, a decentralized pattern of small-scale retail and office “nodes” and selected intersections in the more rural parts of southern Rockdale County. An analysis of zoning in relation to the future land use map in these neighborhood commercial nodes (see Chapter 2) reveals there is unutilized potential to upzone properties to commercial zoning. In addition, many of these neighborhood nodes are partially designated for office, rather than retail use, partly for reasons of ensuring a transition in land use from commercial to residential uses.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. If existing or future conditions do not support office uses within decentralized neighborhood nodes as shown on the future land use map, they are not likely to be developed for the intended purpose. If neighborhood residents have additional opportunities for convenience shopping near their neighborhoods, the vehicle miles they travel and the vehicle trip lengths they make can be reduced. The reliance upon the automobile, and sharply increasing prices for gasoline, make the implementation of this opportunity exponentially important. Providing more public articulation of what Rockdale County wants these neighborhood commercial nodes to include (and look like) can also contribute to the objectives of maintaining the rural character of place in unincorporated Rockdale County.

Implementation Prospects. As a part of the work program for this partial plan update, (Chapter 2), specific properties have been identified within existing commercial nodes that have opportunities for upzoning office-designated properties. Consideration could be given to developing design prototypes for these neighborhood commercial nodes, as well as additional regulations that define sign allowances, maximum building footprints and floor-area ratios, building placement, and other considerations that will help tie this objective to objectives for maintaining the special quality of rural place in unincorporated Rockdale County.

LU-4. Identifying and Protecting Agricultural Areas

Problem or Issue Statement. Agricultural protection does not have any significant place among Rockdale County’s land use policies. The county does not currently have programs in place, other than the preferential tax assessment program, to maintain or increase the number of active agricultural operations and farms. Rockdale County has included a map of agricultural conservation easements in its analysis of areas requiring special attention (see Chapter 2). The

overall vision for Rockdale County, given its metro-Atlanta location, is more focused on rural residence than on agriculture. Nonetheless, the comprehensive plan reveals that these areas are important to the overall rural character and quality of place of unincorporated Rockdale County.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Agricultural operations could eventually vanish altogether from Rockdale County. Existing conservation easements are not necessarily a permanent form of protection – as they can be revoked at some point. The loss of agriculture would work against objectives of preserving rural character and rural scenic views. Such areas may also hold a key to any heritage tourism efforts. And agriculture should not be overlooked as one component of a balanced economic development strategy.

Implementation Prospects. It is probably going to be difficult for the county at this point to emphasize agricultural and the preservation of existing, active agricultural operations and farms. To the extent that Rockdale County’s planning commissioners and elected officials buy into the concept that more should be done to retain rural character, then there is more the county could do to recognize and enhance prospects that agricultural uses remain viable and conservation easements remain in place. A positive first step has been made in mapping these areas in the comprehensive plan (see Chapter 2). Implementation of agricultural preservation would require a significant reconsideration of the county’s land use regulations. This problem/issue correlates with efforts to protect and enhance the rural character of unincorporated Rockdale County.

LU-5. Simplifying Land Use and Zoning Categories

Problem or Issue Statement. Rockdale County has comprehensively revised its land use and land development regulations, to the point that they represent modernized, efficient, and professionally desired techniques to achieve their land use objectives. While they are successful, there is some complexity to them that may be unnecessary or avoidable. For instance, the county has some overlapping categories with regard to watershed protection and more than one option for conservation subdivision development that could benefit from simplification and/or consolidation. The county’s future land use map has a large number of categories that increases its complexity. Some of the county’s residential zoning districts are strikingly similar, and efforts to integrate new zoning districts to implement the Salem Road Corridor Overlay have contributed to that duplicity and complexity. As additional regulations are added, the complexity of the regulatory system increases remarkably.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Keeping regulations simple, or at least avoiding overlapping and duplicative land use categories or zoning districts, can go a long way toward public understanding of county land use regulations.

Implementation Prospects. Since the county recently overhauled its zoning regulations, there does not appear to be a need or desire at this time to undertake significant land use code revisions. However, as amendments are made to implement other recommendations of this comprehensive plan, there are opportunities to consider streamlining through consolidations of land use categories. And, no zoning code or development ordinance should be relied upon for more than five years or so without considering major amendments. Therefore, it may very well

be advisable, in the longer if not short-term, to adopt amendments to its zoning regulations that further the objectives of simplicity and reducing duplicity.

It is noted here that Rockdale County made minor amendments to its adopted future land use map as a part of this partial plan update. The amended future land use map is printed in large-page format and is attached to this document.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

CF-1. Completing and Adopting the Water and Sewer Master Plan

Problem or Issue Statement. The county for some time now has been engaged in an effort to update and revise its master plan for water and sewer infrastructure.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Accommodating population growth and putting the necessary infrastructure in place to support economic development strategies relies in large part on planning for long-range needs and capital improvement programs to systematically provide key facilities such as water and sanitary sewer.

Implementation Prospects. All that is left to do is complete and adopt the master plan, but funding issues still remain. The emphasis of the master plan should be on meeting the consent order from the Environmental Protection Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to take three of these systems off-line. Also, the master plan should call for the implementation of effective water conservation measures and investigate the feasibility of installing grey water (water reuse) systems.

