



SUWANEЕ 20/20 VISION PLAN

JULY 2012

SUWANEЕ, GEORGIA

AWARD-WINNING
fabulous
green
creative
bold
lively
smile
PLAY
FRIENDLY
FRIENDS
MEETING
innovative
FUN
GOOD FOOD
WEIRD
unique
1000's
DREAMS
PEOPLE
colorful
wild
Dance



PREFACE TO SUWANEES 20/20 VISION STRATEGIC PLAN

Big. Bold. Game-changing. Those adjectives accurately describe the initiatives that Suwanee has undertaken over the past dozen or so years – measures that have helped transform Suwanee from just one more metro Atlanta bedroom community into a distinctive, desirable place to live, a place that stands out for its new park system, vibrant Town Center, and engaging sense of community.

But now what? Now that many of the ideas captured through the planning processes that Suwanee undertook in the last decade or so have been implemented, what should Suwanee do next? How do we maintain the momentum?

The City of Suwanee set out last year to meet these questions in a manner that had served it so well previously: by looking to community-based planning. While citizen engagement has always been an important component of many of the City's previous planning efforts, this time around, as it worked to create a vision for the future through strategic planning, Suwanee was determined to engage citizens in new and more intensive ways than ever before. Citizen engagement provides the cornerstone for good community planning – ensuring that as many thoughts, ideas, and opinions as possible are shared and discussed. But effective planning requires more, namely the winnowing of ideas and establishment, through community engagement and dialogue, of priorities. A strategic plan that attempts to be all things to all people is destined to fail. Successful strategic planning requires that choices be made, and that those choices be consistent with broader community goals and values.

Based on earlier community planning efforts, Suwanee chose over the past decade to dedicate energy toward creating from scratch a vibrant and visible mixed-use center anchored by open space – i.e. Suwanee Town Center. And, Suwanee chose to focus on building parks that emphasized natural open spaces, trails, and passive recreation. The City of Suwanee made these particular choices instead of undertaking other compelling options. It's not that other directions were necessarily wrong, but rather that these particular choices better aligned with the community's goals, desires, and values at that time.

The City of Suwanee has received many accolades and awards for the ways that it has achieved goals identified through earlier planning processes. While the City also has, at times, received its share of criticism for some of the choices made, such big, bold decisions often stoke passions.

That being said, this 20/20 Vision process, with assistance from Interface Studio, engaged more citizens more intensively than ever before and in unique ways not previously undertaken in Suwanee. The City believes that the answers – the values, priorities and driving principles – outlined in this 20/20 Vision strategic plan represent a consensual and accurate road map to the kind of Suwanee our community desires in 2020 and beyond. It is hoped – no, it is expected – that the City and others will utilize this plan as “marching orders” to effectively and confidently implement that vision in ways that are big, bold, and game-changing.



Suwanee citizens have no shortage of ideas for the future.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STRATEGIC PLAN: A DEFINITION

Broadly speaking, planning is a way to guide investment, development and allocation of services in a community. But cities are complicated places and often require a number of different plans to set a course for the future. Thus most cities have transportation plans, for instance, that look specifically at ways to better manage traffic or make it safer to walk or bike. Suwanee has one such transportation plan in place, updated in 2011. Other plans, like Comprehensive Plans, are required by State law and intended as a land use tool. Suwanee's 2030 *Comprehensive Plan* does just that. Completed in 2008, it identifies the physical opportunities and challenges facing Suwanee and makes recommendations for new development that reflect local values.

A strategic plan is a different kind of document. In a typical comprehensive plan, squarely focused on the task of managing growth, it is difficult to adequately address the critical programs and services that help define a place, its people, and the quality of life they enjoy – aspects of community life like the arts, youth services, or public safety to name a few. Simply put, Suwanee has a legacy of effective planning, but until now have not had the important conversations about who we are and what binds us together as a community. The City of Suwanee 10-Year Strategic Plan, known as the 20/20 Vision, is intended to look beyond physical planning and discuss what makes Suwanee, well, Suwanee. The feedback and ideas submitted by the committed residents who have devoted so much time to this process have yielded a clear vision, and a set of goals and guidelines for the City to follow to achieve this vision.

THE 20/20 VISION

Suwanee is a diverse and forward-looking community actively engaged in shaping its own future. The people of Suwanee are working to capitalize on the qualities and values that have made it a successful and distinctive community.

Suwanee of 2020 is....

WELCOMING: A place that everyone of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds can call home.

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED: A unique combination of safe, friendly neighborhoods with excellent open spaces and environmental preservation, award-winning schools, and City amenities.

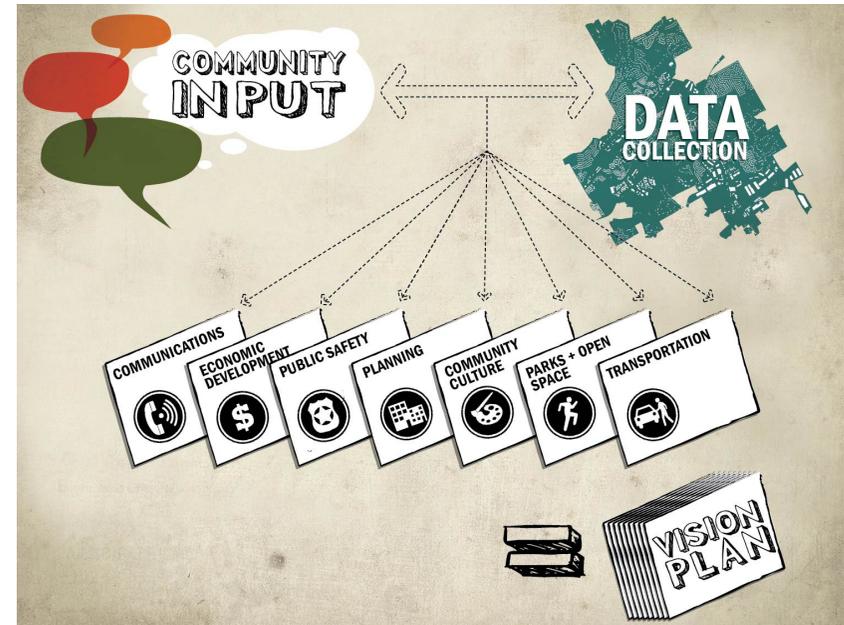
VIBRANT: A center for arts, education, culture, and events with strong commerce and employment.

BALANCED: A well-rounded community where development is a complementary mix of housing, businesses, parks, and recreation facilities that are designed to harmonize people and nature, old and new.

CONNECTED: A community where people come together across generations and cultures and are connected to the places where they live, work, and play.

FORWARD-THINKING: Proactive and accessible leadership that has cultivated a strong reputation for doing things differently and created a distinctive, easily recognizable brand and image.

ENGAGED: A place where all citizens have a voice and are active partners in guiding the future of the City.



Diagrams describing the process of creating a vision and strategic plan for the City of Suwanee.



The Town Center Open House transformed a vacant storefront and was open to the public for 5 weeks in the summer of 2011. It provided a forum for visitors to learn about the plan and contribute their thoughts and ideas.



Community input was solicited through a number of different engagement methods: an Open House, a website that mirrored the Open House, and a Steering Committee that guided the plan and outreach process.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

The success of a resident-driven vision for the future of Suwanee depends on being able to tap the many voices of the community, engage them in dialogue with one another and with the City, and weave the many ideas, viewpoints and dreams that result from those conversations into one common vision. Therefore outreach and engagement were critical components of this plan to reach a broad cross-section of the diverse people who live and work in Suwanee and bring them into the conversation in a variety of ways. To that end, the guiding principles of the process were that it be transparent and inclusive.

Fulfilling the goal of creating a transparent and inclusive process meant creating multiple venues and opportunities to get involved. The City and planning team designed a number of communication tools to ensure that meaningful community input would form the backbone of this plan.

- > A **Steering Committee** was convened to oversee the process and acted as the main instrument for guiding the development of the plan. Steering Committee members were chosen to represent a cross-section of the City and were tasked with assisting the planning team in ensuring that the process resulted in maximum public participation.
- > **20 interviews** were conducted with an array of Suwanee stakeholders to learn about the City from a range of viewpoints.
- > The **Open House** was open for five weeks to allow people to drop in and learn about the vision plan process. The Open House temporarily transformed a vacant storefront in Town Center into an exhibit on Suwanee's past and present. The space included activities and games designed to reveal citizen concerns and ideas for Suwanee's future. Unlike other plans where the issues are framed by outside consultants, the 20/20 Vision tapped local knowledge to identify local concerns. The results of the Open House activities informed the in-depth discussions for the roundtables, focus groups and Steering Committee meetings. More than 435 community members came to check out the Open House and share their thoughts.

- > The **Suwanee2020.com website** provided a forum for people to engage with the planning process from the comfort of their own home. Like an online version of the Open House, the purpose of the website was to involve residents in the planning process and solicit their input.
- > **Roundtables** consisted of small-group, in-depth, facilitated conversations of eight to 12 people per group that allowed community members to discuss important topics concerning Suwanee's future and work together to create a vision for the Suwanee of 2020. There were no City representatives, nor members of the planning team, in any of these meetings. The intent was to encourage people to meet their neighbors, exchange ideas and take a broader view of this City beyond the confines of their neighborhood. A total of 25 roundtable groups, with just under 300 participants in all, were convened four times between September 2011 and January 2012. Each roundtable group had a community member serving as a facilitator charged with guiding the discussion and taking notes to relay information back to the planning team. The vision and goal statements that make up the 20/20 Vision were produced and refined through these roundtable sessions.
- > Seven **focus groups** were organized to discuss, in detail, a few topics often raised but yet to be fully understood. The focus groups represented: seniors, small businesses, Asian community, youth (middle and high school), arts and culture advocates, and young professionals. Themes from the focus groups were folded into the principles and objectives discussed in the last session of roundtables.
- > The City organized a southern **potluck picnic** at the Everett Music Barn, replete with BBQ and a bluegrass band, to provide a forum of public review for the draft 20/20 Vision.

SUMMARY OF THE DRIVING PRINCIPLES & GOALS

The goals and aspirations of this plan will guide city policy and provide a road map for achieving the Suwanee 20/20 vision. The goals that follow reflect the work of the roundtables and the community input collected through the 20/20 website, open house and all of the outreach activities. Each goal in the plan includes a list of potential strategies, culled from community input and insight, which should be considered in working to achieve each goal and, ultimately, to make the vision for Suwanee 2020 a reality. The goals and strategies are organized into seven driving principles:

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT: HOW WE CONNECT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: HOW WE PROSPER

PUBLIC SAFETY: WHAT PROVIDES US COMFORT

PLANNING: HOW WE GROW

COMMUNITY CULTURE: WHAT MAKES US INTERESTING

PARKS + OPEN SPACE: HOW WE PLAY

TRANSPORTATION: HOW WE MOVE



COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT: HOW WE CONNECT

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEE: BE ENGAGED

Suwanee's approach to communication is one that values the opinions of citizens, whatever they may be, and encourages citizens to be involved in a very hands-on way. Citizens feel that the City has done a very good job of using various forms of communication. There's an active spirit of engagement and back and forth dialogue and a strong sense that Suwanee is listening. It's **"still small enough I can pick up the phone and call a city councilmember."** The City understands that to move forward in implementing this plan and others, to support what's working and improve what's not, transparency and a clear mandate from the community are crucial. The following goals are ways that the City can make its communications and engagement strategy even more comprehensive and inclusive so that all voices are brought into the conversation.

- GOAL 1: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE
- GOAL 2: ENCOURAGE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT
- GOAL 3: PROMOTE THE SUWANEE BRAND
- GOAL 4: EMBRACE NEW ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES & AUDIENCES
- GOAL 5: SHARE INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY & REGULARLY



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: HOW WE PROSPER

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: **BE VIBRANT**

The public input process determined that economic development was foremost on residents' minds as the chief area with which the City should concern itself. Groups discussed the need for attracting diverse and high quality commercial development, strengthening local small businesses, and most importantly recruiting job-creating businesses that generate revenue for the City and ensure the future of the City: **"Encourage job growth in general so we are not a bedroom community."** For small business owners, Suwanee is a natural choice: it has great access and great quality of life. The ultimate crossroads that the City faces was posed in one of the roundtables: **"What makes some communities remain vibrant and sustainable while others dissolve?"** The following economic development goals respond to this question and provide important guidance for ensuring Suwanee remains ahead of the pack.

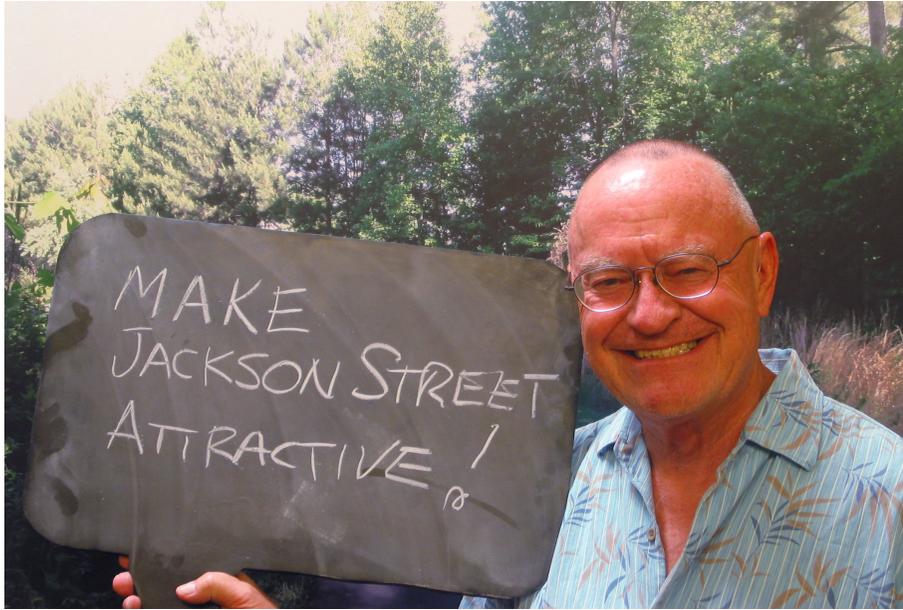
- GOAL 1: FOCUS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AS THE CORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
- GOAL 2: COMPETE FOR THE FUTURE
- GOAL 3: BECOME A JOBS CENTER
- GOAL 4: RECRUIT AND DEVELOP A DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY COMMERCIAL BASE
- GOAL 5: ATTRACT AND RETAIN KNOWLEDGE WORKERS
- GOAL 6: HELP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE

PUBLIC SAFETY: WHAT PROVIDES US COMFORT

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: **BE SAFE**

Suwanee has a reputation as being one of the safest, if not *the* safest community, in the region. Overall, the police force gets high marks from residents and business owners for being responsive, and citizens fully appreciate the high visibility approach the City has taken. Residents also appreciate **"how the police department interacts with the community is significantly different [compared to other places]."** Residents value friendly and engaging police officers with community ties. Having a strong police presence improves quality of life, which is good for attracting and retaining residents and businesses. During the roundtables that produced these goals, participants all felt public safety was a very important aspect of the City's services, generally felt that the City was doing a good job and expect the same quality of service in the future.

- GOAL 1: PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY
- GOAL 2: EDUCATE & ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY
- GOAL 3: USE TARGETED POLICE VISIBILITY EFFORTS
- GOAL 4: EMBRACE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

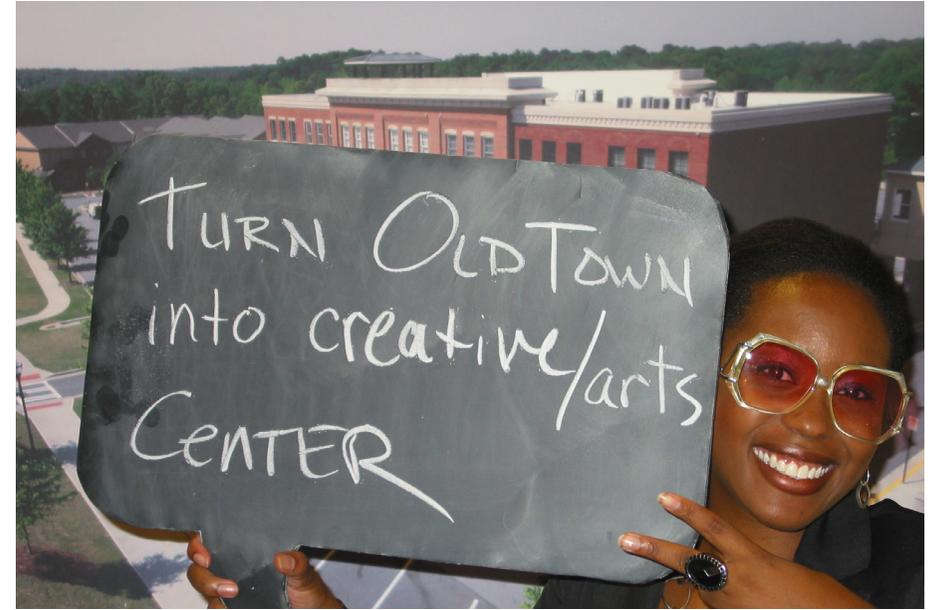


PLANNING: HOW WE GROW

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: BE PROACTIVE

Suburban communities often grow quickly, which can result in a “cookie cutter” development approach that undermines the ability to establish a unique identity. Suwanee has bucked this trend. Throughout the process, residents made it clear that they approved of the City’s proactive and open approach even if they did not always agree with specific decisions. Suwanee stands out; it has an identity that is decidedly not your typical suburb: **“We have a sense of place...this is not just a collection of strip malls.”** To keep its edge, Suwanee must continue to be progressive, innovative, and proactive in its planning. **“The vision is not just what to do to make it better, but what we need to do to preserve what is good.... [just because it’s good now] doesn’t mean it’s going to stay good forever.”**

- GOAL 1: TRANSFORM SUWANEЕ GATEWAY
- GOAL 2: INVEST IN DOWNTOWN SUWANEЕ’S FUTURE
- GOAL 3: BALANCE GROWTH
- GOAL 4: ENSURE LIFETIME HOUSING
- GOAL 5: GROW GREENER & CONSERVE RESOURCES



COMMUNITY CULTURE: WHAT MAKES US INTERESTING

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: BE UNIQUE

Suwanee believes it can and should be a model community. A key factor in taking Suwanee to that next level, in achieving that kind of quality of life, is a commitment to the arts. Public art not only enhances and defines public spaces, but also creates a broader sense of identity, initiates conversations, and is accessible to everyone. Participants in the roundtables were supportive of the City’s approach to arts and very enthusiastic about the many events on tap: **“there’s not a weekend that goes by where there’s not something going on in this park.”** Participants felt that the City has already been very successful in its arts programming and should continue with its current focus and strategies.

- GOAL 1: OFFER A WIDE & DIVERSE ARRAY OF LOCAL EVENTS
- GOAL 2: CAPITALIZE ON THE CITY’S RICH CULTURAL ASSETS
- GOAL 3: MAKE PUBLIC ART THE CITY’S ARTS NICHE
- GOAL 4: FOSTER LOCAL ARTS PROGRAMS & VENUES



 **PARKS + OPEN SPACE:
HOW WE PLAY**

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEE: BE FUN

“There was nothing to do here before Town Center Park. It is Suwanee’s front porch.” Not only do residents love Suwanee’s parks, they have numerous ideas for what to do with them and how to make them better. Now that the City has succeeded in developing its extensive parks system, the City’s focus is to keep the parks in excellent condition, make the connections between them and the trail network, and make park enhancements. The City’s extraordinary green space network defines Suwanee as much as its development does. Aside from being a huge part of why Suwanee’s residents enjoy such a high quality of life, it is also an example of the City’s commitment to environmental preservation and demonstrates its philosophy of responsible development. The green space network also a great marketing tool and certainly a reason to brag: **“Suwanee Greenway - 8 miles of walking/biking trails. It’s a unique bragging right - maybe we don’t boast about it enough?!”**

- GOAL 1: VALUE PASSIVE RECREATION
- GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE EXISTING PARKS
- GOAL 3: ENSURE THE PARKS & TRAILS ARE SAFE
- GOAL 4: EXPAND THE PARK CONNECTIONS & TRAIL NETWORK
- GOAL 5: CONTINUE TO PROGRAM TOWN CENTER PARK AS SUWANEE’S FRONT PORCH

 **TRANSPORTATION:
HOW WE MOVE**

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEE: BE CONNECTED

The most commonly cited transportation issue is **“TRAFFIC!!!”** During roundtable discussions about transportation, dealing with traffic and implementing the sidewalk plan were paramount. The City’s efforts are primarily focused on connecting destinations (jobs, schools, services, etc.) throughout the community in order to minimize the need for a car for every trip and thus alleviate traffic. Reducing the need for car travel means making it safer and more convenient to use other forms of mobility. Currently many of Suwanee’s major roads divide rather than connect areas and are dangerous for pedestrians to cross. **“In this area, high speed is the norm.”** The City values slower vehicle speeds to make the roads safe for drivers and pedestrians alike, and undertakes efforts to calm traffic in various ways, such as narrow, connected streets. The City is also implementing its Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, improving and building sidewalks and greenways.

- GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT
- GOAL 2: MAKE LOCAL CONNECTIONS
- GOAL 3: FOCUS ON DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET AROUND
- GOAL 4: DESIGN ATTRACTIVE ROADWAYS

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC PLAN?

1 STRATEGIC PLAN: A DEFINITION

Broadly speaking, planning is a way to guide investment, development and allocation of services in a community. But cities are complicated places and often require a number of different plans to set a course for the future. Thus most cities have transportation plans, for instance, that look specifically at ways to better manage traffic or make it safer to walk or bike. Suwanee has one such transportation plan in place, updated in 2011. Other plans, like Comprehensive Plans, are required by State law and intended as a land use tool. Suwanee's 2030 *Comprehensive Plan* does just that. Completed in 2008, it identifies the physical opportunities and challenges facing Suwanee and makes recommendations for new development that reflect local values.

A strategic plan is a different kind of document. In a typical comprehensive plan, squarely focused on the task of managing growth, it is difficult to adequately address the critical programs and services that help define a place, its people, and the quality of life they enjoy – aspects of community life like the arts, youth services, or public safety to name a few. Simply put, Suwanee has a legacy of effective planning, but until now have not had the important conversations about who we are and what binds us together as a community. The City of Suwanee 10-Year Strategic Plan, known as the 20/20 Vision, is intended to look beyond physical planning and discuss what makes Suwanee, well, Suwanee.

This is not to say that the 20/20 Vision does not address land use, parks or development. We can't discuss the future of Suwanee without confronting these touchstone issues. However, the 20/20 Vision was designed to discuss these topics in the broader context of the City's identity, services and the needs of its residents, work force and business owners. In addition to land use, the 20/20 Visioning process opened the conversation about Suwanee's future to address economic development, parks, public safety, youth, culture, the arts, seniors, transportation and communication. As such, the 20/20 Vision is not just about what the City can or should do. The 20/20 Visioning process involved the entire community recognizing that our future is driven by much more than City government.

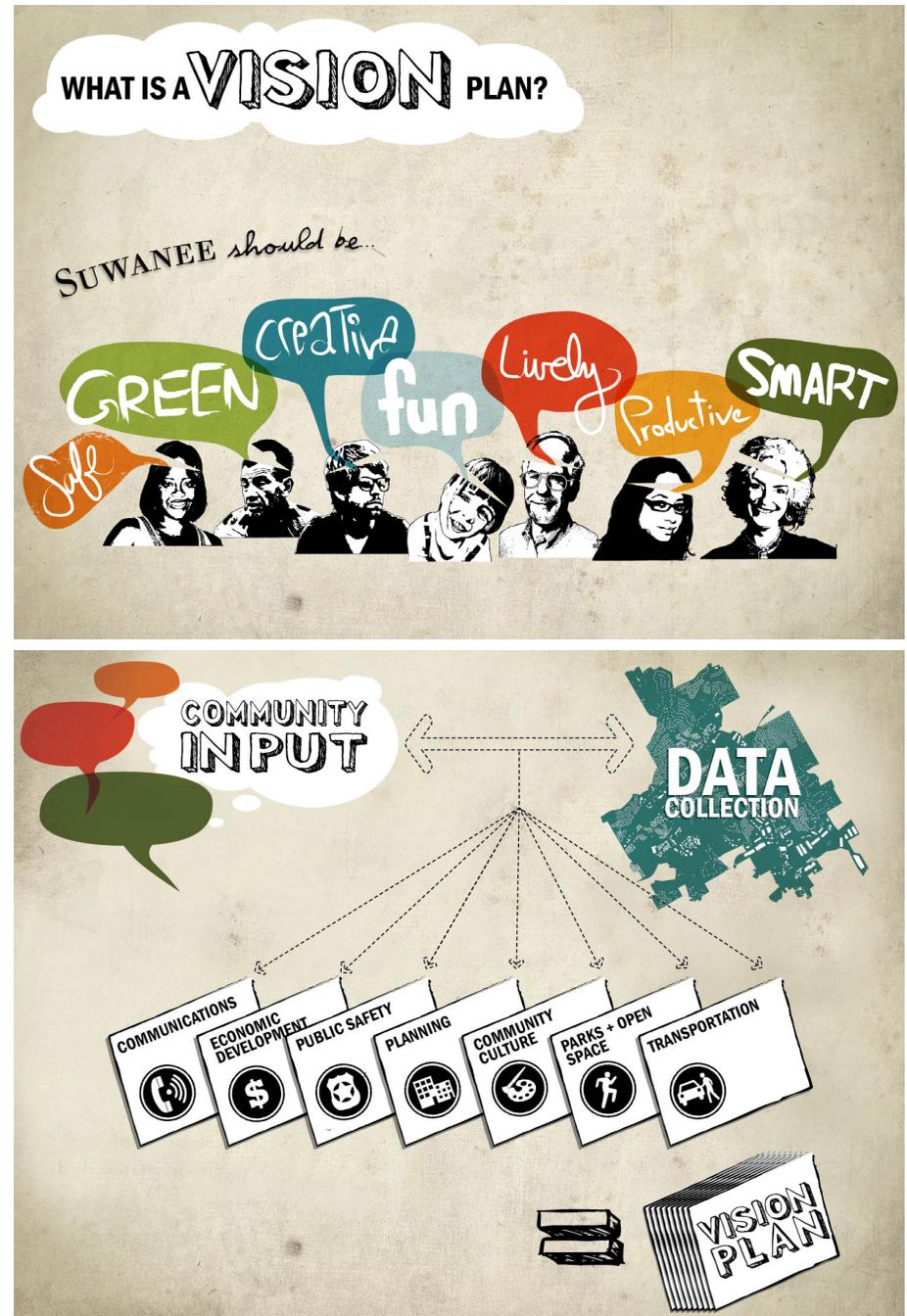


FIGURE 1. DIAGRAMS DESCRIBING THE PROCESS OF CREATING A VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CITY OF SUWANEE.

2 LINKING THE STRATEGIC PLAN TO PRIOR WORK

The 20/20 Vision is an opportunity to bring all of the prior planning work in Suwanee together under one guiding vision. As such, it is important that the 20/20 Vision build upon prior plans. As these other plans focused on specific issues within Suwanee, the 20/20 Vision is intended to help fill the gaps, resulting in a comprehensive blueprint for the City. Each of the following plans provided valuable insight and direction to the development of the 20/20 Vision and goals.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (2001): Prepared by Lose & Associates. This assessment was conducted following the 2000 Comprehensive Plan, which identified the acquisition and protection of parks and open space as a community goal. This needs assessment found that although Gwinnett County was providing adequate active recreation facilities for Suwanee, there was a need for additional passive parks, community gathering areas, and open space preservation. This assessment led to a citizen-approved referendum for the City's \$17.7 million Open Space Initiative bond issue, which resulted in the purchase and preservation of more than 300 acres of open space and parks and the construction of approximately 2.5 miles of additional trails. Suwanee's total park land increased from 16 acres to 363 acres and, combined with Gwinnett County resources, totals approximately 800 acres.

I-85 BUSINESS DISTRICT: COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REPORT (2005): Prepared by Bleakly Advisory Group, PBS&J and Key Advisors. This report recommended the creation of a "Suwanee Gateway" around Exit 111 of I-85 that would allow the business district to 1) continue to grow and prosper, making a major contribution to the City's tax base; 2) deal effectively with increasing traffic congestion; and 3) provide an appealing gateway for visitors, residents and businesses into the City of Suwanee. The report identified 17 sites, representing more than 800 acres of land, within the I-85 Business District that provided potential development opportunities and envisioned the business district's transformation over the next five years into Suwanee Gateway. A five-part strategy was developed to implement the transformation: 1) improve the transportation grid, 2) create catalyst projects, 3) implement streetscape and pedestrian improvements, 4) develop regulatory, incentive, and financing strategies, and 5) brand the business district. Three catalytic projects were identified: the Gateway Center mixed-use project, Celebration Drive hospitality district, and the redevelopment of the four corners at Exit 111. Although the economic climate slowed development, some progress has been made. A branding study was conducted for the Suwanee Gateway and, at the Gateway Center, a catalyst project is underway that has improved the transportation network, added a Lowes and a five-story office building, and has a 335-unit apartment complex under construction. The City will also open a Police Substation and Training Center in 2012.

SUWANEE 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: A COMMUNITY AGENDA (2008): Prepared by Urban Collage, Inc. and Coyne Planning Associates, LLC. This update to the City's 2020 Comprehensive Plan identifies near-term and long-term strategies to guide development of distinct character areas and balance growth and land use needs throughout the City. The 2020 plan adopted a sustainable and long-term approach to development that embraced traditional development patterns compatible with mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented development. The 2030 update is significant in that it represents the first time in Suwanee's history that future growth will

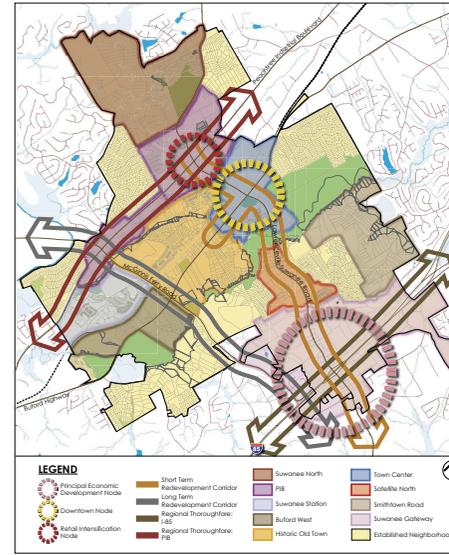


Figure 1.2-c: Future Development



The Suwanee 2030 Comprehensive Plan

be focused on redevelopment where infrastructure already exists rather than on greenfield sites. It also clearly advocates that the character of some areas, particularly established neighborhoods, should be preserved. In the 2030 update, future development is concentrated along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, envisioned as the City's principal mixed-use and commercial corridor. The plan identified three development nodes along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road: Suwanee Gateway for business and employment opportunities with mixed-use, commercial and high-density professional office redevelopment; Town Center at Buford Highway, as a mixed-use downtown and civic center; and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and Suwanee Dam Road, as a local and regional retail destination in a walkable setting. The plan recognized the need to improve McGinnis Ferry Road and transition it from industrial uses and apartments to more mixed-use development. The plan went on to identify five character areas that were expected to receive the bulk of the development, redevelopment, and land use changes: Historic Old Town, Town Center, Suwanee Gateway, Satellite North (Sharon Industrial Way), and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. The overarching vision for the future of Suwanee embodied by this plan is a complete community that includes regional business and employment opportunities, residential densities that support businesses, attractive neighborhoods and open spaces, and a mix of mobility options.

DOWNTOWN SUWANEE MASTER PLAN (2009): Prepared by Ecos Environmental Design, Inc., URS Corporation, Market+Main, Smith Dalia Architects. This update of the 2002 Old Town Master Plan expanded upon the vision of "improving and enhancing walkability, livability and identity to create a unified, economically viable Downtown." The purpose of the plan was to forge a stronger connection between the historic core and the new mixed-use civic center at Town Center by extending development and improvements along Buford Highway. In 2002 the City identified five key public investments: a new town square, new and infill development, a new county library, an alternative transportation system, and improvement of infrastructure in the Historic Old Town area. In the five-year plan update, the City had achieved many of these goals including development of Town Center, the new library, PlayTown Suwanee, and the new pedestrian tunnel connecting Town Center with Old Town. The update to the 2002 plan outlined recommendations and strategies to encourage appropriately scaled and connected development that supports the historic character of downtown and provides a mix of housing types as well as pedestrian, bike and vehicular improvements for better connectivity. The update identifies a context-sensitive design for Buford Highway as a key to the success of downtown Suwanee.

BUFORD HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION STUDY (2010): Prepared by URS. The purpose of this planning and traffic engineering study was to identify long-term multimodal improvements for Buford Highway to meet community and mobility needs identified in the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan. The plan envisioned better options for non-automobile travel and improvements to Buford Highway that would promote the appropriate type of future development to enhance the connection between Town Center and Historic Old Town. This study included three categories of recommendations: 1) roadway projects, 2) short-term traffic operations and safety projects, and 3) long-term traffic operations and safety projects. Recommendations included a focus on context-sensitive design, enhancing access to George Pierce Park, improving congestion and safety through traffic signal control and intersection modifications, lobbying GDOT and Gwinnett County for speed reduction, and possibly removing Buford Highway from the state and federal route system, if needed in order to ensure Buford Highway does not detract from Downtown Suwanee.



PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PLAN (UPDATED 2011): Prepared by Pond & Company. The City of Suwanee completed the Alternate Modes Transportation Plan in 2006, with subsequent updates in 2010 and 2011, when it was renamed the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. The purpose of this plan was to provide a guide for implementation of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to support community goals for a walkable and bikeable community. The plan will fill in the gaps in the sidewalk and trail network and define additional improvements. Goals include: 1) providing pedestrian and bicycle connections from residential areas to Town Center and Old Town area, 2) improving the safety of pedestrians and bicycles crossing Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and other areas with heavy traffic, 3) providing expansive loops for bicycle travel, and 4) implementing projects that improve the system. The plan categorized projects into three prioritization tiers for implementation: Tier I – 2011-2015, Tier II – 2016-2030, and Tier III – long-term (beyond 2030). Primary considerations for prioritization include filling gaps in the network, enhancing major road crossings, and low-cost improvements, like striping. Secondary considerations include projects that are within one mile of Town Center, ½ mile of a school or park, part of the Greenway system, or of significant public interest. The plan strives for implementation of projects identified in Tier 1 by 2015.

3 HOW THE STRATEGIC PLAN WILL BE USED

The 20/20 Vision is a policy document intended to guide City decisions. It does not detail specific physical recommendations or investments as they will need to be developed year-to-year in accordance with the City’s budgeting process. Rather, as a strategic plan guided by extensive public engagement, the opportunity in this process was to openly discuss the City’s current policies, values, and priorities and to collaboratively shape a vision for the future. The feedback and ideas submitted by the committed residents who devoted so much time to this process have yielded a clear set of goals.

As an example, while many residents over the years lamented the poor condition of Suwanee Gateway, it was not clear how high a priority improving this area should be vis-à-vis other potential improvements across the City. This planning process revealed that transforming Suwanee Gateway is in fact one of the highest priorities for residents, which now establishes a clear policy direction for the City going forward. The actual transformation of Suwanee Gateway, however, can be achieved in countless different ways. A variety of strategies from the demolition of obsolete buildings to land banking to public art to marketing can be used as tools to help change the look and feel of the area. With this policy goal in place, the City will need to assess what tools are appropriate given budget considerations, market conditions and other factors as necessary.

The 20/20 Vision is both timely and necessary. Suwanee has established a record of success in the face of rapid growth. However, with less land to develop coupled with the ongoing recession, Suwanee faces the challenges of diversifying its economic base, maintaining what is in place and further investing in improvements that provide the high quality of life that residents have come to expect. It was time to take a half step back, talk with residents and collectively define the next steps forward.

As dynamics change – at the local, regional and global level – so must the planning and implementation efforts of the City. A fluid and flexible approach will allow the City to take advantage of new ideas or circumstances that may emerge as things progress. Ideas unforeseen today may have profound relevance for the future. The ability to incorporate them will keep Suwanee vital and maintain the big, bold, game-changing style that defines Suwanee.

**WHO'S
INVOLVED?**

1 APPROACH TO COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Shaping a vision to serve the community for the next 10 years requires careful listening to the many voices of Suwanee. For a city like Suwanee, this means leaving no stone unturned. The success of a community-driven vision for the future of Suwanee relies upon being able to tap the many voices of the community, engaging them in dialogue with one another and with the City, and weaving the

"Besides being hip, cool and tolerant, Suwanee is open to almost any idea you bring to the table."

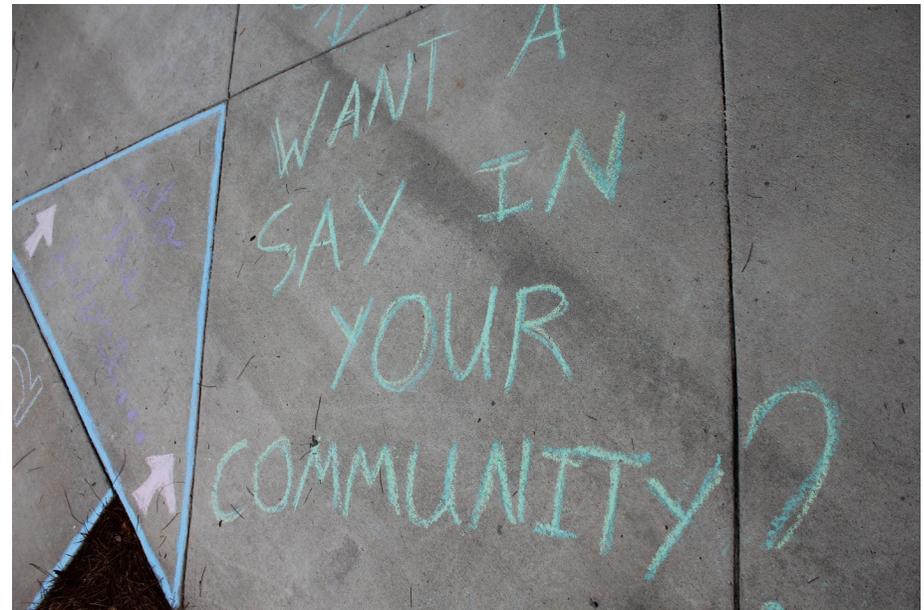
many ideas, viewpoints, and dreams that resulted from those conversations into one common vision. Therefore, outreach and engagement were critical components of this plan with the goal to reach a broad cross-section of the diverse people who live and work in Suwanee and bring them into the conversation in a variety of ways. To that end, the guiding principles of the process were that it be transparent and

inclusive. The City has a strong reputation for openness, good communication and citizen engagement, qualities this visioning process built upon: **"Most people are like us, they want to be more involved. In so many places we lived, the city likely didn't care. It's nice to have a city that really cares about the people and their input."**

Fulfilling the goal for transparency and inclusiveness meant creating multiple venues and opportunities to get involved. The City and planning team designed a number of communication tools and activities to ensure that meaningful community input would form the backbone of this plan. A Steering Committee, convened to oversee the process, was the main instrument for guiding development of the plan. Steering Committee members represented a cross-section of the City and were tasked with assisting the planning team to ensure that the process resulted in maximum public participation.



FIGURE 2. FLYERS ADVERTISING THE OPEN HOUSE AND SUWANEE2020.COM WEBSITE.



Sidewalk chalk outside the Town Center Open House.

And yes, some of this participation included voices of people who do not currently live within Suwanee city limits. The Suwanee community is larger than the irregular municipal boundaries that are invisible at street level. Area residents attend the same schools, enjoy City and other amenities, shop and eat at the same places, and have the same mailing address on the third line of envelopes. With these factors and Suwanee's recognized welcoming spirit in mind, the Steering Committee decided the process should consider voices from the larger community as well. After all, the resulting plan would benefit from considering all good ideas, regardless of from who or where they originated. That said, a few rules were established to ensure that those who live in Suwanee retain the loudest voice and greatest influence on the 20/20 Vision: 1) there must be sign-in sheets for every activity so that participation could be tracked; and 2) the majority of participants must come from within Suwanee. As this vision is guided by the Steering Committee and adopted by City Council, the process rightly prioritizes the views of residents while inviting those who care about Suwanee, regardless of their address, to speak their mind.

Unlike traditional planning processes where public input is limited, this plan sought to develop multiple forums for people to get involved in ways that were meaningful, tangible and related to their own lives. People could chime in with their thoughts through online activities at their own pace or stop by an Open House to meet neighbors and do fun activities designed to tease out what they like about Suwanee, don't like, and what could be improved and how. At the deepest level of involvement, participants committed to an intensive, months-long community discussion that delved into different issues most important to residents. The community outreach and engagement strategies employed in this planning process are discussed in detail in the following pages.

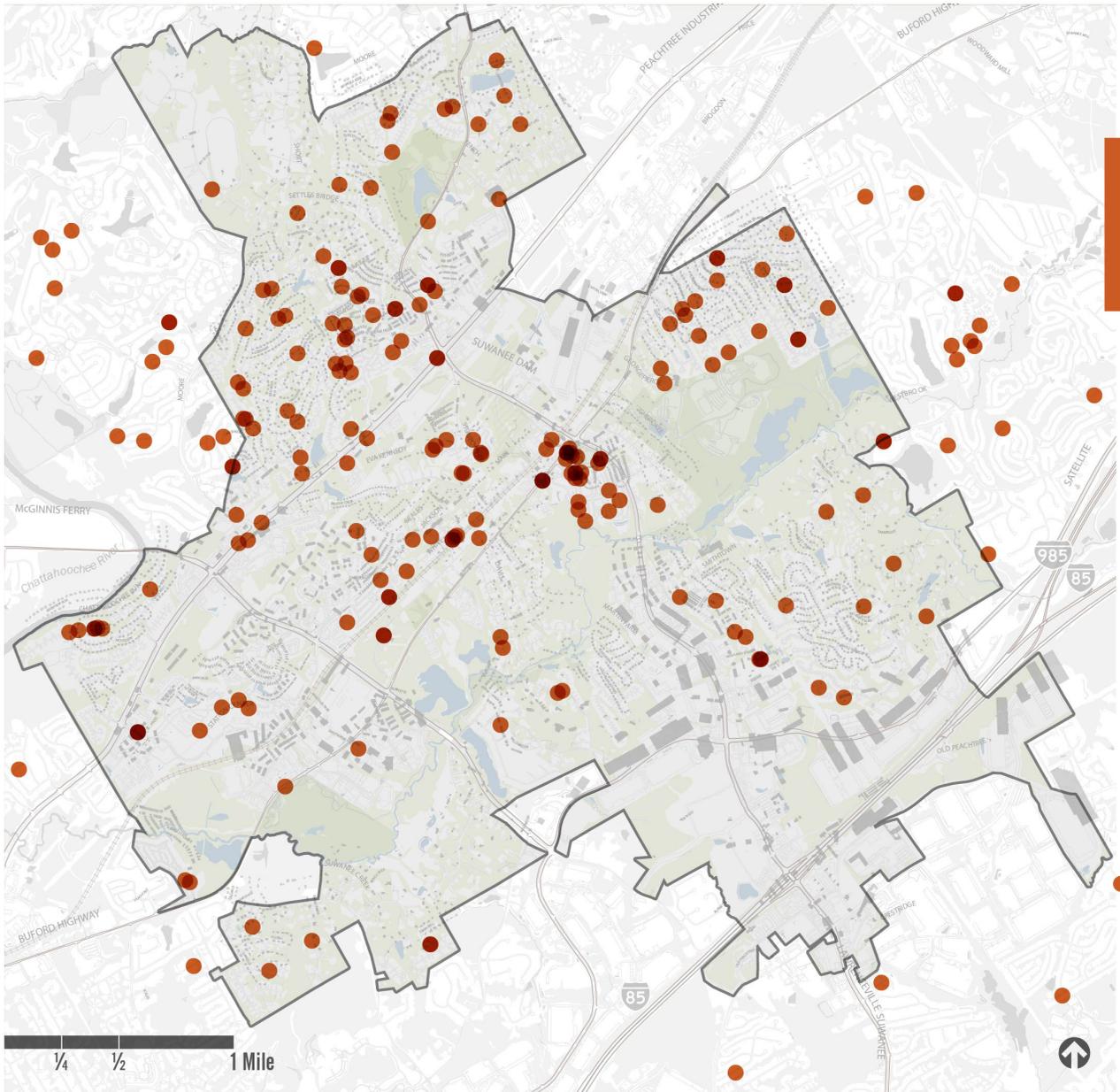
"This is not your grandma's plan."

[WE LISTENED TO MANY VOICES]

COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS X 20 CONVERSATIONS	OPEN HOUSE X 1 MONTH	FOCUS GROUPS X 7 SESSIONS	ROUND TABLES 25 X 4 DISCUSSIONS	PICNIC + PLAN REVIEW X 1 CELEBRATION
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The planning team used a combination of communication tools and outreach methods to make it as easy as possible to participate in the process and have meaningful interactions. Please refer to the Acknowledgments at the beginning of this plan document for a full list of participants.



ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

OUT OF 255 ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS, 183 (72%) LIVE WITHIN CITY LIMITS AND 72 (28%) LIVE OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS

FIGURE 3. ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS MAP

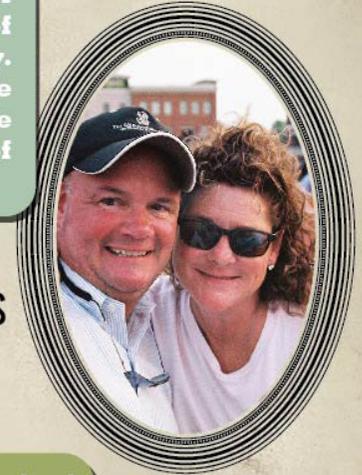
THE FACES OF SUWANE



"I care about Suwanee because it's a great place to raise a family."

ALLIESE OWENBY
RESIDENT: RUBY FOREST

"I care about Suwanee because I feel a great sense of community and a sense of ownership in the community. People are proud to live here and proud to say that they live here because of that sense of ownership."



HEATHER THOMAS
RESIDENT: MORNINGVIEW

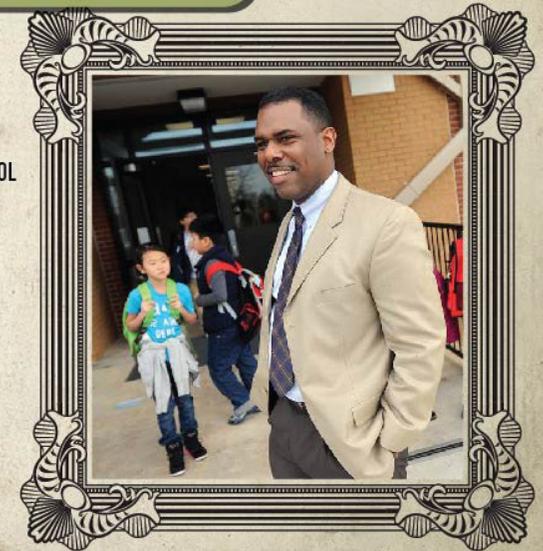
"I care about Suwanee because it represents the values important to me regarding family, neighborhood and community involvement. To me the City of Suwanee represents concern for each other and the desire to develop a community based on the needs and interests of its residents."



BARBARA ALLEN
RESIDENT: SUWANE STATION
PRESIDENT: SUWANE STATION HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

"The Strategic Plan is important because of my children and the future of the city. It is important to map out where you want it to go in the next years for the future generation."

DION JONES
RESIDENT: PEACHTREE HORIZON
PRINCIPAL: ROBERTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



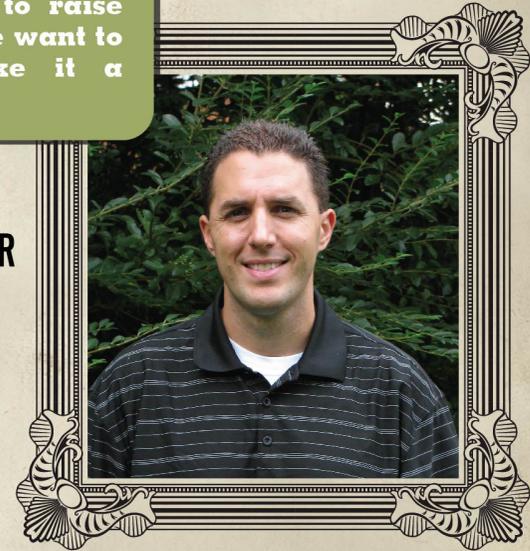
"The Strategic Plan is important because it has allowed the voices of many 'ordinary' citizens to give insight and direction to the future of Suwanee. In a time when many feel 'cut off' from government, this endeavor has involved people from various vantage points to help steer our leaders in a direction to bring success and progress to the people who call Suwanee home!"



