athens-clarke county

CORRIDOR STUDY

OAK STREET & OCONEE STREET

February 2, 2012

Prepared by the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department

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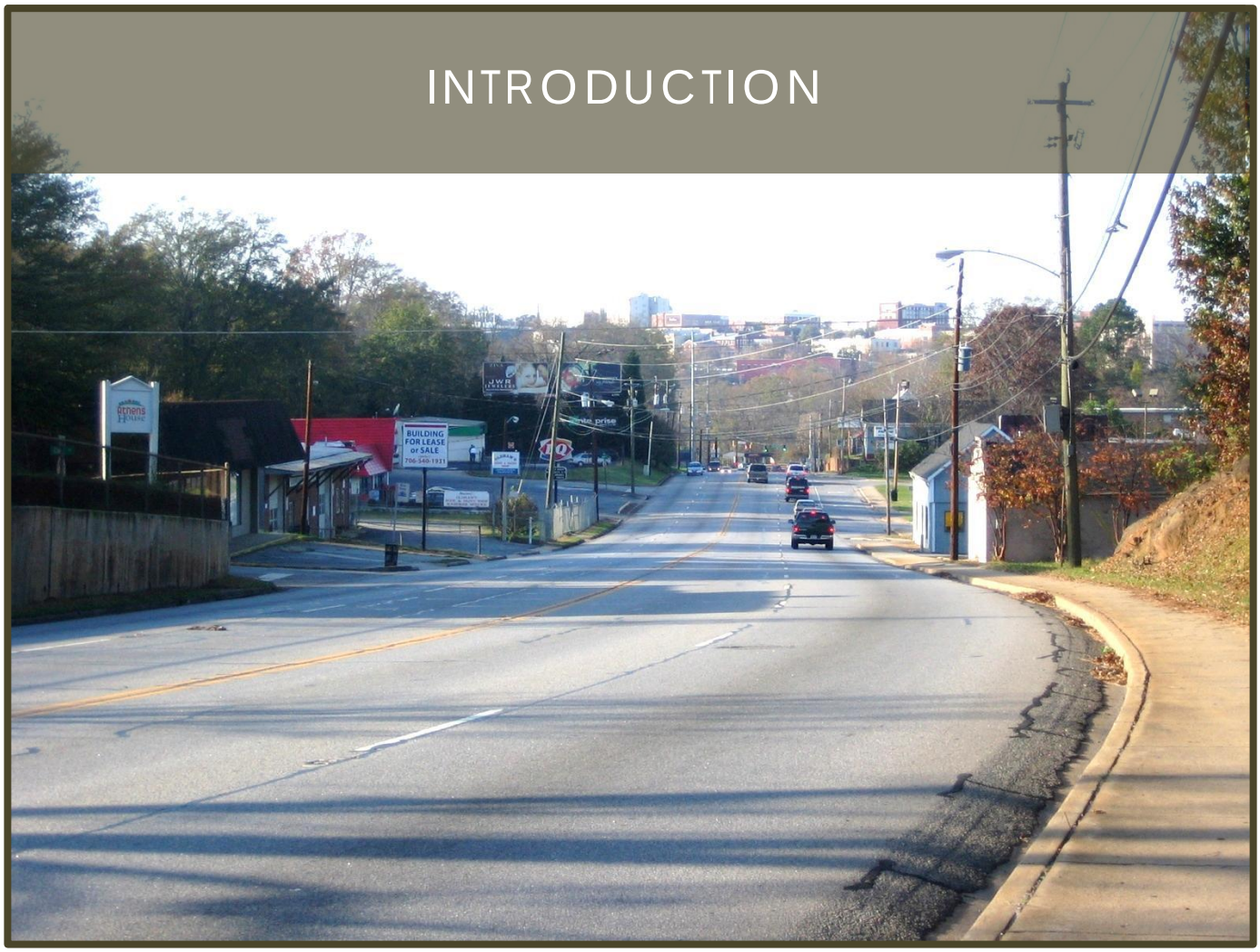
INTRODUCTION



A. Project Origination, Delegation, Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this planning study is to evaluate unique local conditions that affect both the function and appeal of the Oak Street and Oconee Street area – one of Athens-Clarke County's most significant community corridors. The term "corridor" underscores an attention to both the thoroughfare and the land that surrounds it, as the entwined relationship between land use and transportation merits a coordinated consideration. The studies make recommendations to guide the development of public policies - regulatory and incentive-based - designed to enhance and conserve the future quality of these corridors.

A.1 Background / Overview

In late 2008, the Mayor and Commission of Athens-Clarke County requested that the Planning Department conduct corridor studies for two primary gateway corridors leading into downtown Athens: Prince Avenue and Oak/Oconee Streets.

Prince Avenue, which extends westward from the northwest corner of Downtown Athens to the SR10 Loop, and Oak/Oconee Street, which extends eastward from the southeast corner of Downtown Athens to the SR10 Loop, are two significant urban corridors within Athens-Clarke County. Together, the Prince Avenue and Oak/Oconee Street Corridors are at a stage in their histories to mutually benefit from a coordinated approach to transportation planning. Both corridors are facing significant development pressures in the near term. The inevitable growth in these areas needs to be guided by programs and policies designed to produce future sustainable residential and commercial development and to protect natural and cultural resources. The goal of the Prince Avenue Corridor Study and the Oak/Oconee

Street Corridor Study is to provide a base for growth management policies and programs to address current and future transportation needs and guide appropriate development along these corridors.

The Planning Department began these studies by evaluating existing conditions along each corridor and also by revisiting the results of previous smaller-scale planning efforts (including those developed in 2004 by CAPPA - a Community Approach to Planning Prince Avenue) in order to assemble a list of initial observations and recommendations.

Terminal boundaries were established where each corridor intersects Loop 10 and the downtown grid, incorporating a depth of one block on either side of the corridor into the study area. During the initial inventory, Planning Staff oversaw students from two undergraduate design classes from the University of Georgia Landscape Architecture program. These students prepared field surveys of several corridor features: building heights, materials, fenestration, land use, lighting, signage, parking, driveways, sidewalks, etc. Planning Staff presented this base inventory along with information about pertinent regulations, studies and proposals affecting the corridors at a public hearing in April 2009. A community input survey collected feedback at this meeting and an online survey was available over the ensuing months.

Staff reviewed the public input and began to further analyze the corridors in nine specific areas that evolved as organizing elements as a result of public input and staff observations:

- Demographics
- Land Use
- Protection of Resources
- Stormwater Management
- Development Form
- Right-of-Way Design
- Transportation
- Parking
- Lighting & Signage

These elements have become the main “chapters” of each study and are specifically defined below in Section II - Project Overview. They will be referred to as “Areas of Focus” throughout the studies.

A.2 Community Collaboration

One of the intended outcomes of the Master Planning process for the identified corridors is to organize support from the institutions, businesses, property owners and residents located within each corridor study area.

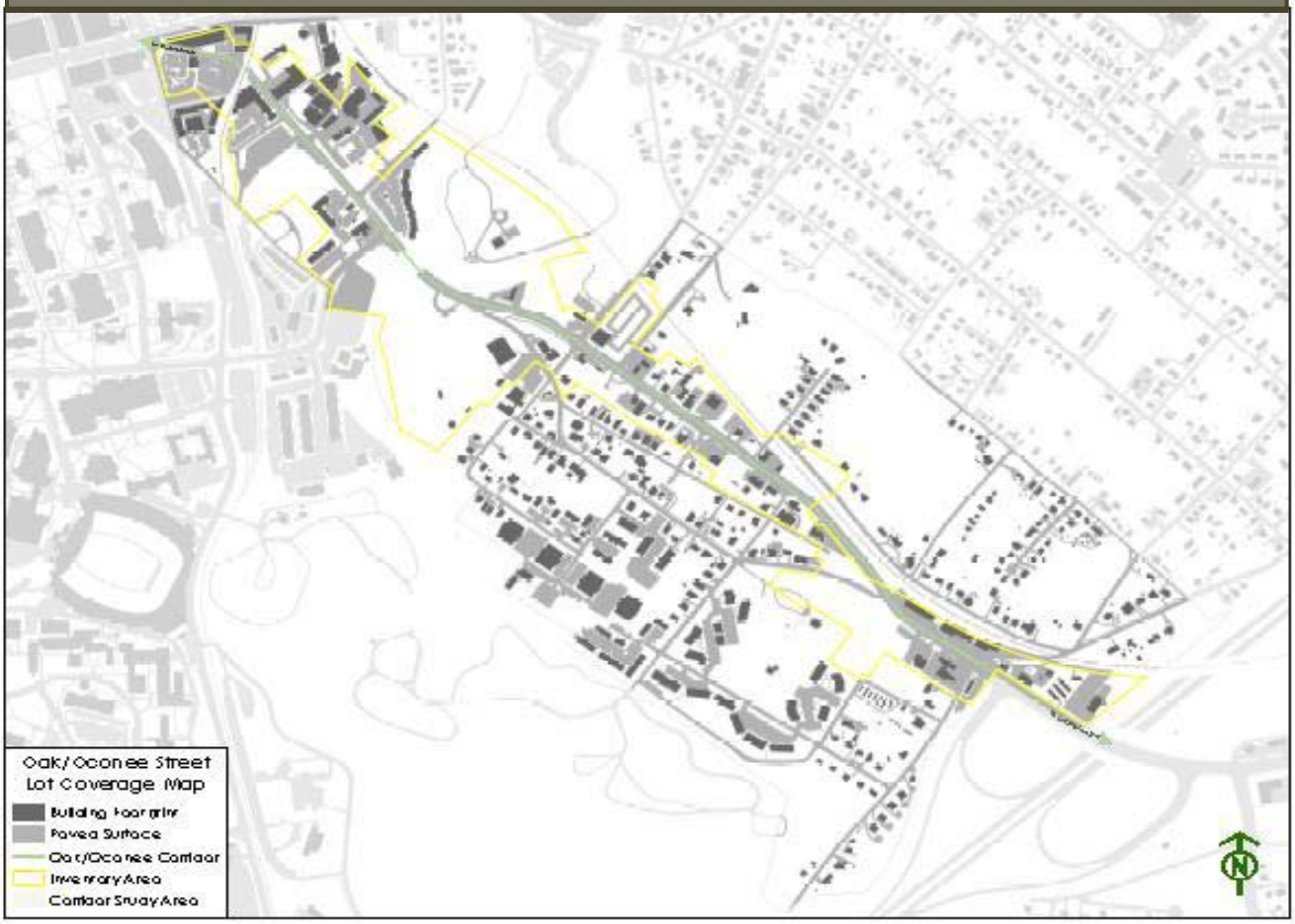
The Oak/Oconee Street study planning partners include:

- ACTION, Inc.
- Athens-Clarke County Unified Government (Planning Department; Transportation & Public Works Department; Public Utilities Department; Central Services Department; Transit Department)
- Carr’s Hill Neighborhood area residents
- East Athens Development Corp.
- East Athens Neighborhood area residents
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)
- Several private businesses, including offices, restaurants, and other retail establishments
- The University of Georgia

By actively engaging these institutions, businesses, property owners and residents directly in the preparation of these Corridor Studies, the results of each study will be comprehensive and equitably developed. In so doing, it is hoped that broad-based support for the implementation of the subsequent work elements will be readily available.

Such support will need to take many forms in order for the goal of the Corridor Studies to be realized, including financial support when appropriate.

PROJECT OVERVIEW



A. Boundaries of Study Area

Oconee Street exits Downtown Athens from the southeast and transitions to Oak Street after crossing the North Oconee River. This roadway parallels the former railbed of the Georgia Railroad. It is flanked by the historic Carr's Hill neighborhood on the south and the collective East Athens area on the north. Substantial redevelopment potential exists along this entire corridor. An ongoing rails-to-trails initiative is underway on the former CSX railway railbed that lies to the immediate north of this corridor.

The Oak/Oconee Street study area boundaries include an area one block deep directly along the corridor from the intersection with Broad Street, east to the intersection with the Athens Perimeter. The parcels within this one block deep area are the main focus of the study, however, the inventory process included surrounding parcels and data was recorded for significant features not located directly on the corridor.

B. Review Process

The corridor study review process began with the development of the nine Areas of Focus (as defined in Section B.2). Specific corridor elements were inventoried within each Area of Focus (as described in Section B.3), and existing conditions along the corridor and within immediately adjacent neighborhoods were recorded. The inventory findings were analyzed and specific character areas were identified along

the corridors, mainly determined by the existing development form. Successful areas, areas of concern and areas of potential growth were identified within these character areas, and potential recommendations and strategies for improvement have been proposed based on the analysis.

B.1 Initial Task List & Current Status

The initial task list developed for the studies and the current status of each task is as follows:

1. Identify inventory needs.
2. Inventory existing conditions.
3. Identify distinct sub-areas or segments along each corridor.
4. Develop goal- or objective-oriented observations of specific strengths and areas of concern for entire corridor and for distinct sub-areas, drawing upon existing resources, public input, and planning staff impressions.
5. Analyze data and inventory information to provide support for or against observations.
6. Draft preliminary findings that include potential strategies, policies, regulations, and/or additional studies to accomplish the goals & objectives identified in the observations.
7. Develop supportive graphics, diagrams, and mapping to illustrate findings and recommendations.
8. Refine, modify, add and/or eliminate preliminary observations, analysis, and findings in response to input from elected officials, Planning Commission and the public.
9. Draft a three-tier implementation schedule [(short-range 0-3 years), mid-range (3-5 years), and long-term (5-10 years)] for recommended policies, regulations, and/or additional studies.

B.2 Areas of Focus

The following nine areas evolved as organizing elements of the corridor studies after reviewing public input and staff observations. These elements have become the main "chapters" of each study and are specifically defined below.

1. Demographics
   The Demographics section describes various population characteristics of Athens-Clarke County's residents, workers and businesses. When available, data for these characteristics was assembled for the particular corridor area being studied, as well as those of comparison areas to aid in the analysis. Primarily collected by federal agencies such the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, demographic information covers a range of topics including population characteristics, household demographics, employment status, commuting patterns, geographic distribution, and other relevant statistics.

   The demographics section references U.S. Census data information. If 2010 Census data was available at the time of the study, that data was used. Otherwise, the most recent available Census data was referenced.

2. Land Use
   This section examines the existing land uses along each corridor and how they relate to surrounding uses, current zoning and development standards, and the recommendations for future land use approved in 2008 as part of the adopted Athens-Clarke County and The City of Winterville Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use section takes a broad view of the current and future uses along the corridor. Several of the comments and strategies mentioned are related to land use, but they are covered in further detail in another section when appropriate (parking, for instance).

3. Protection of Resources
   Historic Districts and Landmarks, Cultural Assets and Environmental Resources within the study areas are examined in this section. These existing resources play an integral role in the community perception, commercial success, and aesthetic appeal of a corridor and should be

considered carefully when making recommendations pertaining to development form, right-of-way design, and general development standards.

4. Stormwater Management
   Stormwater management facilities have the ability to either enhance or challenge development along a corridor, especially if the topography is such that the stormwater facility must be located adjacent to the right-of-way. Our development codes should guide the arrangement of buildings, parking, landscaping, stormwater management facilities and other utilities so that the intended development form can be achieved in a cost-effective and aesthetically pleasing manner. When these elements are not considered equally during site planning, stormwater management can become an afterthought, resulting in constructed facilities that are not consistent with desired development forms.

5. Development Form
   A brief history of the corridor is described in the Protection of Resources section, helping to explain how development progressed through time, resulting in the forms we see today. This section examines the existing development form and formulates potential strategies for either balancing valued existing conditions along the corridor with development forms permitted by current zoning, or for encouraging new development along the corridor in unsuccessful areas, depending on the nature of existing development.

6. Right-of-Way Design
   Corridor elements that are located within the publically-owned right-of-way, such as crosswalks, sidewalks and utilities are discussed in this section. Topics covered also include travel and turn lane configuration, right-of-way ownership and maintenance, and driveway configuration.

7. Transportation
   This section reviews the various transportation modes utilized along a corridor: personal vehicle, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian. Connectivity with other existing transportation routes is explored, as well as safety separation between incompatible users such as pedestrians and vehicles.

8. Parking
   The Parking section analyzes existing conditions and existing code requirements and examines the potential for shared parking lots, access drives and structured parking. Design standards for parking lots are discussed, including vegetative screening and location of parking areas in relation to the right-of-way and building placement.

9. Lighting & Signage
   Athens-Clarke County adopted the most recent sign ordinance in 2005 and a lighting ordinance in 2009. Both of these ordinances have been successful tools, helping to guide signage size and placement and to regulate light intensity and trespass. The placement and size of signage and the placement and quality of light can either impair or greatly augment the visual experience along a corridor for all types of corridor users. This section identifies areas of potential improvement for lighting and signage.

B.3 Description of Review Categories

Content for each Area of Focus is divided into three main categories, as follows:

1. Observation
   This category includes information gleaned during the inventory process. It contains data from previous studies along the corridor, applicable Vision Statements, Issues and Opportunities from the Comprehensive Plan, relevant responses from the public survey taken in 2009 and

general comments and observations made by Staff prior to a full analysis of the field data. The topics covered in the Observation category are fairly consistent throughout the Areas of Focus.

2. Analysis
   Topics covered during the Analysis phase vary per Area of Focus. For instance, the Analysis category in the Parking section explores "Shared Parking & Access Drives" and "Landscaping & Materials". The Analysis category in the "Protection of Resources" section communicates information regarding "Cultural Assets" and "Greenspaces". During Analysis, Staff studied the data gathered during the Observation phase and came to some general conclusions about the condition of various aspects of the corridors.

3. Potential Strategies
   The strategies and recommendations proposed for the Areas of Focus vary from specific, smaller scale development guidelines (such as recommendations for landscape buffers in certain areas) to larger scale modifications of overall corridor zoning (such as a recommendation for a zoning overlay in which ground floor residential is permitted within a commercial zone). Several of the recommendations call for further study regarding an item in order to justify a potential initiative.

C. Summary of Initial Findings

After completion of the initial analysis period, collection of additional data, and review of related local studies and planning documents, Planning Staff developed a set of preliminary observations and conclusions, described below. These were refined and developed into potential strategies and organized according to generalized timeframes suggested for implementation. These Strategies are organized into Short-Term (0-36 months), Mid-Term (3-5 years), and Long Range (5+ years) implementation categories.

General Strategies based on Observations & Conclusions

Short-Term

1. Development of a "residential transition" buffer or overlay area at the rear of the corridors' dual frontage parcels would provide incentives and protections for more compatible transitions between commercial development and residential neighborhoods, including the allowance of ground floor residential in this area when developed following specific design criteria. Accessory dwelling units, residential above commercial, and medium density residential uses are three separate density strategies that may be appropriate in different areas of the corridor.
2. Rezoning portions of Oak Street from Commercial General to Commercial Neighborhood would better align zoning with Future Development Map. Examples of uses that would no longer be permitted include commercial parking lots, commercial outdoor recreation (Tailgate Station's use category), auto sales, self-storage, and construction material sales. Drive-through uses would require a Special Use permit. Retail and office uses would be limited to 10,000 sq. ft. per lot, with up to 30,000 sq. ft. permitted for grocery use.
3. Likely redevelopment along Oconee Street between Downtown Athens and the North Oconee River underscores the need for a detailed, master streetscape plan along this segment that coordinates utility placement under wide sidewalks, street tree plantings and planters, retaining walls, improved crosswalk design, and other pedestrian amenities such as appropriately scaled lighting and signage.
4. Required minimum parking standards should be relaxed in order to encourage flexible commercial use of small tenant spaces as these units tend to serve neighborhood-oriented local business that generate a higher ratio of pedestrian, cyclist and transit trips.
5. A new zoning category, "Commercial-Neighborhood Established" proposed as part of the Prince Avenue Corridor Study may also prove applicable to portions of Oak and Oconee Streets to more

closely align development regulations—both for form and use—with existing resources and community growth goals

6. Future modifications to the Oak and Oconee Street corridor to improve its multi-modal functionality may warrant the reconsideration of local control of right-of-way from Milledge Avenue to the 10 Loop.

Mid-Term

7. Conduct traffic circulation analysis for the corridor. Such analysis may result in lane configuration changes, signalization changes, operational intersection improvements, and enhanced pedestrian facilities including mid-block crosswalks.
8. Assess performance and usage of the Park and Ride Lot planned for construction near the intersection of Oak Street and Grove Street adjacent to the 10 Loop interchange. Consider construction of future phases associated with the Oconee Street Park and Ride Lot master plan.
9. The Airport Overlay and concerns regarding the compatibility of infill housing construction in East Athens and Carr's Hill pose two significant challenges for increasing density on this central corridor. A corridor-specific approach to the development of model infill plans should focus specifically on reconciling airport authority concerns and the unique conditions of the corridor with density goals. Increases in transit frequency and neighborhood-oriented and scaled businesses both require greater residential densities to sustain these services.
10. Consider the creation of a Conservation District or Local Historic Designations designed to protect the historically noteworthy structures and evidence of the corridor's past. In addition to the St. Mary's Steeple, the former CSX trestle ("Murmur trestle"), and 19th century mill structures, the study area also has other historic resources such as the foundation walls of the former cotton warehouses and the Carr's Hill neighborhood.
11. Establish stronger Greenspace connections. A positive attribute of the Oak/Oconee corridor is its proximity to the Greenway and Dudley Park. Despite this proximity, connections to these greenspaces are not highly perceptible. Enhanced wayfinding and a variety of potential landscape design interventions would improve access to this use from the corridor.
12. Accommodate bike routes along, across, and/or through the Study Area.
13. Develop a program for installing street trees along the corridor, and for protecting and enhancing areas with existing trees.
14. Existing corridor conditions merit the exploration of "stormwater overlays" that may include design guidelines for facilities along streets, an incentive program for retrofitting properties, Low Impact Development design criteria, and development of regional stormwater facilities.

