



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2008-2028

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

for

THE CITY OF OXFORD

December 2007

As Adopted

Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center
Planning Department



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1. COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Purpose

This report lays the foundation for the revision of the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Oxford that will create an agenda to manage growth over the next twenty years. Specifically, the report outlines a set of issues and opportunities, as well as supporting information, related to each of the Comprehensive Plan's elements and based on an analysis of existing conditions and historical trends.

The report is designed to meet the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and adopted on May 1, 2005.

Scope

The report is written in executive summary format to provide an overview of the major findings. Detailed information on existing conditions, historical trends, and future forecasts are included in the Technical Addendum.

The report contains four key components addressing the findings in the Technical Addendum including a description of issues and opportunities resulting from an analysis of the available data; an analysis of existing development patterns; an evaluation of the community's existing policies and development patterns for consistency with DCA's Quality Community Objectives; and an analysis of supportive data and information illustrating conformance with the Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Planning Criteria and the local Service Delivery Strategy.

Methodology

This part of the Comprehensive Plan constitutes a review of the community's plans, policies, regulations, and development patterns by the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center and encompasses solely the City of Oxford.

The Community Assessment is the first step in the revision of the Comprehensive Plan. The Assessment will be submitted to the Georgia DCA for review and approval and will form the basis for developing the Community Agenda. The Community Agenda represents the community's vision, goals, policies, key issues, and opportunities that the community chooses to address, and an action plan highlighting the necessary tools for implementing the plan.



2. IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Population

Aging Population – The City of Oxford is home to a large number of residents over 65 years of age. The proportion of this demographic relative to the city’s population will increase due to the high current population between 45 and 64 years of age (18%). This group will require specialized housing and services, which often include smaller, more accessible units and public transportation.

Oxford College – Oxford College of Emory University contributes positive educational, cultural, and employment opportunities to Oxford residents, though its presence skews demographic data, creating analysis difficulties. It is important to note that the 715 students attending Oxford College (2007 enrollment) account for more than one-third of the official 2000 US Census population for the City of Oxford. This can significantly affect demographic analysis, service provision, and other aspects of life in this small community. Because the College has an on-campus residency requirement for nearly all students, neighborhoods are unlikely to suffer the effects of student-dominated residential areas experienced by many communities with similarly large portions of higher-learning populations.

Economic Development

Employment – Currently, most workers residing in Oxford (79% in 2000) commute to other communities for employment purposes. Oxford supports very little employment at the present time, with the main exceptions being Oxford College, Palmer-Stone Elementary School, and the City government. The proposed Town Center project, a mixed-use development with associated greenspace along Emory Street from Pierce Street to Clark Street in the central-city area, would help to provide a limited number of City residents with jobs, generate tax revenue, and create reinvestment in the State Route 81 corridor. Further help could come from annexation and/or creation of employment-based property. Local chambers of commerce and other development-oriented organizations should be utilized as a resource in economic development efforts.

Tax Revenues – Oxford’s public institutions, such as the city government, four churches, Palmer-Stone Elementary School, and Oxford College, hold approximately 200 acres within the City, limiting the potential for taxable development and the revenue it brings. It should be noted, however, that residential property taxes do not generally pay for the services homes require; thus, residential development alone would be a greater drain on city resources than current use patterns. Given the vast disparity between high-revenue generating land uses such as commercial and industrial and low-revenue generating residential and public/institutional property, Oxford has a weak tax base. This is somewhat ameliorated by the fact that, while property taxes are relatively low, City utilities are charged at higher rates. The City has not indicated a desire to seek out new development solely to increase tax rolls.

External Funding–Awards from federal and state government agencies and non-governmental philanthropic organizations typically require time and skill in grant writing. Additionally, while some opportunities are only available to governments, others require non-profit application; in these cases, Oxford College, as a non-profit entity, could partner with the City to leverage outside funding.

Housing

Housing Stock – City leaders point to an aging housing stock and increase in rental properties, which have led to blight and disinvestment, or a risk thereof, in parts of Oxford. Some of these areas could see redevelopment, eradicating sub-standard housing at project sites and encouraging investment in adjoining and neighboring properties. The City also has an opportunity to incentivize home ownership.



Natural & Cultural Resources

Trees – The City of Oxford has an aging and threatened stock of trees. Utilities (specifically power lines) and invasive species (such as kudzu, privet, and ivy) are compromising the community’s tree canopy, while age has already begun to claim significant street trees as well as those in more natural areas. Programs such as Tree City USA and the City’s Trees, Parks, & Recreation Board, and invasive species management, as well as preservation of wooded corridors through extension of the City’s trail system, will enable increases in quantity and quality of trees in the City of Oxford. Burying utility lines, while not necessarily preventing destruction of existing canopy, provides the opportunity for replacing street trees, particularly along Emory Street/State Route 81.

Air Quality – Newton County is listed as a non-attainment area by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for Particulate Matter 2.5 and Ozone (8-hour). With its small size and lack of industry, Oxford does not likely contribute significantly to the problem, nor could the City be expected to ameliorate significantly the situation. However, Oxford officials should work with the County, other municipalities, and state, regional, and federal agencies to better understand the City’s impacts on and from air quality concerns.

Water Availability – Newton County was included in September 2007 in a “level 4” drought designation, which bans outdoor watering, by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. This points to a decrease in availability of water for residential and commercial use in the near and long terms, and could have significant ramifications on the City’s ability to support growth. City and College leaders must ensure that their community conserves as much water as possible throughout and beyond the duration of this drought and plan for similar situations in the future to work toward sustainable consumption levels.

Community Facilities and Services

Utilities – To pay off debt to MEAG (the public corporation that provides the City with the electricity it sells to residents) and to keep property taxes low, City leaders indicate that Oxford’s electricity rates are uncommonly high, particularly for lower-usage brackets. Aging and/or insufficient infrastructure, especially water lines and the stormwater management system, will need to be assessed and replaced or repaired as needed.

Parks and Recreation – Insufficient parks, open space, and other recreational facilities, plus outdated equipment in the City’s only play area, limits the opportunity to remain in Oxford for leisure purposes. The existing and expanding trail system will increase recreation opportunities in Oxford, as would investment in both natural (passive) and programmed (active) spaces. Efforts to expand leisure options in the City should be spearheaded by the City’s Trees, Parks, & Recreation Board with strong public involvement.

