

6

Land Use

The Land Use Element of this Joint Comprehensive Plan provides the following:

- an inventory and assessment of how land is currently being used in Ellijay, East Ellijay, and unincorporated Gilmer County,
- a discussion of the community's needs and desires for both the type and location of future growth in the community, and
- goals, policies, and strategies for future land use that support and reflect the economic, housing, natural and cultural resources, and community facilities and services goals and policies of this plan.

6.1. Inventory

Gilmer County's existing land use patterns have a direct impact on the county's future growth potential; therefore, an analysis of these existing patterns is important as the basis for the preparation of the future land use plan. Existing land use in Gilmer County was inventoried in late spring/early summer of 2003. The land use categories used in the inventory are based on standards established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and include the following:

- **Residential.** This category includes land used for single family and multi-family residential uses.
- **Commercial.** This category includes land used for non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service, and entertainment facilities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building.
- **Industrial.** This category includes land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses.
- **Public/Institutional.** This category includes certain state, federal, or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Public uses include city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, and hospitals. Facilities that are publicly owned, but would be classified more accurately in another land use category, are not included in this category. For

Element Outline:

6.1. Inventory

6.1.1. Residential Land Uses

6.1.2. Commercial Land Uses

6.1.3. Industrial Land Uses

6.1.4. Public and Institutional Land Uses

6.1.5. Transportation, Communication, and Utilities Land Uses

6.1.6. Parks, Recreation, and Conservation Land Uses

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6.4. Community Goals and Implementation Program

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example, publicly owned parks are included in the Park/Recreation/Conservation category, while landfills would fall under the Industrial classification.

- **Transportation/Communication/Utilities.** This category includes such uses as roads, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, airports, or other similar uses.
- **Park/Recreation/Conservation.** This category includes land dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers, or similar uses.
- **Agriculture.** This category includes land dedicated to agriculture, farming, or other similar rural uses such as pasture land not in commercial use.
- **Forestry.** This category includes land dedicated to commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting or other similar rural uses such as woodlands not in commercial use.

Table 6-A provides a breakdown of land use types by acreage and percentage of total land area.

Table 6-A. Existing Land Use in Gilmer County

Land Use Type	Gilmer County		Ellijay		East Ellijay		Unincorporated Gilmer County	
	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%
Residential	26,162							
Single Family	25,968	9.4%	430	19.9%	309	17.8%	25,229	9.3%
Multi-Family	36	0.0%	23	1.1%	3	0.2%	10	0.0%
Mobile Home Park	158	0.1%	0	-	0	-	158	0.1%
Commercial	608	0.2%	164	7.6%	141	8.1%	303	0.1%
Industrial	416	0.2%	130	6.0%	11	0.6%	275	0.1%
Public or Institutional	248	0.1%	168	7.8%	8	0.5%	72	0.0%
Transportation, Communication, or Utilities	8,048							
Road Right-of-Way	7,742	2.8%	153	7.1%	170	9.8%	7,419	2.7%
Rail Right-of-Way	124	0.0%	8	0.4%	3	0.2%	113	0.0%
Communications, Utilities, and Other Transportation	182	0.1%	21	1.0%	-	-	161	0.1%
Parks, Recreation, or Conservation	54,862							
Parks and Recreation	907	0.3%	48	2.2%	-	-	859	0.3%
Conservation	53,955	19.6%	-	-	-	-	53,955	19.8%
Agriculture	15,629	5.7%	54	2.5%	-	-	15,575	5.7%
Forestry	12,732	4.6%	-	-	195	11.2%	12,537	4.6%
Vacant or Undeveloped	153,773	55.8%	938	43.3%	894	47.8%	151,941	55.9%
Water	3,275	1.2%	29	1.3%	5	0.3%	3,241	1.2%
TOTAL	275,753	100%	2,166	100%	1,739	100%	271,848	100%

Source: NGRDC GIS

Existing land use for Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay is illustrated figures 6-A, 6-B, and 6-C on the following pages.

6.1.1. Residential Land Uses

Approximately 9.5% of the land, or 26,162 acres, in Gilmer County is used for residential purposes. Nearly all of the residential development is single-family in nature. Residential land uses account for almost 20% of land area in Ellijay and East Ellijay.