Long Range

15. Coordinate with major employers such as the University of Georgia to maximize housing opportunities for employees in corridor neighborhoods, similar to "Live Near Your Work" programs in the states of Maryland and Delaware and the city of Minneapolis.
16. Future North Oconee River-Oconee Street bridge improvements should include ample sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure. Particularly with the sidewalk design, greenway connections and wayfinding devices should be prioritized.
17. A combination of creative financial strategies ranging from Business Improvement Districts to tax incentives to specific implementation funding sources (e.g. grants, Federal and/or State programs, etc.) needs to be developed in order to incentivize private sector participation supporting the redevelopment of the corridor.

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Refer to Section II.B.2 for a brief overview of the Areas of Focus listed below.
Refer to Section II.B.3 for a summary of the review categories covered under each Area of Focus.

A. Demographics

Where people live and work, how and where they recreate, the kinds of jobs they have and how they flow into and out of Athens-Clarke County all have a direct impact on the character of the corridors in our community. Because decisions about planning initiatives affect human interests and activities, demographic and economic data are collected and studied as part of the planning decision-making process. The Demographics section describes various population characteristics of Athens-Clarke County's residents, workers and businesses, those characteristics of the particular corridor areas under study, as well as those of comparison areas to aid in the analysis. Primarily collected by the federal agencies such the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, demographic information covers a range of topics including population size, sex, age composition, household characteristics, geographic distribution, and other relevant statistics.

A.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan & Other Relevant Studies

Issues:

1. The community lacks workforce development coordination between employment and training and needs a substantial increase in moderate income jobs.

2. Athens-Clarke County needs to conduct periodic analyses and assessments of housing. Perform periodic renter/home ownership survey—rents, new home prices, resale values, condos vs. real property, etc.
3. Athens-Clarke County needs to increase the percentage of owner-occupied housing.
4. Athens-Clarke County needs to enable aging-in-place and protect residents from the negative effects of gentrification. Athens-Clarke County should review taxing mechanisms and other policies to address gentrification.

Opportunities:

1. We will preserve our diverse population by encouraging a mixture of housing types and uses.
2. Sustainable development should achieve a balance that satisfies the community's housing, recreational, educational, commercial, and industrial needs.

Policies:

1. Promote opportunities for Athens-Clarke County to assist local small businesses and entrepreneurs through programs such as the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Opportunity Zone program and other redevelopment strategies such as Tax Allocation Districts.
2. Investigate standards whereby accessory dwelling units may be integrated with owner occupied housing in Single Family (RS) zones.
3. A mix of housing types, including workforce and life-cycle housing, will be encouraged.
4. Athens-Clarke County will support higher densities in urban areas.
5. Support development in areas currently served by public facilities.
6. Identify goals and ideal percentages for development types that will ensure balance and economic viability.

<u>Community Corridor Survey Input</u>

1. Local businesses targeting local, neighborhood clientele are repeatedly expressed as desirable
2. Homeless population a concern along Oak/Oconee corridor
3. Student-targeted residential construction a concern along Oak/Oconee corridor because perceived as cheap, poor-quality, energy-inefficient

<u>Staff Comments</u>

1. Establishing an accurate picture of the corridors' demographic characteristics may be helpful in demonstrating latent demand for (or excess supply of) specific uses, markets or types of development, as well as for transportation options along and adjacent to the corridors.
2. High rates of residential mobility along and adjacent to the corridors relative to other areas of Athens-Clarke County may indicate target areas for educational marketing materials related to community services and codes.
3. An examination of housing density, as well as the variety of housing and occupancy types, may reveal trends that support or deter the attainment of corridor goals. As a preliminary note of concern, Staff questions whether the housing densities typical of neighborhoods surrounding the corridor are sufficient to support frequent transit service or diverse, neighborhood-scaled retail sales and services. Increasing density in order to support these and other often cited compact, "walkable-community" growth goals presents a number of transportation, urban design, and architectural compatibility challenges.
4. A review of the employment sectors concentrated on the corridor may provide insight into commute times, employment opportunities, and corridor-specific business growth targets.
5. Demographic information regarding typical commute durations and methods may reveal useful alternative transportation and live-work proximity information about corridor neighborhoods

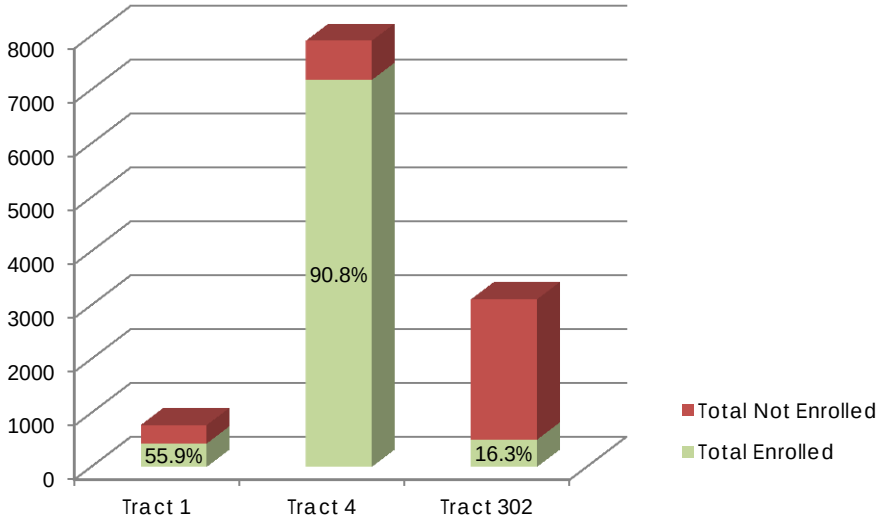
relative to the larger area and region. With two of ACC's largest employers (UGA and ARMC) located on or at the terminus of both corridors, conflicting commute priorities within the community and region are evident from the community input about future modal improvements. This demographic information should support both the modal travel and right-of-way design analyses.

6. Census Tracts 1 (Downtown), 4 (mostly UGA), and 302 (Carr's Hill and East Athens) are the finest grained geographies to analyze corridor-specific demographics.

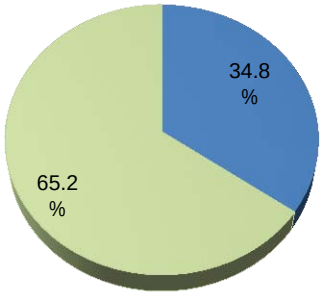
A.2 Analysis

Population Characteristics

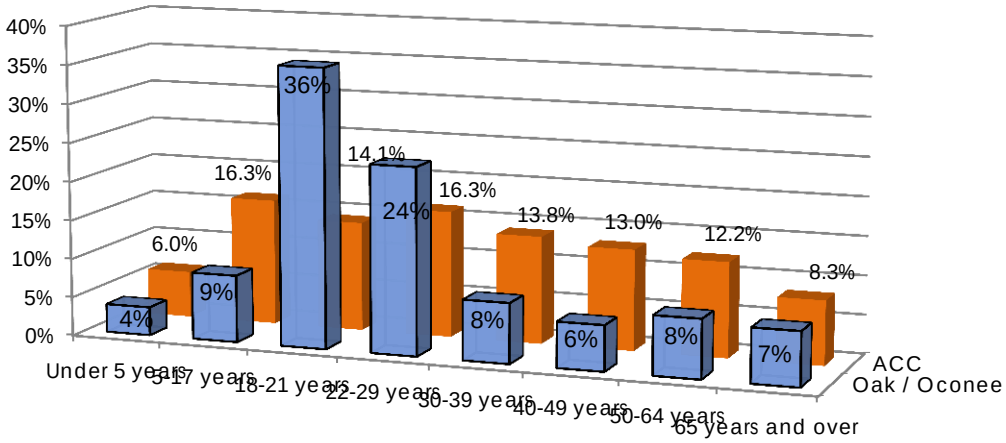
2000 College Enrollment: Population 18 Years and Older

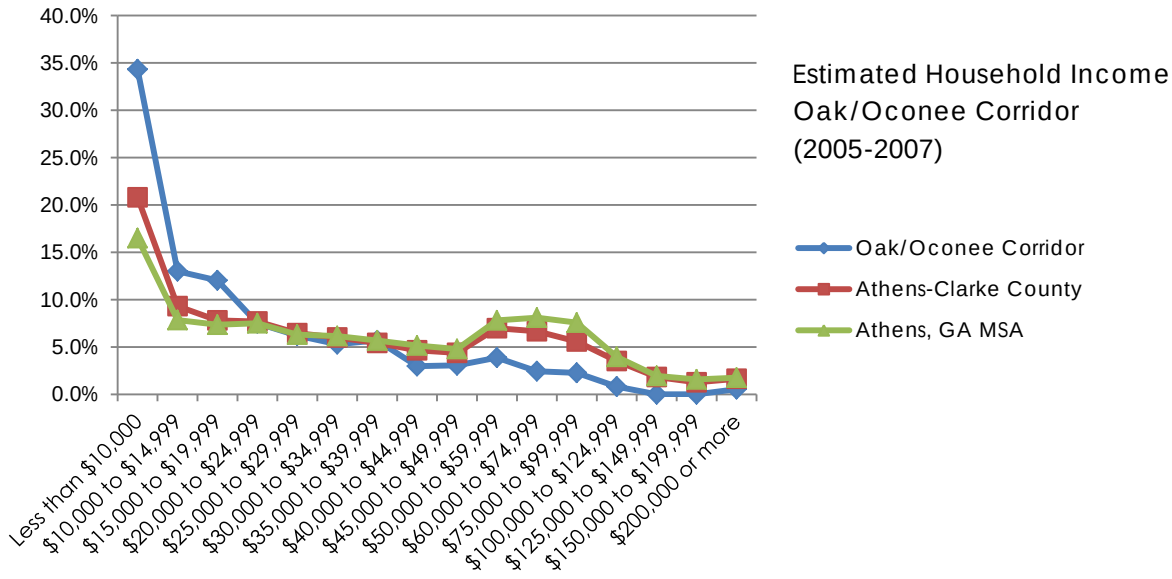


Overall Enrollment in ACC



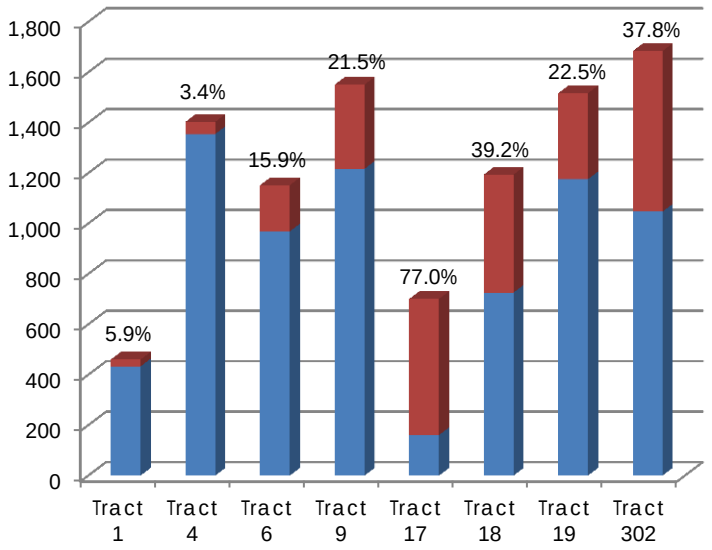
Age Distribution: Oak/Oconee Corridor 2006

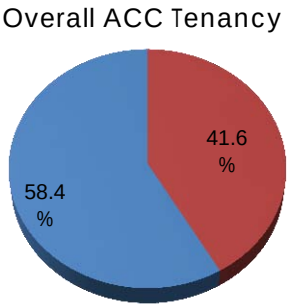




The comparative household income data for the Oak/Oconee Street study area (see above) brings additional clarity to the need for assistance in marshaling resources for this corridor and the neighborhoods that it supports. Approximately 60% of the households in this study area have annual incomes of less than $20,000 – almost twice the number of households earning $20,000 or less within the MSA. Furthermore, the number of households in the study area with incomes of $60,000 or more is approximately half of that for Athens-Clarke County and the MSA.

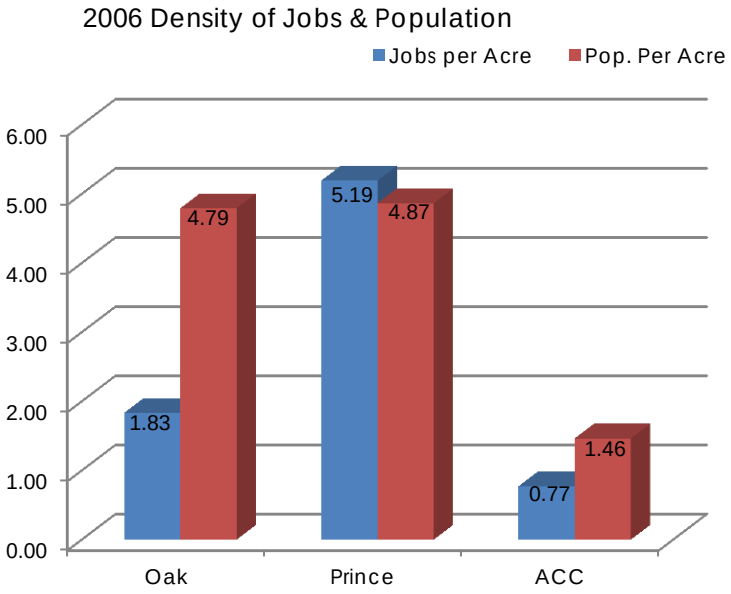
Housing Characteristics

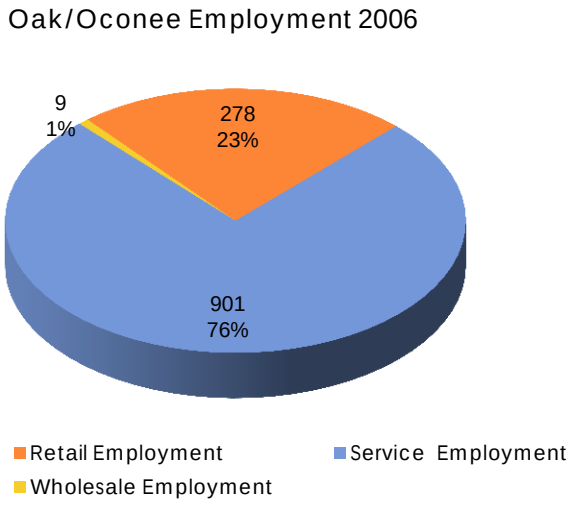




CORRIDOR DENSITY (2000 US Census)	Tract 1 BG 1	Tract 4 BG 1	Tract 302 BG 1	Tract 302 BG 2	Tract 302 BG 3	TOTALS
Area (Land) (acre)	215.72	907.50	244.64	397.52	460.65	2226.03
Area (Land) (square mile)	0.337	1.418	0.382	0.621	0.720	3.48
Population Count (100%)	819	8209	994	1097	2226	13345
Housing Count (100%)	508	1490	559	468	809	3834
Gross Housing Density (units/acre)	2.35	1.64	2.28	1.18	1.76	1.72
Population Density (persons/sq. mile)	2,429.85	5,789.28	2,600.35	1,766.15	3,092.69	3836.79

Employment Characteristics





Top Occupations in 2000 for Residents of Oak/Oconee Corridor Census Tracts (out of 33 categories):

1 Office and administrative support occupations	14.7%
2 Education, training, and library occupations	12.5%
3 Food preparation and serving related occupations	11.5%
4 Sales and related occupations	10.4%
5 Production occupations	7.7%

Top Occupations in 2000 for Residents of Oak/Oconee Corridor: Without Tract 4 (mostly UGA)

1 Production occupations	14.6%
2 Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	10.5%
3 Food preparation and serving related occupations	10.4%
4 Office and administrative support occupations	10.0%
5 Education, training, and library occupations	8.1%

Density Thresholds for Support of Growth Goals

1. Thresholds for supporting neighborhood retail—Rutgers University Model
   a. Research suggests that densities of seven units per acre or higher are needed to support a small corner store; a small supermarket requires 18 units per acre.[1]
2. Thresholds for transit
   a. A minimum level of local bus service (20 daily bus trips in each direction or one bus per hour) is often provided in residential areas averaging 4 to 5 dwelling units per acre. Typically, these residential densities correspond to gross population densities of 3,000 to 4,000 people per square mile. This level of bus service is suitable for non-residential concentrations of activities in the range of 5 to 8 million square feet of floorspace, occasionally lower. An intermediate level of local bus service (40 daily bus trips in each direction or one bus every 1/2 hour) is often provided in residential areas averaging 7 dwelling units per acre (5,000 to 6,000 people per square mile) and for nonresidential concentrations of activities from 8 to 20 million square feet. A frequent level of local bus service (120 daily bus trips in each direction or one bus every ten minutes) is often provided in residential areas averaging 15 dwellings per acre (8,000 to 10,000 people per square mile) and for non-residential concentrations of activities from 20 to 50 million square feet. [2]
   b. The density measurement of 6,400 persons per square mile is equal to 10 persons per acre gross. That density can be suitable for an intermediate level of public transit service (1 bus every half hour) under present-day conditions and assumptions.[3]
   c. Higher employment densities facilitate the delivery of transit services as well. Generally, the threshold for local bus service is 50 to 60 employees per acre.[4]

[1] *Designing for Transit: A Manual for Integrating Public Transportation and Land Development in the San Diego Metropolitan Area. July 1993.*
[2] Institute of Traffic Engineers (1989), *A Toolbox for Alleviating Traffic Congestion*, p. 93
[3] Hess et al. (2001) *Measuring Land Use Patterns for Transportation Research*
[4] http://www.lotma.org/livcomm.pdf

A.3 Potential Strategies

Increasing Density: Jobs, Housing, Population

1. Continue to support opportunities for increased density, both in the resident and employment populations. Accessory dwelling units, residential above commercial, and medium density residential use buffers between corridor commercial uses and existing neighborhood residences are three separate density strategies that may be appropriate in different areas of the corridor.
2. The Airport Overlay and concerns regarding the compatibility of infill housing construction in East Athens and Carr's Hill pose two significant challenges for increasing density on this central corridor. A corridor-specific approach to the development of model infill plans should focus specifically on reconciling airport authority concerns and the unique conditions of the corridor with density goals.

Employment

1. Support the growth of small and neighborhood-oriented businesses that can employ nearby residents and generate walking, biking and transit trips along the community.
    a. Allow minimum parking reductions or eliminations for qualifying businesses (based upon maximum tenant square footage and/or the implementation of transportation demand management strategies.
2. Incentivize employer clean commute reward programs.
3. Coordinate with major employers such as the University of Georgia to maximize housing opportunities for employees in corridor neighborhoods, similar to Live Near Your Work programs in the states of Maryland and Delaware and the city of Minneapolis.

B. Land Use

B.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan & Other Relevant Studies

Issues:

1. Athens-Clarke County zoning and development regulations encourage mixed-use, neo-traditional development patterns; however, new construction and redevelopment projects too often fail to meet these standards fully.

Opportunities:

1. Athens-Clarke County is the regional center for health services.
2. Athens is recognized internationally as a center for music, visual, film and performing arts and has a growing cultural industry.
3. Public Open Space creation and tree canopy preservation will be a major priority within our neighborhoods, along our streets, parking lots and within commercial and industrial developments.
4. The quality of life in Athens-Clarke County could be improved with additional park land.

Policies:

1. Promote opportunities for Athens-Clarke County to assist local small businesses and entrepreneurs through programs such as the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Opportunity Zone program and other redevelopment strategies such as Tax Allocation Districts.
2. Promote and support the vitality and growth of the Athens-Clarke County health care industry.
3. Continue to encourage the development of Downtown and other neighborhood arts districts.
4. Athens-Clarke County will support higher densities in urban areas. Identify goals and ideal percentages for development types that will ensure balance and economic viability. Investigate lower minimum parking-space requirements.
5. Create and support a system of pocket parks, linear parks and public squares and greens.
6. The Athens-Clarke County government should create a committee of urban church representatives and officials in charge of public buildings and parking to create innovative ways to share space for uses that operate on different days / hours.