Educational Facilities – Palmer-Stone Elementary School, as one of the few remaining walkable neighborhood schools in Newton County, is a critical resource for the Oxford community, and its continued presence in Oxford should be ensured. Additional land behind the school may be available for purchase should the School District decide that this is necessary.

Intergovernmental Coordination & Impacts

Industry and Other Activity – Industrial and commercial areas located adjacent to the City, such as asphalt and cement plants and a quarry, concern both citizens and elected officials both for the current effects and potential future development of these and other sites. The Covington Municipal Airport, whose property borders the city, also brings noise, visual, and air quality impacts to Oxford. Officials should keep abreast of any activity related to these sites and use their office to represent citizen concerns at each opportunity.



Transportation – A lack of local control over the State Route 81 right-of-way and difficulty influencing Georgia Department of Transportation officials in decision-making have contributed to imperfect conditions along the corridor for the City. Sidewalks are narrow and poorly maintained, and Oxford has been unable to influence the State to employ engineering and enforcement practices that would tackle increased speeding and traffic. This situation could be addressed by the City assuming control of SR 81, though related costs might be prohibitive and state interest in entering into such an agreement is unlikely.

Education – Local officials cite insufficient communication between the Newton County School District’s Board of Education and the City Council. One example of this is local concern for and uncertainty about the future of Palmer Stone Elementary School, which could eventually cease operations in Oxford. Regular reports from representatives of each organization to the other, plus increased notification on the part of both agencies about important events, meetings, and decisions will engender a working relationship between the two groups. Designating a liaison or emissary to the School District would help the City increase its presence in decision-making and sharing information while decreasing potential for missed opportunities by making a single person responsible for such duties.

Taxes – The City of Oxford is incapable of influencing significantly the decisions made by the Newton County Board of Commissioners, though rising county-level taxes concern City officials. Frequent and clear communication between the City Council and the Board of Commissioners is essential for both bodies to represent their constituents and relay citizen concerns from one level of government to another.

Transportation

Infrastructure – Oxford’s roads require periodic maintenance and repair, and streets in some sections of the City are not sufficiently lit. Utilizing SPLOST and general funds to bring roads and sidewalks into adequate condition and install lighting where necessary will help combat crime and other inappropriate activity that can contribute to blight.

Transportation Choices – Though the City’s residents enjoy relatively quiet streets with low traffic volumes and speeds, little infrastructure or service for transportation outside the automobile currently exists. Oxford has begun implementing a multi-use trail system for bicyclists and pedestrians, though further opportunities for incorporating non-automobile modes into the transportation system should be addressed, such as a comprehensive sidewalk network and on-street bicycle lanes where appropriate. Additionally, the City should examine the possibility of Section 5311 Rural Transit service, which would be useful to the transportation disadvantaged, including seniors, lower-income residents, and people with disabilities, as well as residents who would prefer not to drive.

Land Use, Planning, & Development

Standards and Management – Leadership is not confident in the City’s record preventing the blight and disinvestment referred to in the “Housing” section of this document, both in terms of the strength of its code and the availability of staff to enforce it. Investing limited resources in ordinance development and enforcement will materialize the community’s desire to achieve quality physical growth.

Annexation – Oxford appears to have taken seriously the notion of incorporating more land into its city limits, though unincorporated islands and certain adjacent unincorporated properties are ripe for annexation. Service delivery may need to be addressed, and could function as an incentive in some cases.



Land Use/Transportation Connection – A lack of basic goods and services, as well as employment opportunities, within walking and cycling distance results in automobile dependency, which has been linked to obesity, asthma, and other problems associated with sedentary lifestyles. With Oxford’s small size, conveniently located center-city commerce will create shopping and employment opportunities close enough to most residences for bicycling and walking. The Town Center project provides a blueprint for this type of development, which will also bring residents’ sales-tax dollars into the City’s coffers and help to create an identity for the center.



3. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Existing Land Use

The City of Oxford Existing Land Use Map is based on 2005 aerial imagery supplemented with field research and tax records. Where multiple uses are found on a single parcel, the dominant land use has been displayed. Conventional land use categories are used to describe existing land use patterns, whereas a character-based classification system is used in discussing and planning future development.

The Existing Land Use map is the best available illustration of current development patterns, helping to identify issues and opportunities in relation to the physical attributes of the City, both manmade and natural. Analyzing the Existing Land Use map in conjunction with historical trends can help identify how these development patterns were formed.

Table 1 broadly defines the types of land uses found in the City of Oxford, while Table 2 denotes the existing land use by category and total acreage. The acreage calculation does not include developed public right-of-way.

Table 1: Land Use Definitions	
Land Use Category	Definition
Agriculture	These establishments grow crops, raise animals, harvest timber, and harvest fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, or their natural habitats.
Commercial	Comprise the vast majority of establishments typically associated with commercial land use.
Government	This category includes all state, federal or local institutional land uses.
Multi-Family Residential	This category is identified as characteristically urban environment typically containing attached residential development, whether rental or owner-occupied units, of one to three stories. The provision of public sewage is required for any development of this nature.
Park/Recreation/Conservation	This category is for land dedicated for passive and active recreational uses, whether publicly or privately owned.
Public/Institutional	This category includes certain institutional land uses such as colleges, churches, cemeteries, and hospitals.
Single-Family Residential	Comprised of urban, suburban, and rural establishments offering residence or accommodation, typically in a detached style.
Transportation/Community/Utility	Establishments that serve passengers and cargo movements, produce or distribute information, or provide utility services.
Undeveloped/Unused	Land that is not programmed with any use.

Source: NEGRDC



Population and development trends indicate that the City of Oxford has undergone little significant change regarding its built environment in recent years. Discrepancies between the current (2007) and historical (1997) data in Table 2 can likely be explained in some part by variations in methodology and definitions, and should not necessarily be seen as realized differences in on-the-ground conditions in the City.

For instance, while it would appear that Oxford has not lost more than 130 acres of Transportation / Communication / Utility space (much of this can be accounted for in methodology differences), limited residential development has occurred since the City’s 1997 land use survey, which was incorporated into Newton County’s comprehensive plan. Largely, this is realized in previously-platted parcels that had been listed mostly as Undeveloped/Unused in 1997, especially in the southwestern and northeastern sectors of Oxford.