BOBBY LINKOUS

RESIDENT: ASCOT
PASTOR: SHADOWBROOK BAPTIST CHURCH

"I care about Suwanee because this is a place that we have chosen to raise our family and we want to continue to make it a better place."



BRAD ALEXANDER

RESIDENT: SMITHTOWN ROAD

"It's my home. It's where I grew up. Now that I own a business here, it's important to me that Suwanee remain vibrant and lively while keeping a strong sense of Southern hospitality as its foundation. Suwanee is close-knit with a deep sense of community."



AUDREY WOOD

BUSINESS OWNER: HAIRLUCCINATIONS
IN TOWN CENTER

"I care about Suwanee because I am raising my kids in the city and educating them here so they can give back to the community."



MASTER YOUNG YOO

RESIDENT: RICHLAND
BUSINESS OWNER: TAE KWON DO SEOUL
ON MCGINNIS FERRY ROAD



2 STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee played an essential role in bringing together the 20/20 Vision and represented a diverse cross-section of the City. The members' role was to help find creative ways in which to engage the public and solicit input so that the resulting strategies comprising the plan are in line with Suwanee's community values.

Steering Committee members played four key roles in the 20/20 Community Vision:

- > **HELPED DESIGN THE PLANNING PROCESS:** The Steering Committee was involved in the planning process to ensure that the methods the planning team used to engage the public generated interest, awareness and participation from Suwanee community members. The consultants suggested a range of potential methods for generating meaningful public input, which were fine-tuned by the Steering Committee to maximize public input.
- > **PROMOTED THE OPEN HOUSE:** The five-week Open House, which launched in late June 2011, served as an exhibit about Suwanee and the 20/20 Vision. The Steering Committee was instrumental in getting the word out and encouraging people to visit. Many also voluntarily staffed the Open House, which was temporarily located in a vacant storefront at Town Center.
- > **PROVIDED PLAN OVERSIGHT:** Each phase of the plan from public involvement to analysis of existing conditions to potential strategies required active guidance from the Steering Committee. Their knowledge of the City and insight into all aspects of the planning process provided the planning team with a valuable perspective that helped to refine the 20/20 Vision process.
- > **SERVED AS ADVOCATES:** The Steering Committee helped promote the plan, get the public to meetings and advocate for its adoption. Moving forward, a broad range of voices will be important in ensuring that there is enough support and momentum to fuel implementation of the 20/20 Vision strategies.

The Steering Committee met six times beginning with a kick-off gathering in May 2011. Subsequent meetings were held in June 2011 to review the proposed Open House activities, September 2011 to review results of the Open House, in October 2011 to discuss the roundtables, in February 2012 to review results of the four sets of roundtable discussions, and in June 2012 to review the draft plan.



The Steering Committee was comprised of 25 community members and business representatives.

"What the City of Suwanee is now versus 10 years ago is amazing to me."

"Suwanee took the bull by the horns."

"It feels very community based."

"[You] feel like you're in a Norman Rockwell painting."

"It's easy to make friends here."

"By and large the city is trying to do the right thing."

"If you're in the one mile area, then you get all the bucks."

"It's the small town feel without the busy-body aspect of it."

"Suwanee reminds me of the fat kid that did good."

"The way they've done Town Center is really a nice place... you can't put it back in the bottle [but] taxes could be lower."

"Taste of downtown but we're still in the suburbs."

"You always are running into somebody you know."

"To be a strong community you have to appeal to all segments, all demographics."

Quotes from interviews

3 INTERVIEWS

In May 2011, as part of the project kick-off, the planning team interviewed 20 stakeholders. These were not random interviews, but rather targeted discussions to help the team quickly learn a lot about the City from a range of viewpoints. Consultants talked to residents, business owners, school officials, community leaders, community volunteers, retirees, long-timers who have seen it all, and newcomers attracted by the recent buzz. All of the interviews were confidential and one-on-one.

The interview objectives were to:

- > Gain an in-depth understanding of what it's like to live and/or work in Suwanee from those most knowledgeable about the City.
- > Talk with those who have strong opinions about Suwanee (positive and negative) to better understand their perceptions and the impact they may have on the 20/20 Vision.
- > Identify a range of themes to help design questions and discussion topics for other outreach activities.



SUWANEE 20/20 VISION TOWN CENTER OPEN HOUSE

WELCOME! The Suwanee 20/20 Open House is your opportunity to learn about the 20/20 Vision Plan process, as well as an opportunity for the planning team to learn about YOU—what you would like to see change or preserved in Suwanee over the next ten years. Feel free to explore the ten Open House activities in any order you like—just use the checklist below to make sure you don't miss anything. **HAVE FUN!**



Town Center Open House

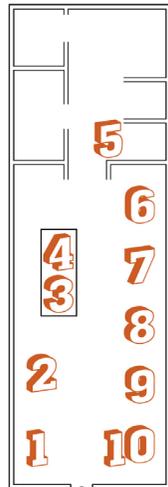
4 OPEN HOUSE

The Town Center open house launched the evening of June 23, 2011 and was open for five weeks to allow people to drop in and learn about the vision planning process. The Open House set the tone for the 20/20 Vision process as inclusive, fun, and transparent and temporarily transformed a vacant storefront in Town Center into an exhibit on Suwanee's past and present. The space included activities and games designed to reveal citizen's concerns and ideas for Suwanee's future. Unlike other plans where the issues are framed by outside consultants, the 20/20 Vision tapped local knowledge to identify local concerns. Results from the Open House activities informed the in-depth roundtable discussions, focus groups and Steering Committee meetings. More than 435 community members came to the Open House and shared their thoughts. Open House activities are summarized in the pages that follow.

activity checklist

- PICK UP MATERIALS & SIGN IN**
- 1 SUWANEE SNAPSHOT SLIDESHOW**
- 2 SUWANEE POP QUIZ**
- 3 WEBSITE TOUR**
- 4 D.I.Y. BUDGET**
- 5 PHOTO SUGGESTION BOOTH**
- 6 GREEN CHALLENGE**
- 7 A TO B, EASY AS 1-2-3**
- 8 COLLABORATIVE MAP**
- 9 POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE**
- 10 AUTOGRAPH WALL**

ACTIVITY MAP



POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

What do you see when you imagine Suwanee in the year 2020? Recognizing that residents have a lot of ideas, we asked them to capture their visions for the future on a postcard dated 2020 (pre-paid postage of course). Fifty-four people shared their visions for the future by writing a postcard during the Open House.



FIGURE 4. OPEN HOUSE ACTIVITY CHECKLIST



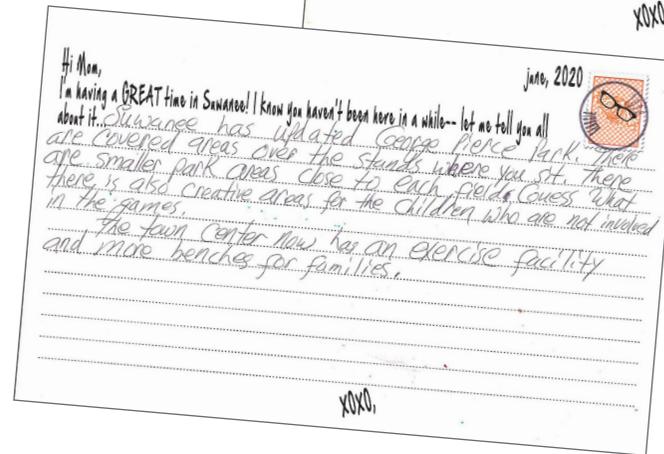
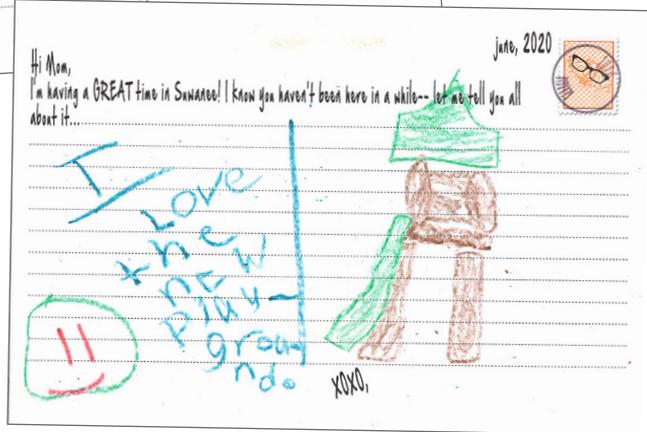
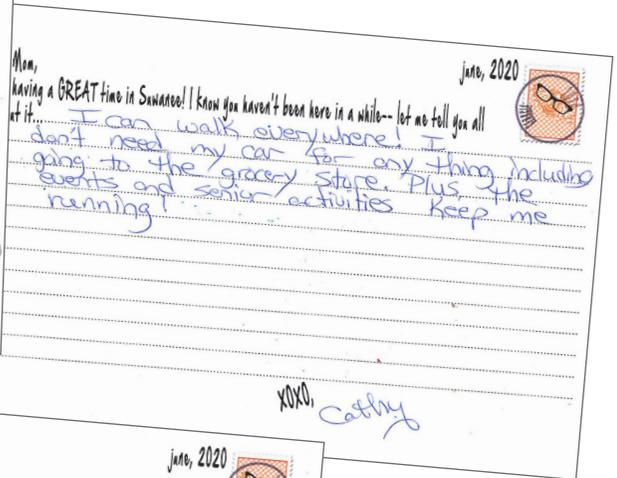
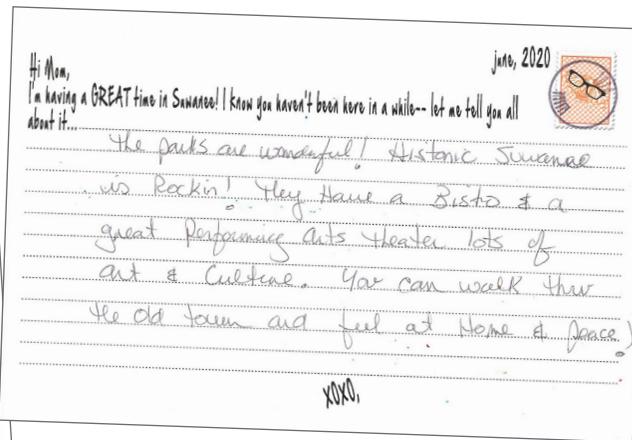
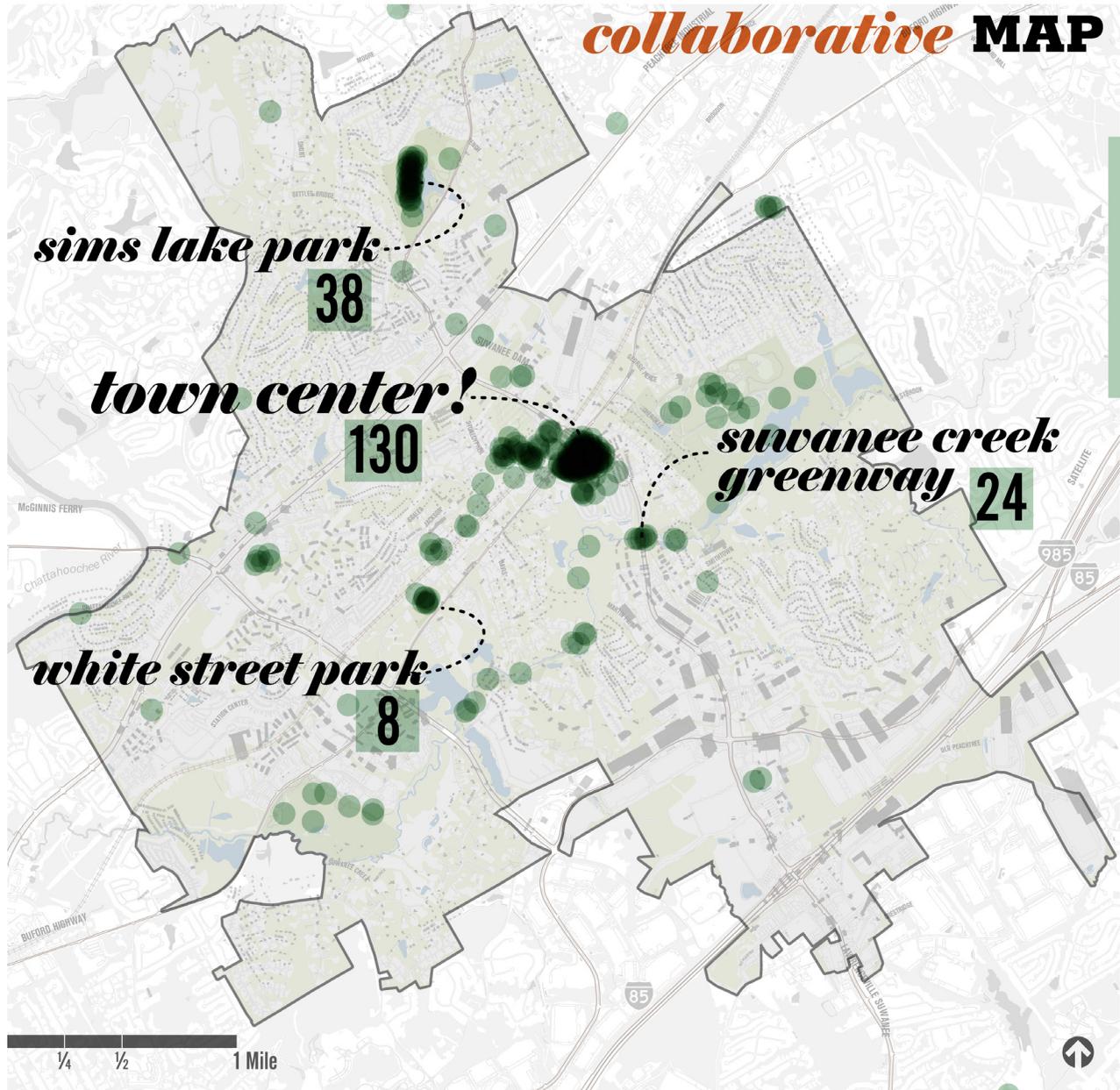


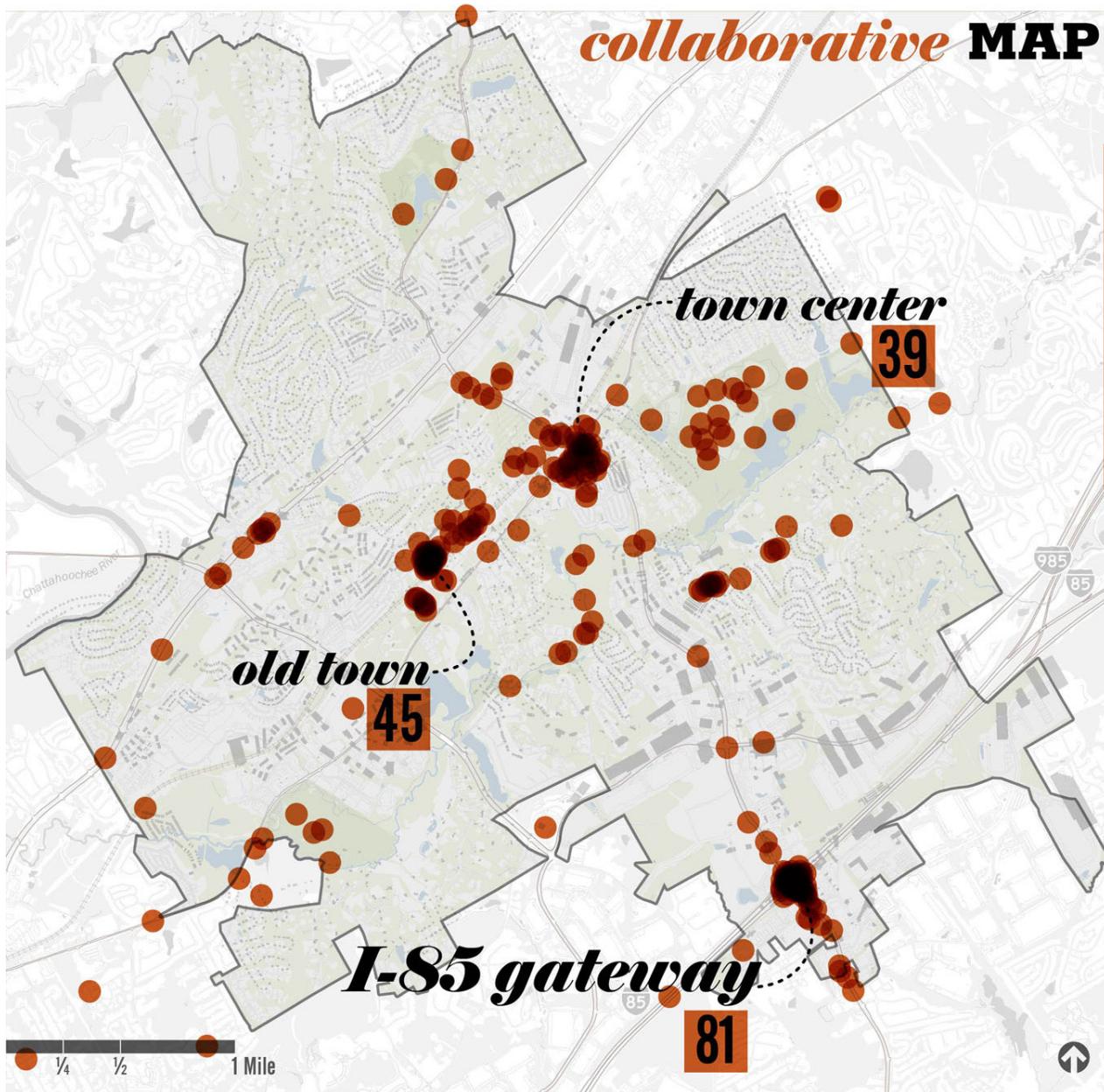
FIGURE 5. POSTCARDS FROM THE SUWANEE OF THE FUTURE
SUWANEE 20/20 VISION PLAN



WHERE YOUR FAVORITE PLACE IN SUWANEE IS

2) Besides your home, what is your favorite location in Suwanee?
 The overwhelming response was Town Center (130). In fact, it received so many stickers that a blow up of Town Center had to be used to catch the overflow. Other favorite places included Sims Lake Park (38), Suwanee Creek Greenway (24), and White Street Park (8), illustrating Suwanee residents' great enthusiasm for the City's park and open space system.

FIGURE 8. COLLABORATIVE MAP: WHERE YOUR FAVORITE PLACE IN SUWANEE IS



**WHERE YOU'D
LIKE TO
SEE SOME
IMPROVEMENTS**

3) If you had money to spend to improve one location in the City, where and what would you spend it on? The I-85 Gateway garnered the most votes for places to spend money for improvements with 81 stickers, followed by Old Town (45), and Town Center (39).

FIGURE 9. COLLABORATIVE MAP: WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO SEE SOME IMPROVEMENTS



do it yourself (DIY) budgeting

If you were in control of the City's budget, how would you spend the money? Each participant receives 6 (six) different denominations of Suwanee Bucks in the amounts of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 (sorry, no million dollar bill here). Drop your bills in the piggy banks that represent your priorities in terms of local budgeting. Save your larger bills for the piggy banks that mean the most to you. There are fewer dollars than piggy banks so choose your priorities wisely!

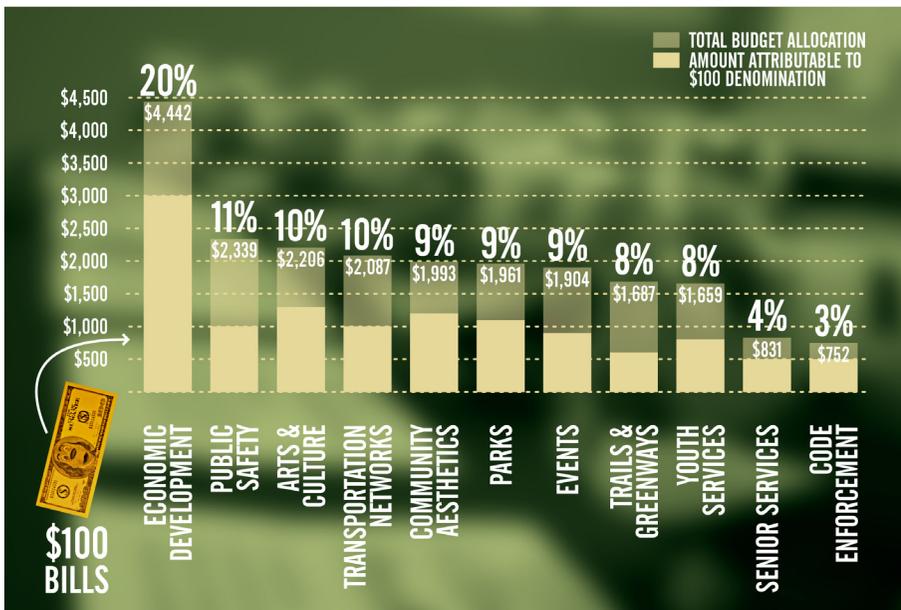


FIGURE 10. DO-IT-YOURSELF BUDGETING

DO-IT-YOURSELF BUDGETING EXERCISE

Participants were given a limited amount of Monopoly-like Suwanee bucks in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100. They were then asked if they were in control of the City's budget, where they would spend their limited resources? Piggy banks representing different categories people could choose to spend their dollars on:

- > Arts & Culture
- > Code Enforcement
- > Community Aesthetics
- > Economic Development
- > Events
- > Parks
- > Public Safety
- > Senior Services
- > Trails & Greenways
- > Transportation Networks
- > Youth Services

Since residents had fewer bills than piggy banks, everyone was forced to make tough decisions. And of course, the decision of where to spend that all-important \$100 Suwanee buck drove many to pace back and forth in front of the piggy banks for several minutes as they mulled their options.

The top ranked category by far was Economic Development which captured 20% of the funds and the most \$100-denomination bills. Public Safety came in second with 11% of the total money spent, and Arts & Culture and Transportation Networks tied for third with 10% of the total each. This raised some questions for the planning team. What did people interpret as "economic development" and what specifically was on their mind? Youth Services received fairly small amounts of money, but was this because residents didn't feel it was important, didn't feel like it was something the City should spend money on, or were there simply not enough teens involved? The results of this exercise are interesting but, as you can see, raised additional questions. This activity simply started the conversation about Suwanee's future – the details needed to be worked out later through the roundtables and focus groups.

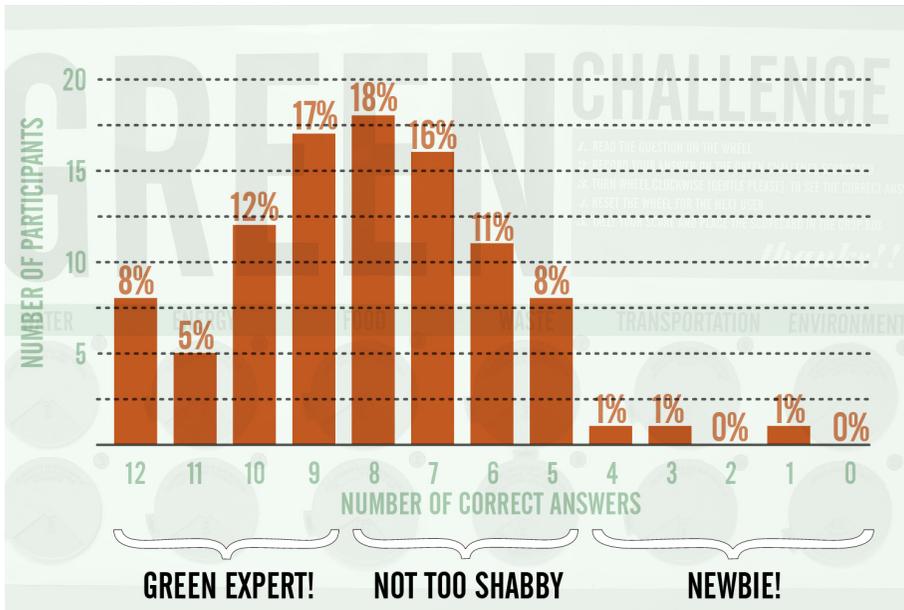


FIGURE 11. GREEN CHALLENGE

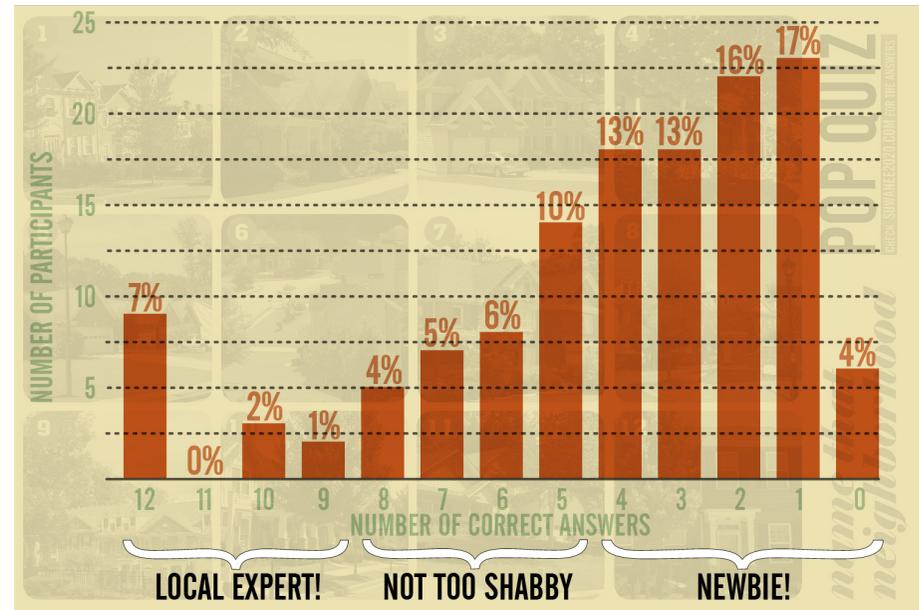


FIGURE 12. NAME THAT NEIGHBORHOOD POP QUIZ



SUWANEE GREEN / SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

The Open House was a great opportunity to test residents' support for and knowledge of sustainable practices. Suwanee's green score card helped residents understand the potential environmental impacts of a number of landscape maintenance practices and lifestyle choices prevalent in Suwanee's neighborhoods. An installation demonstrating easy D.I.Y. projects to implement sustainable practices accompanied a short survey. The survey asked what green choices residents already are in the habit of making and tested how willing they would be to make additional alternative choices for the sake of reducing environmental impacts.

Overall, participants did well on the Green Challenge demonstrating knowledge of green practices: 42% answered enough questions correctly to qualify as "Green Experts" while the bulk of participants (53%) landed in the "Not Too Shabby" category.



NAME THAT NEIGHBORHOOD POP QUIZ

To find out how well Suwanee residents know City neighborhoods beyond their own, a photo board of different neighborhoods in the City was created. Each photo was tagged with a letter and a list of neighborhood names provided. Residents were asked to match the name with the photo.

Overall, the results revealed that this exercise was a challenge. Only 10% of the participants answered enough correctly to qualify as a "Local Expert." Most (63%) had four or fewer correct answers, while 25% scored 5-8 correctly.

PHOTO SUGGESTION BOOTH

Almost 300 people stepped in front of our cameras to share their big idea for Suwanee. Participants were given a chalk board and a choice of Suwanee backdrops to pose in front of. The Open House volunteers also took the chalk board out to Town Center. Photos were used in City communication materials, which helped to generate further awareness and interest in the 20/20 Vision. There was no shortage of ideas from residents. All ideas were catalogued and grouped into general themes which revealed that the majority of ideas (35%) squarely focused on providing more things to do and places to go in Suwanee. In addition, 25% of ideas focused on improving local parks and recreations, 16% focused on the need to maintain what we have, 9% expressed a need to make it easier to get around, 7% wanted to improve youth activities, 6% focused on the arts and 2% revealed an interest in enhancing Suwanee's environmental sustainability.



**WE ASKED COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO SHARE THEIR
BIG IDEA FOR HOW TO MAKE SUWANEE BETTER.**

FIGURE 13. PHOTO SUGGESTION BOOTH IDEAS



FIGURE 14. PHOTO SUGGESTION BOOTH SUMMARY

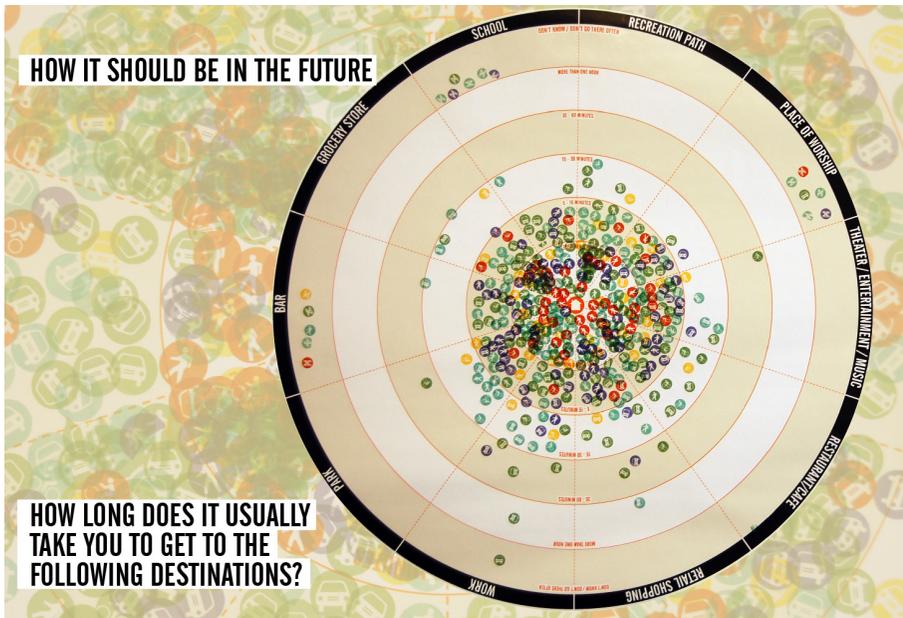
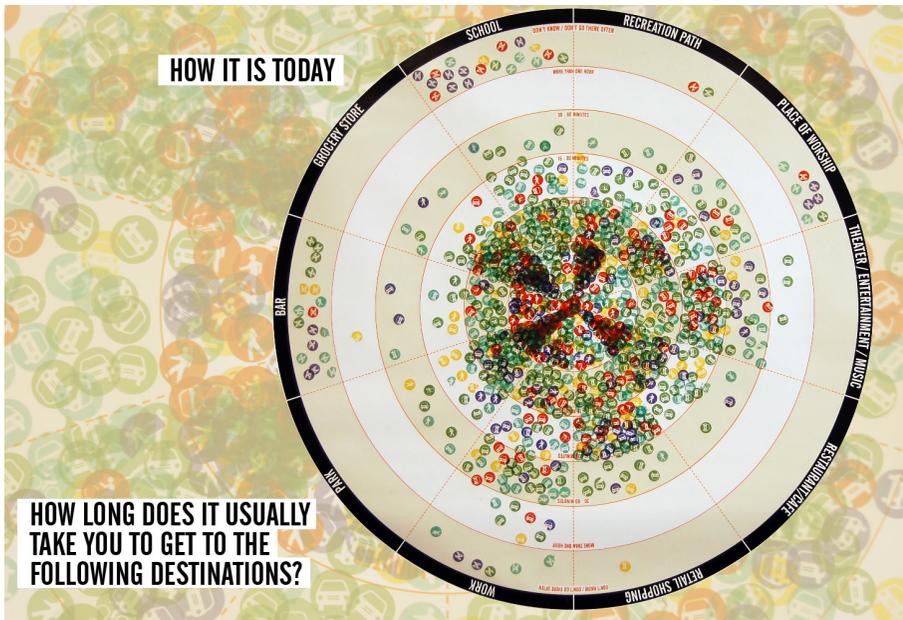


FIGURE 15. DESTINATION PROXIMITY TARGET

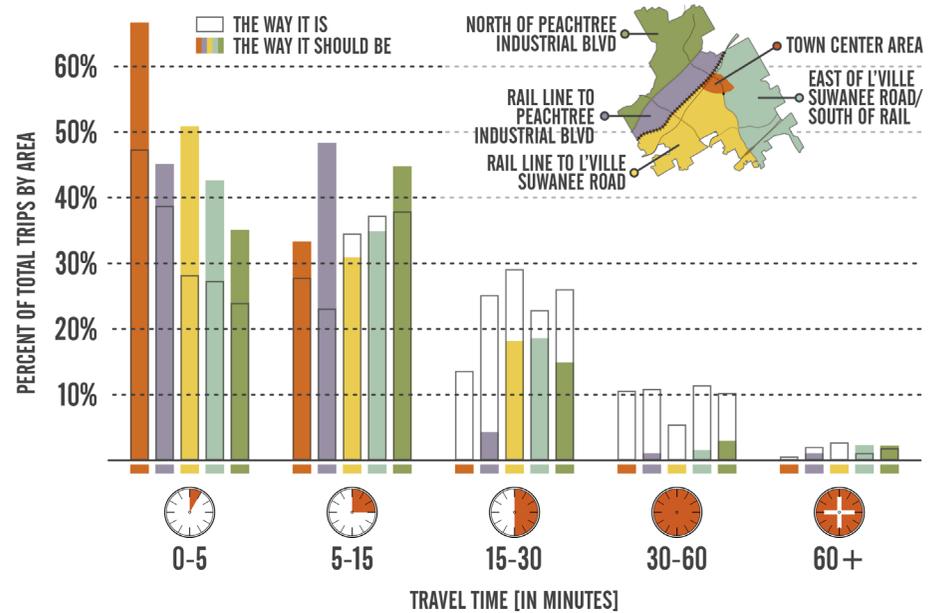


FIGURE 16. DESTINATION PROXIMITY TARGET SUMMARY

DESTINATION PROXIMITY TARGET

In the initial stakeholder interviews with community members, the themes of accessibility and walkability emerged in a couple of different ways. Many interviewees identified as one of Suwanee's greatest assets the ability to live within a comfortable walking distance of shops, parks, schools, community centers, and other destinations. However, many interviewees also lamented the lack of particular destinations within close proximity of home. The Destinations Proximity Target activity asked participants to first identify how accessible a number of specific types of destinations are to their homes [with response options like "less than a 5-minute walk from home," "within 5-10 minutes walking distance," "within a short drive," and so on]. Secondly, participants were asked to specify how accessible they would like these destinations to be. This helped to identify the kinds of services, businesses, or destinations that are priorities for residents and the ways in which they would prefer to access them – in this case primarily by walking. A grocery store, parks and recreation are all assets residents indicated they would like within a 5-minute walk from home. Many residents also indicated a desire to be able to walk to a local restaurant and shopping in the future.

Overall, the exercise revealed a gap between how people travel and how they would like travel. Participants from almost all of the different sub-areas of Suwanee want more destinations to be within a five to 15 minute travel range. All residents are making far more trips in the 15-30 and 30-60 minute range than they want to.

5 SUWANEE2020.COM

Launched in June alongside the Open House and available throughout the entire planning process, the 20/20 Vision website provided a forum for people to engage with the planning process from the comfort of their own home. Like an online version of the Open House, the purpose of the website was to engage residents in the planning process and solicit their input. On the website, people could learn about the plan and get updates about its progress, upload photos of what they like or don't like about Suwanee, contribute ideas for how to make Suwanee better, add their place-specific thoughts and ideas to a collaborative map, and contact the planning team directly with questions, concerns, and ideas. The ideas and the comments on the web-based collaborative map provided invaluable guidance to the overall Vision. As a way of tracking comments made both online and on the collaborative map installed in the Open House, all comments were uploaded to the 20/20 website.

SUWANEE 20/20 VISION

A COMMUNITY PLAN TO BRING SUWANEE'S FUTURE INTO FOCUS



news about open house collaborative map photostream ideas competition communicate!

4th and Final Set of Roundtable Discussions Set to Begin

Posted on January 3, 2012 by admin

It's now time to BRING SUWANEE'S FUTURE INTO FOCUS. During the course of the first three roundtables, each group has discussed big picture issues and strengths in Suwanee but also expressed a range of opinions regarding topics from Economic Development to Youth. We have reviewed the roundtable notes and copied out the specific ideas that have been generated during the discussions. We have combined these ideas with those that emerged from the Open House and other discussions during the 20/20 process. The results are summarized in the background materials for this final roundtable which includes a Suwanee 20/20 Draft Vision Statement and a Summary of Objectives & Ideas.

These files represent what has been discussed in all 25 roundtables. It is, therefore, crucially important and the responsibility of each roundtable to provide honest feedback on all of the objectives and ideas expressed throughout the process to date.

There are two parts to this roundtable discussion:

EXERCISE 1: 20/20 Draft Vision Statement

We have created a draft 20/20 Vision based upon the prevailing themes that

Suwanee 20/20 Vision on Facebook
Like 74

sign up for email updates!

Name _____
Email _____
submit

**SHARE
YOUR IDEAS**



for how to make
SUWANEE BETTER!

**SUBMIT
PHOTOS**



of what you love & don't
ABOUT SUWANEE



FIGURE 17. SUWANEE2020.COM WEBSITE (as of April 2012)



ROUNDTABLE AGENDAS

1 GETTING TO KNOW YOU

GROUP INTROS; DISCUSSION OF STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES IN SUWANEE; REVIEW OF MOST PROMINENT THEMES EMERGING FROM OPEN HOUSE.

2 GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

DISCUSSION OF TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & YOUTH SERVICES ISSUES ARISING FROM OPEN HOUSE AND FIRST ROUNDTABLE.

3 HAMMERING OUT THE ISSUES

GROUP DISCUSSION OF ANY 3 OF 6 TOPIC AREAS: PARKS & RECREATION; COMMUNICATIONS; PUBLIC WORKS; COMMUNITY AESTHETICS; ARTS & CULTURE; PUBLIC SAFETY.

4 BRINGING THE FUTURE INTO FOCUS

REVIEW & REFINE DRAFT VISION STATEMENT; REVIEW, COMMENT ON, & PRIORITIZE TOPIC AREA GOALS & STRATEGIES

6 ROUNDTABLES

Traditional public meetings are often big and presentation-focused, limiting opportunities for residents to provide meaningful feedback. In contrast, a roundtable format is a less formal and more in-depth discussion among community members. Suwanee's 20/20 Vision roundtables consisted of small-group, in-depth facilitated conversations of 8-12 people per group that allowed community members to discuss important topics concerning Suwanee's future and to work together to create a vision for the Suwanee of 2020. No City representatives, nor members of the planning team, were at any of these meetings. The intent was to encourage people to meet their community members, exchange ideas, and take a broader view of this City beyond the confines of their neighborhood. For this reason, roundtable group assignments were random save two exceptions: 1) no married couples or household members were allowed to be in the same roundtable and 2) multiple people from the same community should not be concentrated in one roundtable. Why? Simply put, these residents likely get to talk with one another all of the time and likely share a lot of opinions. This was an opportunity for Suwanee residents to talk with neighbors they didn't already know – neighbors who may or may not have similar opinions and who experience the City differently on a day to day basis. Creating a vision for an entire City means stepping out of our comfort zone and seeing Suwanee through the lives of others who also choose to call it home.

A total of 25 roundtable groups, with just under 300 participants in all, were convened four times each between September 2011 and January 2012. A community member served as a facilitator charged with guiding the discussion and taking notes to relay information back to the planning team. Facilitators participated in a training session to ensure they could create an atmosphere of respect at each meeting, allowing everyone a chance to speak, and keep the discussions on track. Facilitators also had access at all times to the planning team and City staff for any additional support and questions.

Each roundtable group discussed the same topics and was given specific tasks to accomplish, which would inform the subsequent set of discussions. A brief synopsis of each roundtable session follows:

Roundtable agendas

ROUNDTABLE SESSION 1: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

The first set of roundtable discussions were meant to introduce participants to the plan, get neighbors acquainted and discuss Suwanee's strengths and challenges. Participants were debriefed on the most prominent themes emerging from the Open House and asked what they felt should be discussed in further detail in future sessions.

When asked about assets to build upon for the future, community engagement (12%), parks (11%), and art/events/entertainment (10%) came out on top. Other assets included small-town feel, safety, quality schools, reputation, good communication, Town Center, location and accessibility, leadership, fiscal responsibility, diversity, businesses, balanced growth, the family-oriented character, and progressiveness.

When asked about the biggest challenges Suwanee faces, the most frequently cited topics were business development (14%), making sure there was a diversity of businesses and filling vacancies; connectivity (14%), including alternative forms of transportation and more sidewalks; balanced growth (13%) to keep community character and ensure there is infrastructure; and traffic management (8%). Other main challenges included Suwanee Gateway, maintenance and code enforcement, the City boundaries and annexation, parks, safety, parking, community engagement, reputation and branding, focus on groups other than families and kids, affordable housing, and resource allocation.

ROUNDTABLE SESSION 2: GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

The second set of discussions focused on transportation, economic development, and youth services. These were the key issues that emerged from the Open House and first roundtable session. To help guide the discussion, each group was provided with background materials for all three topics that covered both the City's current approach to the topic area and the summary of results from the Open House concerning the topic area. Participants were asked whether they agreed with the City's approach for each topic area and whether they had thoughts on how Suwanee could improve its approach.

TRANSPORTATION

Alternative transportation topped the list of suggestions with 40% of the groups discussing various options such as cabs, shuttles, and trolleys. Traffic safety was identified as a major issue, especially around schools (28%). Other major issues needing attention included traffic management (20%), sidewalks (16%), and parking (16%).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Most of the discussions centered on the need to recruit businesses and increase revenue in the City (44% of the groups). Themes that emerged included Suwanee Gateway (36%), business-friendly policies (28%), quality of life to attract workers (28%), events (28%), infrastructure (28%), reputation (24%), incentives (24%), attracting larger businesses (24%), marketing (24%), and a shop local campaign (24%).

ROUNDTABLE SESSION 1



Roundtable Session 1 themes

YOUTH

Youth engagement was seen as the most important theme of this topic area (44% of roundtable groups discussed engagement through various means). Other major methods for improving youth services and activities included partnerships with schools (36%), more places for youth to go (28%), volunteering (24%), and events (24%).

ROUNDTABLE SESSION 3: HAMMERING OUT THE ISSUES

The third session offered an opportunity for groups to discuss some of the topics that hadn't yet been addressed in detail but had been raised in previous roundtable sessions. Each group was asked to choose any three of six topic areas: Parks & Recreation, Communications, Public Works, Community Aesthetics/Suwanee Gateway, Arts & Culture, and Public Safety. Again, participants were given background materials outlining the City's approach for each topic area to help guide their discussion. Participants were asked to review the City's approach and generate ideas for improvement.

Community Aesthetics/Suwanee Gateway was the topic area most frequently chosen for discussion. The majority (15 of the 17 groups that discussed the topic) wanted to see new development in Suwanee Gateway, seven out of 17 wanted to focus on filling existing vacancies, and 13 out of 17 wanted improved aesthetics, including streetscaping, landscaping, building design, and sign design.

Arts & Culture, Communications, and Public Safety were the next most talked about topics. Most of the groups who discussed Arts & Culture were interested in developing a theater or performing arts space, and four out of 11 groups were interested in expanding arts and events beyond Town Center. The groups that discussed Communications suggested enhancing the use of social media and tapping more strongly into homeowners associations to improve the City's communications strategy. Of those that discussed public safety, over half (six of 11 groups) felt the City did a good job but wanted to ensure that high police visibility was maintained.

Parks & Recreation was chosen by 42% of the groups as a topic area. All but one of the groups indicated increasing safety features at the parks as a priority, and over half of the groups discussed increasing recycling and green initiatives and encouraging more active spaces in the park system.

Only three of the groups chose to discuss Public Works. All of them (including three groups that did not specifically choose the topic) wanted to see the sidewalk plan implemented.

ROUNDTABLE SESSION 4: BRINGING SUWANEES FUTURE INTO FOCUS

The final set of roundtable sessions focused on reviewing and refining a draft Vision and assessing, commenting on, and prioritizing topic area goals and strategies that emerged from the previous sessions. First, participants were asked to assign priorities from 1 for the highest priority to 7 for the lowest priority for each of the seven topic areas which included: Economic Development; Public Safety; Land Use; Parks & Open Space; Communications; Transportation; and Arts & Culture. They then were asked to review and discuss the topics in the order of their rank. As the priority ranking chart shows, some groups ranked all seven topic areas, but others only ranked the three to four topics that they were able to discuss and left the others unranked.

Overall, participants approved of the City's current approach within the seven topic areas and felt that all seven topic areas were important. They chose their priorities based on areas they felt need the most attention. Economic Development ranked the highest with 71% of groups assigning it as their first or second priority. Land Use and Transportation were other clear priority areas. Some of the unranked or lower ranked topic areas – Arts & Culture, Public Safety, Communication, and Parks – were areas in which participants felt that the City already was doing a good job. Since these aspects of Suwanee were viewed as existing strengths, participants felt the City should simply continue to maintain its overall approach in these areas.

Participants also were asked to review objectives within the seven topic areas and indicate whether they considered them high, medium or low priorities. Transforming Suwanee Gateway was a clear high priority across the board with groups citing development, aesthetics, and improving traffic as the most important areas requiring attention. Job creation was the second-highest priority with several groups encouraging tech business recruitment as a good strategy. Improving traffic management was third. Ensuring housing choices ranked as the lowest priority in part due to the varying interpretations of what housing choice could mean as a policy. Some expressed strong concerns related to affordable or multi-family housing coming to Suwanee.

SNAPSHOT OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

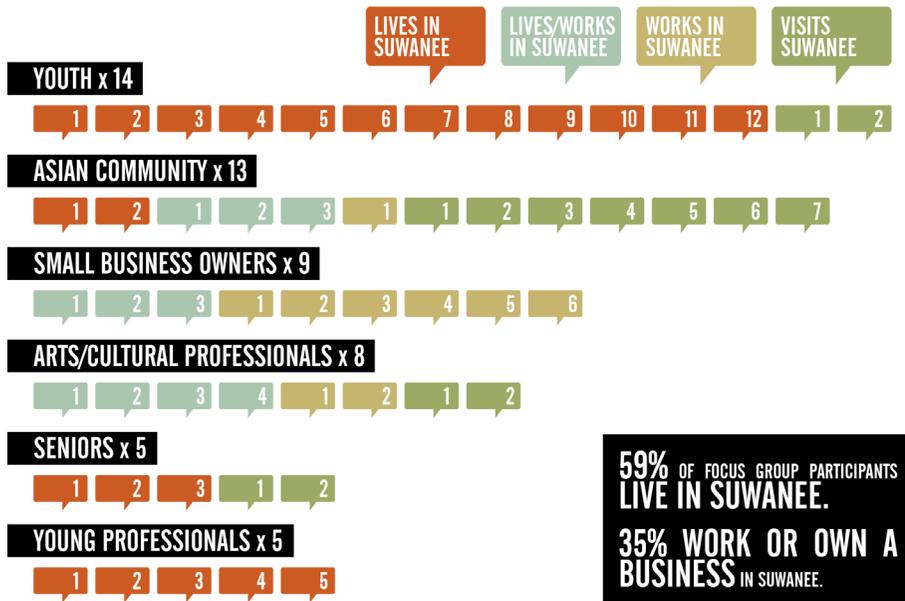


FIGURE 22. FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

7 FOCUS GROUPS

In October 2011, the planning team held a series of seven focus group conversations based on some of the topics that were raised throughout the planning process. The focus groups represented: seniors, small businesses, Asian communities, youth (separate groups for middle and high school), arts and culture advocates, and young professionals. These were topics that the Steering Committee felt needed additional attention to supplement roundtable discussions and bring specific knowledge and experience to the 20/20 Vision. Themes from the focus groups were folded into topic areas and objectives discussed in the last roundtable sessions. A total of 54 people participated in the focus groups.