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. Eclectic development on the corridor lends itself to Athens' unique character and charm
2. Local businesses targeting local, neighborhood clientele are repeatedly expressed as desirable by respondents
3. 24-hour gas station-convenience store is a valued use
4. Dudley Park and the Greenway are repeatedly identified as positive uses
5. More green spaces are a priority
6. Adaptive reuse of Hodgson Oil is an asset
7. Auto-centric uses and game day parking are expressed as negative characteristics
8. Connection to river and greenway use should be strengthened
9. Homeless camp sites detract from the corridor and perception of safety
10. Respondents highlighted difficulty crossing the corridor as a challenge for businesses

Staff Comments

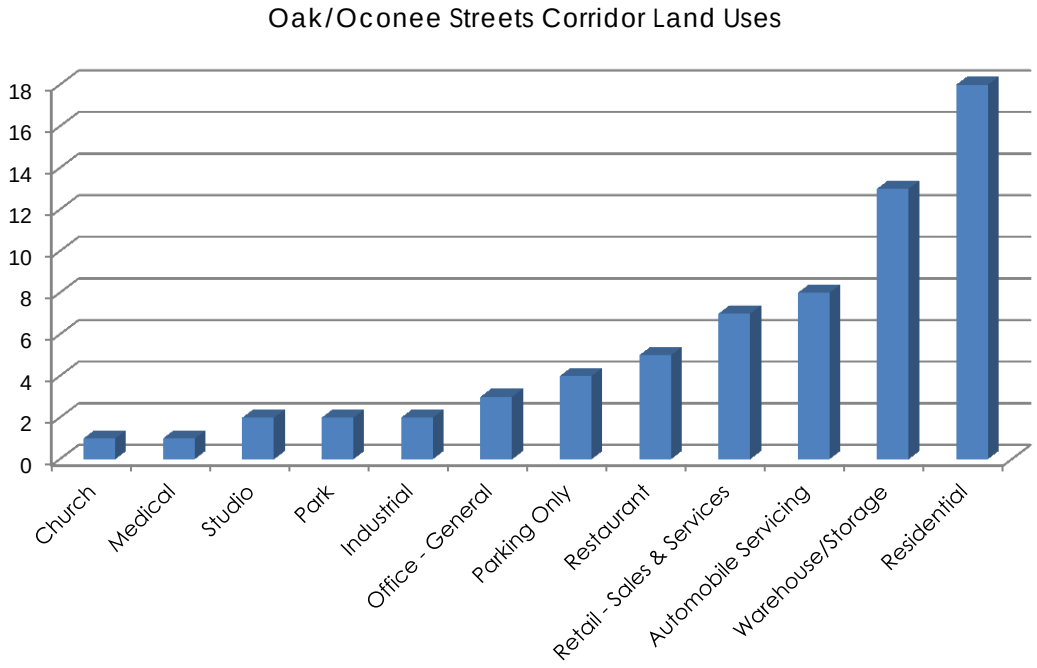
1. The current zoning square footage restrictions on particular uses may not provide the best tool for shaping future development along the corridor in a manner that is consistent with both the Future Development Map and the observations cited above from numerous sources.
2. Differences in the permitted uses among the Commercial zones should be evaluated in light of use preferences for the corridor in general and in light of the Future Development Map character areas' descriptions.
3. Flexible use of available tenant spaces or buildings ripe for "adaptive reuse" may be stifled by parking requirements specific to each new potential use.
4. Viable, mutually supportive neighborhood commercial nodes or activity centers require better corridor pedestrian crossings.
5. Auto-oriented uses and vacant parcels dominate a significant portion of the Oak/Oconee streetscape, creating a challenging pedestrian atmosphere. The introduction of a variety of new uses to create a more active streetscape is desirable.
6. Neighborhood- and recreation-oriented new uses may draw support from the additional foot and bike traffic to be generated by the planned rail-trail segment between Loop 10 and the multi-modal center downtown. Restaurants, general retail, and bike & skate shops are all examples of business that typically support and are supported by greenways, parks and other adjacent recreation areas.
7. Oak and Oconee Streets have a significant asset in the park use along the North Oconee River, but visual and physical connections to this asset are limited. Opportunities for

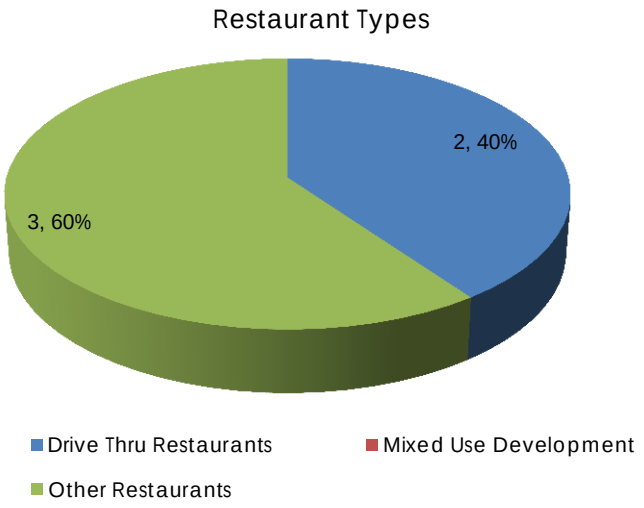
establishing a stronger connection via additional “green” linkages should be explored. The rail-trail will likely provide one such opportunity.

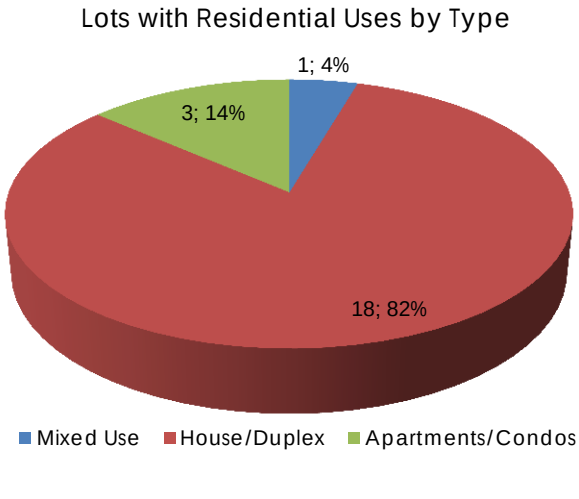
8. Greater housing density may well be critical to supporting several community goals including viable additional neighborhood-oriented uses and more frequent or expanded transit options. Greater housing density will also likely contribute to greater traffic congestion along the corridor, depending on the resident market as well as site locations and designs.

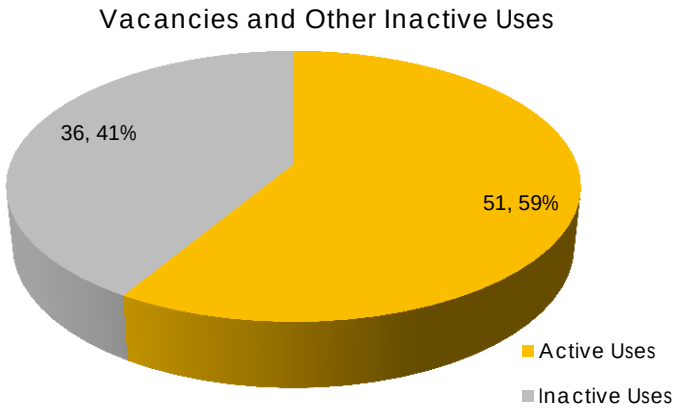
B.2 Analysis

Existing Conditions









B.3 Potential Strategies

Zoning: Commercial-Neighborhood (C-N)

1. Rezone all Commercial-General (C-G) properties (see map) east of the North Oconee River within the study area to C-N in order to foster uses that better reflect the corridor's Main Street Business Future Development Map designation. Rezoning parcels or blocks to bring them into conformity with their Future Development Map designation is identified as a Short Term Work Program item of the Community Agenda.
2. Examples of uses that would no longer be permitted under the C-N zone include commercial parking lots, commercial outdoor recreation (Tailgate Station's use category), auto sales, self-storage, and construction material sales. Drive-through uses would require a Special Use permit. Retail and office uses would be limited to 10,000 sq. ft. per lot, with up to 30,000 sq. ft. permitted for grocery uses.

Zoning: Overlay

Staff recommends an overlay zoning for the Oak / Oconee Corridor as follows:

1. Ground Floor Residential Uses
   a. Ground floor residential forms such as attached townhomes or detached single-family should be allowed as a corridor commercial-neighborhood buffer.
   b. Should be permitted without a Special Use (if outside Airport Overlay) in the proposed residential transitional buffer area and when screened from the corridor by commercial uses on the same lot.
   c. Specific design standards should be developed to address orientation, access, garage or surface parking placement, etc.
   d. An analysis of existing housing density in light of retail market thresholds and transit-supportive thresholds should be prepared to better inform other policy concerns regarding housing and transit along the corridor.
2. Auto Service Uses (Vehicle Repair, Quick Vehicle Serving, Convenience Store)
   a. The zoning definitions of and distinctions between these uses should be revisited for better clarity and simplicity.
   b. All such uses should be appropriate for neighborhood commercial areas but they should be limited in size (both building and vehicle storage areas) and buffered well. To this end, all yards adjacent to public rights-of-way should be screened with an evergreen hedge, dense landscaping, and/or decorative masonry walls whenever one of these uses is introduced. Excessive driveway widths or inappropriately sited curb cuts should also be remedied prior to the introduction of such uses at a pre-developed site.

3. Parking and Use Flexibility
    a. Staff is concerned with the potential negative impact of excessive parking lots and structures on the built environment of the corridor and its capacity to grow both “green” and “walkable”.
    b. While areas dedicated to parking (especially for larger-scaled uses) are not typically driven by zoning minimums but rather by private prerogatives, more flexibility in required parking minimums may be particularly useful for the smaller-scale uses repeatedly identified as desirable. Staff suggests permitting a 1000’ distance for off-site, shared parking (a distance just under ¼ mile or a typical 5 minute walk). Staff suggests eliminating required vehicular parking for introduction of commercial/retail uses smaller than 1800 sq. ft. These modifications will likely increase on-street parking, both on the corridor and along neighboring side streets, a positive trend for the establishment of pedestrian, walking environments but one in which treatment of illegal yellow curb or sidewalk parking requires strict enforcement.
    c. Current ordinances permit the placement of parking in front of certain uses. Within the proposed Overlay, no uses should be exempt from the front-yard parking prohibition as uses may change but the built form remains.

<u>Neighborhood Grocery & Other Small-Scale Local Businesses</u>

1. The only grocery on the corridor is currently located near SR10 Loop, a convenience store developed in conjunction with a gas station. Parking recommendations noted above to eliminate vehicular parking requirements for retail/commercial uses under 1800 sq. ft. within the proposed Overlay should aid in the reuse of small, existing structures for the introduction of additional neighborhood-focused small business and/or local grocery options.
2. Larger-scale neighborhood groceries often locate where a license for alcohol package sales may be issued. As UGA considers development of property along Oconee Street, the potential for a larger-scale grocer in the area north of Oconee Street (the Armstrong & Dobbs properties) may be limited by the expanding campus. Nonetheless the area may otherwise provide a suitable location for an urban grocery, accessible via the planned rail-trail corridor as well as the Multi-Modal Station. Communication between UGA, ADDA and ACC Departments will be critical for fully exploring the use possibilities for this area.

<u>Mixed-Use Incentives</u>

1. Increased Development Allowance
    a. While Staff has recommended downzoning C-G properties to C-N, the decrease in permitted density, height, and FAR should be re-instated to C-G allowances within a potential overlay area for vertically integrated mixed-use projects that include residential uses. The maximum permitted height on C-N zoned properties is proposed to be reduced to 50’ (refer to the Development Form Section for more details). The increased mixed use development allowances would thus allow an increase in height from 50’ to 65’, in FAR from .75 to 1.5 and in bedroom density from 16 per acre to 24 per acre. The increase in development intensity is limited to those areas of the development outside the proposed residential transition buffer area. (The “residential transitional buffer area” allows for ground floor residential uses in specific areas on properties zoned CNE. This buffer is further defined in the Development Form section.)
2. Minimum Parking Reductions
    a. Offer the option of a 50% reduction in overall required parking for residential-commercial (50-50) mixed use developments within the proposed overlay, where demonstrated as feasible.
3. Building Code Modifications
    a. Restrictive state building codes may hinder some mixed-use development with overly burdensome separation requirements for newly constructed mixed-use or live-work

developments. Communication and coordination with state officials/legislative delegation to redress these obstacles may help to eliminate disincentives.

Greenspaces & Plaza Spaces

1. Amend Plaza Requirements
   a. Current plaza requirements reference five design elements but only four are defined. Three of the five design elements are required in order to count a proposed plaza towards a required Floor Area Ratio. Staff suggests defining the fifth design element as "public access via a clear pedestrian connection from the right-of-way".
2. Establish Better Greenspace Connections
   a. A positive attribute of the Oak/Oconee corridor is its proximity to the Greenway and Dudley Park. Despite this proximity, connections to these greenspaces are not highly perceptible. For example, the Greenway sign on Poplar Street is currently not visible from the corridor except in the winter as it is blocked by landscaping. As these trees mature, visibility should improve but enhanced wayfinding and a variety of potential landscape design interventions would improve access to this use from the corridor.
   b. *Long Term Strategy*: Future North Oconee River-Oconee Street bridge improvements should include ample sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure. Particularly with the sidewalk design, greenway connections and wayfinding devices should be prioritized.
3. Pursue Semi-Public Greenspace Potential
   a. One such opportunity for a semi-public park and/or bike-pedestrian connection between Carr's Hill and East Campus Road may be the Oconee Hill Cemetery. A remarkable greenspace asset to the community, this area is largely inaccessible to the public. Communication among the Unified Government of ACC and the private organization that owns and manages the cemetery would be an essential first step toward assessing general receptivity of greater public access to this resource and specific concerns such as additional resources for security and monitoring that a public-private agreement may address.

      Successful examples include:
      - Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C., which allows/encourages picnicking, child play and an off-leash dog park
      - Historic Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, Georgia, which houses a dog park, running trails, bicycling, cross-country skiing, jazz concerts, and picnicking events
      - Riverside Cemetery in Macon, Georgia. According to their website, "The Historic Riverside Cemetery Conservancy has been established to preserve, protect, educate, and help enrich the cemetery's relationship with its community. The Conservancy works directly with Riverside Cemetery to provide both entertaining and educational events and programs.... [and] also partners with the College Hill Corridor Commission to host concerts and picnics in Riverside Cemetery's amphitheatre."

C. Protection of Resources

C.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan & Other Relevant Studies

Issues:

1. Natural areas such as forests, open spaces, riparian buffers and wildlife habitats are reduced or eliminated by residential and commercial development, transportation corridors and other human impacts.
2. There is a lack of public understanding and appreciation of our natural resources and systems, the ordinances and regulations enacted for their protections, and those measures, such as recycling, that are not regulated but should be promoted.
3. Athens-Clarke County is home to many historic buildings, some of which are underutilized and threatened by neglect.
4. Land uses and development regulations are often inconsistent or incompatible with significant natural features.

Opportunities:

1. Preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures offer benefits both financial and in conservation of materials. Historic structures offer Heritage Tourism benefits, as well.
2. The quality of life in Athens-Clarke County could be improved with additional park land.
3. Public Open Space creation and tree canopy preservation will be a major priority within our neighborhoods, along our streets, parking lots and within commercial and industrial developments.

4. Passive and active recreation are vital to our community and should be supported through greenspace acquisition and park development.

Policies:

1. Continue to support acquisition and/or preservation of environmentally sensitive or important natural areas to attain Athens-Clarke County's goal of 20% protected space using a variety of mechanisms.
2. Athens-Clarke County will support historic designation for eligible sites and neighborhoods.
3. Athens-Clarke County will work to leverage resources to compile a comprehensive inventory of county-wide historic properties and prioritize that list for preservation efforts.
4. Athens-Clarke County will encourage the reuse and rehabilitation of historic structures.
5. Sensitive areas, both urban and rural, need to be identified and protected from inappropriate infill development through the use of historic districts, conservation districts, or other measures.
6. Leverage resources to conduct a comprehensive survey of all cultural, natural, and historic resources (urban and rural) to be undertaken and updated on a 5 year cycle.
7. Identify architecturally important non-historic buildings and objects.
8. Continue to encourage public amenities such as bicycle racks, benches, bus stop shelters, fountains, playground equipment, etc. to be functional public works of art.
9. Create and support a system of pocket parks, linear parks and public squares and greens.
10. Develop a property management program for Athens-Clarke County with the purpose of identifying public land suitable for parks, pocket parks, linear parks, public squares and greens and for other purposes.
11. Explore opportunities to amend Athens-Clarke County Code to enhance the protection of natural environmental features such as topography, mature forests, rock outcrops, historic sites and streams.
12. ACC Comprehensive Plan - Chapter 4: Natural and Cultural Resources:

NATIONALLY REGISTERED HISTORIC DISTRICTS & LANDMARKS

DISTRICTS	
Athens Warehouse District; Downtown Athens	
LANDMARK	**ADDRESS**
Athens Factory	279 Williams Street
F.M. Coker Building	112 Foundry Street
Franklin House	464 East Broad Street

LOCALLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC DISTRICTS & LANDMARKS

DISTRICTS	
Downtown Athens	
LANDMARK	**ADDRESS**
F.M. Coker Building	112 Foundry Street
Franklin House	464 East Broad Street

POTENTIAL LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS & LANDMARKS

DISTRICTS	
Athens Warehouse District; Carr's Hill	
LANDMARK	**ADDRESS**
Oconee Hill Cemetery	297 Cemetery Street

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY PROPERTIES

LANDMARK	**ADDRESS**
Hodgson House	87 Oconee Street (no longer exists)
Nicholson House	224 Thomas Street (no longer exists)

CULTURAL FACILITIES

LANDMARK	ADDRESS
Dudley Park	100 Dudley Park Drive

GEORGIA HISTORICAL MARKERS

LANDMARK	LOCATION
Oconee Hill Cemetery Marker – the marker was stolen in 2002 and only the pole remains	297 Cemetery Street

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. Good view of downtown driving in
2. Dudley Park is an asset
3. Street reflects natural topography (this was a positive comment)
4. While some respondents liked the 'eclectic' appearance of the corridor, most found nothing visually appealing along it.
5. Need street trees
6. Need to upkeep buildings – 'run-down' appearance noted
7. Need to inventory historic buildings

Staff Comments

1. Some of the concerns along the Prince Avenue corridor about the allowable scale for new development adjacent to historic development are not as applicable to all segments of the Oak/Oconee corridor, simply because of the existing development pattern which is fragmented and further divided by rail rights-of-way, the North Oconee River and changes in topography.
2. The Oak/Oconee corridor is in need of investments in redevelopment and revitalization. There are some resources along the corridor that are worthy of preservation and could be better recognized, but generally there are fewer anticipated compatibility issues posed by new development on this corridor than on other major corridors in the county.
3. Consistent street tree plantings between the street and sidewalk would help mitigate the inconsistent setbacks along the corridor, create a better pedestrian environment and help slow traffic.
4. Locating utilities beneath the sidewalk creates space to plant larger canopy trees. Utilities could also be located underground in the verge (between the sidewalk and the street) with shrub or groundcover plantings above. These streetscape improvements require coordination between ACC and GDOT as well as intradepartmental coordination between Public Utilities, Public Works, Landscape Management, and Planning.
5. The high volume of traffic and the desire for an improved pedestrian environment together warrant consideration of a wider streetscape area (easement / setback) on this and other major corridors in order to provide adequate space for sidewalks, buried utilities, tree plantings of an appropriate size, etc.
6. Runoff from incompatible uses (large scale surface parking, car washes, etc.) is detrimental to the North Oconee River.

C.2 Analysis

Historic Landmarks and Districts

1. Local Historic Districts and Landmarks already have protections set up to govern development within the district or changes to a designated property, and the northernmost portion of Oconee Street falls within the Downtown Historic District and is well-documented and protected. Staff

is recommending several additions to our Local Designation list that are not already on the Potential Designation list.

2. Staff would like to explore the boundary of the Downtown Historic District as it crosses Oconee Street. There may be cause to expand the district slightly, or perhaps add an Industrial Conservation District adjacent to the historic district in order to preserve/highlight the remnants the area's industrial past.
3. Staff recommends an inventory of structures and ruins along the Oak/Oconee Corridor. Many of the older structures and also the ruins of past industrial activity are not documented or protected. The location, use, condition and historical significance of these resources should be documented prior to the arrival of new development and their potential demolition. Many of the ruins tell the story of the industrial history of the community and some preservation of that industrial context is important. Contextually sensitive redevelopment is desirable for the area, but this cannot happen without research and exploration to determine what resources remain.
4. There are residential properties along the corridor that are potential resources. Staff would like a residential property inventory to be conducted along the corridor.
5. Additional properties/areas that Staff would like reviewed for possible Local Designation that are not already on the Potential Designation list include:
    a. 217 S. Thomas (UGA facility)
    b. 279 Williams Street (former O'Malley's)
    c. 120 Carr's Hill Street
    d. 122 Carr's Hill Street
    e. Ball field at Dudley Park (leagues sponsored by the local mills)
    f. The CSX trestle across the river at Wilkerson Street (Murmur trestle)
    g. Carr's Hill Church / School

<u>Cultural Assets</u>

1. There are several resources along each corridor that have cultural significance, but perhaps are not appropriate to add to the National, Local or Potential Historic Designation lists. These places are special to the community and are worth exploring to determine whether or not some type of protection from developmental pressure is warranted, or if informational signage or other recognition should be considered for the location.
    a. The Spring Street Spring
    b. River / Greenway
    c. ACTION, Inc. building
    d. Nuçi's Space
    e. Dudley Park
    f. R. Wood Studios
    g. Boys & Girls Club granite amphitheater
    h. St. Mary's Rectory and Steeple (R.E.M.)
    i. Foundations and ruins at the Armstrong & Dobbs property that showcase our industrial past
    j. Remaining foundations of cotton mill warehouses and ruins along and in the river
    k. Former rail line along Georgia Drive
    l. The rail line stopped at Carr's Hill in the late 1800's and a small town developed around the depot. Is there an opportunity for signage / programming? Are there any related structures remaining that are worth preserving / inventorying?
    m. Oconee Hill Cemetery – potential connection to UGA; cultural/historic resource
    n. Carr's Hill historical markers along SPLOST sidewalk/bus stop area

2. If the community decides that any of these facilities are worth protecting, a traditional historic district designation may not be the most appropriate strategy for these types of resources.