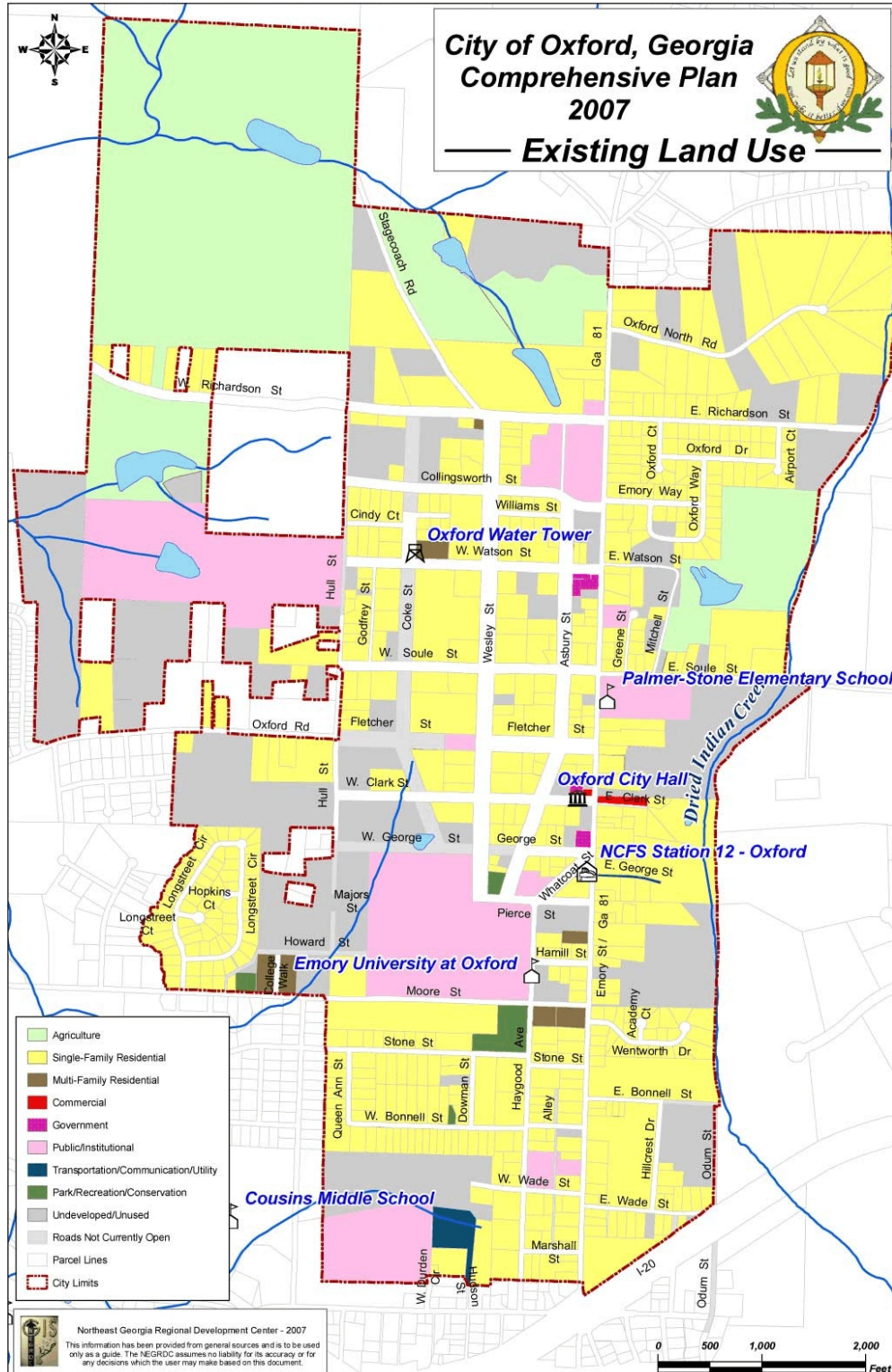
Annexation has also played a major role over time, mostly in Oxford’s western and northwestern sections, where all of the City’s large gain of Agriculture has been absorbed. Other properties not displayed in the 1997 map include northwestern Single-Family Residential space and western Transportation / Communication / Utility land now represented in the city limits.

This changing use of land has resulted in part from development pressures, broadly from the ever-expanding Atlanta region, and specifically from absorption of that growth in both the neighboring City of Covington and unincorporated Newton County.

One relative constant between the two analyses is Commercial use. Oxford’s supply of Commercial land has seen minimal change and is currently quite low, pointing to a dearth of employment- and service-related opportunities in the City.

The City of Oxford’s Existing Land Use map presents an illustration of citywide development and use patterns. The map represents a first draft of the existing land use and may be refined during the public participation process to correct any inaccuracies that may exist.

Land Use Category	1997		2007	
	Area (Ac.)	Share (%)	Area (Ac.)	Share (%)
Agriculture	37.6	3.8	272.8	21.9
Commercial	1.1	0.1	1.0	0.1
Government	1.7	0.2	2.4	0.2
Multi-Family Residential	8.5	0.9	7.5	0.6
Park/Recreation/Conservation	5.5	0.6	5.8	0.5
Public/Institutional	117.1	11.8	137.0	11.0
Single-Family Residential	418.7	42.4	539.8	43.4
Transportation/Communication/Utility	138.1	14.0	4.4	0.4
Undeveloped/Unused	259.9	26.3	273.0	21.9





4. AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION

As growth continues, whether in Oxford or in surrounding communities, it impacts the existing natural and cultural environment as well as the community facilities, services, and infrastructure that are required to support existing and future development. This section outlines areas where growth should be avoided or strictly controlled, where growth might best occur, and where growth could potentially be stimulated. The Special Attention Areas map and supplemental maps illustrate these locales.

Areas of significant natural or cultural resources

Environmental areas typically include wetlands, floodplains, streams, groundwater recharge areas, steep slopes, and small water supply watersheds for existing intakes and reservoirs. The granite quarry to the west of Oxford, the Covington Municipal Airport to the east, and the Interstate 20 corridor all impact or have the potential to impact the City environmental areas and cultural resources.

As shown on the Groundwater Recharge and Watershed Protection map, nearly the entire city, with the exception of limited land in the northwest and east sections, lies within a groundwater recharge area, which necessitates controls on impervious surfaces, effluent, and open space consumption. The city limits avoid the small water supply watershed to the very east of Oxford. Other water resources that require protection are depicted on the Floodplains and Wetlands map.

