

**HARRIS COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



2009-2029

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**Harris County
Comprehensive Plan 2009-2030
Community Assessment**

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Introduction

As the first part of the Harris County Comprehensive Plan the community assessment includes the following:

- a list of potential issues and opportunities the County may want to take action on, an analysis of existing development patterns, including map of recommended character areas to be considered in the development of the community’s vision statement,
- an evaluation of current policies, activities, and
- development patterns for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives.



■ Harris County

Finally the community assessment includes an analysis of data and information and the potential issues and opportunities prevalent to the community.

Population

Population in Harris County is projected to increase by approximately 27,000 persons over the next twenty (20) years, with older citizens becoming a greater percent of total population and with the population of the County becoming better educated and more affluent. The racial composition will not change much with whites representing the majority of Harris County’s population. Harris County will also see an increase in the Asian/Latino community.

Overall, the rate of growth in Harris County depends on local development policies, the availability of infrastructure and the cost of housing. As has been mentioned, Harris County and the municipalities of Harris County are located in a region of the State where growth is happening at a never before seen pace. The question is not whether it will grow but how fast and what type of development will occur. Fortunately the County and municipalities have control over future growth by controlling the placement and timing of infrastructure development and by implementing their respective land use policies.

Harris County and Municipalities/State of Georgia Total Population and Population Projection 2000-2030

County/City	YEAR						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Harris County	23,695	26,925	30,155	35,226	40,302	48,263	56,227
Hamilton	446	501	556	611	668	723	1,112
Pine Mountain	1,141	1,212	1,282	1,409	1,537	1,766	1,995
Shiloh	423	437	450	475	500	542	585
Waverly Hall	709	780	853	952	1,052	1,192	1,332
State of Georgia	8,186,453	8,868,675	9,550,897	10,233,118	10,915,340	11,597,562	12,279,784

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Lower Chattahoochee RDC, Georgia Guide, 2008

Issues

- Providing Infrastructure for a growing population (water, sewer, schools, transportation, etc.).
- Providing additional classrooms and school facilities for a growing population.
- Paying for Growth.
- Increasing Property Values and potentially increasing Taxes.

Opportunities

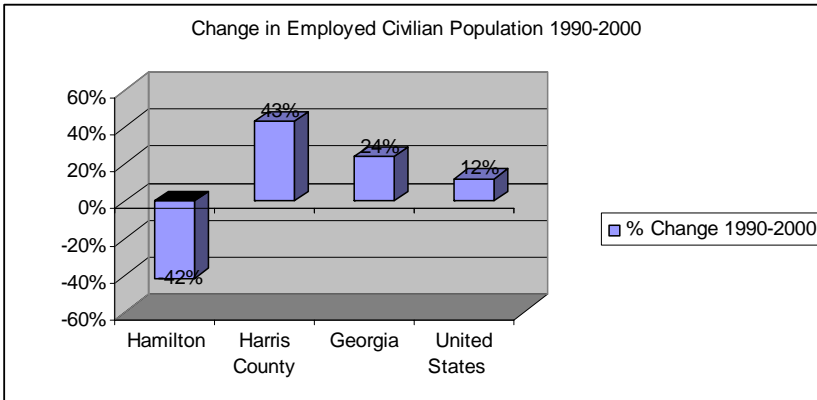
- Diversifying population.
- Expanding tax base from new residential, commercial and industrial growth.
- Expanding local job opportunities.
- Expanding community investment.
- Increase in civilian and military populations.

Economic Development

Harris County's economic profile, historically and currently, reveal a strong dependence on the tourist industry (service and retail sectors). Tourism and employment numbers are included in the service producing employment sector. In 2004, the total number of employees located in Harris County was 4,681. Of the total employees, 46.5 percent were employed in the service producing sector followed by 29.0 percent in the goods producing sector, and 24.3 employed in government. Statewide, in 2004 the service producing industry is the largest employment sector, contributing 65.4 percent of the state's jobs. This sector includes everything except goods producing and government related jobs. Harris County continues to have a significant amount of their population that works outside of the County. In 1990, 67 percent of Harris County residents worked outside of Harris County. In 2000, 75 percent of Harris County citizens worked outside their County of residence. This is indicative of the lack of industry or other businesses in the County. With the creation of the Northwest Harris Business Park in the County it is anticipated that many of the supply and service facilities needed to support the Kia Plant in West Point will locate in this park and bring jobs to Harris County. Also, the County has established the Hamilton Business Park which is located in the city limits of Hamilton. While the park is undeveloped at this time, the County plans to develop and market the park to businesses which would not be appropriate for the Northwest Harris Business Park. It is hoped that the availability of these two business parks will attract business facilities and thus jobs and reversing the trend of Harris County residents working out of County. Historically from 1980-2000, the major employment sectors for residents of Harris County have been construction, finance, insurance, real estate, manufacturing, retail trade,

