

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	viii
List of Acronyms	xi
Introduction	xii
The Vision	xiv

Element 1: Population

1.1. Inventory of Existing Conditions	1-1
1.1.1. Total Population	1-1
1.1.2. Households	1-4
1.1.3. Age Distribution	1-6
1.1.4. Racial Composition	1-9
1.1.5. Educational Attainment	1-10
1.1.6. Income	1-13
1.1.6.1. Per Capita Income	1-13
1.1.6.2. Household Income	1-14
1.1.6.3. Household Income Distribution	1-15
1.1.6.4. Poverty Level	1-15
1.2. Assessment	1-18

Element 2: Economic Development

2.1. Inventory of Existing Conditions	2-2
2.1.1. Economic Base	2-2
2.1.1.1. Employment	2-2
2.1.1.2. Earnings	2-5
2.1.1.3. Weekly Wages	2-6
2.1.1.4. Personal Income	2-7
2.1.1.5. New or Planned Economic Activities	2-9
2.1.1.6. Special or Unique Economic Activities	2-10
2.1.2. Labor Force	2-13
2.1.2.1. Employment by Occupation	2-13
2.1.2.2. Employment Status	2-14
2.1.2.3. Unemployment Rates	2-15
2.1.2.4. Commuting Patterns	2-16
2.1.3. Local Economic Development Resources	2-17
2.1.3.1. Agencies	2-17
2.1.3.2. Programs	2-18
2.1.3.3. Education and Training	2-18
2.2. Assessment of Current and Future Needs	2-20
2.3. Community Goals and Implementation Program	2-22
2.3.1. Community Vision	2-22
2.3.2. Economic Development Goal, Policies, and Action Items	2-23

Element 3: Housing

3.1. Inventory of Existing Conditions	3-1
3.1.1. Types of Housing	3-1
3.1.1.1. General	3-1
3.1.1.2. Manufactured Housing	3-4
3.1.1.3. Elderly Housing	3-4
3.1.1.4. Multi-Family Housing	3-4
3.1.2. Age and Condition of Housing	3-5
3.1.3. Owner and Renter Units	3-6
3.1.4. Cost of Housing	3-8
3.1.5. Cost Burden of Owner and Renter Units	3-9
3.1.6. Housing and Community Characteristics	3-10
3.1.6.1. Population Characteristics Impacting Housing Needs	3-10
3.1.6.2. Special Housing Needs	3-10
3.2. Assessment of Current and Future Needs	3-13
3.3. Community Goals and Implementation Program	3-18
3.3.1. Community Vision	3-18
3.3.2. Housing Goal, Policies, and Action Items	3-19

Element 4: Natural and Cultural Resources

4.1. Inventory– Natural Resources	4-1
4.1.1. Public Water Supply Sources	4-2
4.1.2. Water Supply Watersheds	4-3
4.1.3. Groundwater Recharge Areas	4-7
4.1.4. Wetlands	4-7
4.1.5. Protected Rivers	4-9
4.1.6. Coastal Resources	4-12
4.1.7. Flood Plains	4-12
4.1.8. Topography and Steep Slopes	4-14
4.1.9. Protected Mountains	4-15
4.1.10. Geology and Soil Types	4-18
4.1.11. Farms and Farmland	4-20
4.1.12. Forest Land	4-23
4.1.13. Plant and Animal Habitats	4-24
4.1.14. Major Park, Recreation, and Conservation Areas	4-27
4.1.15. Scenic Views and Sites	4-29
4.1.16. Governor’s Greenspace Program	4-30
4.2. Inventory – Cultural Resources	4-32
4.2.1. Residential Resources	4-32
4.2.2. Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Resources	4-36
4.2.3. Transportation Resources	4-36
4.2.4. Rural Resources	4-37
4.2.4.1. Barns	4-37
4.2.4.2. Crossroad Communities	4-38
4.2.4.3. Agricultural Practices	4-38
4.2.5. Other Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Resources	4-38
4.2.5.1. Community Landmarks	4-38
4.2.5.2. Archaeological Sites	4-39
4.2.5.3. Battlegrounds	4-40
4.2.5.4. Tabby Ruins	4-40
4.2.5.5. Gardens	4-40
4.2.5.6. Parks	4-40
4.2.5.7. Views	4-40
4.2.5.8. Cemeteries and Burial Grounds	4-40