Some less restrictive designation type, conservation district, or incentive measures may offer more appropriate means to support the retention and/or recognition of cultural resources.

Environmental Areas, Tree Canopy & Greenspace

1. Environmental Areas
   a. The major environmental area on the Oak/Oconee corridor is the North Oconee River. The river has a 100' riparian buffer, floodplain and wetlands located near the street.
   b. Several streams run alongside the corridor and into the river – these streams have 75' riparian buffers and also some floodplain protections.
   c. The Stormwater section of this report goes into more detail about the issues with stream flooding in the area.
   d. The Waterford Place complex is located within the riparian buffer and floodplain – rear yard riparian plantings and prevention of parking lot runoff would help protect the river.
   e. There is a car wash at 187 Oak Street that is within the 75' riparian buffer along the stream. The runoff from this property drains to the ACC stormwater system and not directly into the river.

2. Tree Canopy
   a. The Prince Avenue and Milledge Avenue corridors have significant front yards with many substantial trees that give value to those corridors. The Oak/Oconee Street corridor is different – rather than setting up protections for existing trees, this corridor requires special provisions for new tree plantings to add value to this entrance into town.
   b. The Oak/Oconee corridor is in great need of street tree planting. There is not much publically owned right-of-way to plant on, but Athens-Clarke County could look into acquiring easements on private property to facilitate street tree planting.
   c. There are several groupings of trees along the corridor that are important to protect, but few individual trees worthy of greater protection than the tree ordinance already offers. The magnolia adjacent to the St. Mary's rectory and steeple is worth protecting, as well as the large oaks surrounding Oconee Street Methodist Church. The tree areas at each intersection of Oak and Oconee Streets and along the railroad right-of-way are also worthy of protection.
   d. One forested area at the southeastern intersection of Oak and Oconee Streets is in need of remediation – it appears that either invasive species have overtaken the trees, or a disease or pest.

3. Greenspaces
   a. Several greenspaces serve as environmental, cultural or historic resources, if not all three:
      - Dudley Park
      - The Greenway
      - The rail corridor adjacent to Oak Street (between Inglewood Drive and Burney Street) and the parcel to the north of it (the planned rail/trail project is eagerly awaited along the entire rail corridor)
      - The Morris and Nathanson properties to the south of Oconee Street

C.3 Potential Strategies

Historic Landmarks and Districts

1. Conduct an inventory of structures and ruins along the Oak/Oconee Corridor.
2. Study the boundary of the Downtown Historic District to determine if it should be expanded to the south.
3. Consider the addition of an Industrial Conservation District.

4. Review Staff's list of properties for Local Designation that are not already on the Potential Designation list. Add whichever properties that are found worthy of designation to the Potential Designation list from the Comprehensive Plan.
5. Evaluate the Potential Designation list and, if feasible, move forward with the process of adding properties to the Local Designation list.

Cultural Assets

1. Determine which cultural facilities are worth preserving and develop a recognition program or conservation designation to protect them.

Environmental Areas, Tree Canopy & Greenspace

1. Preserve healthy trees along Oak/Oconee where they define vistas, identify gateways, or are culturally significant (e.g. the St. Mary's magnolia). Along the rest of the corridor, focus should be on a large amount of street tree plantings.
2. Master plan street tree planting within a streetscape strategy along corridors within the C-D district and those leading into downtown.
3. Provide greater street tree planting space along major corridors, potentially with easements (10' verge + 10' sidewalk + space for utilities if not underground, or similar). This should be done in conjunction with sidewalk, lighting and general streetscape amenity plans.
4. Install substantial riparian buffer landscape plantings on both sides of the river to help slow runoff from adjacent commercial & parking uses, and to help identify the river/greenway. Include native flowering trees, large canopy trees, flowering shrubs, groundcovers, etc.
5. Work on the restoration and preservation of the declining forested area at the southern intersection of Oak and Oconee Streets.

D. Stormwater Management

Stormwater management facilities have the ability to either enhance or significantly detract from development along a corridor, especially if the topography is such that the facility will be visible from the street. Our development codes should guide the arrangement of buildings, parking, landscaping, stormwater management facilities and other utilities so that the intended development form can be achieved in a cost-effective and aesthetically pleasing manner. When these elements are not considered equally during site planning, stormwater management can become an afterthought, resulting in constructed facilities that are not consistent with desired development forms.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Stormwater runoff is generated when precipitation from rain and snowmelt events flows over land or impervious surfaces and does not percolate into the ground. As the runoff flows over the land or impervious surfaces (paved streets, parking lots, and building rooftops), it accumulates debris, chemicals, sediment or other pollutants that could adversely affect water quality if the runoff is discharged untreated.”

Most of the water quality problems we are currently facing in Athens-Clarke County come from nonpoint source pollution. This type of pollution does not come from one large industrial facility or sewage treatment plant (typical point source pollution generators), but rather from our everyday activities that release pollutants onto our properties. Some common nonpoint source pollutants in our streams today are pathogens, metals, nutrients, sediment and increased water temperature. These contaminates have a variety of causes, including excess fertilizers and pesticides, urban runoff containing oil and grease, pasture runoff containing excess bacteria and nutrients, pet waste, defective septic systems, silvicultural and timber harvesting sites, construction sites and landfills, to name a few. Best management practices (BMPs) such as bioretention areas and stormwater ponds are methods of water quality and quantity

controls used to collect and treat stormwater runoff before it leaves a site and carries pollutants from that site into our streams. In addition to chemical pollutants, the increased volume of stormwater and erosive velocities of poorly managed flow have significant impacts on the environment and water quality.

During the course of inventorying corridors in Athens-Clarke County, the topic of stormwater management surfaced repeatedly as an issue with the potential to significantly affect the size and form of development along our main thoroughfares. The Athens-Clarke County Transportation and Public Works Department is currently developing Watershed Management Plans for our 17 county watersheds, which Planning anticipates as an important reference for future updates to our stormwater management policies. In order for this corridor study to be as effective as possible, Planning Staff would like to collaborate with the Stormwater Department to identify areas along each corridor in need of stormwater system upgrades. Upon initial investigation of stormwater facilities along the corridors, one point that frequently arose is the fact that each development site has unique existing conditions and that stormwater management requirements vary between neighboring properties, as each parcel varies in size and development intensity. Even with site specific stormwater management requirements, there is the potential for the generation of an overarching set of development guidelines that further incorporate stormwater management facilities into the ecological and aesthetic designs of a project, helping to create a positive experience for travelers on our major corridors in Athens.

Staff would like to point out that the State of Georgia contains 14 basins and 52 large watersheds. Athens-Clarke County falls inside the Oconee and Savannah River Basins, and within those, the Upper Oconee and Broad Large Watersheds. Athens-Clarke County is further divided into sub- watersheds. The Oak / Oconee corridor study area falls within the North Oconee Watershed and Trail Creek Watersheds. As Athens-Clarke County continues to study and make recommendations for our major corridors, it is important to remember that these corridors contain the most concentrated development in the county, as well as significant traffic demand. As these corridors develop and change, we have the opportunity to not just protect, but to actually improve the health of our streams. The condition of our streams affects the health of our watersheds, which in turn have an effect on the health of Georgia's overall watersheds and basins. In light of the recent flooding concerns in our state, we certainly have cause to do everything possible to ensure that new development (and potentially existing development) is not further hampering the function of our riparian corridors.

Staff from both the Planning Department and the Transportation and Public Works Department are excited about the opportunities the Corridor Study process provides for collaboration on stormwater management facility design on individual sites, as well as within the greater corridor study areas. We are also looking forward to working with the community on these issues and raising awareness of the importance of these facilities to our overall watershed health.

D.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan & Other Relevant Studies

1. ACC Comprehensive Plan - Vision Statements, Issues and Opportunities & Policies
   a. Policy: Encourage stormwater management practices that most closely resemble natural run-off and infiltration.
2. ACC Transportation and Public Works Department Technical Standards
3. Georgia Stormwater Management Manual Vols. 1 & 2 (GSMM)
4. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Stormwater Program
   a. *Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters*

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. The view into downtown was listed as a positive trait
2. The "natural topography" of the street was listed as a positive condition

3. "Too much concrete"
4. "No street trees"
5. Concern that greenspace will be lost to construction

Staff Comments

1. The following quote from Sustainable Sites Initiative (2008) summarizes Staff's position on the function of a stormwater management system to "manage and clean water on-site": *Design a site to capture, slow, and treat stormwater runoff by reducing impervious surfaces, harvesting rainwater, and directing remaining stormwater runoff to soil- and vegetation-based water treatment methods, such as vegetated bioretention facilities, rain gardens, wetlands, green roofs, and bioswales. Maintain and restore vegetation to ensure water can percolate into the soil or groundwater.*
2. The goal of the Transportation and Public Works Watershed Study is to assess the conditions of streams and determine what types of projects and practices will improve watershed health. This study is initially looking at different types of stormwater requirements for Urban, Suburban and Rural conditions.
3. Negative impacts from impervious area within a watershed begin at 10% and any impervious area added over 30% results in severely degraded urban stream quality.
4. Staff would like to participate in a coordinated corridor stormwater planning effort between the Transportation and Public Works Department and the Planning Department and suggests using the current corridor study areas as pilot study areas and schedule them for the next round of stream walks with the Stormwater Division.
5. "Overlay zoning" is a land use planning technique that can require development restrictions or allow alternative site design techniques in specific areas (GSMM Vol. 1 pg. 100). This 'overlay' tool may be employed to incorporate Low Impact Development guidelines into future development and begin retrofitting existing development. Retrofits could include site specific activities such as BMPs, impervious area reduction, water harvesting combined with regional BMPS to reduce hydrology impacts.
6. Stormwater Hotspots per the GSMM Vol.1 (most of these are present on our major corridors):
    a. Gas stations, vehicle maintenance areas, car washes, auto recycling facilities, material storage areas, loading/transfer areas, landfills, construction sites, industrial sites, industrial rooftops
7. Most properties along the corridor are too small for typical stormwater ponds and wetlands, which require a minimum of 10 acres of contributing area to create a permanent wet pond.
    a. Bio-retention facilities can handle a maximum of 5 acres (0.5-2 ac preferred) and are the most probable general application structural control along Oak/Oconee
    b. Other general application structural controls are sand filters, infiltration trenches and enhanced swales.
    c. A variety of other low impact development techniques could be incorporated into site designs to manage stormwater such as rain boxes, green roofs, and rain water harvesting.[5]
    d. Athens-Clarke County would like to encourage the use of porous concrete and other viable porous pavements on more sites. Porous pavements require a high quality of initial site design and experienced installation. The cost is higher than traditional asphalt, but can offset total cost by requiring less investment in other infrastructure such as piping and catch basins. Any opportunity a site design has to reduce existing impervious area or reduce effective impervious will yield a positive impact on the environment. Use of these surfaces may also lower the total stormwater utility fee for a development.

[5] The Center for Watershed Protection (http://www.cwp.org/Resource_Library/Center_Docs/BSD/smartsites.pdf http://www.urbangardensweb.com/2010/01/29/rain-gardens-for-small-urban-spaces/, http://www.greeninfrastructurewiki.com/page/Seattle+SEA+(Street+Edge+Alternative)+Streets)

8. Many lots are so small that stormwater management practices are not required. For these lots and also for existing developments that were constructed prior to our stormwater management ordinance, Staff would like to explore ways for property owners to benefit from retrofitting their sites with some form of stormwater management, such as low impact development practices, to help absorb stormwater within the site on which it is generated.
9. Current stormwater design requirements could be an impediment to the types of development we see and desire along our major corridors. Along some corridor segments there may be opportunities to locate regional systems on existing "underdeveloped" and undeveloped properties that could manage stormwater for multiple sites, reducing the need to construct individual site facilities. Some jurisdictions have an established a fee that developments can pay to discharge into the facility in lieu of construction of its own BMPs.

D.2 Analysis

Structural Design

(Detention, Retention & Water Quality Facility Design, Outfall Design & Placement, Landscaping Standards & Fencing Requirements)

1. The design and, many times, the placement of the detention, retention, water quality and outfall structures is largely dictated by the existing conditions of the site.
2. The design of detention/retention facilities and water quality facilities should follow specific design guidelines in cases where the topography of a site dictates that the facility location be visible from the corridor or a side street.
3. The outfall for these structures should be designed to integrate with naturally occurring features.
4. Landscaping is desirable around all stormwater facilities. Tree and shrub planting locations are limited by the type of structural control used on the site – for instance, trees and shrubs may not be planted within 15 feet of the toe of slope of a dam. If stormwater controls must be located where visible from a street, a higher level of landscaping should be required in order to avoid views of unpleasant utility features along the corridor.
   a. Require landscape plantings along all stormwater facility fences
   b. Require trees and shrubs between stormwater facilities and streets
5. Although fencing is required for certain stormwater facility designs, fencing is not desirable – it is preferable to construct a safety bench and design the topography to prevent the need for any barriers. If the design is such that a fence must be used, design criteria should be created to prevent the installation of unsightly fences along our corridors. These design criteria should be compatible with our local code requirements for safety fencing.

Site Specific Comments

1. The topography along the south side of the Oak and Oconee Corridor, east of the river, slopes toward the street; therefore, the natural location for new stormwater facilities will be either in front of buildings or just to the side, visible from the street. The topography continues to slope across the corridor into two streams and into the North Oconee River.
2. Trail Creek receives runoff from the corridor and flows through residential properties near Dudley Park. This stream has flooded previously and has the potential for increased flooding if additional impervious surfaces are added in the area.
3. West of the river, the topography slopes to the southeast, directly into the North Oconee River.
4. The older development along the Oak/Oconee corridor does not have any stormwater facilities. Stormwater drains into the ACC system or into our streams.
5. Carr's Hill apartments only have one large vault for water quantity control. This vault discharges into the adjacent cemetery. This side of the ridge still has opportunities for development and the addition of impervious surfaces, which could increase the potential for flooding without additional stormwater controls.

6. The large parcel at 437 Little Oak Street provides a good opportunity to incorporate a regional stormwater facility, greenway trails and private development on one parcel.

D.3 Potential Strategies

Short Term Goals

1. Evaluate Transportation and Public Works Watershed Management Study (Spring 2012) and work together to create a stormwater management task list related to the Corridor Studies.
2. Explore potential incentive program for improving stormwater management on properties that are not being redeveloped but do not meet our current stormwater requirements. (reduction in stormwater utility bill…etc)
3. Research and consider developing additional design criteria for stormwater management improvements on non-compliant properties (and properties coming through Plans Review), which might include rainwater collection systems, rain gardens, green street strategies, etc.
4. Identify areas for potential regional stormwater facilities, and prepare feasibility studies for each.
5. Create restoration / greenspace / regional facility concept plan for the Trail Creek area.

Mid Term Goals

1. Work cooperatively with Transportation and Public Works to develop locally approved design criteria for stormwater management facilities and to draft ordinances based on the results of the Watershed Management Study
    a. Landscape screening requirements between stormwater facilities and streets
    b. Fence design guidelines when visible from a street

Long Term Goals

1. Explore the possibility of reusing a percentage of captured stormwater on site (irrigation, water features, etc)
2. Require weather-based irrigation systems to prevent water loss due to over-watering, wind and evaporation. According to the Sustainable Sites Initiative, weather-based irrigation can reduce irrigation water use by 24% per year.

E. Development Form

E.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan

Issues:

1. Athens-Clarke County zoning and development regulations encourage mixed-use, neo-traditional development patterns; however, new construction and redevelopment projects too often fail to meet these standards fully.
2. Land uses and development regulations are often inconsistent or incompatible with significant natural features.
3. Explore opportunities to amend Athens-Clarke County Code to enhance the protection of natural environmental features such as topography, mature forests, rock outcrops, historic sites and streams.
4. Development codes that determine the final product emphasize use over appearance and context.

Opportunities:

1. Preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures offer benefits both financial and in conservation of materials. Historic structures offer Heritage Tourism benefits, as well.
2. Corridors could benefit from being comprehensively planned rather than planned piecemeal.
3. Implement design guidelines for significant corridors.

Policies:

1. Athens-Clarke County will ensure that proposed zoning and development decisions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Investigate rezoning of properties that are incompatible with the Future Development Map and/or existing uses.
3. Review Commercial Zoning Classifications (e.g. Commercial Neighborhood and Commercial General) and Future Development categories (e.g. Corridor Business) as they relate to one another
4. Encourage the creation of pleasing and distinctive gateways into Athens-Clarke County to promote community pride and to encourage tourism.
5. A lack of suitable guidelines for infill development has the potential to have an adverse impact on the character of existing areas.
6. Athens-Clarke County will support residential and non-residential in-fill development that positively contributes to the character of existing neighborhoods and meets the goal of providing housing and services close to existing infrastructure.
7. Sensitive areas, both urban and rural, need to be identified and protected from inappropriate infill development through the use of historic districts, conservation districts, or other measures.
8. Athens-Clarke County development regulations and review will focus on form, appearance, context and use.
9. Explore the desirability of using Form Based Codes within our development regulations.

Corridor Management Strategy

1. The CMS identifies Oconee Street as a distinct point of entry or gateway to the community and downtown Athens. While the CMS did not cite specific development form strategies for enhancing gateways, general recommendations include the incorporation of public art and a combination of distinctive treatments including plant material, low walls, lighting, or signage.
2. The CMS classifies Oak & Oconee Streets as an “urban mixed-use” corridor, where “the proximity of diverse land uses…requires that adequate buffering and transitioning between concentrations of land uses, particularly to protect historic neighborhoods and residential areas, be considered with any corridor management program.”