8 COMMUNITY PICNIC

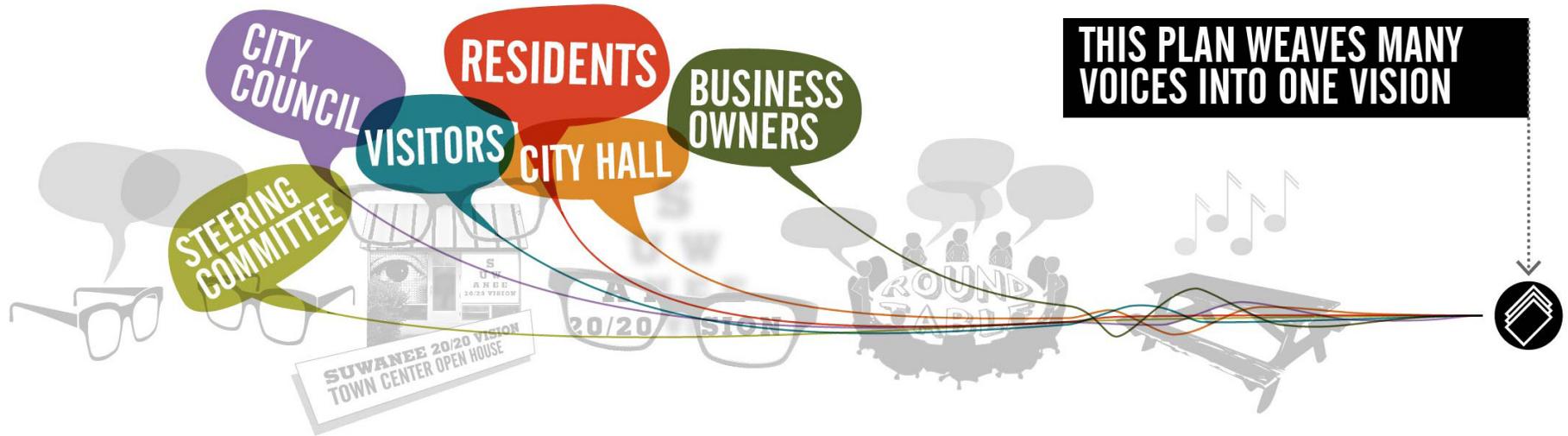
At the end of April, the City organized a Southern potluck picnic at the Suwanee Music Barn. Replete with BBQ and a bluegrass band, the community picnic provided an opportunity for the public to review the draft of the 20/20 Vision.

9 COORDINATION WITH CITY COUNCIL

As the body charged with adopting this Vision, it was critical that City Council be engaged throughout the planning process. That said, to ensure open and frank input from residents, City Council members were intentionally excluded from some of the outreach activities, most notably the roundtables and focus groups. Councilmembers' participation might have quieted other voices and diverted too much attention to them and their past decisions. The planning team wanted to ensure that residents felt comfortable to speak freely. The planning team did coordinate with City Council through designated briefings and updates throughout the process. Interface Studio provided two public briefings to City Council, two updates on the process at City Council work sessions and regularly provided materials to the City Manager's office to share with Council members.

TEASING OUT THE VISION & GOALS

All of the outreach methods described above provided hundreds of observations and ideas for consideration. The challenge in an extensive process such as this is to weave the multiple voices into one vision. This editing process started early with the interviews and Open House. The interviews and five-week-long Open House tipped off the planning team to the main issues and strengths in Suwanee. These fact-finding activities provided the foundation for the questions and materials accompanying the first two roundtable sessions. After reviewing notes from the first two roundtables and focus group meetings described above, the team developed an approach for roundtables three and four. During the fourth roundtable, residents were asked to edit a draft vision and matrix of goal statements, the contents of which came directly from their input, as well as the input provided on the 20/20 website and through all of the outreach activities. This 20/20 Vision is the result of the comments and edits made to that initial draft Vision the goals and represents the culmination of a year of community conversations.



**OUR SUWANEE:
YESTERDAY
AND TODAY**

HOW IT ALL STARTED

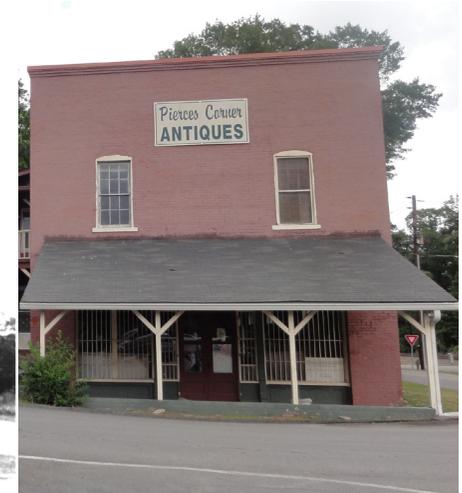
"This was a forest when we moved here."



The rail depot fueled early growth in Suwanee.



Pierce's Corner then and now.



Diehard Suwanee residents are likely well aware of the City's historic roots, but more recent and casual residents may not be. To recap, Suwanee is a City of two distinct and very different histories. For nearly 200 years, Suwanee was defined by gradual change, the kind that took a generation to experience. This is very different from the Suwanee that the majority of residents identify with today.

In the beginning, Suwanee, like many cities, started as an Indian settlement, in this case for the Creek and Cherokee nations but also Shawnee Indians. The name "Suwanee" likely stems from this legacy. Land was ceded to the U.S. Government in the early 1800s, and by 1838 Suwanee was recognized as an established community with a post office.

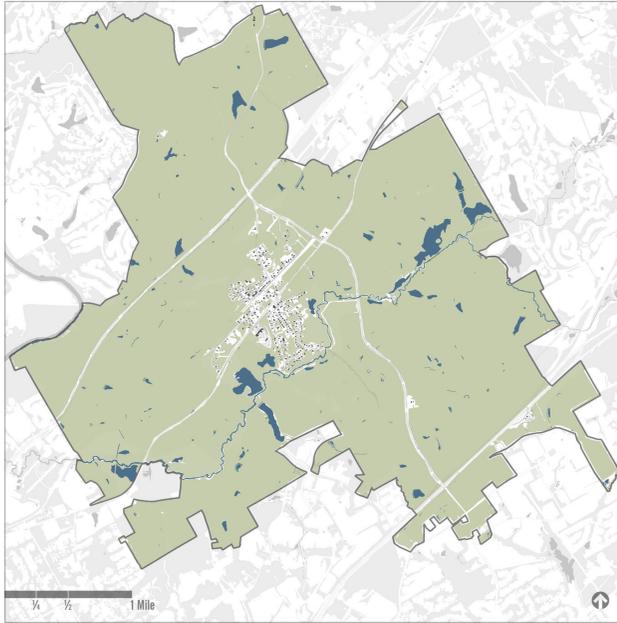
Development of the nation's railroads in the late 1800s fueled the growth of what is now Old Town. As a passenger rail hub served by depots in Suwanee and Shadowbrook, Suwanee was a transfer point to Atlanta for many years. By 1880, the Town of Suwanee consisted of 39 homes and 216 residents, and Old Town included a hotel, department store, and other stores. By the early 1920s, Old Town had grown to include 12 stores, a cotton gin, blacksmith shops, a gristmill, and a livery. One of Old Town's primary buildings, Pierce's Corner, was built in 1910 and remains standing today.

In 1949, Suwanee's roughly 3.1 square miles were officially incorporated. Although centered around active businesses and homes concentrated in Old Town, Suwanee was still a mostly agrarian community. The Pierce family (for whom George Pierce Park is named) owned about 1,000 acres around that time and managed 200 head of cattle. In fact, the 22 acres upon which Town Center now sits was originally owned by the Pierce family and sold for \$5,000 in the 1950s.



Dillard's was once the Suwanee Grill – the 1st restaurant in town housed in former Atlanta street car.

DEVELOPMENT 1950s

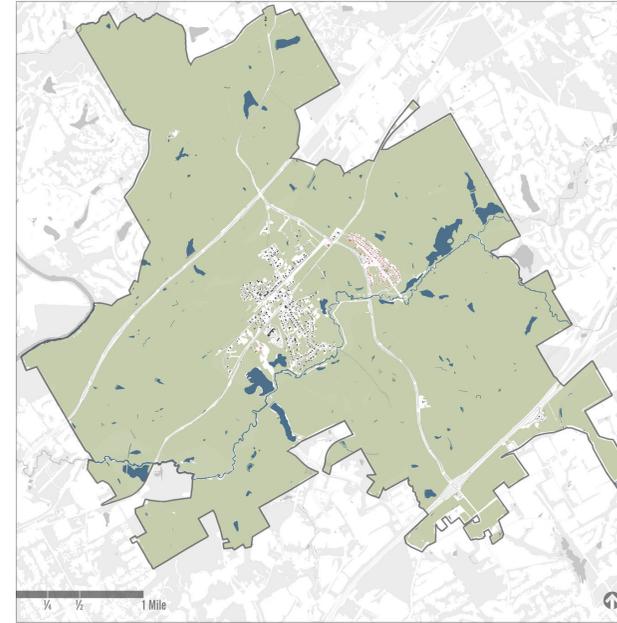


HOUSING UNITS

0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■

DEVELOPMENT 1960s



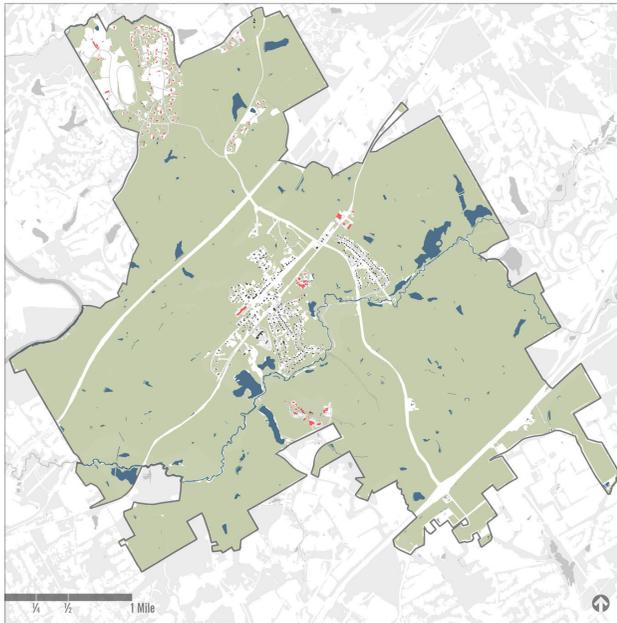
HOUSING UNITS

0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■

1960s ■

DEVELOPMENT 1970s



HOUSING UNITS

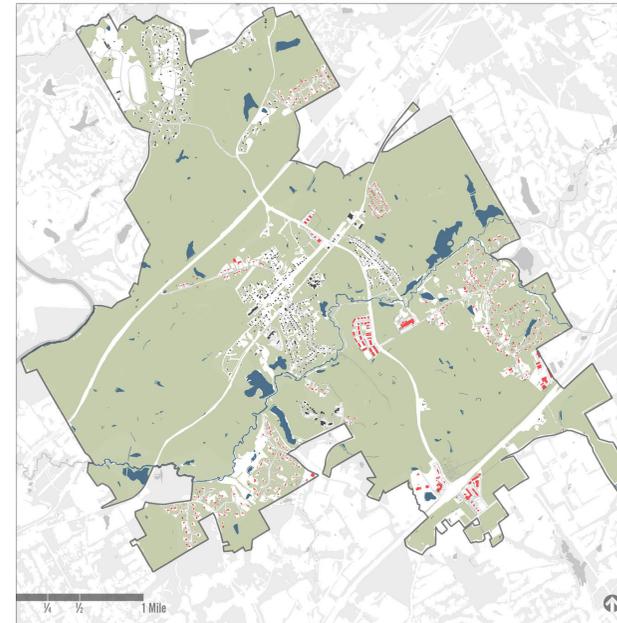
0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■

1960s ■

1970s ■

DEVELOPMENT 1980s



HOUSING UNITS

0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■

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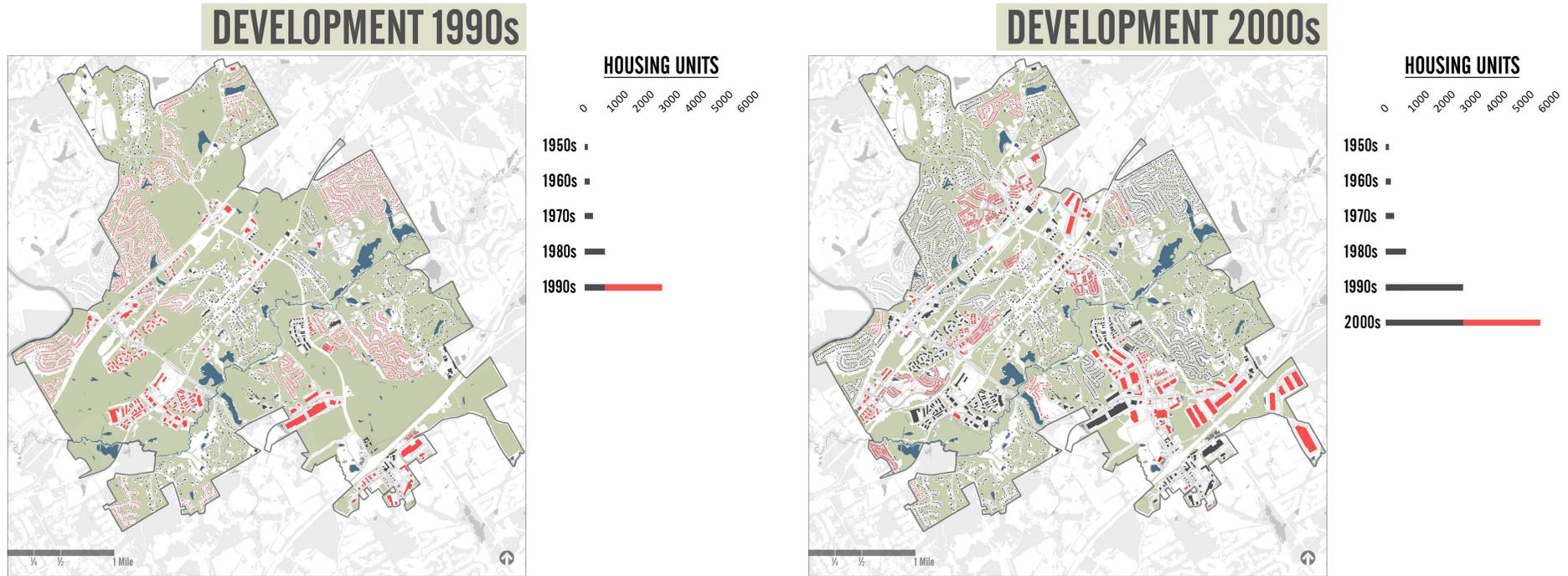
In 1960, the population in Suwanee was 214 – a loss of two people since 1880. But three events in the 1950s laid the groundwork for what we now think of as Suwanee even though it took decades to see the results. The first was the development of water service for Suwanee, which supported growth in new homes around Old Town. The second was creation of Buford Dam and Lake Lanier in 1956. Prior to the dam, the area in and around Suwanee flooded every year washing away crops and making development of the land difficult and expensive. Lastly, construction of I-85 opened up the land north of Atlanta for new development and commerce. What was once a relatively disconnected, rural community, loosely tied to Atlanta by Buford Highway and rail, was now an exit on a major highway.

Still, I-85 spurred limited growth through the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the development in Suwanee at that time comprised of housing developments

connected to Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. It wasn't until the late 1970s / early 1980s that the area now called Suwanee Gateway was partially developed most notably as home to the Atlanta Falcons practice facility. Replete with a large sign on I-85, it was the first indication to many outsiders that Suwanee existed. A handful of people in Suwanee remember this time when the City was relatively quiet and under the radar. **"None of this was here before. There was no traffic on the road. It wasn't very exciting."** **"There wasn't a grocery store here 16 years ago."**

"People in downtown Atlanta didn't know where Suwanee was."

FIGURE 23. MAPS OF DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME
All maps show current Suwanee boundaries.



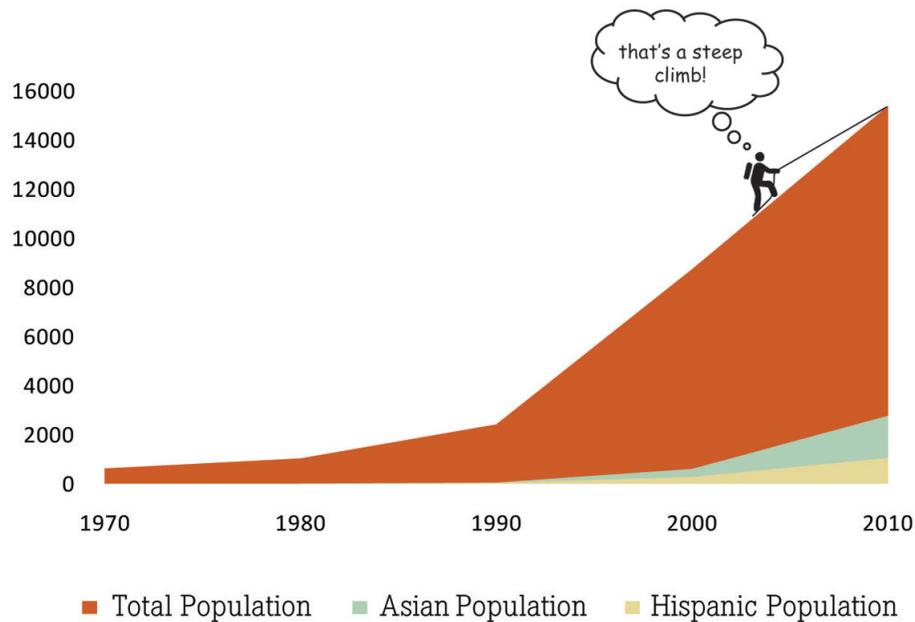


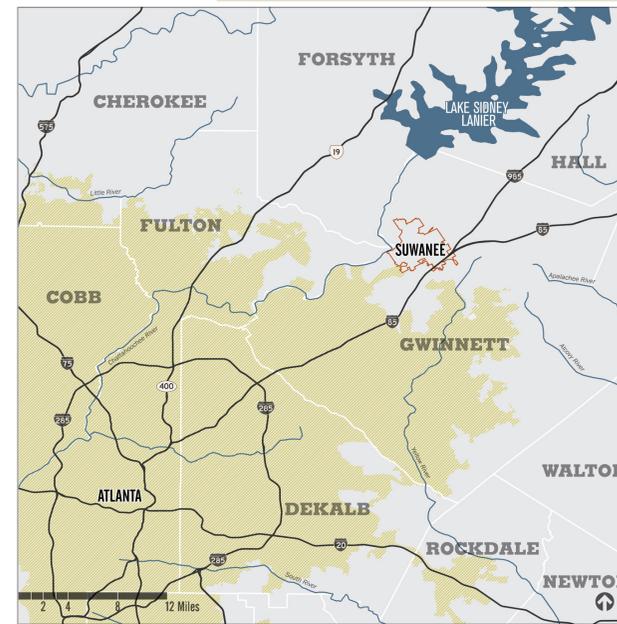
FIGURE 24. POPULATION CHANGE 1970-2010

source: US Census

For most residents today, Suwanee is defined by change. The construction boom that washed over Suwanee in the 1990s more than tripled the population and resulted in the creation of neighborhoods like Chattahoochee Run, Morningside, Martins Farm and Ruby Forest. The last decade only furthered the development boom, as Suwanee sat in the middle of a growing region. From 2000 to 2010, Suwanee's population increased by 76%. Half of residents have lived in Suwanee for less than 10 years and 84% for fewer than 20 years.

Suwanee could have gone the way of a traditional suburban bedroom community by simply approving new residential developments and auto-oriented commercial centers while trying to keep pace with the increased demand for services. Instead, Suwanee chose an alternative path that reflects the values of residents who expressed concerns about new development. City leaders decided to think ahead and actively plan for the future. New residential developments were, in fact, approved but this time with an eye toward establishing traditional, walkable neighborhoods. The City set a goal of creating a sense of place in Suwanee. At a time when land was rapidly being consumed, Suwanee was determined to preserve some open space. Concerned about the collective impact of development throughout the City, Suwanee issued a resident approved bond in 2002 to fund the creation of an extensive park system. The growing park system initially targeted land ripe for development, providing a measure of growth control, but also a unique asset for the City. **"Change is inevitable; we're managing it quite well."**

URBANIZED AREA 1990

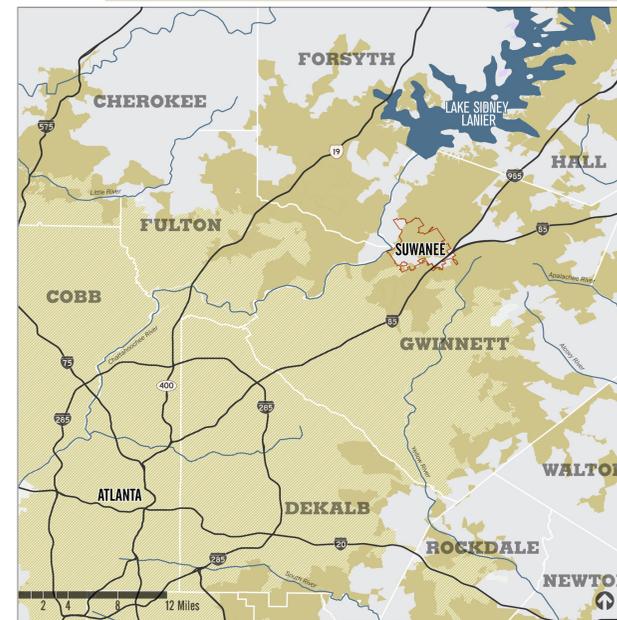


URBANIZED AREAS ARE DENSELY SETTLED AREAS WITH A POPULATION DENSITY OF AT LEAST 1,000 PEOPLE PER SQUARE MILE

urbanized area 1990

SOURCE atlanta regional commission

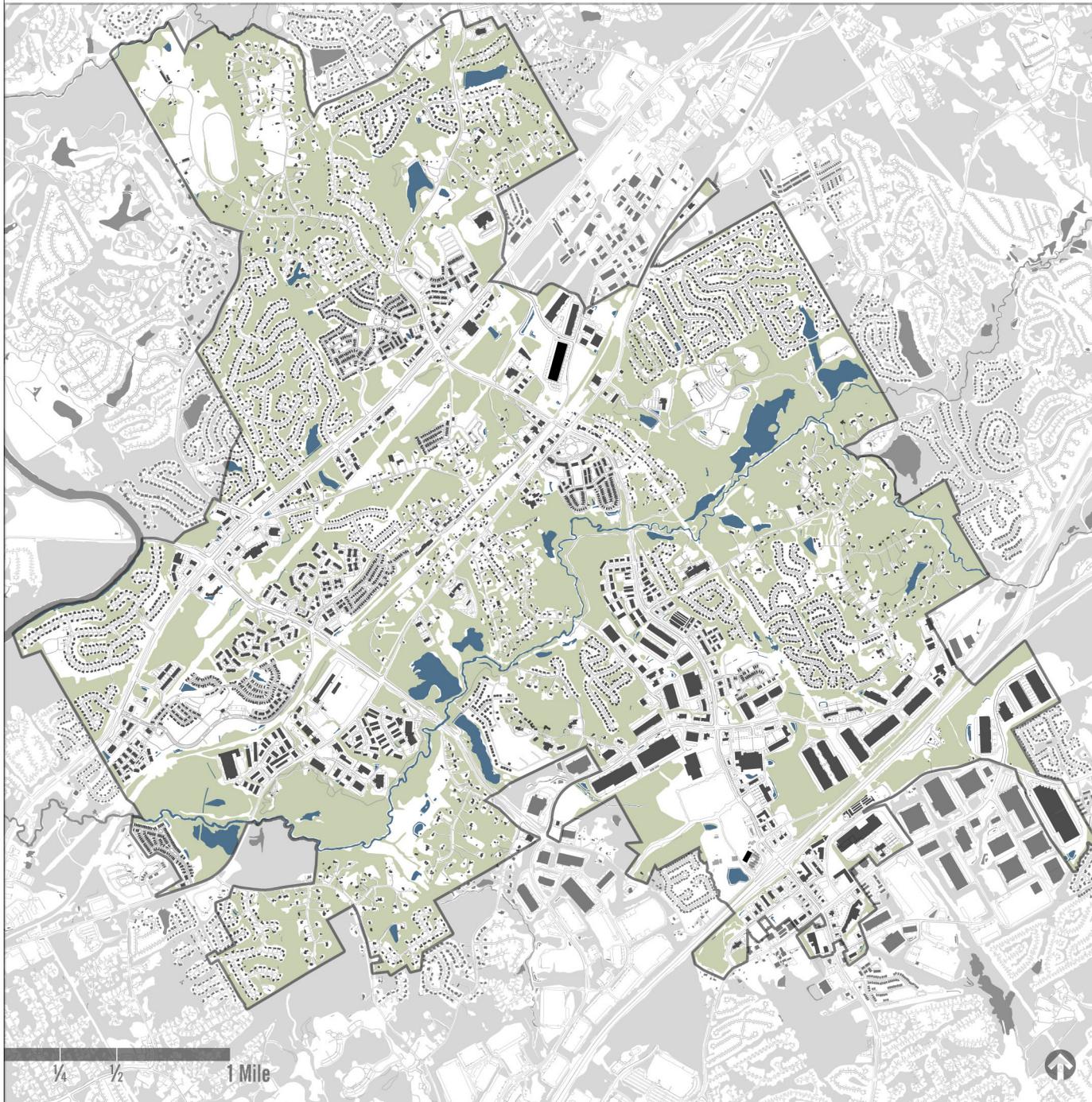
URBANIZED AREA 1990-2000



urbanized area 2000
urbanized area 1990

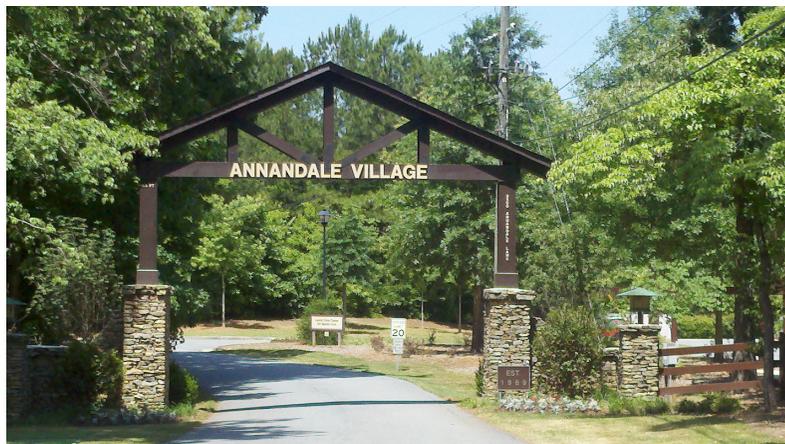
SOURCE atlanta regional commission

FIGURE 25. MAPS OF URBANIZED AREA 1990-2000



SUWANEE IS NEARLY 7,000 ACRES,
ABOUT 10.9 SQUARE MILES.

FIGURE 26. MAP OF SUWANEE





“Relax, you’re in Suwanee.”

Most notably, City leadership pushed forward to create a Town Center that would become the anchor for a growing Suwanee. Just down the street from Historic Old Town, Town Center’s location provided multiple opportunities for more mixed-use development to support retail and City services and better visibility from Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. The focal point of Town Center is Town Center Park, an urban park that acts as the front door to the development – and the community. The City and partner organizations have programmed this park throughout the year with concerts, events, and the annual Suwanee Day festival which draws more than 40,000 visitors. Designed as a park, it has become Suwanee’s collective front porch. This was a risky venture and elicited a wide range of support and concern. To many, Town Center represents the new Suwanee in physical form.

“The City has done a wonderful job in planning. It’s new and fresh and affordable, just a hometown community.” Even those that express concerns about Town Center recognize the overall benefit it has brought to the community – **“I am happy with Suwanee...It’s not perfect, but they took a sleepy little Southern town and made it into something special.”**

The combination of the events in Town Center Park and the City’s commitment to proactive planning has brought about a real sense of community spirit that defines Suwanee. Every plan has been completed with an emphasis on resident involvement, which has in turn produced resident volunteers. Many refer to PlayTown, a large playground across from Town Center, as the epitome of the City’s mindset. **“The way PlayTown was done, together, it helped to build a sense of community here that made other things possible.”** As the signs say, **“Relax, you’re in Suwanee.”**



Like any community, Suwanee too has its problems. Growth on the order that Suwanee has experienced, even well-managed growth, has consequences. Traffic is a constant source of concern – both within Suwanee and along the major corridors that connect Suwanee to the region. Suwanee Gateway remains a headache and blight for many residents. The residential neighborhoods, built at different times and largely according to varying design styles, are disconnected from one another. Major streets like Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and McGinnis Ferry Road divide these communities from one another and are nightmares to cross as a pedestrian or bicyclist. The recent economic recession has resulted in a number of vacant commercial spaces. And underlying every concern is the need to be strategic in spending the limited dollars available to Suwanee.

So after 200 years of gradual change and a sleepy character, Suwanee lurched forward to become a regional leader with a distinct brand. For many it represents the perfect mix of rural and urban, active and secluded.

“Suwanee is the best of both worlds, all of the conveniences a big city offers with a small-town community feel.”

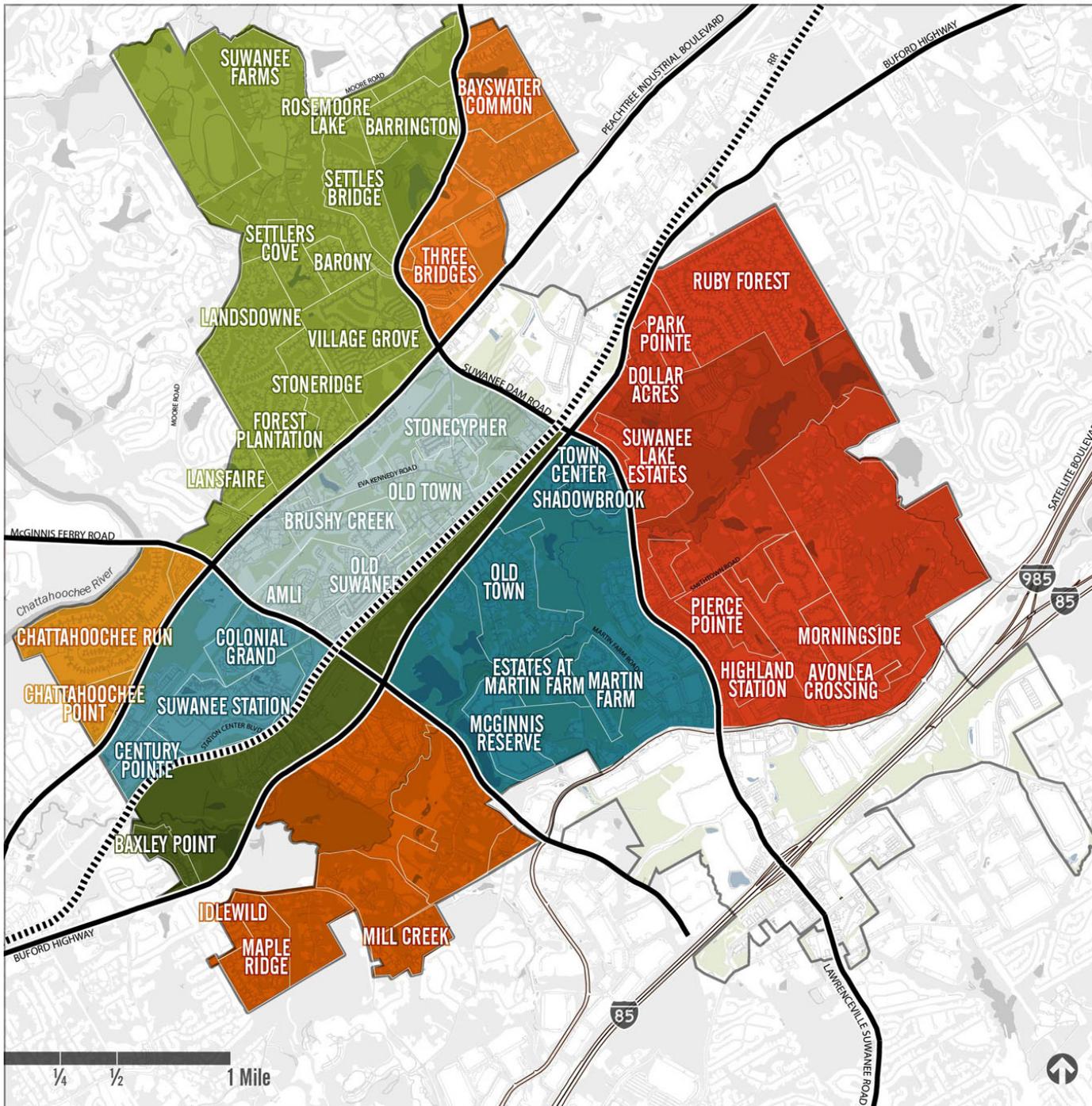
Given Suwanee’s odd physical boundaries shaped by years of annexation, it’s difficult to distinguish what is Suwanee and what is not. **“The border line is written in pencil.”** The result is that Suwanee is less important as a distinct physical place than it is as a broader idea and identity. The welcoming attitude encourages folks to get involved whether they technically live in the City or not. Love or hate the decisions that have been made in guiding City investment, people continue to choose to live here, work here, play here and voice their opinions openly.



Some of the down-sides of the rapid growth: commercial vacancy and traffic (far left and left).



The mix of urban and rural feel is exemplified by Town Center and George Pierce Park (above left and left).



**MAJOR ROADS DIVIDE
SUWANEE INTO ENCLAVES**

FIGURE 27. SUWANEE NEIGHBORHOODS MAP



"Suwanee can be a little bit of whatever you want it to be."

WHAT MAKES US SUWANEE

OUR PEOPLE

People in Suwanee care about one another and about their community. **"Neighbors talk to neighbors; it's how it's always been here."** And for people who have relocated to Suwanee from other towns it's something that strikes them right away: **"There really is a sense of community here I have not witnessed anywhere else."** People are our biggest asset and it's our citizens who will turn the vision for Suwanee into reality: **"When people are passionate, they make others passionate and want to come and help. There are a lot of passionate people in this community."**

OUR COMMUNITY'S CULTURE

We value our family-oriented, yet fun and quirky attitude. There's always a lot going on in Suwanee – with the City producing and hosting more than 40 events each year, which draw people from all over the City and beyond. We are diverse and proud of our diversity. Families with kids, young professionals, and empty nesters all make Suwanee their home. Some of us hail from the region while others come from all over the country and even the world. Our community is well-educated, forward-thinking, and connected to one another. We share the view that we are a young city, a progressive city, a unique city with a vibrant spirit: **"Suwanee can be a little bit of whatever you want it to be."**

OUR SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

Suwanee's schools are top-notch and a huge selling point in attracting new residents. The community actively supports and participates in the schools – volunteering in classrooms, cheering on athletic teams, supporting the arts, etc. We also have a local higher education institution, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, and close access to major institutions such as the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Emory University, and Georgia Gwinnett College.

OUR PARKS

Our parks are one of our greatest assets and a part of our identity. They demonstrate the value we place on environmental preservation, recreation, and healthy lifestyles. We recognize that open space is an essential component of the high quality of life we enjoy in Suwanee. We are known for our parks, which draw people from far and wide and are a model for other cities. The development of our park system is a key example of how things get done in Suwanee. We grew our parks from just 16 acres in 2001 to 363 acres today – a 2200% increase in open space. One resident commented that the Open Space bond referendum is an example of how **"the City is unusually visionary."** Town Center, our centerpiece, is now our City's front porch, a meeting place, and an indelible image of who we are.

OUR BUSINESSES

Our businesses are unique and diverse. The majority of our businesses are small and locally owned. Downtown provides a distinctive setting for restaurants and boutiques. The growing Asian communities are opening new stores and restaurants, which bring multi-cultural offerings to residents. We're not a bedroom community but a growing center for jobs, including a large amount of industrial activity and technology-related businesses.

OUR INSTITUTIONS

Our institutions are strong assets that bind our community together. Our municipal government services, including the police and public works departments, maintain the high quality of life that we are regarded for and that make up our public face and image. They ensure that our neighborhoods and public spaces are safe and beautiful. Public safety is one of our greatest assets: **"In my mind we have one of the lowest crime rates in the area and probably state wide."** Assets like the Suwanee branch of the Gwinnett County Public Library and the community center at George Pierce Park strengthen our community. Our social and religious organizations represent our varied interests and backgrounds and are the anchors that tie our neighborhoods together.

OUR LOCATION

Location is everything and our location along I-85 shapes our City and affects the type of development and businesses that locate here. We have benefited from the light industrial and high-tech businesses that set up shop here to take advantage of the accessibility that I-85 offers. Our proximity to downtown Atlanta also offers key benefits for both businesses and residents, making Suwanee the perfect combination of a place with a small-town community feel that also has access to big city amenities: **"Suwanee – it's closer than you think."**

THE 20/20 VISION AND GOALS

THE 20/20 VISION

Suwanee is a diverse and forward-looking community actively engaged in shaping its own future. The people of Suwanee are working to capitalize on the qualities and values that have made it a successful and distinctive community.

Suwanee of 2020 is....

WELCOMING: A place that everyone of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds can call home.

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED: A unique combination of safe, friendly neighborhoods with excellent open spaces and environmental preservation, award-winning schools, and City amenities.

VIBRANT: A center for arts, education, culture, and events with strong commerce and employment.

BALANCED: A well-rounded community where development is a complementary mix of housing, businesses, parks, and recreation facilities that are designed to harmonize people and nature, old and new.

CONNECTED: A community where people come together across generations and cultures and are connected to the places where they live, work, and play.

FORWARD-THINKING: Proactive and accessible leadership that has cultivated a strong reputation for doing things differently and created a distinctive, easily recognizable brand and image.

ENGAGED: A place where all citizens have a voice and are active partners in guiding the future of the City.

REACHING THE 20/20 VISION: STRATEGICALLY INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

The values of the vision form the underlying spirit of the plan. The goals and aspirations laid out in this chapter will guide city policy and provide a roadmap for achieving the Suwanee 20/20 vision. These goals reflect the work of the roundtables and the community input collected through the 20/20 website, the open house and all of the outreach activities. Each goal includes a list of potential strategies, culled from community input and insight, which should be considered in working to achieve each goal and, ultimately, to make the vision for Suwanee 2020 a reality.

The goals and strategies are organized into **SEVEN DRIVING PRINCIPLES:**



COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT: HOW WE CONNECT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: HOW WE PROSPER



PUBLIC SAFETY: WHAT PROVIDES US COMFORT



PLANNING: HOW WE GROW



COMMUNITY CULTURE: WHAT MAKES US INTERESTING



PARKS + OPEN SPACE: HOW WE PLAY



TRANSPORTATION: HOW WE MOVE



COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT: HOW WE CONNECT

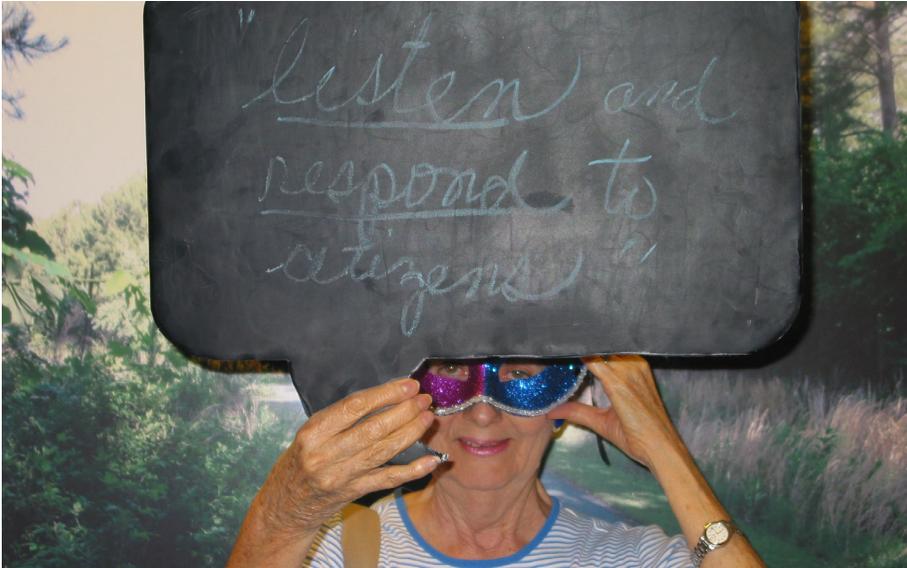
WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: **BE ENGAGED**

Suwanee’s approach to communication is one that values its citizens’ opinions, whatever they may be, and encourages citizens to be involved in a very hands-on way. The City realizes that communication is a two-way opportunity; it provides various means through which citizens may provide feedback, request services, make comments, and share information. In addition to informing and engaging citizens, Suwanee’s communications materials also promote and reinforce the City’s reputation as a regional role model; they position and protect the Suwanee “brand.” In our technology-driven, information-laden world, Suwanee realizes that people have different preferences for how they receive – and send – information. Among the many media utilized by the City of Suwanee are: the CrossRoads newsletter which is published 6 times each year and mailed to every City residence and business; three websites: www.suwanee.com, www.downtownsuwanee.com and www.suwaneeday.com; a database of about 50 media outlets for press releases and placements; social media including Facebook and Twitter; e-mail blasts about twice a month; marketing brochures and publications; advertising in magazines, newspapers, billboards and online; and video on the website.

Citizens feel that the City has done a very good job of utilizing various forms of communication, through new forms of technology and old. They appreciate that the City is responsive and provides answers to inquiries, even if those answers aren’t always the ones they want to hear. There’s an active spirit of engagement and back and forth dialogue and a strong sense that Suwanee is listening. It’s **“still small enough that I can pick up the phone and call a city councilmember.”**

The City understands that in order to move forward in implementing this plan and others, to support what’s working and improve what’s not, transparency and a clear mandate from the community is crucial. Roundtable participants did not rank communications as a high priority with the understanding that it is already one of the City’s strengths. The main goal should be to maintain this strength and push it even further. The following goals are ways that the City can make its communications strategy even more comprehensive and inclusive so that all voices are brought into the conversation.

“How do we keep people involved and get new/more people involved?”



GOAL 1: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE

When a lot of people get involved and take action, good things happen. Resident involvement has helped to shape Harvest Farm community garden at White Street Park, create PlayTown and choose public art pieces through community voting. In this vein, Suwanee must strive to meet the high expectation of residents through continued outreach, but also expand efforts to ensure that all of the City’s communities are included. As good as Suwanee is at getting the word out and encouraging residents to voice their opinions, there are opportunities to build on the City’s success and provide a model for community involvement.



Ethnic diversity is a growing feature of the City.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

1.1 Use a liaison to work with ethnic communities

The Duluth Korean Task Force provides a relevant model and resource to learn from in engaging the Asian community. Reach out to the ethnic communities and start a conversation about how to work together to bridge cultural differences and overcome some of the common tensions that arise from such perceived and real differences.

1.2 Encourage greater participation of ethnic communities on boards and commissions

Suwanee offers multiple opportunities for residents to participate in local government through the various boards and commissions that advise City leadership. Work to encourage leaders in the Asian and other ethnic communities to volunteer for an appointment in this capacity. The exposure to City governance will provide residents with a broader understanding of Suwanee's policies and may uncover ways in which these leaders can help to better integrate new and diverse residents into the larger community. At the same time, more diversity on local Commissions provides an opportunity for fresh perspectives and new collaborations.

1.3 Prepare a comprehensive communications plan that includes all City departments

City departments communicate information on specific programs or activities as needed through the City's public information officer. One of the benefits of the 20/20 Vision planning process is that each department was asked to specifically spell out the approach they currently use with regard to their activities. These approach sheets helped to clearly articulate their department missions as practiced. Going forward, supplement each department's stated mission with a comprehensive communication plan to inform and seek the input of residents.

1.4 Communicate with the homeowners associations

Nearly every neighborhood in Suwanee has a homeowners association (HOA). These associations represent a large portion of the population and take on activities from community policing to developing community gardens. These organizations are closest to the residents and therefore bring with them the opportunity to encourage broader involvement in City initiatives and policy. Maintain a list of homeowners associations on the website and convene an annual summit in a roundtable format to discuss concerns.

1.5 Consider creating a Citizens College

Give interested citizens insight into how the City runs and how they can be a part of it. A Citizens College would be a counterpart to the Citizens Police Academy and consist of a multi-week course to teach participants about the different City departments, how the budget works, how to engage effectively with government, and how to get involved with City initiatives and with this plan.

GOAL 2: ENCOURAGE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Plans require a long time horizon. Recognizing that it takes years to see implementation of many plans take place, Suwanee should be involving those who stand to benefit most – local youth. Youth often are discussed as critically important but rarely have a voice in planning, community events, and other activities. Eleven of the roundtables said as much when they expressed a need to get youth involved and keep them involved. Suwanee should increase targeted outreach to youth and encourage their participation in ongoing programs.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

2.1 Provide youth volunteer programs

Suwanee has many volunteer opportunities for adults to help connect them to one another and to critical services like Police. The City should work with existing programs like Police and Citizens Together (PACT) to encourage and expand participation in these programs by teens. Consider new programs to enable youth to play a meaningful role in Suwanee's future. A Junior Ambassador Program, for instance, could provide teens with an opportunity to show new residents around the City and help staff events like Suwanee Day. Plan for adult oversight as appropriate to ensure youth volunteer time is meaningful.

2.2 Organize a Youth Council/Youth Advisory Board

Youth already play leadership roles in schools. Juniors and seniors provide mentorship to freshmen and sophomores and help organize school functions. These teens are eager for opportunities to take these mentorship opportunities out of the classroom and into the City. Many cities organize a Youth Council to guide city leaders in decision-making, work with local teens around issues of common interest, and increase volunteer opportunities. Suwanee teens in focus group meetings expressed a strong desire to be more involved with the City. They want to lend their perspective particularly to questions around teen activities and programs. Convene a Youth Council that has a seat at the table in guiding the implementation of this 20/20 Vision.

2.3 Organize School Meet-and-Greets

The life of local youth is closely tied to the school they attend. The focus groups pulled youth from different schools to discuss the City. The participants valued the opportunity to meet kids and share what one another was doing. Local principals and the Gwinnett County School System could organize school meet-and-greets, potentially in Town Center Park, as a way of building a community of active youth across the City.

2.4 Create a formal internship program

Work with local high schools and colleges to create a formal internship program for students to experience first-hand the way City government works. Interns would participate in the day-to-day functions of the City's different departments.



GOAL 3: PROMOTE THE SUWANEЕ BRAND

Within the region, Suwanee is recognized for its unique qualities, progressive attitude and community spirit. Much of this brand recognition stems from the City's commitment to community engagement and the focus placed on bringing residents together through a slate of events. The City already does a good job in promoting its identity but should not rest on its laurels. We can and should express our accomplishments, but **"just because you're in Money magazine doesn't mean you are doing a good job."** We need to further expand Suwanee's brand recognition, not only as a way of attracting new residents and investment but also as a tool to strengthen the connection between residents and the City in which they live.

"This is a very, very progressive young city."

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

3.1 Market quality of life and amenities to attract workers, businesses, new residents

Suwanee includes relevant information on the City's website to help attract businesses and residents. Supplement this information and target the message to specific groups. For residents, consider a *Live Suwanee* campaign that promotes local neighborhoods and work with realtors to ensure that they have current data on the City. For business owners and employers, align marketing with the activities of Partnership Gwinnett and business organizations that support local businesses.

3.2 Publicize through national media

Money Magazine and Kiplinger's coverage of Suwanee raised national awareness of the City and its identity. Explore other opportunities to further launch Suwanee into the national and regional spotlight.

3.3 Create distinctive Suwanee products

The 20/20 t-shirts created for this process helped to identify volunteers and brand the process. Bumper stickers, t-shirts, and other products are inexpensive yet effective tools to promote the City and encourage resident involvement.

3.4 Create community bulletin boards in key places to promote local activities

Suwanee operates a calendar of events online and promotes key festivals in the CrossRoads newsletter and through other venues. Supplement these mediums with community bulletin boards installed in locations around the City that draw a lot of activity.

3.5 Design and install wayfinding signage throughout Suwanee

Relax, you're in Suwanee. Or so a few signs that mark the City's entrances say. Besides these small markers, it's nearly impossible for an outsider to know when they are, and are not, in Suwanee. Enhance public awareness by designing and installing eye-catching signage across Suwanee. Keep it playful and make a noticeable statement.

GOAL 4: EMBRACE NEW ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES & AUDIENCES

Suwanee currently uses a range of tools to reach the public. These include the Suwanee website, Facebook page, and a Twitter feed as well as good old-fashioned advertising, brochures and the CrossRoads newsletter. Today, public involvement has changed dramatically due to new technologies that it make it easier to connect people to one another. Continue to supplement face-to-face engagement activities with a range of new and improved tools to get the word out.