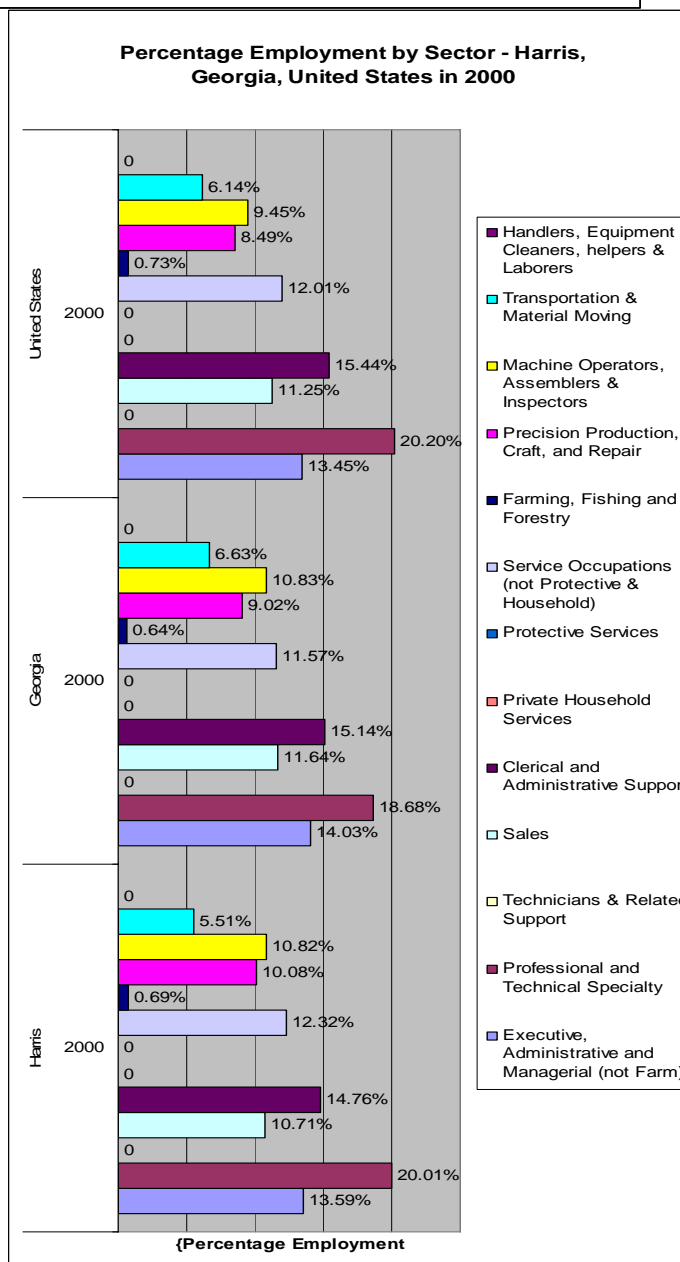
educational, health and social services. In 2000, those five industry sectors employed 62 percent of the 11,821 employed Harris County civilian population.

The Fort Benning expansion and Kia will have a positive impact on job growth in Harris County for the next 20 years. Employment is projected to grow in all of the industrial sectors with the exception of Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Mining. The largest growth sectors will be the Educational, Health and Social Services, Finance, Insurance and Real Estate and Construction.



This chart illustrates the change in employed civilian population in Hamilton, Harris County, Georgia and the United States. The City of Hamilton actually experienced employed population decline between 1990 and 2000. This trend is expected to reverse when results of the 2010 census are released.

The data for Georgia and employment and to the state



following chart demonstrates the 2000 employment by sector in Harris County, the United States. In 2000, the sector for Harris County is Professional Technical Specialty which corresponds and national data.

Issues

- No Business and Retention Plan.
- Lack of local incentives to attract businesses.
- Lack of public transportation.
- Lack of Continuing Education Opportunities within the County. Residents must drive to Columbus, West Point or LaGrange for secondary education.

Opportunities

- Hamilton and Northwest Harris Business Parks.
- Implementing additional public facilities necessary for commercial development.
- Educational Opportunities – excellent K-12 school system.
- Retail/commercial opportunities due to Kia and supplier locations.
- A diverse and educated workforce.
- Many natural resources/Callaway Gardens.

Housing

According to the 2000 Census housing inventory consisted of 10,288 housing units. The primary type of housing for both Harris County and the communities is single-family housing unit. This type of housing is predominant; 81 percent of existing housing stock in Harris County is single-family. Another form of housing, manufactured housing unit, is prevalent in the County; 16 percent of the existing housing stock is manufactured housing. Harris County has a larger percentage of single-family and manufactured housing units than the State of Georgia's average. Currently, Harris County is below the State average of multi-family units, at 3 percent. The percentage of single-

family housing in the municipalities is less than the County, while the percentage of multi-family housing is higher in the municipalities than in the County. The higher percentage in the municipalities is due in part because sewage is available (Hamilton and Pine Mountain) which allows for higher density housing.

