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Kevin D. Keller

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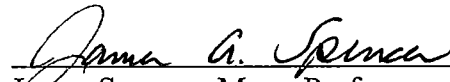
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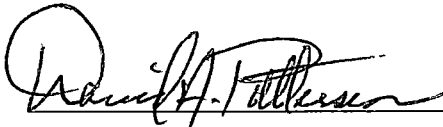
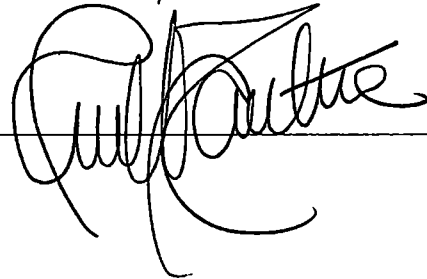
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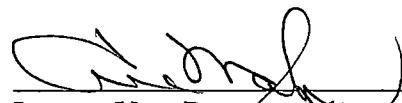
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James Spencer, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
And recommend it's acceptance.

Accepted for the Council


Interim Vice Provost and
Dean of the Graduate School

THE UTILIZATION OF NEW URBANISM
IN LOCAL LAND USE PLANNING
A CASE STUDY OF THE TOWNSHIP CONCEPT IN CHEROKEE COUNTY,
GEORGIA

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science in Planning
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kevin D Keller
December 2000

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the utilization of New Urbanism concepts into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan in Cherokee County, GA. Specifically, the study addresses the impact of the Township Concept in Cherokee County that was presented as a development model in Cherokee County's 2017 Comprehensive Plan.

The study was conducted as a case study and included a literature review, research of local government records, and interviews of persons who played a significant role in the development and implementation of the Township Concept. The initiation and implementation of Township Planning Process in three individual communities were specifically researched. The study also looks at the overall political impact of the Township Concept and its future viability as a land use policy for Cherokee County.

While Townships were proposed for fourteen different communities in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, only two were officially established. Two Township Planning efforts failed in part due to the negative opinions many citizens had towards the Township Concept and because of the divisiveness that ensued within those communities during the Township Planning Process. Many of the negative attitudes expressed towards the Township Concept can be attributed to certain misunderstandings of the Township Concept, lack of education regarding the Township Concept, and in part to the values and preferences of many of the County's citizens which conflicted with the principles of New Urbanism. The experiences of the failed Township Planning

efforts would play a significant part in the loss of political and public support for the Township Concept. A shift in the political makeup of the County would eventually lead to public policy decisions that would virtually eliminate the proposed Townships from the Future Land Use Map and the Township Concept in general.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to better manage and plan growth, many governments are starting to find the principals of New Urbanism to be appealing alternatives to traditional land-use policy. New Urbanism is a planning theory that in part promotes the creation of pedestrian friendly communities by combining businesses and homes in small, dense communities. While there have been many examples of model cities throughout the country adopting New Urbanism ideas, the vast majority of developing communities have maintained very traditional, less restrictive, automobile oriented, and segregated land use zoning concepts.

Cherokee County, Georgia is a rapidly growing County that lies on the northern edge of Metropolitan Atlanta. Beginning in 1996, Cherokee County Commissioners and Planners took innovative steps to try to control and manage growth in a manner consistent with "smart growth". The result of that effort was a pioneering land-use plan based on New Urbanism concepts. The land-use plan mapped out growth for the County until the year 2017. The plan was unique in comparison to former land-use practice in its encouragement of mixed-use townships where persons could live, work, eat, and play within a pedestrian accessible community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the introduction of a land-use plan in Cherokee County utilizing various New Urbanism concepts. Specifically, the study examines components of the plan promoting the development of Townships. Townships are modeled after old-time communities that consisted of a mixed use of commercial, residential, institutional, and recreational uses all within pedestrian accessible confines¹. The underlying theory of the township concept was to prevent sprawl-type development from spreading throughout the County by containing the majority of new growth within the township boundaries. The township concept represents many elements of New Urbanism, a planning theory that tries to create pedestrian friendly communities by combining businesses and homes in small, dense communities. Based on the Cherokee County case study, the paper focuses on the conditions and factors that impacted the implementation of the plan's township components. The primary research question is: What impact did the introduction of New Urbanism ideals, specifically the township concept, have on Cherokee County, GA?

The analysis consists of an examination of public policy decisions on land use and the implementation of the Township Concept that has occurred both during the development and after the adoption of the Land-Use plan.

¹ According to the American Heritage Dictionary, a Township is defined as a subdivision of a county in most northeast and Midwest U S States, having the status of a unit of local government with varying governmental powers. In the case of Cherokee County, the term Township represents an unincorporated planning unit in the form of a concentrated development node. Georgia law makes no provision for Townships as a unit of local government.

It reviews the actions, comments, and opinions of the politicians and citizens that ultimately influenced the success or failure of implementing the township concept in Cherokee County. The study includes assessments and conclusions based on the findings discovered through the research.

Secondary research questions that provide background information and support the ultimate goal of the study include.

- 1 What is New Urbanism?
 - A What are the basic principles?
 - B What is its relevance to land use planning?
 - C. How it's principles relate to the land-use plan adopted by Cherokee County?

- 2 What were the issues in Cherokee County, GA and Metropolitan Atlanta relating to growth and development that led to the development of the township plan?

3. How was the Township Concept received by those citizens and other parties that were to be most affected?

4. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Township Planning Process adopted in Cherokee County?

Methodology

Data concerning public policy decisions on land use were gathered from the time the land-use plan was in the development stage through 1999. The data was retrieved from records located in the Cherokee County Planning Department and the Board of Commissioners Office. Insight regarding public attitudes, political attitudes, political processes, and government staff processes was obtained from official local government documents, newspaper articles, and interviews. A literature review was conducted to obtain a general knowledge and background of the principals of New Urbanism, the Atlanta Metropolitan area, and Cherokee County.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW URBANISM MOVEMENT

Basic Principles

“New Urbanism” refers to a loose group of ideas put forth over the last decade that are intended to revive metropolitan areas and promote better communities. The term “New Urbanism” began to arise in the late 1980’s. Based on development patterns prior to World War II, the New Urbanism seeks to reintegrate the components of modern life – housing, workplace, shopping and recreation-into compact, pedestrian friendly, mixed-use neighborhoods linked by transit and set in a larger open space framework (Congress of the New Urbanism, 1998). The New Urbanism is set forth as an alternative to suburban sprawl, a form of low density development that consists of large, single use “pods” office parks, housing subdivisions, apartment complexes, and shopping centers all of which must be accessed by the private automobile (Congress of the New Urbanism, 1998). New Urbanists claim that traditional zoning laws in the United States, intended to control the adverse effects of industry, have developed into a system that erodes civic life, outlaws the human scale, and defeats tradition and authenticity.

One of the nations largest and most outspoken advocates of the New Urbanism is the Congress of the New Urbanism. Formed in 1993 and united in a desire to provide an alternative to “sprawl” type forms of growth, the Congress of the New Urbanism represents a coalition of architects, urban designers, developers, construction managers,

government officials and others According to the Congress of the New Urbanism, the major principals of New Urbanism are

All development should be in the form of compact, walkable neighborhoods and/or districts. Such places should have clearly defined centers and edges. The center should include a public space – such as a square, green, or an important street intersection – and public buildings such as a library, church or community center, a transit stop and retail business

Neighborhoods and districts should be compact and detailed to encourage pedestrian activity without excluding automobiles all together. Streets should be laid out as an interconnected network forming coherent blocks where building entrances front the street rather than parking lots. Public transit should connect neighborhoods to each other, and the surrounding region.

A diverse mix of activities (residences, shops, schools, workplaces, and parks, etc.) should occur in proximity. Also, a wide spectrum of housing options should enable people of a broad range of incomes, ages, and family types to live within a single neighborhood district. Large developments featuring a single or use or single market segment should be avoided.

Civic buildings, such as government offices, churches and libraries, should be sited in prominent locations Open spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, squares, and greenbelts should be provided in convenient locations throughout the neighborhood (Congress of the New Urbanism, 1998).

New Urbanism attempts to both break the tradition of sprawling suburban developments that have pervaded the American landscape over the past 50 years, and more idealistically to improve community relationships through designing new developments around the pedestrian vs the automobile. Two important directions exist within New Urbanism planning. One direction attempts to incorporate New Urbanism principles

into new developments. New Urbanism advocates generally concede that new developments will and must occur; however, they believe with a heightened attention to design and the public pedestrian, new communities can become more humane places to live. The second direction in New Urbanism focuses on infill development in existing communities that promote civic awareness. This direction finds a significant appeal among those planners who strive to prevent neighborhood degeneration that results in a cycle of suburban flight (Shearer).

One of the major objectives of New Urbanism is the creation of a sense of community. New Urbanists assert that environmental variables affect the frequency and quality of social contacts, and that this in turn creates group formation and social support (Talen, 1999). Group formation is enhanced by passive social contact (creating settings which support contact), proximity (facilitating closeness by arranging space appropriately), and appropriate space (properly designing and placing shared spaces)(Talen, 1999).

New Urbanists attempt to strengthen a sense of community typically through either integrating private residential space with surrounding public space, and careful design and placement of public space. A Sense of community is created through small-scale, defined neighborhoods with a clear boundary and a clear center. When small scales combine with increased residential density, face-to-face interaction is further promoted (Talen, 1999). Personal space, in a sense is sacrificed in order to increase the density of acquaintanceship, and this concentration nurtures a community spirit (Langdon, 1994). Streets are also seen to have a social purpose. They are to be thought of as public space

– much more than voids between buildings – and therefore must be made to accommodate the pedestrian (Calthorpe, 1993). Therefore, since any increase in pedestrian activity is supposed to increase the chance for social encounter and promote sense of place, then streets are to be a place where pedestrians feel safe so that they are encouraged to use sidewalks. Public space, also, provides a location for chance encounters, which serves to strengthen community bonds. Public spaces in the form of parks and civic centers also serve as symbols of civic pride and a sense of place, which promote the notion of community. If public spaces are a pleasure to inhabit, they will be used, and their usefulness as promoters of a sense of community will flourish (Talen, 1999). Increased community interaction and awareness are also theorized to occur with mixed land-uses. When places of residence are located within direct proximity with places to work, shop, contact between peoples of different incomes, races, or ages is encouraged because people will tend to walk more vs. driving. With this increased social interaction, New Urbanists claim that a greater community bond will be a result.

Critiques of the New Urbanism Movement

With the principles and theories of New Urbanism becoming more publicized and embraced over the last few years, the movement, predictably, has its critics. Whether or not the criticism has any validity, it is important to note them as it raises important issues and questions concerning the applicability of New Urbanism in real world practice. Examples of some of the criticisms, questions, and issues, raised as critique of the movement are presented in the following paragraphs.

Many critics of New Urbanism point out that even if New Urbanism could capture both political and popular support for their physical planning prescriptions, the results would do little to change the metropolitan landscape (Downs, 1994). The reason for this view is that the urban capital is already in place and changes very slowly. Hence, the practical consequences of New Urbanism continue to be a small number of communities accommodating a miniscule proportion of metropolitan population growth. Critics therefore, conclude that New Urbanist communities then generally amount to a little more than a pleasant living environment for a few thousand households (Gordon, 1998).

As stated by the Congress of the New Urbanism, New Urbanist communities are intended to have a wide array of personal and consumer services, workplaces, along with places of residence. Peter Gordon, in a speech to the meeting of the American Collegiate Schools of Planning offers a critique to this aspect of New Urbanism. He points to the Kentlands, a New Urbanism labeled planned community, where commercial development lags far behind. He states that while workplace development did occur in many of these communities, they rarely catered to the local population. Due to skill mismatch and other reasons, the overwhelmingly tendency was for the residents to work elsewhere while the jobs in the town were filled by commuters from the outside. As a result, the strategy created more commuting than less (Gordon, 1998).

In terms of housing development, New Urbanism calls for high-density development for residential uses. However, surveys conducted by Fannie Mae have shown that

regardless of income or race, 75-80% of households would prefer to live in single-family houses with a private yard (Gordon, 1998). Thus, the argument is that while it may be possible to design and produce high-density single-family developments in the suburbs that are compatible with these preferences, it is probably impossible at the close infill sites promoted by the New Urbanists. Plus, if New Urbanist type developments were in demand by consumers, they would be built with great frequency. Also, besides consumer preferences there is also the issue of community-wide acceptance as well. Gordon points out that there are many examples of community and political objections to high-density development, usually on traffic generation grounds (Gordon, 1998)

As mentioned previously in this chapter, one of the major benefits of New Urbanism promoted by its proponents is the strengthening of the sense of community. But as Emily Talen suggests there is a possibility that New Urbanists miscalculated the strength of need for gaining a sense of community (Talen, 1999). Or in other words, is there a great desire on the part of the populace to strengthen community based on the methods supported by the New Urbanists? Many have claimed that it is a myth that neighborhoods provide a sense of stability and orientation, and that neighborhoods are nothing more than temporary staging grounds for the upward and outward mobility of their residents (Talen, 1999). Ms. Talen theorizes that the robust community life presumed to be engendered by traditional pre-modern forms was to some extent dictated by scarcity. Lack of money and cars meant a reliance on neighborhood level consumption and recreation. On the other hand, the existence of surplus wealth allows for a wider geographical range of contact.

Ms Talen also theorizes that the neighborhood diminishes in importance in increasing social position. More specifically, high-income groups deem the proximity of goods and services and interaction with neighbors as essential to a much lower degree than low and moderate-income groups (Talen, 1999). The intricacy of this issue is reinforced by the fact that the majority of the market for New Urbanism labeled development generally caters to more affluent persons. Ms Talen concludes that the social claims of New Urbanists are weakened by the fact that sense of community, specifically a shared emotional connection, have been found to exist and even thrive under a variety of conditions, some of which appear adverse to New Urbanism design theology (Talen, 1999)

New Urbanism calls for a mixing of housing preferences for a wide range of socioeconomic levels. Yet many of the critics point to demonstration communities that have not achieved these goals. At Seaside, a planned community in Florida under the New Urbanism label, the 1996 average sales price reached \$503, 500 (Garvin, 1998). Another similar community, the Laguna West area in California, has a household income two-thirds higher than in Sacramento County, where it is located (Gordon, 1998). As thought by David Harvey, New Urbanism builds an image of community and a rhetoric of place based civic pride and consciousness for those who do not need it, while abandoning those that do due to their underclass fate (Harvey, 1997).