SUWANEЕ 20/20 VISION PLAN



FIGURE 28. SUWANEЕ 20/20 T-SHIRTS



Example of community bulletin board



Suwanee signage

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

4.1 Create an overall communications plan

Assess the current use of technology in Suwanee for outreach and its relative effectiveness. As utilizing new technology for outreach is generally a low-cost endeavor, continually update the City's communications plan to ensure that the right tools are used for the right job.

4.2 Set up community notification system for early storm warning/emergency alerts

Residents expressed a need to have access to critical information in the case of an emergency. Evaluate systems like the NIXLE notification system and others as a means of providing local emergency messages to residents.

4.3 Expand the use of social media

As of 2012, the City already sends email blasts to nearly 1,800 subscribers, issues press releases to almost 50 media outlets, has almost 5,500 likes on its Facebook page and communicates with almost 700 people on Twitter. Work with local teens and influentials to increase these numbers and better utilize social media as a way of getting more folks involved with the City.

4.4 Re-design the City's website

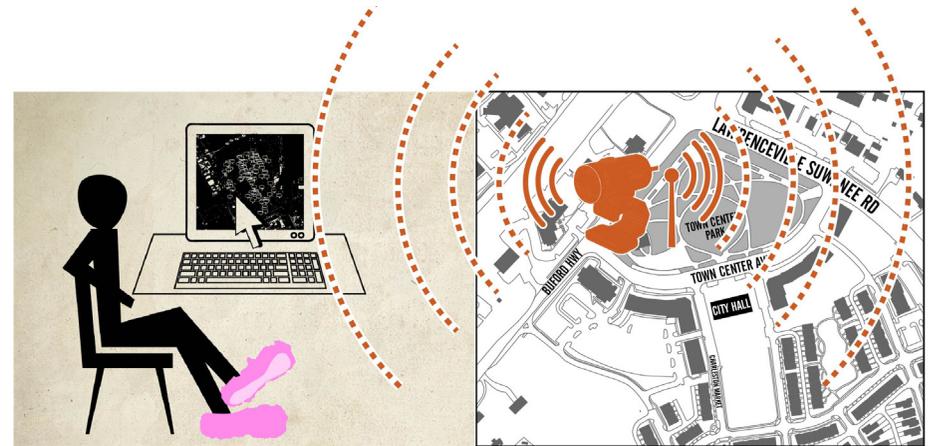
Suwanee's website provides valuable information on the City and upcoming events. Redesign the website to refresh the look and integrate ways in which residents can post comments and interact with City staff. Suwanee's website should reflect its progressive attitude by promoting a commitment to e-government which helps to connect residents more closely with City Hall and reduce administrative costs. Include the Downtown Suwanee and Suwanee Day websites as a part of the web overhaul to ensure a consistent approach and feel to Suwanee's online presence.

4.5 Create a downloadable events calendar

Can't remember when Suwanee Day is this year? There is a simple solution. Enable the City's event calendar to sync with Outlook and Google Calendar. A downloadable events calendar that talks to the calendar applications that residents use on a daily basis would help residents and promote the events they are interested in. Beyond events and festivals, City Council meetings would likely receive more attendance if those functions were on residents' personal calendar.

4.6 Look into providing Wifi in Town Center

Town Center is already a hotspot of activity. It is not, however, a wireless hotspot unless users are able to poach service from one of the local residents or businesses. To support Town Center as a place for multiple activities (even working outside on a nice day), evaluate the cost and benefits of providing a wireless hotspot for the area.



Consider Wifi in Town Center and reinforce the City's online presence.

GOAL 5: SHARE INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY & REGULARLY

Suwanee should continue to provide various means through which citizens may offer feedback, request services, make comments, and share information.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

5.1 Invite ethnic media to events

There is a strong network of media outlets – print, radio, and television – that cater to different ethnicities including the growing Korean population. Include these outlets in all press releases and invite them to cover major stories and events.

5.2 Work with realtors to provide a “Welcome to Suwanee” package to new residents

Moving to Suwanee? If so, it might be helpful to know a little more about the neighborhoods, schools, where to shop nearby and how to access local trails. Organize a short “Welcome to Suwanee” brochure, distributed to local realtors and targeted to home buyers. Through this package, new homebuyers would receive a hearty welcome and relevant information about how to get involved.

5.3 Include more information about City Council activities in communications

Except for those who attend City Council meetings, the inner workings of the City may not be readily apparent. When Suwanee releases information or promotes events, include information on recent Council meetings and decisions, and make sure it is presented in a hip and engaging way.

5.4 Market existing community programs that are under the radar

There are many programs and services that are not funded or organized by the City, such as events at the George Pierce Senior Center, adult sports leagues, and art classes to name a few. Provide a visible list of programs and actively market these programs to help them grow and to connect residents with services.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: HOW WE PROSPER

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: BE VIBRANT

Suwanee’s places of work are concentrated along major transportation corridors: I-85, Satellite Boulevard, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, and parts of Buford Highway. The City is home to several industrial campuses, shown in purple on the map, and clusters of commercial centers at the intersections of major roads. Small businesses are an important economic engine for the City, and three-quarters of all Suwanee businesses are considered small businesses with five or fewer employees. Of the 8,975 people who work in Suwanee, one-fourth of them work at small companies.

For small business owners, Suwanee is a natural choice: it’s beautiful and has great access to Atlanta and natural amenities like mountains and lakes. The City has focused its approach to economic development in several areas. This includes cultivating its brand and reputation and publicizing it through advertising and media. The City also focuses on downtown development (Town Center and Historic Old Town) to strengthen to City’s main economic engine and revitalizing the Gateway. It manages business relations and support, events, and cultural enhancements such as public art that contribute to the creation of a vibrant place. The City also partners with other entities to leverage resources and maximize its reach in business recruitment activities.

The public input process determined that economic development was foremost on residents’ minds as the chief area with which the City should concern itself. At the Open House, when participants were asked to spend limited funds on areas in the City’s budget, the greatest amount by far, 20%, went to economic development. Business development, dealing with commercial vacancies, and job-creation dominated the roundtable discussions, and 71% of the roundtable groups ranked Economic Development the highest priority from among the seven topic areas in the plan. Groups discussed the need for attracting diverse and high-quality commercial development, strengthening local small businesses, and most importantly recruiting job-creating businesses that generate revenue for the City and ensure the future of the City: **“Encourage job growth in general so we are not a bedroom community.”** The ultimate crossroads that the City faces was posed in one of the roundtables: **“What makes some communities vibrant and sustainable while others dissolve?”** The following economic development goals respond to this question and provide important guidance for ensuring Suwanee remains ahead of the pack.

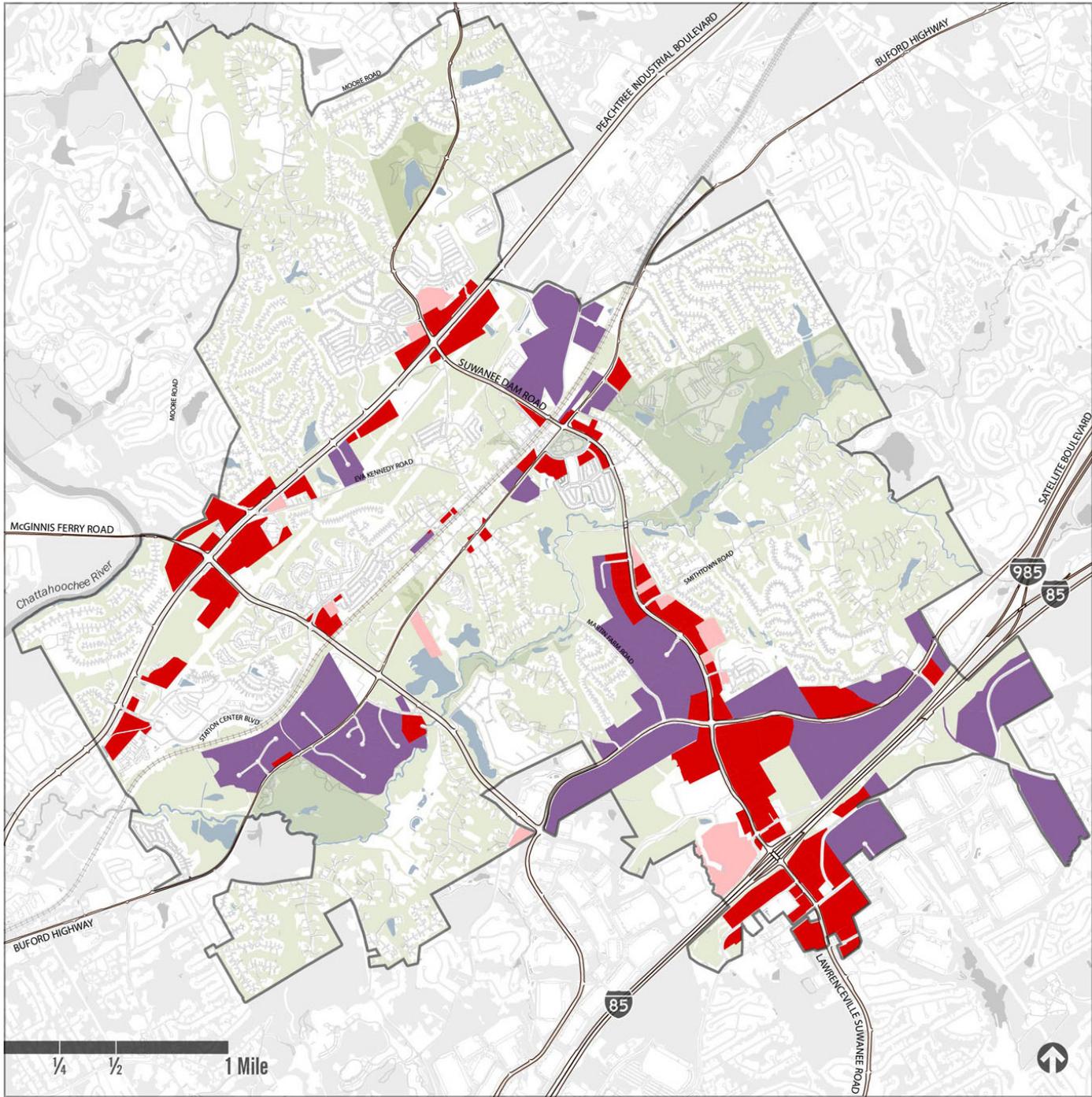


GOAL 1: FOCUS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AS THE CORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The best economic development strategy is based on ensuring an excellent quality of life. People live in Suwanee because of the quality of schools, police force, City services, and community feel. These are the same selling points for employers and small businesses: **“we’ve watched it get nicer and nicer.”** The quality of life initiatives that already are a focus of City leadership must remain paramount to grow businesses and employment in Suwanee.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

- 1.1 **Favor budget items dedicated to maintaining quality of life**
Place a strong emphasis on quality-of-life programs in the annual budgeting process by weighting these factors more heavily than other objectives guiding expenditures.
- 1.2 **Develop quality-of-life benchmarks**
Suwanee is involved with many initiatives designed to ensure a high quality of life. Identify key metrics to measure the City’s progress in sustaining these initiatives and share this information with existing and new businesses. One way to measure quality of life metrics is to participate in the National Citizen Survey or a similar instrument.



8975 PEOPLE WORK IN SUWANEE

3/4 OF ALL COMPANIES IN SUWANEE ARE SMALL BUSINESSES EMPLOYING 5 PEOPLE OR LESS

1/4 OF ALL EMPLOYEES WORK AT SMALL BUSINESSES

■ commercial
■ office
■ industrial
 as of 6/2012

SOURCE city of suwanee

FIGURE 29. COMMERCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT MAP

\$
 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: HOW WE PROSPER



GOAL 2: COMPETE FOR THE FUTURE

Suwanee is nestled within a growing region and surrounded by cities such as Duluth, Buford, and Alpharetta who are competing for the same jobs and people. Moreover, cities throughout the region are learning from one another and creating their own versions of town centers, retail hubs, and parks. Fortunately, Suwanee is well positioned to compete given its location, amenities, and brand awareness. However, other cities are catching up and offer unique amenities of their own. It is important that Suwanee be proactive and compete for businesses, jobs, residents and amenities that add value to the City and ensure sustainable economic growth.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

2.1 Continue working with Partnership Gwinnett for recruitment

The City participates in and supports Partnership Gwinnett, which serves as Gwinnett’s principal external business recruitment/retention arm and utilizes a proven regional approach to traditional economic development activities. This allows the City to localize efforts and to make Suwanee more attractive to businesses, employers and employees.

2.2 Create business incentives

Business incentives can be a useful economic development tool for sealing the deal with employers and business owners. Businesses typically look first for the right space, in the right location, and within an environment that offers a high quality of life. Often, multiple places offer similar advantages. To demonstrate that Suwanee is serious about bringing in the right businesses, consider incentives to help make choosing Suwanee a little bit easier. Incentives can range widely from, including things like fast-track permitting or even subsidized design assistance for items like storefront signs. The City should talk with existing businesses and employers to develop a range of incentives for consideration and discussion.

2.3 Ensure Suwanee has an educated, skilled workforce

Work with the Gwinnett County School System, local vocational schools, and entrepreneurial centers to ensure that adults of all ages have access to the training necessary to compete in today’s job market. Some cities support local skills training by offering marketing programs, providing free space for classes, and helping to link graduates with internship opportunities.

2.4 Attract higher learning institution satellite campus

Georgia is home to many colleges, universities and vocational schools. Reach out to local schools to assess the opportunity of locating a satellite campus in Suwanee. Suwanee Gateway’s excellent highway access and visibility could prove attractive to a school looking to expand. The benefits for Suwanee would include better access to higher education and skills training, a marketing push, and increased revenue.

2.5 Attract/develop green energy manufacturers

Cities across the country are seeking ways to attract green companies and manufacturers. With a central location and educated workforce, plan ahead and compete for these growing industries.

GOAL 3: BECOME A JOBS CENTER

To this point, Suwanee’s growth was based largely on rapid development of new homes and communities. As the numbers of residents increased, retailers followed to provide services to the growing population. But Suwanee is also home to some non-retail employers including wholesale facilities, manufacturing uses and technology businesses like server farms and data centers. Satellite Boulevard sits at the geographical boundary of two competing power companies, which has helped encourage the provision of a large amount of fiber-optic infrastructure in the location. As such, data centers have made Satellite Boulevard their home. Since 2002, Suwanee has a net gain of jobs, due largely to big increases just before the recession hit.

As expressed throughout the 20/20 Vision public engagement process, residents want more jobs in Suwanee. They recognize that for Suwanee to be economically sustainable, it needs a diverse economic base. If Suwanee relies too heavily on residential construction and development for revenue, the long-term result will be more pressure on residents to pay for local services. Suwanee needs to retain existing jobs but also further expand the job base to diversify the economy.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

3.1 Attract larger businesses

Small businesses are the backbone of Suwanee, but the City should also seek opportunities to recruit larger businesses to key sites in Suwanee Gateway. Currently, Suwanee does not have any businesses that employ more than 500 people. As the example of NCR locating in Gwinnett demonstrates, successful recruitment of one large business can create a large number of jobs quickly, increase City revenues (thereby reducing the pressure on residential land), and provide a boost for recruitment of other companies.

3.2 Cultivate a broad range of small businesses

Small businesses provide the majority of local employment and is something that residents are proud of in Suwanee. Recruit and nurture additional small businesses to fill available space in Suwanee. Diversify the commercial and employment mix by attracting businesses that are under-represented in the City and surrounding area.

3.3 Attract new technology businesses

Recruit new technology businesses that create a diversity of technology-based employment and draw knowledge workers. Suwanee Gateway, in particular the Satellite Boulevard corridor, is an ideal location for these types of businesses. Consider a feasibility and market study to further determine the possibilities for ramping up job growth in this sector.

GOAL 4: RECRUIT AND DEVELOP A DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY COMMERCIAL BASE

Suwanee's commercial base of retail, office, and industrial uses are all facing different challenges. Industrial uses are performing pretty well but represent only a small amount of growth on the heels of the recession. The recession has hit retail uses much harder, as illustrated by the vacant storefronts around the City. Finally, office uses have yet to find a concentrated home in the City. Satellite Boulevard provides the closest thing to a concentration of office uses. To ensure a diverse economy, Suwanee should look to diversify its base of commercial uses. Coupled with recruitment and quality-of-life goals explained above, Suwanee should strive for a unique, high-quality commercial base that provides jobs and services to residents and employees.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

4.1 Recruit medical service providers

There are limited health providers within Suwanee forcing residents who need a doctor to travel outside the community for services. Many residents mentioned the desire to have more health services within Suwanee.

4.2 Encourage more independently owned businesses

Residents are proud of the local businesses that operate in Suwanee. When recruiting for retail uses, seek opportunities to fill space with locally owned shops as opposed to national chains. Unique, local businesses like niche restaurants or clothing boutiques often have a strong draw.

4.3 Promote Shop Local Campaign

To support locally owned businesses, Suwanee should consider ramping up its Shop Local Campaign. This could include enlisting more participating businesses, marketing the program more heavily, expanding the use of Suwanee Downtown gift certificates, and organizing Suwanee-to-Suwanee discounts for residents and workers.

4.4 Consider expansion opportunities for the farmers market

The Suwanee Farmers Market has been wildly successful and provides an alternative way to get fresh produce – not to mention providing an additional amenity to Town Center twice a week. The Farmers Market could be expanded with additional vendors. This would help to diversify goods that can be purchased downtown at minimal cost. A more permanent location may want to be explored that could open the possibility of a year-round market.

4.5 Encourage diverse businesses in Town Center

Residents noted that while Town Center is great for a few items, they need to travel to the mall to pick up other specialty goods and basic day-to-day supplies. Existing stores in Town Center and local residents would greatly benefit from the addition of more convenience shopping including a corner store, pharmacy or a small grocery. Additionally, specialty stores like a children's clothing boutique would help to further draw customers and enhance Town Center as a unique retail environment.

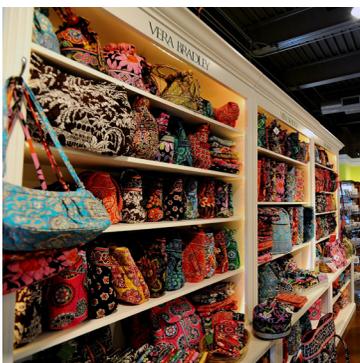
"Suwanee is great for a burger but if you want prime rib you have to go to Atlanta."

Suwanee Farmer's Market at Town Center Park



Asheville Buy Local campaign posters and T-shirts





Suwanee small businesses (clockwise from top): Ippolito's, Sugar D's Sweet Shack & La Ti Da

GOAL 5: ATTRACT AND RETAIN KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

“Knowledge worker” is a loose term that describes people in a variety of creative fields including information technology, programmers, writers, academics, researchers, designers, artisans, etc. Those who are involved in knowledge-based jobs typically are looking for specific amenities and settings. This is why knowledge-based jobs often are clustered in specific cities and towns that offer what they’re looking for. Suwanee already is home to many knowledge workers. Residents are well-educated, mobile and have a choice as to where they want to live and work. The goal is to build upon and expand Suwanee’s knowledge workforce, which will help to recruit additional jobs and amenities to the City.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

5.1 Develop “hang outs” that appeal to knowledge workers

Knowledge workers are looking for great amenities like unique restaurants and a varied nightlife. Currently, there are limited nightlife options for young professionals, and Suwanee could seek to attract more uses, like the Movie Tavern, that appeal to this demographic. This strategy also supports Goal 4 described above, which targets diversifying Suwanee’s commercial businesses.

5.2 Focus on recruiting jobs that are attractive to knowledge workers

A real benefit for knowledge workers is the ability to work close to home. Recruit jobs in information technology, engineering, design (like architecture and industrial design), or computer businesses that bring this progressive workforce with them. Jobs of this kind would thrive close to Town Center or within bicycling distance to offer transportation options that link work and play.

5.3 Continue to focus on public art and local events that represent Suwanee’s unique identity

The commitment to public art and the success of SculptTour has helped to give Suwanee a niche and a unique identity. Combined with the City’s recognized events, there already is a base of amenities that attract some knowledge workers; art and events should remain important aspects of the local economic development environment.

5.4 Orient marketing and brand development of Suwanee toward knowledge workers

Where appropriate, target marketing toward knowledge workers by advertising in trade publications and increasing the City’s online presence.

5.5 Develop live / work spaces for designers and other small creative businesses

Some knowledge workers like graphic designers or craftsmen are looking for funky, off-beat space that can be used in a flexible way for both living and working. These live/work spaces often are home to creative individuals who support local businesses and attract additional businesses. Approach developers who specialize in this product to discuss possible opportunities in the City.

4.6 Develop event space for big parties/weddings

If you’re getting married or simply graduating from high school and want to have a large celebration, you’ll likely need to take that party to a different town. A private event space available for parties and events would help to keep this activity in-town while drawing guests to local shops and perhaps hotels.

4.7 Attract name-brand hotel

Suwanee’s hotels are on the other side of I-85, relatively isolated from the rest of the City. As new jobs find a home in Suwanee, a larger, brand-name hotel would serve as a valuable amenity to new employers. The City should consider playing a role in hotel recruitment and final deal composition in order to facilitate this kind of anchor locating in Suwanee. As the location and type of hotels are driven by the market, transforming Suwanee Gateway as a center of jobs and activity will help to support this strategy.

GOAL 6: HELP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE

Small businesses make up the majority of businesses in Suwanee. They represent a lot of economic activity and provide a range of services and goods that make Suwanee a better place to live. Small businesses also operate on thin margins and can be vulnerable to changes in the economy. Suwanee should strive to support small businesses by offering the necessary infrastructure, connections to available small business programs, and marketing assistance that will help these businesses grow.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

6.1 Provide entrepreneurial training and small business incubation

Many potential business owners have a great idea but lack the capital or experience necessary to get their idea off the ground. To support entrepreneurs, evaluate the potential of creating a small business incubator to offer classes, training, and inexpensive start-up space. Roswell undertook a similar initiative by partnering with UGA to run the program.

6.2 Provide permitting and technical assistance

For some business owners, getting the necessary permits and approvals to open can seem daunting. Be proactive and provide technical assistance for existing and potential business owners to ensure that they know what to expect and what will be necessary to move forward.

6.3 Encourage companies to hold events at local restaurants

Sometimes helping small businesses thrive is simply a matter of connecting them to other businesses. Encourage local companies to hold events, weekly staff meetings, and holiday parties at local restaurants to support local businesses.

6.4 Promote Suwanee.org as the center for small business

The Suwanee Business Alliance operates a website to help small business connect to one another. As a part of that website, there is a listing of small businesses in the City. Provide links to this page from City websites and encourage the Business Alliance to redesign the listing to include an interactive map and search functions by type of business.

6.5 Promote small businesses

The Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, Suwanee Business Alliance, and other business associations targeted toward ethnic groups should combine their resources and connections as appropriate to promote Suwanee's small businesses. Consider organizing fundraising events for local schools and churches that include participation from small businesses. As an example, participating small businesses could offer a donation for every sale but in turn would receive additional volume due to their support for the fundraiser.

6.6 Form better links and increased involvement between the City's big events and local businesses

Some businesses thrive during events like Suwanee Day. Others feel that the chaos and limited access hurt their businesses. The City has worked to make these events beneficial for small businesses, but more can be done. Form a committee of local, small businesses to discuss their needs during event days. Offer additional assistance in promotion and possible reduced advertising for larger events to affected businesses.

6.7 Provide more support for businesses outside of Town Center

Town Center occupies a lot of attention given its mix of uses and activities. However, businesses outside Town Center can feel overlooked. Strive for balance in small business outreach and assistance by ensuring that businesses across the City receive attention.

6.8 Create a clearinghouse and incentives for renting/leasing vacant commercial space

The City can play a key role in collecting and providing information on available commercial space. This clearinghouse could sit on the City's webpage and include information on location, size, zoning, and leasing rates and contacts. Where rental rates are too high for small businesses, consider incentives to offset these rates and bring them in line with what a small business can afford.

6.9 Conduct tours for potential business owners

For business owners looking to locate in Suwanee, conduct tours highlighting the City's amenities as well as key available properties. During these tours, talk with prospective businesses about the support the City will provide.



Suwanee small businesses: Town Center & Suwanee Dental



PUBLIC SAFETY: WHAT PROVIDES US COMFORT

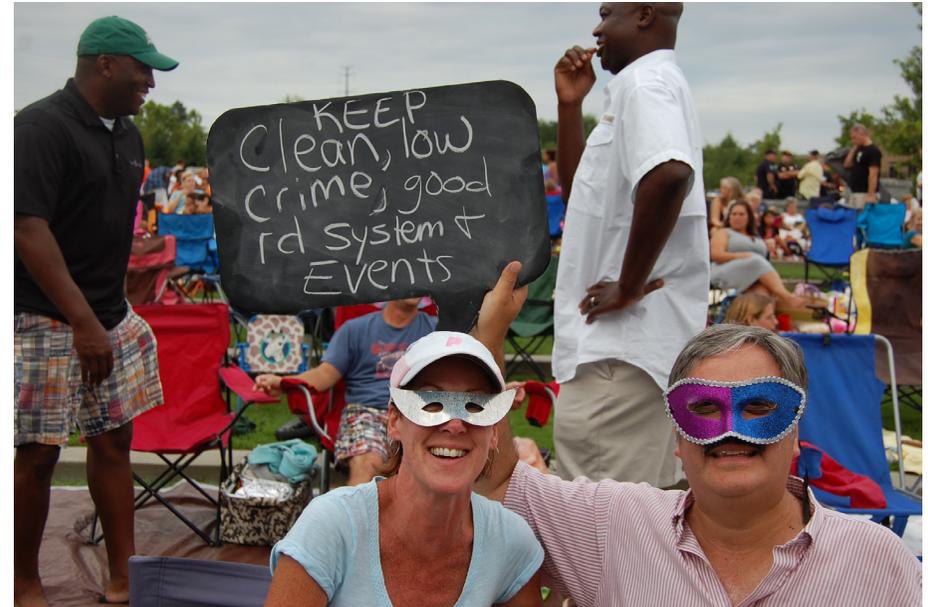
WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEE: BE SAFE

Suwanee has a reputation as being one of the safest, if not *the* safest community, in the region. The crime rate in Suwanee is generally very low. Even though the City's population continues to increase, crime rates have actually decreased in recent years. In 2008 there were 638 Part I Crimes (major crimes). In 2009 there was a 17.24% decrease in those types of crimes and in 2010, a 4.3 % decrease. Year to date for 2011 is following that trend, indicating a 7.9% decrease.

The City uses two main tactics in its policing approach: community policing and high police visibility. The City has numerous ongoing programs to support and implement community policing and uses a combination of personnel and technology to deter crime through strategic and targeted police visibility efforts.

Overall, the police force gets high marks from residents and business owners for being responsive, and citizens fully appreciate the high visibility approach the City has taken. Residents also appreciated **"how the police department interacts with the community is significantly different [compared to other places]."** Residents value friendly and engaging police officers with community ties. Having a strong police presence improves quality of life, which is good for attracting and retaining residents and businesses. However, some community members voiced the opinion that the "police everywhere" approach for traffic enforcement was a bit heavy handed.

During the roundtables that produced these goals, participants all felt public safety was a very important aspect of the City's services but debated about how to prioritize it with regard to the other topic areas. They generally felt that the City was doing a good job and expect the same quality of service in the future. Hence, although public safety was not actively discussed as much as economic development during this planning process, public safety is by no means a low priority. Participants felt that public safety already is a high priority and should remain so.



GOAL 1: PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY

The Suwanee Police Department embraces the concept of community-oriented policing and seeks ways to form partnerships with residents. Through constant communication, police and citizens form more effective relationships and begin to address crime and disorder together. As stated by the Chief, **"We need your help to make our community safer."** Police officers should continue to embrace their successful partnership-building culture as the central public safety philosophy in Suwanee.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

1.1 Expand community-oriented policing where possible

Continue to align community policing with activities of local homeowner associations as well as the Gwinnett Chamber and Suwanee Business Alliance. Ensure that information about the community policing philosophy is integrated into all marketing materials and Welcome to Suwanee packages for new residents and businesses. The City's Code Enforcement services are also a way the City maintain safety in the community and provides another opportunity for residents to partner with the City.



Police And Citizens Together (P.A.C.T.)



Suwanee Police Department

GOAL 2: EDUCATE & ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

Education and engagement are integral to community-oriented policing. Effective partnerships mean that citizens need to know how police operate and what to do and look for in an emergency. Many residents are in contact with the police only when something bad happens. The goal is to ensure that all Suwanee residents have contact with police and an understanding of their tools and methods prior to a time when they may need an officer's help.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

2.1 Promote and expand existing programs

The police department offers many programs designed to engage and educate the community. These include the Citizens Police Academy, which trains residents in police tactics. The Youth Explorers program, in collaboration with the Boy Scouts of America, focuses on teaching 14 to 20 year olds police tactics and enlisting their help at major events. The Park Ambassadors program provides training and support to residents to help monitor local parks. PRIDE (Parents Reducing Incidents of Driver Error) is a state program designed to teach parents and 16-year-old drivers the do's and don't's of driving. Officers provide car seat safety checks through the CPST program and work as youth mentors through the COPS (Caring Officers Providing Support) initiative to link police volunteers with local schools. And of course, the Police and Citizens Together (PACT) initiative, which assigns an officer to each neighborhood to solve local problems. Continue to seek new innovative education and citizen engagement programs and find ways in which to promote programs online and through social media and encourage greater volunteer involvement to expand their capacity to handle more participants.





Rendering of new police training center and substation

GOAL 3: USE TARGETED POLICE VISIBILITY EFFORTS

“It’s safe. As a woman living alone I feel safe.”

Numerous studies clearly demonstrate that high police visibility, including visible traffic enforcement, can and does deter crime. Criminals generally do not

like to be in an area where police officers are present, so the City takes purposeful efforts to give the criminals the perception that we have police everywhere. As such, Suwanee police officers make concerted efforts to be visible at key locations and times to maximize effectiveness – whether undertaking routine monitoring or performing traffic enforcement. If it sometimes appears that **“police are everywhere”** in Suwanee, then job well done. Given the success of this strategy, the goal is to ensure that police are targeting the areas that most require their presence.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

3.1 Finish the police training center/substation at I-85

The police training center and substation under construction is located at the I-85 exit. The location was chosen specifically to place police at a challenging intersection and to deter criminals at the main point of entry to the City. Completion of this facility should significantly lessen crime and the perception of crime in Suwanee Gateway.

3.2 Use available officers strategically

Assign officers to locations where crimes are occurring and base these decisions on up-to-date data including hotspot mapping. Utilizing this strategy already has resulted in a reduction of Part 1 crimes by 30% between 2008 and 2011.

3.3 Continue high-visibility efforts along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road

Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road is one of the main corridors in Suwanee and funnels a significant amount of traffic to and from I-85. Because of this excellent access, Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road is home to many businesses but also a means by which some criminals access Suwanee. As identified by the police department, visibility on this road is warranted to deter crime throughout the City.

GOAL 4: EMBRACE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The Suwanee Police Department is a progressive force that seeks to stay on top of national best practices with regard to public safety. As such, the police department should maintain its goal of embracing new technologies that will help train police, solve crimes, and track progress.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

4.1 Maximize the use of the training center

The training center at I-85 includes a simulator to train police in the appropriate use of force and a firing range. Completion of this project will bring substantial benefits to the City's police department. These facilities should be used, as appropriate, as a part of the community engagement and education programs that the police department already offers.

4.2 Use technology for effective policing

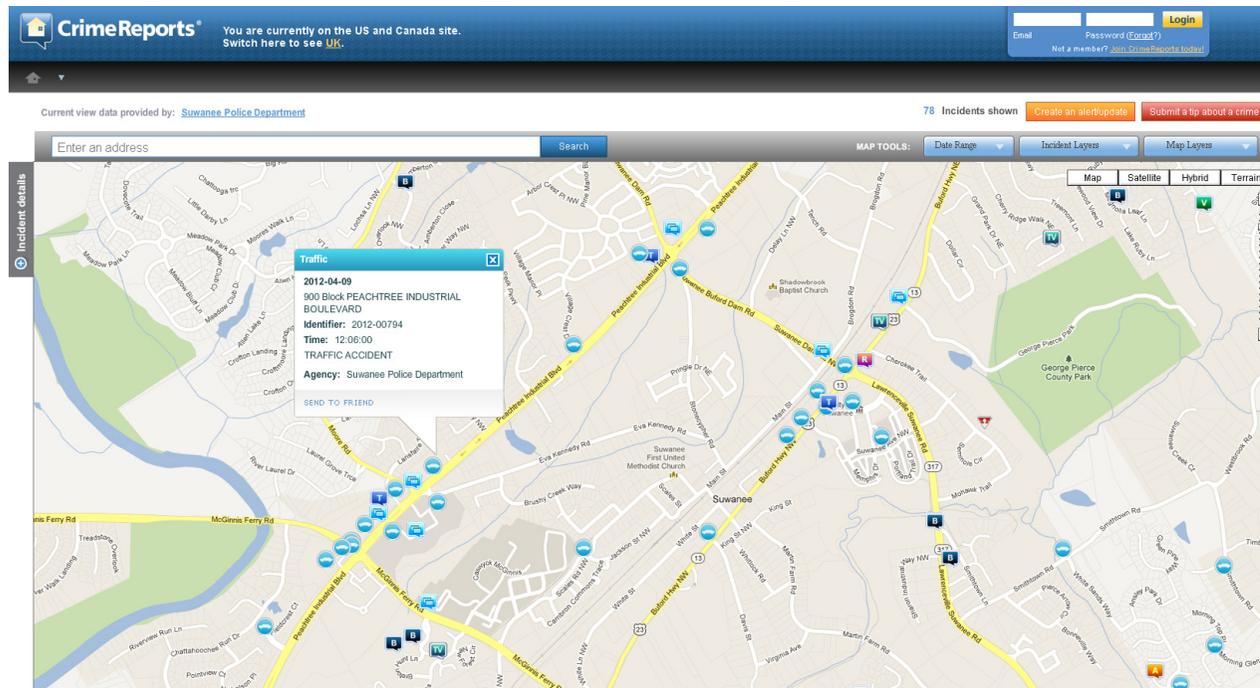
Suwanee police use a variety of technology tools to help them police more effectively, including an Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR), radar signs, video surveillance cameras in the parks, and electronic ticketing. Continue to look for the latest technology available in policing and determine if it would be effective in Suwanee.

4.3 Expand the use of mapping technology to track criminal activity

The Suwanee Police Department uses Command Central – a program that gathers data and identifies crime hotspots. Police officers use these hotspot maps to allocate officers and discuss crime trends with City leaders. Residents can access crime data using www.crimereports.com. Suwanee should consider making these hotspot maps available for review through the City's website as well. While showing crime data can raise some concerns about fostering negative perceptions, the long-term benefits include transparency, which is already a philosophy the police department and City leaders share.

4.4 Follow your PACT officer @Twitter

Police officers as a part of the PACT program should be encouraged to sign up for a Twitter account and invite residents in their designated neighborhood to "follow" them. Twitter affords quick and convenient updates in 140 characters or less. Using social media in this way simply offers another means to provide information and connect with residents.



Screenshot from www.crimereports.com





PLANNING: HOW WE GROW

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEE: BE PROACTIVE

Over the last 10 years, the fruits of Suwanee's proactive planning have been impressive: the extensive parks and greenway system; the well-loved and well-used Town Center Park; new traditional, walkable neighborhoods; and mixed-use development. These assets help shape the City's identity and image throughout the region.

This strategic vision plan provided a chance to gauge public opinion on the City's planning to date and its policies and approach in order to establish a clear set of goals moving forward. Throughout the process, residents made it clear that they approved of the City's proactive and open approach even if they did not always agree with specific decisions.

"The vision is not just what to do to make it better, but what we need to do to preserve what is good... [just because it's good now] doesn't mean it's going to stay good forever."

During the roundtables, participants were keenly interested in how Suwanee would balance growth and infrastructure, deal with vacancy and stalled development, build upon the success of Town Center, and most importantly, transform Suwanee Gateway. Overwhelmingly, roundtable participants, Open House participants, and interviewees all cited the Gateway as a main priority. When participants at the open House were asked to mark on the Collaborative Map what place they most wanted to see improvements, the Gateway garnered the most comments. During the roundtable

discussions, the Gateway emerged as the biggest priority of all the goals across each of the seven topic areas; 17 of 23 roundtable groups ranked the Gateway as their highest priority.

Suburban communities often grow quickly, which can result in a "cookie cutter" development approach that undermines the ability to establish a unique identity. Suwanee has bucked this trend. Suwanee stands out; it has an identity that is decidedly not your typical suburb: **"We have a sense of place...this is not just a collection of strip malls."** To keep its edge, Suwanee must continue to be progressive, innovative, and proactive in its planning. **"The vision is not just what to do to make it better, but what we need to do to preserve what is good... [just because it's good now] doesn't mean it's going to stay good forever."**



GOAL 1: TRANSFORM SUWANEE GATEWAY

The area around Exit 111 off I-85 called Suwanee Gateway was, not surprisingly, the first area in Suwanee to be commercially developed. It first gained attention as home to the Atlanta Falcons practice facility and now includes 13.9 million square feet of industrial space, more than 642,000 square feet of office space, almost 800,000 square feet of retail space and a small number of hotels. It is a critical economic engine for Suwanee and Gwinnett County.

The unfortunate reality, however, is that a vast amount of vacant and underutilized space is visible from Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. The result is that Suwanee's "front door" looks like a downtrodden retail strip that could be in any city. Combined with frequent traffic backups, the Gateway is a major concern and source of embarrassment for Suwanee residents: **"When I bring people to Suwanee, I don't take the 85 exit - it could be so much more."**

The last plan completed for the Gateway was done in a different economic setting. The recession took the wind out of the sails of that plan, at least for the time being. In the meantime, the City has worked to make moderate improvements in the area. These include the development of the Suwanee police substation, the creation of a Tax Allocation District (TAD) to help fund improvements, a streetscape plan for the I-85 interchange that is anticipated for construction in 2012, and ongoing code enforcement and business recruitment activities. Private improvements have included the Terraces at Suwanee Gateway project and significant renovations, like the Movie Tavern.

Residents have clearly indicated that transforming the Gateway into an area that Suwanee can be proud of should be a top priority for the City in coming years. The existing plan should be re-evaluated to respond to today's economic realities. As a priority goal for the 20/20 Vision, Suwanee Gateway needs targeted investment to encourage private development.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

1.1 Explore the feasibility of an entertainment center for indoor activities

Build upon the success of the Movie Tavern and Sky Zone trampoline park and look toward additional indoor entertainment uses including an arcade, bowling, skating rink, or aquatic center. Suwanee Gateway's excellent location and access could make for a successful entertainment zone that spurs additional commercial uses.

1.2 Land bank property

To ensure more control over future development, consider land banking property. Land banking is a process of strategic acquisition with the intent of amassing land that can be developed when the market is ready. As the land owner, the City can exert greater control over development by proactively marketing the land to quality developers and removing blighted properties that hinder the area's development potential. The decision of how much to land bank will be based on the cost of the land, market conditions, and the long-term impact on the City's budget.

1.3 Use temporary landscaping where possible

It likely will be years before some properties will be developed or redeveloped. Rather than settle for vacant land in the highly visible Gateway, explore alternative landscape strategies that can add environmental and aesthetic benefits. Sunflowers or switch grass, for example, grow relatively quickly and can be utilized to create biofuels. Reach out to a landscape architect to discuss options for temporarily transforming the look and feel of the Gateway in the near term.

1.4 Commission eye-catching public art at the Gateway

Much as SculpTour and public art have helped to distinguish Town Center, Suwanee Gateway could benefit from an eye-catching work of art. In this location, art needs to be large enough to capture the attention of drivers and make a visible statement about Suwanee. The Public Art Commission should work with a private entity to commission a unique and remarkable piece. Artistic treatments on buildings, such as murals, could also help to further enhance the area and give it an artsy vibe.

1.5 Pursue upscale, unique retail

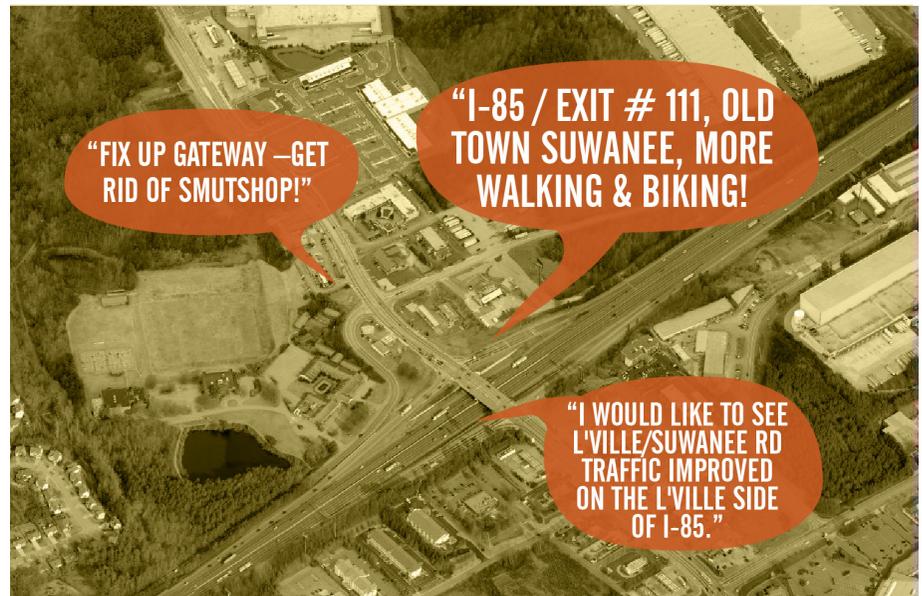
Residents are looking for more retail options locally. Evaluate and market the potential for various types of retail; this could include both small scale retail or an open air retail center similar to the Forum at Peachtree Corners as a part of new development in the area, perhaps in the Terraces at Suwanee Gateway.



"I-85 is not a beauty spot."



Existing gateway conditions



"FIX UP GATEWAY –GET RID OF SMUTSHOP!"

"I-85 / EXIT # 111, OLD TOWN SUWANEE, MORE WALKING & BIKING!"

"I WOULD LIKE TO SEE L'VILLE/SUWANEE RD TRAFFIC IMPROVED ON THE L'VILLE SIDE OF I-85."

Open house public input regarding Gateway





Example of highway overpass beautification in Indiana (top) and in LA (above).



Open house public input regarding Town Center

1.6 Develop visually striking buildings

Whatever is eventually built in the Gateway, hold developers and their architects to high standards. The buildings must be visually distinctive to help the Gateway, and all of Suwanee, stand out from the competition.

1.7 Beautify the overpass

Is an overpass an overpass? Suwanee should expect more. Work with GDOT to determine options for making the overpass in the Gateway unique. Lighting, lettering (like the overpasses in Atlanta), and landscaping can help make a difference that results in private interest. This can be an expensive undertaking so plan ahead and work to raise outside funds.

GOAL 2: INVEST IN DOWNTOWN SUWANEE'S FUTURE

Much attention has been paid to both Town Center and Old Town and with good reason. Town Center, in particular, is the “mother ship” of activity and in many ways the heart of Suwanee. Its mix of uses, range of events and urban park are each essential in distinguishing Suwanee from other cities. Historic Old Town does not offer the same economic benefit but represents Suwanee’s historic roots, is accredited as a part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Program, and offers some unique amenities including the Everett Music Barn. At the time this plan was developed, the City was pursuing part of Old Town as a historic register district. In the area between Old Town and Town Center is the City’s police headquarters, Gwinnett County Public Library and PlayTown. Collectively, Old Town and Town Center represent Suwanee’s downtown.

Downtown matters for the City. Although other parts of Suwanee also deserve investment, downtown is not yet complete. A healthy downtown can boost economic development and job growth and provide a range of programs and services for all walks of life in Suwanee. The City does indeed need balance in terms of how and where dollars are spent, but continued investment in downtown is necessary and warranted.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

2.1 Support redevelopment of Pierce’s Corner

Pierce’s Corner, built in 1910, is a distinctive structure that can anchor a resurgence along Main Street. Continue to work with developers to reuse this building for commercial activity.

2.2 Energize Old Town through the arts and adaptive reuse

Older structures usually are attractive spaces for creative individuals. The Everett Music Barn has established a local performance space for Old Town. Suwanee Academy of the Arts offers classes and camps in their school on Main Street. The Creative Clay House is a fun outlet for Suwanee’s amateur painters. Look to build upon this momentum by attracting other arts-related uses. Evaluate adaptive reuse options for historic structures; creative uses might include galleries, live/work spaces, locally owned restaurants, and small offices.

2.3 Fill the missing links

Part of the reason people often refer to Town Center and Old Town as different places is that they are fundamentally disconnected. Old Town is tucked away, literally on the other side of the tracks. The pedestrian tunnel completed in 2009 was an important first start to helping connect the two areas. Further improve the connection between Old Town and Town Center by investing in Buford Highway and Russell Street. In addition, ensure that all of downtown is connected to local amenities including trails and nearby neighborhoods. Consider new uses along Jackson Street and Scales Road to connect Suwanee Station to downtown and explore ways to more strongly connect PlayTown Suwanee and White Street Park to nearby neighborhoods.

2.4 Expand Town Center

Expand the range of uses and retail options available in Town Center. In addition, look to invest in properties around Town Center to create active, supporting uses that provide more job opportunities in Suwanee.

2.5 Manage parking downtown

Events like Suwanee Day create real difficulties for parking in and around downtown. Most residents are aware of the problems and plan to leave their cars at home that day. Even with the shuttle service and remote parking offered during major events, parking is a concern for residents and business owners alike. Some have proposed a parking garage in Town Center to handle excess capacity. Given the huge expense of developing a garage, the City should undertake a parking management plan to identify cost-effective alternatives for handling increased parking demand on the busiest days of the year. As an example, partnering with the owners of empty retail centers nearby could allow the City to take advantage of existing underutilized parking.

GOAL 3: BALANCE GROWTH

Rapid growth brings with it many challenges, from providing services to managing traffic volumes. Suwanee, through prior planning and investment, has sought to guide and manage growth as much as possible. Even so, the City's rapid development has raised concerns among residents. The City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan addresses land-use concerns explicitly and provides guidance to Suwanee in making investment decisions. As noted by residents during the 20/20 Vision process and through prior plans, the City should evaluate and balance growth with respect to the potential impacts new development will have on the City.

"Are we too popular? Will we lose sight of ourselves?"



Landscaping as an example for beautifying land while waiting for development



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

3.1 Encourage transitional uses for land cleared for stalled subdivisions

For stalled subdivisions, encourage owners and developers to explore alternative uses and strategies to beautify the land.

3.2 Explore annexation possibilities

Use annexation as a tool, where possible and appropriate, to increase revenue and improve services. As residential uses have the highest costs associated with service delivery and given the legal barriers to annexing a large amount of properties, focus annexation on industrial and commercial uses. Annexation of these uses around Suwanee Gateway would help to coordinate and fund investments around I-85, further supporting the City's tax base.

3.3 Balance the allocation of resources across the City

Much attention has been focused on Town Center in recent years. Other areas of the City require improvements including Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and Suwanee Gateway. Ensure that the necessary improvements are in place across Suwanee to serve the needs of existing neighborhoods and ensure their future viability.



Village Grove



Shadowbrook



Three Bridges

GOAL 4: ENSURE LIFETIME HOUSING

Suwanee's housing stock consists primarily of single-family homes. Cities with a limited mix of housing types often face challenges in retaining families and residents as their housing needs change. The development of Town Center provided an alternative model of living above storefronts that has proven to be attractive to many. In that spirit, promote alternative housing types with the goal of retaining residents at all stages of life and offering different housing options attractive to knowledge workers, young professionals, and smaller families.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

4.1 Promote development of housing for seniors

It is important for seniors to be able to age in place. As Suwanee's population ages, some seniors will be looking for smaller homes with limited maintenance. Others may require housing coupled with services. Plan for (and even perhaps recruit) new independent senior homes and assisted living facilities designed in a walkable, mixed-use development pattern.

4.2 Encourage design that make homes accessible to people with varying physical abilities

For independent seniors or those with handicaps, Universal Design features like ramps, wide doorways and hallways, lever door handles and pull out cabinets can greatly improve mobility and independence. Encourage developers to design new homes with Universal Design features in mind.

4.3 Promote a mix of housing types

Recent developments in Suwanee like Village Grove, Shadowbrook, and Suwanee Station provide a mix of housing types and sizes. Further diversify Suwanee's housing stock by encouraging a range of housing types that appeal to different family sizes.