4.2.5.9. Festival Locations and Gathering Places	4-41
4.2.5.10. Historically Significant Districts	4-42
4.2.5.11. National Register Properties	4-42
4.3. Assessment of Current and Future Needs	4-44
4.4. Community Goals and Implementation Program	4-45
4.4.1. Community Vision	4-45
4.4.2. Natural and Cultural Resources Goal, Policies, and Action Items	4-46

Element 5: Community Facilities and Services

5.1. Inventory of Existing Conditions	5-1
5.1.1. Transportation Network	5-1
5.1.2. Water Supply and Treatment	5-1
5.1.2.1. Operational Responsibility	5-1
5.1.2.2. CIE: Projection of Needs	5-2
5.1.2.3. CIE: Service Levels	5-5
5.1.2.4. CIE: Service Area	5-6
5.1.2.5. CIE: Schedule of Improvements and Funding Sources	5-7
5.1.2.6. Additional Information	5-7
5.1.3. Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment	5-4
5.1.3.1. Operational Responsibility	5-8
5.1.3.2. CIE: Projection of Needs	5-8
5.1.3.3. CIE: Service Levels	5-10
5.1.3.4. CIE: Service Area	5-11
5.1.3.5. CIE: Schedule of Improvements and Funding Sources	5-12
5.1.4. Solid Waste Management	5-13
5.1.5. Public Safety – Law Enforcement	5-15
5.1.6. Public Safety – Fire Protection and Emergency Management	5-17
5.1.7. Hospitals and Other Public Health Facilities	5-20
5.1.8. Recreation Facilities	5-22
5.1.9. General Government	5-24
5.1.10. Education Facilities	5-25
5.1.10.1. Gilmer County Public School System	5-25
5.1.10.2. Higher Education	5-26
5.1.10.3. Vocational Training	5-26
5.1.11. Library and Other Cultural Facilities	5-27
5.1.11.1. Library	5-27
5.1.11.2. Senior Center	5-28
5.1.11.3. Gilmer Arts and Heritage Association	5-28
5.1.12. Other Public Facilities	5-30
5.2. Assessment of Current and Future Needs	5-31
5.3. Community Goals and Implementation Program	5-34
5.3.1. Community Vision	5-34
5.3.2. Community Facilities and Services Goal, Policies, and Action Items	5-35

Element 6: Land Use

6.1. Inventory	6-1
6.1.1. Residential Land Uses	6-5
6.1.2. Commercial Land Uses	6-5
6.1.3. Industrial Land Uses	6-6
6.1.4. Public and Institutional Land Uses	6-6
6.1.5. Transportation, Communication, and Utilities Land Uses	6-7
6.1.6. Parks, Recreation, and Conservation Land Uses	6-7
6.1.7. Agriculture Land Uses	6-7
6.1.8. Forestry Land Uses	6-7
6.1.9. Vacant or Undeveloped Land Uses	6-7

6.2.	Assessment of Existing Land Use	6-8
6.3.	Projection of Future Land Use Needs	6-11
6.3.1.	Residential Land Use Needs	6-12
6.3.2.	Commercial and Industrial Land Use Needs	6-12
6.3.3.	Other Land Use Needs	6-12
6.4.	Community Goals and Implementation Program	6-13
6.4.1.	Future Land Use Map	6-13
6.4.2.	Future Land Use Narrative	6-16
6.4.3.	Goal, Policy, and Action Items	6-19