The ratio of single-family detached to single-family attached/multi-family will change over the next 20 years with the development of mixed-use developments. Two such developments, The Grove and West Point Holdings, intend to build single-family attached homes in Harris County, with The Grove also building several acres of apartments.



In 2000, the housing vacancy rate in Harris County was higher for both owner (2.29%) and renter (11.29%) housing units than the State of Georgia which was 2.24 percent for owner occupied housing and 8.46 percent for rental housing. Housing costs in Harris County have been higher when compared to the State of Georgia, with a median property value of \$122,700 in 2000 as compared to the State of Georgia median value of \$111,200. The average value on a single family home, based on 2001 Harris County building permit information, was \$190,891. The average 2008 building permit value for a Harris County single family home was \$227,176, which is a 19 percent increase from 2001. From a cost burden standpoint 21.1 percent of Harris County home owners and renters pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing cost while 22.1 percent of home owners and renters in the State of Georgia pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing cost. With anticipated county and area growth, both the value of property and monthly rent cost are expected to increase.

**Table 1
Housing Unit Types
By Number Of Units And Percentage Of Total Units - 2000**

Jurisdiction	Number of Units	Percent of Single Family	Percent of Multi-Family	Percent of Manufactured Housing
Harris County	10,288	81%	3%	16%
Hamilton	191*	74%	24%	2%
Pine Mountain	892	76%	23%	1%
Shiloh	172	59%	0	41%
Waverly Hall	240	87%	4%	9%
Region	102,111	68%	22%	10%
Georgia	3,281,737	67%	21%	12%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, LCRDC Regional Plan

*Housing number adjusted to reflect Census 2000 under count

**Table 2
Occupancy Characteristics - 2000**

Jurisdiction	Owner Occupied Units	Percent Of Occupied Housing	Renter Occupied Units	Percent Of Occupied Housing	Total Occupied Units	Vacant Units	Percent of Total Housing Units	Owner Vacancy Rate	Renter Vacancy Rate
Harris Co.	7,596	86%	1,226	14%	8,822	1466	14%	2.29%	11.29%
--Hamilton	103*	60%	69*	40%	172	19*	10%	10.71%	0
--Pine Mountain	240	50%	238	50%	478	414	46%	2.83%	2.46%

--Shiloh	114	74%	41	26%	155	17	10%	0	12.77%
--Waverly Hall	198	83%	42	17%	240	0	0%	0	0
--LCRDC Region	55,186	60%	36,235	40%	91,421	10,690	11%	2.71%	9.25%
--State of Georgia	2,029,293	67%	977,076	33%	3,006,369	275,368	8%	2.24%	8.46%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

*Housing number adjusted to reflect Census 2000 under count

Issues

- Availability of affordable and adequate housing for future residents.
- Increase of rental units in the last 20 years.
- Small Areas (pockets) of deteriorating structures.
- Balancing housing cost with housing quality.

Opportunities

- Construction of additional affordable and adequate housing.
- Diversify housing mix from predominantly single family site built and manufactured housing units to quality single family attached (townhouse, condominiums).
- Create housing communities in comparisons to housing developments, retrofit existing housing areas.
- Maintain high level of home ownership in Harris County.

Natural and Cultural Resources

As a result of the expected population growth, development pressures will increase over the next 20 years. Harris County has wetland, floodplain, drinking water sources, plant and animal habitats that need protection. Harris County should expand appropriate infrastructures where increased development density is needed to meet growth demands and minimize the effects on sensitive areas. The County should develop educational programs to promote conservation and protection of important resources for all segments of society. Harris County should continue to strengthen and improve existing regulations regarding development in sensitive areas.



In 1994 a comprehensive survey of Harris County historic resources was completed. This survey will allow planning for future development by identifying any cultural or historic resources. It is an important tool in protecting these significant assets. Harris County has adopted all applicable "Environmental Planning Criteria" ordinances.

Issues

- Harris County has numerous waterways and wetlands. Waterways of importance and their associated wetlands include the Chattahoochee River, Mulberry Creek, Oak Mountain, Flat Shoals, Ossahatchee Creek and Standing Boy Creek. Waterway and wetland integrity needs to be maintained by limiting development in these areas and maintaining appropriate buffers.
- Management planning for significant community resources is needed.
- There is no on-going and active education about resource conservation and protection for the public, local elected officials, developers, economic developers, etc.

- Insuring the public has adequate access to community resources.
- The community has a few abandoned and potentially contaminated properties.
- Harris County has identified historic resources but does not have a Historic Preservation ordinance or a Historic Preservation Commission.
- County does not have an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in summer.
- County does not have a tree preservation ordinance.
- County does not have a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.