GOAL 5: GROW GREENER & CONSERVE RESOURCES

Forward-thinking cities across the country are seeking ways to limit their impact on the environment. Reducing waste, conserving water, and recycling materials are not only good for the local environment but also a way to save money. Through development of mixed-use and compact neighborhoods and the creation of a local park system, Suwanee already is a leader in the region with respect to going green. Suwanee is certified by the Atlanta Regional Commission as a Green Community – the first one in Gwinnett County. As Suwanee shifts from new development to maintaining and upgrading what is built, do so with a focus on expanding the City's green ethos.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

5.1 Promote citywide recycling

Encourage all residents and businesses to recycle by launching a public education campaign designed to raise awareness about local recycling programs. Make it easier for residents and businesses to recycle by providing recycling bins in Town Center, local parks and shops across the City. Consider partnering with national programs like RecycleBank, which offers incentives for recycling.

5.2 Encourage composting

Composting is the process of transforming food waste and landscape material like leaves into fertilizer and soil. Soil produced from this process is rich in nutrients and excellent for gardening. Reach out to homeowners associations (HOAs) to explain the benefits of composting, and work with them to create a shared composter for their neighborhoods. Work with the Harvest Farm managing board to increase the capacity the garden can compost. Also encourage local restaurants to manage a shared composting site for food waste. Composting food waste from restaurants reduces the amount of trash they need to have collected, and the resulting soil could be used for landscaping around those restaurants or in local parks or community gardens.

5.3 Encourage water conservation

Everyone remembers the recent drought that drained Lake Lanier and forced water restrictions throughout the region. Plan ahead for the next drought by working with HOAs to encourage water conservation. Offer classes on how to conserve water but also on ways to capture stormwater using rain barrels and rain gardens. Capturing more stormwater on site means less flooding and more free water available for gardening.

5.4 Use recycled materials for trail improvements and other public improvements

There are a variety of materials that could potentially be used for trails and public spaces. Instead of using pavers or asphalt, seek to use recycled materials like recycled tires, where appropriate. These materials are attractive and durable and provide environmental benefits.

5.5 Investigate alternative energy production methods

Some cities have saved money over the long-term by investing in alternative energy to power their facilities. Methods like solar power generation, solar hot water heaters, and waste-to-energy plants can provide local power that is less costly for users than traditional utilities. A waste-to-energy plant would require significant discussion and study to test the feasibility locally.

5.6 Create Low-Impact Development Guidelines

Integrate guidelines into the codes that reduce the impact of new residential and commercial development. This may include provisions for reduced road widths (to slow traffic) in neighborhoods, sidewalks, tree plantings, recycled materials, Energy Star compliance and strategies to help manage and store stormwater for gardening and other uses.



Resource conservation methods include recycling, composting and water conservation.



Solar water heaters and recycled tires for trails are examples of energy production and resource conservation.





COMMUNITY CULTURE: WHAT MAKES US INTERESTING

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANE: **BE UNIQUE**

Suwanee values a rich cultural life; it is part of what makes Suwanee attractive to residents and businesses. Therefore the City's support for arts and culture is aimed at creating a place and a vibe that is conducive to both economic and community development. The City hosts around 40 events each year that are varied and attract a wide range of people. The events are a promotional tool that helps create and mold the City's image and reputation. Many events involve partnering with local radio stations and other media entities to leverage marketing and branding platforms.

Suwanee believes it can and should be a model community. A key factor in taking Suwanee to that next level, in achieving that kind of quality of life, is a commitment to the arts. The City's focus is on public art, specifically. Public art not only enhances and defines public spaces, but also creates a broader sense of identity, initiates conversations, and is accessible to everyone. Some examples of the City's public art initiatives include: SculptTour funded with private sponsorships and donations; the City's 1% program whereby 1% of construction costs for public projects is devoted to public art; developer and private sector 1% programs; the World Trade Center artifact; and collaborations with the North Gwinnett Arts Association for art-related events such as Arts in the Park, Plein Air events, and a presence during Toast @ Town Center.

It seems the population of Suwanee has a healthy appetite for arts, culture and events. Participants in the roundtables were supportive of the City's approach to the arts and very enthusiastic about the many events on tap: **"There's not a weekend that goes by where there's not something going on in this park."** On the flip side, however, some wondered if perhaps the events were too successful to the point where they were becoming overcrowded.

Many residents who came to the Open House and left a photo suggestion of their "big idea" proposed ideas that fell under the theme of "more things to do or places to go" (35%), while another 6% of the ideas specifically address the arts. In the budgeting exercise, Arts & Culture ranked as the third highest allocation of funds, behind first-place Economic Development and second-place Public Safety. Although the roundtable discussions did not choose to discuss the arts in detail, participants acknowledged it was because they felt that the City has already been very successful in this area and should simply continue with its current focus and strategies.



GOAL 1: OFFER A WIDE & DIVERSE ARRAY OF LOCAL EVENTS

Events provide opportunities that help build a sense of community, showcase local and regional talent, contribute to the economy of the community, and establish an active downtown. In addition to attracting residents, they draw first-time and returning visitors to Suwanee, making them a powerful platform for word-of-mouth publicity. Despite the large number of events, residents provided countless ideas for additional ones that would draw different people to downtown. Build upon the success of Town Center Park by further diversifying the event calendar and try new ideas to foster an even stronger community spirit in Suwanee.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES **MAY** INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

1.1 Organize a broader range of cultural events

Many expressed the desire for more culture in Town Center Park, such as symphony nights in the park. Further expand concert offerings and movies (some foreign!) to appeal to different age groups and shake up the current slate of events.

1.2 Encourage & support multicultural events

The Korean Festival held for several years in Suwanee was a wildly popular event that drew residents and media throughout the region. Welcome more multi-cultural events and seek ways to bridge cultural differences through shared use of Town Center Park. Help promote multi-cultural events in local businesses and through social media.

1.3 Allow teen events in Town Center Park

Teens have performance spaces in their schools but local youth are seeking additional opportunities to express themselves. Encourage teen performances, talent shows, and battle of the bands contests in Town Center. Allow teens the opportunity to program the event stage a few times a year.

GOAL 2: CAPITALIZE ON THE CITY'S RICH CULTURAL ASSETS

Suwanee's interest in arts and culture has grown over the past decade. Fortunately, at this point, Suwanee has a lot to build upon. Embrace and take advantage of local assets like the Everett Music Barn and existing cultural festivals. Ensure that these local gems are included in marketing materials and seek ways to further turn up the volume on local culture.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

2.1 Promote local performing arts programs

Except to locals, the Everett Music Barn is a hidden jewel. Born of a grassroots interest in bluegrass music, it is now the home to weekly entertainment. Suwanee Academy of the Arts is a popular spot for Suwanee's more dramatic residents, offering classes and camps for both youth and adults. Their annual performances in Town Center Park have quickly become a community favorite. Promote Music Barn and Academy of the Arts events and work with the organizers to expand their offerings and reach into Suwanee and beyond.

2.2 Integrate art into local festivals

Seek ways to integrate art into local events. Commission artists to create cost-effective installations during major events like Suwanee Day and reach out to local artists to design flyers and other material to help promote events.

2.3 Explore the feasibility of a performing arts venue for community theater, community choir, etc.

Many area arts organizations are dedicated to the performing arts. The Royal Dance Academy, Suwanee Performing Arts, Dance Arts Centre, and local a cappella groups are resources that have knowledge, talent, and experience to capitalize on. These organizations also are looking for broader opportunities to show what they can do. These organizations should explore the feasibility of creating a small, indoor performing arts venue. In the meantime, work with them to promote the use of the event stage by local performing arts organizations.



Suwanee is renowned for its cultural events.





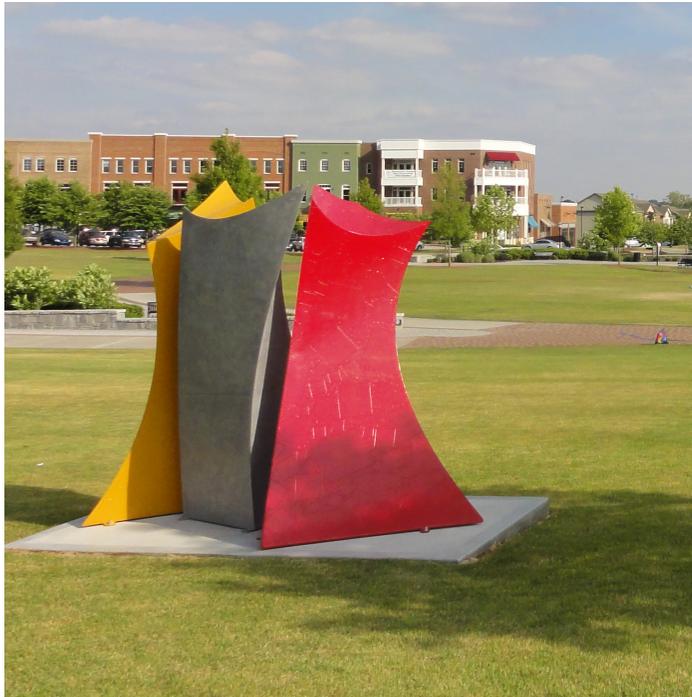
GOAL 3: MAKE PUBLIC ART THE CITY'S ARTS NICHE

Suwanee is developing a brand around art, specifically public art. Public art is accessible, often cost-effective and most importantly, visible at street level for long periods of time. Build on the work of the Public Arts Commission to expand public art offerings throughout Suwanee as a means to support the local arts, creatively improve public spaces, and promote the City as a place to live, work, and play.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

3.1 Continue and expand SculptTour program

SculpTour, overseen by the Public Art Commission, has been extremely successful. While some may dislike the choice of art, the pieces have served their purpose, which is to get people talking and promote downtown businesses. Continue and expand the program and don't be afraid to choose more controversial pieces. If people are talking about Suwanee, then all the better.



SculpTour

3.2 Locate public art throughout the City

SculpTour and other pieces of public art have been squarely focused on downtown. Other places need public art-love too. Art in the Suwanee Gateway would help promote the area for development and help Suwanee get noticed from the highway. Art on a Limb is a popular program with the community where small pieces of art are hidden on the trails and in the parks each May. Permanent public art in local parks would further strengthen Suwanee's beloved trails and green spaces. Further, creative art installations along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard would help to revive a relatively non-descript commercial corridor.

3.3 Support private art installation efforts

Continue to encourage developers to contribute 1% to public art and offer guidance and assistance through the Public Arts Commission in locating public art and choosing art work. As the economy improves, demonstrate the positive economic value of public art within new developments.

3.4 Develop and implement a public art master plan

To coordinate future art installations, develop a public art master plan to guide the type, location, and range of work suitable for Suwanee. Seek outside funding to support and maintain major artworks. Develop the arts plan with local artists and consider ways to enhance partnerships between key arts organizations like ArtWorks! Gwinnett and the North Gwinnett Arts Association.

3.5 Identify and fund an iconic public art piece

Make a statement with your art. Go for scale and commission a known artist to put Suwanee on the national art map. A large piece could transform the perception of Suwanee in the Gateway or further support downtown interest.

3.6 Expand storefront art program

The North Gwinnett Arts Association works with the owner of Town Center to fill vacant storefronts with art. This helps to keep the storefronts attractive and supports adjacent businesses, in addition to showcasing Suwanee's local artistic talent. Consider expanding the program to include vacant storefronts throughout the City and challenge local artists to make a bigger statement. Use the whole window, mix mediums, and get noticed. Encourage artists to develop video art installations at night. Don't just focus on the vacant storefronts, reach out to existing businesses to determine their interest in the program as well.

GOAL 4: FOSTER LOCAL ARTS PROGRAMS & VENUES

A strong local arts scene is driven by strong programs and organizations. The City is helping to jumpstart the arts by supporting local organizations and investing in public art but ultimately, non-profits, arts organizations, and civic organizations should play a significant role in sustaining a vibrant visual, literary and performing arts scene. Focus on supporting and growing local arts programs so that they can expand their reach and influence on the City's art scene.

"So many artists around here that are passionate that they kind of just suck you in."

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

4.1 Create Artist-in-Residency program

A yearly artist-in-residency program would help to establish Suwanee on the national arts scene. National recognition brings the opportunity for outside resources and dollars to support the arts.

4.2 Maintain arts curriculum in schools

Reiterate with the Gwinnett County School System and local principals the need to maintain an active arts curriculum in local schools. Support these programs by offering teens in-school arts programs and the opportunity to create public art in Suwanee. Organize an arts competition for youth to engage them in the arts in Suwanee.

4.3 Expand capacity of North Gwinnett Arts Association and ArtWorks! Gwinnett

These organizations are volunteer driven. As such, their ability to take on larger initiatives and sustain them is limited to the time volunteers have to donate. Help these organizations recruit more volunteers and provide networking opportunities with art organizations in other cities. Offer staff support for larger projects and help connect these organizations with school arts groups.

4.4 Consider providing vacant space to artists for a nominal fee

Commercial space is not making any money for the owner if it's empty. Holding onto vacant space can become costly and ineffective. At the same time, artists often are looking for space in which to work, sell or teach. Explore the possibility of offering vacant space to artists for a reduced fee or for free in exchange for community arts service. Work with realtors and building owners to overcome the barriers to making this happen. Focus on temporary use (6 months) to allow owners the flexibility to fill the space as the market improves.

4.5 Identify, recruit, and engage groups of patrons who support the arts

Great art often requires grants, donations, and patrons. For the arts to thrive, Suwanee needs to identify and recruit patrons interested in the arts and in supporting Suwanee.



Art in Storefronts in San Francisco



COMMUNITY CULTURE: WHAT MAKES US INTERESTING



"There was nothing to do here before Town Center Park. It is Suwanee's front porch."

PARKS + OPEN SPACE: HOW WE PLAY

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: BE GREEN

In 2001, the City had just 16 acres of parkland, and remaining greenspace faced the threat of imminent development due to the City's breakneck pace of growth over the previous decade. Residents relied on non-City facilities for their recreation needs – Gwinnett County's George Pierce Park, neighborhood recreation areas, and private facilities, such as Suwanee Sports Academy or fitness centers. A community-involved master planning effort in the early 2000s resulted in the November 2001 bond referendum, with Suwanee voters approving a \$17.7 million program to acquire land, preserve open spaces, and develop parks. Since active recreational space needs were being met through non-City facilities, Suwanee has been focused on building passive parks. The results from this last decade of acquisition and building have been dramatic:

- > 2200% increase in open space acreage, from 16 acres in 2001 to a current total of 363 acres
- > Construction of six new parks: Town Center Park; Suwanee Creek Greenway extension; PlayTown Suwanee; Sims Lake Park; Suwanee Creek Park; and White Street Park
- > Acquisition of land for future park sites, such as Delay Nature Park and Smithtown Road tract

The new parks have really paid off. The Open House collaborative map of people's favorite places in the City tilts very heavily to the City's greenspace network: Town Center was the breakaway winner with 130 votes – so many that the stickers couldn't fit on the original map and a new one had to be brought in. Other locations with multiple votes included Sims Lake Park (38), Suwanee Creek Greenway (24), and White Street Park (8). Not only do residents love the existing parks, they have numerous ideas for what to do with them and how to make them better; 25% of the big ideas that were produced at the Open House were related to parks.

Now that the City has succeeded in developing its extensive parks system, the City's focus is to keep the parks in excellent condition, make connections between them and the trail network, and enhance the parks with additions such as the Big Splash fountain in Town Center Park (existing); amphitheater/outdoor classroom in White Street Park (existing); shade structures in Town Center and Sims Lake Parks (planned); additional pavilion in Sims Lake Park (planned); and tricycle track in PlayTown Suwanee (planned).

The City's extraordinary greenspace network defines Suwanee as much as its development does. Aside from being a huge part of why Suwanee's residents enjoy such a high quality of life, it also is an example of the City's commitment to environmental preservation and demonstrates its philosophy of responsible development. The greenspace network is also a great marketing tool and certainly a reason to brag: **"Suwanee Creek Greenway – 8 miles of walking/ biking trails. It's a unique bragging right – maybe we don't boast about it enough!"**



GOAL 1: VALUE PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation generally enhances the open-space aspect of a park by providing a minimal intensity of development for "unstructured" recreation opportunities, such as walking, picnics, and exercise. Active recreation, on the other hand, involves more intensive development for ball fields or aquatic centers, and typically includes programmed activities. Active recreation is a service provided by others. Gwinnett County provides extensive sports programming, leagues, and recreation facilities at George Pierce Park, which receives active use by Suwanee residents. An aquatic center is located in Collins Hill Park. Given that these amenities are well-established and well-used by residents, place an emphasis on passive recreation. By focusing on passive open spaces, Suwanee provides a unique opportunity to connect with nature and its trail network provides connections to major amenities like downtown.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

1.1 Target funding for passive open spaces

When considering budget allocations for parks, prioritize improvements and development of passive recreation. Ensure all residents of Suwanee are within a short walking distance of passive recreation opportunities.

1.2 Encourage residents to explore passive open spaces with new events

Organize trail events like a scavenger hunt, geocaching, and public art walks to encourage more local residents to discover the valuable open space resources available to them. The annual Art on a Limb program, where pieces of art are hidden on the trails and in the park each day in May, is a good example of encouraging residents to explore the parks in a fun way.





Greenways with separate paths for runners and bikers in Greenville, SC (left) and Littleton, CO (right).



Community garden at Chattahoochee Run

GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE EXISTING PARKS

Suwanee has spent much of the last decade creating new parks to respond to the citizen-approved bond referendum. While more park spaces are planned, ensure that existing parks are maintained so that they remain attractive assets. New parks increase the City's operating costs and responsibilities. As such, focus dollars toward enhancing existing parks before creating new ones.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

2.1 Add amenities and enhancements to the parks

Residents noted that many of the trails and existing parks could use more amenities such as benches and other seating, trees, bike racks, and shade structures. Develop a priority list of cost-effective improvements to existing parks. Seek private sponsorship of amenities, such as an Adopt-a-Bench program that engages residents in the upkeep and improvement of these parks. Incorporate artistic, whimsical elements.

2.2 Add a separate bike trail to the Greenway

The Suwanee Creek Greenway gets a lot of use. As trails become more popular, it is important to separate faster moving bicycle traffic from the space used for walking. Create a separate bike trail to minimize conflicts on the Greenway.

2.3 Improve the parks for runners

Runners prefer softer surfaces that protect their knees and joints. Allocate space for an unpaved trail for runners separate from a bike trail. Connect and expand existing trail markings that indicate mileage and location.

2.4 Expand community gardening

Community gardens are of keen interest to Suwanee residents. Harvest Farm at White Street Park has operated with a waiting list since it first opened in 2010. Chattahoochee Run developed their own community garden for residents. Existing parks are an opportunity to capitalize on this interest and connect more residents with the park system. Seek opportunities to create a range of community gardens, including fruit orchards, U-pick fields like strawberry and pumpkin patches, etc. With resident volunteers, these can be inexpensive, yet powerful, improvements to the parks.

2.5 Explore the construction of a dog park

Woofstock has already established Town Center Park as a dog-friendly locale. Many residents walk their dogs in the park or sit outside of local businesses. Locate a dog park similar to the Newtown Dream Dog Park in Johns Creek to provide a permanent home for Suwanee's furry friends. Suwanee's mascot, Parker, would approve.

GOAL 3: ENSURE THE PARKS & TRAILS ARE SAFE

Many comments and big ideas from residents regarding parks in the 20/20 Vision related to improving safety. Some residents do not use the parks because of safety concerns. It's understandable. The parks, while connected to nearby neighborhoods, also feel secluded. To promote expanded use of the parks and at all times of the day, maintaining park safety is a critical goal for Suwanee.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

3.1 Add caution signs on trails

Install caution signs that alert park-users to park maintenance issues, such as downed trees and locations of limited visibility.

3.2 Have an enhanced presence on trails

Suwanee police officers strategically patrol the parks and work with trained Park Ambassador volunteers to provide an enhanced presence. Expand the number of Park Ambassadors trained by the Police and seek ways to add more patrols on the trails at different times of the week. Build on the police department's targeted visibility efforts and locate officers at major trail and park entrances as appropriate to deter criminals.

3.3 Add video surveillance to local parks

Suwanee began adding video cameras in strategic park locations. Expand this program to cover major trails and entrances and promote these investments to local residents.

3.4 Improve the maintenance of parks and trails

Poor maintenance can send a signal to criminals that the space is not monitored and thereby off the beaten path. Ensure that maintenance concerns are addressed quickly. Create a Google map on the City's website and/or a smartphone app that allows residents and Park Ambassadors to tag areas of the parks that require some level of maintenance or improvement.



Caution sign on greenway trail





GOAL 4: EXPAND THE PARK CONNECTIONS & TRAIL NETWORK

Improving existing parks and ensuring that they are safe is the current priority for Suwanee. However, this does not mean we should not think ahead about ways to improve connectivity of the trail network. Suwanee's trail system is extensive, but there are a few missing links. An effective trail network is one that is connected and fully integrated into the City's neighborhoods and downtown.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES **MAY** INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

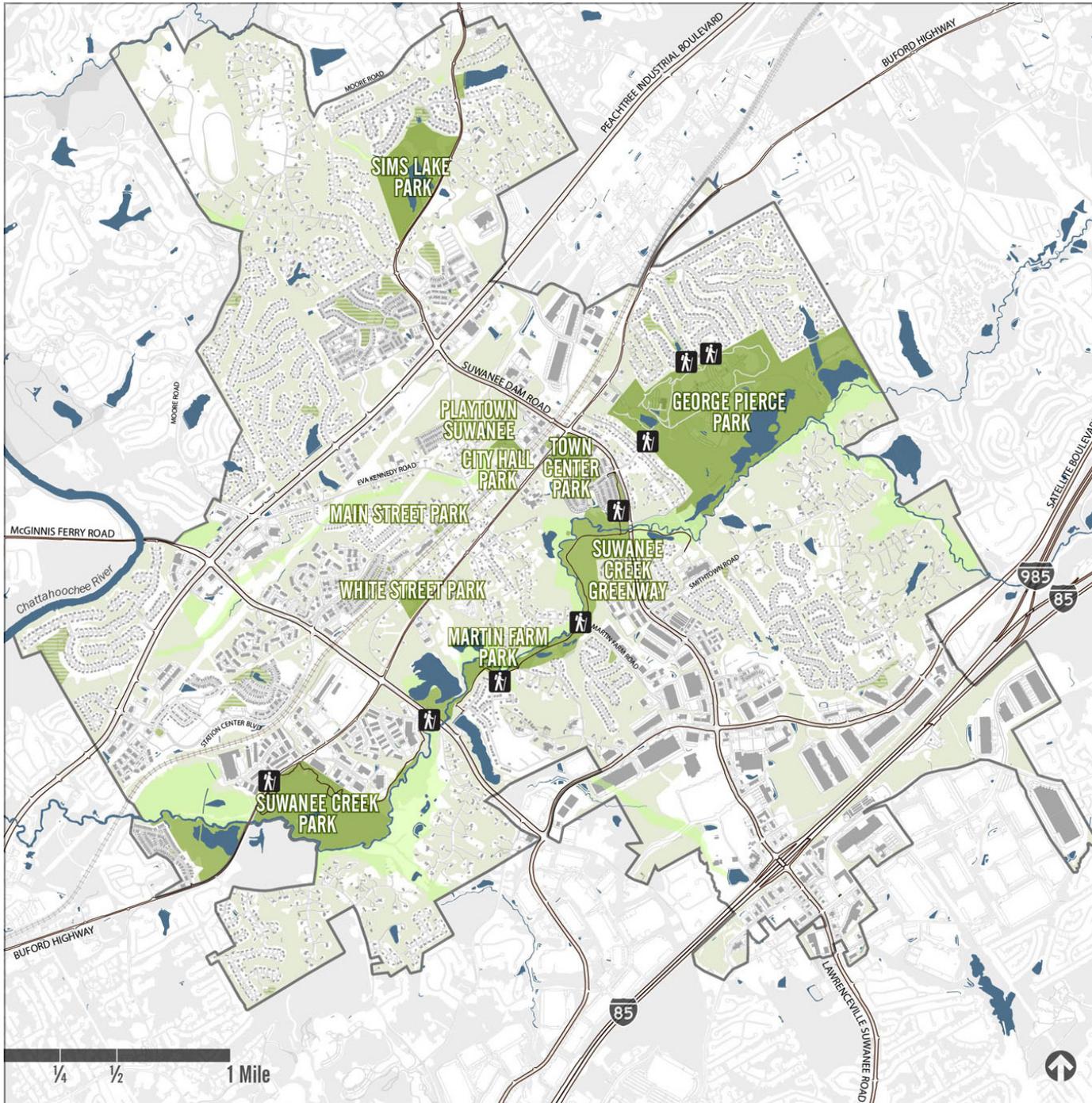
- 4.1 Extend the Suwanee Creek Greenway from Suwanee Creek Park to Peachtree Ridge Park**
Partner with Gwinnett County on this project, which would open the Greenway to new users, connect important local park spaces, and encourage students at Peachtree Ridge High School to use the trail either to get to school or for recreation after school.
- 4.2 Plan ahead for new trails**
New trails should seek to specifically address the missing links in the system. Specifically, Sims Lake Park is very popular but disconnected from nearby Moore Road and the large number of homes and kids that live in the area. Plan for a trail link to connect Sims Lake to this area, and identify a potential Brushy Creek Greenway to provide stronger connections to PlayTown.
- 4.3 Organize a walking group to George Pierce Park senior center**
New trail connections are not always what's needed to strengthen connections; sometimes organized activities can offer residents comfort in using the parks. The George Pierce Park Senior Center is an excellent facility, but a little removed from nearby neighborhoods and downtown. Organize a walking group of seniors to encourage greater use of this facility.

GOAL 5: CONTINUE TO PROGRAM TOWN CENTER PARK AS SUWANEE'S FRONT PORCH

All of Suwanee's parks are important but few, would disagree that Town Center Park acts as the City's front porch. It is home to almost all of the City's events and is an economic engine that supports local businesses and promotes Suwanee's brand. Remain focused on programming the space and expand the array of uses available in the park on a daily basis.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES **MAY** INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

- 5.1 Expand active play space in Town Center Park**
On any given day, Town Center Park is home to fitness classes, Frisbee, soccer, and other active sports. Encourage use of the park for sports clubs. Evaluate options for integrating outdoor fitness equipment into the park in places that will not interfere with event programming and passive recreation space. Consider allocating space for other small games as well including horseshoes, chess and ping pong.
- 5.2 Explore the possibility of a Teen Center**
Teens are looking for something to do in Suwanee. Town Center would be an ideal location for a teen center supported by PTAs and fundraisers. Consider reduced rent for the teen center with a requirement for community service through assistance in park maintenance and improvements. PTAs, partner organizations and the proposed Youth Council would need to spearhead this strategy.



- trailhead
- parks
- greenspace
- private/HOA space

SOURCE city of suwanee

FIGURE 30. PARKS AND GREENWAYS MAP



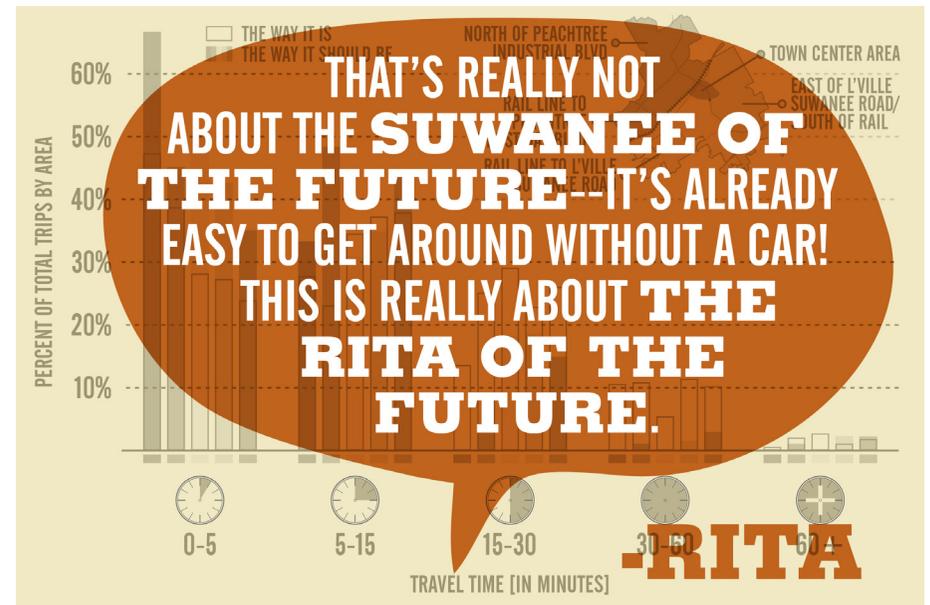
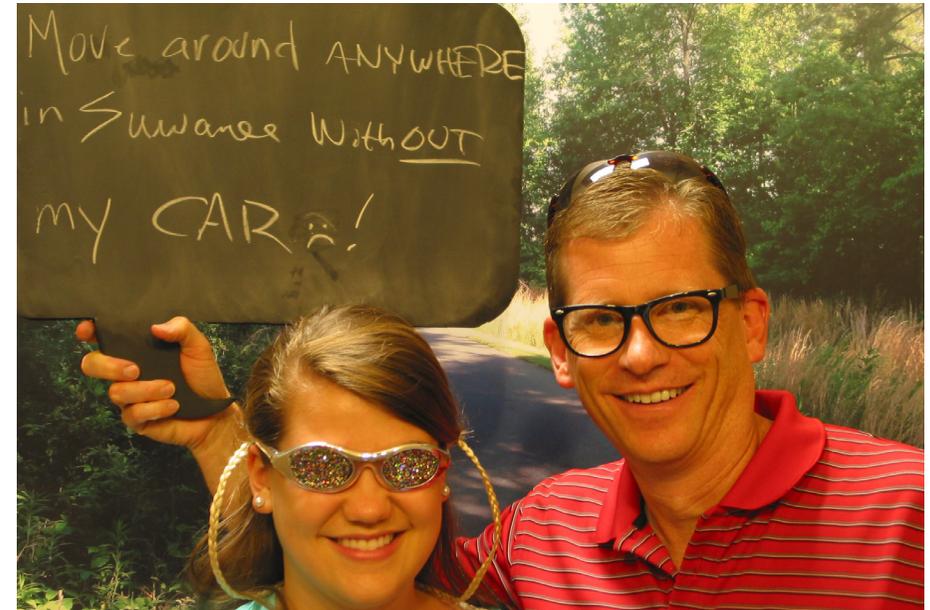
TRANSPORTATION: HOW WE MOVE

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SUWANEЕ: BE CONNECTED

The most commonly cited transportation issue is **“TRAFFIC!!!”** The City’s local transportation actions can be summarized in four primary focus areas: 1) connectivity; 2) safety; 3) maintenance; and 4) alternative transportation. The City’s role is not to create large, multi-lane highways crisscrossing Suwanee. Rather, the City’s efforts are primarily focused on alternatively (i.e. other than roads) connecting destinations (jobs, schools, services, etc.) throughout the community in order to minimize the need for a car for every trip and thus alleviate traffic. Due to these initiatives and proactive land use planning, Suwanee residents spend less time travelling to stores, restaurants and other amenities than they did 20 years ago. These kinds of services are simply closer to where residents live which provides the possibility of getting to them without driving. During roundtable discussions about transportation, dealing with traffic, especially at the I-85 and Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road intersection, and implementing the sidewalk plan were paramount.

Reducing the need for car travel means making it safer and more convenient to use other forms of mobility. Currently many of Suwanee’s major roads divide rather than connect areas and are dangerous for pedestrians to cross. **“In this area, high speed is the norm.” “Would walk more if that sidewalk was built. At night, it’s just not safe to walk along Buford Highway.”** The City values slower vehicle speeds in order to make the roads safe for drivers and pedestrians alike and undertakes efforts to calm traffic in various ways, such as narrow, connected streets. The City also is implementing its Pedestrian and Bicycle plan, which focuses on improving and building sidewalks and greenways.

This is important because better traffic management and sidewalks were the biggest transportation priorities identified by the residents. During the Open House, 27 people suggested better ways to get around without a car as their big idea. When asked about the differences between how long they would like to spend getting places versus how long it actually takes, Open House participants generally responded that they would like to be spending less time en route to their destinations, preferably under 15 minutes. Residents from the Town Center area, developed to be walkable and mixed use, had the highest number of actual trips under 5 minutes and also the highest expectation of short trips. But spending less time in the car is not just about the physical infrastructure, though that plays a large part; it also is about the attitude of individuals, and convincing them that walking or biking is not only a safe and convenient option but a preferable one for short trips.



GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Traffic management is a complicated and sometimes costly endeavor to tackle. Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and Gwinnett County own major roads in Suwanee and are therefore responsible for funding improvements to ease traffic. Although Suwanee does not control the sources of major traffic concerns like the I-85 Exit, Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, or McGinnis Ferry Road, there are things that the City can and should do to improve traffic management. To maintain quality of life, growth and infrastructure must be in balance, and targeted measures are needed to slow traffic, reduce conflicts, and improve safety.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

1.1 Divert traffic around high pedestrian areas

Where possible, explore ways to divert traffic around high pedestrian areas like Town Center especially during major events that draw more pedestrians and bicyclists. Develop traffic re-routing plans to encourage alternative routes.

1.2 Improve traffic safety around schools

Install crosswalks, walk signs, and pedestrian signals where possible. Develop a specific improvement plan for each school and work with school principals to improve traffic safety for kids. Include education and awareness programs targeted toward students and their parents.

1.3 Use traffic calming-methods

Traffic calming includes the practice of designing streets to slow traffic and thereby improve safety for drivers and pedestrians alike. Develop a list of traffic calming tools including speed tables, street trees, bumpouts, and crosswalks among others and identify locations in Suwanee most in need of traffic-calming measures.

1.4 Plan for better traffic flow at I-85/Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road

Exit 111 off I-85 is a traffic nightmare. Not only are cars getting on and off the highway, but additional cars are using Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road to cross into Suwanee from communities to the east. The opening of McGinnis Ferry Road over I-85 has helped relieve some of this pressure, but without a highway exit, this improvement can only offer an alternative route for some of the through traffic. Seek ways to improve flow through the Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road / I-85 intersection, and advocate for GDOT to upgrade the McGinnis Ferry Road overpass to include access to I-85. This type of improvement is realistically well beyond the 10-year time frame of the Vision 20/20.



Traffic calming measures include bumpouts, speed tables and crosswalks.





TOWN CENTER TRANSECT - CONCEPT BUFORD HWY. STUDY



Buford Highway Town Center and Russell Street concepts



ROUND A BOUT - CONCEPT BUFORD HWY. STUDY



GOAL 2: MAKE LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Sometimes Suwanee can feel disconnected. The major roads that link Suwanee to the region also divide neighborhoods from one another and, because they are designed to accommodate cars, make it difficult and dangerous to walk or bike to local stores and services. Suwanee's role from a transportation perspective is to overcome these barriers and provide opportunities for residents to safely move about town with or without a car. The trail connections and sidewalk improvements have helped to improve connectivity but much more remains to be done. Fill in the missing gaps and ensure that all Suwanee residents can safely access local parks, schools, City services, and shopping.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

2.1 Transform Buford Highway

One of the missing links is between Old Town and Town Center. This major split divides downtown Suwanee and limits the potential of both districts. Buford Highway is a road in need of improvements and can serve as the spine that re-connects downtown and establishes links to the local trail network. Funding has been secured to improve Buford Highway and should be used to design a new roadway that balances the needs of cars, pedestrians and cyclists. Consider integrating trail amenities which, together with the Suwanee Creek Greenway and McGinnis Ferry Road trail, would create a two-mile walking and bicycling loop. Ensure that the transformed Buford Highway is safe to cross at key intersections, notably with Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, Russell Street, and McGinnis Ferry Road. Link land-use changes to support investment in Buford Highway that will encourage more people to walk to and from downtown.



New sidewalks are being built but some sidewalks don't connect.



Better connections are needed to local parks.



2.2 Build more sidewalks

Every resident should have access to nearby stores and parks. Complete projects to close gaps in the City's existing sidewalk network to improve the pedestrian environment and address key safety concerns. Consider the feasibility of speeding up implementation of the Pedestrian Bicycle Plan so more projects can be completed in a quicker time frame. Focus on adding sidewalks to roads with high volumes of vehicles, such as Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (PIB), Suwanee Dam Road, and Buford Highway. Partner with Gwinnett County and GDOT where necessary to coordinate improvement.

2.3 Create safer pedestrian crossings along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (PIB)

PIB is designed as a highway to move cars as quickly as possible. It contains a minimum of two lanes in either direction, plus turn lanes as necessary, and a small, currently unimproved median. To help residents north of PIB access downtown and local parks, pedestrian crossings need to be improved. Coordinate with GDOT on improving markings, crosswalks, signage, and light timings to enable safe passage.

2.4 Create better pedestrian connections to the parks

Residents love their parks. It's a shame that many feel they can only access them by getting in their cars. Ensure that strong pedestrian connections to local parks exist, including most notably Sims Lake Park, PlayTown, George Pierce Park and Town Center. This strategy reinforces specific recommendations contained within the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.



A Citywide transportation loop could link neighborhoods and businesses.



Bicycling on Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road (left) and sharrow on Main Street (right).

GOAL 3: FOCUS ON DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET AROUND

Suwanee is home to a driving culture. Realistically, there are few other options. But Suwanee is also home to a diverse range of residents from all stages of life with different mobility needs. Adding sidewalks will help create connections for those with the time and interest to walk, but for many others, additional alternatives that provide effective service and reduce pollution, including local transportation trolleys, bus service, bicycling, and carpooling should be explored. By encouraging alternative options for travel, Suwanee can reduce its traffic volumes and headaches, and also be accessible to seniors and people of varying physical abilities.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

3.1 Consider a Citywide transportation loop

As more businesses find a home in Suwanee, there are opportunities to create local transportation service that links these jobs and services to downtown and neighborhoods. Work with major employers to explore opportunities for a local bus loop or van service dedicated to enabling workers and residents to access City services and amenities without using their car.

3.2 Explore ideas for improved bus service

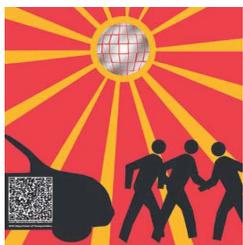
Bus service is available in the region but it is not convenient for local travel (as opposed to commuting to Atlanta). Explore the possibility of a park & ride facility for county bus service that links residents with their jobs outside the I-285 perimeter. Advocate for a private express bus to other cities and the Doraville MARTA station.

3.3 Encourage carpooling

Many residents travel to the same locations for work. Help Suwanee residents connect via Facebook and on the City's website by providing a carpooling matching service with the intent of increasing carpooling from Suwanee. Many organizations in Gwinnett County can assist with carpooling programs.

3.4 Create an integrated network of local bike lanes and bike racks in key locations

A growing number of residents are dedicated to bicycling, mostly for recreation. Over time, this interest can spur some to bike to work if their job is nearby and it is safe to bike. Make sure that bicycle infrastructure such as bike lanes, sharrows, and bike racks are in place to encourage those who would like to bike in Suwanee to do so.



**Cars crossing sidewalk:
Worst New York City hotspot
To run into friends**



**Cyclist writes screenplay
Plot features bike lane drama
How pedestrian**



**Puerta del coche
Se abre al ciclista.
Un freno duro**



**A sudden car door,
Cyclist's story rewritten.
Fractured narrative**

New York City Department of Transportation "Curbside Haiku" poster and multimedia safety campaign to raise awareness among bicyclists, pedestrians and drivers.

3.5 Develop public education materials for drivers and bikers on road safety

Increased cyclists on the road usually mean more conflicts between drivers and bikers. Drivers are typically not used to looking for bikers. At the same time, bikers often flaunt the law and run red lights. As safety is paramount, launch a public education campaign for both drivers and bikers on the rules of the road and safety.

3.6 Plan for electric car charging stations

Electric cars are just entering the broader market. As they gain popularity due to the increase in gas prices, plan ahead for their integration in Suwanee by providing car-charging stations in convenient locations. Few cities know yet how to accommodate charging stations; be a leader and promote greater use of electric cars.

3.7 Plan for a commuter rail line and station

As the region's traffic grows, alternative services like regional rail will be seriously considered. Suwanee Station has long been discussed as home to a future Amtrak and/or MARTA station should a regional rail service move forward. Advocate for a station stop in Suwanee and plan to include walkable, mixed-use development nearby to encourage transit ridership.

GOAL 4: DESIGN ATTRACTIVE ROADWAYS

The look and feel of local streets says a lot about a place. Suwanee is distinctive. As such, the streets should express its character. Don't settle for engineering solutions that favor car-oriented designs with limited attention to landscaping and amenities. Push for better streets that express the pride residents have in Suwanee.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES MAY INCLUDE THESE AND OTHER FUTURE COOL IDEAS:

4.1 Grow the Adopt a Road program

Reach out to youth, schools, and churches to "Adopt a Highway." Connect with Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful to integrate signs and provide support for maintenance to ensure that main roads in Suwanee are clean and safe.

4.2 Provide landscaping and cleaning

Improve the landscaping and cleanliness of major roads like Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. Consider the expanded use of street sweepers if cost effective and work with partners to increase the amount of native plantings in the right-of-way, as is currently being done in the PIB medians.

4.3 Plant median strips on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard/Suwanee Dam Road (with business sponsorship)

The median strips along PIB and Suwanee Dam Road are poor excuses for landscaping. They do not add value nor do they improve the look and feel of Suwanee's streets. Work with local businesses to secure sponsorship and undertake a landscaping program dedicated to these corridors.

4.4 Paint utility poles

Utility poles dot the landscape across the City. They are not attractive but are a fact of life except in those rare cases when money and interest align to bury them. Explore alternative approaches in turning a negative into a positive by creatively painting utility poles. At little cost, it will help add value to the City and express its commitment to the arts.



IMPLEMENTATION

1 ALIGNING THE STRATEGIC PLAN WITH SUWANEE'S FISCAL HEALTH

As the City's Strategic Plan, the 20/20 Vision Plan contains many goals and potential strategies. It goes without saying that we can't do it all at once. Partners are needed to spearhead many strategies that are just not appropriate for the City to undertake. For other strategies, the City's investment and action steps need to be evaluated in the context of the City's budget. Undertaking some strategies will preclude the City from pursuing others.

Generally when citizens consider how a municipality's budget works, they are thinking of the direct impact to them; meaning, the average person weighs the payments they make to the City against the services they receive from the City. However, in any municipality, there are potentially several streams of revenue and many types of costs associated with service delivery to a variety of users. Even if you are not a direct recipient of these services or payer of these revenues, the composition of this balance is of critical importance. Further, it is also essential that the sources of revenue be as diversified as is feasible so that the municipality's tax base can withstand inevitable economic downturns in different sectors (commercial, residential, etc.) and still be able to provide needed services.

Maximizing choices and options in any given community helps create that intangible quality of life that so many people are seeking and find in Suwanee. The more options and choices a community is able to offer and take advantage of, the stronger the economic foundation and greater the likelihood that the community will sustain into the future. A greater diversity of both revenue streams and cost demands significantly contributes to long-term economic viability.

It also is very important to try to achieve as much balance as is feasible between costs and revenues for any municipality. For whatever amount of revenue any municipality receives, there is a typical cost of service associated with different types of land uses. Most often, residential uses have the highest costs associated with service delivery; usually at a point that is higher than the revenue level they yield. At the other end of the spectrum, industrial uses generally have the lowest costs associated with service delivery; usually at a point that can be less than half of the revenue level they generate.

This strategic plan is intended as a guide for the City – both for policy but also for allocating funds.

Overall, the City of Suwanee has a balanced and diversified tax base. In fact, the City's bond rating recently was upgraded from AA to AA+, which is especially notable at a time when many municipalities' credit ratings are being downgraded. However, there are some potential areas for improvement in the tax-base structure. Many of the goals and strategies included within this strategic plan will both directly and indirectly impact the tax base structure and its long-term viability. Risk/reward ratios should be kept in mind by City leadership as implementation decisions are made. To achieve long-term economic health and a strong and diverse tax base, the City will have to make investments that leverage existing assets and build them into stronger foundations for the future, much as it already has done successfully in recent history.

2 WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that the 20/20 Vision planning process is complete, it's time to build on the momentum generated from coming together as a community to start implementation. **This strategic plan is intended as a guide for the City – both for policy but also for allocating funds.** The the goals and potential strategies were identified by a wide range of residents and stakeholders who all care about Suwanee. The result is a 20/20 Vision with 33 unique goals and about 140 potential strategies. So how will decisions be made about what to implement and when?



Suwanee 20/20 Vision Open House

IDENTIFYING HOT TOPICS

The process of engagement identified a number of clear “hot topics.” These are goals and strategies that came from the community and were frequently repeated throughout engagement activities. These “hot topics” provide clear direction for the City and their partners to consider as essential first steps in implementing the 20/20 Vision. The hot topics include:

Communications & Engagement: How We Connect

- > Goal 2: Encourage Youth Involvement

Economic Development: How We Prosper

- > Goal 1: Focus on Quality of Life as the Core Economic Development Strategy
- > Goal 4: Recruit and Develop a Diverse, High Quality Commercial Base
- > Goal 6: Help Small Businesses Thrive

Planning: How We Grow

- > Goal 1: Transform Suwanee Gateway

Community Culture: What Makes Us Interesting

- > Goal 2: Capitalize on the City’s Rich Cultural Assets

Parks & Open Space: How We Play

- > Goal 2: Prioritize Existing Parks

Transportation: How We Move

- > Goal 2: Make Local Connections

In addition to these hot topics, there are a few areas that the community made clear should remain a focus for the City moving forward. In other words, the general feeling is that these aspects of Suwanee already are extremely successful and should remain so. These include: **Public Safety: What Provides Us Comfort** with an emphasis on partnering with and engaging the community and; Under **Community Culture, Goal 1 – Offer a Wide and Diverse Array of Local Events.**

CREATING A METHODOLOGY FOR MAKING DECISIONS

In a community-driven process, ideas are floated and discussed. The potential strategies outlined in the 20/20 Vision represent those that received the most attention and consensus during the planning process. However, it is critical to distinguish between conceptual ideas and achievable ideas. Ideas need to be formally evaluated in order to understand the true costs, impacts, benefits, and challenges related to implementation.

As noted previously, this plan is a guide for decision-making. How the strategies move forward will largely stem from the City’s annual budgeting process and partnerships formed to push them forward. To provide a means with which to have meaningful discussions about the strategies, prioritization and moving them forward, a matrix was created that rates each idea against a number of critical factors. As a caveat, the factors are intended to guide discussions only and are therefore qualitative in nature. They should not be viewed as a directive for action. Charging forward without sufficient consideration could result in inefficient use of the City’s resources and detract from its ability to pursue achievable goals. The factors include:

- > Has this idea been **EVALUATED**? Is this idea achievable? Has anyone already explored whether it can be accomplished? Do we know how much it costs? There are three ratings for this criteria:
 - Yes = strategy has been evaluated
 - Some = the idea has been discussed but not seriously studied
 - No = the idea has not been discussed and will need to be formally evaluated before any decisions to proceed can be made
- > Who should **LEAD**? Who is the most appropriate lead for the initiative? There are three ratings for this criteria:
 - City = most effectively organized / funded by the City
 - Community = most effectively accomplished by volunteers or existing non-profits / community organizations
 - Other = requires action by an outside entity (GaDOT, Gwinnett County, schools, etc.)
 - Private = primarily financed by a private developer / investor or property owner
- > What is the potential **IMPACT**? Does the strategy yield a valuable return? Will it be noticed? Does it add substantial value above what is already happening? There are three ratings for this criteria:
 - Low = minimal change from what is currently practiced or provides low value
 - Medium = brings new benefits that will be noticed
 - High = substantial, potentially transformative impact

- > What is the estimated **COST** to implement? There are three ratings for this criteria:
 - Low = minimal to no cost to implement; may just require some staff time or a change in policy
 - Medium = requires a conscious decision; likely requires both funding and staff/community time
 - High = significant cost that must be balanced against other decisions, understanding that doing it may keep other actions from occurring. Likely funded through a multi-year allocation of dollars and /or a grant to pay for the improvement

- > How much **STAFF TIME** and **EFFORT** will this take to organize and implement? Even if the cost of a particular strategy is low, strategies may require a lot of staff or community time. There are three ratings for this criteria:
 - Minimal = can be accomplished with limited extra time from city staff or through a few community volunteers or involvement by others
 - Some = requires an allotment of City staff time or a coordinated and sustained number of community volunteers or involvement by others
 - A lot = potentially requires a new staff position or a community organization / non-profit dedicated to making it happen

- > When could it **HAPPEN**? Based on the factors above, each strategy falls within a potential time frame for implementation:
 - Ongoing = already underway and likely to continue through the duration of the plan
 - Near-term = likely within the next 3 years
 - Mid-term = likely within the next 4-10 years
 - Long-range = likely in 10 years or more

The charts beginning on page 96 provide an initial rating of potential strategies using this criteria. The final category of “When could it happen” is additionally influenced by whether the strategy falls within an identified “hot topic.” From this rating, it is clear that there are many strategies that could be accomplished in the coming two to three years while there are many others that will take time and effort to accomplish. Regardless of the time frame, the City can’t do it all nor should it attempt to do so. Many ideas need to be driven by the community, private sector or other, non-City agencies. This raises the important and final piece of the 20/20 Vision – forming partnerships.