Residential land uses have been grouped into the following categories:

Single Family. All land area or part of area with principal structures consisting of single family detached housing.

Multi-Family. All land area with principal structures consisting of attached housing types including duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes, townhouses, and apartments.

Mobile Home Parks. All land area with principal structures consisting of mobile homes and trailer homes in mobile home parks.



Much of the residential development in Gilmer County over the past decade has been of the “second home” or “vacation home” variety.

6.1.2. Commercial Land Uses

Gilmer County. Less than 1% of the land in Gilmer County (608 acres) is used for commercial purposes. Most of the commercial development is located within the limits of Ellijay and East Ellijay, with approximately 8% of the land in each city being used for commercial purposes. Commercial enterprises which are located outside the city limits are generally found along major road corridors such as Highway 282 and Highway 52 East and include uses such as convenience stores and apple houses.

Ellijay. Downtown Ellijay serves as is a commercial hub for the Ellijay. It contains a variety of commercial uses such as restaurants, retail shops, and professional offices. Because of recent streetscaping efforts, it offers a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Other commercial areas include Highway 5/Main Street and Highway 52/River Street. A variety of commercial uses are located along these corridors such as car washes, convenience stores, and small offices and shops.



The commercial area near the square of downtown Ellijay is pedestrian-friendly due to recent streetscaping efforts.



Lowe's is one of the recent "big-box" retailers to open on Highway 515.

East Ellijay. East Ellijay has been experiencing rapid commercial growth in recent years, with much of the commercial development locating along Highway 515. Recent development includes a new super Wal-Mart, a Lowe's home improvement store, and a Goody's department store. Other new businesses in the area along Highway 515 include automobile dealerships, car washes, a motel, and fast food restaurants.

This new development has led to vacancies in older commercial centers, such as the shopping center where the old Wal-Mart was located. Efforts are underway to find a new tenant for that location.

Other commercial land uses in East Ellijay include fast-food restaurants, grocery stores, automobile dealers, pharmacies, banks, gas stations, specialty retail shops, hair salons, appliance dealers, real estate offices, and accounting offices.

6.1.3. Industrial Land Uses

Gilmer County. Less than 1% of the land in Gilmer County is used for industrial purposes. Most of the industrial development is located within the limits of Ellijay, with 6% of the land in the city being used for industrial purposes. Less than 1% of the land in East Ellijay is used for industry.

Examples of industries in Gilmer County, including the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay include Gold Kist (poultry processing), Regal Ellijay (manufacturer of bath mat sets and rugs), Blue Ridge Commercial Carpet (tufted carpet manufacturer), and White Path Fab Tech (wire harness assembly).

Efforts are underway to recruit additional specialty manufacturing businesses to the area.

6.1.4. Public and Institutional Land Uses

Gilmer County. Less than 1% of the land in Gilmer County is used for public or institutional purposes. Most of the land used for public or institutional development is located within the limits of Ellijay, with 7.8% of the land in the city being used for such purposes. Less than 1% of the land in East Ellijay is devoted to public or institutional use.

Ellijay. The property owned by the public school system comprises the largest amount of acreage in the city limits. Other public land uses



The Gilmer County School System owns approximately 511 acres, including the 300 acres recently purchased on Clear Creek Road.

in the City include City Hall, the County Courthouse, the public library, the Post Office, the medical center, and numerous churches.

East Ellijay. Public and institutional land uses in East Ellijay include City Hall and several churches.

6.1.5. Transportation, Communication, and Utilities Land Uses

Approximately 3% of the land in Gilmer County is used for transportation, communication, and utilities. Streets make up the largest portion of this land use category, with 7.1% of Ellijay and 9.8% of East Ellijay being used for road rights-of-way.

6.1.6. Parks, Recreation, and Conservation Land Uses

Less than 1% of the land in Gilmer County is used for parks and recreation, while almost 20% is in conservation. The land under conservation is located in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Park, recreation, and conservation areas are described in more detail in Section 4.1.14.

6.1.7. Agriculture Land Uses

Almost 6% of the land in Gilmer County (15,629 acres) is used for agriculture. Nearly all of this land is in the unincorporated parts of the county.