The Historic Resources map illustrates the importance of the 1837 plan's original extent to Oxford's cultural heritage, as most significant historic wealth lies in or adjacent to this area. The National Register Historic District recognizes this quality.

Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur

The City of Covington's presence to the southwest and east of Oxford, as well as Covington's slowly expanding city limits, creates pressure for development, as does the Interstate 20 corridor. Impacts within the City of Oxford will be realized only to the degree that city leaders allow, in that much of the land bordering Covington is already built-out. The City Council will need to decide to what extent it will allow or encourage development in other areas.

The City's Town Center plan, if implemented, will focus growth, activity, and interest in the center, which presents significant economic, cultural, and social opportunities, but could also pose adverse impacts without proper planning and design.

Areas where the pace of development has outpaced or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation

Given that development has not been occurring at significantly rapid rates, and is not forecasted to do so in the near future, transportation is likely the most pressing concern regarding community facilities in Oxford. Local officials cite increasing speeds and traffic volumes along the SR 81/Emory Street corridor, and have also indicated that street maintenance has not been performed as desired.

If development increases, there will be impacts to community service delivery and infrastructure networks, including water service, law enforcement, and emergency services, without continued investment in personnel, facilities, and equipment.



Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated

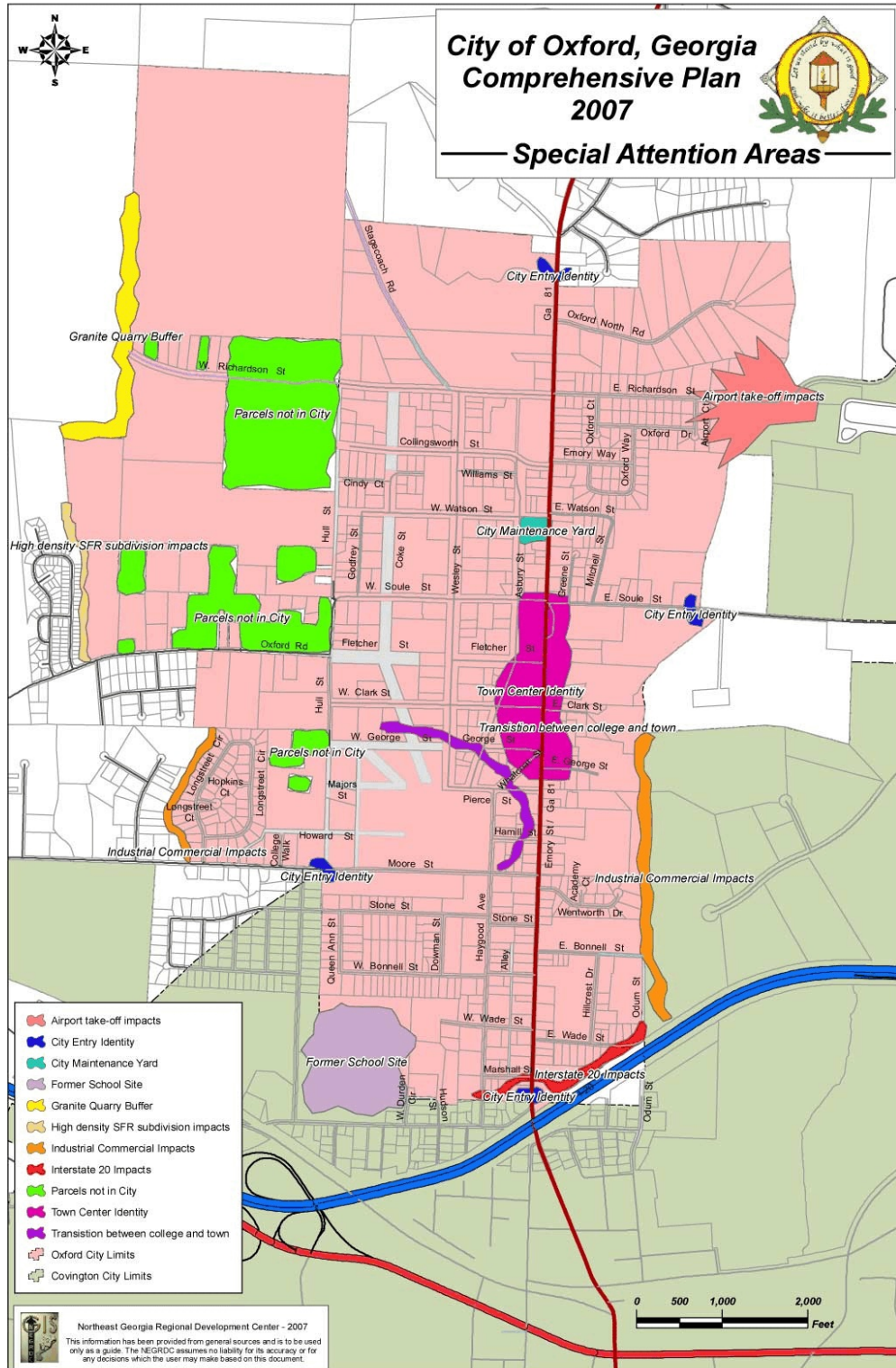
Though it is not abandoned, the former middle school in the southern portion of Oxford has undergone a transformation of use and activity; it currently serves the community with office space.