3 FORMING PARTNERSHIPS

There is a demonstrated interest in getting involved and making things happen. As such, this plan also is a means by which to further organize committed residents around the goals and ideas that they care most about with the intent of taking action. Many of the potential strategies outlined in the 20/20 Vision require primarily coordination and commitment. The result is that the City, their community partners, local business organizations, arts groups and non-profits can all play a strong hand in bringing the vision to reality.

Indeed, the completion of this document does not signal an end to the planning or coordination process. Rather, this is still the beginning of what promises to be a strong working relationship between the City and community partners all invested in Suwanee’s future. Continued involvement by all parties is key for implementation.

Moving forward with each of the seven driving principles will be required in order to fulfill the goals of the vision and form a complete picture of Suwanee 2020. They are all pieces of a puzzle that will require participation from people all over Suwanee, representing the full spectrum and many facets of the community in order to achieve a complete picture.

Community and City partnerships should be explored and developed for each of the recommendation areas to ensure the plan’s implementation by those who are committed and knowledgeable. In some cases, partnerships already exist that could be strengthened and expanded; in others, new partnership opportunities should be explored. Potential community partners include the following organizations:

HOW WE CONNECT: COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

- Ethnic community organizations/media
- Media
- HOAs
- Gwinnett County School System
- Partnership Gwinnett
- Realtors
- Churches

HOW WE PROSPER: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Partnership Gwinnett
- Suwanee Business Alliance
- Ethnic business associations
- Gwinnett County School System
- Entrepreneurial centers
- Colleges, universities, and vocational schools

WHAT PROVIDES US COMFORT: PUBLIC SAFETY

- Police Department
- HOAs
- Chamber of Commerce
- Suwanee Business Alliance

HOW WE GROW: PLANNING

- Developers/builders
- Investment groups
- Insurance companies
- GDOT for I-85 area
- HOAs for green initiatives
- Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful
- Atlanta Regional Commission
- Georgia Piedmont Land Trust

WHAT MAKES US INTERESTING: COMMUNITY CULTURE

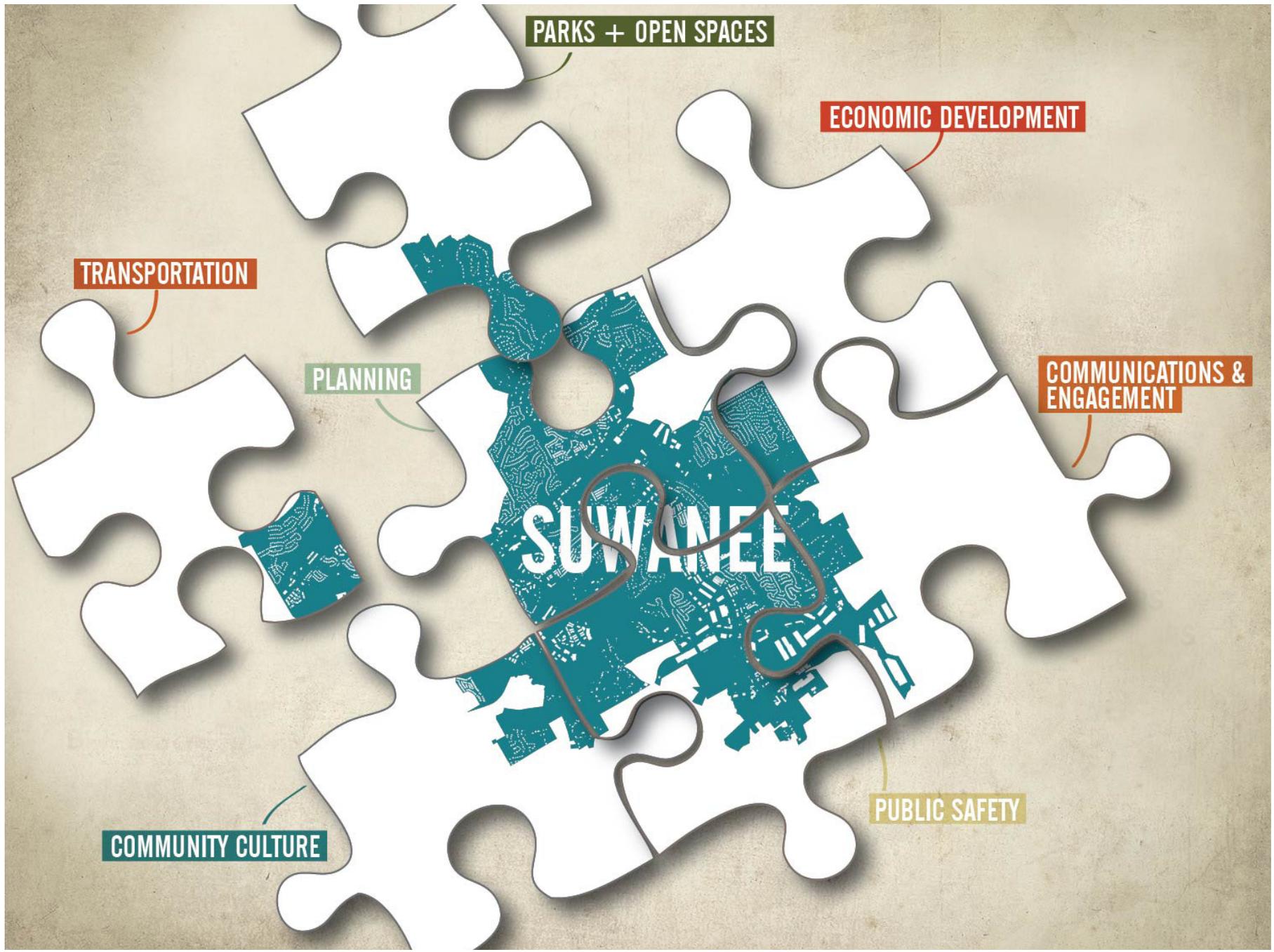
- Public Arts Commission
- North Gwinnett Arts Association
- North Gwinnett Arts Council
- ArtWorks! Gwinnett
- Gwinnett County School System
- Performing arts groups (ex. Royal Dance Academy, Suwanee Performing Arts)
- Suwanee Business Alliance
- Developers
- Suwanee Academy of the Arts
- Everett Music Barn

HOW WE PLAY: PARKS + OPEN SPACE

- Police Department
- Park Ambassadors
- Harvest Farm Managing Board
- George Pierce Park Senior Center

HOW WE MOVE: TRANSPORTATION

- Police Department
- GDOT
- Atlanta Regional Commission
- Gwinnett County
- Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful
- Amtrak
- MARTA



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The City of Suwanee is committed to ensuring that Suwanee stands out as a distinctive and desirable place to live. We need everyone on our team. We know the citizens of Suwanee are exceptionally active participants in civic life and take pride in their strong sense of community and involvement. Hundreds of citizens participated in the roundtable discussions, open house, focus groups, and other planning activities. This active citizenry is one of Suwanee's greatest assets and will help to ensure the goals of the 20/20 Vision are achieved. Here are some things you can do:

PARENTS

Show your kids what being an engaged citizen means and teach them how important community engagement is to keeping Suwanee great and making it even better. Take them with you to community meetings and events, participate in community volunteer opportunities together, talk to them about local news and events, and show them how they can keep up with what's going on in the City.

YOUTH

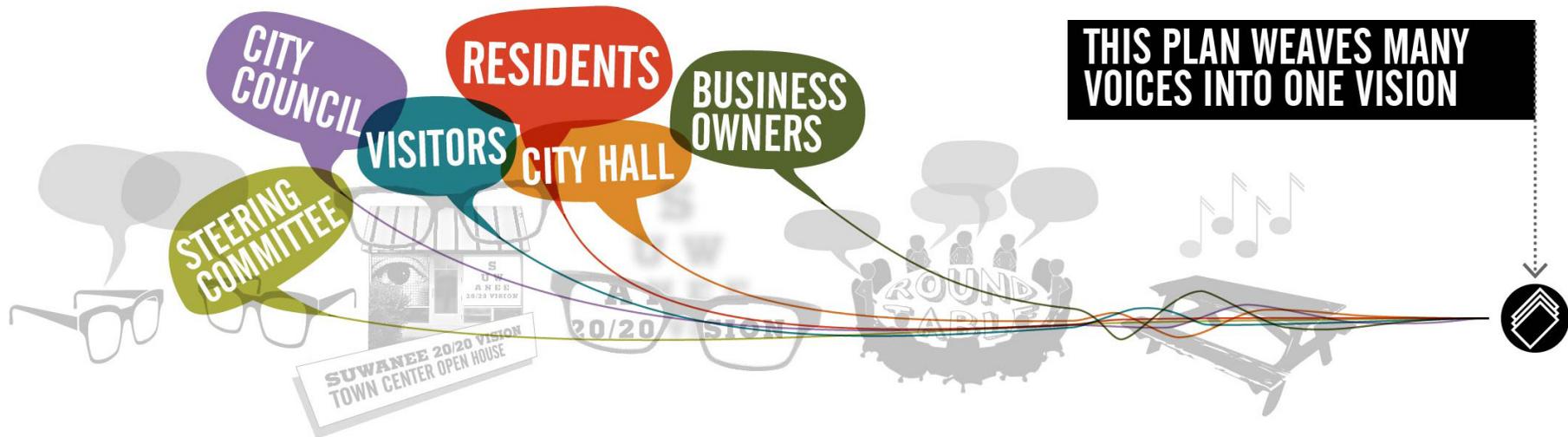
You are a part of this plan and your opinions matter. Take advantage of all Suwanee has to offer and speak up about new ways you would like to be active in your community – both in school and out. You can help make the Suwanee of the future happen by championing the ideas that interest you most and talking to your friends, parents, teachers, and community leaders about what you can do.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

You are the new generation of community leaders, and therefore central to Suwanee's future. Get involved so you are an active part of shaping that future. Bring your specialized skill set to bear in Suwanee by offering pro bono services for the issues that are important to you. Be an advocate by letting your peers know why Suwanee is the place to be.

SENIORS

You have valuable life experiences, as well as education and expertise, that Suwanee can benefit from. You may be at a point in your life when you have time to do the things you enjoy and are passionate about. Share your knowledge and talents by volunteering your time.



COMMUNITY LEADERS

Discuss the plan with your constituents to identify the issues that most impact and interest you. Use your connections to reach out to the City and other potential partners to organize around these issues and formulate implementation steps.

BUSINESS OWNERS

Businesses are a crucial part of Suwanee's economy...and community. Partner with the City and local business associations to help strengthen your business and grow local jobs. A strong partnership will help you access available resources and help develop new ones to strengthen Suwanee's economy.

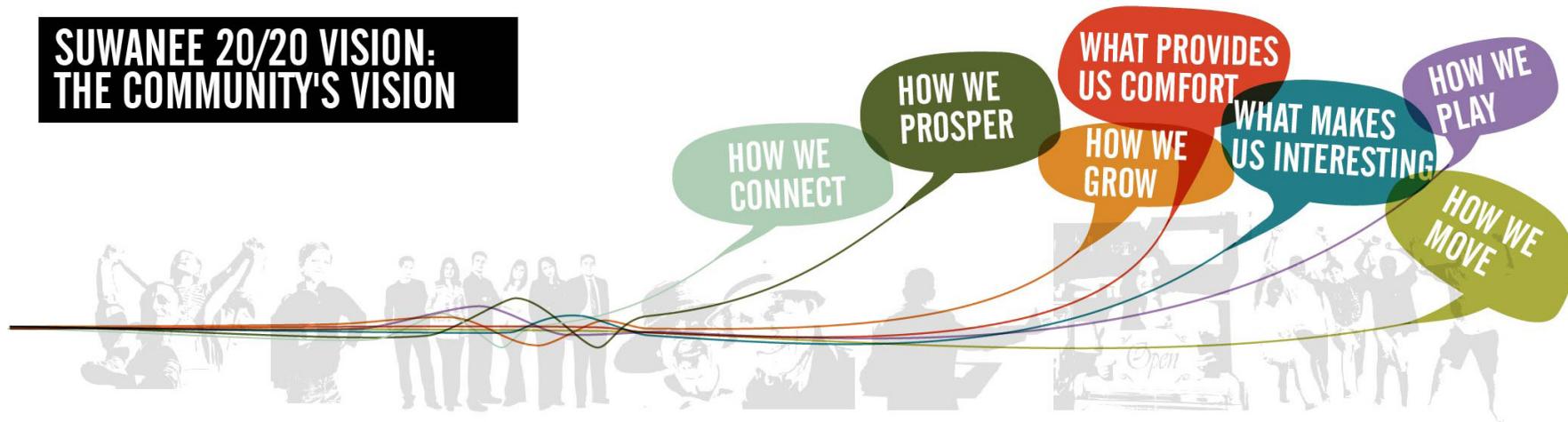
EVERYONE

Spread the word about the plan. Stay up-to-date with what the City is doing to implement the plan using the broad range of communication tools available. Become a passionate leader for the issues that matter most to you. Celebrate the accomplishments we make and take positive, proactive steps to overcome obstacles we'll face. Get to know your neighbors, support your local businesses and be a champion of Suwanee. Help us maintain and promote the high quality of life we all expect and take it even further with the bold vision for the future that is **SUWANEE 20/20**.

HOW TO GET STARTED

VISIT: WWW.SUWANEE.COM
OR GIVE US A CALL: 770.945.8996

SUWANEE 20/20 VISION: THE COMMUNITY'S VISION



IMPLEMENTATION CHARTS

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT: HOW WE CONNECT	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 1: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE						
<i>Specific strategies may include:</i>						
> Use a liaison to work with ethnic communities	no	community	medium	medium	some	mid
> Encourage greater participation of ethnic communities on Boards and Commissions	no	city	medium	low	minimal	near
> Prepare a comprehensive communications plan that includes City departments	no	city	low	low	some	mid
> Communicate with homeowners associations	yes	city	medium	low	some	near
> Consider creating a Citizen's College	some	city	medium	medium	some	mid
Goal 2: ENCOURAGE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT						
<i>Specific strategies may include:</i>						
> Provide youth volunteer programs	no	community/other	medium	low	minimal	mid
> Organize a Youth Council / Youth Advisory Board	no	city	medium	low	some	near
> Organize school meet and greets	no	other	low	low	minimal	mid
> Create a formal internship program	some	city	med	med	some	near
Goal 3: PROMOTE THE SUWANEE BRAND						
<i>Specific strategies may include:</i>						
> Market quality of life and amenities to attract workers, businesses, new residents	yes	city	high	medium	some	ongoing
> Publicize through national media	some	city	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Create distinctive Suwanee products	some	city	low	low	some	near
> Create community bulletin boards in key places to promote local activities	some	city/community	medium	medium	some	near
> Design and install wayfinding signage throughout Suwanee	some	city	high	medium	a lot	mid
Goal 4: EMBRACE NEW ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND AUDIENCES						
<i>Specific strategies may include:</i>						
> Create an overall communications plan	no	city	medium	medium	some	near
> Set up community notification system for early storm warning/emergency alerts	yes	city	medium	medium	some	near
> Expand the use of social media	yes	city / community	medium	low	some	ongoing
> Re-design the City's website	yes	city	medium	medium	some	mid
> Create a downloadable events calendar	no	city	low	low	minimal	mid
> Look into providing Wifi in Town Center	some	city	medium	low	some	near
Goal 5: SHARE INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY AND REGULARLY						
<i>Specific strategies may include:</i>						
> Invite ethnic media to events	yes	city	medium	low	minimal	near
> Work with realtors to provide a "Welcome to Suwanee" package to new residents	no	city / other	medium	medium	some	mid
> Include more information about City activities in communications	yes	city	low	low	minimal	near
> Market existing community programs that are under the radar	no	city/community	low	low	minimal	near

HOT TOPICS are highlighted in **RED** in the matrices.
FOCUS AREAS to keep up are highlighted in **GREEN** in the matrices.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: HOW WE PROSPER	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 1: FOCUS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AS THE CORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Favor budget items dedicated to maintaining quality of life	yes	city	low	low	minimal	ongoing
> Develop quality of life benchmarks	no	city	low	medium	some	near
Goal 2: COMPETE FOR THE FUTURE						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Continue working with Partnership Gwinnett for recruitment	yes	city	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Create business incentives	some	city	medium	medium	a lot	mid
> Ensure Suwanee has an educated skilled workforce	no	other	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Attract higher learning institution satellite campus	no	city/other	high	high	a lot	long
> Attract / develop green energy manufacturers	no	city/other	high	medium	a lot	long
Goal 3: BECOME A JOBS CENTER						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Attract larger businesses	no	city/other	high	high	a lot	ongoing
> Cultivate a broad range of small businesses	no	city/other	high	medium	a lot	ongoing
> Attract new technology businesses	no	city/other	high	medium	a lot	ongoing
Goal 4: RECRUIT AND DEVELOP A DIVERSE, HIGH-QUALITY COMMERCIAL BASE						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Recruit medical service providers	no	city/other	high	medium	some	mid
> Encourage more independently owned businesses	no	city	medium	medium	some	mid
> Promote Shop Local Campaign	some	city / other	medium	medium	some	mid
> Consider expansion opportunities for the farmers market	no	city/private	medium	medium	a lot	long
> Encourage diverse businesses in Town Center	no	other	high	medium	some	near
> Develop event space for big parties/weddings	no	private	medium	high	some	mid
> Attract name-brand hotel	no	private	medium	high	some	mid
Goal 5: ATTRACT AND RETAIN KNOWLEDGE WORKERS						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Develop "hang outs" that appeal to knowledge workers	no	city/private	medium	medium	some	mid
> Focus on recruiting jobs that are attractive to knowledge workers	no	city/other	medium	medium	some	mid
> Continue to focus on public art and local events that represent Suwanee's unique identity	yes	city / other	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Orient marketing and brand development of Suwanee toward knowledge workers	no	city	medium	medium	some	mid
> Develop live / work spaces for designers and other small creative businesses	no	private	high	high	some	long

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: HOW WE PROSPER (CONT'D)	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 6: HELP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Provide entrepreneurial training and small business incubation	no	other	medium	high	a lot	mid
> Provide permitting and technical assistance	no	city	low	low	some	mid
> Encourage companies to hold events at local restaurants	no	city	low	low	minimal	near
> Provide Suwanee.org as the center for small business	no	other	low	low	minimal	near
> Promote small business	some	city / other/private	medium	medium	a lot	ongoing
> Form better links and increased involvement between the City's big events and local businesses	no	city	low	low	some	near
> Provide more support for businesses outside of Town Center	some	city	medium	medium	a lot	mid
> Create a clearinghouse and incentives for renting/leasing vacant commercial space	no	city/other	low	medium	a lot	mid
> Conduct tours for potential business owners	no	city	low	medium	some	ongoing

PUBLIC SAFETY: WHAT PROVIDES US COMFORT	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 1: PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Expand community-oriented policing where possible	yes	city	medium	low	some	ongoing
Goal 2: EDUCATE & ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Promote and expand existing programs	yes	city	low	low	minimal	ongoing
Goal 3: USE TARGETED POLICE VISIBILITY EFFORTS						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Finish the police training center/substation at I-85	yes	city	high	high	minimal	ongoing
> Use available officers strategically	yes	city	high	medium	minimal	ongoing
> Continue high-visibility efforts along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road	yes	city	medium	medium	some	ongoing
Goal 4: EMBRACE NEW TECHNOLOGIES						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Maximize the use of the training center	yes	city	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Use technology for effective policing	yes	city	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Expand the use of mapping technology to track criminal activity	yes	city	low	low	minimal	ongoing
> Follow your PACT officer @ Twitter	no	city	low	low	minimal	near

PLANNING: HOW WE GROW	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 1: TRANSFORM SUWANEE GATEWAY						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Explore the feasibility of an entertainment center for indoor activities	no	city / private	high	high	some	long
> Land bank property	some	city	high	high	a lot	mid
> Use temporary landscaping where possible	some	city	medium	medium	a lot	near
> Commission eye-catching public art at the gateway	no	city / other	medium	medium	some	mid
> Pursue upscale, unique retail	no	city / private	medium	medium	some	long
> Develop visually striking buildings	some	private	high	high	some	long
> Beautify the overpass	some	other	high	high	some	long
Goal 2: INVEST IN DOWNTOWN SUWANEE'S FUTURE						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Support redevelopment of Pierce's Corner	yes	city / private	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Energize Old Town through the arts and adaptive reuse	some	city / community / private	high	high	a lot	mid
> Fill the missing links	yes	city / other	high	high	a lot	mid
> Expand Town Center	no	city / private	high	high	a lot	long
> Manage parking Downtown	some	city	medium	high	a lot	long
Goal 3: BALANCE GROWTH						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Encourage transitional uses for land cleared for stalled subdivisions	no	private	low	medium	some	near
> Explore annexation possibilities	yes	city	medium	high	a lot	long
> Balance the allocation of resources across the City	some	city	high	high	a lot	near
Goal 4: ENSURE LIFETIME HOUSING						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Promote development of housing for seniors	no	city / private	medium	low	some	near
> Encourage design that makes homes accessible to people with varying abilities	no	city / private	medium	low	some	near
> Promote a mix of housing types	yes	city / private	medium	low	some	ongoing
Goal 5: GROW GREENER AND CONSERVE RESOURCES						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Promote citywide recycling	some	city / private	medium	medium	some	mid
> Encourage composting	no	other	low	medium	a lot	mid
> Encourage water conservation	some	city / other	medium	medium	some	mid
> Use recycled materials for trail improvements and other public improvements	no	city	low	medium	minimal	near
> Investigate alternative energy production methods	no	other	medium	high	a lot	long
> Create Low-Impact Development Guidelines	no	city	medium	low	some	mid

COMMUNITY CULTURE: WHAT MAKES US INTERESTING	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 1: OFFER A WIDE AND DIVERSE ARRAY OF LOCAL EVENTS						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Organize a broader range of cultural events	yes	city / community	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Encourage and support multi-cultural events	yes	city / community	low	low	some	ongoing
> Allow teen events in Town Center Park	no	city / community	low	low	some	near
Goal 2: CAPITALIZE ON THE CITY'S RICH CULTURAL ASSETS						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Promote local performing arts programs	no	community / city	medium	low	some	near
> Integrate arts into local festivals	no	community / other / city	medium	medium	a lot	near
> Explore the feasibility of a performing arts venue for community theater, community choir, etc.	no	community / other	high	high	a lot	long
Goal 3: MAKE PUBLIC ART THE CITY'S ARTS NICHE						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Continue and expand SculptTour program	yes	city / other	medium	medium	some	ongoing
> Locate public art throughout the City	some	city / other / private	high	high	a lot	mid
> Support private art installation efforts	yes	private / city	medium	medium	minimal	ongoing
> Develop and implement a public art master plan	no	city / other	low	medium	some	mid
> Identify and fund an iconic public art piece	no	city / other	high	high	a lot	long
> Expand storefront art program	no	other / city	low	low	a lot	near
Goal 4: FOSTER LOCAL ARTS PROGRAMS AND VENUES						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Create Artist-in-Residency Program	no	other / private	medium	high	a lot	long
> Maintain arts curriculum in schools	no	other	medium	medium	a lot	near
> Expand capacity of North Gwinnett Arts Associate and ArtWorks! Gwinnett	no	other	medium	medium	a lot	mid
> Consider providing vacant space to artists for a nominal fee	no	private / other	medium	medium	some	mid
> Identify, recruit, and engage groups of patrons who support the arts	no	private / city / other	medium	medium	a lot	long

HOW WE PLAY: PARKS + OPEN SPACE	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 1: VALUE PASSIVE RECREATION						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Target funding for passive open spaces	yes	city	medium	medium	minimal	ongoing
> Encourage residents to explore passive open spaces with new events	no	city / other	low	low	some	near
Goal 2: PRIORITIZE EXISTING PARKS						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Add amenities and enhancements to parks	yes	city	medium	medium	some	near
> Add a separate bike trail to the greenway	no	city	medium	high	a lot	long
> Improve the parks for runners	no	city	medium	medium	some	mid
> Expand community gardening	some	city / other	low	medium	some	mid
> Explore the construction of a dog park	no	city	low	medium	some	mid
Goal 3: ENSURE THE PARKS AND TRAILS ARE SAFE						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Add caution signs on trails	no	city	low	medium	some	near
> Have an enhanced presence on trails	some	city / community	medium	high	a lot	mid
> Add video surveillance to local parks	yes	city	medium	medium	some	near
> Improve the maintenance of parks and trails	some	city	medium	medium	a lot	ongoing
Goal 4: EXPAND THE PARK CONNECTIONS & TRAIL NETWORK						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Extend the Suwanee Creek Greenway from Suwanee Creek Park to Peachtree Ridge Park	no	other	high	high	a lot	long
> Plan ahead for new trails	yes	city	high	high	a lot	mid
> Organize a walking group to George Pierce Park senior center	no	community	low	low	minimal	near
Goal 5: CONTINUE TO PROGRAM TOWN CENTER AS SUWANEE'S FRONT PORCH						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Expand active play space in Town Center Park	no	city	medium	high	a lot	long
> Explore the possibility of a Teen Center	no	community / private	medium	high	a lot	long

TRANSPORTATION: HOW WE MOVE	Has this been idea been EVALUATED?	Who should LEAD?	What is the potential IMPACT?	What is the relative COST?	How much STAFF TIME & EFFORT will this take?	When could it HAPPEN?
Goal 1: IMPROVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Divert traffic around high pedestrian areas	no	city	medium	high	a lot	long
> Improve traffic safety around schools	no	other / city	medium	medium	a lot	mid
> Use traffic calming methods	some	city / other	medium	high	a lot	ongoing
> Plan for better traffic flow at I-85/Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road	no	other / city	high	high	a lot	long
Goal 2: MAKE LOCAL CONNECTIONS						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Transform Buford Highway	yes	city / other	high	high	a lot	mid
> Build more sidewalks	yes	city / other	high	high	a lot	ongoing
> Create safer pedestrian crossings along PIB	some	city / other	high	high	a lot	mid
> Create better pedestrian connections to the parks	some	city / other	high	high	a lot	mid
Goal 3: FOCUS ON DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET AROUND						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Consider a Citywide transportation loop	no	city / other	medium	high	a lot	long
> Explore ideas for improved bus service	no	other	medium	medium	a lot	long
> Encourage carpooling	no	other	medium	low	some	ongoing
> Create an integrated network of local bike lanes and bike racks in key locations	some	city	medium	high	a lot	ongoing
> Develop public education materials for drivers and bikers on road safety	no	city	low	low	some	near
> Plan for electric car charging stations	no	other / private	low	medium	some	long
> Plan for a commuter rail line and station	some	other / city	high	high	a lot	long
Goal 4: DESIGN ATTRACTIVE ROADWAYS						
<i>Specific strategies might include:</i>						
> Grow the Adopt a Road Program	yes	other	low	low	minimal	ongoing
> Provide landscaping and cleaning	no	city / private	medium	high	a lot	near
> Plan median strips on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard/Suwanee Dam Road (with business sponsorship)	yes	city / private	medium	medium	a lot	ongoing
> Paint utility poles	no	other / city	low	low	some	mid

APPENDIX

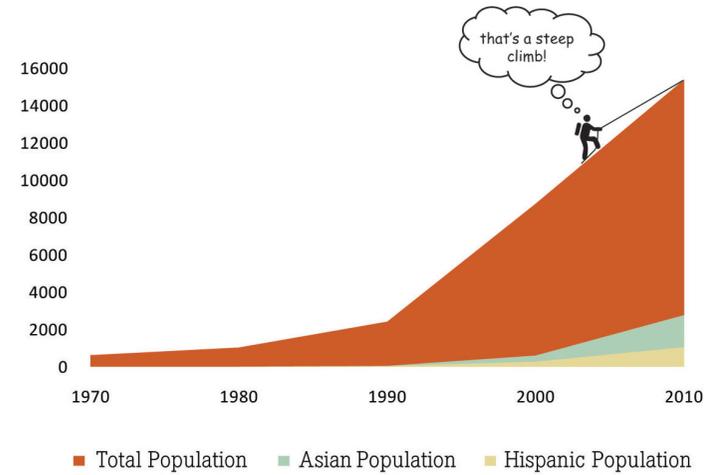
BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHICS AND MAPPING

POPULATION

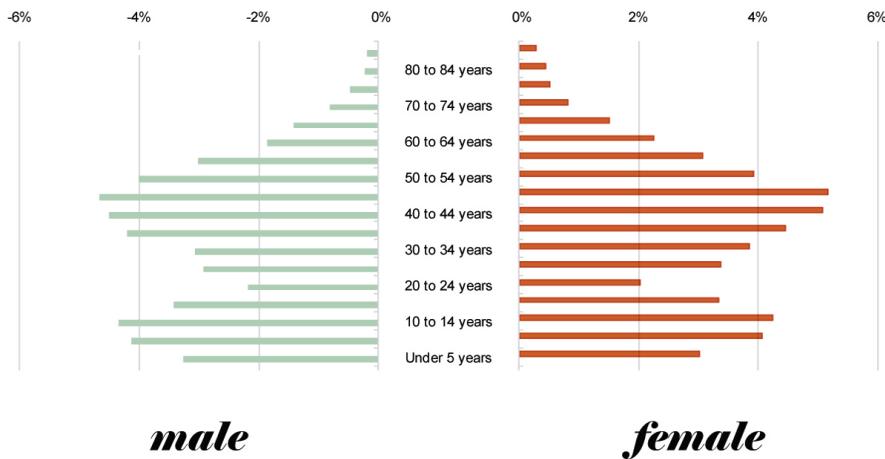


42% of Suwanee residents are between 35 and 59
 [Compared to the 37% in Gwinnett County]

POPULATION GROWTH IN SUWANEЕ



AGE PYRAMID OF SUWANEЕ

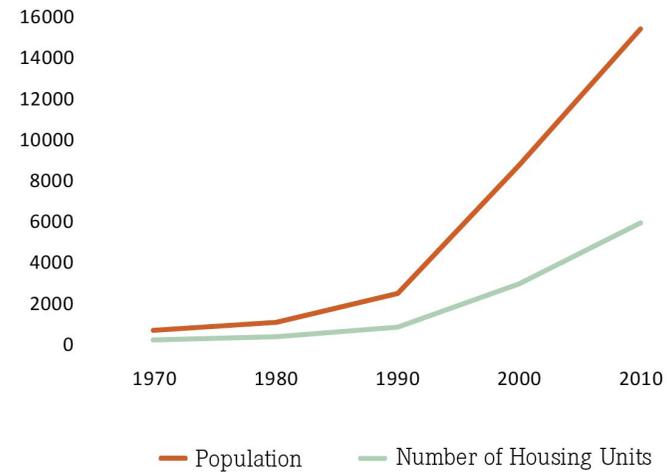


male

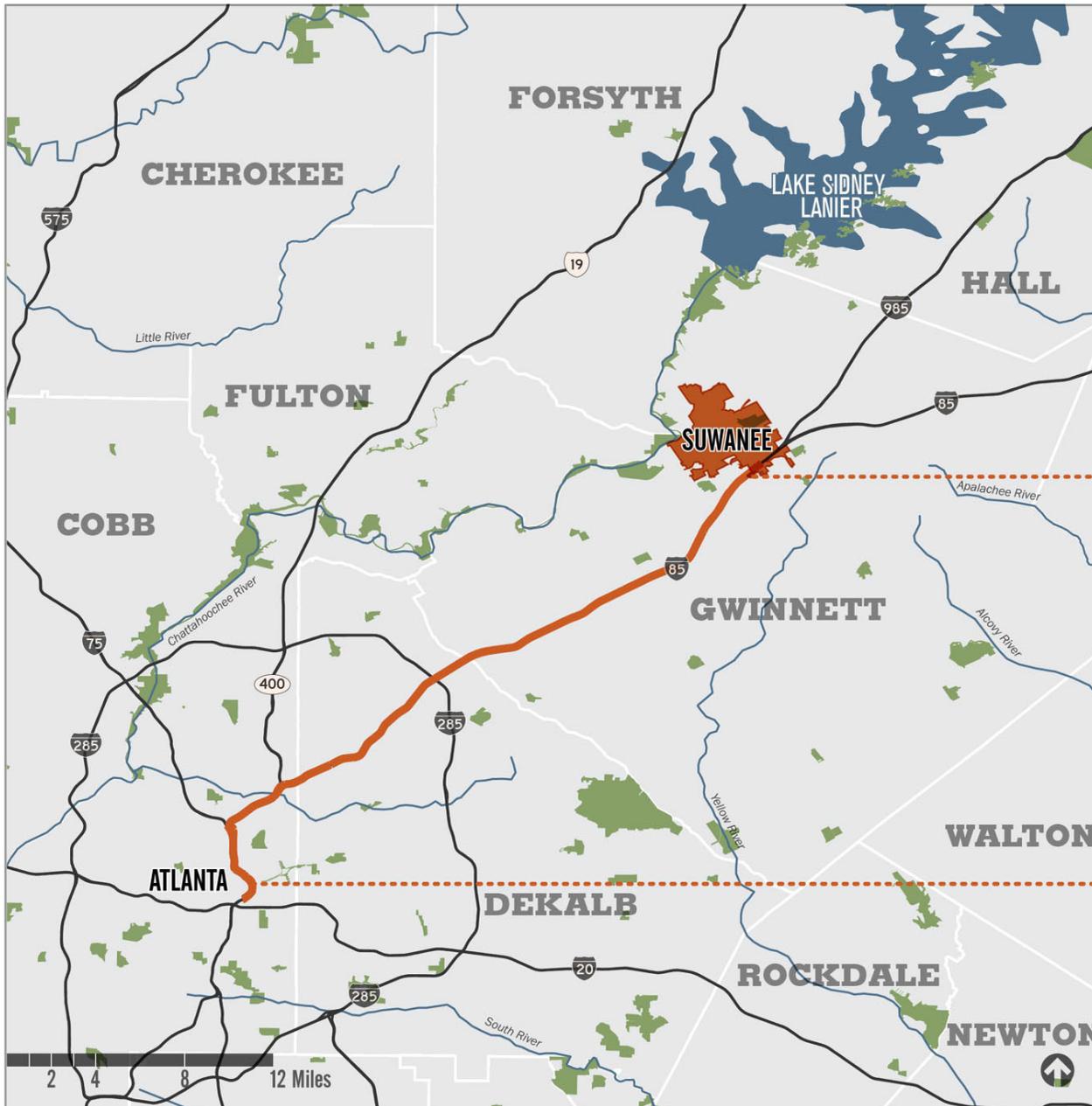
female

source: US Census, City of Suwanee

POPULATION AND HOUSING UNITS IN SUWANEЕ



REGIONAL CONTEXT

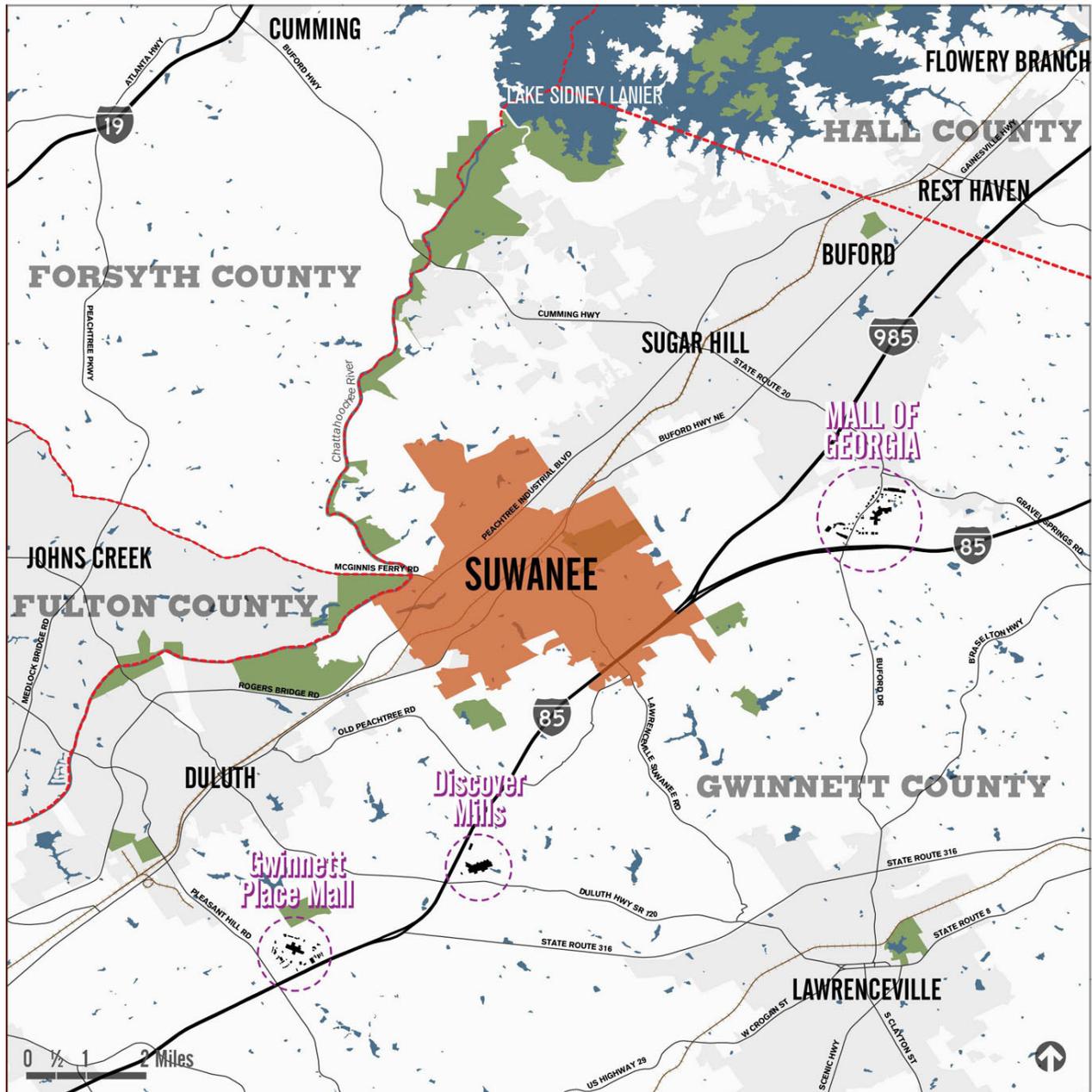


DISTANCE =
34 MILES

TYPICAL
TRAVEL TIME =
45 MINUTES

RUSH HOUR
TRAVEL TIME =
A LOT **MORE**
THAN **45 MINUTES**

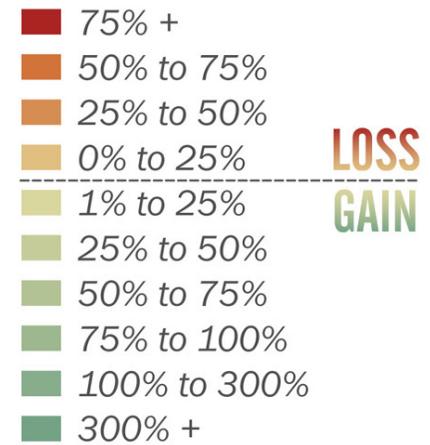
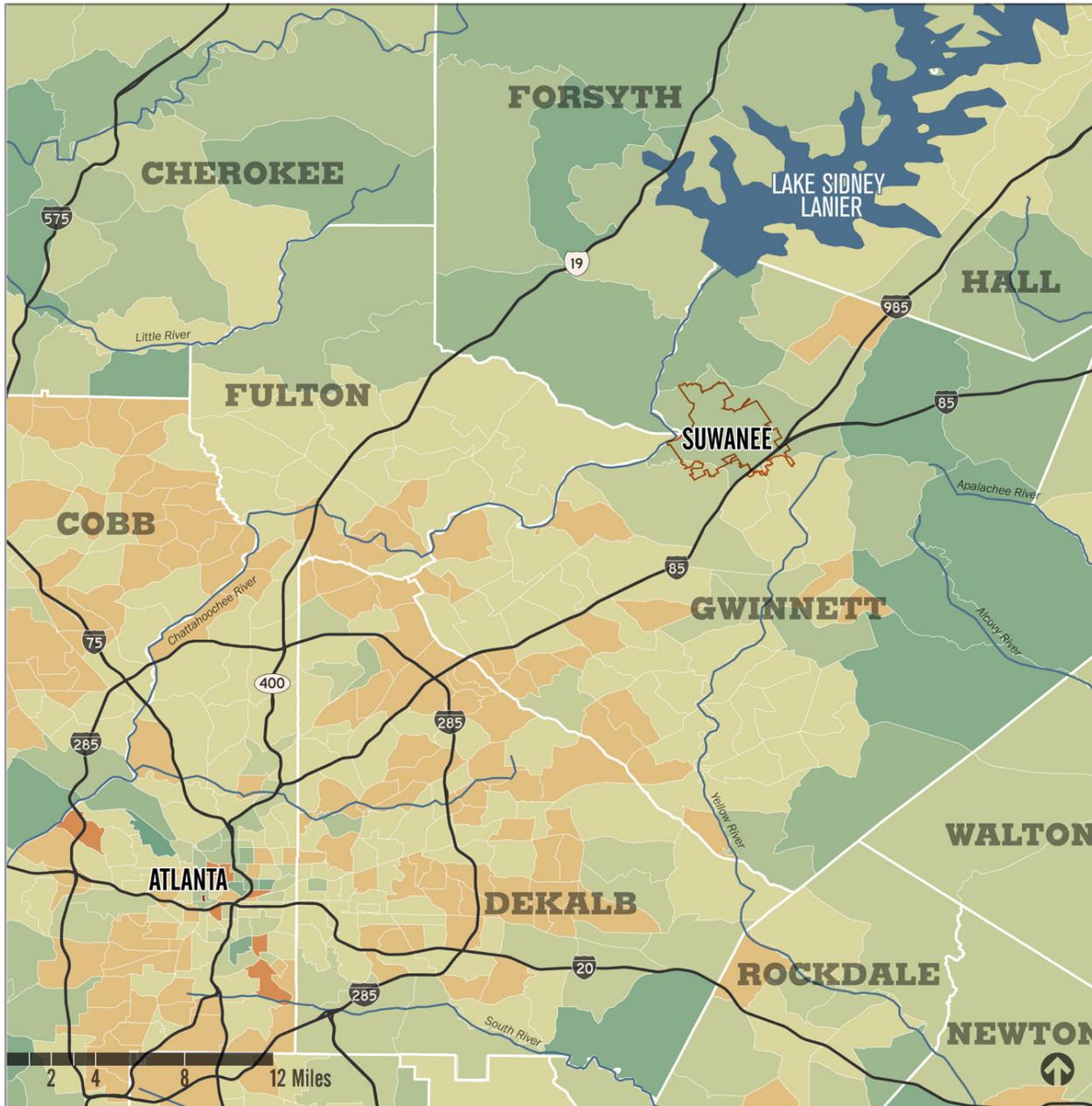
CONTEXT



- County Border
- Malls
- City of Suwanee
- Parks
- Lakes, Rivers, Ponds

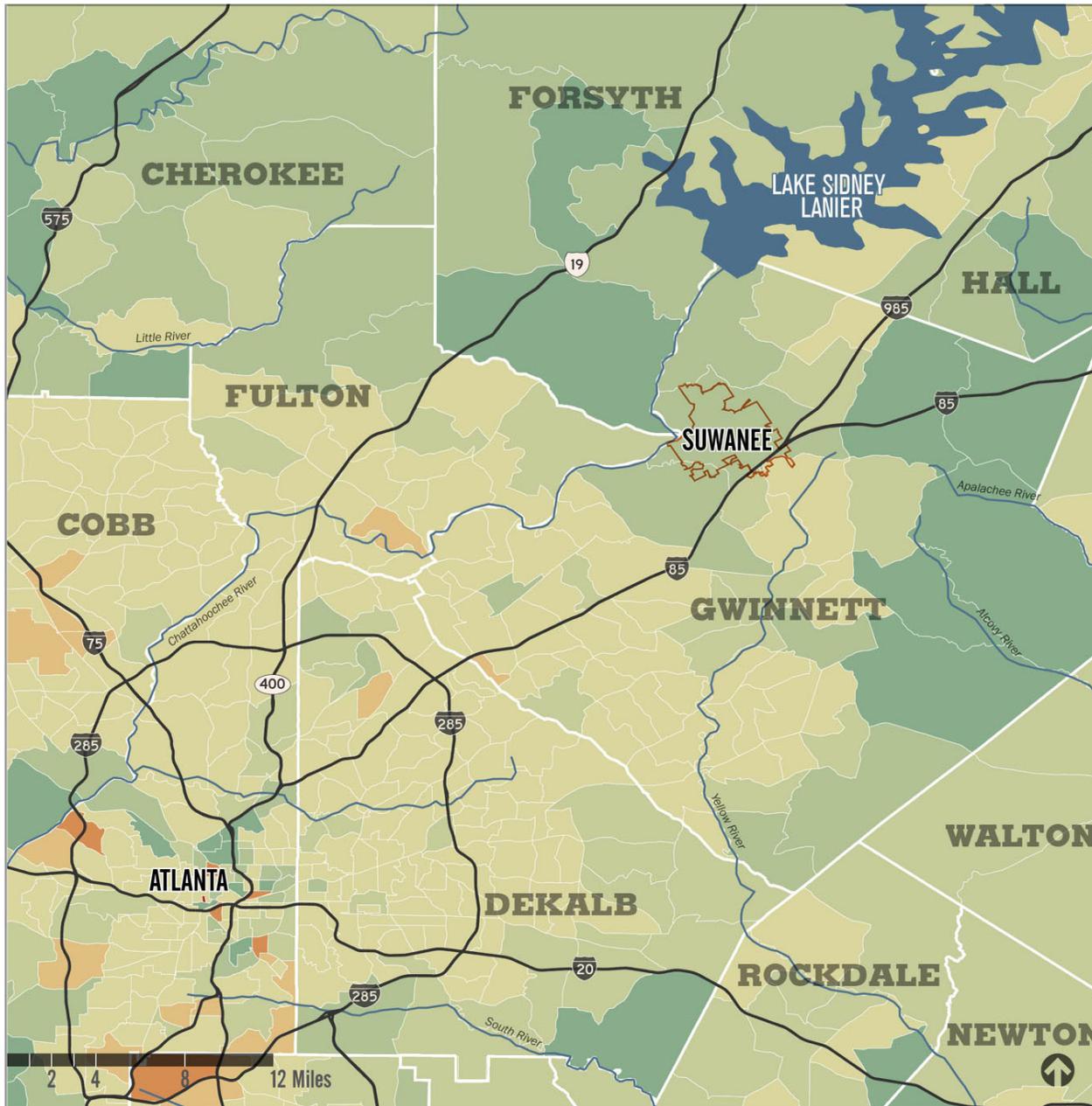
SOURCE city of suwanee

POPULATION CHANGE 2000-2009



SOURCE *atlanta regional commission*

HOUSING CHANGE 2000-2009



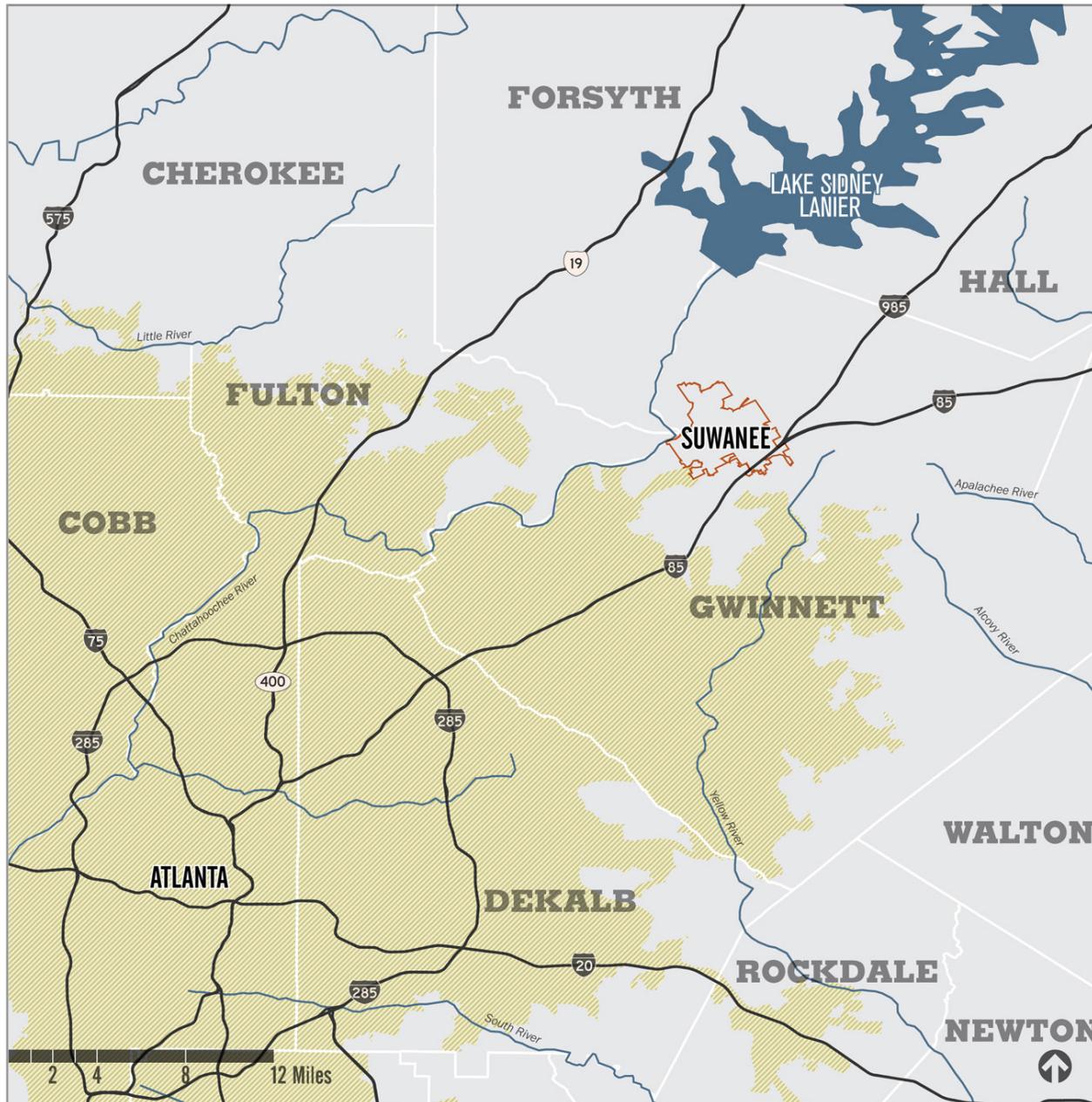
change in % of housing units by census tract