New Urbanism vs Neo-Traditional Development (TND)

In many of the critiques of New Urbanism, the movement is seen simply as nostalgia, a re-creation of small town America mainly for the rich. In response to many of the critiques and assumptions about New Urbanism, Peter Calthorpe suggested in a article in the Denver Post that nostalgia is not entirely what New Urbanism is proposing, that it's goals are much grander, more complete and challenging (Calthorpe, 1999). Calthorpe suggests that many of the misconceptions of New Urbanism are often created by misinterpreting one of its precursors, neo-traditional development, and confusing it with New Urbanism (Calthorpe, 1999). Since TND did little to define and address the regional order that must confine, direct, and correct new development, it's products were thus criticized as a new style of sprawl. And, most TND developments were high in price, reinforcing the image of an escape from the complexities of modern life available only to the upper class. Calthorpe insists that two fundamental principles of New Urbanism address the issues of affordability and location that in many instances are often ignored in TND developments

One principle is diversity, which entails a broad range of housing opportunities as well as multiple land uses within each neighborhood. Diversity in this instance shall include affordable and expensive, small and large, rental and ownership, single and family housing (Calthorpe, 1999). While Calthorpe admits that mixing income groups in this way would be unorthodox and opposed in many communities, it is a central tenant of New Urbanism and often overlooked in many TND developments. A good example of New Urbanism communities where the principle of income diversity is well

implemented is the HOPE VI projects supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In these developments, former public housing is eliminated and replaced with attractive privately run housing that includes a mix of incomes ranging from the affluent to the public housing tenant. This is accomplished through establishing a proportion of the units that are private market rate and the other proportion that are occupied by tenants eligible for public housing assistance.

The second principle of New Urbanism that Calthorpe suggests pushes beyond neo-traditional design is a call for regional design. New Urbanism proposes to create a definitive physical map of the metropolis; its boundaries, its open space hierarchy, its connections and center (Calthorpe, 1999). While the concept of designing a region is outdated and rarely used in practice, it is central to addressing the issues of where development should occur and how it should fit into the big picture. Without regional form givers like urban growth boundaries, greenbelts, transit systems, and designated urban centers, Calthorpe concludes that even well designed development can be counter-productive (Calthorpe, 1999).

In summary, TND developments are often micro in scale and simply present a physical layout similar to New Urbanism design principles without addressing many of the larger and social components of New Urbanism philosophy. That is not to say that all developments under the label of TND or New Urbanism fail to uphold the spirit of New Urbanism. The complexity in evaluating neo-traditional and New Urbanism

developments is that the entire utopia exposed by New Urbanism might be too large to be successfully applied to one single development or community.

Neo-Tradition Developments are generally viewed as popular examples of New Urbanism. Such developments are typically built from scratch, isolated, cater to a particular market, and are controlled from a design and structural sense by one developer. One Neo-Traditional Development popularly used as an example of New Urbanism is Kentlands. Kentlands is located on the historic Kent family farm on the edge of Gaithersburg, Maryland. Kentlands was designed in 1988 as a community of 1600 dwelling units with a projected population of 5,000 (Southworth, 1997). Kentlands is a new planned community that was designed by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberg. Duany and Zyberg were both hired by Joseph Alfordres, who was the principle developer of Kentlands (Andersen, 1991).

Kentlands, which is surrounded by Planned Unit Developments and auto-oriented commercial strips, is not an independent community but rather dependent on Gaithersburg, Maryland for its governance, most of its services, and jobs. Organized into several distinct neighborhoods, the community avoids the monotony and lack of local identity of mass-produced suburbs. Many of the characteristics of the Kentland development include strong architectural references to Federal, Classic Revival, and other styles. The grading and siting of buildings are sensitive to the natural setting and the community as a whole is on more of a pedestrian oriented scale unlike typical suburban developments that have an auto-oriented design. There is also provision of

alleys for garage access that has a major impact on street character by eliminating garage doors and driveways from streets (Southworth, 1997). The Kentlands development also has a mixed-use character built into it with the inclusion of an elementary school, apartments, corner shops, a large shopping center, and almost 1 million sq. ft. of offices in the development's final plans (Andersen, 1991).

Such New Urbanism examples like Kentlands contrast with the Township Concept in Cherokee County, where New Urbanism principles are sought to be incorporated into government policy and local development regulations. The Township Concept in Cherokee County also would apply to existing and established communities vs. the brand new community that was being created in the Kentlands example. Another difference is that the design and structure of the Kentlands development was under the sole control of one developer while the implementation of specific New Urbanism principles through the Township Concept in Cherokee County could only evolve through the input and consensus of a large number citizens and government leaders. Essentially, the Township Concept in Cherokee County represents a public policy guide while most Neo-Traditional developments like Kentlands represents one isolated, specific development.

Conclusion

New Urbanism is a grand and ambitious concept whose ideas are not easily measurable or tested. Its principles can be characterized as anything from controversial, over-ambitious, sky-in-the pie social engineering, or sound solutions to solving many the

problems facing metropolitan areas today. It is often difficult to clearly distinguish a community's effectiveness of promoting the principles of New Urbanism. Many of the communities or developments that label themselves as New Urbanism, while instituting many of the components of the theory, also fail to incorporate many of the others. This result should be commonplace in a planning theory that is both specific enough to spell out design guidelines at a micro scale and broad enough to include objectives touching upon social and cultural behavior and correcting precedents set by an urban form that has been in existence for over 50 years. Therefore, it could be deemed unrealistic for new developments or planning strategies that label themselves as New Urbanism to incorporate all aspects of the theory in order to be deemed successful. When New Urbanism ideas are proposed either in a micro situation such as a specific development or in a growth strategy at a regional or county level, most often it will only embrace those ideas within New Urbanism that are relevant to addressing specific needs for a specific population and which can be realistically achieved. In the case of Cherokee County, the subject of this study, the township concept promoted in their land-use plan does not address or incorporate many of the aspects of New Urbanism. However, the aspects of the movement that Cherokee County did incorporate is significant enough that one could conclude that the land-use plan is of significant New Urbanism influence.

CHAPTER III

THE GREATER METROPOLITAN ATLANTA AREA

This chapter will present a brief synopsis of the Atlanta Region in regard to population, housing, employment trends, and growth and development issues. The purpose behind presenting information for the entire region is that generally, a specific community, or in this case a county, within a metropolitan area typically is directly affected or is a microcosm of the trends and issues related to the region as whole. The county that is at the center of this study, Cherokee County, is part of the Atlanta Metropolitan area and is therefore affected by the trends and issues associated with the region.

For the purposes of this study, the geographical boundaries of the Atlanta Region will be consistent with those used by the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), created in 1971 by local governments of the Atlanta Region, includes the counties of Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties. ARC is the official planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the region

History and Background

The city of Atlanta originated in 1837 under the name of Terminus and consisted of nothing more than a few houses centered around a train depot. The name Atlanta was given to the town in the 1850's. By the early 1850's, Atlanta served as a center of a network of rail lines that connected south and east to the Gulf and Atlantic coasts as

well as north and westward to the Ohio Valley. In a region with few railroads, the strategic intersection of so many lines gave Atlanta the basis to become a prominent city in the South (Newman, 1999). During the Civil War, Atlanta was burned to the ground by Union forces in 1864 but quickly rose from the ashes. By the 1880's city officials were successful in promoting Atlanta as the Gateway to the South, and by 1895, Atlanta was celebrating its rebirth as the Capital of the New South (Bullard, 1999).

Transportation has always been one of the key components that have helped Atlanta establish itself as a major city. Atlanta started as a rail hub in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century it also became the trucking hub of the southeast as well, aided by the number of interstate highways transecting the city. By the 1970's, Atlanta also became a major center for air transportation upon the construction of Hartsfield International Airport. Over the last twenty years the airport has emerged as one of the busiest in the world.

Today, Metropolitan Atlanta has emerged into a large metropolis and serves as the commercial and financial center of the southeastern United States, the regional center for federal operations, and the center for communications and transportation. With its many other desirable amenities, including a temperate climate and an abundance of moderately priced housing, new companies, industries, and persons continue to migrate to the region at a rapid rate.

Population Trends and Changes

The Atlanta Region has represented one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States over the last few decades. Between 1990 and 1996 Metro Atlanta moved from the 13th to the 11th largest metropolitan area in the United States. In comparison to the population of the region at the beginning of the century, there are over 11 times the number of people that live in the region as of 1998. More than 40 percent of the growth that has occurred in the 1990s has occurred since 1980. For comparison purposes, the population in 1900 was 274,912, in 1980 the population was 1,896,182, and by 1998 the population had risen to 3,110,600. This represents a percentage increase of 65% between 1980 and 1998. Table 1 shows how the region has grown in the century. Population changes in Table 1 are expressed as annual averages to aid comparison (ARC, 1998).

Table 1
Population of the Atlanta Region, 1900 - 1998

Year	Population	Average Annual Increase	
		Number	Percent
1900	274,912	-	-
1910	357,324	8,241	2.7
1920	437,557	8,023	2.0
1930	540,319	10,276	2.1
1940	620,034	7,972	1.4
1950	792,211	17,218	2.5
1960	1,093,220	30,101	3.3
1970	1,500,823	40,760	3.2
1980	1,896,182	39,536	2.4
1985	2,187,300	58,224	2.9
1990	2,557,800	74,100	3.2
1995	2,882,500	69,940	2.4
1996	2,954,400	71,900	2.5
1997	3,033,400	79,000	2.7
1998	3,110,600	77,200	2.5

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

Atlanta's current expansion developed in the post World War II era. In the decade of the 1950s and 1960s, the regions annual populations increase averaged above three percent. This rate was over double the rate of the decade of the 1930s and almost a percentage point higher than during World War II. During the 1970s, growth slowed to an annual rate of 2.4 percent. The growth rate accelerated again in the 1980s when the annual percentage increase grew to around three percent (ARC, 1998).

After a period of slower growth in the early 1990s, the region recorded its largest single-year population increase ever in 1994-1995, by adding an additional 105,000 persons. Growth since 1995 has been slower, up 71,900 between 1995 and 1996, 79,000 between 1996 and 1997, and up 77,200 during the past year (ARC, 1998). In total, the period between 1990 and 1998 saw the region add a total of 552,800 additional persons.

In the 1980s, over 70 percent of the population increase spread out north of the Atlanta core. In particular, the north and northwest region including Cobb and North Fulton Counties led the region in growth, adding more than 175,000 new residents. While the 1990s have seen an increase in the directional growth for the southern part of the region, the majority of growth remained on the north side. During the 1990s, the direction of regional growth shifted eastward from Cobb County to the north-northeast corridor that includes eastern Gwinnett County. Growth along that corridor in the 1990s included the addition of 112,622 residents (ARC, 1998). The census tracts with the greatest net population increases since 1990 all lie outside I-285, which serves as the Atlanta

Perimeter. West Cobb County, North Fulton, eastern Gwinnett, the I-575 corridor in Cherokee County, and the I-75 corridor in Henry County and the Peachtree City area in Fayette County led the region in attracting new residents in the 1990s. As of 1998, the region's most dense counties still remain the largest in population. Fulton County remains the largest county with 773,300 residents in 1998. DeKalb County remains second with a population of 589,600, and Cobb is third with 580,110. Gwinnett County, one of the fastest growing counties in the nation, ranks fourth with a population 499,200. Together, these four counties account for nearly four-fifths of the 1998 regional population (ARC, 1998).