Farmland is discussed in more detail in Section 4.1.11.



Agriculture is an important industry in Gilmer County.

6.1.8. Forestry Land Uses

Almost 5% of the land in Gilmer County (12,732 acres) is used for forestry purposes. Nearly all of this land is in the unincorporated parts of the county.

6.1.9. Vacant or Undeveloped Land

Over half of the land Gilmer County (153,753 acres) is vacant or undeveloped. Just under half of the land located within the limits of Ellijay and East Ellijay is also vacant or undeveloped. The mountainous topography of Gilmer County is a primary reason why so much land is vacant or undeveloped.

6.2. Assessment of Existing Land Use

In Section 6.1, the capacity, performance, general condition, and expected life of the community facilities and services in Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay was provided. The assessment of current and future community facilities and services needs involves the following:

- an analysis of the data provided in Section 5.1., including consideration of the implications of historical trends, current conditions, and 20-year forecasts,
- an evaluation of this data in terms of its significance to the community and its relevance to other plan elements,
- a statement of current and future needs base upon projections of future growth, and
- an assessment of how these needs may affect or be affected by other elements.

This assessment can be completed by answering the following questions which were derived from Section 110-12-1-.0 4(12)(e)2.(ii) of Georgia's Minimum Local Planning Standards.

- What historical factors have led to current development patterns?
- How do land use patterns and densities relate to the provision of infrastructure improvements?
- Are there blighted areas, areas in need of redevelopment, or transitional areas in Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay?
- Are there environmentally sensitive or locally valued land and resources which are unsuitable for development or in need of special protection or management practices?
- Are there any problems with existing patterns of land use such as extensive single-use districts, strip commercial development, or "leap-frog" development?
- What opportunities exist for infill development, traditional neighborhood development, and other compact forms of urban development?
- What local development policies can affect future land use patterns?

These questions are answered in Section 6.2.1. through 6.2.4.

6.2.1. What historical factors have led to current development patterns?

Several factors have led to current development patterns including the following:

- mountainous topography,
- streams, creeks, and flood control structures,
- National Forest lands,
- development of resort communities,
- school construction,
- creation of Carter's Lake, and
- construction of Georgia Highway 515, the Appalachian Highway.



The construction of Georgia Highway 515 has had a great impact upon development in Gilmer County.

6.2.2. How do land use patterns and densities relate to the provision of infrastructure improvements?

Typically, infrastructure improvements have been made in response to development needs. For example, significant infrastructure improvements will be required to facilitate the development of the new public school campus and proposed business and technology park on Clear Creek Road. Another example is the extension water and sewer lines to the Highlands development on 515. Infrastructure was extended as part of the development agreement.

An example of infrastructure being provided to stimulate development is the construction of Georgia Highway 515, the Appalachian Highway. This road opened up large tracts of land for development that would likely have remained undeveloped otherwise.

6.2.3. Are there blighted areas, areas in need of redevelopment, or transitional areas in Gilmer County, Ellijay, or East Ellijay?

There are several abandoned or idle commercial and industrial sites in the area including the old Wal-Mart shopping center and the old Shaw plant.

Redevelopment along Old Highway 5 South should be encouraged as an alternative to Highway 515. Low intensity commercial and light industrial development would be appropriate. New development should be conducted in a manner which will allow for the future widening of Old Highway 5.

Numerous improvements have been made in downtown Ellijay; however, the downtown would benefit from an overall master plan which would include items such as streetscaping, parking, façade improvements, housing alternatives, infill development, commercial support and recruitment, and marketing. Efforts at finding tenants or new owners of vacant buildings such as the old NAPA Auto Parts store will be important. The construction of the new Gilmer County Courthouse and the reuse of the existing courthouse building will also have a great impact on the future of downtown Ellijay.

6.2.4. Are there environmentally sensitive or locally valued land and resources which are unsuitable for development or in need of special protection or management practices?

Gilmer County is full of environmentally sensitive lands including steep slopes and small streams, tributaries, and headwaters. Many of these areas receive some protection from existing regulations. Water quality and water availability is of concern to residents and business owners and measures are being taken within the community to promote water quality. (Refer to Sections 4.1.2 and 4.3.2 for more detail.)