CF-2. Constructing a 9th Fire Station

Problem or Issue Statement. The county has identified the need for a ninth fire station to serve southern Rockdale County.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Fire suppression is key public safety objective of the county, and one additional fire station needs to be added as the population increases. Fire station access, when improved, helps to reduce fire insurance (“ISO”) ratings. And fire stations provide first-responder emergency medical service, thereby becoming doubly important in terms of protecting against loss of life as well as property due to fire or medical conditions.

Implementation Prospects. Implementation is virtually assured, since Rockdale County has adopted a development impact fee program. When a specific project is identified, it will be added to the schedule of improvements in the capital improvements element of the comprehensive plan, if it has not been so identified already.

CF-3. Planning for Open Space and Greenways

Problem or Issue Statement. There was a Master Trails Plan for Rockdale County prepared in 1999 which called for an extensive system of trails which would serve bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian users (Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 6). However, there appears to be no reference that the 1999 plan was adopted, and the 2006 master plan for parks and recreation did not adequately address the need to plan and develop greenways and trails. It specifically called for further study.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Planning for trails and greenways has widespread community support, and the plan should emphasize and respond to the current need for 34 miles of trails. It has many correlations with other strategies of the comprehensive plan, especially the protection and enhancement of rural resources such as rock outcrops and historic preservation. More access by residents also has transportation benefits, including reduced reliance on the automobile.

Implementation Prospects. Implementation is highly probable, given public support, and an adopted reference in the park and recreation master plan to complete this planning component. And such a plan can be funded at least in part with development impact fee proceeds. As noted below, under intergovernmental coordination, there is an intergovernmental dimension needed to this plan; it should be undertaken jointly with the City of Conyers.

DESIGN AND SENSE OF PLACE

D-1. Ensuring a Sense of Place

Problem or Issue Statement. There are several references in the Rockdale County Comprehensive Plan regarding the lack of any “distinctions” or character. The adopted comprehensive plan clearly recognizes that there is more that Rockdale County could do in terms of promoting a more aesthetically pleasing environment in its urban and suburban areas, and in rural areas. There are multiple references in the plan to establish aesthetic regulations that address compatible new site and building development.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Greater attention to design has multiple benefits. A more attractive place generates community pride. Economic development prospects are enhanced for places with a quality built environment versus those that have visual clutter and a lack of attention to quality of architecture.

Implementation Prospects. The comprehensive plan already makes reference to several suggestions that would help improve the suburban and urban parts of unincorporated Rockdale County. Regulations for special mixed use areas, such as the Salem Road Corridor Overlay, hold promise in that regard. There is less confidence, however, that visual quality will be preserved and enhanced in the rural parts of the county. Many other implementation strategies have been identified in this partial update which can contribute to that end, including: prototype designs for neighborhood commercial nodes, scenic viewshed mapping (and possible regulation), protection

of rock outcrops, promotion of conservation subdivisions (if not requiring them in certain areas), historic districts, and other measures. This point underscores the interrelatedness of these programs and emphasizes that a comprehensive approach to preserving rural character is needed, on a scale the same as the county has committed to regarding suburban and urban revitalization.

Furthermore, some of these implementation measures need to be jointly undertaken by Rockdale County and the City of Conyers. As one example, the comprehensive plan calls for the county to with the City of Conyers to develop architectural and signage guidelines for the I-20 corridor. There is also a desire of the Chamber of Commerce to embark on an “Interstate Gateway Initiative,” which would seek to beautify Highway 138 from Honey Creek to the Georgia International Horse Park via streetscaping and reconstruction landscaping.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

IC-1. Coordinating Land Use Planning

Problem or Issue Statement. One concern raised in the discussion of areas requiring special attention is the compatibility or consistency among the future land use maps of Rockdale County and the City of Conyers, and the compatibility of zoning districts assigned. This problem/issue increases in significance as Conyers continues to annex property, especially if “upzoning” of land use designations previously adopted by Rockdale County takes place.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. The potential for inconsistencies, incompatibilities, and conflicts between city and county land use plans could be significant, especially as annexations by Conyers continue, although there is no evidence of major inconsistencies at this point. Annexation also offers potential to disrupt existing service delivery arrangements, though most of the services provided by Conyers and Rockdale County have already been consolidated.

Implementation Prospects. Rockdale County has already put into place monthly coordination meetings which might be used as a forum to begin addressing this problem/issue. Update of *Comprehensive Service Delivery Strategy for the City of Conyers and Rockdale County* is a necessary period task that helps to ensure conflicts will not occur among neighboring land use patterns and service provision arrangements. Furthermore, strong consideration should be given to the city and county jointly preparing a study establishing a Conyers growth area or annexation plan, or annexation sphere of influence, within which annexation would eventually occur but outside of which there would be no intent on the part of the municipality to annex. Additionally, such an area could be assured land use compatibility through an urban growth management agreement between the city and county.

IC-2. Coordinating Parks and Recreation Master Planning

Problem or Issue Statement. Community participation during the comprehensive planning process in 2003 revealed the opportunity for Conyers and Rockdale County to provide a greenway linking Randy Poynter Lake (county owned) with the International Horse Park (city owned) (p. 1-4, Comprehensive Plan).

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Given the current configuration of the City limits and prospects for countywide connectivity, it is important that both the city and county jointly plan and provide trails and greenways that link between each others' jurisdictions.