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. Eclectic development on the corridor lends itself to Athens unique character and charm
2. Downtown skyline/vista from Oak/Oconee is positive feature of corridor.
3. The shifting, natural topography of the corridor is valued
4. Architecture and form at west end of Oconee St. has community value
5. Hodgson Oil Co. building renovation is a benefit to the Oak/Oconee corridor
6. Urban development, style of homes and street layout in the Oconee Hill/Carr’s Hill and Chicopee-Dudley neighborhoods are valued as positive characteristics of corridor
7. Student-targeted residential construction a concern along Oak/Oconee corridor because perceived as cheap, poor-quality, energy-inefficient
8. The Greenway entrance is valued
9. A lack of interesting structures, low quality or poorly maintained buildings, auto-centric development forms, and expanses of paved areas are identified as negative qualities of the corridor needing improvement
10. A lack of cohesion and degradation of the walking environment along the corridor is cited as a concern
11. Concern that codes will foster inappropriate suburban forms and not compel quality construction along the corridor as it redevelops

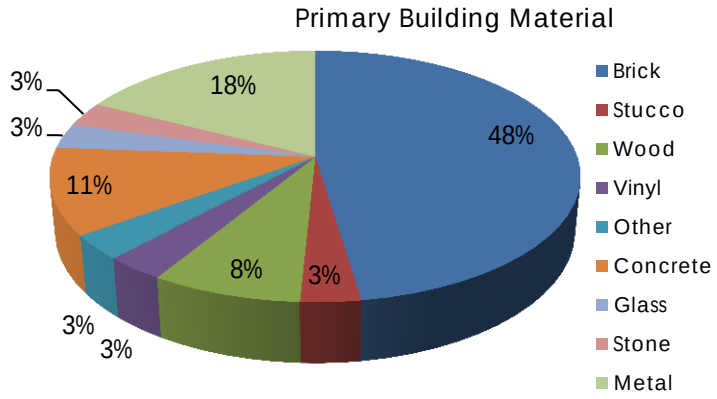
12. Concern that the corridor is able to maintain eclectic charm rather than homogenize
13. Tax credits or other programs to incentivize redevelopment of challenging parcels along the corridor is recommended

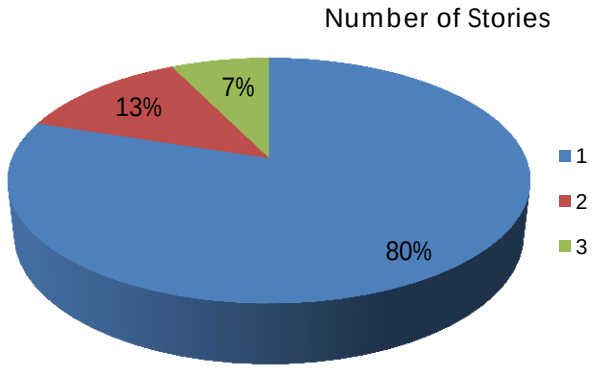
Staff Comments

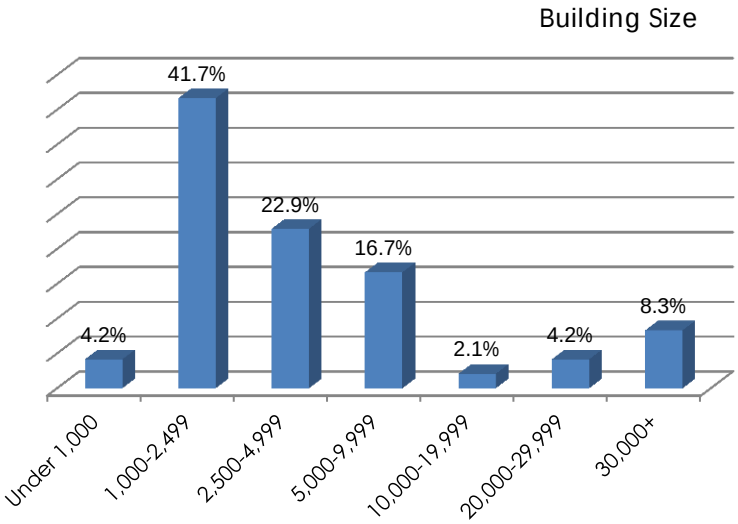
1. Development form along Oak and Oconee Streets varies substantially from one character area to the next:
   From downtown to Williams Street roughly, the historic pattern of shallow and zero building setbacks along the street edge can be traced from the remaining historic structures, but long stretches of road frontage are now characterized by vacant parcels.
   The development form characteristics transition around the river where building orientations are loosely related to the street edge and low floor area ratios are typical.
   Around Poplar Street the character transitions again to small, primarily single-use commercial structures with shallow front yard parking areas.
2. Building heights range between 1 and 3 stories along the corridor yet zoning allows heights up to 100' west of the river in the Commercial-Downtown zone and up to 65' in the Commercial-General zone. Should new development that maximizes permitted heights be proposed for most areas of the corridor, height contrasts would likely appear significant. For the segment west of the river, these heights would likely substantially alter the vista visible from the Oak Street approach to downtown. Analysis via computer modeling may help reveal the degree to which this area's redevelopment would alter scenic vistas.
3. For the segment east of the river, height contrasts at the rear of the corridor parcels and adjacent to single-family structures, may pose the greatest impact. Special reviews associated with the Airport Overlay, which affects much of this area, would likely discourage heights approaching the district's maximum 65 feet. Regardless, greater attention should be directed to how development form on the corridor transitions toward residential areas, frequently abutting the rear of corridor tracts.
4. The two predominant Future Development Map designations on the Oak and Oconee Street corridor are Downtown and Main Street Business, with the division occurring at the North Oconee River. Both designations describe pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use urban forms, with active storefront facades. The biggest difference between the two is the anticipated density, with Downtown envisioned with significantly higher floor-to-area ratios and residential units per acre. The degree to which existing regulations contribute to or detract from achieving these character areas designations should be more fully explored in the analysis section.
5. Despite the Future Development Map vision and the regulatory allowances, vertically integrated mixed-use development has largely been unpursued by the private development sector with several notable exceptions. Finding incentives and removing obstacles to vertically integrated mixed-use development forms should be a priority if the community vision for both Oconee Street's downtown character and Oak/Oconee Street's gateway character are to be achieved by new development. Each segment has its own unique challenges that warrant individualized strategies.
6. Preservation and creation of significant vistas along the corridor are important strategies for enhancing the unique character of the corridor.
7. Enhancement of the urban form within multiple character areas along the corridor may warrant the application of a tailored form-based code that adapts to unique block characteristics and constraints.

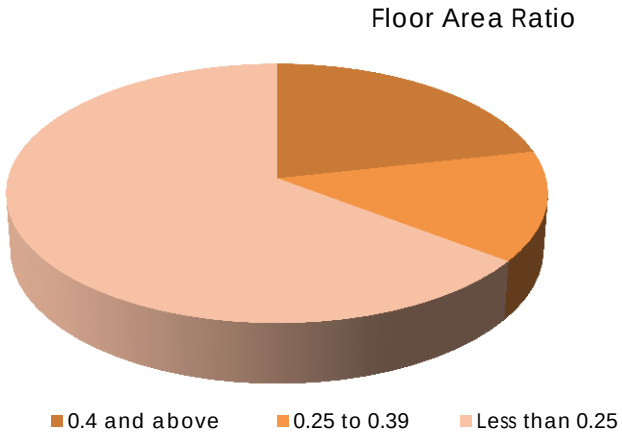
E.2 Analysis

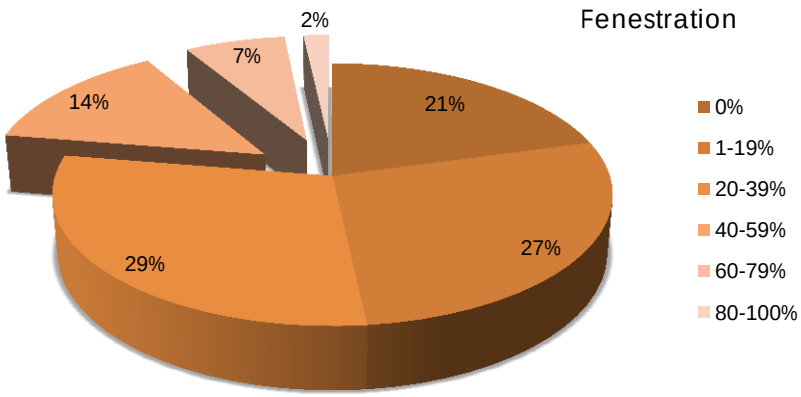
Existing Conditions











Existing Development Form Characteristics by Corridor Segment						
Corridor Segment	Front Yard Setbacks*	Height (stories)	0.4+ Floor Area Ratio	0.25+ Floor Area Ratio	40% or More Transparency	Character-Defining Elements
Downtown to Williams/Wilkerson	0-90	1-3	41% (63%)	53% (81%)	17%	Historic shallow setbacks; Brick; Topography
Williams/Wilkerson to Poplar	30-60	1-3	18% (40%)	18% (40%)	0%	River "gateway"
Poplar to Oconee (Oak Street) - northern frontage	5-30	1	0%	0%	18%	Downtown vista; shallow lots
Poplar to Oconee (Oak Street) - southern frontage	25-44	1	7% (8%)	13% (17%)	25%	Downtown vista; shallow lots
Oak to Loop (Oconee Street) - northern frontage	10-40	1	50%	67%	43%	Road curvature; Loop "gateway"; shallow lots
Oak to Loop (Oconee Street) - southern frontage	35-100	1	0%	0%	66%	Road curvature; Loop "gateway"

*Range between average, median, & mode

() Excludes vacant parcels

E.3 Potential Strategies

Regulatory: Zoning

1. C-G to C-N: From the river to the Loop, the corridor should be rezoned to Commercial-Neighborhood to bring the zoning into conformance with the Future Development Map designation of Main Street Business. The current Commercial-General zoning is not compatible with the Main Street Business Designation. As a Park-N-Ride facility is planned at the intersection of Loop 10 and Oconee Street to encourage commuters to exchange their automobiles for coordinated transit, transitioning from Commercial-General to Commercial-Neighborhood at this gateway would provide a complementary zoning measure to encourage pedestrian scale development. The decrease in permitted multi-family residential density from 24 bedrooms per acre to 16 would provide more consistency with the limitations imposed by the existing Airport Overlay zone; however, allowances for increases back to 24 bedrooms per acre as a mixed-use incentive are also included a study recommendation.
2. C-N HEIGHT REDUCTION: Consider reducing maximum permitted C-N height to 50’ from 65’. If overall C-N height reduction is not preferred, consider a zoning maximum 50’ height for C-N properties along corridor within an overlay area.

Regulatory: Design Standards

1. BUILDING SETBACKS: Future rights-of-way should not preclude new building setbacks consistent with established block patterns.
2. BUILDING HEIGHTS
   a. C-D Step backs and Height-to-Street-Width ratio.
   Oconee Street parcels zoned Commercial-Downtown have a maximum permitted height of 100 feet. In order to avoid a potential canyon effect created by redevelopment maxing out height at the right-of-way line, staff recommends a required step back in the façade based upon a 1:1 façade height-to-street width ratio. For example, with a 60’ future right-of-way, a façade placed at the 0’ setback would have a maximum height of 60’, above which

additional height would be stepped back a minimum of 10'-15'. At the maximum 30' setback, a 90' façade would be permitted without step backs.

b. Proposed Rezone of C-N properties which are currently zoned C-G
Both C-G and C-N zones currently permit a maximum building height of 65' This height is not in character with existing development, although greater overall intensity of development form could yield a variety of benefits to the corridor. Potential Strategies:
Short Term. Amend Commercial-Neighborhood maximum height to 50'. Ensure each elevation meets height maximum rather than the average of all four elevations.
Short Term. Create overlay zoning for C-N parcels on the corridor to allow increase in maximum height to 65' for portions of qualifying mixed-use developments that are outside a defined "residential buffer transitional area." See incentive section below.

3. FENESTRATION
   a. Short Term. Amend fenestration requirement to differentiate between pedestrian streetscape fenestration and upper level fenestration, i.e. 1st Floor: 40%; 2nd Floor and above 25%
   b. Short Term. Develop fenestration and/or alternative architectural treatment standard to highly visible elevations not immediately adjacent to rights-of-way using a vista and viewshed study as framework for identifying applicable areas. This is particularly critical for the Oconee Street parcels zoned Commercial-Downtown that allow 100' building heights along the slope that defines Downtown's southeastern approach, a prominent and valued vista.
4. BUILDING-PARKING ORIENTATION
   a. Corner lots should anchor the built form at the corner, not separate the side street from the building by parking areas. No parking should be permitted between the building and the street, neither the primary frontage nor secondary road frontages.
   b. Additionally side yard parking should only be permitted when it is located behind at least 50% of the primary façade plane, defined by the overall measurement of all walls roughly parallel to the front lot line that are not separated from the street by enclosed square footage.
5. BUFFERS
   a. Increase the required landscaped buffer when parking and drive areas abut a local street with residentially zoned properties immediately opposite. The proposed buffer would be ten feet in width, four feet in height, and consist of evergreen shrubs.
   b. Graduated rear setback - Rear setbacks are only required when a rear property line abuts residential zones or a right-of-way. The required setback is then 10'. Staff recommends applying a graduated rear setback based on the height of the structure when the rear property line abuts residentially zoned property or a local street with residentially zoned property immediately opposite. For example, a 10' min. setback, plus 1' for each 1' of building height (of rear elevation) over 30'.

<u>Incentives & Other Measures</u>

1. LANDSCAPE AS FORM
   The Oak/Oconee corridor has a unique development form challenge by virtue of its substantial lengths of road frontage where built development forms are not feasible due to converging rail and road rights-of-way, resulting in extremely shallow parcels, and environmentally sensitive areas. Along these segments, intentional landscape interventions may provide the streetscape framing that development form conventionally provides along an urban gateway corridor. The Rails-to-Trail and the Park-N-Ride projects offer two design opportunities to address this corridor improvement need. Future sidewalk improvements along missing segments in the pedestrian network should also incorporate framing landscape elements.
   Potential Strategies:
   Short Term. Include these landscaping elements within the design scope of future privately

funded projects;
Long Term. Include these landscaping elements as a component of potential publically funded Tax Allocation District improvements.

2. TRANSITIONAL BUILDING ENVELOPE TO PROTECT NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER & TO ENCOURAGE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT
   Provide better form transition between commercial corridor and residential street by defining an optional shifting building envelope for dual frontage development. To provide incentives for development form consistent with the transitional, dual frontage envelope, a coordinated "package" of incentives may be provided including parking reduction, corridor-scaled stormwater management, use flexibility, etc.
   a. RESIDENTIAL BUFFER TRANSITIONAL AREA defined:
      This area is the portion of a property that is within 65 feet of adjacent residentially zoned property and/or within 65 feet of an abutting local street with residentially zoned property immediately opposite the subject property. Developments intending to take advantage of mixed-use incentives to maximize the buildable envelope may do so outside of this area, but form bonuses cannot be utilized in this area. Structures with ground floor residential uses are permitted in the residential buffer transitional area without a Special Use Permit, provided that these units are fully screened from the collector/arterial/commercial corridor street by mixed-use or commercial buildings and these units do not exceed 50% of the total leasable/occupiable square footage of the development.
   b. MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT FORM ALLOWANCES
      To encourage vertical, mixed use projects, additional allowances for FAR, bedroom density, and height are proposed within an overlay area. A maximum FAR of 1.5, 24 bedrooms per acre and a maximum building height of 65 feet would be permitted outside the "residential buffer transitional area" of parcels within the overlay if a minimum qualifying number of residential units are included in a mixed-use project.

F. Right-of-Way Design

F.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan

Opportunities:

1. Corridors could benefit from being comprehensively planned rather than planned piecemeal.
2. Implement design guidelines for significant corridors.
3. Athens-Clarke County will continue to expand our sidewalk network.

Policies:

1. Athens-Clarke County will continue to refine design standards for transportation corridors.
2. Infrastructure plans to support the policies in the Future Development Map should be continually developed and updated.
3. Strongly encourage the location of utilities and storm drains within the pavement section of the right-of-way whenever feasible.
4. Athens-Clarke County will encourage street design that promotes multiple modes of transportation.
5. Continue to provide funding in the capital budget to support and expand the Bicycle Master Plan and the sidewalk network.
6. Consider the creation of bicycle lanes or routes that parallel the corridor from the Loop 10 intersection to Downtown.

7. Explore a plan to convert all state routes within Loop 10 (Oak and Oconee Streets, South Milledge Avenue, North Milledge Avenue, Prince Avenue) to local jurisdiction incrementally within the next 20 years.
8. Expand the use of street trees in corridors.
9. Athens-Clarke County will continue to monitor and modify street and crossing designs to promote pedestrian crossing safety and accessibility that specifically address the needs of the elderly, the disabled, and the young.

Corridor Management Strategy

1. The CMS classifies specific roadways within Athens-Clarke County based upon a typology of urban, suburban, and rural characteristics and functions.
2. Specific corridor design guidelines were developed for each classification of roadway.
3. In all, the study set out to provide guidance in how specific roadways in Athens-Clarke County could and should be enhanced to promote safety, travel, landscaping, and overall functionality.
4. The CMS designates Oak & Oconee Street as an urban mixed use corridor, as well as a gateway.
5. 7'-10' wide sidewalks are recommended, with a textured or colored band wherever the sidewalk is immediately adjacent to the curb
6. 8' minimum crosswalks at major intersections should have special pavements; Planted pedestrian refuge islands are recommended for mid-block crossings
7. 4' minimum "lawn panel," a landscaped verge between the road and sidewalk, is recommended, with a 7'-8' minimum width if street trees are located between sidewalk and road; alternatively, street tree planting strip may be located between sidewalk and adjacent private property.
8. Street trees should provide signature plant palettes, such as the dogwood pattern on Prince.
9. 4'-12' planted medians are recommended for this corridor type
10. Bike lanes consistent with locations identified in Bicycle Master Plan are recommended.
11. Shared drives should be encouraged; a maximum of one curb cut per parcel recommended; sidewalk patterns should be clearly delineated across driveways

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. Top Concerns: intersection of Old Winterville St and Oconee; traffic; accommodating all modes of transportation
2. Undesirable features: traffic; too much concrete at intersections; lack of crosswalks; bit too much concrete - I would like to see more greenery
3. Desirable features: downtown skyline view; street reflects natural topography; I value the urban development and the layout of our streets and the style of homes that are present in the Chicopee-Dudley neighborhood and Oconee Hill. I also value the trees and greenspace that is present in these neighborhoods. I would like to see that increase in the corridor through landscaping and complete streets for alternative transportation.

Staff Comments

1. A review of the newly developed Driveway Ordinance may address any future curb cut issues, but the effect it may have on existing, excessively wide or narrowly spaced curb cuts is dependent upon redevelopment in most cases.
2. Attractive signs and directional markers, similar to those of the downtown area, would enhance the corridor and more clearly guide drivers looking for specific turn-offs.
3. Researching boulevard-type design may reveal strategies to improve the function and aesthetics of the corridor.

4. An analysis of current right-of-way design in relation to sidewalk, utility, and landscaping placement may result in the reduction of concrete and the increase of pervious ground cover.

F.2 Analysis

Corridor Management Strategy Recommended Design

1. ACC has developed a Minimum Street Design Index in which future right-of-way needs are based. Much of the corridor appears to vary in existing right-of-way width, but each street is slated to have a 60' minimum right-of-way width. This allows room to expand in some areas; however, in other areas it appears as though the right-of-way already exceeds minimum width needs.
2. The recently adopted ACC Driveway Ordinance now regulates the number of curb-cuts a property may have, as well as the width, setbacks, and distances between driveways along with intersections. Many of these standards have thresholds for application; however, there is a stipulation that the Transportation and Public Works Department may close a driveway that poses a safety risk. One negative to this is that much of the corridor lies under GDOT control, and therefore, the ACC Driveway Ordinance does not apply in all instances.
3. Under the "Urban Mixed Use" classification assigned by the Corridor Management Strategy, there are a number of recommended design criteria that may be suitable for this corridor. Standards include increasing the existing sidewalk width, pavement delineated crosswalks with refuge islands, lawn verges, street trees, planted medians, pedestrian scale lighting, bike lanes, and sidewalk patterns that carry over driveways.
4. The corridor is to be treated as a gateway into Athens-Clarke County, and as such, be made to enhance the view of downtown when approaching. This can be done through specific design implementation in the form of legible wayfinding signage, street lights, tree placement, and boulevard type medians.

Pedestrian & Wayfinding Improvements

1. Improve existing intersections' pedestrian accessibility and aesthetics by means of sidewalk ramps and landscaping.
2. Signage along the corridor is regulated by GDOT, but it may be possible to come up with alternative design solutions unique to the corridors, which conform to design regulations as mandated by the state government.
3. Based upon the survey conducted for pedestrian sidewalks along the corridor, this is an appropriate time to address existing gaps in the sidewalk network as funded through the Sidewalk Improvement Program.

Utilities

1. Review of the current water/sewer line placement throughout the corridor reveals that many of the lines lie both in the center of the street as well as along the sides of the road. Placement within the right-of-way allows for easy access and no additional cost in purchasing maintenance rights. Still, conflicts do arise between road construction and utility lines that can cause a disturbance and cost in both traffic and utility occurrences.
2. The use of easements in which to place utilities is also a possibility. Many of them would need to be between 20' and 30' based upon the type of line(s) being located within them. Easements do have an upfront cost associated with them in purchasing the rights to use them; however, easements are typically restricted to utilities only, eliminating conflicts with road improvements.
3. The use of easements adjacent to the right-of-way for utility placement can infringe on the capacity to achieve urban design goals for the corridor. Building setbacks are pushed farther back from the road; street trees become front yard trees. Where density and urban form is

more desirable than suburban arterial form, co-locating utilities in the right-of-way (often in vertical trenches that make the most efficient use of space) becomes necessary.

Right-of-Way Ownership

1. Legal control of the right-of-way is currently held by the Georgia Department of Transportation. Revisiting the local control issue will be an important component of the implementation of any right-of-way design strategies.
2. While maintenance of GDOT-controlled right-of-way technically falls under the responsibility of the state department; ACC Landscape Management Division routinely maintains all state routes within Athens-Clarke County, though no formal agreement is in place and there is no financial reimbursement from GDOT.

F.3 Potential Strategies

Roadway Design

1. Potential exists to create decorative knee-high retaining walls where applicable along the corridor that will help create a pedestrian boundary adjacent to private property, and will also delineate physical confinement of the corridor within the right-of-way.
2. If local control of the right-of-way is obtained from GDOT, traffic circulation analysis should be conducted for the corridor. Such analysis may result in lane configuration changes, signalization changes, operational intersection improvements, and enhanced pedestrian facilities including mid-block crosswalks.
3. Road realignments should be undertaken where feasible in order to promote safety and ease traffic congestion. Not all existing intersection along the corridor need to be realigned, but one such example is that of Old Winterville Road and Grove Street.
4. Remove the deceleration lane across from Kent Street and create a crosswalk from Kent Street across Oak Street. Staff only recommends this upon the installation of a landscaped pedestrian median that will provide a safe haven for those attempting to cross Oak Street.*

Pedestrian Design

1. Crosswalks should be a minimum of 8’ wide and constructed of a specific pavement or hardscape at all intersections.*
2. A minimum of 10’ wide sidewalks along the corridor west of the North Oconee River in all instances where possible. This portion of the corridor should also provide at least a 5’ verge between the sidewalk and the street in all instances where possible.
3. All sidewalks east of the North Oconee River should be at least 5’ in width, and provide at least a 2’ verge between the sidewalk and the street.
4. Delineate stream and greenway crossings with special pavement incorporated in the sidewalk and possibly even the street itself.
5. Incorporate unique street name signs to be placed on poles while still leaving the existing overhead street signage. All other traffic signage should be incorporated onto said poles as to avoid the clutter of multiple signage poles.*
6. Install pedestrian level lighting to improve safety along the entire corridor.