Table 2 shows regional growth trends at the county level between 1970 and 1998. Table 3 illustrates the rank order of counties by population increase between 1990 and 1998. In regards to population growth at the county level in the 1990s, Henry County has led the region in rate of population growth with an average increase of 7.1 percent per year since 1990. Three counties, Cherokee, Gwinnett, and Fayette are closely tied for second with averages ranging from 4.2 to 4.4 percent per year. For absolute population increases during the 1990s decade, Gwinnett, Fulton, and Cobb have an overwhelming lead over the other 7 counties in the region. Between the years of 1990 and 1998, those three counties added a total of 341,900 new persons that represents 62% of the total absolute population increase in the 10 county Atlanta Region (ARC, 1998). The average density of the population of the region increased from 1.34 persons per acre to 1.63 in 1998 (see Table 4). DeKalb County is the most densely populated

Table 2
Total Population of the Atlanta Region by County

	1970	1980	1985	1990	1997	1998
Atlanta Region	1,500,823	1,896,182	2,187,300	2,557,800	3,033,400	3,110,600
Cherokee	31,059	51,699	68,100	91,000	122,300	128,700
Clayton	98,126	150,357	159,900	184,100	209,500	213,100
Cobb	196,793	297,718	374,000	453,400	535,000	550,100
DeKalb	514,387	483,024	511,000	553,800	594,400	598,600
Douglas	28,659	54,573	63,600	71,700	88,400	91,500
Fayette	11,364	29,043	42,900	62,800	84,100	87,400
Fulton	605,210	589,904	630,400	670,800	760,100	773,300
Gwinnett	72,349	166,808	249,600	356,500	478,900	499,200
Henry	23,724	36,309	44,300	59,200	95,900	102,700
Rockdale	18,152	36,747	43,500	54,500	64,800	66,000
Atlanta	495,039	424,922	430,000	415,200	426,300	426,600
Average Annual Change						
	1970 to 1980	1980 to 1985	1985 to 1990	1990 to 1997	1997 to 1998	1998
Atlanta Region	39,536	58,224	74,100	67,943	77,200	69,100
Cherokee	2,064	3,280	4,580	4,471	6,400	4,713
Clayton	5,223	1,909	4,840	3,629	3,600	3,625
Cobb	10,093	15,256	15,880	11,657	15,100	12,088
DeKalb	6,764	5,595	8,560	5,800	4,200	5,600
Douglas	2,591	1,805	1,620	2,386	3,100	2,475
Fayette	1,768	2,771	3,980	3,043	3,300	3,075
Fulton	-1,531	8,099	8,080	12,757	13,200	12,813
Gwinnett	9,446	16,558	21,380	17,486	20,300	17,838
Henry	1,259	1,598	2,980	5,243	6,800	5,438
Rockdale	1,860	1,351	2,200	1,471	1,200	1,438
Atlanta	-7,012	1,016	-2,960	1,586	300	1,425
Average Annual Percentage Increase						
	1970 to 1980	1980 to 1985	1985 to 1990	1990 to 1997	1997 to 1998	1990 to 1998
Atlanta Region	2.4	2.9	3.2	2.5	2.5	2.5
Cherokee	5.2	5.7	6.0	4.3	5.2	4.4
Clayton	4.4	1.2	2.9	1.9	1.7	1.8
Cobb	4.2	4.7	3.9	2.4	2.8	2.4
DeKalb	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.0	0.7	1.0
Douglas	6.7	3.1	2.4	3.0	3.5	3.1
Fayette	9.8	8.1	7.9	4.3	3.9	4.2
Fulton	-0.3	1.3	1.3	1.8	1.7	1.8
Gwinnett	8.7	8.4	7.4	4.3	4.2	4.3
Henry	4.3	4.1	6.0	7.1	7.1	7.1
Rockdale	7.3	3.4	4.6	2.5	1.9	2.4
Atlanta	-1.5	0.2	-0.7	0.4	0.1	0.3
Source Atlanta Regional Commission						

Table 3
Rank Order of Counties by Population Increase, 1990-1998

Rank	County	1990 to 1998 Change in Population	
		Number	Percent
	Atlanta Region	552,800	21.6
1	Gwinnett	142,700	40.0
2	Fulton	102,500	15.3
3	Cobb	96,700	21.3
4	DeKalb	44,800	8.1
5	Henry	43,500	73.5
6	Cherokee	37,700	41.4
7	Clayton	29,000	15.8
8	Fayette	24,600	39.2
9	Douglas	19,800	27.6
10	Rockdale	11,500	21.1

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

Table 4
Population Density by County, 1998 and 1990 (Persons per acre)

	Land Area Acres	1998		1990	
		Population	Density	Population	Density
Atlanta Region	1,911,396	3,110,600	1.63	2,557,800	1.34
Cherokee	271,200	128,700	0.47	91,000	0.34
Clayton	91,294	213,100	2.33	184,100	2.02
Cobb	217,741	550,100	2.53	453,400	2.08
DeKalb	171,707	598,600	3.49	553,800	3.23
Douglas	127,560	91,500	0.72	71,700	0.56
Fayette	126,333	87,400	0.69	62,800	0.50
Fulton	338,364	773,300	2.29	670,800	1.98
Gwinnett	277,032	499,200	1.80	356,500	1.29
Henry	206,522	102,700	0.50	59,200	0.29
Rockdale	83,645	66,000	0.79	54,500	0.65

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

County with 3.49 persons per acre. Cherokee and Henry Counties are the least densely populated in the region, with 0.47 and 0.50 persons per acre respectively. The region's most populous county, Fulton, has more residents than DeKalb, but also has more land area.

Even though most of the City of Atlanta, with its density of more than five persons per acre, is located in central Fulton, less developed areas north and south of the city lower the county's density to 2.29 persons per acre. Cobb, Clayton, and DeKalb counties all have higher densities than Fulton (ARC, 1998).

Housing Trends and Changes

Between 1980 and 1990 the number of housing units in the Atlanta Region grew from 721,266 to 1,052,430 representing a percentage change of 45.9 percent. Between 1990 and 1998, the Atlanta Region added 228,573 units, representing a 21.7 percent increase. Gwinnett County led the region over this eight-year period, adding 58,995 units. One of every four units built in the region was built in Gwinnett. Fulton ranked second with an increase of 43,216 units, Cobb third with 40,917 units. Together, these three counties account for just under two-thirds of the region's net increase in housing units since 1990, and almost 60 percent of the region's total 1998 housing inventory (ARC, 1998).

Table 5 illustrates 1998 estimates for number and percentage change of housing units by structure type for the ten counties. Between 1990 and 1998 the largest total increase in housing units were in the north part of the Atlanta area. However, the county with

Table 5
Number of Housing Units by County, 1980 to 1998

	Total Housing Units			Percentage Change	
	1998	1990	1980	1990-1998	1980-1990
Atlanta	1,281,003	1,052,430	721,266	21.7	45.9
Region					
Cherokee	48,178	33,840	17,894	42.4	89.1
Clayton	82,708	71,926	52,989	15.0	35.7
Cobb	230,789	189,872	113,271	21.5	67.6
DeKalb	253,948	231,520	181,803	9.7	27.3
Douglas	33,861	26,495	17,746	27.8	49.3
Fayette	31,649	22,428	9,608	41.1	133.4
Fulton	340,719	297,503	245,585	14.5	21.1
Gwinnett	196,603	137,608	57,982	42.9	137.3
Henry	38,161	21,275	12,244	79.4	73.8
Rockdale	24,387	19,963	12,144	22.2	64.4
Source: Atlanta Regional Commission					

the largest percentage increase, Henry County, lies on the south side. The total number of housing units in four of the regions counties, Henry, Fayette, Cherokee and Gwinnett, were all up by more than one-third in the 1990s. Gwinnett's increase this decade, however, is well below the 137 percent increase recorded in the 1980s (ARC, 1998)

The region's mix of new single family, multifamily, and mobile home units mirrors the demand for housing units appropriate to different household sizes, though it may lag behind the market. Over-construction of multifamily units in the late 1980's, changes in tax laws, and low mortgage interest rates combined to cause single families to dominate new construction in the 1990s (ARC, 1998). According to the estimates, in 1998 single-family units account for two-thirds of the housing stock in the Atlanta region. In Cherokee, Douglas, Fayette, Henry, and Rockdale counties single family units accounted for nearly 90 percent of the net increase in housing units since 1990. Multifamily units did increase their share of new construction between 1996 and 1997. Nearly a third of the 40,817 units added to the region's inventory that year were multifamily. Over 1998, however, multifamily units share of the net increase fell to 26 percent. As a result, the multifamily unit's share of the region's housing inventory in 1998, 30.4 percent is about the same as in 1995. Since 1990, 88 percent of new multifamily units were added in the region's five core counties (Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett) (ARC, 1998)

Employment Trends

After experiencing a net loss in jobs during the first two years of the 1990s, the region has experienced strong job growth from 1992 to 1997. During that time period the region added a total of 360,000 jobs for an average of 72,000 per year (ARC, 1998). Table 6 summarizes changes in the region's employment by major industry group between the years 1980 and 1997. The 1975 national recession was the region's most serious economic setback since WW II. The effect of the recession caused a net out-migration of workers and families from the Atlanta region.

The 1990 recession, while slowing population growth significantly, was not enough to actually reverse the migration stream into the region. Many analysts expected job growth to pause after the 1996 Olympics. There was a slowing of the growth in the City of Atlanta, but for the region as a whole, the annual increase in jobs was slightly higher for the year following the Olympics than for the year preceding the Olympics (ARC, 1998)

Eight of the region's ten counties added more jobs in 1997 than in 1996. Fulton County, which includes most of the City of Atlanta, added only 13,100 jobs in 1997 after a 28,100-job increase in the previous year. Growth in Henry County fell by only 50 jobs from 2,200 to 2,150 (ARC, 1998). Between 1995 and 1996, Fulton County was the region's fastest growing county. The slow down in Atlanta dropped Fulton to third place in 1997. Cobb County led the region between 1996 and 1997 with 17,100 new

Table 6
Employment by Major Industry Group, 1980-1997

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997
Atlanta Region	901,157	1,146,567	1,426,000	1,640,000	1,706,000	1,774,000
Misc	3,084	5,940	8,000	10,400	11,000	12,000
Const	48,768	69,210	64,300	69,500	79,500	80,600
Manf	135,923	157,297	153,900	169,000	167,700	170,600
TCU	82,654	97,317	126,500	143,000	148,600	154,100
Wholesale	82,525	116,107	139,100	147,200	153,200	159,700
Trade						
Retail Trade	145,654	198,910	261,500	297,200	311,100	331,000
FIRE	71,737	87,141	113,800	117,700	121,000	124,700
Services	181,549	246,593	349,700	461,300	488,700	514,500
Govt	149,263	168,052	209,200	224,700	225,200	226,800
Average Annual Net Change						
	1980 to 1985	1985 to 1990	1990 to 1995	1995 to 1996	1996 to 1997	1990 to 1997
Atlanta Region	49,082	55,887	42,800	66,000	68,000	49,714
Misc	571	412	480	600	1,000	571
Const	4,088	-982	1,040	10,000	1,100	2,329
Manf	4,275	-679	3,020	-1,300	2,900	2,386
TCU	2,933	5,837	3,300	5,600	5,500	3,943
Wholesale	6,716	4,599	1,620	6,000	6,500	2,943
Trade						
Retail Trade	10,651	12,518	7,140	13,900	19,900	9,929
FIRE	3,081	5,332	780	3,300	3,700	1,557
Services	13,009	20,621	22,320	27,400	25,800	23,543
Govt	3,758	8,230	3,100	500	1,600	2,514
Annual Percentage Change						
	1980 to 1985	1985 to 1990	1990 to 1995	1995 to 1996	1996 to 1997	1990 to 1997
Atlanta Region	4.9	4.5	2.8	4.0	4.0	3.2
Misc	14.0	6.1	5.4	5.8	9.1	6.0
Const	7.3	-1.5	1.6	14.4	1.4	3.3
Manf	3.0	-0.4	1.9	-0.8	1.7	1.5
TCU	3.3	5.4	2.5	3.9	3.7	2.9
Wholesale	7.1	3.7	1.1	4.1	4.2	2.0
Trade						
Retail Trade	6.4	5.6	2.6	4.7	6.4	3.4
FIRE	4.0	5.5	0.7	2.8	3.1	1.3
Services	6.3	7.2	5.7	5.9	5.3	5.7
Govt	2.4	4.5	1.4	0.2	0.7	1.2
Source Atlanta Regional Commission						

jobs followed by Gwinnett with an increase of 15,900. In terms of job percentage growth, Cherokee County led the region with a 14.7% increase between 1996 and 1997. Fayette County followed at 12.5%. The region's job base as a whole grew at a rate of approximately 4% between 1996 and 1997 (ARC, 1998)

Impacts of Growth and Development

While the Atlanta region has experienced tremendous prosperity and growth over the last thirty years, it has brought various adverse impacts. Like the majority of major metropolitan areas throughout the country, the dominant growth pattern for the Atlanta region is what is often referred to as "sprawl", which is defined as random, unplanned growth (Bullard, 1999). While many cities may have grown up with increased density, Atlanta for most intents and purposes has grown out, enlarging its land area. Atlanta, despite its rapid growth, still remains one of the lowest density metropolitan areas in the United States. Atlanta is basically flat and landlocked with no major bodies of water or mountains to constrain outward growth (Bullard, 1999). This, coupled with abundance of inexpensive land to develop and new highways providing easy access to the far reaching hinterlands, have allowed the suburbs to stretch at some points as far as 40 miles from the city's center. With the high population growth that has inhabited the region and the demand for new development, a significant number of the region's green spaces have been eliminated in the process. In the late 1990's, every week some 500 acres of green space were paved under to make way for new development (Bullard, 1999) Data from the NASA Landsat Satellite show that from 1988 to 1998, the Atlanta Metropolitan area lost about 190,000 acres of tree cover (Ballard, 1999)

With the region's population becoming larger and more spread out, one pertinent issue that the region has had trouble coping with is the ability to efficiently transport persons back and forth across the region. Despite massive investment in new road construction, a great portion of the region's highways are gridlocked during peak times and over capacity. Residents of Metropolitan Atlanta drive an average of 34 miles a day each, more than in any metropolitan area in the United States (Leggett, 1998). With over 2.5 million registered vehicles in the metropolitan area, over 100 million miles are driven per day total. And while the commutes are long in distance, they are also the most time consuming. The long distances combined with the standstill traffic result in many commute times to average 60-90 minutes one way.

In the 1960s, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) was hailed as a solution to the growing traffic and pollution problems the region was facing (Bullard, 1999). The original plan was for MARTA rail lines to connect important nodes throughout the entire metropolitan area. However, opposition by many of the counties to MARTA participation limited both rail and bus service to just two counties, Fulton and DeKalb. And while both of those counties are well served by bus service, many of the major employment, retail, and residential nodes are not accessible by the rail service. As a result, with a greater proportion of the population living in the outlying counties, and with major business centers becoming more prominent outside of central Atlanta, only 5% of the region's workers commuted to work by public transit as of 1999 (Bullard, 1999).

With the ever-increasing traffic volume facing the region, air pollution, especially ground level ozone emitted by automobiles, began to worsen significantly. Due to the increasing levels of ozone, the Environmental Protection Agency classified the Atlanta Metropolitan Area as a non-attainment area thus triggering the negative consequences set forth in the federal Clean Air Act. The Clean Air Act was initially established in 1995 and was amended in 1963, 1970, and 1990. Under the 1990 amendments, the federal government designated states as being responsible for non-attainment areas, and it established deadlines for compliance. Under the law, no federal funds can be spent on transportation projects unless they are part of a transportation plan that conforms to air quality requirements (Goldberg, Planning, 1998).