Implementation Prospects. The prospects for jointly planning of greenways and trails is very good, given that the county's comprehensive plan already calls for this task to be undertaken. The county's portion of funding might involve use of impact fee proceeds since planning is an eligible expenditure. The county should take the lead and ask for the city to contribute a share (to be equitably determined) of the cost of preparing this component of the recreation and parks master plan.

IC-3. Continuing the Functional Consolidation of Services

Problem or Issue Statement. The assessment of Quality Community Objectives (Chapter 1) contains an analysis of how service responsibilities are distributed between Rockdale County and Conyers. Though much functional consolidation of facilities and services has already occurred, there are other, additional opportunities that could be explored.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. It is in the best interests of city and county residents to consider different arrangements for delivering services and providing facilities, if they are more efficiently provided by one rather than two service or facility providers. Continued functional consolidation of facilities and services is a more feasible alternative to full-scale consolidation of city and county governments, something that most cities including Conyers are most apt to question or oppose altogether.

Implementation Prospects. The implementation prospects are very good, as Conyers and Rockdale County have had a history of coordinating services and the joint provision of many different facilities and services. Such prospects are easier in Rockdale County than elsewhere because the county is small geographically, and because there is only one municipality in the county.

TRANSPORTATION

T-1. Battling the Over-reliance on the Automobile

Problem or Issue Statement. Rockdale County's expansive low density residential areas means that residents are over-reliant on their automobiles for mobility. The pattern of development also deters walking and bicycle trips. There is no public transit available.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. The operation of automobiles is becoming more expensive with rapidly increasing gas prices. Continued auto use provides adverse impacts on air quality. Quality of life and the public health of individuals are enhanced when walking and biking opportunities are provided. Public transit provides mobility for those who cannot afford a private vehicle.

Implementation Prospects. There are some incremental steps the county can take to begin reducing its over-reliance on the automobile. Prospects for transit, other than regional bus transit to DeKalb County and other parts of metro Atlanta, are reasonably good but take some time to plan, negotiate with service providers, and implement. Changes to land use, some already underway such as promoting redevelopment of mixed use centers and possibly greater allowance within or expansion of neighborhood commercial nodes, may result in some marginal improvements. In the end, market conditions such as the price of gasoline are likely to hold greater sway than public intervention.

T-2. Improving Conditions on Congested Arterials

Problem or Issue Statement. Like other counties in the metro Atlanta area, Rockdale County's arterial system is at capacity in many places.

Rationale for Addressing the Problem or Issue. Traffic congestion leads to waste of time and resources and is expensive. It frustrates people and can even lead to road rage. Congested communities begin to get impacted in terms of decisions on whether to locate in the community; businesses and economic development recruitment efforts can suffer in cases of severe traffic congestion.

Implementation Prospects. The planning and organizational structure for regional transportation planning is in place to set the framework for improvements to the arterial and collector road system in Conyers and Rockdale County. There is not enough money regionally to implement all road improvements needed. While some incremental improvements can be made, through road widening, intersection improvements, provision of public transit, and the implementation of transportation demand strategies and other techniques, congestion is largely a fact of life that the county and city will only be able to partially mitigate.

CHAPTER 4 POLICIES

The partial update of the comprehensive plan is intended to provide a guide to everyday decision-making for use by local government officials and other community leaders. The requirements for partial plan updates specify that the local government will include any policies the local government will adopt to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with addressing the identified Issues and Opportunities. The state's standards also suggest that local governments refer to recommended policies listed in the State Planning Recommendations for suggestions.

Rockdale County's adopted comprehensive plan provides "goals" and bulleted lists of policy or action statements under each of those goals. This update to the comprehensive plan does nothing to disturb or otherwise modify those goals and policy statements – they are not revised by this document. In many cases those goal statements are adequate, as Chapter 1 (Assessment of Quality Community Objectives) reveals. As directed by the state's requirements for partial updates of local comprehensive plans, the policies listed here are drawn directly from the analysis of Quality Community Objectives (Chapter 1), the Assessment of Areas Requiring Special Attention (Chapter 2), and the Issues and Opportunities (Chapter 3) which themselves are derived from the first two chapters of this Partial Plan Update.

In addition to the goals and policy statements in the adopted comprehensive plan, Rockdale County hereby adopts the following policies:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

1. Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities (Quality Community Objective, Growth Preparedness).
2. Appropriate Business Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities (Quality Community Objective, Appropriate Business).
3. Employment Options Objective: A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce (Quality Community Objective, Employment Options).
4. Educational Opportunities Objective: Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their

job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions (Quality Community Objective, Educational Opportunities).

5. Continue to attract additional employers to Rockdale County.
6. Work with the Economic Development Council, Inc. to facilitate redevelopment projects.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

1. Heritage Preservation Objective: The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character (Quality Community Objective, Heritage Preservation).
2. Take additional measures as appropriate to preserve historic resources in Rockdale County.
3. Encourage owners to list eligible properties on the National Register of Historic Places.
4. Environmental Protection Objective: Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved (Quality Community Objective, Environmental Protection).
5. Open Space Preservation Objective: New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors (Quality Community Objective, Open Space Preservation).
6. Prepare, adopt, and implement a greenway master plan.
7. Pursue additional federal and state funding for acquisition of green spaces and open spaces.
8. Encourage the protection and preservation of rural scenic views, through conservation subdivision planning and other means as appropriate.
9. Use the map of rock outcrops, provided in this plan update, in the development review process, and encourage the retention of rock outcrops in conservation subdivisions.
10. Emphasize "low impact" development to improve stormwater management practices in land development.