Opportunities

- Harris County should develop more means of protecting significant natural and cultural resources.
- Actively educate the public, local elected officials, developers, economic developers, about resource conservation and protection.
- Improve, enhance, and promote the County's natural and cultural resources.
- Develop abandoned rail line as a north/south bike/pedestrian connector between residential, commercial areas and public uses.
- Guide new development away from important resources to conserve resources and minimize waste.
- Strengthen and enforce resource protection regulations.
- Set aside environmentally sensitive areas of the County, such as stream banks, floodplains, or steep hillsides from development.
- Best management practices are required as part of the development process.
- Adopt appropriate site design guidelines for development of sensitive areas (e.g. steep slopes, wetlands).
- Link local trail systems with state designated bike routes and existing trails in neighboring communities.
- Develop programs that encourage infill development or brownfield/greyfield redevelopment.
- Consider developing a greenspace plan.
- Consider developing a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.

Community Facilities

Harris County provides water, Sheriff, fire (volunteer), jail, solid waste, E 9-1-1, Emergency Management Systems/Emergency Management Agency and recreation services for its citizens. Over the last several years Harris County has been in the process of updating many of its community facilities. Below is an assessment of Harris County's major community facilities.



Water

Harris County operates a public water system with the Chattahoochee River being the primary source of water. The Harris County water system serves approximately 7,526 water customers. Residential customers are the primary users of the facility. Harris County supplies water to 7,433 residential customers. Average daily water usage for Harris County's 7,526 water customers is 2.5 million gallons a day. Both Columbus, Georgia and Talbot County sell water to Harris County. Columbus has a contract for 15,000,000 gallons a month. Talbot County provides up to 2,500,000 gallons a month. Harris County has twelve water tanks with a total capacity of 4,400,000 gallons.

Harris County's current pumping capacity is 4,000,000 gallons a day. Future demand for the year 2030 is estimated to be 9,091,871 gallons a day. Harris County's existing water pumping capacity is not going to be adequate to meet estimated 2030 demands. Harris County is working to increase water system capacity.

Sewer

Harris County does not have a county-wide sewage system. To date the County relies on septic tanks for sewage treatment. Harris County does have a contract with Columbus to extend a Columbus sewer line, located on Fortson Road at the Harris County and Muscogee County border, to The Grove. The Grove is a new mixed use

development located at the intersection of I-185 and SR 315. Both the municipalities of Hamilton and Pine Mountain operate a sewage collection and treatment system which serve the incorporated areas. However, these systems do not extend into the unincorporated areas.

Harris County officials have reviewed available sewage system options. Harris County is in the process of developing County standards for package treatment systems. No systems would be allowed unless it meets Harris County system requirements. Harris County may have to use all available sewage options to meet future growth demands.

Solid Waste

Harris County provides “curbside” garbage collection for the residents of the County; this service is provided within the municipalities as well. County trucks pick up and deliver the waste to a transfer station on Barnes Mill Road. Waste is trucked from the transfer station to the Subtitle D Landfill owned and operated by the City of LaGrange. The County contracted with LaGrange in April 2004 to provide transportation and disposal for a term of ten years. Harris County also operates an active inert landfill. The landfill is utilized by the residents of Hamilton, Pine Mountain, Shiloh and Waverly Hall. Harris County operates three manned convenience centers on Harrisville Road, GA Highway 116 and US Highway 27. A convenience center is needed between Waverly Hall and Ellerslie. A convenience center is also needed in the northwest part of Harris County somewhere around the Whitesville area.

LaGrange Subtitle D Landfill has enough capacity at the current fill rate for another 30 years of use. If Harris County continues to contract with LaGrange, their household garbage disposal needs for the next 30 years will be met. The current fill-pit at the Harris County inert landfill is good for another four years at the current fill rate. Over the next 20 years Harris County may have to dig additional pits. Private inert material contractors are also operating in Harris County. Outsourcing inert waste to private contractors is also an option to handle inert material.

Storm Drainage

Harris County’s storm drainage system consists primarily of ditches with some curb and gutters in new developments. The storm drainage system is adequate for normal amounts of rainfall. Harris County officials need to monitor and maintain existing storm drainage systems. In developing areas, storm drainage systems are now required. All new storm drainage systems must meet NPDES requirements.

Law Enforcement

The Sheriff’s Department provides police protection in unincorporated Harris County. Law enforcement is a cooperative effort with the Georgia State Patrol, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and other law enforcement agencies when the need arises. The Sheriff’s Department is located in the east part of Hamilton, on GA Highway 116, in the Law Enforcement Center.