Utilities

1. Consider the placement of utilities within the right-of-way in place of easements upon adjacent private parcels. This would allow for more usable space on privately-owned property, more street tree planting space and a less “cluttered” streetscape.*
2. Utility placement should be coordinated with Transportation and Public Works and/or GDOT so that their location within the right-of-way is appropriate, and will result in the least amount of

impact should the need for maintenance arise. One option is to mandate that specific utilities share a common trench and are located beneath the sidewalk.

3. Remove unused utility poles from the right-of-way to increase visibility, reduce visual clutter and remove impediments from sidewalks.

Right-of-Way Ownership

1. Initiate steps to acquire state right-of-way from GDOT for this corridor.
2. If right-of-way acquisition is not feasible, then clearly establish an understanding with GDOT as to which possible physical design elements to the corridor can be made that are safe and effective, but perhaps different than standard designs.
3. Pursue an agreement with GDOT pertaining to the maintenance of the corridor in an effort to improve aesthetics.
4. If overall legal control of the right-of-way cannot be obtained from GDOT, then an agreement as to the specific technical design waivers that the county may obtain needs to be discussed. Such topics shall include driveway width, median design, speed limits, maintenance, crosswalks, verges, and landscaping.

(*) Indicates a recommendation that may conflict with Georgia Department of Transportation design standards

G. Transportation

A goal of the Corridor Studies is to assess the potential for providing the widest possible variety of transportation options within each of the corridor study areas. Presently, a portion of the Oak/Oconee Street corridor is under Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) jurisdiction. Coordinating local planning efforts for the corridor with GDOT is essential in order to implement meaningful right-of-way modifications.

Consideration is given to developing alternate transportation routes outside of the rights-of-way of these streets. In the case of the Oak/Oconee Street Corridor, the “rails-to-trails” conversion of the abandoned CSX railroad right-of-way that parallels most of the Oak/Oconee Street Corridor offers an excellent opportunity to provide grade-separated routes for bikes, pedestrians, and other non-motorized transportation and recreational use. Streetscape design strategies discussed in the study help to reinforce the function of alternative transportation facilities by incorporating safe and attractive transit stops, pedestrian crossings, and bike lanes.

G.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan

Vision Statement:

1. Athens-Clarke County will support transportation policies that promote context-sensitive street design principles and provide a balanced transportation system to encourage viable

alternatives to the automobile, promote public health and safety, protect the environment, encourage efficient land use, relieve traffic congestion, maintain a sense of community, accommodate the needs of our diverse population and support the movement of goods, services and people.

Issues:

2. Corridors could benefit from being comprehensively planned rather than planned piecemeal.
3. An efficient and safe transportation system must accommodate multiple modes of transportation.

Opportunities:

4. All alternative transportation plans working together can provide non-automotive connectivity throughout Athens-Clarke County.

Policies:

1. Athens-Clarke County will continue to refine design standards for transportation corridors.
2. Infrastructure plans to support the policies in the Future Development Map should be continually developed and updated.
3. Athens-Clarke County will encourage street design that promotes multiple modes of transportation.
4. Continue to provide funding in the capital budget to support and expand the Bicycle Master Plan and the sidewalk network.
5. Consider the creation of bicycle lanes or routes from the South Milledge / Loop 10 intersection to the Prince Avenue / Loop 10 intersection.
6. Explore a plan to convert all state routes within Loop 10 (South Milledge Avenue, North Milledge Avenue, Prince Avenue) to local jurisdiction incrementally within the next 20 years.
7. Map existing and proposed rights of way to determine the suitability and funding feasibility of each for inclusion in a connected system of bicycle and pedestrian pathways.
8. Explore an active marketing program for the Athens Transit System aimed at familiarizing the entire community with the system and its use. Special focus will be given to marketing the program to University of Georgia students, Spanish-speaking members of the community, seniors and young people.
9. Continue to explore ways to increase funding for the Athens Transit System.
10. Begin exploring the potential for expanding Athens Transit System into adjoining counties in order to promote movement among population, commercial and employment centers.
11. Athens-Clarke County will continue to expand our sidewalk network.
12. Implement design guidelines for significant corridors.

<u>Corridor Management Strategy</u>

1. The CMS designates Oak & Oconee Streets as an urban mixed use corridor, as well as a gateway
2. 7’-10’ wide sidewalks are recommended, with a textured or colored band wherever the sidewalk is immediately adjacent to the curb
3. 8’ minimum crosswalks at major intersections should have special pavements; Planted pedestrian refuge islands are recommended for mid-block crossings
4. Bike lanes consistent with locations identified in Bicycle Master Plan are recommended
5. Shared drives should be encouraged; one curb cut per parcel recommended; sidewalk patterns should be clearly delineated across driveways

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. The Greenway is clearly valued in multiple responses
2. Negative comments include: Traffic congestion, especially during peak hours, crosswalks not placed near commercial areas, traffic speed, continued degradation of walkable environment
3. "Mostly concerned with making the area more hospitable for non-motorized forms of transportation"
4. Safety was a repeated theme: "Greenway is not safe for bikes, bus stops are not safe, convenient or accessible; lack of crosswalks; no more plans for bike/pedestrian bridge in Park-n-Ride"
5. "I value the urban development and the layout of our streets and the style of homes that are present in the Chicopee-Dudley neighborhood and Oconee Hill. I also value the trees and greenspace that is present in these neighborhoods. I would like to see that increase in the corridor through landscaping and complete streets for alternative transportation."

Staff Comments

1. Analysis of the different modes of travel along the corridor may help establish a clear and precise picture of the physical changes that the corridor may need to undergo in order to accommodate a variety of transportation options.
2. A review of the current sidewalk system will highlight deficiencies in accessibility, material, width, as well as usage, not to mention safety.
3. By examining sidewalk usage, the need for new crosswalks may be justified in areas currently underserved.
4. The possibility exists to tie in bicycle usage along the corridor to that of the proposed rails-to-trails plan. In doing so, bicycle traffic may be dispersed more evenly between the Rail-to-Trail path and that of the much needed bicycle lanes along the corridor.
5. Reviewing the current speed limit may further prove to be a necessary safety measure. Coincidentally, it could further enhance the appeal of the corridor, allowing travelers to enjoy the view of downtown as they approach, seeing all the corridor has to offer instead of driving past as though it is a highway.
6. Through careful transit planning, existing and future stops could be designed to allow easier traffic flow and less bicycle obstruction.
7. The Community Agenda section of the Comprehensive Plan addresses many modal travel issues under its Transportation heading. One such instance calls for coordination between future land uses and the transportation system, a strategy that is addressed in the 2030 MACORTS Transportation Plan.
8. The Community Agenda calls for the construction of bicycle facilities and expansion of mass transit usage to effectively meet community mobility needs.
9. The Future Development Map classifies the western portion of Oak and Oconee Streets as Main Street Business, an area in which "auto-oriented uses" are not encouraged and "walkability and pedestrian-scale are important." Likewise, the Downtown designation on the eastern portion stresses the importance of the pedestrian environment.
10. The Comprehensive Plan encourages alternate modes of transportation. Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding is consistently sought to advance these principles.

G.2 Analysis

Pedestrian Issues

1. 2000 Census figures indicate the popularity of walking as a primary commute means for the corridor's residents. On average, 22% of the commuters within all of the surrounding tracts walked to work, with all tracts reporting 10% or higher. The census tracts with the largest proportion of pedestrian commuters include Downtown and the University of Georgia with

28.0% and 25% respectively of commuters walking. These are significant figures in light of the nationwide comparison, in which only 2.93% of all US commuters or 1.72% of Georgians are able to walk to work as their primary means of transportation.

2. A survey of the existing sidewalk facilities was conducted in order to assess width, quality, and obstructions.
   a. The survey revealed an inconsistent pattern with well-defined, high quality pedestrian segments infrequently interspersed with lower quality, poorly-defined sidewalk segments, to areas with no pedestrian facilities at all.
   b. Characteristics consistent with a high quality, well-defined pedestrian environment include a landscaped verge or strip between the sidewalk and curb, limited and narrow curb cuts that delineate the sidewalk path across the widths of driveways, deciduous tree canopy cover, and distinct, accessible crosswalks.
   c. Improving the quality of the pedestrian way where sidewalks already exist has traditionally occurred during the redevelopment of a parcel, when curb cuts are narrowed and landscaping is installed. Few retrofits of this nature have occurred along Oak/Oconee Streets, with the exception of the Hodgson Building landscaping. The redevelopment of vacant parcels, such as the Armstrong and Dobbs property, will present multiple opportunities for pedestrian way improvements.
3. The sidewalk survey identified gaps in the pedestrian network on the southern side of Oak Street between Poplar and Oconee Street to the east. As this area has very limited pedestrian crossings to facilities on the north side, eliminating the gaps via the Sidewalk Improvement Program is a corridor planning priority. Existing informal pedestrian pathways or “desire lines” provide evidence of the need.
4. Crosswalk frequency and the effectiveness of midblock crosswalks should be further analyzed in order to specifically identify a set distance for block-length crosswalks. Currently, there are no midblock crosswalks along this corridor.

Bicycling Issues

1. 2000 Census figures indicate a lower percentage of cycling commuters for the corridor’s residents than the Prince corridor, with 2% reporting this primary commute means (compared to 4.9%). Topography and fewer safe routes may account for the difference between the two centrally located corridors. Nevertheless, the figures are still significant in light of the nationwide comparison, in which only 0.38% of all US commuters rely upon the bicycle. These percentages have likely increased substantially over the last 10 years, as the US Census Bureau’s 2008 American Community Survey indicates a 43 percent increase in cycling as a primary commute nationwide, and substantial residential construction has brought students and other younger households to the corridor’s neighborhoods.
2. There is potential to connect bicycle traffic along the corridor to that of the future Rails-to-Trails path. One such connection may involve the North Oconee Greenway.
3. Bike Athens produces the free Bike Map that identifies routes and traffic levels throughout Athens-Clarke County. The 2010 edition provides an update to the 2005 map. On the map, the Oak/Oconee Street corridor is coded as a red corridor, signifying heavy traffic without dedicated bicycle lanes or other facilities and, as such, not recommending use as a cyclist route. The implication of this characterization for multi-modal connectivity between Downtown and UGA to the west and neighborhoods to the east is significant as other routes are limited and less direct. Improvements to cyclist infrastructure along this corridor are therefore critical to overcoming this barrier. The parallel rail-to-trail project offers one such improvement, but additional infrastructure to support a complete network is still needed.
4. Locally, Athens-Clarke County has adopted design standards relating to bicycle facilities (October 2003). Such standards include the minimum width for bicycle lanes, striping, markings, signage, and possible conversion of 4-lane roadways to 3-lane roadways in order to

provide room for bicycle lanes or other multi-modal improvements. This issue is discussed further in the Right-of-Way Design section of this study.

5. While bike lanes or other types of bicycle facilities would benefit the corridor, right-of-way width and cartway width vary substantially along the corridor, having a substantial impact on potential options. In order to provide needed space for bicycle or multi-use paths, existing government-owned easements may reduce the cost of what it would take to acquire additional right-of-way.
6. Zoning and development standards call for bicycle parking to be provided for all new development and for existing developments when substantial changes are proposed. These standards specify 2 bicycle parking spaces at a minimum with one space per 20 required vehicular spaces. Currently, there are no requirements or incentives to exceed required bicycle parking provisions. If the future vision for Oak/Oconee Streets is to include a realistic multi-modal environment, these minimum standards should be revisited.

Transit Issues

1. Transit ridership is composed of two general groups, captive and choice. Captive users of a transit system typically have limited alternative transportation options, i.e. they do not own an operable vehicle or they have a physical impairment that prevents them from utilizing other means. Choice users do have alternative options such as their own vehicle; however, they choose to take transit because of its conveniences or benefits. Altering community-wide travel behaviors to reduce congestion and other negative bi-products of auto-dependent travel requires a transit system that is capable of attracting choice ridership in addition to fully serving the needs of its captive ridership. A key component of choice ridership is frequency or service, with headways (the interval between bus service at a given stop) of 15 minutes or less. Such frequent service requires higher minimum population densities to sustain the operational costs.
2. From Williams Street eastward, the corridor is utilized by three transit routes, each providing hourly service with one traveling eastward only along the corridor, one traveling westward only along the corridor, and the third traveling in both directions.
3. 2000 Census figures indicate public transit usage is strong for some of the corridor's surrounding neighborhoods. Sixteen percent of the workers in the neighborhood north of the corridor reported commuting by transit most of the time, while only one percent reported this type of commute from Carr's Hill to the south. The reasons behind this discrepancy in transit usage are likely varied but basic, safe access may be one. The area to the north has a fourth transit route option that bisects the middle of the neighborhood while the area to the south has no supplemental transit options and challenging pedestrian access to inbound buses on the north side of the corridor.
4. A review of the 2005 Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the Athens Transit System found that recommendations were made that included route modifications, extended service hours, use of 'superstops', and the possible inclusion of Park and Ride lots. The proposed Park and Ride located along Oconee Street near Loop 10 may increase ridership and reduce traffic congestion along this corridor. As development occurs along the corridor that may increase ridership, changes to routes and headways may be accommodated.
5. All future buses purchased are to be equipped with bicycle racks, further supporting both transit and bicycle use.

Personal Vehicle Issues

1. Traffic congestion along the corridor has increased, and will likely continue to increase with the development of high-density land uses or those specifically oriented to regional users. Nevertheless, traffic congestion is not always a bad corridor feature. Vehicular congestion motivates users to select different modes and routes. Congestion can also be an indicator of activity and urban vitality. Traffic engineers John La Plante and Walter Kulash, who have both written extensively on "road diet" or "complete street" highway retrofits, identify a Level of

Service (LOS) of D as a reasonable peak period rating in urban areas. Level of Service "grades" are reflective of congestion-related factors, including anticipated delay at intersections and travel time along a given roadway segment. According to Kulash, to have a LOS of A or B in an urban area is contrary to creating a pedestrian-oriented environment with multiple travel modes as viable options. As congestion is and will be an increasingly significant feature of travel along this corridor, design and programmatic strategies to prioritize transit and other high-occupancy vehicle travel along the corridor, especially during peak congestion periods, are critical to the future success of these modes and to the planned Park n Ride facility.

2. 2000 Census figures indicate that only 46% of the corridor's commuters relied primarily on solo vehicular transportation by car, truck or van, a relatively low percentage compared to 75.7% nationally and 77.5% statewide.
3. In 2000 the section of Oconee Street from Broad Street to Poplar Street had a volume-to-capacity ratio greater than 1.0. This is significant because roadway segments with volume-to-capacity ratios between 1.0 – 1.29 are likely experiencing congestion problems during peak hour traffic. While the projected 2030 volume-to-capacity ratio is reduced for the length of the Oconee Street from Broad Street to Willow Street, the majority of Oak Street (Poplar St. to Inglewood Dr.; Carr St. to Old Winterville Rd.) is included in the "greater than 1.0" list. Aggressive strategies to reduce single-occupant vehicular trips may help alleviate problems such as elevated ground-level ozone associated with this projected congestion.

G.3 Potential Strategies

Pedestrian

1. Construct sidewalks along both sides of the street, for the entire length of the corridor.
2. Improve existing intersections' pedestrian accessibility and aesthetics by means of sidewalk ramps and landscaping.
3. Provide more crosswalk locations throughout the corridor, possibly even at midblock intervals. Specifically, the intersection of Kent Street appears to provide the most logical location.
4. Provide some sense of safety assurance to pedestrians in the form of physical barriers between the sidewalk and street. Examples include planters, trees, and wider verges.
5. Provide amenities that promote and support pedestrian use of the corridor. Examples include benches, drinking fountains, and public art.
6. Consider a "Heritage Walk" or other manner of pedestrian education along the corridor that describes certain historical events pertaining to the corridor.
7. A connection should be made between the corridor and the future Rails-to-Trails project. Specifically, it should connect along Old Winterville Road just inside the perimeter until it meets the river at Poplar Street.
8. Pursue negotiations with the Oconee Hill Cemetery for access to and through during specified hours.
9. Acquire the rights to the railroad spur connecting the Multi-Modal Center to UGA's North Campus.
10. Specific signage should be placed at the intersection of Oak Street and Poplar Street that directs pedestrians to Dudley Park. Such wayfinding signage should be common throughout the corridor in both size and material. Similarly, neighborhood markers could also be placed throughout the corridor to signify neighborhood gateways.

Bicycling

1. Bike lanes or other types of bicycle routes should be installed along both sides of the street if additional right-of-way can be acquired to construct it.
2. Install applicable bicycle signs that make vehicle traffic aware of bicyclists.

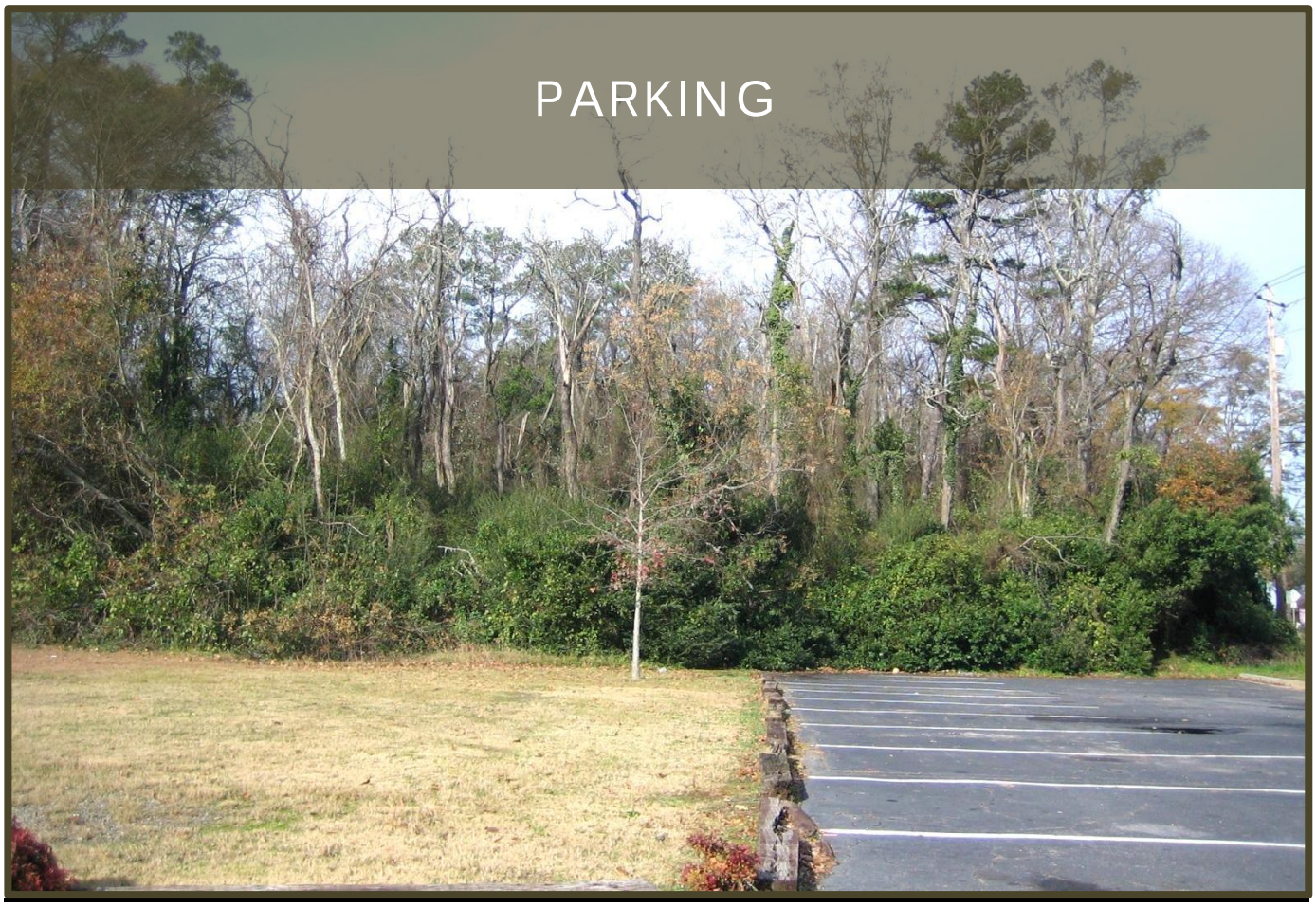
3. A connection should be made between the corridor and the future Rails-to-Trails project. Specifically, it should connect along Old Winterville Road just inside the perimeter until it meets the river at Poplar Street.
4. Pursue negotiations with the Oconee Hill Cemetery for access to and through during specified hours.
5. Acquire the rights to the railroad spur's continuation in an effort to connect the Multi-Modal Center to UGA.

Transit

1. Assess whether scheduled bus shelter installation could be modified to incorporate more aesthetic structures unique to the corridor.
2. Complete bus route information should be posted at each bus stop.

Personal Vehicle

1. A reduction in speed limit should be considered along the corridor, especially in areas west of the Poplar Street traffic signal.



H. Parking

H.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan & Other Relevant Studies

Opportunities:

1. Public Open Space creation and tree canopy preservation will be a major priority within our neighborhoods, along our streets, parking lots and within commercial and industrial developments.

Policies:

1. Athens-Clarke County will interconnect streets and businesses by retrofitting parking lots and planning new network connections.
2. Work with developers to promote and expand alternative parking lot designs that create circulation routes within commercial centers as distinct streets. The designs should include sidewalks, shade trees, small courtyards, on-street parking and traditional block sizes with multiple access points to shopping areas.
3. Continue to seek additional opportunities for Park-and-Ride lots for UGA, downtown destinations and other work centers.
4. Investigate lower minimum parking-space requirements.