11. Promote sustainable and energy-efficient development (2006 Regional Development Plan Policy #10).

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Housing Opportunities Objective: Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (Quality Community Objective, Housing Opportunities).
2. Encourage a variety of home styles, densities and price ranges in locations that are accessible to jobs and services to ensure housing for individuals and families of all incomes and age groups (2006 Regional Development Plan Policy #8).
3. Traditional Neighborhood Objective: Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity (Quality Community Objective, Traditional Neighborhood).
4. Facilitate the provision of moderate income housing, through private or public means, or both. Encourage the creation of, and cooperate with, community-based housing organizations in the pursuit of more affordable workforce housing.
5. Monitor housing and community conditions in Census Tracts 602.1 and 603.09, to avoid blighting influences, and declines in property values. Target housing code enforcement and community development block grant funds, where available, in these areas.

LAND USE

1. Infill Development Objective: Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community (Quality Community Objective, Infill Development).
2. Sense of Place Objective: Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment (Quality Community Objective, Sense of Place).
3. Evaluate the workings of the Salem Road (SR 162) Corridor Overlay District and modify regulations as needed to improve prospects for implementation on the ground.
4. Develop a design and land use prototype for neighborhood commercial centers in rural parts of the county.

5. Coordinate with the City of Conyers in the implementation of the ACTIPS (Activity Center/Town Center Investment Policy Strategy) (now Livable Centers Initiative) plan prepared for the City of Conyers in 2001.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

1. Pursue additional measures for water conservation.
2. Coordinate with the Water and Sewer Authority in the preparation, adoption, and implementation of a master plan for water and sewer.
3. Comply with the Consent Order of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to take community wastewater systems off line.
4. Complete the planned expansion of the sewage treatment plant.
5. Continue to explore potential for implementing a water reuse system.
6. Provide libraries at the level of service standard adopted in the capital improvements element of the comprehensive plan, including additional facilities as growth occurs.
7. Focus park capital improvements on eliminating or reducing the current deficit in level of service for trails.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Transportation Alternatives Objective: Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged (Quality Community Objective, Transportation Alternatives).
2. Strive for consistency with the Atlanta Regional Commission's Atlanta Region Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan, which includes recommended policies for local governments that, when implemented, can increase mobility, safety, accessibility, and connectivity region wide for bicyclists and pedestrians.
3. Consider ways to expand express bus service to best serve the county's residents.
4. Continue to monitor, and participate, in efforts to provide commuter rail through Conyers and Rockdale County.
5. Monitor efforts to achieve a multi-modal transportation system "on the ground."

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

1. Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics (Quality Community Objective, Regional Identity).
2. Regional Cooperation Objective: Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to the success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources (Quality Community Objective, Regional Cooperation).
3. Regional Solutions Objective: Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer (Quality Community Objective, Regional Solutions).
4. Coordinate local policies and regulations to support regional policies (2006 Regional Development Plan Policy #17). Ensure that goals and implementation programs of the Comprehensive Plan are consistent with adopted coordination mechanisms and consistent with applicable Regional and State programs.
5. Continue the Intergovernmental Planning Committee and seek its guidance as to ways to coordinate transportation, land use, and facility and service decisions among adjacent local governments.
6. Update the county’s Service Delivery Strategy.
7. Periodically assess existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as appropriate.
8. Share resources and information with all government entities.
9. Cooperate with the City of Conyers in terms of planning and providing trail systems.
10. Cooperate with Conyers in the development of an annexation plan or designation of an annexation sphere of influence.
11. Resolve conflicts with other local governments through established mediation processes or other informal or formal means.

CHAPTER 5 SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM

Table 8 provides the specific actions needed to implement Rockdale County's Comprehensive Plan, including the implementation measures called for in this Partial Plan Update. The work program includes those implementation activities that are called for in prior chapters of this Partial Plan Update, but the work program also incorporates items that have not been completed from the previously adopted work program and items suggested by the Department of Public Services and Engineering.