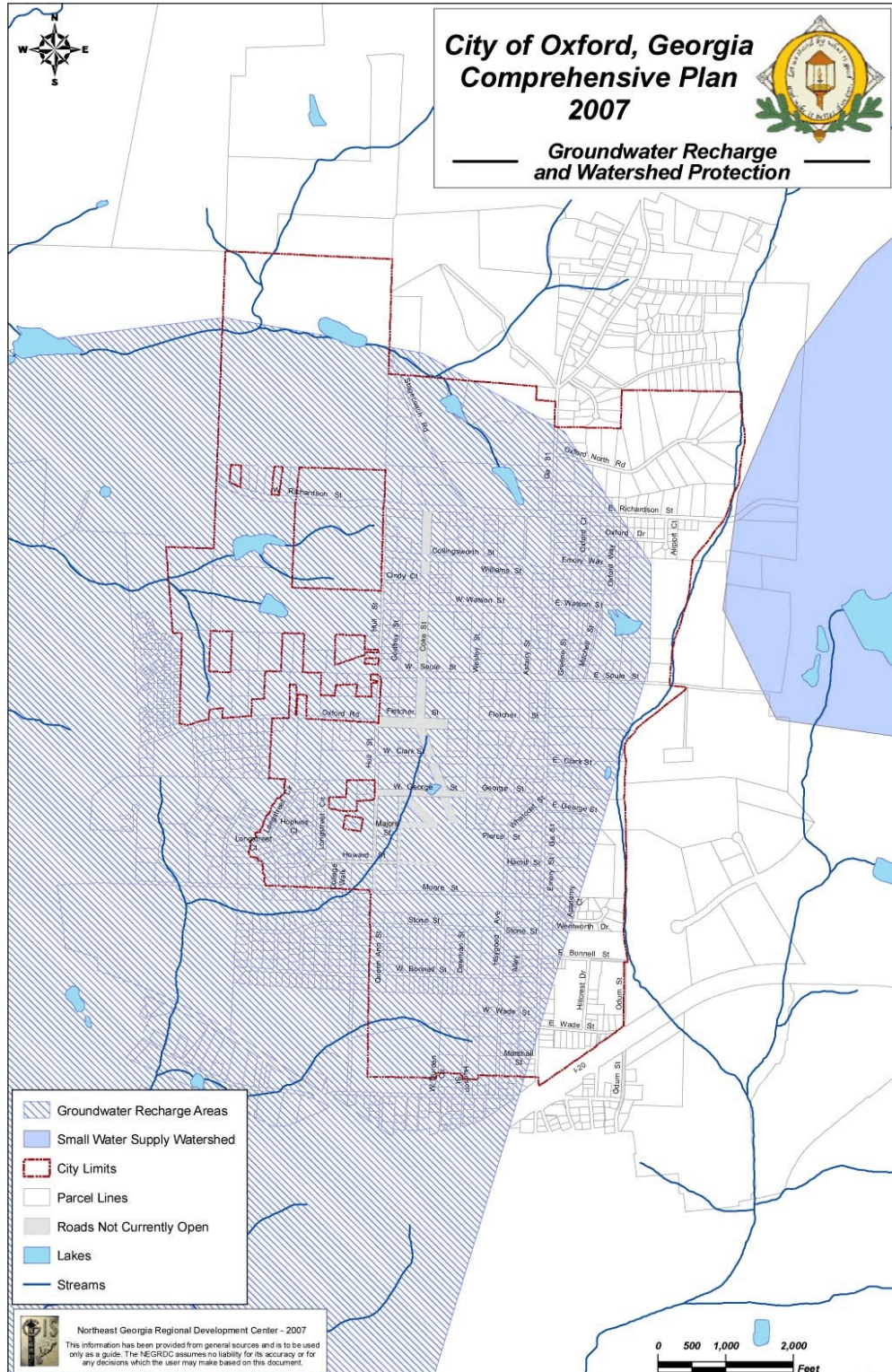
Areas with infill and/or redevelopment opportunities

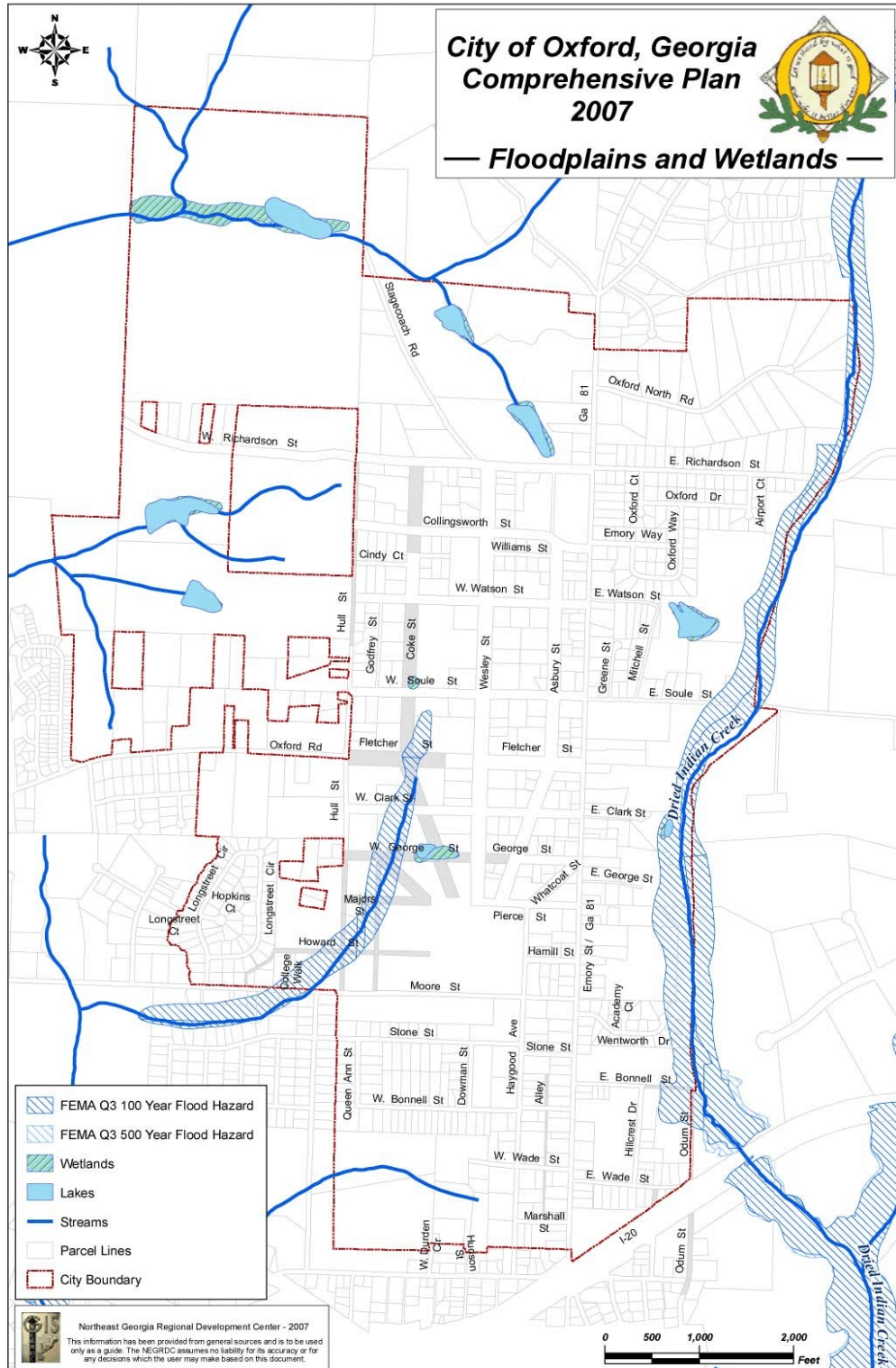
With the exception of the northern extent of Oxford, which currently supports the majority of the City's open and agricultural space, much of the population is evenly distributed throughout, leaving opportunity for infill in targeted, usually parcel-specific cases. With proper land use and development policies, redevelopment of blighted or struggling areas will occur as growth pressures from elsewhere in Newton County increase; allowing large undeveloped areas to be transformed by new development will undermine this.