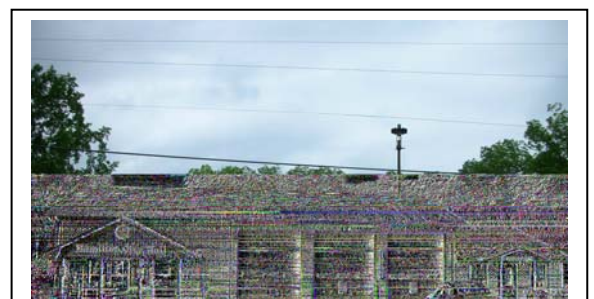
The Sheriff’s Department has 67 total employees, including 41 sworn peace officers currently employed in patrol, investigations and court services. The aforementioned numbers do not include the sheriff, chief deputy and one administration officer. There are two, non-sworn administrative office workers assigned to the Sheriff’s office. There are 21 officers assigned to the jail.

The Harris County Jail opened in 1993. It can house 100 prisoners, although the current jail population is well below this number. The facility provides adequate space for the Sheriff’s office. The Sheriff’s Department is fully equipped and staffed to meet the needs of the present population. As the population continues to grow, staffing will need to increase proportionately to meet future service demands.

Fire

Fire protection is provided by eleven (11) volunteer fire departments and one paid fire department (West Point). Each of these departments, including those within the municipalities, is an independent entity that contracts with Harris County and the municipalities for fire protection services. The City of West Point does not contract with Harris County for fire protection services. The Georgia Forestry Commission assists the departments in field and wood fires.

Volunteer staff and paid staff is adequate to meet future fire protection needs for the next 20 years.



Emergency Medical Service

Harris County operates a full-time Emergency Medical Service (EMS) from four separate facilities. One facility is located on GA Highway 116 east of Hamilton, the second facility is located on Mountain Hill Road in Fortson, the third facility is located in Waverly Hall at GA Highway 85 and O'Neal Street and a fourth facility opened in Pine Mountain January 1, 2009.

The service operates four fully staffed and equipped ambulances, one from each facility. The service also has two reserve ambulances which are utilized during special events or when the main line ambulances are down for maintenance or mechanical failure. The current average response time is twelve minutes. Harris County EMS officials would like to lower their response time to 10 minutes.

Harris County plans to add one more EMS/fire facilities within the next ten years. The addition of one site will be adequate to handle EMS protection for the next 10 to 15 years. Beyond the 15 year window another facility will be needed to meet EMS demands. Additional facilities will help EMS officials meet their 10 minute response time goal.

E 9-1-1

Emergency calls for the Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, and EMS are answered by an Enhanced 911 system. The E 9-1-1 Center handles calls for the unincorporated areas of the County as well as calls from municipal areas. The E 9-1-1 Center is located on GA Highway 116 next to the Harris County Law Enforcement Center. The E 9-1-1 center is fully staffed and operates 24-7 with three employees each on four shifts. Harris County also has an 800 MHZ system with Troup and Muscogee Counties.

The current staff level of three employees per shift allows E 9-1-1 to handle the anticipated growth in calls for Harris County for the next 20 years. From a space standpoint, the existing facility can handle needs for the next twenty years as well.

Harris County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)

EMA is currently located in the Harris County E 9-1-1 Center. A recent building expansion to the E 9-1-1 Center will meet space needs for EMA operations for the next 20 years.

Education

The Harris County Board of Education administers the school system which serves the residents of unincorporated Harris County, the City of Hamilton, the Town of Pine Mountain, the City of Shiloh, the Town of Waverly Hall and portions of the City of West Point. The Board of Education operates and maintains four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one alternative school for grades Pre-K-12. An intermediate school for grades 5-6 will open in 2009. The system offers a full range of educational opportunities from Special Education through gifted programs. The high school also offers a vocational education program. Current renovations/additions include adding classrooms to Park Elementary, Pine Ridge Elementary and New Mountain Hill Elementary which will add a total of eight classrooms.

In the long term, by the year 2030, school enrollment at all levels will exceed existing capacity. Total current enrollment is 4,955 students. In 2030 there could be approximately 9,000 to 10,000 school-aged children in Harris County. Increases in the number of elementary, middle school and high school students are expected. More students mean the addition of classrooms to existing schools, the construction of new schools or both.

Recreation and Parks

Harris County operates four parks: the Charles Moultrie Complex, Harris County Soccer Complex, Pine Mountain Valley Park, and E.C. Pate Park. Harris County has also purchased the abandoned Georgia Southwest Rail Road rail line and intends to use the line as a linear bike/pedestrian trail and utility corridor. Hamilton, Shiloh and Waverly Hall also have walking trails. In addition, the Town of Pine Mountain has two parks, and the Town of Waverly Hall has one park. Waverly Hall is in the process of developing a second park. These are the only local public park facilities currently available to County residents. A comprehensive recreation plan was completed in 2000.

Within the next ten years Harris County recreation staff sees a need for more baseball and softball fields, and adult baseball, volleyball and softball programs. A community center is under design and will be constructed with SPLOST funds. Pate Park in Cataula and Fortson are the areas most in need of new or expanded facilities.