Table 8
Short-Term Work Program
Rockdale County, 2009-2013

Description	Year(s) To Be Implemented	Estimated Cost (\$)	Responsible Party	Possible Funding Sources
NATURAL RESOURCES				
Revise regulations as necessary to protect integrity of "303(d)" List of Impaired Waters	2009 - 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
Conduct an inventory and study of rural scenic views in Rockdale County	2010	\$50,000 (Consultant)	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Operating Budget
HISTORIC RESOURCES				
Consider adoption of ordinances protecting historic resources, including Milstead Village	2009 - 2011	\$15,000 (Consultant)	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Operating Budget
Add eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places	2009-2013	\$2,500 per nomination	Historic Society; consultant	Operating Budget
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES – WATER AND SEWER				
Comply with Consent Order to take Community Wastewater Systems Off-line	2009 - 2011	Unknown	Water Resources and Finance Dept.	Local (Water and Sewer Fund)
Prepare and adopt a new Water and Sewer Master Plan (including water conservation)	2008-2009	\$325,000 (Consultant)	Water Resources and Finance Dept.	Local (Water and Sewer Fund)
Expand water and sewer line coverage in service areas per master plan	2010-2013	Per master plan	Water Resources and Finance Dept.	Local (Water and Sewer Fund)
Implement a septic tank inspections program	Ongoing	NA	State Environmental Health	Operating Budget
Construct new Wastewater Treatment Plant in southern Rockdale County	2008- 2020	\$60,000,000	Water Resources and Finance Dept.	Local (Water and Sewer Fund)
Investigate feasibility/potential of implementing a water reuse (gray water) system	2009 - 2012	Unknown	Water Resources and Finance Dept.	Local (Water and Sewer Fund)
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES – SOLID WASTE AND STORMWATER				
Implement and update as required the county's solid waste management plan	2009 -- 2013	NA	Public Works Dept.	Staff Function or Consultant
Construct new South Rockdale Recycling Center facility	2010	\$76,000	Public Works Dept.	\$46,000 GEFA, \$30,000 Local
Regional Retention Pond	2002 - 2010	\$4,900,000	EPA, VA HUD	Congressional Appropriations; County Capital Fund
Stormwater Infrastructure throughout Rockdale County	2002 - 2020	\$1,500,000 annually	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Local (Stormwater Utility)
Prepare and implement guidelines or regulations for low impact development	2009 - 2010	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function

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Description	Year(s) To Be Implemented	Estimated Cost (\$)	Responsible Party	Possible Funding Sources
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES – PARKS AND RECREATION				
Georgia Veterans Memorial Park at Black Shoals Park	2002 - 2010	\$10,000,000	Board of Commissioners; VA HUD	VA HUD, Local Funds
Black Shoals Park (phase II) improvements	2002 - 2010	\$500,000	Board of Commissioners	Local Funds
JP Carr Community Center; renovation and expansion of existing West Avenue facility	2002 - 2009	\$5,000,000	Board of Commissioners	County Capital Fund
Parker Road recreation facility	2004 - 2012	\$10,000,000	Board of Commissioners	County Capital Fund
Prepare and adopt Greenway Master Plan as component to Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan	2009 - 2011	\$150,000	Board of Commissioners	County Operating Budget; Conyers
Pursue additional federal and state funding for open space acquisition and park and greenway improvements	2009 - 2013	NA	Board of Commissioners	(Staff Function)
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES – PUBLIC SAFETY				
Construct 200-400 bed addition to Rockdale County Jail	2004 - 2009	\$16,000,000	Board of Commissioners	County Capital Fund
Construct New Fire Station #8 near Klondike Road and McDaniel Mill Road in southern Rockdale County	2008 - 2009	\$2,000,000	Board of Commissioners	County Capital Fund
Construct New Fire Station #9 in southern Rockdale County	2010 - 2013	\$2,500,000	Board of Commissioners	County Capital Fund
Construct new 200 space parking deck for Rockdale County Courthouse Complex	Long Range	\$3,200,000	Board of Commissioners and City of Conyers	County and City Capital Funds
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES – OTHER				
Annually Update Capital Improvements Element (CIE) for impact fees	2009 - 2013	\$0 - \$10,000	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Operating Budget or Impact Fees
Plan, Design, and Construct Library Improvements per CIE	2009-2013	Per CIE	Board of Commissioners	County Capital Fund
URBAN DESIGN AND AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT				
SR 138 Beautification and Economic Initiative	2004 - 2010	\$1,000,000	Board of Commissioners	Congressional Appropriations; County Capital Fund
Countywide Beautification Initiative	2009 - 2013	\$3,000,000	Board of Commissioners	HOST
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT				
Attract desirable businesses and industries to Rockdale County through active recruitment efforts and business assistance programs	2009-2013	NA	BOC; Chamber; Economic Development Council, Inc.	Operating Budget (Staff Function)
Maintain an inventory of vacant industrial and commercial building spaces and market vacant spaces to new users	2009-2013	NA	Economic Development Council, Inc.	Council Operating Budget
Formalize more detailed strategies for the redevelopment of aging and obsolete commercial strip centers	2009-2013	NA	BOC; Chamber; Economic Development Council, Inc.	Operating Budget (Staff Function)