In May 1996, Metropolitan Atlanta was put on notice that it would lose the right to spend federal transportation dollars when its current Transportation Improvement Program expired in late 1997 unless a new plan was put in place that would show to dramatically improve air quality. In an attempt to address the threat of the cutoff in funding, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) undertook a plan that promised to put the region in compliance with air quality standards. However, the completion of a computer analysis in March 1998 showed that the ARC's new transportation plan would not be able to meet air quality standards. As a result, because the region failed to come to grips with its air problems; the federal government shut off all federal highway money except for specifically exempted road projects.

Along with the air quality and traffic, the fast pace of growth and development has also impacted public infrastructure. In many instances, the rate of new growth occurred in areas without the adequate infrastructure to accommodate it. In North Fulton County, for example, the two main sewage treatment plants in 1997 exceeded capacity that resulted in periodic sewage overflows. As a result, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division levied \$102,550 in fines against Fulton County for allowing pollutants into the Chatahoochee river from its sewage system (Laskar, 1998).

Public schools also experienced problems associated with abundant growth. Despite the fact that several counties have approved sales tax increases to fund new buildings, overcrowding problems remain. Portable classrooms are often put in place to handle the overflow of students, even at brand new schools. In one Gwinnett County school, for example, classes are held in 42 classroom trailers (Leggett, 1998)

Past and Current Initiatives to Address Growth

With major problems facing the region associated with its growth, the issue of managing growth moved to the forefront of many local and state politics. In many local jurisdictions, the act of imposing zoning moratoriums became a common reactionary measure to deal with growth related problems. These zoning moratoriums were either utilized to offer a window of time for local governments to develop better long term strategies to cope with new growth development or as simply a political reaction over public criticism on how elected officials were handling growth in their communities. In Fayette County, a moratorium was issued on rezonings for one-acre lots and planned

unit developments in the fall of 1997. During the same time frame, Peachtree City placed a 7-month freeze on new apartment development. Another example existed in North Fulton County where a zoning moratorium was enacted in 1998 in reaction to the area's sewage treatment plants operating at full or either exceeded capacity. The moratorium in this case applied to all rezonings and accompanied an already existent countywide one-year ban on re-zonings for apartment complexes. Other zoning moratoriums arose in Cherokee, Forsyth, and Clayton Counties.

Instead of only looking at short-term reactionary measures to manage growth, a few County governments took more proactive and progressive measures to plan for future growth and development. In DeKalb County, the region's second most populous county, work began in early 1999 to revise its zoning laws to promote "new urbanism" concepts that encourage developers to build small village type communities where people can live, work, and shop. The intent of the zoning revisions were also designed to curb development from destroying older neighborhoods as the region continues to grow (Smith, 1999). Another plan developed by a County government that carried the label of "New Urbanism" was enacted in Cherokee County. This plan called for high densities at 12 townships or current crossroads and more rural type development elsewhere (Laccetti, 1999).

Throughout the region, a perceived lack of coordination, cooperation, and vision amongst local and state agencies to address the region's problems existed. According to Tom Weyandt, senior associate with Research Atlanta, "We have a laissez-faire attitude

toward land use regulation. In this region, we just react to crises. We have a proliferation of local governments. Along the northern tier, you can be in four major counties in a 20-minute drive. There is an enormous competition of the tax base” (Dobbins, 1997). Ironically, the lack of regional focus has generally been charged to the regional planning agency and the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) of the Atlanta Region, the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Atlanta Regional Commission is governed by a board composed generally of elected local officials. Therefore, the criticism lies in that the Atlanta Regional Commission board members typically make decisions that put the interests of their jurisdiction front and foremost, even in cases when they go against the betterment of the region. The Georgia Department of Transportation has also fallen under public and political criticism with continuing to place too much emphasis on road building while not pushing hard enough to develop transportation projects that promote alternate modes of transportation. These perceptions and criticisms, combined with the failure of the ARC to develop a transportation plan to bring Metropolitan Atlanta back in compliance with the Clean Air Act is what led the newly elected Governor of 1999, Roy Barnes, to propose the establishment of a state transportation super agency, the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority. The legislation to create the agency was publicly supported by an unusual alliance of environmental and business groups, including the Sierra Club and the Regional Business Coalition, representing eleven suburban and urban chambers and more than 19,000 businesses (Pruitt, 1999). The establishment of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority passed in both houses of the Georgia Legislature with little opposition with uncommon bipartisan support.

The intent of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) is to serve as an umbrella agency under the control of the Governor that would coordinate all transportation planning in pollution plagued areas. GRTA would consist of 15 members who would be appointed by the Governor himself. The GRTA would have the ability to veto plans initiated by the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Department of Transportation, send them back and demand a program more to its liking (Goldberg, AJC, 1999). The agency would also have the authority to block by a two-thirds vote huge "developments of regional impact," such as malls or large office parks. At the local level, the authority could withhold money for related road improvements and other state grants when local governments ignore its recommendations. However, the county in which the development is planned could override GRTA's decision with a three-fourths vote of the county commission (Goldberg, AJC, 1999). GRTA could also plan, design and implement plans to extend mass transit service that have generally been resisted in many of the region's counties. While the agency would not have the authority to impose special taxes, it could sell up to \$2 billion in revenue bonds, \$1 billion of which would be guaranteed by state taxpayers. The money generated by such bonds would be generally used to provide the 20 percent match required to receive 80 percent in federal funding for a given project (Goldberg, AJC, 1999).

Local and State governments were not the only entities that have made efforts to address pollution and traffic in the region. Many major employers throughout the

region enacted new policies designed to reduce the length and amount of automobile trips its employees have to take to their job. Telecommuting, flextime, and incentives for carpooling are generally becoming commonplace in most workplaces. Bell South Corp , the regions second largest private employer, launched an initiative to relocate 13,000 of its employees from suburban offices to three new business centers located strategically in the city along a MARTA line. The consolidation of employees at the three sites will allow BellSouth to close 75 of its 100 locations in the metro area (Saporta, 1999). The overall aim of this effort by Bell South was to place less emphasis on automobile transportation and place a greater reliance on public transportation.

CHAPTER IV
CHEROKEE COUNTY, GA – BACKGROUND

Population Trends

Cherokee County, GA over the last few decades has represented one of the fastest growing counties in the state of Georgia. In 1970, Cherokee County had a population of 31,059 which ranked 30th in the state. By 1990, Cherokee County's population had grown to 91,000, representing a 193% increase from 1970 and resulting in the county to rise to be the 12th largest in Georgia (see Figure 1). For comparison purposes, the growth rate over the same period for the state of Georgia was 41% and for the United States was 24%. Between the years 1980-1990, Cherokee County was ranked as the 5th fastest growing county in the state with a growth rate of 76% (U.S. Bureau of the Census)

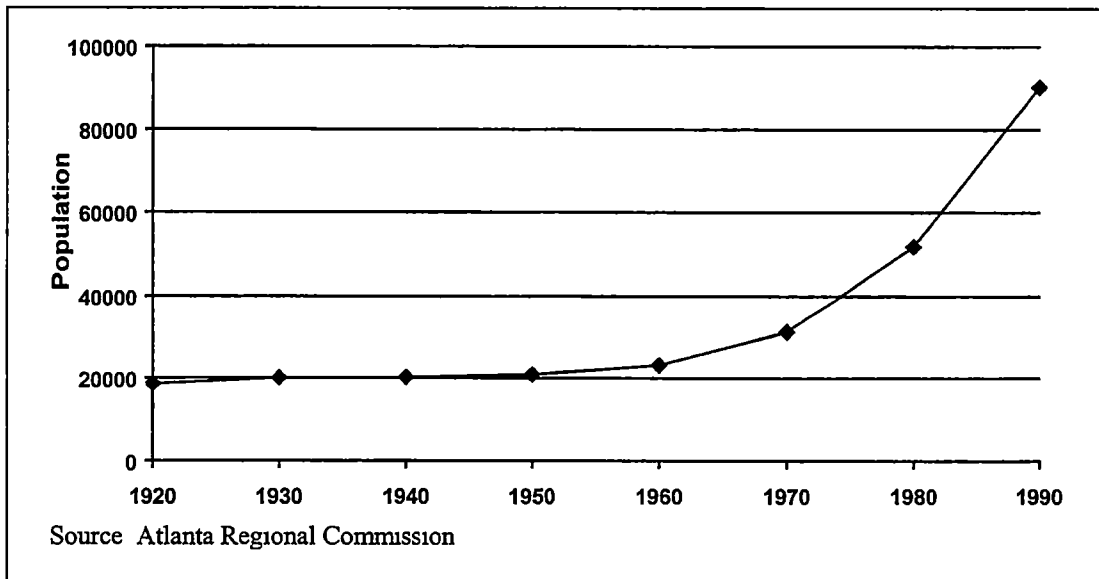


Figure 1: Cherokee County Historic Population Counts, 1920-1990

The high growth rate in Cherokee County can generally be attributed to the rapid expansion of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. Prior to the 1970's, the county maintained a relatively rural character. As the road network in the county was enhanced, better linking Cherokee County to the more developed counties to the south, bedroom communities began to emerge serving individuals working in metropolitan Atlanta (Cherokee County, 1998). When the large migrations to Metropolitan Atlanta occurred in the 1970's and 1980's, Cobb and Gwinnett were the counties that experienced the highest growth rates in the region. However, by the 1990's Cherokee County began to fall into that same class of population growth. Cherokee County's commute rate, amongst the highest in the Greater Atlanta area, is especially indicative of the county's popularity as a suburban residential community. While the southern portions of the county will still be expected to remain the most populous due to its closer proximity to the City of Atlanta, the northern portion of the county is projected to catch up in terms of growth over the next few decades as the large abundance of available rural land is expected to be developed.

There are two main factors that generally influence a county's population change. The first is the increase and decrease in population caused by natural birth and death rates, and the second is the amount of people that migrate in and out of the area. Table 7 shows a breakdown of population change between natural causes and net migration. As the figures indicate, between the years of 1990 and 1994 there was a population increase of 20,089 people or 22.10%. 72.10% of that increase was the result of net migration while 27.90% was due to a natural increase (Cherokee County, 1998).

Table 7
Cherokee County Components of Population Change, 1990-1994

Population Change		Components of Population Change	
1990 Population	91,000	Total Births	7,650
1994 Population	111,089	Total Deaths	2,043
Total Population Change	20,089	Natural Increase	5,607
Percent Population Change	22.10%	Percent Natural Increase	27.90%
		Net Migration	14,482
		Percent Net Migration	72.10%
Source Cherokee County 2017 Comprehensive Plan			

According to projections from the Atlanta Regional Commission, Cherokee County between 1990 and 2000 is expected to grow by 64% from 91,000 to 148,000 (see Figure 2). For the decades beyond 2000, the growth rate is expected to decline, but remain relatively high. Between the years 2000 and 2010, the county's population is expected to increase to 218,000 at a rate of 47%. The growth rate over the time period of 2010 to 2020 will decline further to 38% even as the number of persons increases to 301,900. If current estimates hold true, then by the year 2020 Cherokee County should be the fifth most populous county in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area behind Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Cobb.

Housing Characteristics

Table 8 illustrates the breakdown of housing unit types in the county. As evident by the numbers in the table, the single-family house is the pre-dominant housing type comprising 86.8% of the total housing stock since 1995. New single-family construction has averaged 1,434 per year since 1980 and has grown 147.7% since that time. Multi-

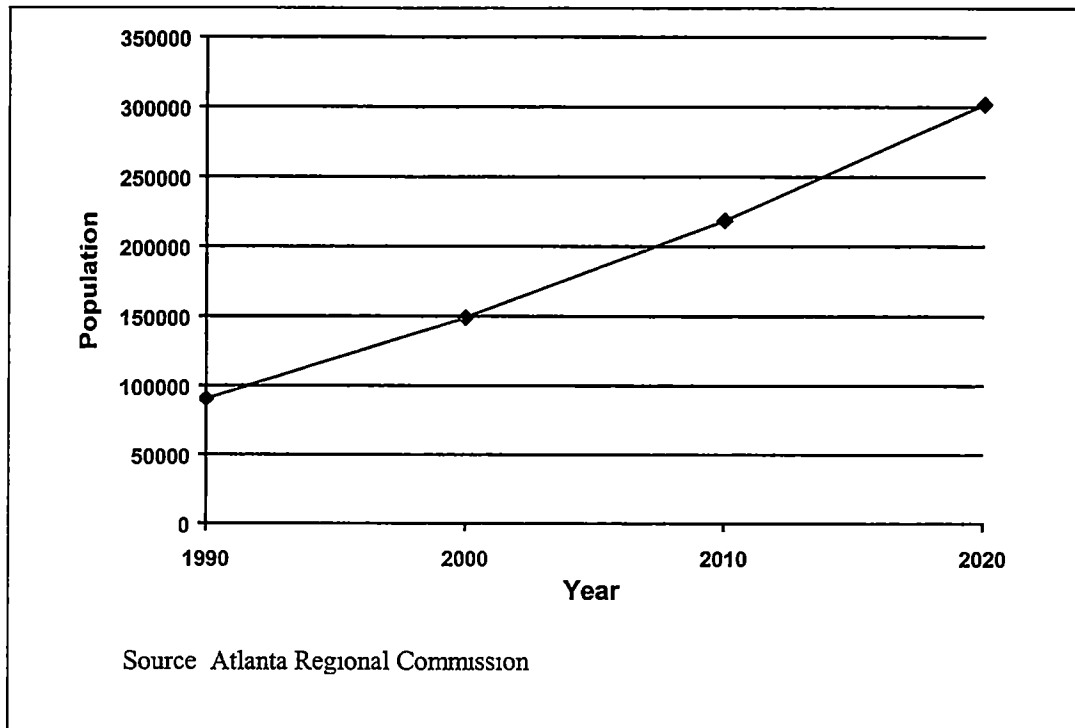


Figure 2 – Cherokee County Population Projections, 1990-2020

Table 8
Cherokee Housing Units by Type, 1980-1995

Year	Single-Family		Multi-Family		Mfg Homes		Total
	No.	Pct	No.	Pct.	No	Pct	
1980	14,566	81.4%	728	4.1%	2,344	13%	17,849
1990	28,408	83.9%	1,148	3.4%	4,284	12.7%	33,840
1995	36,077	86.8%	1,207	2.9%	4,269	10.3%	41,553

Source U.S. Census. 1980. 1990: ARC 1995 Population and Housing

family units represent only 2.9% of the total housing since 1995. Since 1980, the multi-family housing category grew by 65.8%

In comparison to other counties within the Atlanta Metropolitan area, Cherokee County in 1995 had the highest percentage of single-family homes at 86.8% and the lowest percentage of multi-family housing at 2.9%. As of 1995, there were 1,207 multi-family units in the county as compared to 36,077 single-family units. As the county transforms from a rural to suburban to urban environment, it is expected that the proportion of multi-family houses will increase (Cherokee County, 1998).