Element 7: Intergovernmental Coordination

7.1.	Inventory of Existing Conditions	7-1
7.1.1.	Coordination with Governmental and Public Entities	7-1
7.1.1.1.	Gilmer County and the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay	7-1
7.1.1.2.	Surrounding Counties	7-3
7.1.1.3.	Gilmer County School Board	7-4
7.1.1.4.	Constitutional Officers	7-4
7.1.1.5.	Independent Special Districts and Development Authorities	7-4
7.1.1.6.	Utilities	7-5
7.1.1.7.	Other Joint Planning Efforts	7-5
7.1.2.	Coordination with State Programs and Activities	7-6
7.1.2.1.	Service Delivery Strategy	7-6
7.1.2.2.	Governor’s Greenspace Program	7-6
7.1.2.3.	Appalachian Regional Commission Program	7-6
7.1.2.4.	Regional Water Supply/Water Quality Protection Plans	7-6
7.2.	Assessment of Current and Future Needs	7-9
7.3.	Community Goals and Implementation Program	7-11
7.3.1.	Community Vision	7-11
7.3.2.	Intergovernmental Coordination Goal, Policies, and Action Items	7-12

Element 8: Transportation

8.1.	Inventory	8-2
8.1.1.	Streets, Roads, and Highways	8-2
8.1.1.1.	Roadway Network and Functional Classification	8-2
8.1.1.2.	City Streets	8-4
8.1.1.3.	Traffic Volumes	8-7
8.1.1.4.	Roadway Conditions	8-9
8.1.1.5.	Accident Data	8-10
8.1.2.	Bridges	8-11
8.1.3.	Signalization and Signage	8-14
8.1.4.	Parking Facilities	8-15
8.1.5.	Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities	8-15
8.1.6.	Public Transportation	8-17
8.1.7.	Railroad	8-17
8.1.8.	Airport	8-19
8.2.	Assessment of Current and Future Needs	8-20
8.3.	Community and Implementation Program	8-22
8.3.1.	Community Vision	8-29
8.3.2.	Transportation Goal, Policies, and Action Items	8-30

Element 9: Community Agenda

9.1	Short Term Work Programs	9-1
9.1.1.	Gilmer County Short Term Work Program	9-2
9.1.2.	Ellijay Short Term Work Program	9-4
9.1.3.	East Ellijay Short Term Work Program	9-5
9.2	Reports of Accomplishments	9-6
9.2.1.	Gilmer County Report of Accomplishments	9-6
9.2.2.	Ellijay Report of Accomplishments	9-10
9.2.3.	East Ellijay Report of Accomplishments	9-14
9.3.	Capital Improvements Element Update	9-17
9.4.	Public Participation Program.....	9-19
9.4.1.	Schedule for the Preparation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan, the Joint Solid Waste Plan, and the Capital Improvements Element/ Short Term Work Program Update	9-19
9.4.2	Notices of Opportunities for Public Involvement	9-20
9.4.2.1.	Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing Notices	9-20
9.4.2.2.	Solid Waste Management Plan Public Hearing Notices	9-21
9.4.2.3.	Capital Improvements Element/ Short Term Work Program Public Hearing Notices	9-22
9.4.3.	Transmittal Resolutions	9-22
9.4.3.1.	Gilmer County Transmittal Resolution	9-23
9.4.3.2.	Ellijay Transmittal Resolution	9-25
9.4.3.3.	East Ellijay County Transmittal Resolution	9-27
9.4.4.	Adoption Resolutions	9-29
9.4.3.1.	Gilmer County Adoption Resolution	9-30
9.4.3.2.	Ellijay Adoption Resolution	9-31
9.4.3.3.	East Ellijay County Adoption Resolution	9-32

List of Figures

Element 1: Population

1-A. Gilmer County Population	1-1
1-B. Population Growth in Gilmer County	1-2
1-C. Total Population in Gilmer County, Past and Projected	1-3
1-D. Persons per Household	1-5
1-E. Population by Age Groups: 2000	1-6
1-F. Place of Birth of the Foreign Born Population: 2000	1-9
1-G. Educational Attainment: 2000	1-10
1-H. Drop-Out Rate of Students in Grades 9 to 12	1-11
1-I. Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Scores	1-11
1-J. American College Test (ACT) Scores	1-11
1-K. Per Capita Income Trends and Projections	1-13
1-L. Average Household Income Trends and Projections	1-14