Issues

- Meeting the service demands of aggressive population growth. With expected growth the demand for public services will increase. Careful planning will be required to ensure adequate services are available over the next twenty (20) years.
- Increasing school age population.
- Expanding water capacity to meet projected need.

Opportunities

- Growth provides an opportunity to look at various fees (Impact fees, Subdivision Review fees, Service Tax Districts and Capital Recovery fees) to compensate for new growth.
- Availability of public space and determine what needs expansion, renovation or closure.
- Adequate highway system.
- Development of abandoned rail line as connector between residential areas and public uses.
- Consider developing a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.

Intergovernmental

Harris County's primary intergovernmental interaction is with Hamilton, Pine Mountain, Shiloh, Waverly Hall and West Point. However, working relationships do exist between neighboring jurisdictions such as Columbus, LaGrange, and Talbot County. In order to reduce issues and make the most of potential opportunities Harris County should maintain open communication and dialogue with its neighboring jurisdictions in regards to local and regional issues. The County should maintain proper working relationships between local and regional governments in regards to transportation projects and the impact of development on important regional resources and other environmentally sensitive areas. County officials must be actively involved in transportation and water planning activities either directly or thru agencies such as the Columbus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Middle Chattahoochee Water Council. Lastly, the Service Delivery Strategy should be updated regularly. The Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) update will be conducted in conjunction with the update of the Comprehensive Plan. Harris County is working with Hamilton, Pine Mountain, Shiloh and Waverly Hall to update the SDS.



Issues

- Water availability and impact of development on local and regional infrastructure systems and natural and cultural resources.
- Monitor avenues for mass transportation as conditions dictate.
- Maintain a presence in Columbus MPO/Valley Partnership/Regional Development Center activities.



Opportunities

- Projected growth for area counties and municipalities, an opportunity exists for communities to develop stronger working relationships and to share resources when necessary.
- Service Delivery Strategy will need to be updated as part of the Comprehensive Plan process.

Transportation

The amount of growth in Harris County over the next twenty (20) years will require considerable transportation infrastructure improvements. In general, road capacity is adequate to serve both existing and anticipated volume of traffic within the County over the next twenty (20) years. The majority of improvements should center around minor road widening projects, intersection improvements, realignment of roads and signalization.

From a functionality standpoint I-185, US Highway 27, SR 219, and SR 85 provide good north/south access thru Harris County. East to west access thru Harris County is more of a transportation problem. SR 18 and SR 116 provide good east/west access in the central and northern portion of Harris County. Improvements will be needed along SR 315 which serves the southern portion of Harris County in order to function as a seamless transportation route. Below is a list of needed transportation projects.

- Widen SR 85 from SR 315 intersection to Ellerslie traffic light (SR 315 East)
- Redesign of the entire length of SR 315 to eliminate the following deficiencies:
Intersections at Highway 85, US Highway 27 and SR 219.
- Replace bridge at Jordan Road and Mulberry Creek.

Issues

- Financing road improvement projects.
- Cost of transportation improvements associated with large developments.
- Controlling development/signage and maintaining traffic flow along major arterials, such as US 27, SR 18, SR 85, etc.
- Number of curb cuts/driveways along SR 315.
- Do not require new development to connect with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.
- Lack a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.
- No sidewalk ordinance in our county that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.
- County does not have a policy requiring that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.

Opportunities

- Create a Walk/Bike First Community by expanding existing bike/pedestrian trail routes to create land use connectivity.
- Create pedestrian and vehicular Gateways into Harris County.
- Develop a bicycle/pedestrian plan to compliment the redevelopment of the Georgia Southwestern bike/pedestrian/utility corridor.

Land Use

The citizens of Harris County wish to create and maintain an environmentally sensitive land use system centered upon the single-family home but allowing for various and appropriately located residential, commercial and industrial types and densities.

Key challenges to Harris County officials include developing a land use system that protects environmentally sensitive areas and creates/maintains a greenspace/open space preservation system. Another challenge is integrating walking and biking opportunities into the land use scheme and creating connectivity between future and existing developments.

Issues

- Protecting natural and cultural resources.
- Renovating or removing dilapidated structures.
- Inventory existing brownfield sites; connect developers to the Federal and State incentives for cleaning up brownfields.
- Encroachment of non-compatible land uses in Historic Areas.
- Lack of commercial uses.
- Protecting existing open space and creating open space in new developments.
- No street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.
- Lack of Brownfield/Greyfield redevelopment promotion.
- Harris County does not have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.

Opportunities

- Include adequate space for the growth of employment-related uses, within the Future Land Use Plan/ Development Map.
- Encourage traditional neighborhood development. Traditional neighborhood design should be required when developing adjacent to or within a historic district or areas with significant natural resources.
- Protect natural resources within developments. Promote the use of the conservation subdivision ordinance. Provide an incentive to create greenway connections.
- Create a very desirable development pattern.
- Develop abandoned rail line as connector between land uses.
- Promote in-fill development opportunities in existing Harris County subdivisions.
- Consider developing a guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our county.
- Consider developing a plan to protect designated farmland.
- Consider developing a citizen education program to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our county.