In terms of occupancy, the 1990 Census indicates that 76.3% of the housing units are owner-occupied with a total of 25,828 for 1990. The percentage of renter-occupied units is 16.2% with a total of 5,481. 7.5% of the housing stock in 1990 was considered vacant. For comparison purposes, the state of Georgia in 1990 had a total percentage of owner-occupied units of 34.1% and a total percentage of renter-occupied units of 31.4%. Table 9 illustrates occupancy rates for both Cherokee County and the state of Georgia between 1970 and 1990.

Table 9
Occupancy Rates and Characteristics, 1970-1990

	OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS				RENTER-OCCUPIED UNITS			
	County	Pct	State	Pct.	County	Pct	State	Pct
1970	6,971	70.8	836,323	57.0	2,385	24.2	532,902	36.3
1980	13,842	78.3	1,216,459	60.4	3,006	17.0	655,193	32.5
1990	25,828	76.3	1,536,759	58.2	5,481	16.2	829,856	31.4
Source: U.S. Census, 1970, 1980, 1990								

Land Use Characteristics

Cherokee County has a total land area of 434 square miles, approximately 281,000 acres. Approximately 67% of that land has been developed or used in some way. Most of the development is concentrated in the southern portion of the county while the northern portion maintains a more rural character (Cherokee County, 1998)

Cherokee County's growth emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century after the first railroad link from Canton to Atlanta was complete. This was the driving force of growth until the middle of the twentieth century. Land-use patterns before that time consisted of commercial and residential nodes around towns, surrounded by agriculture uses. More recently, the southern portion of the county has urbanized rapidly, especially after the completion of the I-575 freeway, which connects the heart of Cherokee County with Interstate 75 (Cherokee County, 1998). This easier automobile access to and from Atlanta helped spur the growth in the southern portion of the county

Residential currently makes up 24% of the developed land in the county. Most of the residential lots are single-family and typically have a minimum of ½ acre sizes due to the lack of sewer facilities in large portions of the county. Lack of sewer facilities also contributes to the relatively few duplex or apartment complexes in the county (Cherokee County, 1998).

Commercial land comprises only 0.9% of the developed land in the County. Most of the development in this category is retail and service uses situated along major highways and collector streets. Industrial uses occupy 1.2% of the developed area.

Public and Institutional comprise 0.4 % of the developed area, and recreation uses consists of 9.8% (Cherokee County, 1998).

Agriculture and forestry land still represents the most dominant land use despite the rapid growth of the southern portion of the county. As of 1997, agriculture and forestry made up 38.5% of the total developed area. Many farmlands are still very visible in the northern portion of the county even though it is expected that more farms are expected to disappear to be replaced by new development if current trends continue.

According to estimates derived from the Cherokee County Planning Department, the proportion of residential uses to the total developed area is expected to increase significantly over the next 20 years. Tables 10 and 11 illustrate the breakdown of land use in Cherokee County for both 1997 and the 2020 projections. In 2020, residential uses are projected to represent 38.60% of the total developed area as compared to 24% in 1997. The proportion of Commercial and Industrial uses is also estimated to rise in 2020. The proportion of Commercial usage to the total developed area is expected to be 2.7% in 2020 as compared to 0.9% for 1997 while the proportion of Industrial usage to the total developed area is expected to rise from 1.20% in 1997 to 2.5% in 2020. The land use that is estimated to experience the biggest decrease in its proportion to the total developed area is Agricultural/Forestry. In 2020, Agricultural/Forestry is estimated to represent 23.90% of the total developed area that is a significant decrease from 1997 figure of 38.5%. In terms of land that is vacant or undeveloped, in 1997 approximately

Table 10
1997 Cherokee County Land Use

Land Use	Acres	% Developed Area	% Total Area
RESIDENTIAL	51,500	24.0%	18.3%
COMMERCIAL	1,995	0.90%	0.70%
INDUSTRIAL	2,620	1.20%	0.90%
PUBLIC/ INSTITUTIONAL	780	0.40%	0.30%
TRANSPORTATION/ COMMUNICATION/UTILITIES	37,786	17.5%	13.4%
PARK & RECREATION	21,140	9.80%	7.50%
AGRICULTURE/ FORESTRY	83,041	38.5%	29.5%
UNDEVELOPED	66,157	0%	23.5%
MUNICIPALITIES	16,590.60	7.70%	5.90%
TOTAL AREA	281,600		
Source: Cherokee County Planning Department			

Table 11
Cherokee County Projected Land Use, 2020

	Acres	Percent Developed Area	Percent Total Area
RESIDENTIAL	93,985	38.6%	33.40%
COMMERCIAL	6,790	2.7%	2.40%
INDUSTRIAL	7,020	2.90%	2.5%
PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL	780	0.32%	0.27%
TRANSPORTATION/ COMMUNICATIONS/UTILITIES	37,786	15.50%	13.40%
PARK & RECREATION	21,920	9%	7.80%
AGRICULTURAL/ FORESTRY	58,365	23.90%	20.70%
UNDEVELOPED	38,363.2	0%	13.60%
MUNICIPALITIES	16,590.6	6.80%	5.90%
TOTAL AREA	281,600		100%
Source: Cherokee County Planning Department			

66,157 acres fell into that category which represented 23.5% of the total land area. According to the future land use projections, only 38,623 acres is expected to be vacant/undeveloped in 2020 representing 13.60% of the total land area.

Employment

As illustrated in Table 12, Cherokee County in 1995 had 4.08% of Metro Atlanta's population, but only 1.35% of its jobs. This is indicative of the city of Atlanta's dominance over employment in the entire metropolitan area. Although Cherokee County's share of jobs in Metro Atlanta is expected to increase to 3.36% by 2020, it will not increase as fast as the population share, which will equal 7.24% by 2020 (Cherokee County, 1998). What this trend indicates is that the county does not possess a business and industry employment base that is proportionate to its total population. Therefore, while the new residential growth has brought new construction activity and service sector employment, it has also placed a strain on the county's ability to serve its growing populace without the strong tax base that comes from a healthy business, industrial, export oriented economy.

Table 12
Cherokee County Share of Metro Atlanta Population and Employment, 1990-2020

Year	Population Share	Emp. Share	Difference
1990	3.56%	1.12%	2.44%
1995	4.08%	1.35%	2.73%
2000	4.78%	1.49%	3.29%
2005	5.48%	1.68%	3.80%
2010	6.08%	2.09%	3.99%
2015	6.61%	2.62%	3.99%
2020	7.24%	3.36%	3.88%

Source: Cherokee County Comprehensive Plan, ARC Vision 2020 Baseline Forecasts, 1994

Implications of Growth

While Cherokee County has experienced rapid growth, it still has not evolved into the more heavy urban and suburban landscape exemplified in the other Metro Atlanta counties. Therefore, the issues facing the County and the perspectives of its citizens are somewhat different than those in many of the other metropolitan counties. However, since high growth proportionate to existing conditions does exist in Cherokee County, it does experience many of the same issues commonplace throughout the rest of Metro Atlanta. The rate of growth and development for the county has outpaced the ability of the government to proactively plan and manage it. Infrastructure has become overburdened, schools became overcrowded, and increased traffic has brought gridlock to many of the county's main roads (Reinolds, 5/27/99). The majority of the County still remains without sanitary sewer. Much of the populace has become vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with the trends they see taking place in their community. Over the last twenty years, many persons migrated to Cherokee County from other Metro Atlanta counties to live in a more peaceful and rural environment. To their dismay, they have witnessed many of the qualities of Cherokee County that originally appealed to them start to be replaced by the sprawl type atmosphere that they before tried to escape from (Bennett, 5/22/99).

Many residents' point to the more dense suburban counties that exemplify sprawl development such as Gwinnett and Cobb as examples of what Cherokee County should avoid evolving into. Some views on that issue suggest developing public policy that attempts to completely restrict growth not consistent with the rural character of the

County, while other views recognize that growth is inevitable but should be managed properly and proactively. Therefore, developing new strategies and policies to either restrict or manage growth was one of the major issues in the forefront of public opinion and local politics in the latter part of 1990s. It was these issues that led elected officials to initiate the innovative township concept that will be discussed in the following chapters and what influenced the outcomes of the local elections of 1998.

Chapters V and VI will discuss Cherokee County's effort to develop a strategy and policy guide to manage land use and growth through the creation of townships. The proposed township concept was one element of the Cherokee County Comprehensive Plan for 1997-2017.

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2017 PLAN IN CHEROKEE COUNTY, GA

The introduction of the Township Concept in Cherokee County is the primary subject of this study. The Township Concept in theory incorporates many of the ideals exposed in the New Urbanism Movement. As a concept, a township would have a mixture of commercial, office, and residential development that would allow residents to live, work and play without ever leaving the township, an idea promoted by New Urbanism advocates. The Township Concept in Cherokee County was one element introduced as part of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan in Cherokee County. This chapter will provide an overview of the planning process utilized in the development of the Comprehensive Plan, an overview of the major components that made up the Comprehensive Plan, and a description of the Township Concept that represented one single component of the Plan.

The Initiation of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan

The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 (O.C.G.A. 50-8-7.1) requires that each county develop a comprehensive plan to coordinate development, environmental control, and economic growth. The act specifically requires that the County develop a twenty-year plan with updates at five-year intervals. As part of the five-year updates, each county is encouraged to do an assessment of factors such as population, economic base, natural and historic resources, community facilities, housing, and land use patterns. Based on these assessments, each county then projects their current and future needs and develops strategies that seek to implement the County's future goals and objectives

The first comprehensive plan in Cherokee County was developed in 1992. In 1996, with the County's first five-year update deadline looming, the County used that opportunity to initiate a planning process that would result in a updated comprehensive plan document that would guide the County until the year 2017. With the exploding growth in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area, and the observed problems of counties closer to Atlanta in dealing with the effects of growth, a growing discontent was starting to emerge among Cherokee residents regarding uncontrolled growth in Cherokee County.

Overview of the Citizen Input Process

The planning process for the Cherokee County 2017 Comprehensive Plan was initiated in February of 1996 with a public hearing that created a Citizen's Advisory Committee that would meet twice a month. The members of the Citizen's Advisory Board were selected through appointment by the Board of Commissioners. In September of 1996, the Board of Commissioners expanded the Citizen's Advisory Board to consist of 53 members (Cherokee County, 1998).

The first priority of the Citizen's Advisory Board was to address the planning elements by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in accordance with Georgia State Law. In order to accomplish this, a survey questionnaire was developed by the Planning and Zoning staff and distributed to every member of the Citizen's Advisory Board. The survey questionnaire was divided into individual categories for each planning element outlined by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The

planning elements included Natural, Environmental, and Historic Resources; Population Growth; Housing, Economic Opportunity Development, Community Facilities; Transportation; and Land Use. Of the 53 questionnaires distributed, 37 were completed and submitted to the Planning Department. Majority votes were taken from final tallies and later utilized for specific recommendations in the planning document, specifically the five (5) year short-term work program component (Cherokee County, 1998)

The Citizen's Advisory Committee was also requested to define quality growth. Research from other communities such as Palm Beach, Florida, King County, Washington; Petaluma and Santa Barbara, California; Richardson and Plano, Texas; and Boulder, Colorado that have successfully made the transition from rapid growth to quality growth were presented to the committee as examples of quality growth (Cherokee County, 1998). This research assisted the members in establishing definitions and parameters for quality of life indicators. Video presentations of case studies were also used to illustrate the aesthetic and economic value of quality growth within model communities for further comparative evaluation. This information was a catalyst for citizen workshops and town meetings held over an eight-month period in which new ideas were presented to the citizens of Cherokee County (Cherokee County, 1998). In addition, a Visual Preference Survey was presented to the citizens at a public work session. Survey findings from the Visual Preference Survey along with the input received from the other public meetings were used to provide the county with knowledge on citizen goals and objectives that were to serve as the basis of the development policy within the new plan

The Visioning Process

In order to attempt to gain a community consensus of the vision for the community, the Cherokee County Planning Department hired Anton Nelessen and Associates to conduct a visual planning process that included a Visual Preference Survey, a demographic and public questionnaire, a vision translation workshop, and a vision implementation workshop. The purpose of the visioning process was to help ensure that the recommendations for policies directing future development were a direct reflection of the citizen's desires

The Visual Preference Survey was conducted in 1996 with a record number of 221 citizens in attendance (Cherokee County, 1998). The premise of the Visual Preference Survey was to present two slide images simultaneously that showed two different approaches to a development form. For example, one slide might illustrate a commercial development in the form of a strip shopping center, while the other image would illustrate a commercial development in the form of a traditional Main Street. Persons participating in the survey would then give a score to each image. Once all of the scores are tallied, conclusions could be developed as to specific preferences for certain forms of development

After the survey was concluded and all of the scores were tallied, the Consultants conducting the survey presented their findings and presented specific recommendations. Some of the major conclusions and recommendations based on the survey were as follows:

- Affordable housing in the form of mobile homes received a low score by the survey participants. Therefore, affordable housing should be developed in a different form with quality landscaping and maintenance
- Development that embodies the preservation of a green edge with a planned new community in a village form was considered more desirable than suburban sprawl.
- Residential streets with planted parkways and sidewalk hedges were considered more acceptable while automobile garagescapes common in new subdivisions were deemed undesirable.
- Arterial streets with streetscapes that mirror traditional Main Streets with pedestrian oriented details were considered more acceptable than streets dominated by commercial franchise development.
- Commercial development in the form of a traditional Main Street was deemed more acceptable than auto-oriented commercial development.
- Traditional residential architecture that emphasizes human activity through porches and front door was considered more desirable than residential development with front facade garage placement
- In order to maintain the county's rural character, 5% of all new housing shall be built on very large lots; the recommended density is one unit per 20 acres 20% of all new housing should be built at a density of unit per 1 to 2 acres of land. 55% of new housing should be built within new hamlets, villages, and neighborhoods, with an approximate net density of 3 to 4 units per acre. 20% of all new housing should be built at a higher density within core neighborhoods at approximately 8 dwelling

units per acre. Multi-family development should be located on a street, with porches in the front and parking in the rear at a density of 16-20 units per acre.