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Description	Year(s) To Be Implemented	Estimated Cost (\$)	Responsible Party	Possible Funding Sources
Continue pursuit of a new technology park area emphasizes office-distribution-technology	2009-2013	NA	BOC; Chamber; Economic Development Council, Inc.	Operating Budget (Staff Function)
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT				
Monitor housing and neighborhood conditions in Census Tracts 602.1 and 603.09; map areas where blighting conditions or disinvestment within neighborhoods is occurring	2011; 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
Apply for Community Development Block Funds (CDBG) for improvement of low- and moderate income areas	2009 - 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
Evaluate the need and if necessary implement housing code enforcement programs targeted in Census Tracts 602.1 and 603.09	2009 - 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
LAND USE				
Annually update future land use plan map	2009 - 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
Implement the Stonecrest Mall Area Study	2009-2010	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Operating Budget (Staff Function)
Evaluate the workings of the Salem Road (SR 162) Corridor Overlay District; amend regulations as necessary	2009 - 2010	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
Prepare prototype design and use plan for neighborhood commercial development in rural Rockdale County; revise neighborhood commercial zoning district(s) as necessary	2009 - 2011	\$35,000 (Consultant)	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Operating Budget
Prepare New Comprehensive Plan	By Recertification Deadline	\$300,000 (Consultant)	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Operating Budget
Prepare amendments to land use regulations after five year comprehensive review	2013 or Long Range	Unknown	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function or Consultant
TRANSPORTATION				
Prepare five-year update of Comprehensive Transportation Plan	2009	\$300,000 (Consultant)	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Operating Budget
Complete regional and local road and intersection improvements per Comprehensive Transportation Plan and Regional Plans	2009 - 2013	Per Adopted Plans	Board of Commissioners	Federal, State, and Local Funding Sources Per Adopted Plans
Continue to monitor studies of the Georgia Department of Transportation with regard to implementing commuter rail	2009 - 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
Continue to monitor achievement of multi-modal transportation improvements on the ground	2009 - 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION				
Continue to participate in the Intergovernmental Planning Committee	2009 - 2013	NA	Dept. of Public Services and Engineering	Staff Function
Cooperate with Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) to improve or expand express bus service	2009 - 2013	NA	Board of Commissioners	Staff Function

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Description	Year(s) To Be Implemented	Estimated Cost (\$)	Responsible Party	Possible Funding Sources
Monitor plan amendment efforts and continue to comply with all mandates of the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District	2009 - 2013	Unknown	Board of Commissioners	Staff Function
Work with City of Conyers to agree upon a future annexation plan or sphere of influence for the City of Conyers	2009 - 2010	NA	Board of Commissioners	Staff Function
Update Rockdale County Service Delivery Strategy	2009 - 2013	Unknown	Board of Commissioners	Staff Function

Appendix Short-Term Work Program for Transportation Projects

The following Short-Term Work Program for transportation shows those projects adopted by the Rockdale County Board of Commissioners and approved by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority and Atlanta Regional Commission in 2008. This list may be amended and/or superseded by projects in the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, upon its revision, in the future.

Transportation Activity	Years	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
RO 015D: Parker Road from Flat Shoals Road to Culpepper Drive; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2002 ROW 2002 CST 2008	Rockdale County, GRTA	\$7,295,732 (\$3,302,732 Local, \$3,993,000 Q24)	Local and Q24- Surface Transportation Program
RO 015E: Parker Road, Phase III from Flat Shoals Road to SR 20; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2003 ROW 2008 CST 2009	Rockdale County, GRTA	\$7,473,000 (\$2,705,000 Local, \$4,768,000 GRTA)	Local, GRTA
RO 017A: Klondike Rd From Smyrna Rd to Johnson Spur; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE Auth ROW Auth CST 2010	Rockdale County	\$3,850,000 (\$1,050,000 Local, \$2,800,000 State)	Local, State
RO 023: Smyrna Rd from Klondike Rd to Iris Dr; add curb and gutter to roadway.	PE 2010 ROW 2011h CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$3,850,000 (\$1,990,000 Local, \$1,860,000 State)	Local, State
RO 025C: Flat Shoals Road from Salem Road to Old Salem Road; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 1996, ROW 2002, CST 2014	Rockdale County	\$9,511,500 (\$1,150,000 Local, \$8,361,500 Q23)	Local and Q23- Surface Transportation Program
RO 028: Metro Arterial Connector – SR 20 (McDonough Hwy) from SR 212 to Honey Creek Road; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2003 ROW 2014 CST 2014	GDOT	\$31,208,000	Federal, State
RO 034: Old Covington Hwy from Green St to SR 138; widening from 2 to 3 lanes.	PE 2004 ROW 2007 CST 2009	Rockdale County, GRTA	\$4,011,200 (\$3,638,600 GRTA, \$372,600 Local)	Local, GRTA
RO 138A: SR 138 from East Fairview Rd to Ebenezer Rd; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2014 ROW 2014 CST 2021	GDOT	\$28,391,800	Federal, State
RO 138B: SR 138 from Ebenezer Rd to Parker Rd; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2007 ROW 2009 CST 2014	GDOT	\$1,026,000	Federal, State
RO 138C: Old Salem Road Relocation from I-20E at SR 138/20; new alignment 4-lane urban arterial.	PE 2002 ROW 2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$33,790,000 (\$30,000,000 Q05 & GDOT; \$2,160,325 Local)	Local, State Q05- National Highway System
RO 138D: SR 138/20 from just north of I-20 to Sigman Road; widening from 4 to 6 lanes.	PE Auth ROW Auth CST 2006	GDOT	\$23,106,000	Federal, State Q05- National Highway System
RO 138F: Common Sect. Beautification Initiative; add landscape and streetscape.	PE 2006 ROW 2007 CST 2008	Rockdale County	\$1,124,050 \$199,250 PE \$1,000,000 CST	Federal Designated