Other locally valued lands and resources in Gilmer County include the numerous flood control dams and lakes, the golf course, the River Park, and the square.

6.2.5. Are there any problems with existing patterns of land use such as extensive single-use districts, strip commercial development, or “leap-frog” development?

Because of the lack of zoning in the county, many residents feel that developers have been directing growth in the community. Strip commercial and “leap-frog” development is occurring along Highway 515 and this pattern is expected to continue, with the flattest properties likely to be developed first. As discussed in Section 8.2.1., this type of development pattern along Highway 515 is going to drastically reduce the highway’s capacity because more traffic signals and lower speed limits will be requested. In addition, without some form of design guidelines for signs and landscaping, auto-oriented commercial development has the potential to detract from the natural beauty of the community.

6.2.6. What opportunities exist for infill development, traditional neighborhood development, and other compact forms of urban development?

The mountainous topography found in much of Gilmer County limits the opportunities for traditional neighborhood development and other compact forms of urban development; however, this type of development can be encouraged in areas where public water and sewer infrastructure exists. Infill opportunities exist in limited areas within the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay. These opportunities should be identified as part of a downtown master plan for the City of Ellijay.

6.2.7. What local development policies can affect future land use patterns?

The Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay have zoning ordinances which, when used in conjunction with this Comprehensive Plan, will guide future land use patterns. Similarly, the proposed Gilmer County Land Use Ordinance (zoning ordinance) is intended to establish minimum standards for the use of land and the improvements which are located on the land. The ordinance is designed to accomplish the following:

- protect existing development;
- lessen congestion on the streets;
- secure safety from fire, panic, and other dangers;
- promote health and the general welfare;
- provide adequate light and air;
- prevent overcrowding of land;
- avoid undue concentration of population;
- ease the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public requirements;
- promote desirable living conditions,
- sustain the stability of neighborhoods,
- protect property against blight and depreciation;
- secure economy in government expenditures;
- conserve the value of buildings;
- encourage the most appropriate use of land and structures; and
- improve and protect the overall aesthetics of the community.

6.3. Projection of Future Land Use Needs

Future land use needs for Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay were prepared for the years 2015 and 2025. Tables 6-B and 6-C show the amount of land that will be needed to accommodate the anticipated future population and economic growth presented in the population, economic development, and housing elements.

Table 6-B. Projected Future Land Use Needs in Gilmer County (unincorporated and incorporated areas)

Land Use Type	2003		2015 (Projected)		2025 (Projected)	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Residential	26,162	9.5%	49,968	18.1%	66,204	24.0%
Commercial	608	0.2%	874	0.3%	1,065	0.4%
Industrial	416	0.2%	684	0.2%	841	0.3%
Public or Institutional	248	0.1%	448	0.2%	598	0.2%
Road Right-of-Way	7,742	2.8%	12,993	4.7%	17,177	6.2%
Rail Right-of-Way	124	0.0%	124	0.0%	124	0.0%
Communications, Utilities, and Other Transportation	182	0.1%	197	0.1%	212	0.1%
Parks and Recreation	907	0.3%	967	0.4%	1027	0.4%
Conservation	53,955	19.6%	53,955	19.6%	53,955	19.6%
Agriculture	15,629	5.7%	14,429	5.2%	13,429	4.9%
Forestry	12,732	4.6%	10,932	4.0%	9,432	3.4%
Vacant or Undeveloped	153,773	55.8%	12,907	4.7%	108,415	39.3%
Water	3,275	1.2%	3,275	1.2%	3,275	1.2%
TOTAL	275,753	100.0%	275,753	100.0%	275,753	100.0%