During the survey session the question was presented “What is your recommendation for future growth”. 93% of the survey participants chose the response, “generate different patterns of development which create a more traditional neighborhood that is more walkable, less auto dependent and preserves environmentally sensitive areas” (Anton Nelessen & Associates, 1997). With public participation at the Vision Translation Workshop, a development pattern was proposed based on the rural village/town form. The development form would be based on accommodating development for future population projections. According to the Vision Plan, 25% of growth should occur on properties 1 acre or larger. This method is referred to as land conservation with its goal being to preserve the rural character of the county. 75% of the growth should be concentrated in neighborhoods, villages, and hamlets at different levels of densities starting at 3 units per acre or more. The Vision Plan also included conceptual drawings of the Township form. Recommendations were also provided regarding levels of commercial and public services that should be put in place in townships given the size.

Principal Components of the Comprehensive Plan

The major components of the Cherokee County 2017 Comprehensive Plan consisted of sections covering natural and historic resources, population, housing, economic

opportunity, community facilities, transportation, land use, and the implementation strategy

In the population section of the plan, historical information was presented related to population counts and population growth rates. This section also presented the County's population growth to 2020 based on forecasts from the Atlanta Regional Commission. Data concerning educational attainment, racial characteristics were also presented. The future population projections served as the basis for which the future land use strategy was developed.

The chapter on housing presented historical and current information regarding the number and percentage of housing units within the County based on housing type. Housing units for the purposes of this chapter were classified as single-family, multi-family, or manufactured. This chapter also presented data on the condition of the housing stock, tenure type, and the renter/owner value of the units. Throughout the chapter, the data for Cherokee County was presented with the data for the other counties within the Atlanta Metropolitan Area for comparison purposes. The conclusion of this section presented a brief summary of the future housing needs through the year 2020. For the purposes of determining future housing needs, a household size of 2.78 was used which was the average household size for the County in 1995. The methodology used to determine the total of new housing units needed was to divide each year's future population projection and/or past estimate by the set household size. Also, the type of housing that would be needed was obtained by taking the total number of new housing

units needed and dividing it by a predetermined ratio of 3:3:3:1. Based on an average of Metropolitan Atlanta housing compositions, 30% of the new houses in the county would be on 1-acre lots, 30% on ½ acre lots, 30% on 1/3-acre lots, and 10% multi-family (Cherokee County, 1998).

The chapter on Economic Opportunity presented data relating to the labor characteristics of Cherokee County. Information and analysis was also gathered regarding general economic indicators such as economic base assessment and employment share. The chapter also illustrated the breakdown in job types, commuting patterns, income by job type, education stability, and level of wages. The chapter concluded by presenting strategies to enhance local economic development. This consisted of strategies such as strengthening private/public partnerships, strengthening local resource agencies, and the further development of tools and programs designed to encourage and attract local industry.

Many of the strategies listed in this chapter had the primary goal to strengthen the County's manufacturing and large-scale employment base. Over the last decade, Cherokee County has experienced a significant influx of new residents. However, the majority of new residents out-commute to jobs in other counties. This meant that few large-scale employment generators existed within the county. Although the new growth has brought with it significant new construction activity and service sector employment, it has also placed a strain on the County's ability to serve its growing populace.

Without a strong tax base that comes from a healthy export oriented economy, the county's infrastructure and public services can be hampered (Cherokee County, 1998).

In order to address this issue, the Cherokee Development Authority in conjunction with the Planning and Zoning Department outlined in this chapter it's goal to establish a High Technology Corridor along I-575 across the entire length of the County. The Cherokee Development Authority is a constitutional authorized development authority who under Georgia law has the authority to grant tax incentives to prospective industries and businesses. The future Land Use Map supported this goal by delineating the majority of undeveloped land along I-575 for industrial usage and by establishing the boundaries for the High Technology Corridor. The high technology corridor is a 24-mile mixed-use/high technology development corridor that extends parallel to I-575 (Cherokee County, 1998)

The chapter on Economic Opportunity also included the recommendation to establish a Community Improvement District (CID) for the technology corridor. A CID is a limited government district with private sector taxing authority. The CID would be used to unify planning and investment along the corridor, adding private investment to public investment for transportation and infrastructure improvements (Cherokee County, 1998).

The chapter on Land Use presented an inventory of current land uses within the County. The chapter also projected future land use needs through 2020 based on Atlanta

Regional Commission forecasts. A section was also developed which discussed future opportunities and constraints for new growth. Future planning methods to be utilized were also discussed that were termed as a variety of unconventional, yet common sense designs to encourage the preservation of natural resources and allow "quality growth" management within the County (Cherokee County, 1998). The planning tools discussed briefly in this chapter were aimed at achieving the plan's goals and objectives as discussed in the implementation section. The major planning tools that were included in this section of the chapter were conservation subdivisions and the township concept.

The Implementation Strategy section of the plan was based on the goals, objectives, policies and action statements that were jointly developed by Citizen Task Forces for the Comprehensive Plan. The Implementation Strategy was developed by the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Board of Commissioners of Cherokee County (Cherokee County, 1998). The definitions for the four main elements were as follows: Goals are defined as the ideal conditions to which a community aspires. Objectives are defined as intermediate steps toward attaining a goal. Policies are defined as the guidelines or standards for achieving objectives or goals. Action statements are defined as specific strategies employed to implement policies.

The goals, objectives, policies, and action statements brought forth in the Implementation Strategy are extensive and cover a wide range of all of the issues affecting Cherokee County. However, for the purpose of this study, listed below are

examples of goals, objectives, policies, and action statements that were relevant to the land use policy, specifically the development of the Township Concept.

- Goal – The long-term protection of significant natural and historic resources (Cherokee County, 1998)
 - Objective – Encourage the preservation of prime agricultural land and the continued viability of the “family farm” (Cherokee County, 1998)
 - Policy – Use the Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan when considering land use and development proposals (Cherokee County, 1998)
- Goal – A plentiful housing supply in which high quality housing is available for all segments of the population (Cherokee County, 1998).
 - Policy – Encourage the development of diverse housing alternatives to reflect different and changing lifestyles (Cherokee County, 1998).
 - Objective - Evaluate the Zoning Ordinance and address such issues as infill development in built-out areas, cluster developments and conservation subdivisions, need for increased low and moderate income housing, housing for renters to include affordable multi-family projects, minimum square footage regulations which recognize diverse needs for size and affordability, mixed-use developments in regional activity centers to provide opportunities for integration of home and work places,

and innovation in housing style and mixture of housing types (Cherokee County, 1998).

- Policy – Encourage the conservation of unique and historical neighborhoods (Cherokee County, 1998).
- Policy – encourage housing design that is visually compatible with its surroundings (Cherokee County, 1998).
- Goal – Provide an efficient, equitable, compatible and sustainable distribution of land uses within Cherokee County (Cherokee County, 1998).
 - Objective – Create a consistent and orderly zoning ordinance that strictly conforms to the future land use map (Cherokee County, 1998).
 - Policy – Avoid development patterns that would require uneconomical extensions of public facilities or services (Cherokee County, 1998)
 - Objective – Plan and provide for an additional 42,485 acres of land for residential use by the year 2017 to accommodate an appropriate balance of housing density and types to meet the needs of the projected policy (Cherokee County, 1998).
 - Policy – Encourage a more compact development pattern in order to conserve land resources and minimize public infrastructure and services costs (Cherokee County, 1998).
 - Action - Assure that the Zoning Ordinance permits a variety of alternative site planning techniques and housing styles and densities to keep housing costs affordable to a wide segment of the population (Cherokee County, 1998).

- Policy – Encourage high-density multi-family residential development to be located in proximity to, and as transitional uses, between low-density residential areas and commercial centers, or areas with more intense activities (Cherokee County, 1998).
- Policy – Encourage “mixed-use” projects with innovative site plans that combine various residential densities and incorporate neighborhood serving nonresidential uses where appropriate (Cherokee County, 1998).
- Policy – Encourage commercial developments to occur in “clusters” rather than “strips” along the highways (Cherokee County, 1998).

The Township Concept

The Township Concept was introduced as a planning tool in the Cherokee County 2017 Comprehensive Plan as a unique method to direct future growth within the County for a twenty-year period. The plan initially proposed the creation of over 14 unincorporated townships. The townships would be formed around specific nodes within the County that possess some form of a historical identity as an individual community. According to Ken Patton, who was the Cherokee County Planning Director at the time of the Comprehensive Plan development, “ We tried to borrow from Cherokee’s rural past with the old neighborhoods and crossroads grocery stores and project that into Cherokee’s future” (Bennett, 12/4/1997) With careful planning and design standards, it would be possible to integrate the historic character of these places with new development in an aesthetically pleasing way (Cherokee County, 1998). The Cherokee planners also envisioned the Township concept as a means of protecting the rural

character of the County by limiting dense development to the Townships while leaving the land surrounding the Township areas relatively open, with only large lot sizes required. In concept, the Townships would be modeled after old-time communities that had neighborhoods centered around a small, commercial district. Surrounding the commercial district would be densely packed residential uses with the density decreasing farther away from the Township center. The concept ideally would create a pedestrian oriented community where residents could shop, live, and eat without leaving their community, a development form advocated in New Urbanism. According to Mr Patton, the development community favored the initial Township Concept because they understood the vision and that the Townships provided opportunities for future development

The idea of the Township Concept was introduced to Cherokee County by the Planning Director Ken Patton, who borrowed the idea from Loudoun County, Virginia. Patton suggested the concept to the Citizen's Advisory Committee who was charged with developing the County's twenty-year Comprehensive Plan (interview with Ken Patton, 5/30/2000) The Township Concept was materialized even further through recommendations derived from the "VISION Plan For Sensible Growth Patterns for Cherokee County" developed by Anton Nelessen and Associates, a consultant hired by Cherokee County to lead a community wide visioning process.

The Township Concept was designed to be a public/private partnership that would entail a community based planning process. The community would initiate the

Township planning process and would be responsible for facilitating public meetings, gathering public input, establishing goals and objectives, and recommending design standards and land use patterns. Ultimately, within each Township planning area there would be a group of individuals recognized as the Economic Development Council. The purpose of the council would be to serve as the liaison between the County, citizens, and businesses within the Township. The council could also initiate changes to the Board of Commissioners in any guidelines set forth in the Township Plan

During the establishment of the first two Townships, Free Home/Lathemtown and Union Hill, no specific policies and procedures were in place for the Township Planning Process. The Township Concept in general was still a conceptual idea that was not fully developed as an official planning tool. These two original Township Plans would serve as attachments to the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, they were not considered official until the Comprehensive Plan was approved by the Board of Commissioners. By the time certain other communities engaged in the Township planning process, specific policies and procedures governing the process evolved. The most recent version of the Township Planning Process Policies and Procedures are as follows:

1. To initiate township planning process, the Planning and Zoning Department shall receive a petition requesting to initiate the process. The petition must contain a minimum of ten (10) percent of the property's owner's signatures within the proposed Township area. The proposed Township shall have historical background.
2. A Citizen letter requesting township planning process shall certify that the community has a fifty (50) percent cash match to contract with a consultant.

- 3 The Cherokee County Planning and Zoning Department shall notify property owners within the proposed township boundary as well as adjacent property owners by certified mail prior to the first and last meeting of the township planning process
4. The proposed township area shall consist of a minimum of 310 acres with a minimum of ten (10) percent designated for commercial development and a residential component equal to three (3) units per acre. The ten (10) percent designated for commercial and the residential component equal to three (3) units per gross acres shall be calculated based upon the aggregate acreage for any proposed township (i.e. —if township consists of 2,500 acres, then 250 acres should be designated for commercial with the residential component providing for 7,500 units (2,500 acres x 3 units/acre).
5. The first notification letter shall include:
 - a Date, place and time of first community wide township planning meeting
 - b A township is not creating more government
 - c A township is not a legal entity.
 - d The township planning process does not rezone property.
 - e. An explanation of what the township planning process is.
 - f. A questionnaire/survey of community likes and dislikes.
- 6 The township planning process shall discuss land use categories, architectural guidelines (commercial, office, and industrial), streetscapes for activity centers, landscape requirements, signage and identification of gateway entrances to the township.
- 7 The township planning process shall conduct at least 1 community meeting each month with the Steering Committee meeting every other week.
- 8 The second notification letter shall include final ballots for the recommended township plan. The second notification letter shall include
 - a. Date, place and time of the final community-wide township planning meeting.
 - b Results of all surveys and/or ballots
 - c An explanation of the recommendations and the proposed township plan.
- 9 Fifty (50) percent plus one (1) property owner must participate in the vote for the vote to be valid. Votes are allocated based upon acreage with each parcel. One (1) vote is allocated for property containing 5.0 acres or less. For

each 5.0 increment above the initial 5.0 acres, there shall be one (1) additional vote allotted to that property owner.