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. Concerns related to parking included: “continued degradation of walkable environment,” “too much concrete,” “autocentric development, suburban, disjointed,” and “unsightly parking”
2. A desire to improve the landscaping and general aesthetic character of the corridor was a common theme

Staff Comments

1. A common theme between the various corridor studies and this corridor is the need to limit driveway curb cuts and control access to on-site parking.
2. The corridor’s parking areas commonly lack screening with neither structures nor vegetation obscuring sight lines to lots nor defining separations between pedestrian pathways and vehicular drives and parking. Retrofitting these non-conforming lots may reap significant aesthetic benefits for the corridor.
3. The corridor has some variation in appearance and general character. These character differences should be recognized and enhanced to create specific design guidelines or form-based development standards for each character area.
4. On-street parking does not appear to be a viable design idea for the corridor due to the volume of traffic, limited sight distance in many areas and GDOT control of the right-of-way. Some on-street parking is available along intersecting streets in the corridor, serving primarily commercial uses on the corridor but some adjacent residential uses as well.
5. The Comprehensive Plan touches on parking and site design in several different references made throughout the Guiding Objectives, Strategies and Policies. The objectives are to encourage mixed use development along corridors, in traditional Athens, particularly in community and neighborhood centers. Future infill/redevelopment would result in multi-story, multi-use development with shared parking in tree shaded lots and parking structures that have limited visibility from the street and any adjacent residential areas.
6. The Implementation Strategies include providing incentives and mechanisms to reduce parking and reliance on automobiles. Walkable community and neighborhood centers as well as regular transit service are seen as preferable alternatives for mobility.
7. On-street parking and street trees have multiple benefits to the area including slowing traffic and more pleasant, healthful places for pedestrians.

H.2 Analysis

Future Right-of-Way

1. The “future right-of-way” is the privately owned area parallel to the existing right-of-way in which the placement of new buildings is prohibited in order to plan for additional right-of-way acquisition and improvements at some point in the future. Potential future improvements range from roadway realignment or expansion to sidewalks and landscaping to on-street parking areas or any combination of these improvements. Anticipated right-of-way width needs and the existing right-of-way width together determine the location of the “future right-of-way” line on a property. In some cases, future right-of-way requirements may mandate building placement beyond the traditional street wall established by existing buildings. These areas deserve the greatest scrutiny to ensure the greatest possible compatibility between transportation, urban design, and community preservation goals.

Parking as a Sole Use

1. Currently there are no stand alone commercial parking lots along the corridor with the exception of the game day parking facility, technically an outdoor recreation use by zoning. It is specifically limited to University home football game weekend use. No other use may be

made of this facility. It is developed with a grass paver parking area, landscaping throughout the site, restroom facilities and a meeting area provided for the private use of the lot owners. Because condominium ownership of individual parking spaces characterizes the development model, future redevelopment of the site with a more intensive use is substantially constrained.

2. There is a proposal to develop a public Park and Ride facility adjacent to the GA 10 loop. The plans available at this time indicate two large parking lots, one on either side of the corridor. The lots currently are shown with only minimal tree planting areas. No detailed plans have been presented to date.
3. The large UGA-owned parking lots along the northwestern most segment of the corridor are unlikely to undergo modification in the immediate future due to State budgetary constraints. The 2006 master plan map of the university campus shows the parking lots in their current configuration without proposals for other uses or for modification such as parking deck construction. But as the University population continues to grow and the campus expands physically, demand for parking spaces will continue. Re-use/re-development of these parcels should be expected.
4. Parking as a sole use of property is not seen as a desirable land use along the corridor as it contributes to an inactive streetscape, and the current zoning does not permit it as a use in the commercial zones except by Special Use permit. Shared parking on adjacent parcels serving multiple uses in an immediate area could serve several purposes.

Landscaping & Materials

1. Parking lots located along the Oak/Oconee corridor are almost completely devoid of landscaping at present. Every study and survey indicates the desire to green parking areas to improve the aesthetic appearance and environmental health of the corridor.
2. The current tree ordinance requires one tree per seven parking lot spaces with no more than fourteen spaces in a row without a tree island or peninsula. Additionally, 7% of the interior of a parking lot area must be landscaped, a calculation that may include the required tree islands. The lots along Oak/Oconee Streets that do not meet these requirements are “legal, non-conforming” sites. Redevelopment of a minimum threshold requires that these lots be brought into compliance with the landscaping requirements.

Site Design

1. The site design standards currently prohibit the construction of parking between the street and the front façade of buildings. The prohibition on front yard parking is intended to create a pedestrian-friendly environment in which active uses, storefronts, and landscaping contribute to an interesting streetscape while parking areas are relegated to less visible areas of lots. Several shortcomings of the existing ordinance limit its capacity to achieve its urban design goals, particularly for planned urban mixed-use corridors:
   a. Some uses are exempt from the front yard parking prohibition, which detracts from the overall streetscape design goals.
   b. Corner lots are still permitted to incorporate parking areas between the building and street in the side yard. This design can be just as detrimental to the achievement of an active, pedestrian-oriented streetscape.
   c. Small front façade protrusions such as a foyer or entryway have been utilized to minimally extend the front of the building beyond parking areas in the front yard, technically relegating these areas to “side yard” status in a loophole that circumvents the intent of the ordinance.
2. In addition to the landscaping requirements noted above, parking areas and the drives serving them are required to be set back from property lines by a 10’ landscaped buffer. Where a property line abuts a residential zone or use, this buffer coincides with the minimum residential buffer of 10’. Where parking abuts a side property line adjacent to another business and

parking lot, this required 10' buffer would result in a 20' landscaped strip along the property line, perhaps an inefficient allocation of space along a corridor intended to support an active, urban environment in which shared parking areas could contribute to reduced overall area dedicated to surface lots. Few existing lots along the Oak/Oconee corridor meet this parking buffer standard.

3. Parking lots in each of the three general character areas could benefit from re-design or at least minor facelifts consisting of addition of street trees along the right-of-way and removal of excess pavement that does not directly serve as parking space or access lane. Removal of excess pavement in areas could offer opportunities to plant parking lot trees which would improve aesthetics, potentially lower surface lot temperatures and provide areas for small stormwater management facilities such as rain gardens.
4. The re-development of the former Armstrong & Dobbs property is expected in the near future. Development of that site in a manner that reflects the community desires for this important corridor is key to the enhancement of the corridor and the Commercial Downtown areas. Development of an overlay district with specific development standards for this particular area may be appropriate. Such standards would address placement and design of surface and/or structured parking. (note about working w/ UGA?)

Shared Parking & Access Drives

1. As noted above under the site design heading, a number of parcels could potentially benefit from re-design such that adjacent parcels might share access points and utilize cross access and shared parking to benefit the uses. Properties with dissimilar business operations such as one that operates during the day and an adjacent business operating largely at night might benefit from shared parking since overlap of use of spaces would be minimized.
2. Other scenarios with similar businesses or common hours of operation could also benefit from re-design of access and parking layout by loss of excess pavement, increasing landscaping for aesthetic benefit, and access could be provided without introducing more curb cuts on the right-of-way. This could also result in a reduction in curb cuts.
3. To facilitate analysis of the potential for shared parking, each corridor parcel's general overall use, building size and number of existing parking spaces were reviewed to determine if any obvious surplus or deficit of parking spaces based solely on regulatory parking minimums. Further, more detailed analysis would be required to determine whether there are other parking arrangements such as shared parking agreements between any of the parcels at this time.

Minimum Parking Requirements

1. Typical uses along the corridor include professional office, residences, retail, restaurant, and a variety of institutions. With the exception of residential uses and those with Commercial Downtown zoning, each of these use types corresponds to a minimum parking ratio of required spaces per square foot of gross leasable space, as follows:
   a. General office: 1 per 450 sq. ft
   b. Retail: 1 per 300 sq. ft.
   c. Restaurant: 1 per 100 sq. ft. or 1 per 4 seats, whichever is less
   d. Church: 1 per 4 seats
2. Eliminating minimum requirements for small businesses in targeted pedestrian zones is one strategy some communities have pursued in order to provide greater flexibility for small and start-up businesses as well as to achieve greater intensity of activity in these areas.
3. Lengthening the maximum distance permitted between available off-site, shared parking areas and a proposed business is another strategy with similar goals. Currently ACC does not recognize off-site parking beyond 200 feet from a business' front door as satisfying required parking minimums.

Decks & Structures

1. Structured parking is not limited to the parking space maximum provision (150% of the minimum required spaces) that is otherwise applied to surface lots. Likewise, FAR maximums do not include the square footage of structured parking areas, although the structures still affect the compatibility of a project's overall massing and bulk. The exclusion of structured parking from these limitations is intended to encourage their use over more land consumptive surface lots that detract from pedestrian environments.
2. Most of the uses existing along this corridor do not have need for the number of spaces likely to be provided in a parking deck. University controlled lands within the C-D zoned portion of the corridor have the greatest potential for such structured parking, but no plans have been introduced by University planners for such a change for conversion of their surface lots.
3. The vacant property that formerly housed Armstrong & Dobbs is subject to major redevelopment, and, depending on the buyer and proposed use(s) for that site, structured parking could certainly be an option that should be encouraged in order to maximize use of the site.
4. Specific form-based design guidelines should be considered for any new deck construction to insure appropriate scale and aesthetic design of structures. An example of parking deck design guidelines from Virginia Beach, VA has been found and might be considered as a starting point for this discussion. It should be noted that most well designed parking structures up to this point have been achieved through careful and considered design for individual sites. Legislative controls do not appear to be responsible for successful design.

H.3 Potential Strategies

Incentives

1. The most effective means by which to gain compliance with desired design changes to private properties is through the institution of some type of incentive program to make the re-design and re-construction of parking areas palatable and affordable to private business. Incentives should include the renovation of existing parking facilities to incorporate landscape buffers, particularly adjacent to rights-of-way where the parking lies between a building and a street.
2. Though monetary incentives are certainly difficult to produce, particularly in tight economic times, some relaxation of another design standard that would be difficult to meet in the area might be considered.
3. Some consideration should be given to adjusting parking ratios to provide reuse or redevelopment incentives and flexibility, particularly for mixed use development. Some uses, such as small offices, neighborhood retail or cafes could be allowed to occupy existing tenant spaces without accounting for on-site parking requirements as long as parking is available within ¼ mile. Other uses along the corridor might be considered for some additional parking allowance if following specific overlay zone design standards. Such additional parking should be part of a shared parking arrangement or made available to those other uses which have no on-site parking.
4. Incentives need to be created to encourage redevelopment of parking lots increasing the number of parking lot trees to allow no more than 7 spaces in a row without a tree.

Financing

1. Various means of public/private cooperative financing should be considered as part of the overall corridor study to encourage redevelopment and positive change.
2. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) may be an appropriate strategy to provide funding for parking retrofits in conjunction with an overall streetscape improvement plan.

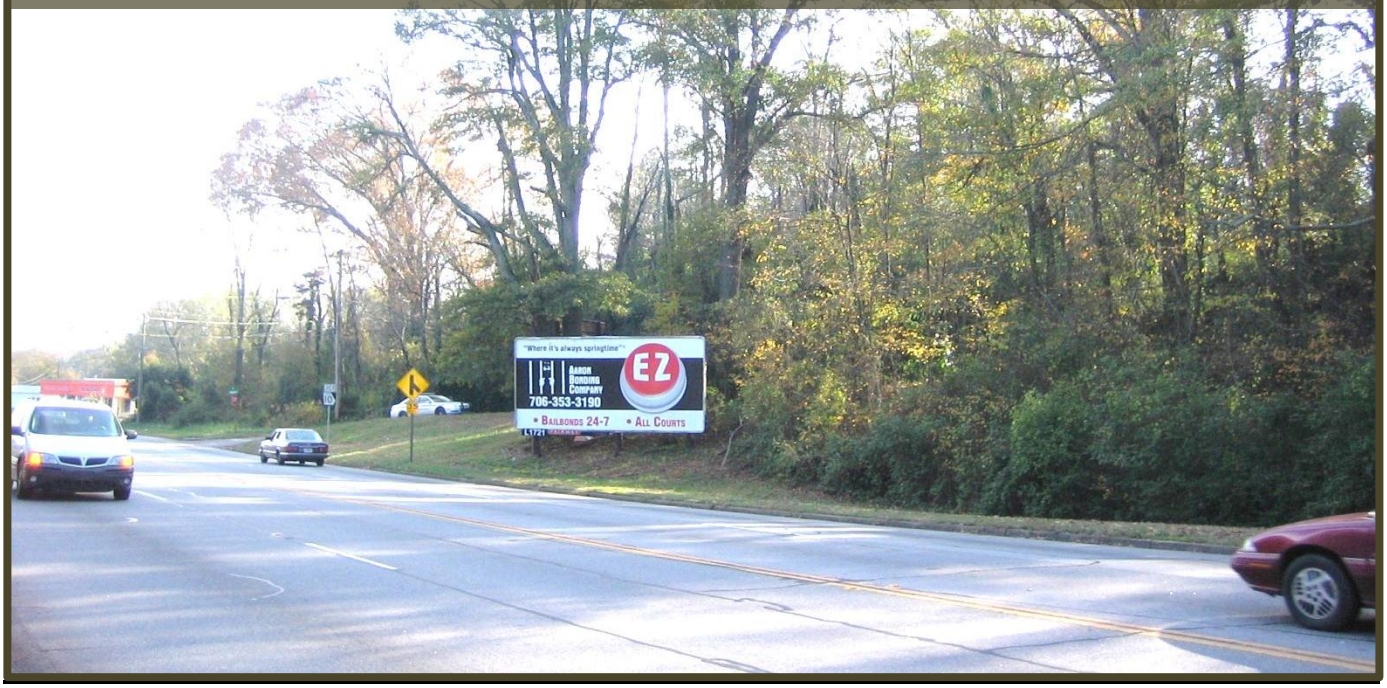
Regulatory

1. Redevelopment of the corridor should include the exclusion of parking between buildings and streets. Desired development standards would call for parking to be pushed to the rear of buildings and between buildings, giving it less visibility from streets and therefore less visual emphasis.
2. Where mixed use development occurs with residential on the secondary street frontage, parking needs to be kept to mid block/lot location.
3. Where mixed use development occurs, distance to off-site shared parking may be increased to 800' or to a distance consistent with the Milledge Avenue overlay.
4. Where mixed commercial/retail development occurs, uses of less than 1800 sq. ft. may be exempted from minimum parking requirements.
5. Where service stations/convenience stores with pump islands exist, pump island parking should be counted toward minimum parking requirements. Such parking needs to be screened from all streets with low shrubbery to minimize appearance of vehicles' headlights while allowing for security.
6. Landscape buffers should be required for parking areas adjacent to or across a local street from residential uses.
7. Athens-Clarke County should develop structured parking design standards, with the understanding that each site will have unique challenges and solutions that an individual ordinance cannot anticipate.

Shared Corridor Resources

1. At the northeastern end of the corridor's commercial areas, the very shallow parcels situated between Oconee Street and the railroad right-of-way could benefit from redevelopment, but existing minimum parking and other requirements create a challenging regulatory environment for these parcels. Utilization of the rail-trail and the Park and Ride facilities to supplement access and parking would be beneficial. Businesses to support the local area as well as the commuters utilizing the Park and Ride and rail-trail could share parking with the Park and Ride lot, thereby gaining additional usable development space, providing handicapped accessible and bicycle parking on the sites. An improved pedestrian crosswalk could be provided across the Old Winterville Road/Elbert Street right-of-way between the sites.
2. Assess performance and usage of the Park and Ride Lot planned for construction near the intersection of Oak Street and Grove Street adjacent to the 10 Loop interchange. Consider construction of future phases associated with the Oconee Street Park and Ride Lot master plan.
3. Access across the Oak/Oconee corridor for pedestrian movement would be helpful particularly at the eastern end. This should be considered along with the possible re-alignment of Grove Street Extension and Old Winterville Road and Elbert Street.
4. The undeveloped/unopened right-of-way at the eastern end of Georgia Drive, just west of the eastern intersection of Oak and Oconee Streets could be developed partially to provide pedestrian access from the commercial area into the residential area to the southwest and possibly provide a small parking area for businesses along the southwest side of the corridor.
5. Encouraging aggregation of some of the smaller parcels, particularly for shared parking, increased landscaping and better stormwater management, could support higher density mixed-use development, and bring positive economic and aesthetic changes to the corridor.

LIGHTING & SIGNAGE



I. Lighting & Signage

I.1 Observation

Comprehensive Plan

1. The Comprehensive Plan touches on the importance of creating attractive signage to guide visitors to downtown or other areas of interest.
2. One of the over-arching aspirations of the Comprehensive Plan is to create visually attractive gateways and corridors. This study area presents an early opportunity to work toward some of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Policy: Limit development in designated natural areas, regulate outdoor lighting, invasive species, encourage the reuse or re-adaptation of vacant residential and commercial properties and brownfields.

Community Corridor Survey Input

1. Lighting
   a. Though there were no specific mentions of lighting, the community input emphasized the importance of the Greenway and the current relative lack of aesthetics along much of this corridor.
   b. One of the over-arching concerns that appeared several times in the Community Corridor Survey was that of energy efficiency. Although the specific context of these comments did not include lighting concerns, the larger issue of energy efficiency is something that this section of the Corridor Study would be able to influence.

2. Signage
   a. The Community Corridor Survey Input expressed concerns regarding the "ugly and uninviting" status of much of the corridor.
   b. Fairway Outdoor Advertising, a local billboard company, expressed a desire for involvement in the corridor study.

Corridor Management Strategy

3. The CMS identifies this corridor as a gateway into the urban core, noting the transition from Lexington Road to Oconee Street as a distinct point of entry. General gateway design recommendations include the incorporation of a variety of treatments including lighting and signage. Some of the relevant CMS recommendations are as follows:
   a. Lighting
      - Recommends the installation of pedestrian scale lighting along all urban mixed-use corridors, but acknowledges that additional light may not be needed where there is extensive existing roadway lighting and less pedestrian traffic or within historic and residential segments.
      - Recommends both signage and lighting as gateway corridor treatments that contribute to a "distinctive, high quality" arrival sequence. Lighting should be sensitive to the surrounding environment and positioned to illuminate gateway elements only.
      - Street lights should be consistently designed.
   b. Signage
      - Gateway signage should be "simply constructed, in scale with surrounding elements, made of high quality and durable materials."
      - Clear and legible wayfinding signage recommended
      - Both lighting and signage should be uncluttered and consistent

Staff Comments

1. Much of this corridor is under-utilized and appears empty and vacant. There is great potential for good development that must be encouraged by smart regulation and right-of-way design.
2. Understanding the relationship between lighting and safety, whether considering avoiding particular walking or driving hazards or in terms of crime prevention, is important in establishing lighting ordinances and improving or adding lighting infrastructure.
3. While most research shows that the relationship between lighting and safety is a tenuous one, the perception of safety that lighting provides cannot be ignored. Lighting does create a more inviting space for the pedestrian.
4. Attractive signs and directional markers similar to those of the downtown area would enhance the corridor, providing clear distinctions between different character areas, while positively affecting traffic flow for travelers looking for specific turn-offs.

I.2 Analysis

Off-Site Signage & Billboards

1. Oak and Oconee Streets are listed in Appendix C of the Sign Ordinance as corridors where billboards would be permitted. Consideration should be given to removing these two corridors – entirely or in part – from the list of corridors where billboards are permitted.
2. Completion of the county-wide billboard study has helped provide insight into what regulations, if any, need to change in terms of location, size, and number of billboards.

On-Site Signage – Sign Standards

1. Consideration should be given to including Oak and Oconee Streets to the listing of restrictive corridors in Appendix A of the Sign Ordinance. This requires new signage to follow additional requirements beyond those of the underlying zoning alone.
2. Review the signage inventory for Oak and Oconee Streets and associated maps.
3. Create a visual representation of what the current zoning allows in terms of height and square footage of signs.

Lighting

1. Map light and dark spots along the right of way.
2. Combine dark spot mapping with crime data to address the role of lighting in the perception of safety.
3. Compare results of crime/lighting analysis to existing research regarding lighting and crime prevention.
4. Review of the Baxter Street renovation might help in making future corridor decisions in regards to lighting.
5. Research different types of pedestrian and street lights to create a preliminary cost/benefit analysis by type or design.
6. The new lighting ordinance limits light trespass for new developments and significant redevelopments. Existing problem areas may not come into conformance with the ordinance for years. Incentives for voluntary light shielding need to be considered.
7. Identify potential incentives to encourage property owners along the corridor to comply with the Lighting Ordinance in the short-to-medium term.
8. Discuss situation with Georgia Power to learn infrastructural limitations and difficulties, as well as capabilities and new options.
9. Review and identify problem areas using data from the lighting inventory.

I.3 Potential Strategies

Off-Site Signage & Billboards

1. Amend sign ordinance to remove Oak/Oconee from Appendix C, prohibiting any new billboards along this corridor.
2. To restore especially significant vistas along the corridor, like that of the downtown skyline from Oak Street, Athens-Clarke County should investigate the purchase of certain properties and/or a program to “buy out” or incentivize the removal of billboards at these locations.
3. Create visual markers for pedestrian wayfinding to enhance and encourage the pedestrian experience. These can include neighborhood markers, pedestrian-scale street markers (like the granite obelisks), and visual indicators in the sidewalk itself.