Map of Existing Land Use in Unincorporated Portions of Harris County.



Analysis of Existing Development Patterns

An analysis of existing development patterns provides an understanding of how land is used at a specific point in time. An existing land use map is the first step in gaining an understanding of not only what land uses exist and where they are but how they interact. The purpose of this section is to map and review existing land use in Harris County; look at areas in need of attention, areas in need of protection and areas with development opportunities. The last task is the creation of a draft character area map which groups areas of similar land use characteristics or land use traits. This portion of the plan explains the current situation in Harris County, as far as how the community has developed thus far. The corresponding section, Recommended Character Areas, will be the portion of the plan that lays the foundations for how Harris County will develop in the future, incorporating elements of the smart growth principles.



The following table illustrates the acreage and percent of unincorporated County land dedicated to existing land uses.

Existing Land Use Table

Unincorporated Existing Land Use Classification	Total Acreage	Percent of Total Acreage
Residential	31,772.20	10.64%
Commercial	244.79	0.08%
Industrial	206.10	0.07%
Transportation/Communication/Utility	5,062.55	1.69%
Recreation/Parks & Conservation	37,942.98	12.70%
Public/Institutional	531.00	0.18%
Agricultural/Forestry	218,297.53	73.06%
Vacant/Undeveloped	4,725.54	1.58%
Total Acreage	298,782.69	100.00%

The following table presents the definitions of each of the land use categories.

Existing Land Use Definitions Table

Existing Land Use	Definition
Residential	Single-family residential uses, multi-family residential uses (apartments and duplexes), and manufactured and mobile home units all normally located on no less than two acres.
Agriculture/Forestry	Land used for agricultural purposes such as farming and/or livestock production and timber production.
Commercial	Commercial uses including office use; retail, restaurants, convenience store, car dealerships, etc.
Industrial	Land dedicated to industrial uses (includes both light and heavy industrial uses).
Parks/Recreation/Conservation	State, Federal and local parks, active and passive recreation activities, and protected land; includes land preserved in a land trust.

Public/Institutional	Community facilities including schools, public safety facilities, county/city offices, courthouse, jail, health facilities, churches, cemeteries, and libraries.
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	Land used for transportation, communication or utility facilities (cell towers, power stations, water tanks, and water treatment facilities).
Road Right-of-Way	Land dedicated to road use including right of way.
Undeveloped/Vacant	Land where no apparent active uses exist; property with dilapidated or abandoned structures or overgrown vacant lots.

Areas Requiring Special Attention

Areas Where Development is Likely to Occur and Pressure Community Facilities and Services

The majority of development will continue to occur in the southern third of Harris County below SR 315. A major mixed use development, The Grove, located at the intersection of I-185 and SR 315 was given development approval in 2007. The general development pattern in this area is linear with subdivisions popping-up along existing local and state routes. The majority of development is single-family residential on 2-acre tracts. Public infrastructure has followed development and has also been put in place in areas anticipating future development. Harris County is working on expanding water capacity and making transportation improvements in this area. Due to the advent of Kia, other development is expected to occur in the northwest section of Harris County around the junction of SR 103 and SR 18. Development will follow SR 103 south along the Chattahoochee River to Flat Shoals Creek. Development pressure is also likely to mount between SR 315 and Lower Blue Springs Road from Lake Harding to US Highway 27. SR 18 west of Pine Mountain to Hopewell Church Road can also expect continued development pressure.

Significant Natural Resources

The natural environment places certain opportunities and constraints on the way land is used. Soil conditions, slopes, flood frequency and wetlands all affect where development can safely and feasibly occur. In Harris County, areas adjacent to and affecting the major waterways (Chattahoochee River, Mulberry Creek, Ossahatchee Creek, Palmetto Creek, Mountain Oak Creek, Flat Shoals Creek, Standing Boy Creek and Striblin Creek) should be reviewed for compliance with state and local ordinances and regulations. There are a series of wetlands and flood zones along all of the aforementioned creeks that need to be maintained and protected. The County has slopes between 15 percent and 30 percent. In these areas special design guidelines need to be created and then followed. Development on slopes greater than 15 percent is not recommended. Pine Mountain is probably Harris County's greatest resource. The integrity of Pine Mountain needs to be maintained and its scenic views protected.