- 75% +
- 50% to 75%
- 25% to 50%
- 0% to 25%
- 1% to 25%
- 25% to 50%
- 50% to 100%
- 100% +

LOSS
GAIN

SOURCE atlanta regional commission

URBANIZED AREA 1990

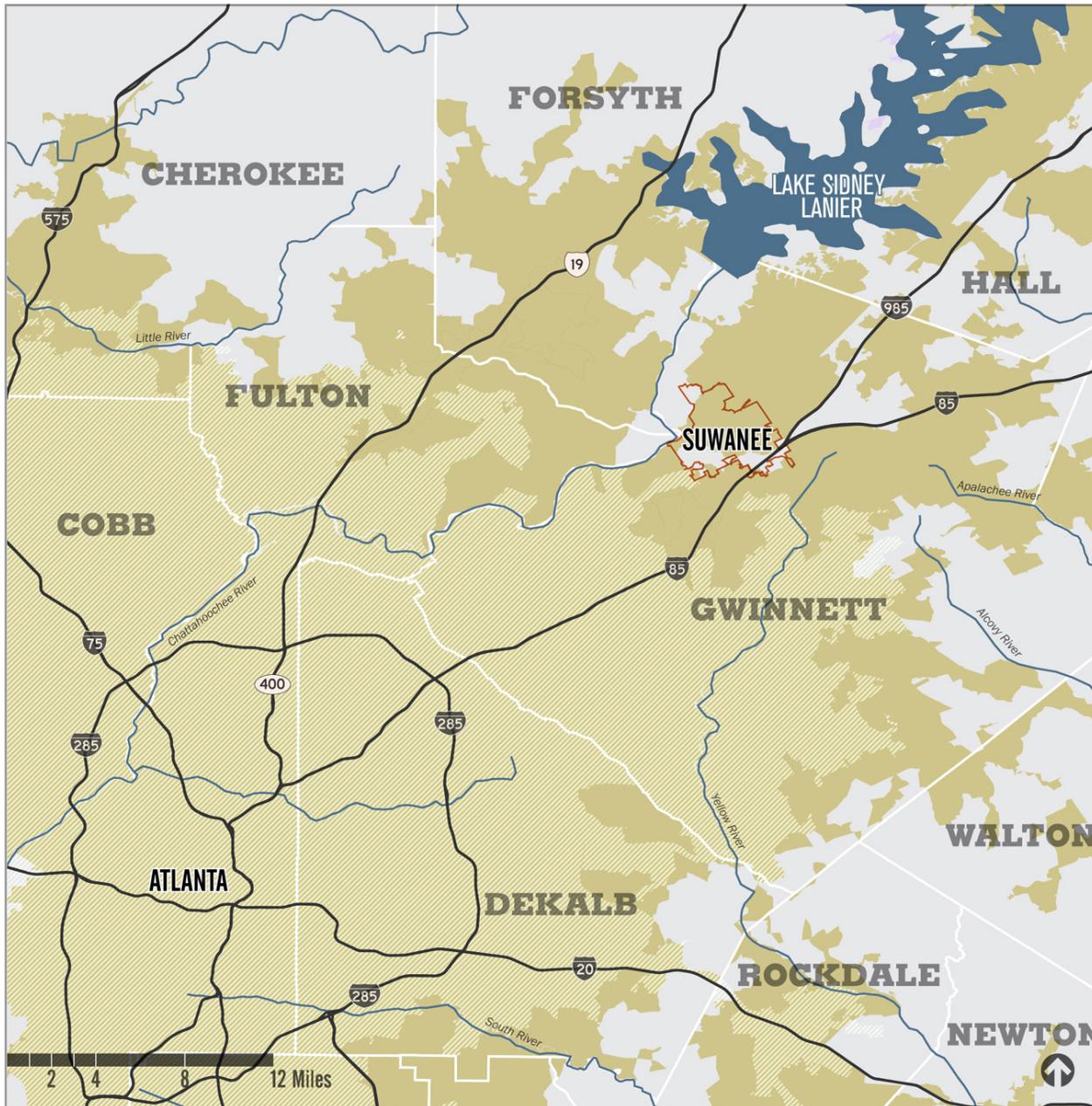


URBANIZED AREAS
ARE DENSELY SETTLED AREAS
WITH A POPULATION DENSITY
OF AT LEAST
1,000 PEOPLE
PER SQUARE MILE

 urbanized area 1990

SOURCE *atlanta regional commission*

URBANIZED AREA 1990-2000

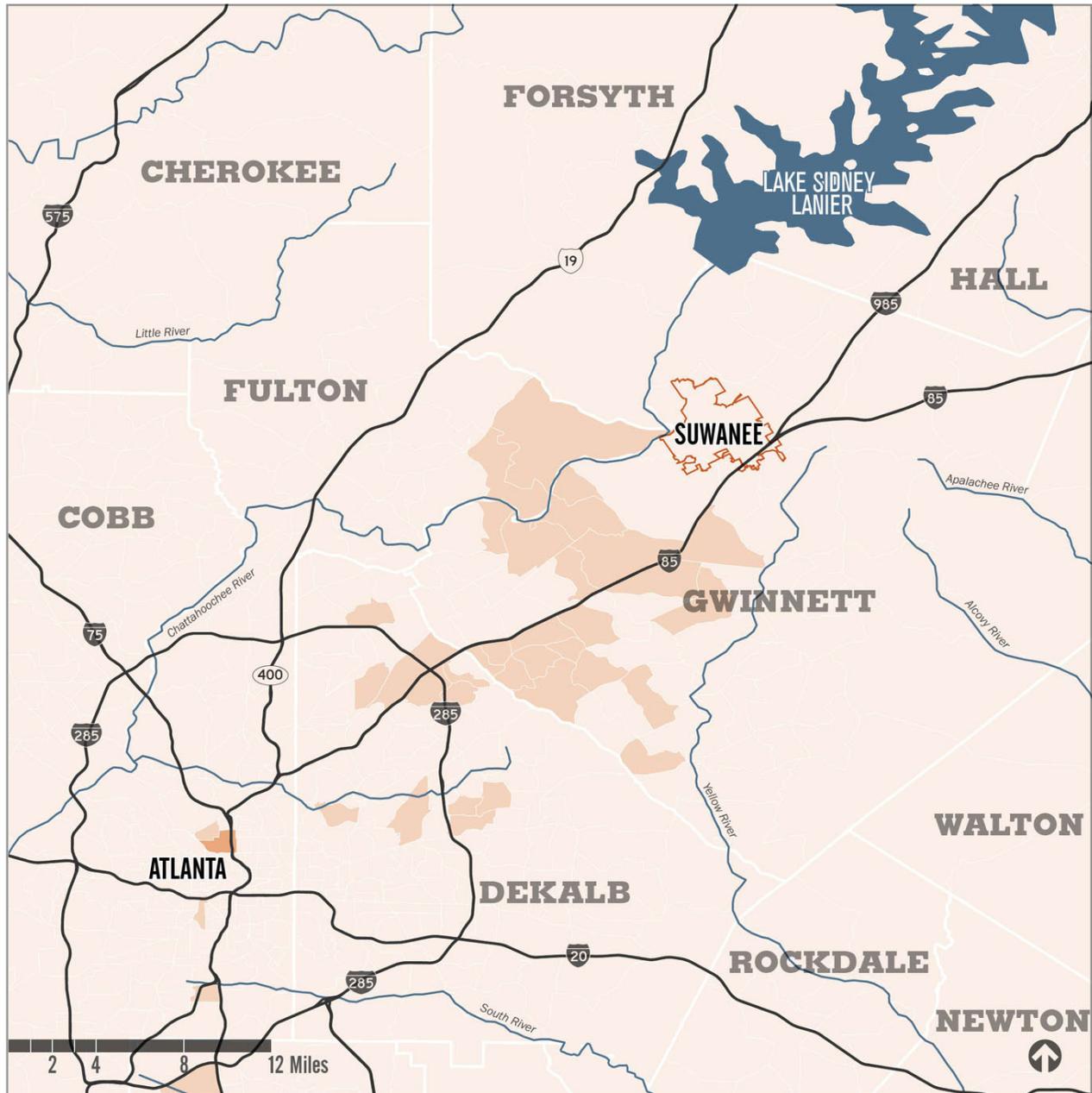


URBANIZED AREAS ARE DENSELY SETTLED AREAS WITH A POPULATION DENSITY OF AT LEAST 1,000 PEOPLE PER SQUARE MILE

■ urbanized area 2000
▨ urbanized area 1990

SOURCE *atlanta regional commission*

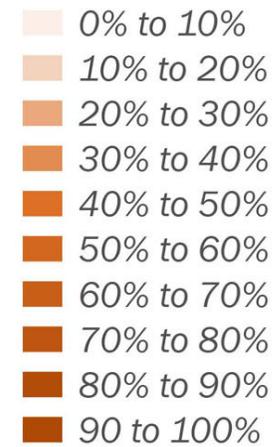
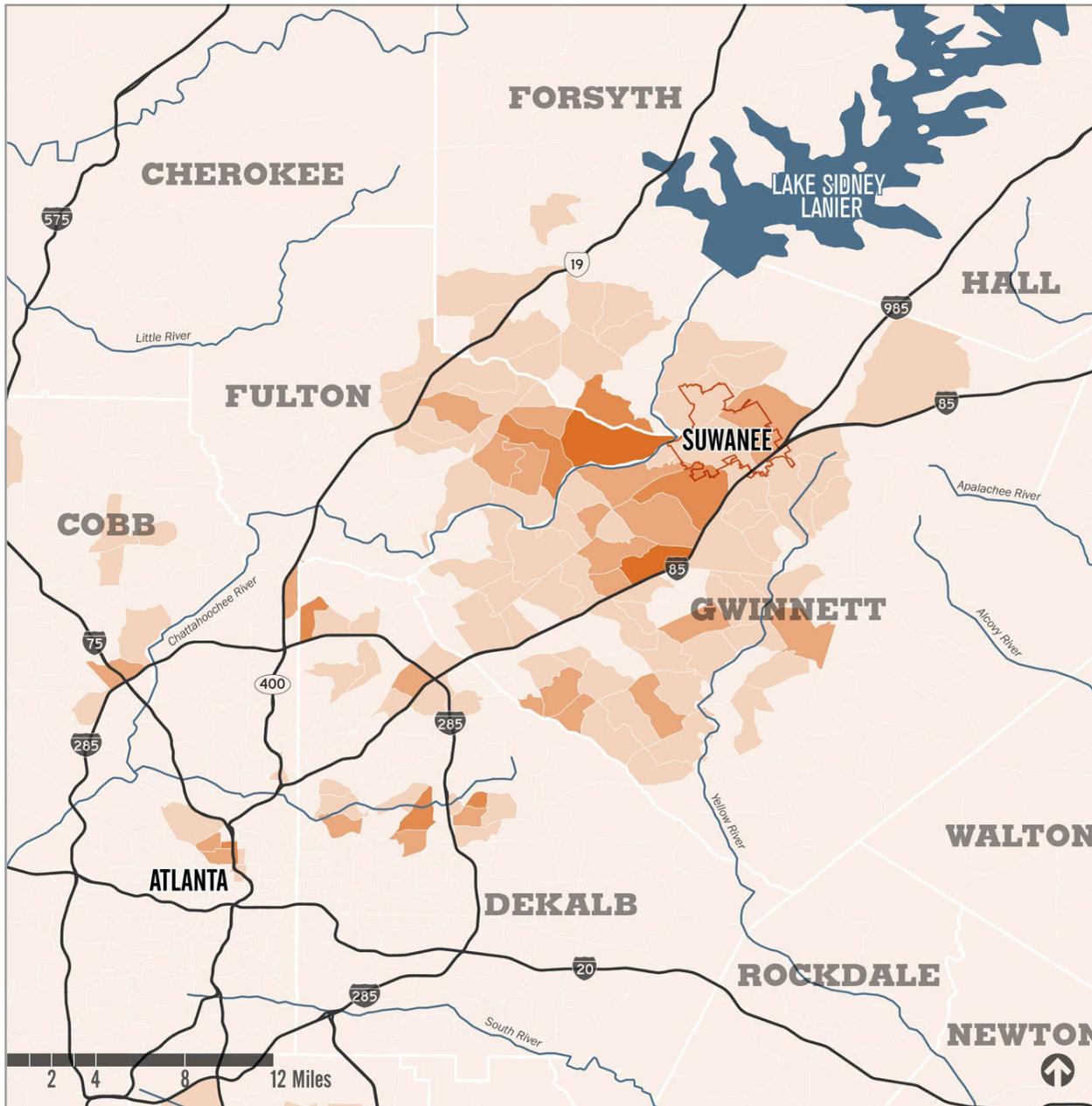
ASIAN POPULATION 2000



- 0% to 10%
- 10% to 20%
- 20% to 30%
- 30% to 40%
- 40% to 50%
- 50% to 60%
- 60% to 70%
- 70% to 80%
- 80% to 90%
- 90 to 100%

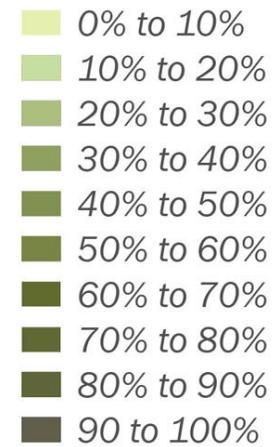
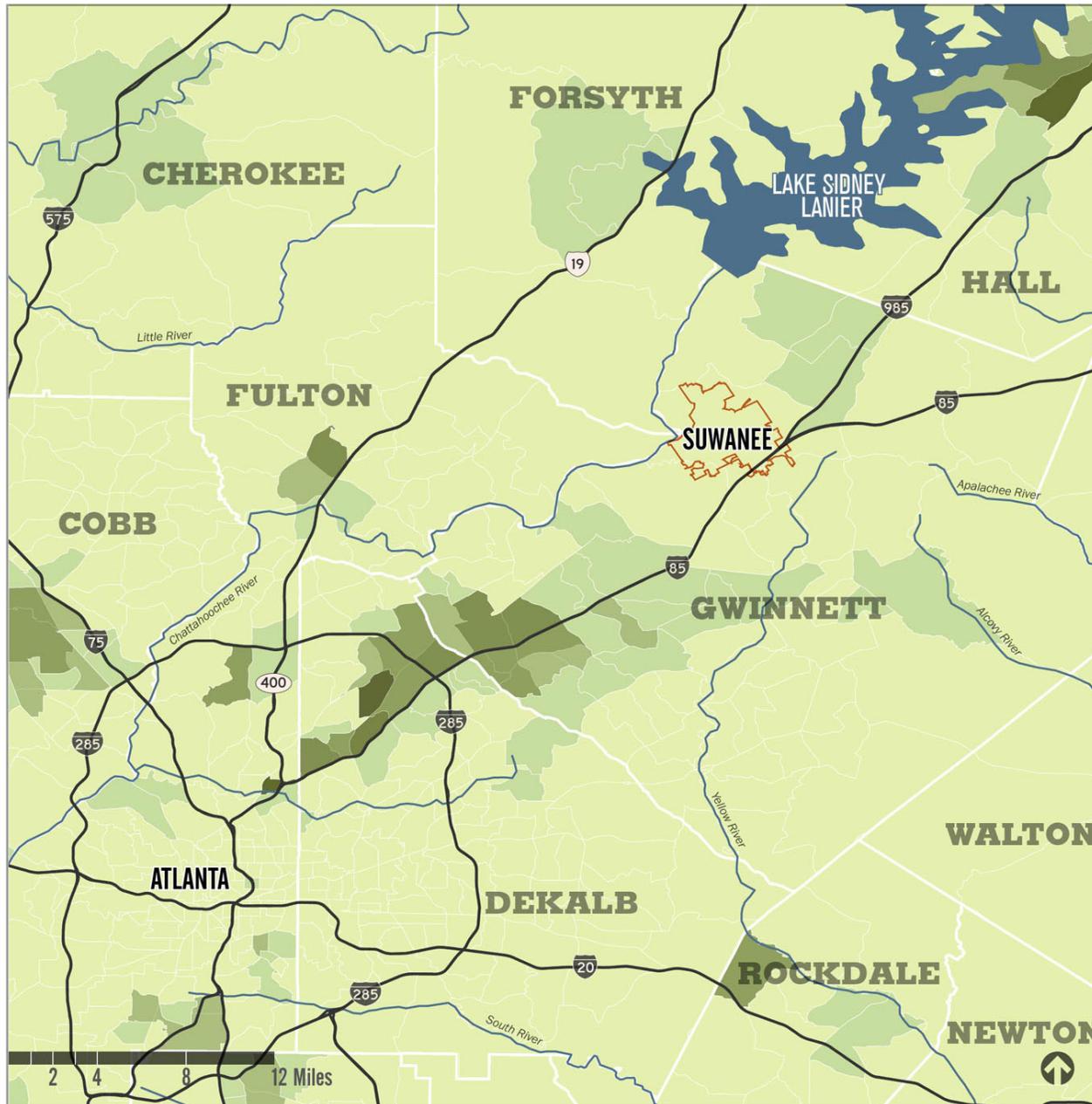
SOURCE *us census 2000*

ASIAN POPULATION 2010



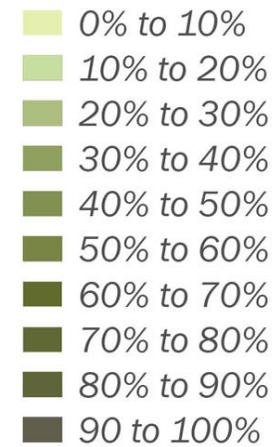
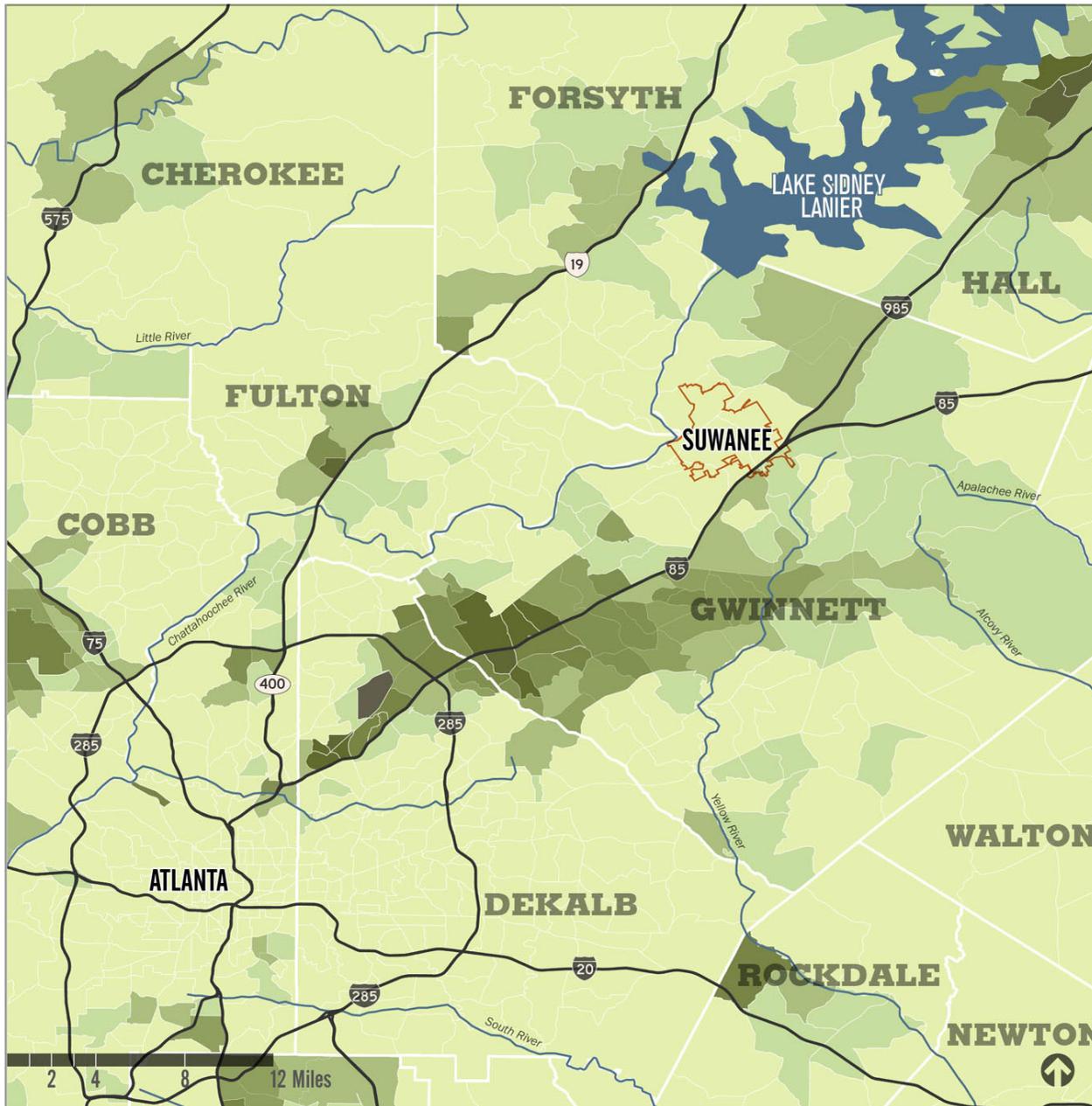
SOURCE *us census 2010*

HISPANIC POPULATION 2000



SOURCE *us census 2000*

HISPANIC POPULATION 2010



SOURCE *us census 2010*

DEVELOPMENT 1950s

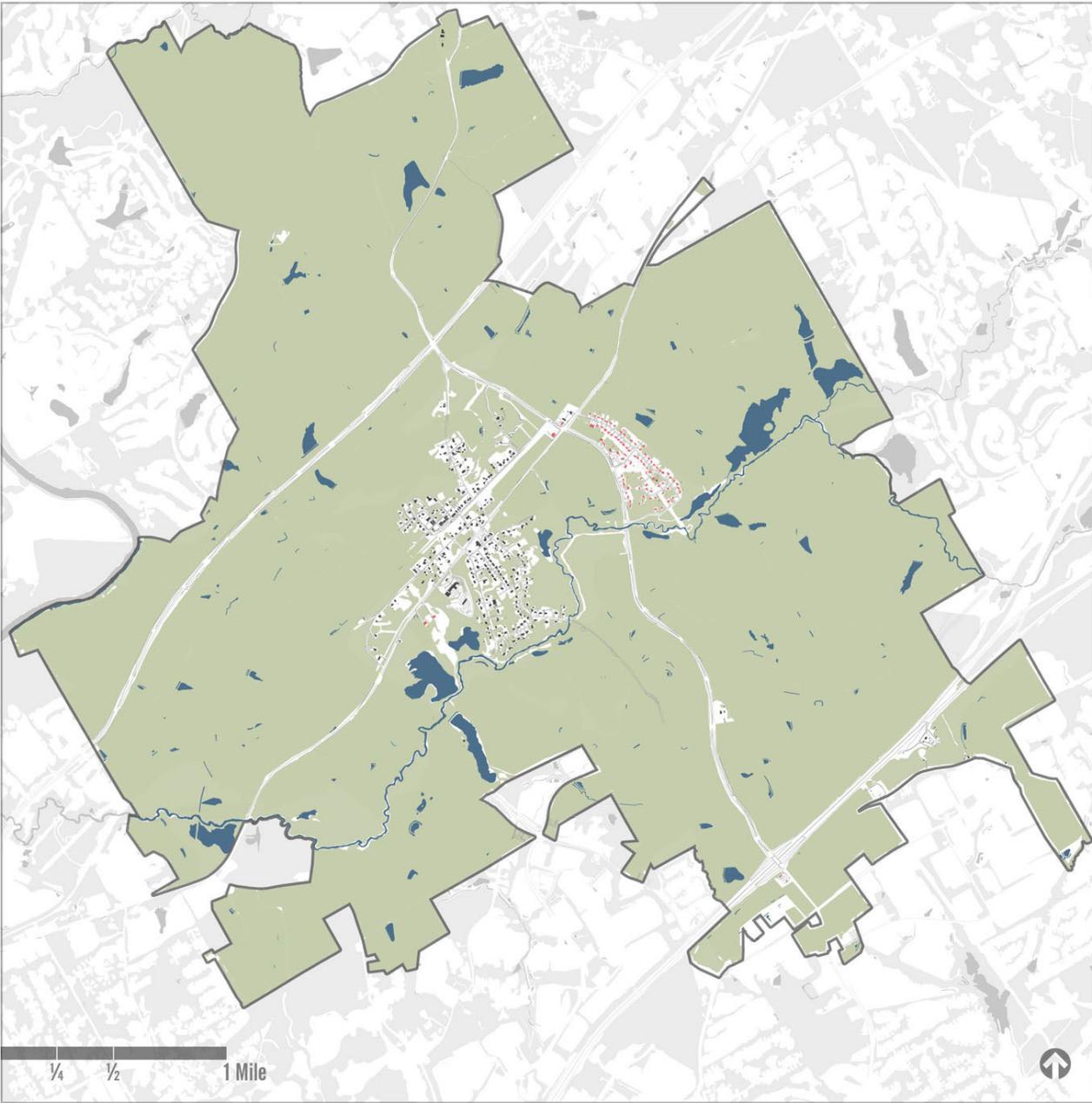


HOUSING UNITS

0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■

DEVELOPMENT 1960s

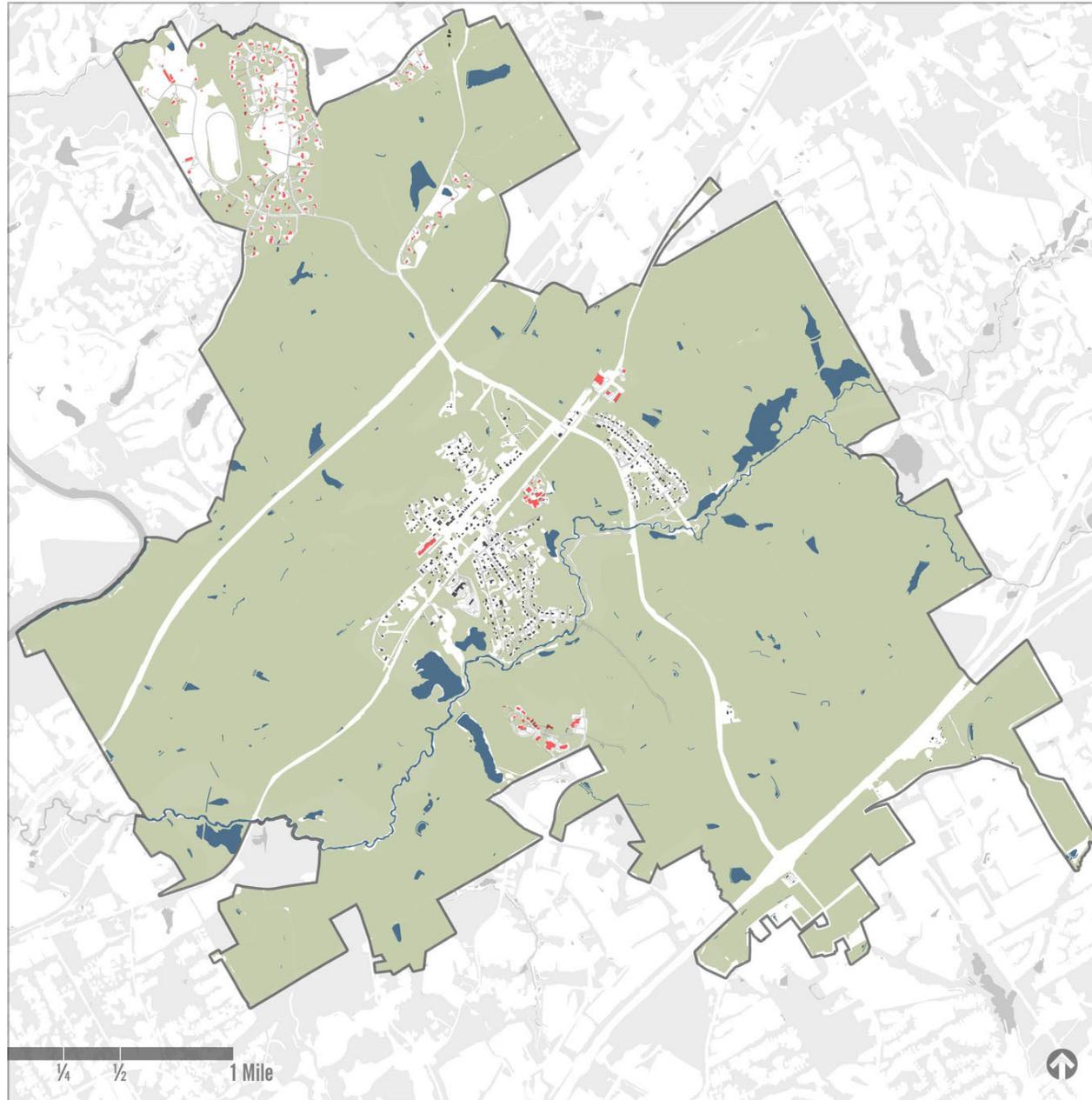


HOUSING UNITS

0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■
1960s ■

DEVELOPMENT 1970s



HOUSING UNITS

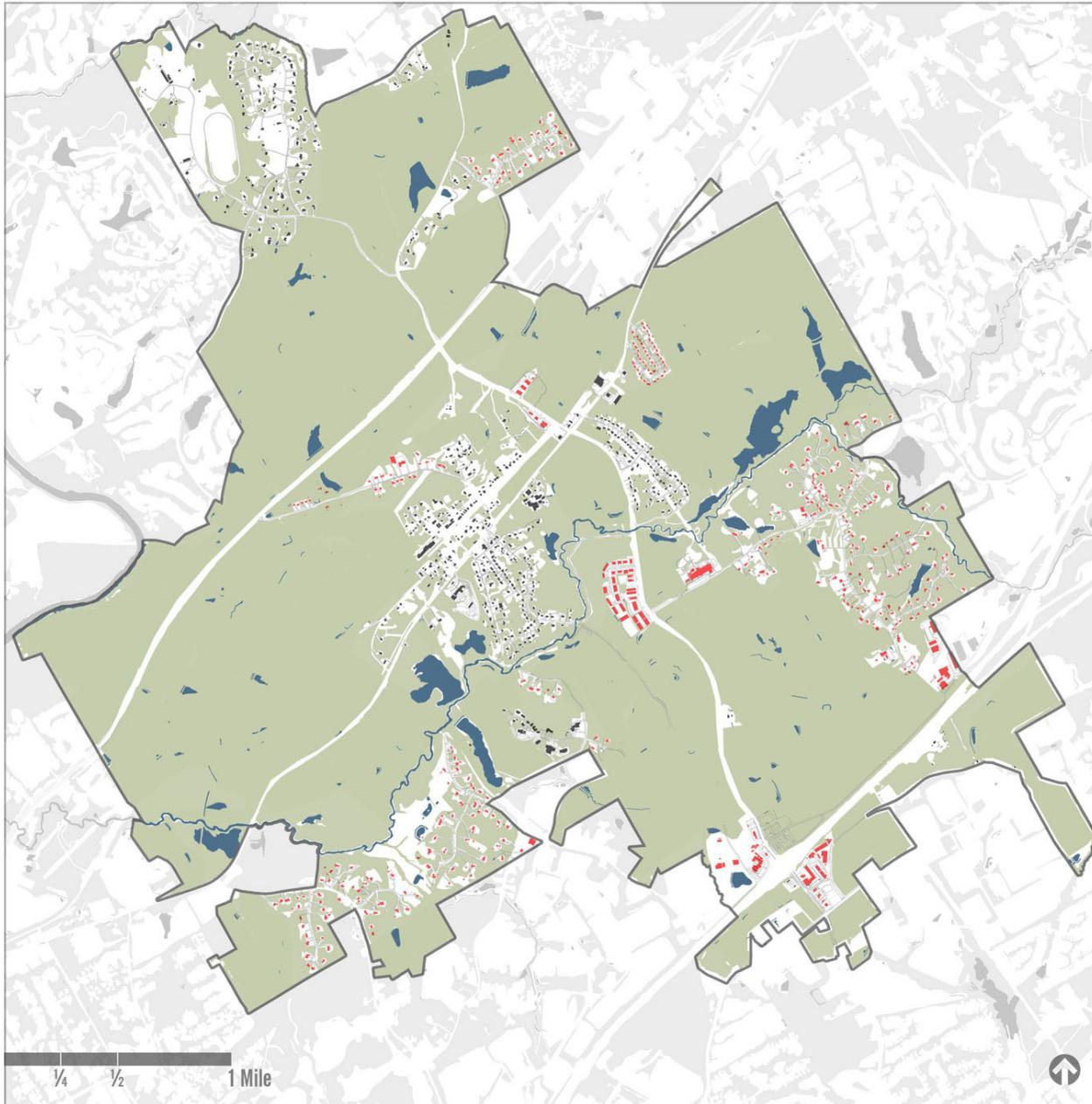
0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■

1960s ■

1970s ■

DEVELOPMENT 1980s



HOUSING UNITS

0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

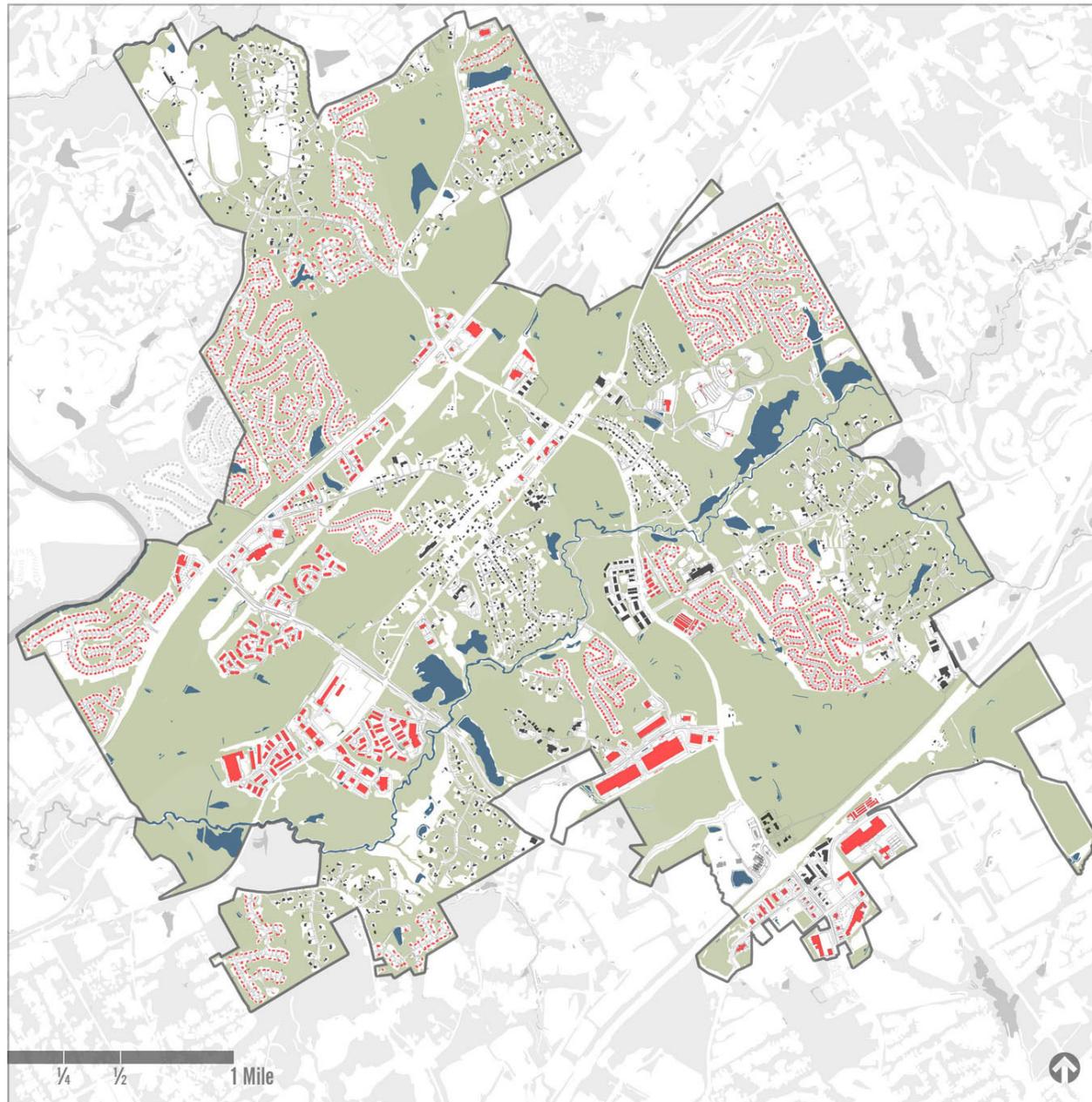
1950s ■

1960s ■

1970s ■

1980s ■■

DEVELOPMENT 1990s



HOUSING UNITS

0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

1950s ■

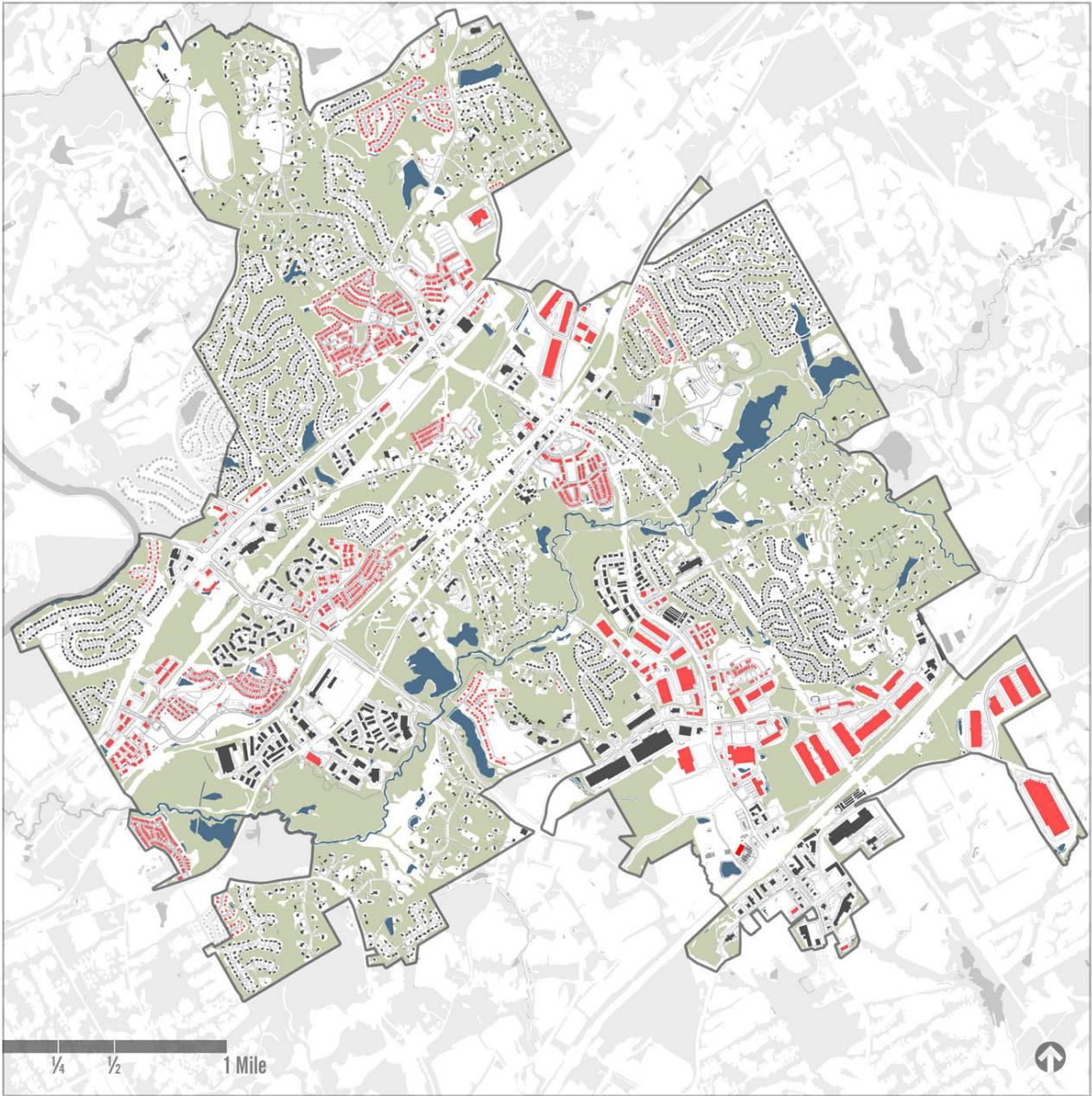
1960s ■

1970s ■

1980s ■

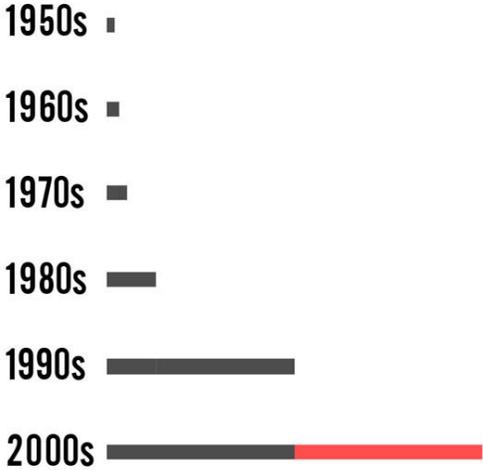
1990s ■

DEVELOPMENT 2000s

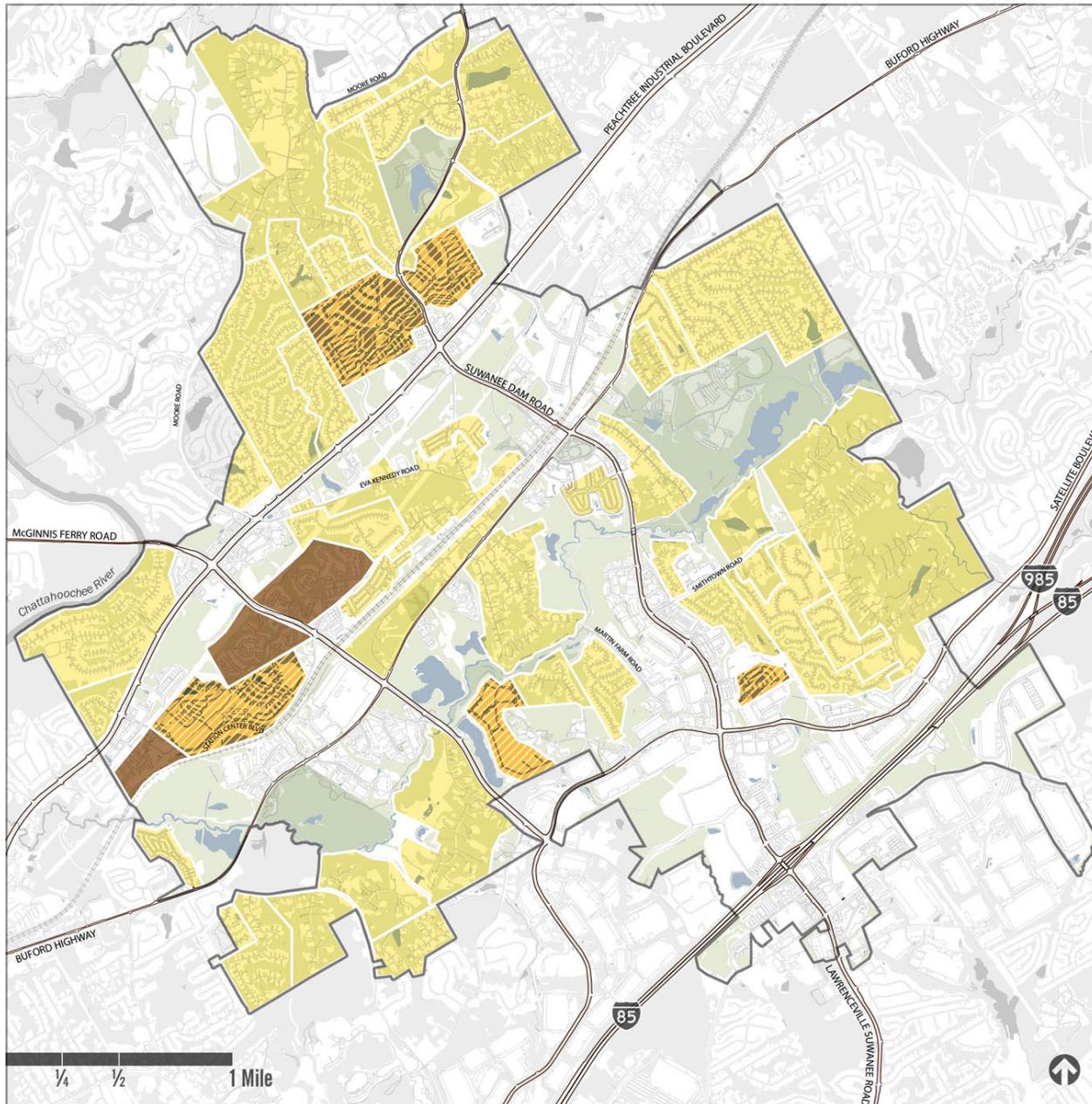


HOUSING UNITS

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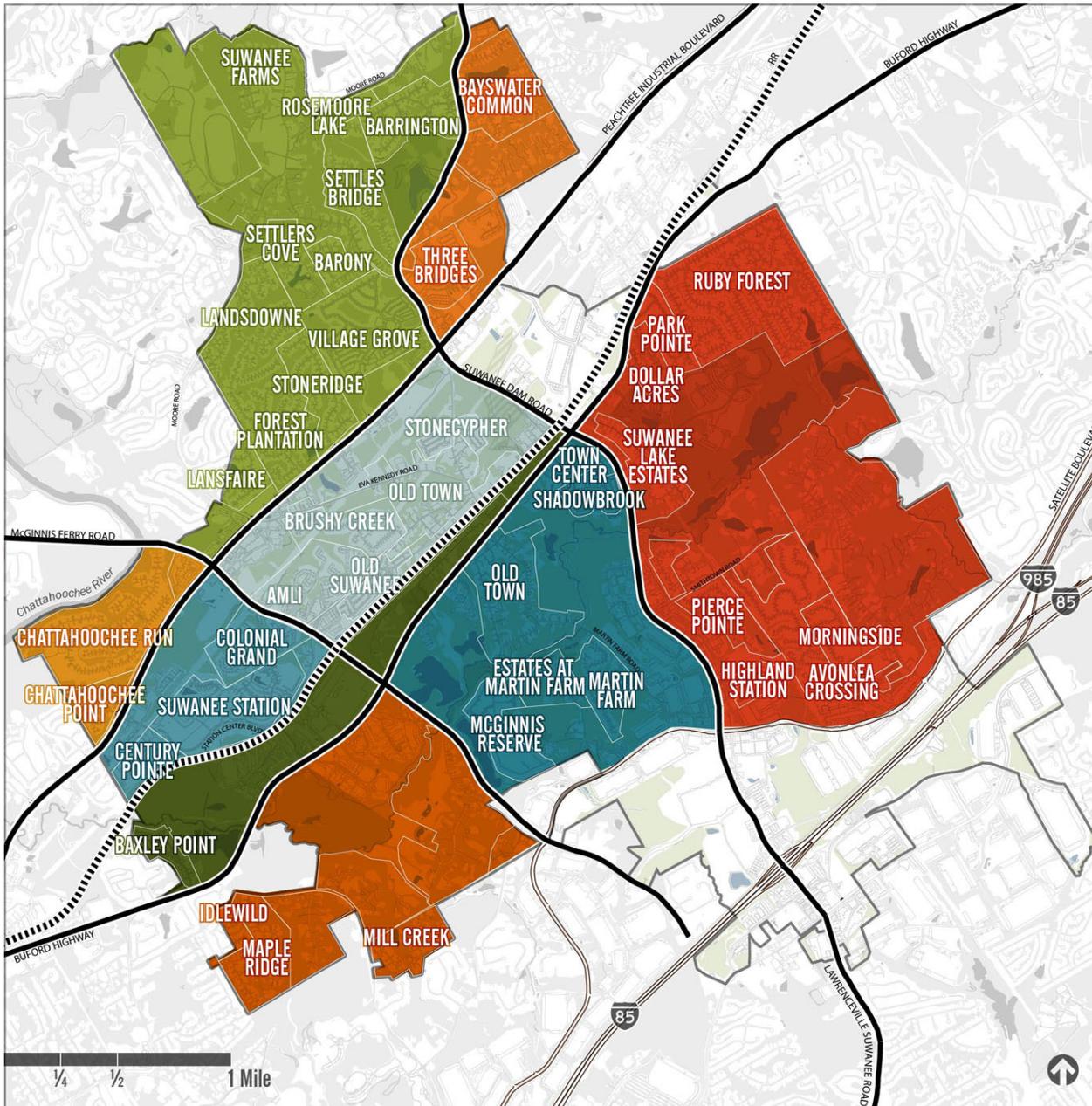
WHERE WE LIVE