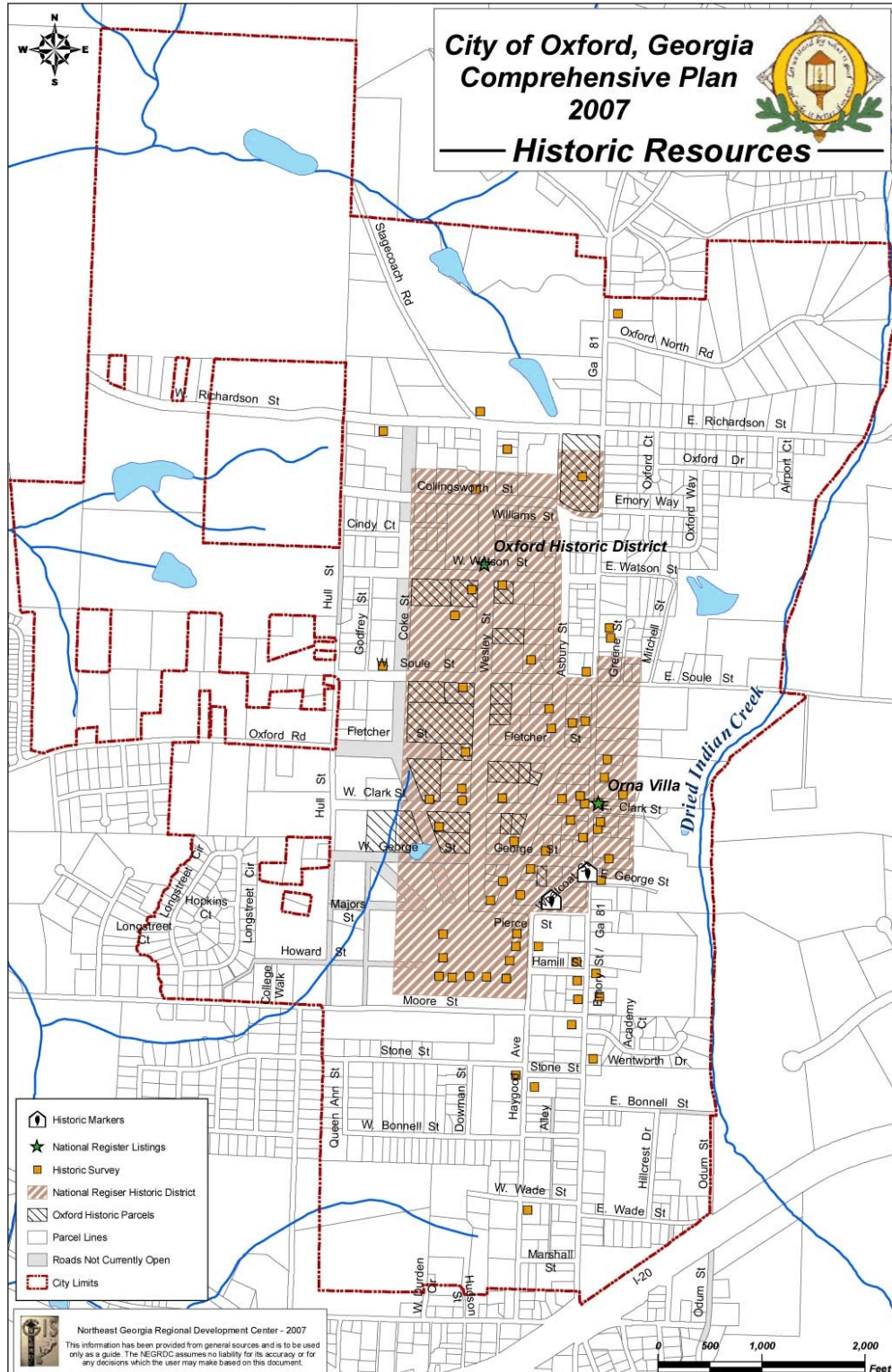
Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment

According to city leaders, disinvestment has occurred in areas where rental properties are prevalent, such as west of SR 81/Emory Street in the southern portion of Oxford.











5. RECOMMENDED CHARACTER AREAS

Character areas are defined as geographic areas of a community that share unique characteristics or have the potential to evolve as a unique area. Character areas can be used to illustrate existing patterns of development and also as guidelines for desired development patterns based on a community vision.