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Transportation Activity	Years	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
RO 206: SR 162-Salem Rd from Flat Shoals Rd to Brown Bridge Rd (Newton); widening from 2 to 6 lanes.	PE 2004 ROW 2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$48,850,000 (\$47,850,000 Local, \$1,000,000 GRTA)	Local , GRTA Q24- Surface Transportation Program
RO 212: Lakefield Extension; new 2 lane alignment parkway.	PE Auth ROW 2009 CST 2011	Rockdale County	\$1,185,000	Local, State
RO 215: Honey Creek Rd from Ebenezer Rd to Underwood Rd; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2013 ROW 2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$39,270,000 (\$13,926,000 Local, \$25,344,000 Fed)	Local, Federal
RO 217A Old Salem Rd from Flat Shoals Rd to Salem Gate Dr; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2013 ROW2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$6,184,000	Local
RO 217B Old Salem Rd from Flat Shoals Rd to SR 162; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2013 ROW2021 CST 2030	Rockdale County	\$11,233,570	Local
RO 222B: East Freeway Dr Extension from Old McDonough Hwy to Parker Rd; new 2-lane roadway.	PE 2007 ROW 2021 CST 2021	Rockdale County	\$5,623,000	Local
RO 229: SR 212 at Honey Creek; bridge replacement	PE 2002 ROW 2004 CST 2014	GDOT	\$1,767,000	GDOT and Q10- Bridge (on- system)
RO 230: Iris Drive @ McDaniel Mill Road; intersection improvement.	PE 2004 ROW 2007 CST 2008	Rockdale County	\$670,286 \$656,846 GRTA 13,440 Local	Local and GRTA Q24- Surface Transportation Program
RO 231: Lenora Church Rd @ Pleasant Hill Rd; intersection improvement	PE 2004 ROW 2006 CST 2008	Rockdale County	\$711,821 \$689,496 GRTA \$22,325 Local	Local and GRTA Q24- Surface Transportation Program
RO 232: Old Salem Rd @ McCalla Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2004 ROW 2004 CST 2008	Rockdale County	\$958,608 \$748,305 GRTA \$210303 Local	Local and GRTA Q24- Surface Transportation Program
RO 235A: Sigman Rd Extension / Hayden Quarry Rd; new 4-lane urban arterial.	PE 2004 ROW 2014 CST 2014	DeKalb / Rockdale Counties	\$15,488,000 \$12,190,000 Federal \$3,298,000 Local	Local, Federal
RO 235C: Sigman Rd from Lester to Irwin Bridge Rd; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE Auth ROW 2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$10,079,000	Local
RO 235D: Sigman Rd from Irwin Bridge Rd to SR138; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2013 ROW 2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$17,888,000 \$13,91,880 Federal \$3,977,120 State	Federal, State
RO 235E1: Sigman Road from SR 20/138 to Old Covington Hwy; widening from 2 to 4 lanes.	PE 2013 ROW 2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$17,086,000 \$13,045,600 Federal, \$4,040,400 Local	Local, Federal
RO 235E2: Sigman Road @ Gees Mill Road; intersection improvement.	PE 2005 ROW 2008 CST 2009	Rockdale County	\$862,000 \$766,000 GRTA 96,000 Local	Local, GRTA
RO 236: SR 20 @ Bell Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2008 ROW 2009 CST 2010	Rockdale County	\$890,000	Local
RO 237: Klondike Rd @ Hurst Rd / McDaniel Mill Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2007 ROW 2008 CST 2009	Rockdale County	\$1,405,000 (856,000 Federal, 549,000 Local)	Local, Federal
RO 238: Old Covington Hwy @ Sigman Rd / N. Salem Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2007 ROW 2008 CST 2009	Rockdale County	\$1,398,180 (\$800,000 Federal, \$598,180 Local)	Local, Federal

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Transportation Activity	Years	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
RO 242C: SR 20 @ West Hightower Trail; intersection improvement.	PE 2007 ROW 2008 CST 2009	Rockdale County	\$1,945,000 (969,000 Federal/State, 976,000 Local)	Local, State, Federal
RO 243: Salem Gate Extension from Old Salem Rd to Old Covington Hwy; new non-access bridge and 4-lane urban arterial.	PE 2006 ROW 2014 CST 2020	Rockdale County	\$22,700,000	Local
RO 247: Georgia Veteran Memorial Park Pedestrian Facility; park improvements	PE Auth ROW Auth CST 2008	Rockdale County	\$3,040,000 Federal Earmarks	Federal
RO 249: Irwin Bridge Rd Bridge Replacement; bridge replacement	PE 2007 ROW 2009 CST 2010	Rockdale County	\$6,614,300 (\$4,211,000 Fed/State, \$2,403,300 Local)	Local, State, Federal
RO AR 203: Sigman Rd @ Eastview Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2003 ROW 2008 CST 2008	City of Conyers	\$650,000 (\$471,200 Fed, \$178,800 City)	Local, Federal
GDOT PI 0007066: SR 138 @ Eastview Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2006 ROW 2007 CST 2008	GDOT	\$630,000 (\$500,000 State, \$130,000 Local)	Local, State
Rockdale O-48: Pleasant Hill Rd @ West Hightower Tr; intersection improvement.	PE 2000 ROW 2001 CST 2009	Rockdale County	\$555,000	Local
Rockdale O-49: Old Salem Rd @ Underwood Rd / Benji Blvd; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$1,095,000	Local
Rockdale O-50: SR 138 @ Tucker Mill Rd (West End) ; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$1,225,000 (\$675,000 Local, \$550,000 State)	Local, State
Rockdale O-51: SR 138 @ Tucker Mill Rd SW; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$940,000 (\$380,000 Local, \$560,000 State)	Local, State
Rockdale O-52: SR 212 @ Smyrna Rd / O'Neal Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$1,300,000 (\$450,000 Local, \$850,000 State)	Local, State
Rockdale O-71: SR 212 @ Bailey Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$975,000 (\$425,000 Local, \$550,000 State)	Local, State
Rockdale O-76: Milstead Ave @ Milstead Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2006 ROW 2008 CST 2008	Rockdale County	\$670,900	Local
Rockdale O-86: SR 20 @ Sugar Creek Dr; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$850,000 (\$200,000 Local, \$650,000 State)	Local, State
Rockdale O-90: Smyrna Rd @ Flat Shoals Rd; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	Rockdale County	\$870,000	Local
DK 030B: Old Covington Hwy (US 278) from Tucker Mill Rd to Lake Capri Rd; widening from 2 to 4 lanes	PE Auth ROW 2014 CST 2020	GDOT	\$9,124,800	Federal, State
AR 612: Park and Ride Facilities for Xpress Bus Service In Rockdale; new parking lot for bus service.	PE Auth ROW 2008 CST 2010	GRTA	\$5,500,000	GRTA