(Source: Township Policies and Procedures, Cherokee County Planning and Zoning Department)

Once the Township Planning process was completed, the Township Plan would be reviewed by the County Planning and Zoning Department who would then make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to accept or reject the Township Plan. The final decision on whether or not to officially approve a Township planning area would rest with the Board of Commissioners. According to Mr Patton, the intent was for the Township Plan to eventually evolve into legally binding development regulations through the creation of overlay zoning requirements for the Township area (interview with Ken Patton, 5/30/2000)

According to Ken Patton, Cherokee County Planning Director during the time of the Comprehensive Plan development, he proposed the Township Concept as an alternative to traditional land use policy. He also saw the concept as a means of preserving some of the history of the county. Also, according to Patton and others who were proponents of the Township Concept, it would help prevent sprawl, scattered type development patterns from eventually dominating the landscape of the County as in the case of other Metropolitan Atlanta counties. Patton also indicated that the original thought was that the Townships could provide for more affordable housing through the development of higher density residential and multi-family. He stated that at the time there was an insufficient amount of multi-family and overall affordable housing in the County that could house workers in the growing service industry. He also claimed that higher

density development would be more cost effective from a public service and infrastructure standpoint than conventional sprawl development. The promotion of additional affordable housing, higher density development, and mixed-use activities were all supported within the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan (interview with Ken Patton, 5/30/2000).

CHAPTER VI

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOWNSHIP CONCEPT IN CHEROKEE COUNTY

As Chapter V discussed in detail the Township Concept as it was envisioned in the Cherokee County 2017 Comprehensive Plan, this chapter will focus on three different efforts to implement the Township Concept for a particular community. This chapter will also provide a synopsis of the events and issues surrounding the County's overall political environment in the years of 1998 and 1999 that had a direct impact on the Township Concept's future viability as a true development policy

The 2017 Comprehensive Plan proposed 14 different communities to become Township areas. In the proposed Land-Use map that was dated April 1998, land use designations were drawn up for every one of the 14 proposed Township areas. These proposed land-use designations resulted in most of the proposed Township areas to have a circular appearance, with overlapping rings radiating from the core, each representing a different land use. The majority of the Township areas were also bordered by a ring that represented a transitional zone. However, despite the proposed Township designations on the Land-Use map, in order for a community to officially establish themselves as a Township, they would have to initiate the planning process, develop their Township Plan, and submit it to the County for approval or disapproval. The Township Concept for Cherokee County embodied a true community based planning concept

Of the three communities that initiated a Township planning process to be discussed later in this chapter, only Union Hill actually completed a Township Plan that was approved and officially recognized by the Cherokee County government. One significant difference with Union Hill is that their Township planning process occurred while the County was still in the stages of completing their 20-year Comprehensive Plan, which included the specific vision of the Township Concept. At that time, the Township Concept was still a conceptual idea being developed by the Citizens Advisory Committee and the County Planning and Zoning staff. Therefore, during the time Union Hill was in the Township planning process, there were no official Township guidelines, policies, or a future Land-Use plan yet developed by the County.

The Union Hill Township

The Township planning process in Union Hill was initiated in December 1996 when Union Hill resident and activist, Bob Whitaker, approached Planning Director Ken Patton & Cherokee County Development Authority Director Kevin Johns about developing a Township Plan for the Union Hill community (Schecner, 1998). At this point, the County was in the middle of developing their twenty-year Comprehensive Plan and had just conducted a Vision Session facilitated by consultant Anton Nelessen that allowed the citizens of Cherokee County a first glance of the Township Concept.

Union Hill, at the time the Township Plan was developed, is best described as a well-balanced mix of rural, low-density residential, and neighborhood commercial development. Although exact measurements were not available to the Union Hill

planning group, much of the area was either farmland or forest existing in its natural state. The existing commercial activity was clustered along Union Hill Road and Sugar Pike Road near the western boundary of the community (Taylor, 1997).

During the planning process, three public gatherings were held for the purpose of providing information to the community and for collecting input. In addition, a series of questionnaires were distributed throughout the community to establish and quantify values, concepts, definitions, and development criteria (Taylor, 1997). In order to assist in the development of the plan, an architect was selected to work with the community in writing the Township Plan. The Consultant was funded half by the community and half by the County.

By spring of 1997, the initial draft was completed and accepted by the community. According to Ken Patton, Cherokee County Planning Director at the time, the voting process in Union Hill was done through a ballot that was sent to every piece of property within the proposed Township area. Then the ballots were to be filled out and submitted back to the Planning Department where the votes would be counted. A majority of votes indicated acceptance of the Township Plan. The Planning Department staff would then review the Township Plan to either accept or reject it (interview with Ken Patton, 5/30/2000). The Union Hill Township Plan would then serve as a Township prototype that would be attached as part of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan with its formal approval pending on the Board of Commissioner's vote of acceptance of the entire Comprehensive Plan

The basic components of the Union Hill Township Plan included a historical overview of the community, goals and policies, development criteria, and recommendations concerning architectural guidelines, infrastructure, and land use. Based on the results of the questionnaires, almost 100% of the respondents favored concentrating commercial development into a core area. Also, 76% of the respondents favored allowing mixed-use development (residential, commercial, office) within a designated area. In terms of high-density development, 60% of the respondents felt that it should be concentrated adjacent to the commercial area while 40% felt that no high-density development should be allowed at all (Taylor, 1997)

The land use component of the Township Plan called for one commercial/mixed use activity area at the intersection of Sugar Pike Road and Lower and Lower Union Hill Road. Surrounding the commercial/mixed use area would be low-density residential uses (Taylor, 1997). The remainder of the Union Hill area would remain agricultural. All new commercial development was recommended to be built on parcels of one acre or larger with at least 100 feet of road frontage. The low-density residential component surrounding the mixed use/commercial area would require a maximum density of 1 unit per acre w/o sewer and 3 units per acre w/ sewer. In the recommendation section of the plan, it was recommended that no sewer lines be run in any section of Union Hill in order to control growth. Therefore, if that recommendation were to be followed, all new development would be limited to 1 unit per acre.

In the component concerning architectural and site standards for the mixed use/commercial area, the major theme that was recommended to be incorporated into design was "vintage small town America" Also, the guidelines sought to incorporate an equestrian theme such as the style of the "Kentucky" horse farm Other architectural and site guidelines of note included:

- Signage should be in the form of small hanging signs or flush mounted to buildings Free standing signs should be low profile with a solid base clad in stone, brick, or similar material (Taylor, 1997).
- Parking should be shielded from view through dispersion, landscaping, and berms. Parking on the side and rear is encouraged. (Taylor, 1997).
- All utility wires should be installed underground (Taylor, 1997).
- Reduce the usual number of curb cuts through the use of required minimum footage, encouraging common access and interconnecting parking behind the buildings (Taylor, 1997).
- Fencing shall be a four rail, dark brown stained horse fence (Taylor, 1997).
- Concrete sidewalks shall be constructed, 5 feet wide, 3 feet behind the curb line Street trees are to be planted within this 3-foot strip at regular spacing

In a June 3, 2000 interview with John Hargraves, a resident of Union Hill who sat on the citizen's Steering Committee during the development of Union Hill Township Plan, Mr Hargraves indicated that there was significant opposition to the Township Concept. One of the major groups who opposed to the idea, according to Hargraves, were persons who held significant acreage that were afraid that with the Township in place they

would not be able sell or develop their property at the highest value which typically would be commercial usage (interview with John Hargraves, 6/3/2000). This concern was particularly commonplace for those who owned large acreage in areas delineated for future agriculture use or even in areas delineated for low density residential. According to Mr. Hargraves, many persons saw the potential for future commercial usage for their property and wanted to eventually profit to the maximum extent possible. They felt that the Township Plan would result in a loss of value of their property. Mr. Hargraves also stated that many persons also opposed to the concept of architectural and site guidelines governing their property. Generally, these were people who believed strongly in individual property rights and objected to any effort that would place restrictions on the use of property. They also felt that it would make it unfeasible to improve their property if the specific guidelines had to be followed. In the opinion of Mr. Hargraves, there was also probable apathy when the final vote was taken for the Township Plan that had a significant impact on the final outcome (interview with John Hargraves, 6/3//2000).

Since no specific guidelines were in place governing the Township planning process, the steering committee members worked with the Planning and Zoning department who provided advisement during the planning process. Ken Patton, Cherokee County Planning Director at the time, stated that one of the things the Planning staff wanted to be incorporated into the Townships was higher density residential development (interview with Ken Patton, 5/30/2000). According to Mr Hargraves, Mr Patton advised the Union Hill Steering Committee to include high density residential and

multi-family into the Township Plan. However, that suggestion was strongly opposed in the community (interview with John Hargraves, 6/3//2000).

The Union Hill Township Plan was eventually approved as part of the 2107 Comprehensive Plan for Cherokee County. The manifestation of implementing the components of the Union Hill Township Plan occurred through the development of an Overlay Zoning District. The Overlay Zoning District for Union Hill was initiated by the Union Hill Economic Development Council, developed by the Planning and Zoning Department, and brought forth by the community to the Board of Commissioners for approval. The Overlay Zoning was approved by the Board of Commissioners on July 27, 1999. The basic purpose of an Overlay Zoning District is to create additional development standards above and beyond the existing zoning. The Overlay Zoning for the Union Hill community essentially included all of the land use designations, architectural standards, site standards, and other development criteria in the Township Plan. Since the Township Plan was adopted, no major development has occurred within Union Hill by the study was completed.

Hickory Flat Township

Hickory Flat is a community located in the southeastern portion of Cherokee County. It is located along busy state highway 142, which connects the county seat of Cherokee, Canton, with bustling North Fulton County. The area is relatively rural consisting mainly of large acreage properties and farms. A few low-density subdivisions exist with minor commercial businesses located along two intersections on Highway 142.

The initiation of a Township in Hickory Flat occurred in the summer of 1997 when a small group of residents volunteered to convene to weigh the positives and negatives of forming a Township. What followed was over six months of controversy and divisiveness over the Township issue. Throughout the beginning stages of the planning process, organizers claimed to have difficulty with a process that was at the time ill defined. During the time period between the summer and winter, the County was still in the process of developing their Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, a defined process with specific guidelines and procedures was not yet created by the County Planning Department to guide communities through the Township process. Many of the citizens involved found the situation frustrating as evident in the comments of Hickory Flat resident Everet Heckman who said, "This whole process is just so loose" (Bennett, 10-23-1997). But, the proponents of a Township continued by conducting informal meetings amongst the residents to gather their input for the Township Plan.

One of the first controversies to arise in the community occurred at one of the first community meetings to discuss the Township. At the meeting, the proposed land-use map that was developed by the County's Planning Department as part of the twenty-year land-use plan was presented. The land-use map included two commercial nodes along Hwy 140 at the East Cherokee Drive and Mountain Road intersections. The map also provided for multi-family housing to be located along Hwy. 142 that would have allowed for more than 9,400 units. This multi-family component of the map caused significant protest within the community. As a result, a small group of community

residents developed an amendment to the proposed land-use map that would have reduced the number of potential multi-family units from 9,400 to 1,000. The amendment was presented to the Board of Commissioners and approved. County Commissioner J.J. Biello, who represented the Hickory Flat area, represented the only opposition vote stating that he opposed any apartments in Hickory Flat (Bennett, 12-25-1997). This position was widely felt among many of the residents of the Hickory Flat community and represented one of the principle factors that caused residents to have negative feelings towards the Township Concept.

As the Township Concept continued to be discussed in Hickory Flat different factions emerged, each with their own views of how the Township should be developed. Heated disagreements over the township question stalemated progress in the planning process. Dissatisfaction with the Township Planning process also arose due to a particular item within the Township Policies and Procedures that was proposed by the Citizen's Advisory Committee in December of 1997. The specific provision involved the voting methodology that the community would undertake in the final vote to approve or disapprove a Township Plan. In the provision, one vote would be granted for every property owner with an extra vote being allocated to a property owner for every five acres that they owned in addition to a base of five acres. Therefore, if one person owned 1 to 5 acres, they would be granted one vote. Then, if a person owned 10 acres they would be granted 2 votes, and a person with 50 acres would be granted 10 votes. Attorney Ralph Walker was among those who pushed for the provision, saying it would prevent large landowners from being controlled by those who own small tracts

around them (Bennett, 12-18-1997). Local activist following the township process were angered that the new rules weigh the process so heavily in favor of the large landowners. This sentiment was expressed by one Hickory Flat resident Linda Ruggerio who stated, "Cherokee County sells out to large landowners, builders and developers take over" (Bennett, 12-18-1997) Much of the opposition to the Township in Hickory Flat also came from large landowners who remain wary of a plan to organize. They feared it would make it difficult for them to capitalize on the coming growth by selling their land for development (Bennett, 10-23-1997)

In a June 6, 2000 interview with Deborah Wallace, a citizen activist in Hickory Flat who was heavily involved in the township planning process, she explained many of the reasons why people opposed the creation of a Township in Hickory Flat. Ms. Wallace indicated that citizens seemed to have a grasp of the Township Concept but did not really understand the details. She further stated that many landowners did not want the controls, any committee over them, and the density associated with the Township Concept. Also, according to Ms. Wallace, the concept of a pedestrian oriented community didn't make sense to them. In regards to the concept of architectural and site guidelines, Ms. Wallace claimed that she surveyed the community on that subject and discovered support for architectural guidelines for commercial and office development. The exception was the landowners along Hwy 140 who had strong opposition to the concept. When asked of the community's feelings regarding the initial Township form proposed in the Comprehensive Plan where a commercial center would exist with residential surrounding it with density decreasing further away from

the core Ms. Wallace stated, "I think each residents feels differently depending on how close that are to the center core. Those in the center are hoping for land profit so they love it The next step out loves it a little less. Beyond that they get no economic advantage and are left with density. Even those in the core hate the regulations. Residents here don't even have associations much less committees" Ms. Wallace also stated that while she supported elements of the Township Concept such as architectural guidelines, she was against having development at higher densities and also the concept of multi-family development. She felt that for a community like Hickory Flat, three units per acre should not be considered medium density and eight units per acre is off the scale. In regards to apartments, Ms Wallace said that the opposition to apartments in the community is generally the perception that they bring crime, residents with no ties to the community, crowded roads, and noise. She also there was a feeling that "I paid for my acreage when I moved here so you shouldn't get to come in for a lower admission price" (interview with Deborah Wallace, 6/6/2000).