Element 2: Economic Development

2-A. 2002 Gilmer County Employment by NAICS	2-2
2-B. Sources of Household Income in 1999	2-8
2-C. Total Farm Gate Value	2-10
2-D. Apple Farm Gate Value	2-11
2-E. Freeport Exemption in Nearby Counties	2-11
2-F. Persons in the Labor Force: 2000	2-14
2-G. Unemployment Trends	2-15

Element 3: Housing

3-A. Growth in the Number of Housing Units in Gilmer County	3-2
3-B. Types of Housing Placed in Gilmer County Between 1990 and 2000	3-2
3-C. Mean Value of New Residential Construction: 2002	3-3
3-D. Housing Occupancy in Gilmer County in 2000	3-6
3-E. Elderly Population as a Percentage of Total Population	3-10

Element 4: Natural and Cultural Resources

4-A. Gilmer and Nearby Counties	4-1
4-B. Water Supply Watersheds in Gilmer County	4-4
4-C. Wetlands in Gilmer County	4-9
4-D. Protected Rivers in Gilmer County	4-10
4-E. Flood Zones in Gilmer County	4-13
4-F. Flood Zones in Ellijay and East Ellijay	4-14
4-G. Protected Mountains and Steep Slopes in Ellijay and East Ellijay	4-16
4-H. Steep Slopes in Ellijay and East Ellijay	4-17
4-I. Gilmer County Soils	4-19
4-J. Prime Farmland in Gilmer County	4-22
4-K. Trout Streams in Gilmer County	4-26
4-L. National Forest, Wilderness Areas, and Wildlife Management Areas in Gilmer County	4-28
4-M. The Southern Highroads Scenic Highway	4-30
4-N. Greenspace Program Vision Map	4-31
4-O. Census Blocks with Archaeological Sites	4-39
4-P. Potential Historic Districts in Ellijay and East Ellijay	4-42

Element 5: Community Facilities and Services

5-A. Water Connections and Gallons Billed in 2002	5-3
5-B. Public Water Availability	5-6
5-C. Public Sewer Availability	5-11
5-D. Solid Waste Facilities	5-14
5-E. Public Safety Facilities	5-18
5-F. Number of Calls Received at the E911 Center	5-19
5-G. Student Enrollment in the Gilmer County Public School System	5-25
5-H. Colleges Near Gilmer County	5-26
5-I. Library Attendance and Circulation	5-27

Element 6: Land Use

6-A. Gilmer County Existing Land Use	6-3
6-B. Ellijay and East Ellijay Existing Land Use	6-4
6-C. Gilmer County Future Land Use	6-15
6-D. Ellijay and East Ellijay Future Land Use	6-16
6-E. A Comparison of a Standard Subdivision and an Open Space Subdivision	6-18

Element 8: Transportation

8-A. Functional Classification and the Relationship Between Access and Mobility	8-2
8-B. Functional Classification of Roads in Gilmer County	8-5
8-C. Select Traffic Count Stations	8-8
8-D. Alcohol and/or Drug Related Crashes in 2002	8-11
8-E. Unsafe or Illegal Speed Related Crashes in 2002	8-11
8-F. Signalized Intersections in Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay	8-14
8-G. Sidewalks in Ellijay and East Ellijay	8-16
8-H. Rail Lines in Gilmer County	8-17
8-I. Georgia Rail System, January 2004	8-18
8-J. Proposed Commuter Routes in Georgia.....	8-18
8-K. Gilmer County Airport Location	8-19
8-L. Year 2000 Levels of Service	8-22
8-M. Projected Level of Service in 2010	8-24
8-N. Projected Level of Service in 2020	8-26