On-Site Signage – Sign Standards

1. As recommended in other sections of this study, a rezone of commercial parcels to Commercial-Neighborhood would reduce allowable signage sizes and heights to levels that are more characteristic of and complementary to a mixed-use, urban gateway corridor.

Lighting

1. Coordinate with Georgia Power, whenever possible to improve existing street lights and their illumination of pedestrian areas along the right of way.
2. Work with Georgia Power to improve the quality of the light from these fixtures. Eliminating light trespass, improving the light quality, and reducing glare would help to make for a safer, more attractive corridor.

3. Pursue alternatives to easement and pole-based electrical utilities. Utilities placed within the right of way and underneath sidewalk would create a much more visually appealing corridor, while having fewer conflicts with potential pedestrian and street lighting.
4. The many topographical challenges of this corridor limit traditional lighting options. However, creatively placed LEDs in sconces or under capstones in retaining walls adjacent to sidewalks would likely complement the gateway sensibility of the corridor while enhancing the pedestrian realm.
5. Along the eastern portion of the corridor, up to the bypass, Staff recommends standard pedestrian-level lighting. There are fewer topographical and right of way challenges than for much of the rest of the corridor. The potential University of Georgia River Road/Grove Street connection bridge, if completed, would only strengthen this need. An aesthetic public investment could perhaps help to spur private investment and redevelopment.
6. Though the initial cost is higher, Staff recommends that any new lighting be energy efficient, LED or solar-powered lighting. As a long-term infrastructural investment, these energy efficient lights would recoup some of the expenses by way of lower energy costs.
7. Replace existing street lighting with newer, more efficient models.
8. Work with property owners to improve the quality and intensity of light on privately-owned land.
9. Creatively illuminate the Oconee River Bridge to serve pedestrian traffic while accenting one of the main intersections with the Greenway and River.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Implementation Schedule

A listing of the recommended Strategies is provided below. These Strategies are organized into phases. Placement in the first or second phase was determined in part by assessing the immediacy of the proposed strategy, the anticipated cost of a strategy, and the amount of coordination and resources required to pursue a recommended strategy. Also, some strategies are sequential in nature, necessitating that a particular step must be completed before the next strategy can be initiated.

It is not anticipated that the full array of strategies can be undertaken at once, and it is expected that the list of items will be used to set priorities for future action.

Phase I

Land Use	1. Consider rezoning all C-G (Commercial-General) properties within the corridor study area to C-N (Commercial-Neighborhood) in order to foster uses that better reflect the corridor's Main Street Business Future Development Map designation.
	2. Either in addition to, or in lieu of, the rezoning suggested above, consideration should be given to creating an overlay zoning designation for the Oak/Oconee Corridor to regulate ground floor residential uses, auto service uses, parking flexibility, neighborhood grocery and smaller scale businesses, and amended plaza requirements.
	3. Continue to support increased opportunities for density in development, both in the resident and employment populations. Accessory dwelling units, residential-above-commercial (vertically mixed) development, and medium density residential use buffers between corridor commercial uses and existing neighborhood residences are three separate strategies to increase residential density immediately along the corridor that may be appropriate in targeted areas of the corridor.
	4. The Airport Overlay and concerns regarding the compatibility of infill housing construction in East Athens and Carr's Hill pose two significant challenges for increasing density on this central corridor. A corridor specific approach to the development of model infill plans should focus specifically on reconciling airport authority concerns and the unique conditions of the corridor with density goals.
Stormwater Management	1. Evaluate Transportation and Public Works Watershed Management Study (Spring 2012) and work to create a stormwater management task list related to the Corridor Study.
	2. Explore potential incentive program for improving stormwater management on properties that are not being redeveloped but do not meet our current stormwater requirements. (tiered reductions in stormwater utility bill…etc)
	3. Research and consider developing additional design criteria for stormwater management improvements on non-conforming properties, which might include rainwater collection systems, rain gardens, green street strategies, etc.
	4. Identify areas for potential regional storm water facilities, and prepare feasibility studies for each. Specifically, the area near Branch Street should be given consideration for a joint storm water facility/greenspace area.
Development Form	1. Study development form issues including: reduced maximum building heights; height-to-street-width ratios; modified setbacks when adjacent to historic resources; adjusted floor area ratios; variable fenestration standards for street level versus upper level; corner lot parking standards; and graduated rear setbacks adjacent to neighborhoods.
Right-of-Way Design	1. Study the feasibility of incorporating "Complete Streets" modifications along the corridor. 2. Traffic circulation analysis should be conducted for the corridor. Such analysis

	may result in lane configuration changes, signalization changes, operational intersection improvements, and enhanced pedestrian facilities including mid-block crosswalks. 3. Establish an understanding with GDOT as to which possible physical design changes can be made along the corridor that are safe and effective, but perhaps different than standard design requirements.
	4. Remove unused utility poles from the right-of-way to increase visibility, reduce visual clutter, and remove impediments from sidewalks.
	5. Construct sidewalks along both sides of the street, for the entire length of the corridor. Construct sidewalk ramps at intersections and crossings to improve pedestrian accessibility.
	6. Install landscaping along the corridor to improve pedestrian safety and experience.
	7. Specifically identify intersections or other points along the corridor in which to construct landscaped bump-outs. These may help ease traffic speed, while adding to aesthetic value of the corridor. Crosswalks should be a minimum of 8' wide and constructed of a specific pavement or hardscape at all intersections.
	8. Improve existing intersections' pedestrian accessibility and aesthetics by means of sidewalk ramps and landscaping
	9. Improve crosswalk design, especially at midblock locations where pedestrian refuges would increase safety and ease of crossing.
	10. Bike lanes or other types of bicycle routes should be installed along both sides of the street if additional right-of-way can be acquired to construct it.
Transportation	1. Assess whether scheduled bus shelter installation could be modified to incorporate more aesthetic structures unique to the corridor.
Lighting & Signage	1. Amend the Sign Ordinance to remove Oak Street and Oconee Street from Appendix C, prohibiting any new billboards along this corridor.
	2. Work with property owners to improve the quality and intensity of light on privately-owned land.
Protection of Resources	1. Conduct an inventory of structures and ruins along the Oak/Oconee Corridor for potential addition to our Local Designation list.
	2. Study the boundary of the Downtown Historic District to determine if it should be expanded to the south along the Oak/Oconee Corridor.
	3. Consider the addition of an Industrial Conservation District for the area.
	4. Review Staff's list of properties for Local Designation that are not already on the Potential Designation list. Add whichever properties that are found worthy of designation to the Potential Designation list from the Comprehensive Plan.
	5. Evaluate the Potential Designation list and, if feasible, move forward with the process of adding properties to the Local Designation list.
	6. Preserve healthy trees along the corridor, particularly where they define vistas, identify gateways, or are culturally significant (e.g. the St. Mary's Magnolia). Along the rest of the corridor, sincere attention should be given to locating significant street tree plantings.
	7. Master Plan street tree planting with a coordinated streetscape strategy along the corridor and the intersecting local streets. Master planning must take into account the demands placed on the right-of-way and front yards of private properties and strike a balance between the multiple uses for these areas (e.g. utilities, driveways, travel lanes, landscaping, signage, lighting, etc.).
	8. Athens-Clarke County should work with property owners along Oak/Oconee Street, the Georgia Department of Transportation and Georgia Power to acquire landscaping easements along the corridor for street tree planting.
	9. Install substantial riparian buffer landscape plantings on both sides of the river to help slow runoff from adjacent commercial and parking uses, and to help identify the river/greenway.
	10. Work on the restoration and preservation of the declining forested area at the southern intersection of Oak and Oconee Streets.

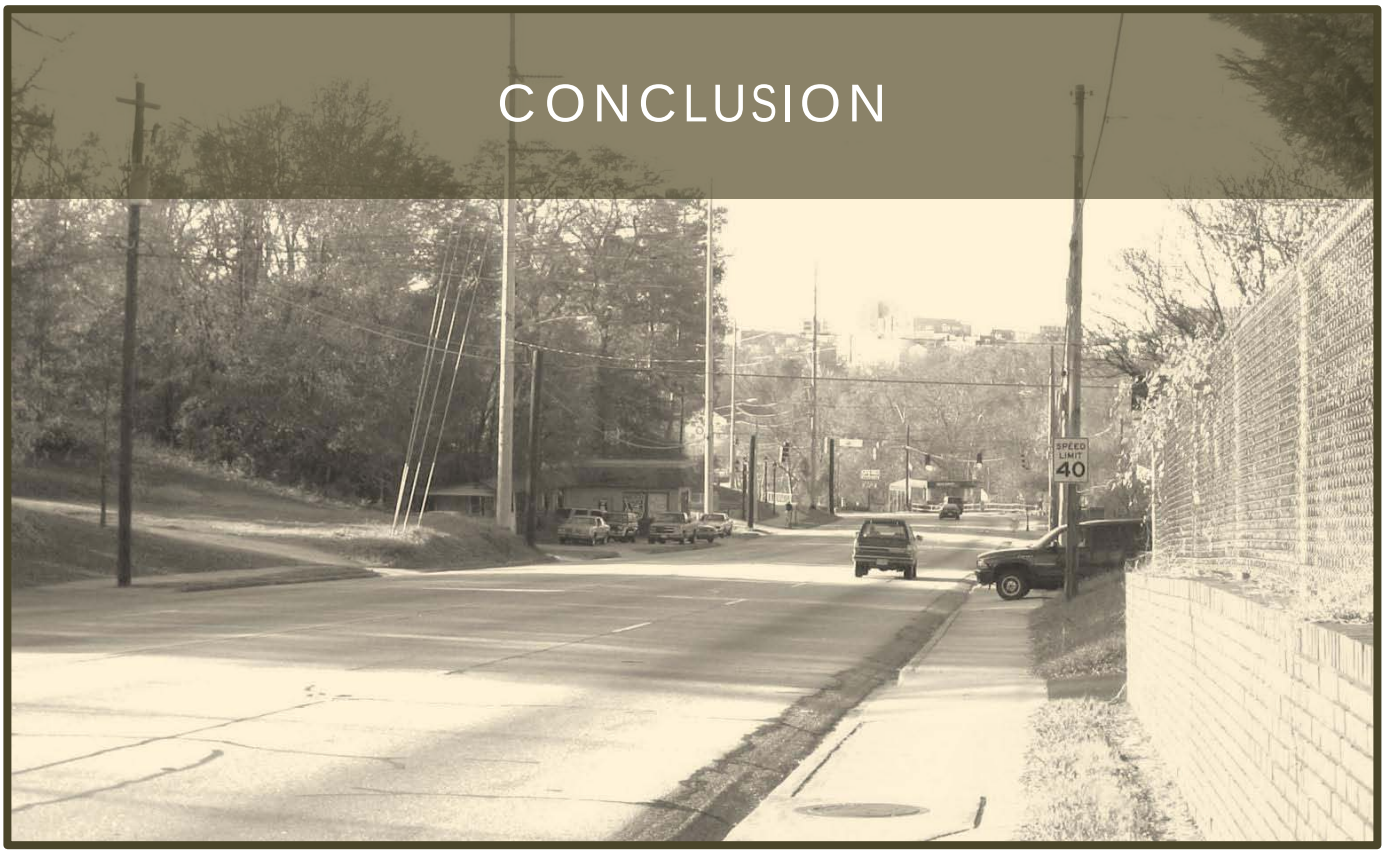
Phase II

Demographics	1. Coordinate with major employers such as UGA to maximize housing for employees in corridor neighborhoods.
	2. Incentivize employer clean commute reward programs.
Land Use	1. BUILDING CODE MODIFICATIONS Restrictive state building codes may hinder some mixed-use development with overly burdensome separation requirements for newly constructed mixed-use or live-work developments. Communication and coordination with state officials/legislative delegation to redress these obstacles may help to eliminate disincentives.
	2. ANNOUNCE GREENSPACE CONNECTIONS A positive attribute of the Oak/Oconee corridor is its proximity to the Greenway and Dudley Park. Despite this proximity, connections to these greenspaces are not easily found. Enhanced wayfinding and a variety of potential landscape design interventions would improve access from the corridor to these greenspace areas.
	3. PURSUE SEMI-PUBLIC GREENSPACE POTENTIAL One opportunity for a semi-public park and/or bike –pedestrian connection between the Carr's Hill neighborhood (south of the Oak/Oconee Corridor) and East Campus Road may be the Oconee Hill Cemetery. A remarkable greenspace asset to the community, this area is largely inaccessible to the public. Communication among the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government, UGA, and the Cemetery Board would be an essential first-step toward greater public access to this resource and specific concerns such as additional resources and design measure to ensure security and monitoring through a public-private agreement. Another form of semi-public greenspace would involve the establishment of community gardens in strategic locations.
Stormwater Management	1. Explore the possibility of reusing a percentage of captured stormwater on site (irrigation, water features, etc). Consideration should be given to codifying Low-Impact Development (LID) standards as part of the local development regulations.
Right-of-Way Design	1. Road realignments should be considered where feasible in order to promote multi-modal safety and ease traffic congestion. Not all existing intersections along the corridor need to be realigned, but one such example is the intersection of Old Winterville Road and Grove Street.
	2. Potential exists to create decorative knee-high retaining walls where applicable along the corridor that will help create a pedestrian boundary adjacent to private property, and will also delineate physical confinement of the corridor within the right-of-way.
	3. Consider the placement of utilities within the right-of-way in place of easements upon adjacent private parcels. This would allow for more usable space on privately-owned property, more street tree planting and a less "cluttered" streetscape
	4. Future North Oconee River-Oconee Street bridge improvements should include ample sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure. Particularly with the sidewalk design, Greenway connections and wayfinding devices should be prioritized.
	5. Sidewalks along the corridor located to the west of the North Oconee River should be a minimum of 10' wide wherever possible. This portion of the corridor should also provide at least a 5' verge between the sidewalk and the street in all instances where possible. All sidewalks east of the North Oconee River should be at least 5' in width, and provide at least a 2' verge between the sidewalk and the street.
	6. Incorporate unique street name signs on decorative poles, and combine various types of street signage on the poles, as an alternative to multiple poles along the corridor. Overhead street name signage should be retained to allow for clear visibility from traffic.
	7. Install pedestrian-level lighting to improve safety along the entire corridor.

Transportation	1. Consider a "Heritage Walk" such as the CAPPA-recommended "FootPrince" or other manner of pedestrian education along the Oak/Oconee corridor that describes certain historical events pertaining to the corridor.
	2. Provide amenities that promote and support pedestrian use of the corridor. Examples include benches, drinking fountains, and public art.
	3. Specific signage should be placed at the intersection of Oak Street and Poplar Street that directs pedestrians to Dudley Park. Such wayfinding signage should be common throughout the corridor in both size and material. Similarly, neighborhood markers could also be placed throughout the corridor to signify neighborhood gateways.
	4. While bike lanes or other types of bicycle facilities would benefit the corridor, right-of-way width and cartway width vary substantially along the corridor. Traffic speeds and counts, and limited sight distance, will also have substantial impact on potential bike facility options.
	5. One or more connections should be made between the corridor and the future Rails-to-Trails project.
	6. Pursue negotiations with the Oconee Hill Cemetery for pedestrian access to and through the property during specific hours and on designated, secured routes.
	7. Acquire rights to the railroad spur's continuation in an effort to connect the Multi-Modal Center to UGA.
	8. A reduction in speed limit should be considered in designated areas
Parking	1. Consideration should be given to adjusting parking ratios to provide reuse or redevelopment incentives and flexibility, particularly for mixed use development.
	2. Various means of public/private cooperative financing should be considered to encourage possible parking structure development. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs), and Tax Adjustment Districts (TADs) are a mechanism utilized in a number of communities that may be viable for Prince Avenue. Through varying means, each program seeks to return a prorated portion of funding assessed on properties within the targeted area to the area to pay for predetermined improvements intended to improve the targeted area as a whole.
	3. Incentives need to be created to encourage redevelopment of parking lots increasing the number of parking lot trees to allow no more than 7 spaces in a row without a tree.
	4. Where service stations/convenience stores with pump islands exist, pump island parking should be counted toward minimum parking requirements. Such parking needs to be screened from all streets with low shrubbery to minimize appearance of vehicles' headlights while allowing for security.
	5. Landscape buffers should be required for parking areas adjacent to or across a local street from residential uses.
	6. Develop structured parking design standards, with the understanding that each site will have unique challenges and solutions that an individual ordinance cannot anticipate.
	7. Assess performance and usage of the Park and Ride lot planned for construction near the intersection of Oak Street and Grove Street adjacent to the 10 Loop interchange. Consider construction of future phases associated with the Oconee Street Park and Ride Lot Master Plan.
	8. Access across the Oak/Oconee corridor for pedestrian movement would be helpful particularly at the eastern end. This should be considered along with the possible re-alignment of Grove Street Extension and Old Winterville Road and Elbert Street.
	9. Encouraging aggregation of some of the smaller parcels, particularly for shared parking, increased landscaping and better stormwater management, could support higher density mixed-use development, and bring positive economic and aesthetic changes to the corridor.
Lighting & Signage	1. Stylistic changes to street and directional signs would enhance the corridor character areas.

	Local artist design of these signs could further instill the distinctive defining features of the character areas along the corridor.
	2. The many topographical challenges of this corridor limit traditional lighting options. However, creatively placed LED lighting in sconces or under capstones in retaining walls adjacent to sidewalks would likely complement and define the gateway sensibility of the corridor while enhancing the pedestrian realm.
	3. Along the eastern portion of the corridor, up to the bypass, Staff recommends standard pedestrian-level lighting. The potential River Road/Grove Street connection bridge, if completed, would only strengthen this need. An aesthetic public investment could perhaps help to spur private investment and redevelopment.
	4. Creatively illuminate the North Oconee River bridge to serve pedestrian traffic while accenting on the main intersections with the Greenway and River.
	5. Create more visual markers for wayfinding at a pedestrian level to encourage and enhance the pedestrian experience.
	6. Replace existing street lighting with newer, more efficient models. Though the initial cost is higher, Staff recommends that any new lighting be energy efficient, LED or solar-powered lighting. As a long-term infrastructural investment, these energy efficient lights would recoup some of the expenses by way of lower energy costs.
	7. Work with Georgia Power to improve the quality of the light from these fixtures. Eliminating light trespass, improving the light quality, and reducing glare would help to make for a safer, more attractive corridor.
	8. Pursue alternatives to easement and pole-based electrical utilities. Utilities placed within the right of way and underneath sidewalk would create a much more visually appealing corridor, while having fewer conflicts with potential pedestrian and street lighting.
	9. Install mid-block pedestrian lighting along the corridor. In most cases, the existing lighting at intersections should be sufficient for those immediate areas.
	10. Consider “buying out” billboards in important vista areas to preserve the view of downtown.

CONCLUSION



The importance of Oak and Oconee Streets as a gateway into Athens, as a critical transportation route for residents, workers, and visitors, and as a vibrant conduit for commerce and culture are unquestionable. The future of this corridor is at an important juncture. Development activity along the corridor has been sporadic in recent years, but intense interest in the redevelopment of the vacant properties between the North Oconee River and Downtown Athens has the potential to spur tremendous growth along the roadway and adjacent areas. The possibility that the route could be transferred from State to local control offers another opportunity for the corridor to be re-shaped. These transformative events will require careful consideration and coordinated planning in order to ensure success and the realization of the greatest benefits possible for those that live, work, or otherwise utilize and enjoy the corridor. This study is an attempt to present a unified review of the issues and opportunities facing the Oak and Oconee Street corridor, and to carry forward the valuable input and analysis of previous efforts into a contemporary discussion regarding the roadway's future.

During the period designated for the development of the Oak and Oconee Streets Corridor Study project, deliberate attention will be paid to coordinating with institutions, businesses, property owners and community-based organizations that can serve as partners with the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government in the implementation of the Study's' goals and strategies. The Corridor Study's resulting Implementation Schedule will include opportunities for future collaboration with identified institutions, businesses, property owners and community-based organizations located within or affected by the improvement of each corridor study area. During the ensuing three-year performance period and beyond, it is expected that appropriate short-term items from the study will be implemented with the cooperation of the identified partners and possible other partners identified as each recommended work item progresses. When appropriate, all available opportunities to provide organizational support to those sub-contractors, consultants, and community-based organizations that are actively involved in the implementation of portions of the Corridor Study's resulting Implementation Schedule will be pursued.

It is also important to note that the planning process itself that generated the study will result in a more educated and engaged citizenry, and the identification and mobilization of institutional and corporate partners. When organized and administered properly, community planning processes like this yield benefits beyond the realization of the items included in the Implementation Schedule. It has been demonstrated on numerous occasions that when Athens-Clarke County citizens actively participate in community planning efforts, some of those participants are more likely to go on to serve on appointed Athens-Clarke County boards or seek election to local public office. Their experiences in those planning efforts serve as a positive touchstone for their roles as community leaders. One important end result of this phenomenon is the continued reinforcement of future community planning processes and a deeper understanding of the importance of community planning's role in local public policy development and resource allocation.