Source: NGRDC

Table 6-C. Projected Future Land Use Needs in Ellijay and East Ellijay

Land Use Type	Ellijay			East Ellijay		
	2003	2015	2025	2003	2015	2025
Residential	453	622	699	312	547	744
Commercial	164	180	200	141	325	450
Industrial	130	180	230	11	21	21
Public or Institutional	168	183	193	8	28	38
Road Right-of-Way	153	291	330	173	230	313
Rail Right-of-Way	8	8	8	3	3	3
Communications, Utilities, and Other Transportation	21	26	31	0	5	10
Parks and Recreation	48	58	68	0	10	20
Conservation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agriculture	54	25	0	0	0	0
Forestry	0	0	0	195	120	45
Vacant or Undeveloped	938	562	376	894	444	90
Water	29	31	31	5	5	5
TOTAL	2,166	2,166	2,166	1,739	1,739	1,739

Source: NGRDC

6.3.1. Residential Land Use Needs

Residential land use needs are based upon future housing projections (Section 3.2.2.) and the current land consumption trend of 2.2 acres per unit in Gilmer County, 0.7 acres per unit in Ellijay, and 1.2 acres per unit in East Ellijay.

Based upon these projections, approximately 40,000 additional acres (66,204 total) might be needed in Gilmer County for residential purposes by the year 2025. The actual amount used will likely be smaller given the number of undeveloped lots that currently exist in the county.

In addition, the amount that is actually needed to accommodate the projected number of housing units can be reduced by encouraging compact, higher density development patterns in areas where water, sewer, and other community facilities are provided.

6.3.2. Commercial and Industrial Land Use Needs

Commercial and Industrial land use needs are based upon future employment projections (Section 2.1.1.1.) and the current land consumption trend of 0.3 acre per commercial job and 0.1 acre per industrial job in Gilmer County. Based upon these projections, 882 additional acres (1,906 total) might be needed in Gilmer County for commercial and industrial uses by the year 2025.

Given that Ellijay already has 1,068 acres zoned for commercial or industrial uses and East Ellijay has 898 acres zoned for commercial uses, the need to rezone property in the unincorporated areas to either commercial or industrial uses should be limited to areas where adequate infrastructure exists or can be economically provided. Leap-frog development or commercial and industrial development in remote areas of the county should be discouraged.

6.3.3. Other Land Use Needs

Growth in the other land use categories was based upon a variety of factors. Public/Institutional growth was based in large part upon the development of the new school campus on Clear Creek Road. It was estimated that the entire property would be developed by 2025.

The amount of land needed for road right-of-way was estimated to be 25% of the total acres developed for residential, commercial, industrial, and public or institutional uses.

In terms of parks and recreation, the cities were projected to add a total of 20 acres each by the year 2025. An additional 80 acres were projected for the unincorporated areas.

Lands used for agriculture and forestry were projected to decline by 100 acres and 150 acres per year, respectively.

The total amount of vacant or undeveloped land is projected to decline from 153,773 acres to 108,415 acres by 2025.

6.4. Community Goals and Implementation Program

6.4.1. Future Land Use Map

The future land use map is designed to reflect the results of the assessment of current and future land use needs. It depicts the general location, distribution, and characteristics of future land uses. The following land use categories are included on the future land use map:

- Commercial
- Crossroads Commercial
- Industrial
- Public or Institutional
- Transportation, Communication, and Utilities
- Low Density Residential
- Medium to High Density Residential
- Agriculture, Forestry, and Very Low Density Residential
- Parks and Recreation
- Conservation

Two of the categories listed above were not used in the existing land use map: “Crossroads Commercial” and “Agriculture, Forestry, and Very Low Density Residential.”

Crossroads Commercial areas are designated as land within a 400 meter (437 yard) radius of crossroads that currently have one or more existing commercial uses such as a convenience store, plus another non-residential use such as a church, fire station, or other landmark. These are areas which in the future will serve the nearby rural neighborhood and the commuting or traveling public. Typical uses will include convenience stores, small sit-down restaurants (as opposed to fast-food, drive thru restaurants), and a limited range of specialty and professional services such as a hair salon, dry cleaner, gift shop, etc.

The areas which are designated for agriculture, forestry, and/or very low density residential development are areas which are currently rural in character and are currently either (1) undeveloped, (2) used for forestry or agriculture, and/or (3) have very steep slopes. They are likely to remain as such in the future unless water and sewer service becomes available. This designation is applied throughout much of the county in order to reflect both non-residential and residential potential.