List of Tables

Element 1: Population

1-A. Total Population	1-2
1-B. Growth in Total Population	1-3
1-C. Total Number of Households and Average Household Size	1-4
1-D. Average Household Size by Race: 2000	1-5
1-E. Median Age of Residents: 2000	1-6
1-F. Population Trends and Projections by Age Group in Gilmer County	1-7
1-G. Population Trends and Projections by Age Group in Ellijay	1-7
1-H. Population Trends and Projections by Age Group in East Ellijay	1-8
1-I. Population by Race as a Percentage of Total Population	1-9
1-J. Highest Level of Educational Attainment	1-10
1-K. Percentage of Graduates Entering Georgia Public Colleges and Universities	1-12
1-L. Percentage of Graduates Entering Georgia Public Technical and Adult Schools	1-12
1-M. Per Capita Income	1-13
1-N. Average Household Income	1-14
1-O. Household Income Distribution	1-15
1-P. Families Below Poverty Level	1-15
1-Q. Types of Families Below Poverty Level	1-16
1-R. Poverty Status by Age	1-16
1-S. Gilmer County Food Stamp Recipients	1-17
1-T. Students Eligible to Receive Free or Reduced Price School Meals	1-17
1-U. Percentage of Households Requiring Energy Assistance in 2000	1-17

Element 2: Economic Development

2-A. Employment by Sector (NAICS)	2-3
2-B. Employment by Sector (SIC)	2-3
2-C. Projected Employment by Sector (NAICS)	2-4
2-D. Earnings by Employment Sector (SIC)	2-5
2-E. Projected Earnings by Employment Sector (SIC).....	2-5
2-F. Average Weekly Wages Paid by Employment Sector (SIC)	2-6
2-G. Average Weekly Wages Paid by NAICS: 2002	2-7
2-H. Percent of Households Receiving Various Sources of Income	2-7
2-I. Sources of Personal Income: Projected	2-8
2-J. Major Employers in Gilmer County	2-9
2-K. Employment by Occupation	2-13
2-L. Employment Status	2-14
2-M. Unemployment Rates	2-15
2-N. Commuting Patterns	2-16
2-O. Average Travel Time to Work	2-16

Element 3: Housing

3-A. Number and Types of Housing Units	3-1
3-B. New Residential Construction Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits	3-3
3-C. Manufactured Housing Permits Issued in Gilmer County	3-4
3-D. Age of Housing	3-5
3-E. Condition of Housing	3-5
3-F. Housing Tenure – Occupied Housing Units	3-6
3-G. Housing Tenure – Vacant Housing Units	3-7
3-H. Average Home Sale Price in 2000	3-8

3-I. Cost of Housing	3-8
3-J. Percent of Housing Units Cost Burdened by Income Level	3-9
3-K. Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income	3-9
3-L. Adult and Child Protective Service Cases	3-11
3-M. Percentage of Persons with Disabilities	3-11
3-N. Gilmer County ADB Medicaid Recipients	3-11
3-O. Migrant Children in Gilmer County	3-12
3-P. Projected Number of Housing Units: Gilmer County	3-14
3-Q. Revised Projected Number of Housing Units: Gilmer County	3-14
3-R. Projected Number of Housing Units: Ellijay	3-15
3-S. Projected Number of Housing Units: East Ellijay	3-15

Element 4: Natural and Cultural Resources

4-A. Watershed Protection Criteria	4-5
4-B. Section 303(d) List of Impaired Streams in Gilmer County	4-6
4-C. Soil Associations and Soil Suitability for Land Uses in Gilmer County	4-19
4-D. Farms and Farmland in Gilmer County	4-21
4-E. Forest Acreage in Gilmer County by Ownership	4-23
4-F. Volume of Saw Timber and Growing Stock in Gilmer County	4-23
4-G. Rare and Protected Plants	4-24
4-H. Rare and Protected Animals	4-25
4-I. Governor’s Greenspace Program Proposal	4-31
4-J. Residential Historic Resources	4-33
4-K. Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Historic Resources	4-36
4-L. Transportation-Related Historic Resources	4-36
4-M. Historic Barns	4-37
4-N. Gilmer County Cemeteries	4-40