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On-Going Project Maintenance	Years	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
AR 619: Park and Ride Facilities for Xpress Bus Service at Sigman Rd; adding parking spaces and signal light	PE Auth ROW 2007 CST 2008	GRTA	\$1,500,000	GRTA
RO AR 138: I-20 East Interchange @ SR 138; adding additional lanes and widening the bridge.	PE Auth ROW 2014 CST 2020	GDOT	\$30,919,000 (\$6,183,000 State, \$24,735,000 Federal)	Federal, State
Off System Safety Projects; pavement marking, guardrail.	2008 – 2013	Rockdale County; GDOT	\$200,000 per year	GDOT
Local Assistance Road Program; resurface existing roadways.	2008 – 2013	Rockdale County; GDOT	\$300,000 per year (50%/50% Split)	Local, GDOT
State-Aid Program; pavement marking, guardrail and resurface existing roadways.	2008 – 2013	Rockdale County; GDOT	\$100,000 per year (50%/50% Split)	Local, GDOT
State Maintenance Program; Restriping existing roads	2008 – 2013	Rockdale County; GDOT	\$100,000 per year	GDOT

The following list of transportation projects are within the City of Conyers.

Transportation Activity	Years	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
1402: Sigman & East View Road; intersection improvement.	PE 2005 ROW2008 CST 2008	City Of Conyers LCI	\$665,000 \$145,000 Local \$520,000 LCI	Local, LCI
2302: Green St. @ Scott St.; intersection improvement.	PE 2009 ROW 2010 CST 2010	City of Conyers	\$731,600 Local	Local
1404 :West Ave; streetscape	PE 2006 ROW 2007 CST 2008	City of Conyers GDOT	\$1,800,000 \$1,525,000 Local \$275,000 State Aid	Local GDOT (State Aid)
SR138 @ East View PKY; intersection improvement.	PE 2005 ROW 2008 CST 2008	GDOT	\$230,000	GDOT
2308:Main Street Streetscape from Pine Log Rd to Peek Street	PE 2011 ROW 2012 CST 2013	City of Conyers	\$2,305,000	Local
2303: Bank Street from Main St to Pine St; improvements	Project completed	City of Conyers	Estimated Cost \$255,000 Completed cost \$119,000	Local
2301: Rockbridge Rd from Main St to Sigman Rd; resurface & sidewalks	Project completed	City of Conyers	Estimated Cost \$1,040,000 Completed Cost \$227,200	Local

**Partial Update of Comprehensive Plan
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Transportation Activity	Years	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
2307: Old Covington Rd @ Gees Mill; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	City of Conyers	\$1,396,000 Local	Local
2306: Sigman @East Park Dr; intersection improvement.	PE 2008 ROW 2009 CST 2010	City of Conyers	\$840,000 Local	Local
2309: Railroad Street; Widening	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	City of Conyers	\$998,000 Local	Local
2304: College Ave Street improvements	Project Completed	City of Conyers GDOT	\$1,561,000 \$1,441,000 Local \$120,000 State Aid	Local (Stormwater SPLOST) GDOT (State Aid)
2305: West Ave @ Green Street; intersection improvement.	PE 2010 ROW 2011 CST 2012	City of Conyers	\$785,000 Local	Local

On-Going Project Maintenance	Years	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source
Northside at Milstead Ave.; intersection improvement	PE 2008 ROW 2006 CST 2006	City of Conyers	\$600,000	Local
Off System Safety Projects; pavement marking, guardrail.	2008 – 2013	City of Conyers; GDOT	\$200,000 per year	GDOT
Local Assistance Road Program; resurface existing roadways.	2008 – 2013	City of Conyers; GDOT	\$150,000 per year (25%/75% Split)	Local, GDOT
State-Aid Program; pavement marking, guardrail and resurface existing roadways.	2008 – 2013	City of Conyers; GDOT	\$100,000 per year (40%/60% Split)	Local, GDOT
State Maintenance Program; Restriping	2008 – 2013	City of Conyers; GDOT	\$15,000 per year	Local, GDOT