The future land use maps for Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay are shown on the following pages. The land use maps show a development pattern in which all vacant land has been consumed by the year 2025. While all land will not be consumed by this time, the future land use map is intended to reflect the development potential of all property and the desired land use pattern over time. Because development cannot be accurately predicted at the parcel level, the future land use maps are generalized and are intended to provide ample locational choices while still being consistent with the desired land use policies.

Because the future land use map is based upon general policy guidelines, it should be reviewed periodically and revised when appropriate in order to reflect development trends and conditions in the community.

6.4.2. Future Land Use Narrative

This section summarizes the reasoning behind the land use patterns shown on the future land use maps.

Community Vision. The following community vision evolved out of the planning process. The future land use map was developed with this vision in mind.

In the year 2024, Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay will be known as vibrant, safe, healthy, and attractive places to live, work, and play. The excellent quality of life experienced by all of our residents and visitors is a result of the following:

Livability. *We have healthy residential neighborhoods, thriving commercial areas and activity centers, strong agricultural establishments, and outstanding public facilities and services. Opportunities for quality education, employment, and recreation are varied and plentiful.*

Community Character. *We recognize that our community's abundant natural resources and rich history contribute greatly to our quality of life and to our economic prosperity. We seek measures to protect these resources while promoting and facilitating well-planned growth and development.*

Shared Direction. *The public and private sectors work together as partners to proactively plan for growth in the community. The local governments provide excellent leadership and residents are well-informed about the projects and activities which are planned for and occurring in the community.*

Growth and Transition Areas. Several areas in Gilmer County can be expected to see major growth in the next ten years. The first is along Highway 515, specifically around the Highlands shopping area in East Ellijay. Commercial and mixed-use developments are expected to continue to occur in this area.

The second area expected to experience growth is in the vicinity of the new school campus on Clear Creek Road. A variety of residential developments and some light commercial development is likely to occur there when the school campus is developed, and especially when water and sewer service is extended to the area.

A third area of the county which will experience growth will be in the vicinity of the new hospital campus. The location for the new hospital has yet to be determined, but its location will impact growth in its immediate vicinity. Medical and other hospital support business are likely to locate near the new hospital.

Commercial Development. In 2003, Gilmer County had approximately 603 acres of land which were either being used for or developed for commercial uses. The projection of future land use needs shows a potential demand for a total of 1,065 acres of commercial property. In order to provide for flexibility and opportunity for commercial growth, the Future Land Use Map includes a total of 1,908 acres of commercial property and an additional 814 acres of crossroads commercial property. This represents an increase from the year 2003 amount of commercial property of 351%.

The Future Land Use Map includes 2,722 acres of commercial property. In 2003, there were 603 acres of land either being used commercially or being developed for commercial use.

Highway 515. Development along Highway 515 can be expected to continue in the future. The pace and scale will depend largely upon access to the state-right-of-way. The Georgia Department of Transportation maintains a permit review process for all projects which require access to the highway.

Compact development along Highway 515 can protect the functionality of the highway as well as the scenic quality of this corridor. For this reason, the future land use map focuses commercial development in certain areas along the corridor, rather than along its entire length. Design guidelines should be developed to enhance the appearance of the corridor.

Infrastructure. Because the cities have a well-developed base of facilities and services, the Future Land Use Plan places an emphasis upon the cities and the immediate outlying areas for future growth. Development of the greatest density and intensity should be located within or near the city limits or in the three growth areas discussed earlier in order to encourage an efficient and cost effective utilization of existing public facilities.

Critical and Sensitive Areas. Gilmer County has an abundance of natural resources as detailed in Element 4. Development of steep slopes and protecting water quality will be among the most pressing issues for new development.

In addition to existing regulations for protecting natural resources, conservation or open-space subdivision design should be investigated as a means for protecting valuable critical and sensitive areas. Conservation subdivision design allows for development at maximum densities while preserving open space, steep slopes, or other valuable natural resources. Typically, access to water and sewer are necessary for this type of development. More information on conservation subdivision design can be found on the National Association of Homebuilders website at <http://www.nahb.org> or the Natural Lands Trust website at <http://www.natlands.org/pdffiles/growinggreener.pdf>. A comparison of a standard subdivision and an open space subdivision design is shown on the following page.