Element 5: Community Facilities and Services

5-A. Level of Service for Water Customers Using Base Meter Equivalent	5-3
5-B. Water Infrastructure Needs for the Planning Horizon	5-5
5-C. Water Transmission and Distribution Capital Projects: 7/1/04 to 6/31/09	5-7
5-D. Level of Service for Sewer Customers Using Base Meter Equivalent	5-9
5-E. Sewer Infrastructure Needs for the Planning Horizon	5-10
5-F. Sewage Treatment, Collection, and Transmission Capital Projects: 7/1/04 to 6/31/09	5-12
5-G. Waste Reduction Measures	5-15
5-H. Law Enforcement Facilities and Resources	5-16
5-I. Gilmer County Crime Statistics by Offense	5-16
5-J. Fire Protection and Emergency Management Resources	5-17
5-K. Average Annual Number of Health Department Clients/Patients	5-21
5-L. Gilmer County Public School System Facilities	5-25

Element 6: Land Use

6-A. Existing Land Use in Gilmer County	6-2
6-B. Projected Future Land Use Needs in Gilmer County	6-11
6-C. Projected Future Land Use Needs in Ellijay and East Ellijay	6-11

Element 7: Intergovernmental Coordination

7-A. Governor’s Greenspace Program Proposal	7-6
---	-----

Element 8: Transportation

8-A. Classification of Roads in Gilmer County 8-3
8-B. Ellijay City Streets 8-4
8-C. East Ellijay City Streets 8-6
8-D. Traffic Counts at Select Stations in Gilmer County 8-7
8-E. Growth in Traffic Volumes on Highway 515 8-9
8-F. Highway Segments with the Greatest Average Annual Growth in Traffic Volumes 8-9
8-G. Lane Mileage of Public Roads by Surface Type in 2002 8-9
8-H. Gilmer County Traffic Accident Data 8-10
8-I. Locally Owned Federal Aid Route Inspected Bridges in Gilmer County 8-11
8-J. 2004 – 2006 State Transportation Improvement Program and Selected
Construction Work Program Projects for Gilmer County 8-25
8-K. Possible Future Roadway Improvements 8-27

List of Acronyms

ABD – Aged, Blind, or Disabled
BMP – Best Management Practice
COE – United States Army Corps of Engineers
DCA – Georgia Department of Community Affairs
DOT – Department of Transportation
DNR – Georgia Department of Natural Resources
EPD – Environmental Protection Division (of the Department of Natural Resources)
DEMA – Dedicated Ellijay Merchants and Associates
EDA – Economic Development Authority
EPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency
ETC – Ellijay Telephone Company
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
GAHA – Gilmer County Arts and Heritage Association
GEDA – Georgia Economic Development Association
GNRR – Georgia Northeastern Railroad
LOS – Level of Service
MATS – Mountain Area Transportation System
MGD – Million Gallons per Day
MTPT – MultiModal Transportation Planning Tool
NAICS – North American Industry Classification System
NFIP – National Flood Insurance Program
NGRDC – North Georgia Regional Development Center
NRCS – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
RESA – North Georgia Regional Educational Services Agency
SCS – Soil Conservation Service
SDS – Service Delivery Strategy
SIC – Standard Industrial Classification
STIP – Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
STWP – Short Term Work Program
SWAP – Source Water Assessment Program
SWCC – Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission
SWPP – Source Water Protection Plan
TMDL – Total Maximum Daily Load
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
WMA – Wildlife Management Area
WPCP – Water Pollution Control Plant
WSA – Water and Sewerage Authority

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this Joint Comprehensive Plan is to coordinate planning on interjurisdictional issues and provide a policy framework for guiding long range and day-to-day decision making for local government officials and administrators of Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay. The plan represents participation in the coordinated planning process set forth by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 which requires that local governments prepare a local plan in order to retain their “Qualified Local Government” status. This status is needed for eligibility for state grants, loans, and permits.