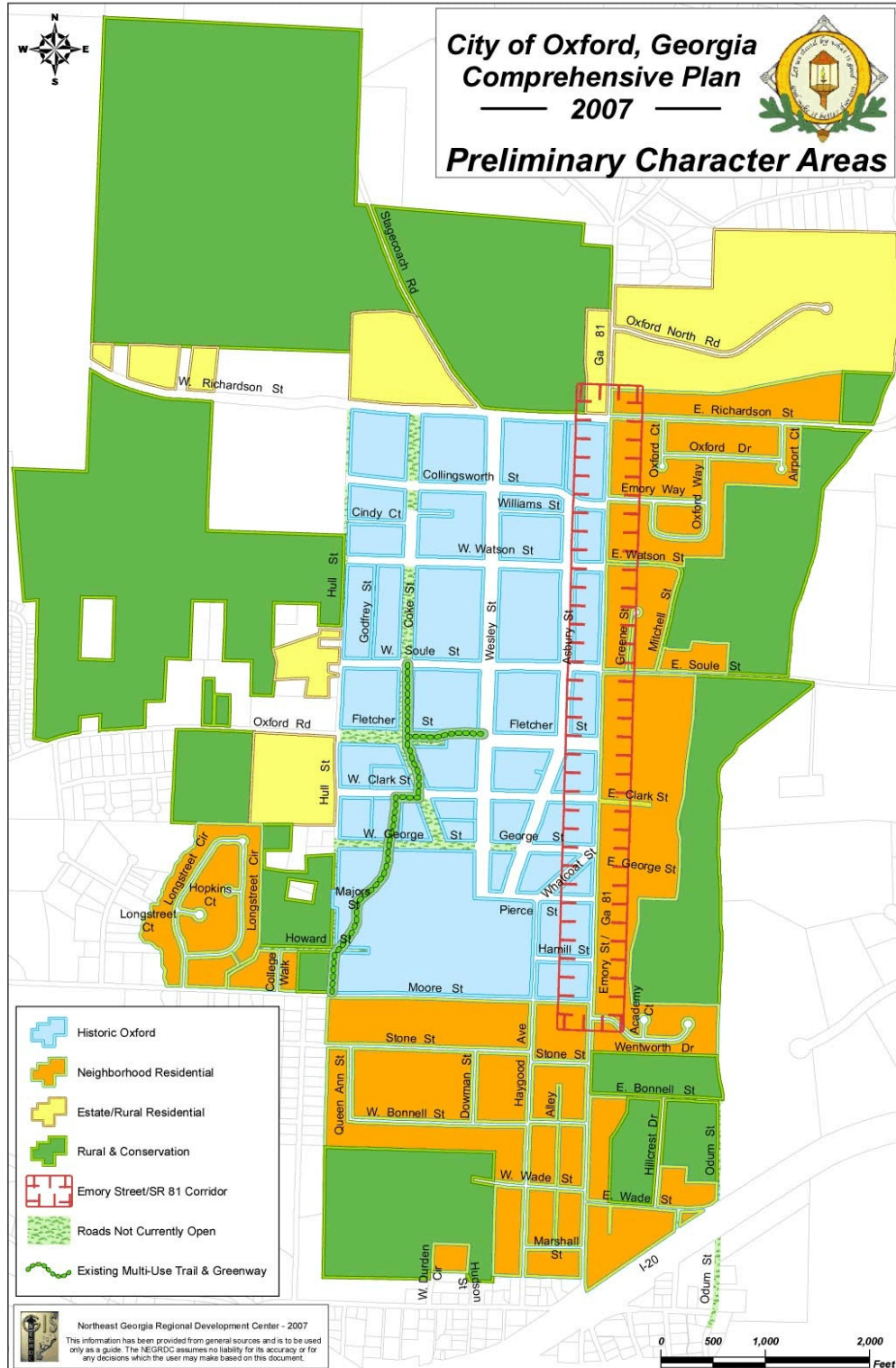
Oxford’s character areas are based on existing conditions and the information contained in the section on Areas Requiring Special Attention.

As the public participation process evolves and a community vision emerges, these character areas will be revisited to make the map compatible with the vision, goals, and objectives of the community. Table 3 and the associated Preliminary Character Areas map represent an objective assessment of Oxford’s existing development patterns.

Table 3: Recommended Character Areas	
Character Area	Description
Historic Oxford	Original 330-acre town and campus surveyed and planned by Edward Lloyd Thomas in 1837. Features residence halls, class and office buildings, and peripheral uses; historic (and non-historic) homes of varying sizes and architectural styles; public-use facilities such as Oxford’s City Hall and Post Office; the historic Methodist cemetery; and a limited amount of office and commercial space. Mature hardwoods and preserved structures (including private residences, the Old Church, and Oxford College’s many distinctive buildings) provide both aesthetic and historical interest. The entire area is designated as a Heritage Landmark of the United Methodist Church, while certain homeowners have elected for voluntary local historic designation.
Conservation & Rural	Primarily undeveloped or developed at extremely low densities, this area is typically wooded or agricultural, with notable exceptions in several large residential-zoned lots and open space owned by Oxford College. The few residences that exist within this character area tend to be isolated from one another and are either historic or in the ranch style.
Estate/Rural Residential	Low-density suburban and rural single-family areas that feature little divergence from the typically residential character compose this group.
Neighborhood Residential	Traditional and higher-density suburban residential neighborhoods, as well as complementary applications such as churches and neighborhood-scale retail or offices, this character area represents a diversity of physical and socio-economic traits. Styles range from single-family patterns of various sizes and designs to duplexes and an apartment complex; many streets share design and functional characteristics such as lane width, speed limit, and signage.
Multi-Use Trail & Greenway Overlay	A partnership between the City of Oxford and Newton Trails is responsible for this bicycling and walking path (and associated typical 20-foot right-of-way) that functions as a recreational, transportation, environmental, and social amenity. te matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics are not contained on-site.



Activity Corridor Overlay	State Route 81/Emory Street corridor between Richardson Street and Moore Street. Accounts for the unique qualities of development along Emory Street, which supports the City's existing commercial activity and professional offices, as well as the Palmer-Stone Elementary School. Predominantly comprised of currently or formerly residential structures that impart a community character. Though use varies, buildings typically address the street and several have historic value.
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6. COMPLIANCE WITH RULES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING CRITERIA

The City of Oxford has adopted a wetland protection ordinance that adequately addresses the Environmental Planning Criteria developed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, as certified by the Department of Community Affairs in 1999. However, the City has not adopted a groundwater recharge area ordinance. This will be a necessary component of the Short Term Work Program portion of the Community Agenda.



7. ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives to help assess development patterns and preserve the diverse and unique character found throughout the State. This provides an opportunity for local governments to assess their progress toward meeting the community objectives set forth by the State.