Redevelopment Areas. Old Highway 5 South should be targeted for redevelopment in order to provide opportunities for lower cost light industrial and commercial development (as an alternative to Highway 515). In addition, upon completion of a master plan for downtown Ellijay, the areas surrounding the core commercial area would benefit from residential redevelopment.

Agriculture and Forestry. Only 3% of the County contains cropped acreage, while timberland accounts for almost 80% of the county; therefore, a rural cultural landscape in Gilmer County is more likely to be forested, or have chicken houses, rather than apple orchards or cultivated fields. The pressure to develop this land will continue to increase in the future. This can have a dramatic impact upon the natural resources in the area as well as upon the community's scenic beauty.

In addition, there will continue to be a conflict between certain agricultural uses and other uses in the community. Poultry houses in particular are seen by some as detracting from the quality of life of neighboring residents.

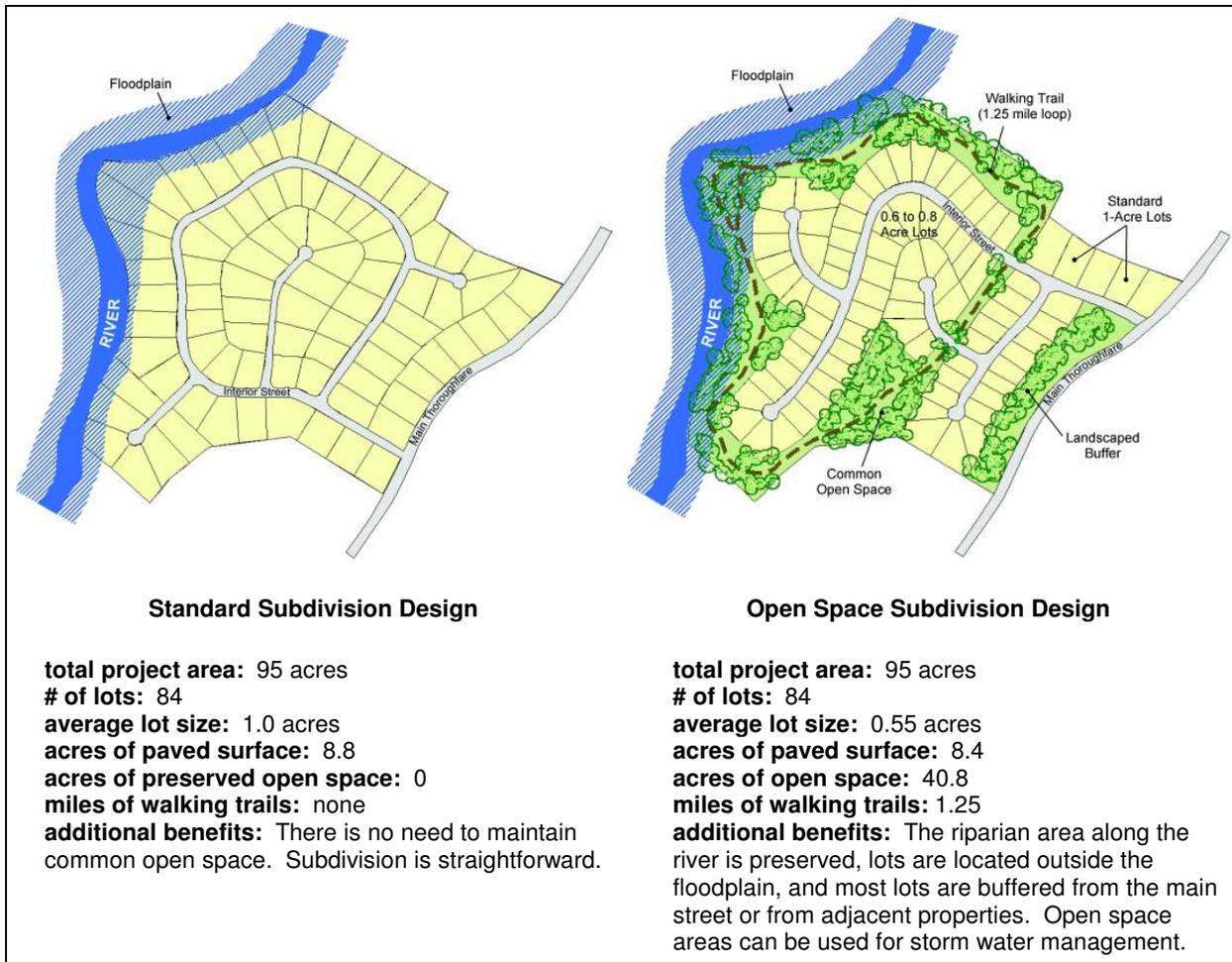


Figure 6-E. A comparison of a standard subdivision with an open space subdivision.

6.4.3. Goal, Policies, and Action Items

To support the land use map and narrative above, the following goal and associated policies and action items have been developed:

<p>Goal: Land resources which have been allocated for uses that will accommodate and enhance economic development, natural and historic resources, community facilities, and housing and will protect and improve the quality of life of residents and visitors.</p>	
<p>Policy 1: Community Character and Environmental Quality. The positive qualities of the natural environment, historic and cultural resources, and scenic characteristics which contribute to Gilmer County’s character should be preserved.</p>	<p>Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adopt a land use ordinance in Gilmer County. b. Through a committee of local officials, developers, and interested citizens, develop design guidelines for the Highway 515 corridor which will promote a positive visual image of the community. c. Continue to enforce environmental regulations. d. Pursue TMDL and SWAP initiatives.
<p>Policy 2: Residential Development. Future residential development should be compatible with the physical limitations of the land and the established land uses in the area. In addition, the transition in size, density, site development, and other characteristics should be compatible from one district to another.</p>	<p>Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Investigate the effectiveness and applicability of open space subdivision design and consider this type of design in any housing projects in which local governments participate. b. Support the use of package treatment plants and other alternative on-site wastewater treatment systems in subdivision developments in the county and incorporated cities.