The State’s Minimum Planning Standards require an inventory and assessment of characteristics related to population, economic development, natural and cultural resources, community facilities, housing, land use patterns, intergovernmental coordination, and transportation. Based upon this background information, communities are asked to assess current issues and project future needs, and develop policies and implementation strategies. Finally, the process requires the preparation of a work program of the specific implementation strategies that the local governments propose to achieve within the five year period after plan adoption.

In addition to being a blueprint for community development and long term growth, a comprehensive plan is used to guide the drafting of future regulations and will become the measure by which the courts judge local zoning decisions once land controls are adopted. Therefore, in order to meet legal challenges to its future growth management strategies, a community’s land development regulations must be consistent with the goals and policies in its comprehensive plan.

The local governments in Gilmer County adopted their first comprehensive plan per the Georgia Planning Act requirements in 1994. This Comprehensive Plan update is for the 2004 through 2025 planning period. It has been prepared in consideration of the State’s Quality community Goals and Objectives which have been adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

The Public Process

The Georgia Planning Act strongly emphasizes public participation in the process of developing a comprehensive plan. For this plan, seven advisory groups were established to review and comment upon the various plan elements. Each group met to review the inventory and assessment sections and develop goals and objectives. The Land Use advisory group met two times, once to discuss existing land use and another time to review future land use. Following is a list of the public hearings and workshops which were held in conjunction with the preparation of this plan.

February 26, 2004 – Joint Public Hearing: This hearing was held to present the purpose of the plan, the planning process and schedule, and the public participation program.

March 2, 2004 – Economic Development Workshop
March 2, 2004 – Housing Workshop

March 16, 2004 – Natural and Cultural Resources Workshop
March 16, 2004 – Community Facilities Workshop

March 30, 2004 – Land Use Workshop #1
March 30, 2004 – Intergovernmental Coordination Workshop

April 20, 2004 – Land Use Workshop # 2
April 20, 2004 – Transportation Workshop

June 18, 2004 – The complete draft plan was made available for public review in hardcopy format at the Gilmer County Library, Ellijay City Hall, East Ellijay City Hall, and the Gilmer County Commissioners Office.

July 1, 2004 – Joint Public Hearing: This hearing was held to brief the community on the contents of the draft Comprehensive Plan; provide an opportunity for residents to make suggestions, additions, or revisions; and to inform the community of when the plan will be submitted to the Regional Development Center and Department of Community Affairs for review.

July 13, 2004 – City Council Meeting, City of East Ellijay. Resolution to approve transmittal of the Draft Comprehensive Plan to the North Georgia Regional Development Center for review.

July 22, 2004 – County Commission Meeting, Gilmer County. Resolution to approve transmittal of the Draft Comprehensive Plan to the North Georgia Regional Development Center for review.

July 26, 2004 – City Council Meeting, City of Ellijay. Resolution to approve transmittal of the Draft Comprehensive Plan to the North Georgia Regional Development Center for review.

This plan update has been prepared by the North Georgia Regional Development Center with the substantial involvement and input from local elected officials from each jurisdiction, city and county staff, various public and private agencies and groups, and members of the general public.

The Vision

A vision for the future of Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay evolved out the planning process and is articulated as follows:

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.*

The following images are intended to illustrate the desired characteristics of **livability** :

Healthy Residential Neighborhoods: including traditional single-family neighborhoods, multi-family developments, and “resort” communities



Thriving Commercial Areas and Activity Centers: including pedestrian-oriented and auto-oriented commercial development as well as places where the community can gather for special events



Strong Agricultural Establishments:



Outstanding Public Facilities and Services:



The positive aspects of the **community's character** can be illustrated with images of the area's abundant natural resources and rich history.