Significant Cultural Resources

In 1994 a comprehensive survey of Harris County historic resources was completed. That survey identified 570 resources 50 years old or older in the County. From that survey, 103 were identified as being individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The 1994 Survey also identified four areas with large concentrations of historic resources that would be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as districts: Hamilton, Pine Mountain, Shiloh, and Waverly Hall. As a result of that survey, two individual properties (1. Mountain Hill Schoolhouse and 2. Whitesville Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery) and two districts (1. F. D. Roosevelt State Park and 2. Sunnyside School—Midway Baptist Church and Midway Cemetery) were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. F. D. Roosevelt State Park was also designated a National Historic Landmark.

As of August 2004, there are ten individual historic properties and three historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places in Harris County. Harris County does not have a Historic Preservation ordinance.

Areas with Significant In-fill Development Opportunities

In-fill development opportunities can be found throughout the unincorporated area of Harris County. The majority of opportunities are found in the southern half of Harris County below SR 315. There are vacant lots in subdivisions both new and old in this general area. The rural villages of Cataula and Ellerslie also have vacant lots with public water that provide infill development opportunities. There are also numerous infill development opportunities to the east and west of Pine Mountain.

Brownfields

In general terms, brownfields are abandoned or underused industrial or commercial properties where redevelopment is complicated by actual or perceived environmental contamination. There is no requirement on size, location, age or past use for brownfields. Some examples of brownfields include abandoned gas stations and unused former manufacturing plants.

Some issues involving brownfields are the potential to cause harm to the population and the environment, reduction in employment opportunities and tax revenue, increasing illegal dumping and reduction in the property value for the surrounding area. Redeveloping brownfields can restore property to productive use by increasing property values, improving public health and the environment, and utilizing existing public infrastructure and increasing job opportunities and local tax revenues.

Potential brownfields in Harris County consist of old vacant gas stations and junk yards.

Areas of Disinvestment, Needing Redevelopment, or Improvements to Aesthetics or Attractiveness

Most communities have areas of disinvestment or areas in need of improvement. Harris County is no different; but the extent of areas of disinvestment or in need of redevelopment is extremely low.

Areas needing a “face lift” include small pockets of housing such as in Whitesville or Butts Mill Road in the Pine Mountain area, Skinnerville located south of West Point, Cataula north of SR 315 and the area located east SR 18 and Middlebrooks Road. The County has identified these areas and is interested in addressing these problems in the future.

Recommended Character Areas

Establishing character areas serve to recognize the land use differences that exist in the urban and rural landscape of Harris County. Character areas define future development activities by recognizing what are good land development characteristics that need to be preserved and what are bad land development practices that need to be changed. Desired land use results are determined by establishing goals, objectives, policies and implementation strategies and tools for each defined community character area. The following Character Area Table is a depiction of existing development characteristics. Harris County plans to incorporate development elements that reflect the needed changes within their community to incorporate further smart growth policies during the future development map public participation plan process. Redefining or adding character areas will also take place during the future development map process.

Character Area Table

Character Area	Description/Predominant Characteristics
Conservation/Recreation	State, federal and local parks, active and passive recreation activity areas also includes protected open space (wetlands, floodplains, stream corridors, and natural buffers).
Agriculture	Lands in open or cultivated state or sparsely settled, including woodlands and farm lands.
Suburban Area Built Out/Established Residential/Commercial	Existing residential areas with varied street patterns, often curvilinear, cul-de-sacs, low pedestrian orientation, high open space, high to moderate degree of building separation. Majority of residences are single-family detached. Area also includes scattered commercial development.
Developing Suburban Area/Rural Residential	This area is characterized by large supplies of undeveloped land, as well as very low density rural residential development. It exhibits low pedestrian orientation, large tracts of land, pastoral views, and a high degree of building separation. This area is likely to experience the greatest development pressures over the planning period. The availability of water service in this area makes the expansion of suburban residential development very likely.
Rural Village (Cataula and Ellerslie)	Commercial activity area located at a highway intersection. Typically automobile focused. There is a mixture of uses to serve highway passers-by, rural and agricultural areas.
Industrial Area	Land used for high and low intensity industrial uses including quarries, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution facilities. These areas are found throughout the County.
I-185 Major Highway Corridor	Developed or undeveloped land on both sides of designated high-volume transportation facility, such as arterial roads and highways.
Scenic Corridor SR18 (from SR 219 to Hopewell Church Road), SR 190, Hamilton Pleasant Grove Road and I-185	Developed or underdeveloped land paralleling the route of a major throughfare that has significant, natural, historic or cultural features, and scenic or pastoral views.
US 27 Gateway Corridor	Developed and undeveloped land paralleling the route of a major throughfare that serves as an important entrance or means of access to the community.
Linear Bike/Pedestrian Trail	Man-made linear features for recreation, transportation and conservation purposes and links ecological, cultural and recreation amenities.
The Grove/Mixed-Use	A mixed-use development with a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians.
Other	A district or area that presently does not fit or is envisioned fitting into the other character areas may have a singular use such as a hospital, airport, school/public facility or utility.

Map of Character Areas in Unincorporated Portions of Harris County.