<p>Policy 3: Agriculture and Forestry. Prime agricultural and forest lands should be protected through the use of incentives, land use regulation, and other means.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide information to property owners of farmland, forest land, and environmentally sensitive land about tax incentives for leaving property undeveloped.
<p>Policy 4: Parks and Recreation. Plan for the development of parks and open spaces in locations throughout the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Prepare and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
<p>Policy 5: Reuse of Historic Buildings. The adaptive reuse of historic facilities and structures in the county and incorporated cities should be encouraged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Seek ways to protect the historic fabric of downtown Ellijay through methods such as design guidelines or a preservation commission.
<p>Policy 6: Sense of Place.* Community focal points are important and should be encouraged. Such areas should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment. Downtown Ellijay is a focal point which should be promoted.</p>	
<p>Policy 7: Traditional Neighborhoods.* Traditional neighborhood patterns should be encouraged, including the use of human scale development, mixing uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.</p>	
<p>Policy 8: Infill Development.* The development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of Ellijay and East Ellijay should be encouraged.</p>	

* A DCA “Quality Communities” Objective

Goal: Land resources which have been allocated for uses that will accommodate and enhance economic development, natural and historic resources, community facilities, and housing and will protect and improve the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Policy 9: Infrastructure. Development should be encouraged in areas which are targeted for growth on the future land use map and which either have public services or where public services can be extended at a reasonable cost.

Policy 10: Strip Commercial Development. Strip commercial development should be discouraged and compact development in activity nodes should be encouraged to reduce traffic congestion and efficiently utilize public services.

Policy 11: Neighborhood Commercial Development. Appropriate neighborhood commercial development should be planned to serve the needs of major residential areas in the county and cities.

Policy 12: Transitional Uses. An orderly transition between commercial areas and single family residential areas should be promoted through transitional uses such as multi-family residential and natural buffer areas.

Policy 13: Industrial Development. Industrial development should be encouraged in areas which have compatible soils, drainage, and other environmental characteristics, and which can be efficiently and effectively provided with adequate utilities and infrastructure with minimum costs to both industry and government.

Policy 14: Government Facilities. The downtown area of Ellijay should be promoted as the primary location for government facilities.