7.1 Development Patterns

1. Traditional Neighborhoods.

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

Objectives	Status
If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential, and retail uses in every district?	The zoning code does separate uses – no current option for mixed-use.
Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development "by right" so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process?	No, but we are beginning to consider such ordinances.
We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade trees appropriate to our climate?	We have a tree ordinance that requires preservation or replacement of canopy by percentage, but not type. We have a list of recommended, native trees.
Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in summer?	Yes. We have been part of the Tree City USA program for 10 years.
We have a program to keep our public areas clean and safe	No, but by default the property owners generally keep the rights-of-way clean in front of their houses.
Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.	Currently not well. However, sidewalks are a priority in next year's (2008) budget -- \$50,000.
In some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.	No. Other than the post office and city hall, which are walkable, there are no areas to run errands (no commercial).
Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.	Yes. We need to provide for more sidewalks/trails connecting neighborhoods to our elementary and nearby middle school.
Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.	Yes. An elementary school and college are in the community, and a middle school is adjacent.

2. Infill Development.

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



Objective	Status
Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.	Yes. Our Planning Commission maintains that information.
Our community is actively working to promote Brownfield Development?	We have no brownfields within the city limits.
Our community is actively working to promote Greyfield Development?	We have no greyfields within the city limits.
We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development?	No, the community is only two square miles. However, we are considering a "Town Center" district.
Our community allows small-lot development for some uses?	Our smallest current lot size for new development is 15,000 square feet. Existing lots that are smaller can be redeveloped.

3. Sense of Place.

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

Objective	Status
If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where she was, based on our distinct characteristics	We are relatively distinct, especially with the presence of Oxford College.
We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage and have taken steps to protect those areas.	We have delineated a historic district and have established a "walking tour" of historic places, but our ordinances do not protect them sufficiently.
We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.	No.
We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	Yes. We have a strong sign ordinance.
If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.	No, except for Agricultural Residential zoning.

4. Transportation Alternatives.

Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.



Objectives	Status
We have public transportation in our community.	Not for the general public, though Oxford College does have a shuttle between campuses.
We require that new development connect with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.	No, not yet.
We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.	No, our sidewalk system is poor. However, our streets are straight, long, and relatively free of congestion, making many of them reasonably safe for pedestrians.
We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.	No, not yet.
We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.	No, not yet.
We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.	Yes. We have a plan for a five-mile loop multi-use trail system around the town. Roughly one mile has been completed.
We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.	Yes, though currently not applicable (no commercial or retail operating now).

5. Regional Identity.

Each region should promote and preserve a regional "identity", or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

Objective	Status
Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural style and heritage	Yes.
Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.	Yes, some.
Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage.	Yes, to some extent.
Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	Somewhat (through local chamber of commerce)
Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.	Yes.
Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment, and education.	Yes, strongly.



7.2 Resource Conservation

1. Heritage Preservation.

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

Objective	Status
We have designated historic districts in our community.	Yes, though not consistent, and voluntarily based.
We have an active historic preservation commission.	No. We have an historical shrine society that is primarily charged with care of one historic facility.
We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure that happening.	Yes we do, but no, we don't have ordinances in place to ensure it yet.

2. Open Space Preservation.

New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.

Objective	Status
Our community has a greenspace plan.	No.
Our community is actively preserving greenspace - either through direct purchase, or by encouraging set-asides in new development.	No, not yet, but we are considering conservation subdivisions and purchase of buffer areas that will also serve as trail routes.
We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.	No.
We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.	No, not yet. See above.

3. Environmental Protection.

Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Wherever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.



Objective	Status
Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.	We have a public tree inventory, soils analysis, and waterways/wetland/recharge area inventory.
We use this inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.	Yes.
We have identified our defining natural resources and have taken steps to protect them.	Yes – our waterways, wetlands, and especially our tree canopy.
Our community has passed the necessary Part V Environmental Ordinances, and we enforce them.	Yes.
Our community has and actively enforces a tree preservation ordinance.	Yes.
Our community has a tree-planting ordinance for new development.	Yes.
We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	Yes.
We have land measures that will protect the natural resources in our community.	We operate under the County development ordinances that protect natural resources.

7.3 Social and Economic Development

1. Growth Preparedness.

Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.

Objective	Status
We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	No, we do not as a city. Our county and our county seat do, however.
Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same projections.	As of recently, yes, the various local governing bodies have been looking at projections together.
We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.	Yes.
We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth. These areas are based on the natural resources inventory of our community.	We have discussed them, but we have not officially designated them.

2. Employment Options.

A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.



Objective	Status
Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.	No.
Our community has jobs for skilled labor.	Yes.
Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	Yes.
Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	Yes.

3. Appropriate Businesses.

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

Objective	Status
Our economic development organization has considered our community’s strengths, assets, and weaknesses and has created a business development strategy based on them.	No.
Our ED organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit business/industry that will be compatible.	No.
We recruit businesses that provide or create sustainable products.	No.
We have a diverse job base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple us.	No.

4. Housing Choices.

A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community, to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.

Objective	Status
Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.	Yes, to some degree.
People who work in our community can afford to live here too.	Yes.
Our community has enough housing for each income level.	No. We have an imbalance towards smaller, low-grade housing. (35% 1,200 sf or less)
We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town.	No. We have not.
We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or neo-traditional living.	No.
We have vacant and developable land available for multi-family housing.	No. We have developable land, but none of it is designated for multi-family housing.
We allow multi-family housing to be developed in our community.	We have the zoning category on existing developments, but no new available areas.
We support community development corporations building housing for lower-income households.	No. Again, we have an imbalance of housing stock towards lower-income households.
We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.	No.
We allow small houses built on small lots in appropriate areas.	Yes.



5. Educational Opportunities.

Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community - to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.

Objective	Status
Our community provides workforce-training options for our citizens.	No, not in our city, but such options are plentiful in our county.
Our workforce-training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	Yes, county programs do, but there are no City of Oxford programs.
Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	Yes. There are five institutions of higher learning represented in our county.
Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.	Yes.

7.4 Governmental Relations

1. Local Self-Determination.

Communities should be allowed to develop and work toward achieving their own vision for the future. Where the state seeks to achieve particular objectives, state financial and technical assistance should be used as the incentive to encourage local government conformance to those objectives.

Objective	Status
We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.	No formal citizen-education campaign, but planning meetings are open to the public, and members are available for explanation outside of meeting times.
We have processes in place that make it simple for the public to stay informed on land use and zoning decisions, and new development.	Yes – website plus minutes kept at city hall.
We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	Yes, very strong.



8. ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY

Newton County and its cities have recently undergone a revision to the Service Delivery Strategy, as approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs by Memorandum on November 1, 2006.

Evaluation of this Strategy and its consistency with service delivery in the City of Oxford will be conducted and outlined in the Community Agenda portion of this Comprehensive Plan.