- single family residential
- multi family residential
- active construction

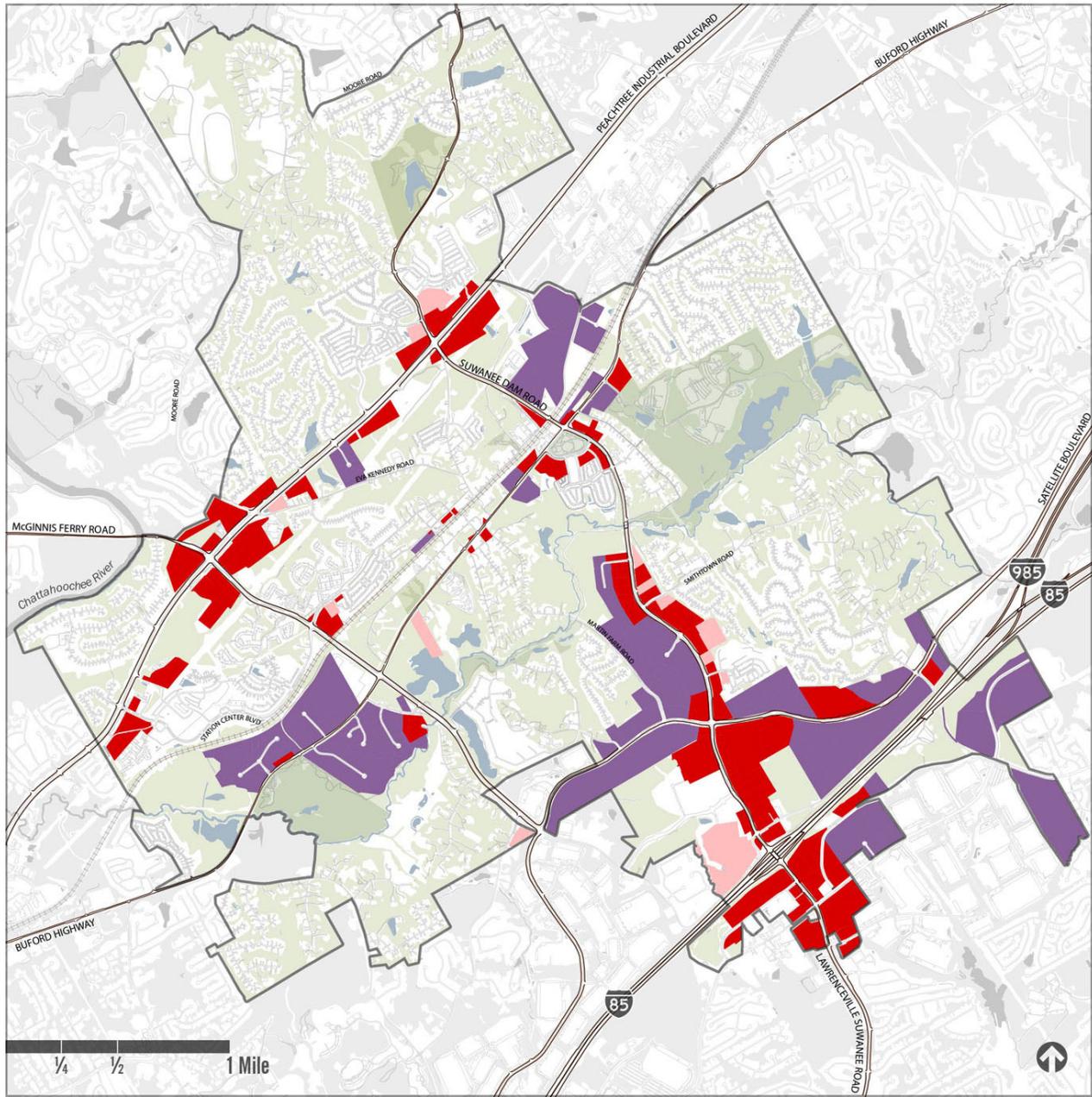
SOURCE city of suwanee

WHERE WE LIVE

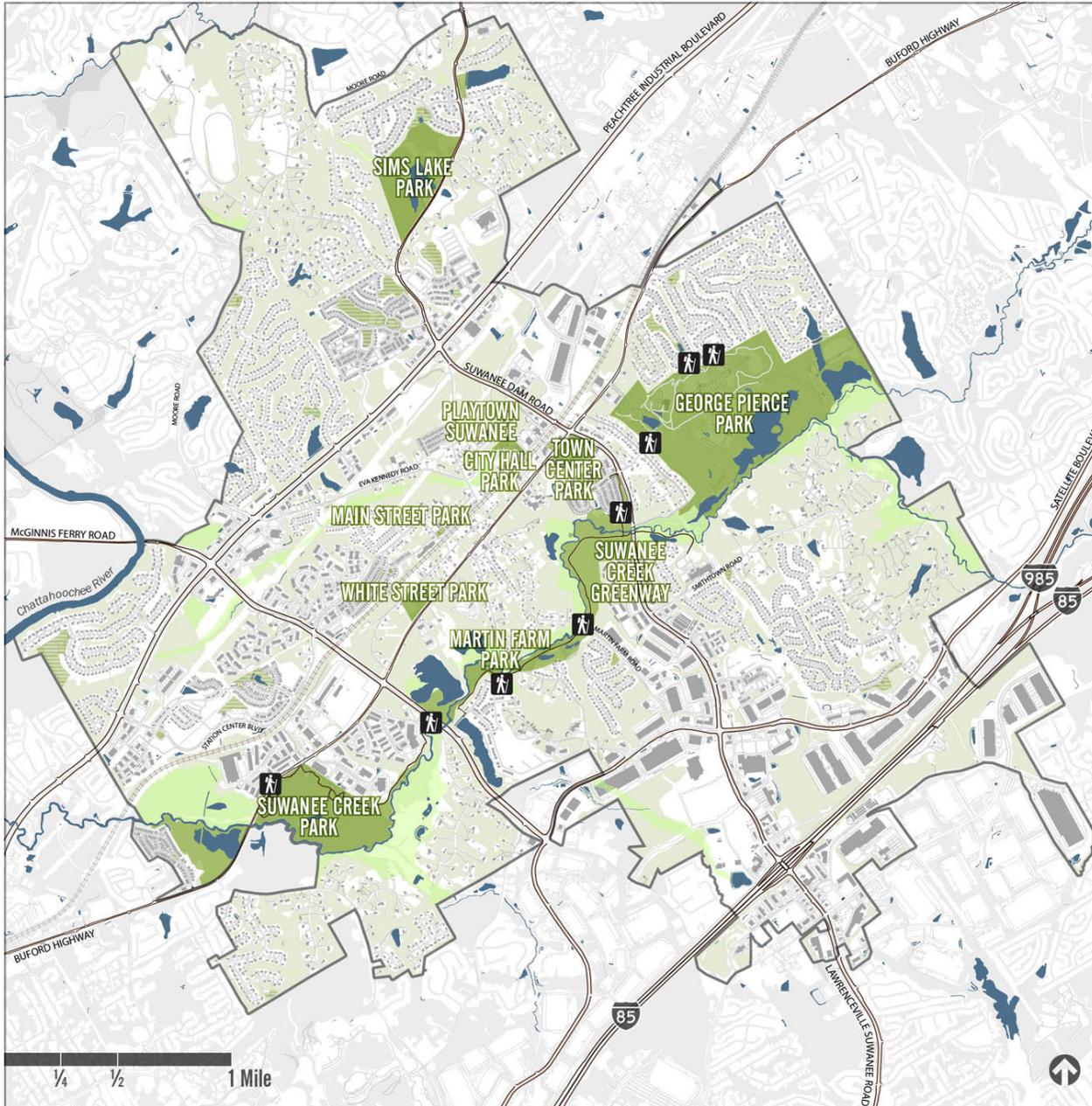


MAJOR ROADS DIVIDE
SUWANEE INTO ENCLAVES

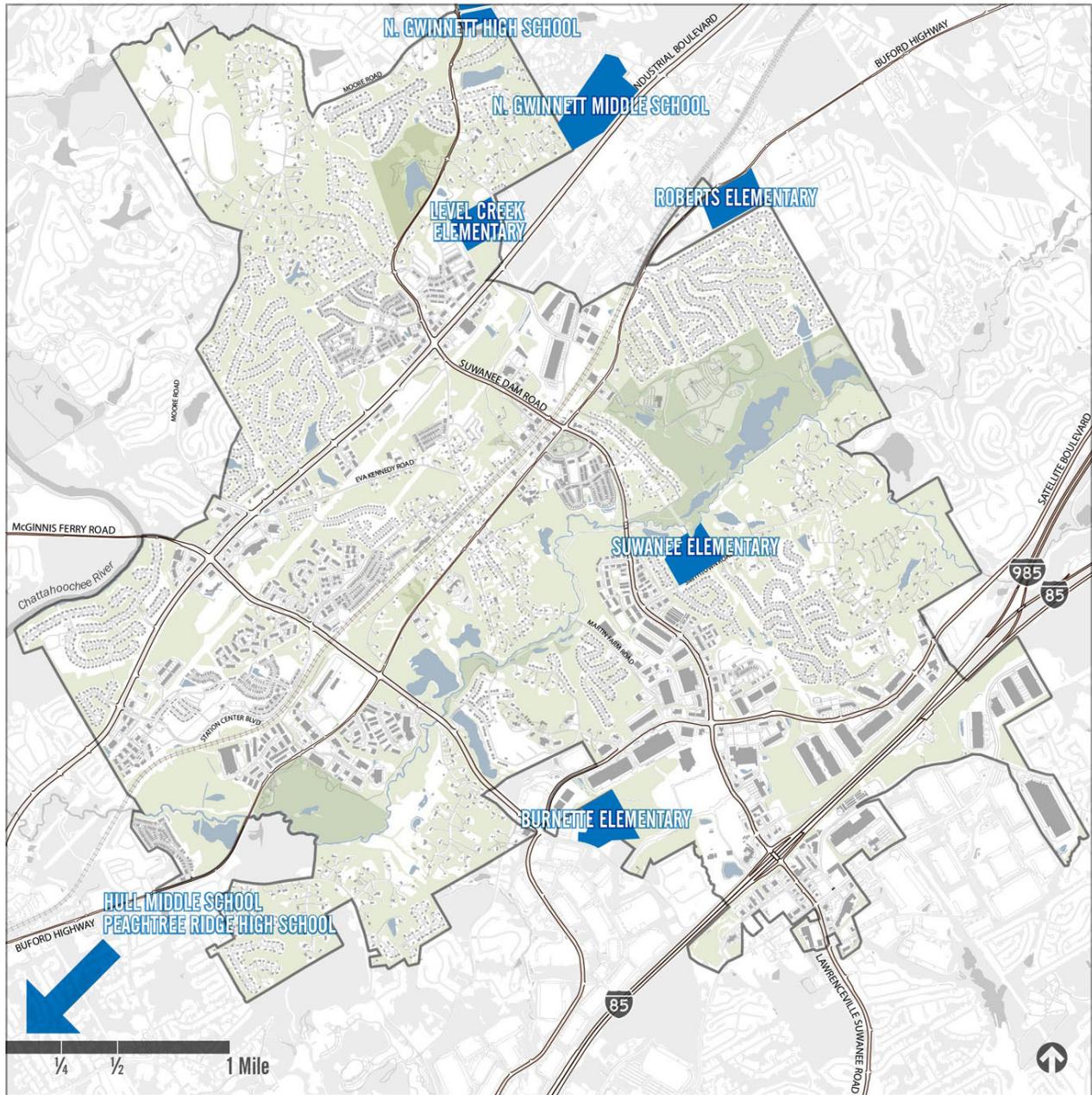
WHERE WE WORK



WHERE WE PLAY



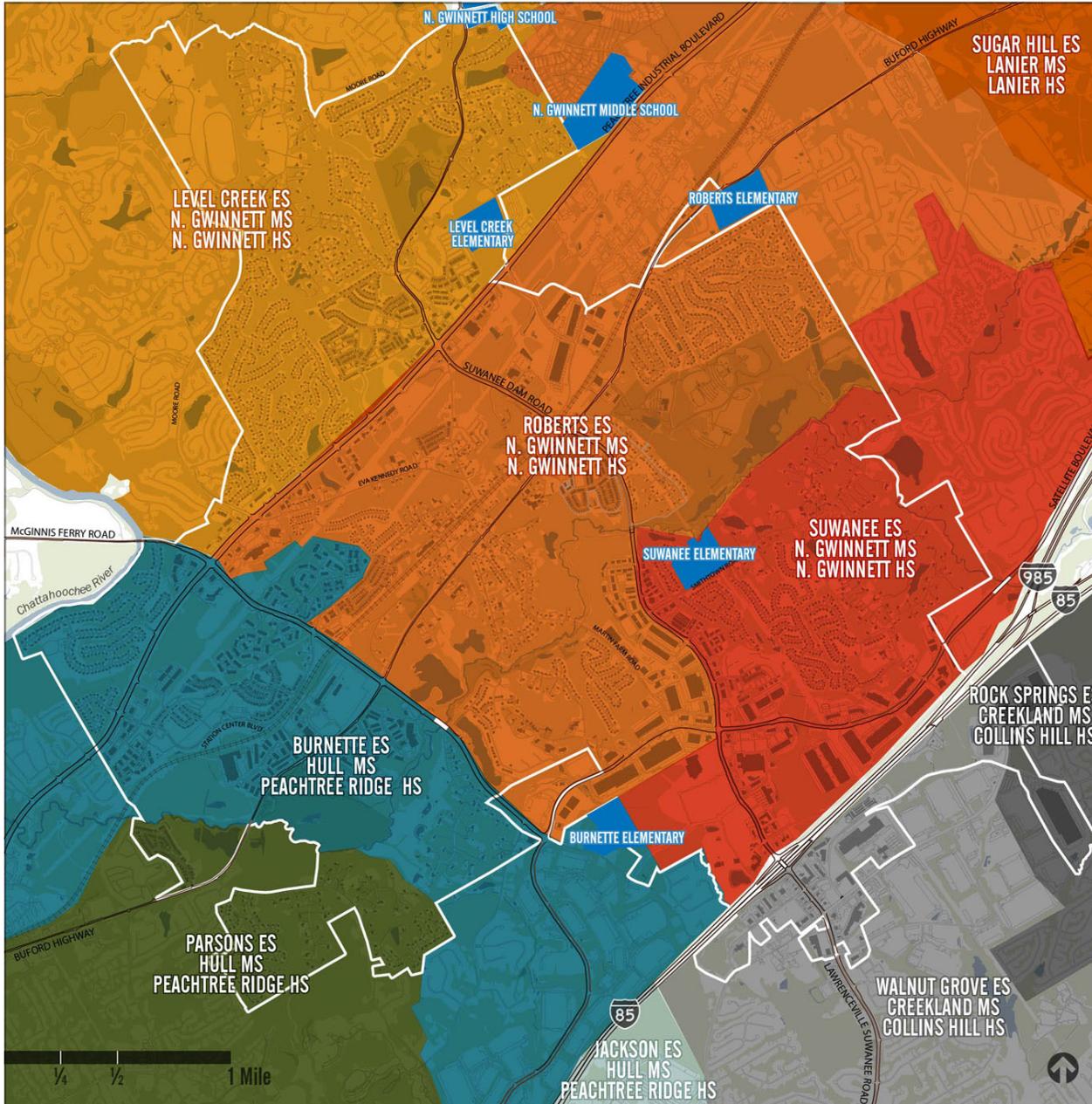
WHERE WE LEARN



■ schools

SOURCE *gwinnett board of education*

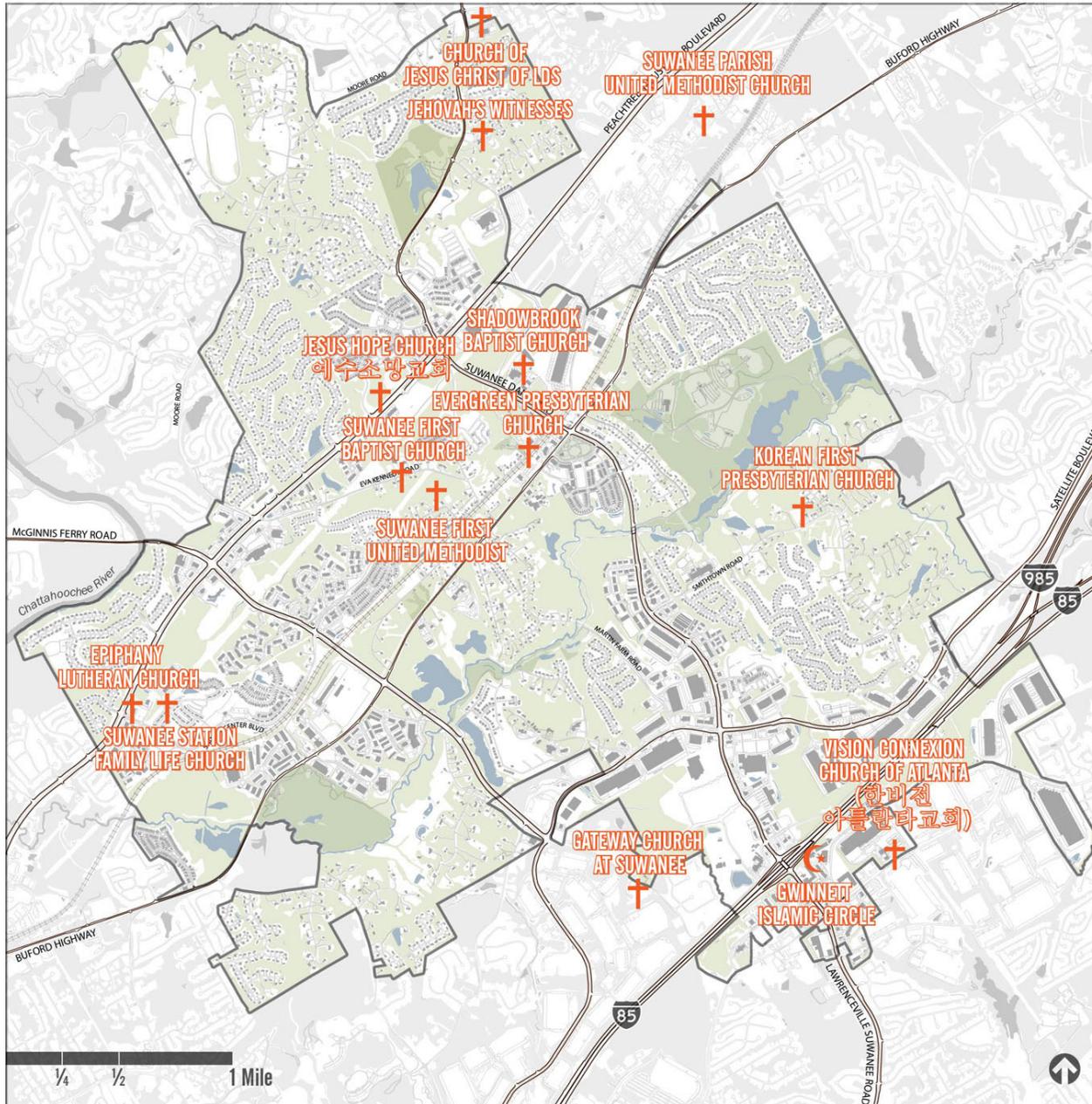
WHERE WE LEARN



 schools

SOURCE *gwinnett board of education*

WHERE WE WORSHIP



This map is intended to show the diversity of religious institutions represented in Suwanee. It is not intended to be an all-inclusive listing of religious institutions.

- † church
- ☪ mosque

SOURCE city of suwanee

PURPOSE OF ANALYSIS

This snapshot has been prepared to review components integral to the City of Suwanee's economy. A diverse group of indicators were collected and analyzed in order to gain an accurate picture of the health of the local economic base for the City. While understanding the quantitative components of the City's economic dynamics is important, it is also valuable to note that the business climate and the actions of the local government are inextricably linked. It is crucial not to forget that qualitative issues do translate into hard dollar cost items for all segments of a community – businesses, residents, government – as well.

Key economic factors have been reviewed for the City of Suwanee, and compared to the Atlanta MSA¹ and nation where appropriate, through six sections in this document.

WORKERS: Information on labor force characteristics, commuting patterns, educational attainment, and age distribution is provided.

JOBS: Characteristics on current employment, employment trends, industry sectors, occupations, employers, and business size are profiled.

MONEY: Data related to income and earnings is reviewed.

COMMERCIAL: Brief overview of local commercial market activity.

FISCAL: Key highlights of local fiscal picture.

MAJOR FINDINGS: Summary of trends and issues for the City of Suwanee.

¹ The Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is made up of 28 counties: Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Haralson, Heard, Henry, Jasper, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton.

WORKERS

LABOR FORCE²

The City of Suwanee's resident labor force totals approximately 9,500, equaling about 64% of the City's total population. The labor force accounted for 67% of the Atlanta MSA's population. By comparison, the nation's labor force accounted for 65% of its total population. While these proportionate differences are not great, they still point to Suwanee's population being in an age range that constitutes a solid local workforce for a community of Suwanee's size.

However, as is common in this day and age, people who live in Suwanee do not necessarily work in Suwanee. Particularly in metro Atlanta, commutes include destinations throughout the area, both near and far. According to Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) information compiled by the US Census Bureau, less than 10% of Suwanee residents work in Suwanee. Interestingly, the residents of Suwanee appear to largely commute to other municipalities within Gwinnett county or areas in North Fulton county. Conversely, it appears that the people that work in Suwanee largely live in nearby municipalities within Gwinnett county.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

As in most places across the nation, and particularly in metro Atlanta, the majority (82%) of Suwanee residents drive alone to work. Approximately five percent of Suwanee residents work from home. Not surprisingly, very few take public transportation or cycle or walk to work.

Approximately 70% of Suwanee residents have commute times of 45 minutes or less. About 40% of these residents have commute times less than 30 minutes, which seems to support commuting to employment in the greater Gwinnett or North Fulton areas. About 30% of Suwanee residents drive more than 45 minutes to get from home to work. The average commute time is 34.3 minutes for residents of Suwanee, which is just above the Atlanta MSA average of 33.2 minutes.

² Labor force is defined here as all persons between 16 and 65 years of age that live in the jurisdiction. This effectively excludes the elderly and children. However, these parameters should be considered cautiously, as many more retirees are remaining active in the workforce.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The City of Suwanee has a highly educated resident population as compared to the nation. Suwanee has fewer residents with less than a high school education and more with a college education. Approximately 21% of Suwanee residents have a high school diploma or lesser level of education, with only two percent having less than a ninth grade education. Nationally, 44% have a high school diploma or less, with six percent having less than a ninth grade education.

Those with some college but no degree account for 19% of the population in Suwanee. For the U.S. as a whole, the figure is 21%. Those with some type of college degree make up approximately 60% of Suwanee's population, but only 35% of the nation's; Suwanee's proportion of college graduates is almost twice the national average. In terms of workers, Suwanee's educational attainment is not quite as high as its residents, but still solid. Approximately 21% of Suwanee's workers have a Bachelor's or more advanced college degree. About 20% of Suwanee's workers have a high school diploma; while about 24% have some college education or an Associate's degree. Slightly less than 10% of Suwanee's workforce has less than a high school education.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

The City of Suwanee is young, with an average age of 32.0, a full five years younger than the national average. This is largely attributable to the considerable proportion of residents under age 18 (34%), which is significantly higher than the national and Atlanta MSA proportions. The other contributing factor for a young population is the small proportion of older folks, with only five percent of Suwanee's residents aged over 65 years, less than half of the national average and about half of the Atlanta MSA proportion.

In terms of workforce, the bulk of Suwanee's workers (61%) are between 30 and 54 years of age. About 26% of workers are aged less than 29 years and 13% of people that work in Suwanee are aged 55 years or older.

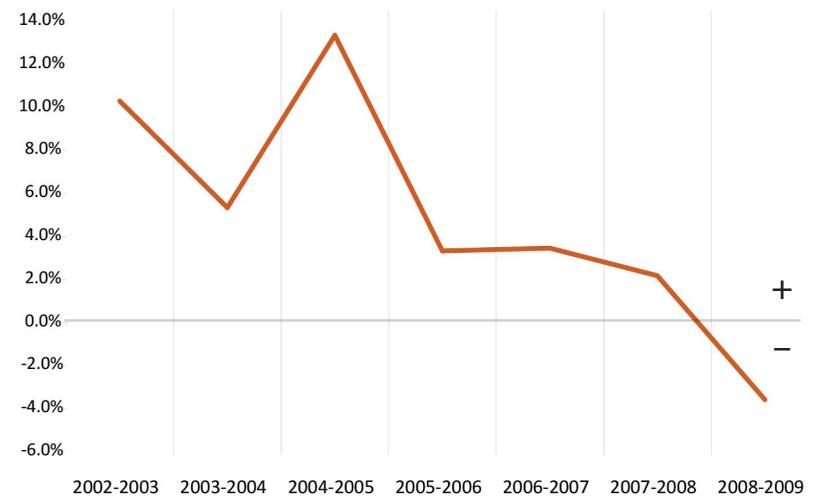
JOBS

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

The total daytime population, or employees, for Suwanee is approximately 9,100.³ This represents only a tiny fraction (0.33%) of the employment base in the Atlanta MSA. Employment in Suwanee has grown significantly since 2000, as the commercial corridors matured in the development cycle and provided more employment opportunities.

Historical data on employment is available from different sources that, unfortunately, has a lag time due to reporting guidelines. While the current year is not available, it is still valuable to consider what has been happening in the City over the last several years. Jobs grew steadily between 2002 and 2008 in Suwanee. The chart below demonstrates year-over-year change to demonstrate annual fluctuations, reflecting mostly incremental increases in more recent years. There was a slight loss between 2008 and 2009, like much of the rest of the country.

ANNUAL CHANGE IN TOTAL JOBS, CITY OF SUWANEE, 2002-2009



source: LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

LOCAL SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

While overall employment numbers are an important economic and social indicator, the types and nature of jobs vary greatly between different regions, and also within regional economies. The chart at right gives a breakdown of employment by category within the City of Suwanee. The largest proportion of jobs is in the Retail Trade sector (17%) and the second-largest job sector is Wholesale Trade (13%). Manufacturing accounts for 10% of total employment. Together, these sectors comprise almost 40% of all jobs in the City. Wholesale Trade and Manufacturing are generally higher-paying, higher-skill jobs, while Retail Trade are generally lower-paying, lower-skill jobs.

In addition to the three largest sectors, there are five sectors that each provide between five and ten percent of jobs, and 12 other sectors provide less than five percent of jobs each. However, given how the statistics are reported, there are eight sectors delineated that, taken together, really make up a “super sector” of Services. When taking these eight sectors together, it points to Services essentially functioning as the largest employment type, with about 40% of the jobs in Suwanee.

Services historically has been a “mixed bag” when it comes to jobs, including restaurant workers to doctors to garbage collectors to teachers to amusement park operators. These sub-sectors are now being delineated individually as stand-alone sectors to gain a better understanding of a local economy’s working parts, as demonstrated in the chart at right.

SECTOR EMPLOYMENT COMPARISON

As depicted in the chart at right, employment by sector for Suwanee varies in some ways from the Atlanta MSA’s⁴ sector employment. The largest percentage of jobs in both Suwanee and metro Atlanta is in the Retail Trade sector; but Suwanee’s percentage at 17% is larger than the MSA percentage of 11%. Suwanee’s proportion of Wholesale Trade employment is double the Atlanta MSA’s proportion. Manufacturing employment’s share in Suwanee is also larger than the metro share.

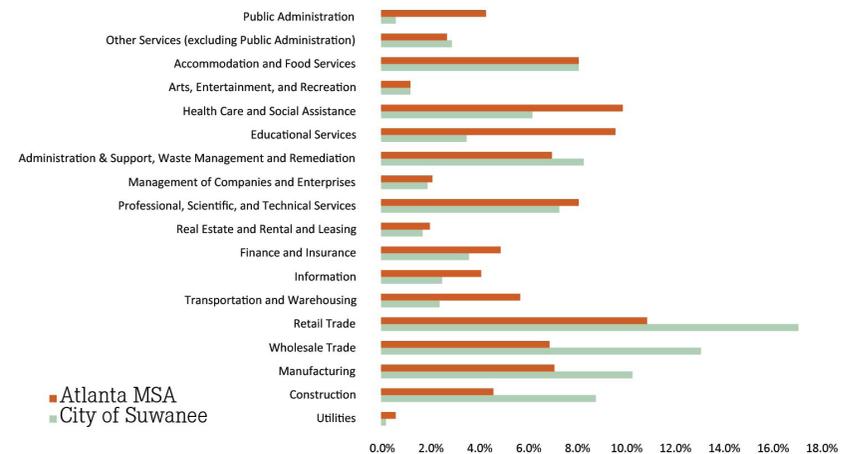
The difference in economic base composition between the City of Suwanee and the Atlanta MSA is also seen in the Services sectors. The Atlanta MSA has larger shares of jobs in these sectors than the City of Suwanee.

4 The Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is made up of 28 counties: Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Haralson, Heard, Henry, Jasper, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton.

SECTOR EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION, CITY OF SUWANEЕ, 2009



SECTOR EMPLOYMENT COMPARISON, CITY OF SUWANEЕ & ATLANTA MSA, 2009



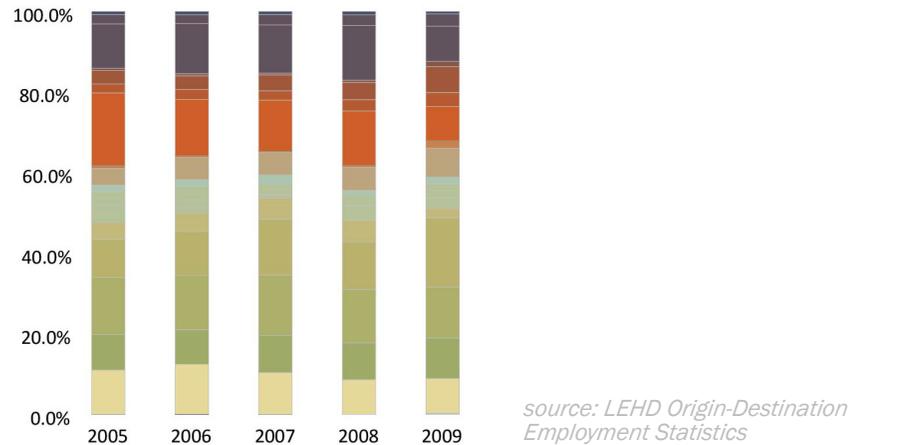
source: LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

SECTOR EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The chart below illustrates the sector employment trends in the City of Suwanee between 2005 and 2009. Over the years considered, most of the sectors have remained relatively stable in terms of proportion in the local economy. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, Management of Companies and Enterprises, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade experienced the most growth over the years reviewed.

Between 2005 and 2009, the following sectors declined most notably, in terms of proportionate share of employment: Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation; Transportation and Warehousing; Information; and Construction.

SECTOR EMPLOYMENT, CITY OF SUWANEE, 2005-2009



- Public Administration
- Other Services (excluding Public Administration)
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (+)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (+)
- Educational Services
- Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation (-)
- Management of Companies and Enterprises (+)
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- Finance and Insurance
- Information (-)
- Transportation and Warehousing (-)
- Retail Trade (+)
- Wholesale Trade
- Manufacturing
- Construction (-)
- Utilities (<1%)
- Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (<1%)
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (<1%)

OCCUPATIONS

The largest occupational categories for workers in the City of Suwanee are:

- > Management (18%);
- > Sales and Sales Related (16%);
- > Office and Administrative Support (10%); and
- > Business and Financial Operations (8%).

Only a few other occupations constitute more than five percent of total employment each, including: Computer/Mathematical, Education/Training/Library, Health Practitioner/Technician.

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

The largest private sector employers in Suwanee, all with over 100 employees, are listed below.

EMPLOYER	# OF JOBS
WalMart Supercenter	313
Maggitt Training Systems	292
Flowers Bakery	190
Mitsubishi Electric Electronics	163
Kroger	153
Quality Technology Services	128
Lowe's	120
Cracker Barrel	109
Blockbuster Textiles	102

source: City of Suwanee business license listing (May 2011)

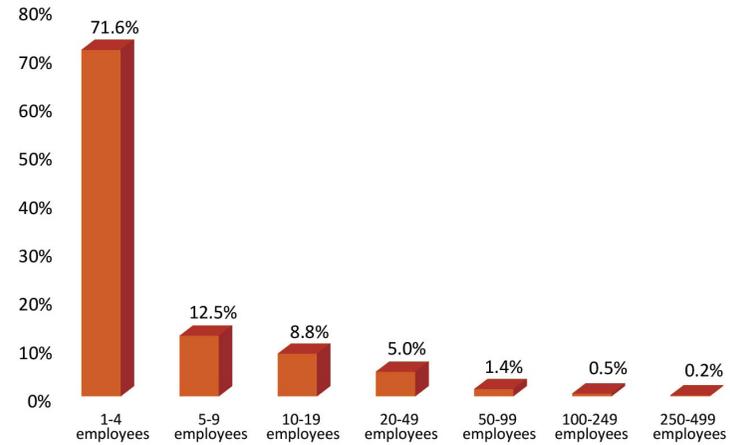
BUSINESS SIZE

BUSINESSES BY EMPLOYEE SIZE

The bulk of the City of Suwanee's employers are small businesses. Almost 85% of Suwanee businesses employ fewer than 10 people, with approximately 70% of those businesses employing fewer than five people. Further, for the most part, as number of employees/size of business increases, the total number of businesses decreases. This can clearly be seen graphically in the chart at right.

Less than one percent of Suwanee businesses employ more than 100 people. Further, the City does not have any businesses that employ more than 500 people.

BUSINESSES BY SIZE, CITY OF SUWANEES, 2011

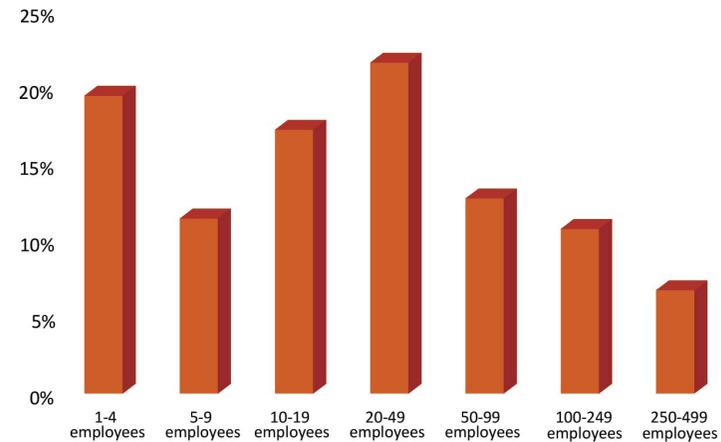


source: City of Suwanee business license listing

EMPLOYEES BY BUSINESS SIZE

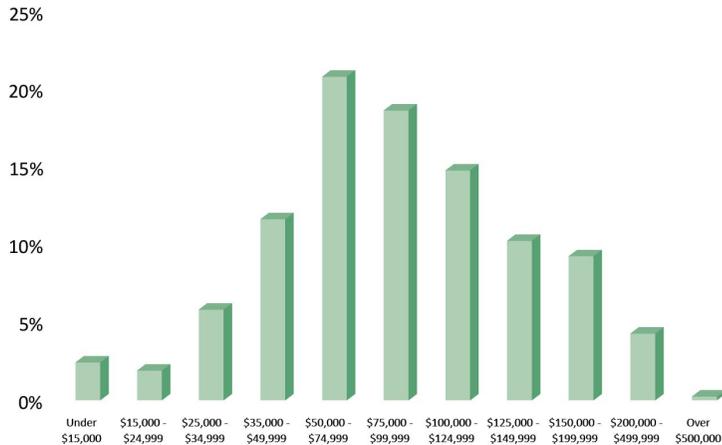
While small businesses clearly dominate in the City of Suwanee, as in most communities across the nation, it is also important to understand how employment is distributed among the businesses. After all, it takes many small businesses to comprise the same total employment as one large company. Approximately 30% of Suwanee workers work in businesses that employ less than 10 people, as seen in the chart at right. Nearly half of Suwanee workers (40%) work in businesses that employ between 10 and 50 people. Just under 20% of Suwanee workers work in businesses that employ more than 100 people.

EMPLOYEES BY SIZE OF EMPLOYER, CITY OF SUWANEES, 2011



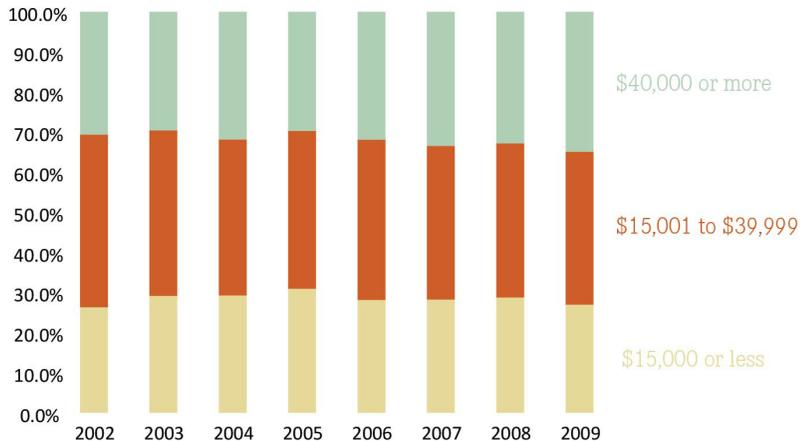
source: City of Suwanee business license listing

HOUSEHOLD INCOME, CITY OF SUWANEЕ, 2011



source: Claritas

JOBS BY EARNINGS, CITY OF SUWANEЕ, 2002-2009



source: LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

MONEY INCOME

SOURCES OF INCOME

Job earnings provide the most significant proportion of income for households in Suwanee. Approximately 10% of Suwanee households receive Social Security at some level and another 10% receive other retirement income sort. About one percent of households in the City receive some sort of public assistance.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Household income levels represent all the sources of income for residents of Suwanee, not just workers. The average household income in the City of Suwanee is high in comparison to the nation and metro Atlanta. Suwanee's average household income is approximately \$98,000 annually; this is 145% of the national average and 129% of the metro Atlanta average.

Almost 40% of Suwanee households have incomes at or above \$100,000, as shown in chart at right. Another approximately 40% have incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Less than five percent of Suwanee households have incomes less than \$25,000.

POVERTY LEVELS

Not surprisingly, the level of poverty in the City of Suwanee is quite low. Families at or below the poverty level account for approximately four percent of all households in the City.

EARNINGS

JOBS BY EARNINGS

Earnings represent the job-related income for workers in Suwanee, not residents. The detail available for worker-related data is limited. It also suffers from lag time due to reporting guidelines, but it is still worthwhile to examine. In the City of Suwanee, there is a relatively even distribution between the major earnings levels of less than \$15,000, between \$15,000 and \$40,000, and \$40,000 or more, as illustrated in chart at left. Two of the three categories in 2009 were almost on par with one another, with between \$15,000 and \$40,000 at 38% and \$40,000 or more at 35%. Approximately 27% of jobs in Suwanee paid less than \$15,000 in 2009.

Between 2002 and 2009, Suwanee lost about 8% of jobs that paid less than \$15,000. During that same timeframe, jobs that paid between \$15,000 and \$40,000 remained relatively static, with a change of just two percent. However, over the course of those seven years, the jobs paying more than \$40,000 increased by 24%.

COMMERCIAL

Commercial uses in a community include retail, office, and industrial. These uses should be viewed separately, as they each contribute to a community in very distinct ways. Retail is essentially a use for residents, meaning it provides goods and services to residents as consumers. While it does provide employment, its greater benefit for a community is really for resident convenience and activities. Office and industrial uses make more of a contribution for employment, either for workers directly in a community, or located nearby.

Office and industrial uses also usually make a greater contribution to the local tax base than retail uses.

RETAIL

Overall, retail is not performing well market-wise in Suwanee, as is the case in much of metro Atlanta. Retail within Suwanee's Town Center is performing the best in the City market-wise. Anchorless strip center retail in the City is suffering the most market-wise.

OFFICE

Overall, office is not performing well market-wise in Suwanee. There is not much office clustering occurring in the City, which usually strengthens office market performance. There are office uses interspersed with industrial along Satellite Boulevard, and much of that is performing satisfactorily. The strongest contender for office location currently is likely Town Center area because of services and amenities.

INDUSTRIAL

Overall, industrial is performing pretty well market-wise in Suwanee. There is a strong concentration of flex space, which is a combination of office and industrial; usually a front office space with back office, warehousing/distribution, or manufacturing as well. Satellite Boulevard is where the existing concentration of industrial and flex space is located.

FISCAL

Overall, the City of Suwanee has a balanced and diversified tax base. In fact, the City's bond rating was upgraded from AA- to AA, which is especially notable in a time when many municipalities' credit ratings are being downgraded. However, there are some possible areas for improvement in the tax base structure as well. Key selected positives and potential negatives about the City of Suwanee's overall fiscal picture, based on the adopted FY 2012 budget, are listed below.

POSITIVES

- > Relative balance between property taxes (45%) and other sources of revenues (55%).
- > Close proportions among residential (20%) and commercial (25%) property tax revenues.
- > Diversified revenue stream, with inclusion of resilient resource of franchise fee payments related to utilities.
- > Strong strategic leveraging of outside funds for alternative revenue sources, such as SPLOST and grants.

NEGATIVES

- > Hotel/Motel tax revenue has decreased steadily over last few years. This tax – largely borne by non-residents – could be a more significant source of revenue (currently 1%) with location along I-85.
- > While greenspace is a highly valued asset by residents, much of the open space in the City is heavily programmed and amenitized, producing higher costs to service.
- > Decrease in revenues from building permits and property taxes. However, this is attributable to the national housing collapse and resulting commercial downturn, not any Suwanee-specific actions.
- > Small proportion of property tax assessed values from industrial uses (5%) in comparison to residential (40%) and commercial (49%). The remaining 6% of assessed value is comprised of motor vehicle, agricultural, utility, and conservation.

MAJOR FINDINGS: TRENDS & ISSUES

As with any community, the results and conclusions of this Economic Snapshot are mixed for the City of Suwanee. Since community capacity and business climate are really the accumulated sum of numerous individual factors, any individual shortcomings can result in a negative perception of the community. Conversely, strengths and assets can be leveraged to establish a positive reality, and thus, project a more positive image of the community.

Overall, the City of Suwanee has strong positives in relation to types of jobs and business size. However, there are notable negatives in relation to size of job base, not leveraging talented residential base as workforce, and relatively static employment base.

The decision before Suwanee now in terms of economic base viability and vitality is essentially about the type of community that is desired. Suwanee can remain a predominately residential/bedroom community with businesses that primarily serve residents or it can move towards a more diversified and robust local economy enabling people to both live and work in the City.

If Suwanee does want to grow its job base, it will have to target and work to build upon the foundation of higher-paying, higher skill jobs that have been growing incrementally in recent years. The City's quality of life and demographic profile are significant assets to leverage. However, to succeed and compete in this global environment, economic and community development efforts in Suwanee will need to be focused and proactive.

(+) POSITIVE

- + Steady growth in jobs
- + Strong proportion of jobs in higher-paying, higher skill jobs
 - + Majority of small-sized employers
 - + Solid earnings levels for workers
- + Impressive growth in higher-paying jobs
- + Industrial performing well market-wise
 - + Balanced & diversified tax base

(-) NEGATIVE

- Slow growth in jobs
 - Small job base
- Most residents commute elsewhere for work
- Largest single employment sector is generally comprised by lower-paying, lower skill jobs
- No significant shifts in sector employment proportions in recent years
 - Retail & office uses not performing well market-wise
- Declines in non-resident tax revenues

THANK YOU!

please sign here



Continue the
Dead World Day

Rob Sumner I LIKE TURTLES
Missi Jaerling
Hey you! I love Suwanee!
Lived here my whole life!
-Lindaguyen

Don & Cat
Kerry
Cia Roth
Stephen Hoban
Ai Len
Christine Soler

Jan & Barbara
Davi

Suwanee is tops!
Carol Kessler

Bernice
Bumari

Alissa
Swanna
Soler
Wanna
Selen

Elain Hooper
I love Suwanee!
Abie Smith
Card van Dyck

William
Christine

Maife
Amy Nina &
Everett
Hatte Williams
Robert
Cathy

John
4/11
John
5/30

Jason
Amy
me same
Suwanee!

Ada
Resale Tube
IQ Suwanee

David
I love Suwanee!

Victoria
Lexi
B.P. 5

Soledad
Taylor
Diana

Kristin
Robinson
Sophia
MARTIN

I Love
SWANEY

Stella
Anthony

Hannah
Zachary
Sarah
Peter

Kennora
I love SUWANEE!
INCREIBLE!

Carin
The Suwanee
Greenway
is terrific

Denise
The Irwin Family
Jake, Kerri
and Abby
Scott
Daren
Chamberlain
& Smith

Hope
Strom
Hans
Muller
I love SUWANEE

Dan
Leatz
Kristi
Bruster
Photography

Hope
Lybeer
Derek
& Kerri
Griffin