Other criticisms of the Township Concept were that many felt it represented another layer of government or it restricted the use of the property. This aspect of a Township being another layer of government represented one of the many misconceptions township opponents had in the Hickory Flat community. In a statement to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Ken Patton stated, " There is a lot of misinformation out there. I have talked till I am blue in the face, but I just can't make people understand, some don't want to understand" (Bennett, 12-25-1997)

While the Township opponents were the most vocal during the Hickory Flat debate, many residents expressed their opinion of the Township Concept as a positive idea. Resident Eddie Robinson whose restaurant would benefit from the advent of apartments quoted to the Cherokee Tribune, "We support growth that in turn supports our business." It would be a lot better for the local economy if people spent their money in Hickory Flat rather than somewhere else"(Schechner, 1-7-98). Ernie Darnell, in another quote to the Cherokee Tribune stated, "There is no need for Mobile Homes in this area anymore Multi-family zoning would allow us to do something with the property rather than letting it just sit there" (Schechner, 1-7-98). Resident Monte Bores, in a letter to the editor in the 1-7-98 Cherokee Tribune stated, "Growth is coming, and unless we have a plan in place for dealing with it, we will be at the mercy of hit and run developers from outside of the county. Either the adopt township plans that will preserve some resemblance of our rural lifestyle, or leave the floodgate open and allow Cherokee County to become just another Atlanta suburb, densely populated with congested city sprawl "

A January public meeting was initiated by Commissioner J.J. Biello to try to gauge the public sentiment and resolve issues concerning establishing a Township in Hickory Flat. The meeting yielded two conclusions, that the majority of Hickory Flat residents are opposed to high-density growth and the Township Concept in general. Eventually, despite continued efforts by some to continue with the Township Planning Process, the effort eventually ceased, as it was evident that the divisiveness and opposition in the community was too strong. At that point, according to Commissioner Ilona Sanders,

the Township became too much of an emotional and divisive issue amongst the citizens for it to receive much political support (interview with Ilona Sanders, 6/5/2000)

Sixes Township

The proposed Sixes Township area centered around the intersection of Sixes Road and Bell Ferry Road. At the time the Township planning process was initiated, the zoning composition of the area was 50% agricultural, 8% residential at 1 unit per acre, 8% residential at 2-3 units per acre, 30% Planned Unit Development (medium density), and 2% commercial. Also, when the Sixes community began their Township planning process, policies and procedures were already developed by the County and a Future Land Use Map was in existence that illustrated proposed certain land use delineation's for the Sixes Township. The County's Future Land Use map called for the projected composition of the Sixes area to be 40% medium density (4 units per acre), 40% low density (3 units per acre), and 15% commercial/mixed use. According to the County's policies and procedures for the Township Planning Process, the Sixes Plan would at a minimum require 10% of the land to be allocated for commercial and a residential component equal to 3 units per gross acre of the entire Township area. Therefore, if the proposed Sixes township area represented a total of 2,000 acres, the Township Plan should allow for a minimum of 6,000 residential units. Since the Township Policies and Procedures did not dictate how the residential was to be distributed, technically the 6,000 units could either be concentrated in multi-family or they could be distributed more evenly throughout the township area.

The Township planning process for Sixes was initiated when the District Commissioner, Ilona Sanders, asked local resident and citizen activist Karen Mahurin, to begin leading the process. An initial 44-member group, led by Ms. Mahurin, held an informal meeting on March 17, 1998 to introduce the Township Concept for Sixes (Schecher, 3-23-1998). According to documents located in the Cherokee County Planning Department, with the initial feedback from that meeting being positive, the group then proceeded to submit a petition, signed by 10% of the property owners in the proposed Sixes township area, to the Planning Department as required by the Township Policies and Procedures. Once the petition was signed and submitted, the community moved to organize a steering committee, set dates for future Steering Committee and community meetings, and start developing the initial components of the Township Plan. Based on the County's Township Planning Process Policies and Procedures, the Sixes group was charged with establishing township boundaries, developing architectural and site guidelines, and identifying land use and density declinations for the township (Cherokee County Planning Department, 1998).

One of the initial activities that occurred during the Township planning process was the distribution of a questionnaire to the residents of the Sixes community. The questionnaire's purpose was to gauge the resident's sentiments regarding several issues that were relevant to the Township Concept. The results of the questionnaires were obtained from records located in the Cherokee County Planning Department. Sixty-three questionnaires were filled out and submitted. Based on the questionnaire results,

the following conclusions were made regarding the majority opinion of the questionnaire respondents

- Commercial should be limited to the Bells Ferry corridor vs. having a commercial district in a circular form that would also encompass Sixes Road.
- The overall objective should be to manage growth and retain the small town atmosphere and rural lifestyle.
- Commercial guidelines should be in place consistent with the history of the Sixes community.
- Of the types of Land Use that Cherokee County should increase availability for in future growth, apartments and duplex housing ranked the lowest
- High density residential should not be allowed in commercial activity centers.
- The majority of respondents disagreed with the proposed composition of the community per the Future Land Use Map. They felt the composition should be 36% agricultural, 38% low density residential, 10% medium density residential, and 10% commercial.

In the comments section attached to the questionnaire results, the majority of remarks were either in opposition to the Township Concept or just some of its elements. A sample of some of the comments include:

“ We chose Cherokee County for it’s rural beauty and reasonable priced housing. Cutting down most of the trees and cramming in the houses will only make us seek out another community”.

“ We moved to this area to be away from all of the development. I guess we will just keep moving”.

“ One acre minimal for residential.”

“Anything more than two units per acre is too much.”

“This land has been in my family for 3 generations. Please don't do this.”

(Sixes Township Questionnaire, Cherokee County Planning Department, 1998)

By the fall of 1998, the Sixes Township Steering Committee was organized and met on a regular basis (information regarding the Steering Committee meetings was obtained through the meeting minutes on file at the Cherokee County Planning Department). At the first couple of Steering Committee meetings misconceptions regarding the Townships were discussed and efforts began to establish the Township boundaries and articulate the historical significance of the community. By the months of January and February, work had begun to develop the specific components of the Township Plan. The Steering Committee also hired an architect to assist in the Township Plan development process. Approximately nine Steering Committee meetings and 3 community meetings were held during the planning process (Sixes Township Steering Committee meeting minutes, Cherokee County Planning Department, 1998).

The planning process started to lose momentum when significant opposition started to emerge. Some of the divisions that were developed included “old-timers” vs. “newcomers” and “landowners” vs “subdivision residents”. Eventually, the hostility that was created amongst the different factions led the original Steering Committee Chairperson, to leave the Township planning process. In a June 4, 2000 interview with Karen Mahurin, the original Steering Committee Chairperson of the Sixes Township

planning process, Ms. Mahurin indicated that she felt that the Township effort was not worth the hostility and division that was being created in the community (interview with Karen Mahurin, 6/4/2000) The Township proponents were also upset by many of the requirements they had to follow in the County's Township Planning Process Policies and Procedures. In a letter obtained from the Cherokee County Planning Department that was written from the Steering Committee to Commissioner Ilona Sanders, the Steering Committee members were questioning the fairness of how the Union Hill and Free Home/Lathemtown Township Plans did not have to abide by the same policies and procedures that Sixes did such as residential density requirements and minimum commercial areas. The fact that the Sixes Township Steering Committee looked to the Union Hill and Free Home/Lathemtown Township Plans as models, but had to abide by a separate set of rules upset them. The letter also stated that the Steering Committee opposed the minimum density requirement as required in the guidelines.

In the June 4, 2000 interview with Karen Mahurin, the original Chairperson of the Sixes Township Committee, many issues were discussed concerning the positives and negatives of the Township Concept and the reasons why certain people opposed the Township idea. The main reason Ms. Mahurin was interested in the Township Concept was the establishment of architectural and site guidelines for commercial development. Ms. Mahurin, like most of the Sixes residents, was opposed to the idea of high density residential in the community. Ms. Mahurin stated that two opposing camps emerged that consisted of "old timers" who opposed the entire Township Concept and the

“newcomers” who saw the Township Concept as a means to provide for quality growth in the community based on the values of the residents. She further stated that the “old timers” became very hostile towards the “newcomers” who they viewed as people trying to dictate what they could do with their property. Ms. Mahurin also said that one of the main reasons for opposition to the Township Concept came from existing landowners outside of the proposed commercial area who were afraid that they would not be able to eventually profit by selling their property for commercial use” (interview with Karen Mahurin, 6/4/2000). At that time, commercial property sold at a rate of five times greater than residential property. Therefore, many of these landowners were afraid they would lose the value of their land if the Township Concept were put in place. Ms. Mahurin also stated that many of the long-term landowners were opposed to the concept of architectural and site guidelines. They felt that such guidelines would make it unfeasible to improve their property and make it harder to sell. In terms of the concept of the live, work, and play community that is exposed in New Urbanism and which was originally envisioned for the Townships, Ms. Mahurin felt that such an idea would not work well in a rural environment like Sixes where the automobile is so engrained into the daily lives of people. She also felt that high-density housing and multi-family would not be in character with the Sixes community. In general, Ms. Mahurin felt that the most viable element of the Township Concept is having architectural and guidelines developed by the residents of the community. She felt that it would not be ideal to try to propose prototypical township land use patterns on an existing community” (interview with Deborah Wallace, 6/6/2000).

Ms Mahurin withdrew from the Township planning process because she claimed that no one could come to terms. This divisiveness also displeased the County Commissioner representing the Sixes Community, Ilona Sanders. Ms. Sanders indicated in a June 5, 2000 interview that she initially was very much in favor of establishing a Township for the Sixes area. However, she eventually quit supporting the idea because of the conflicts that seemed divide the community ” (interview with Ilona Sanders, 6/5/2000)

Despite hiring a Consultant, no real resemblance of a Township Plan was ever put together for the Sixes community to ever vote on and submit to the County for approval. Even after the resignation of their original Chairperson, a group of residents still continued the Township initiative in Sixes. However, the opposition and division within the community eventually led the Steering Committee to give up the effort, especially once political support for the Sixes Township was lost.

The Future of the Township Concept in Cherokee County

The County elections of 1998 would mark a significant change in direction for the County in its approach for managing growth and development. Many of the Commissioners that were in existence before the 1998 elections held the viewpoint that growth is inevitable and a strong Land Use Plan should be in place that will ensure future growth is managed properly. However, the new Commission candidates that arose in the 1998 elections felt that policies should be put in place that would significantly slow or reduce the rate of growth in the County. Emily Lemcke, who ran

for Commission Chair that year against incumbent Hollis Lathem was quoted in the Cherokee Tribune as stating, "I have become convinced that our county is not prepared for the impact of residential development that it has already allowed. The old cry that growth is inevitable isn't necessarily so" (Schechner, 2-27-1998). The 2017 Comprehensive Plan for Cherokee County took in account the projected population figures for the next twenty years that were developed by the Atlanta Regional Commission and proposed a strategy that would have accommodated that growth, specifically in the Townships. However, the County Commission that was sworn into office in January 1998 felt that future growth within the County should be slowed down from current and projected rates

After the 1998 election was over, incumbent Chairman Hollis Lathem and another incumbent Commissioner were defeated. Both of these public figures had reputations in the community of being pro-growth. They were replaced by new Commission Chair Emily Lemcke and new Commissioner Larry Singleton. The incumbents were defeated in large part due to a visible mandate within the County electorate to stop or slow future growth.

One of the first major actions undertaken by the new Commission in January 1998 was to make a statement against growth by enacting a 12-month residential rezoning moratorium. During the time of vote on this issue during the Board of Commission meeting, several citizens and Commissioners expressed concern on the impact it would have on the building and construction industry. However, upon motion to approve, the

moratorium passed by a vote of 4-1 (Minutes of the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners, 1999).

The Township Concept, which was the heart of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan and which drew praise from around the state and country, would also be subject to change by the Board of Commissioners in the year of 1999. A consideration to amend the Future Land Use Plan was initiated by Commission Chairman Emily Lemcke at the January 22, 1999 Board of Commission meeting. In March, at a Board of Commission work session, revisions were proposed for the Future Land Use Plan that would essentially remove the original proposed Township areas. One of the main revisions was to change the population projection from the original projections used from the Atlanta Regional Commission. The original projection had Cherokee's population growth to reach 301,900 by 2020. That projection was reduced by the Board of Commissioners to 215,604, which would represent a total population increase of approximately 86,000 over a twenty-year period. According to Commissioner Ilona Sanders, the original projection was unrealistic and that there would be no way the County could have kept pace from an infrastructure standpoint. Ms. Sanders was also quoted in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution stating that the Commissioners never understood how much growth was originally programmed into the plan. She further stated that she supported the concept of the plan but she was not aware that the figures were so high and that she also wanted to see the high density removed (Bennett, 3-18-1999). The proposed 86,000 resident drop in the population projection change were subtracted from eight of the County's 14 proposed Townships. The existing approved

Townships of Union Hill and Lathermtown/Free Home would remain intact (Minutes of the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners, 1999) The number of homes and apartments that would be built within the Townships would be reduced by 83 percent from nearly 30,000 to 4,300. Also, changes in the land use delineation's and land use category definitions erased much of the density of the Townships The high density of homes and apartments were essentially removed all together, which would leave a few residents to support a commercial center. The change in Land Use categories were as follows

- Low Density Residential changed from 1-3 units per acre to 0-1 units per acre
- Medium Density Residential changed from 2 to 4 units per acre to 1 to 2 units per acre
- High Density Residential changed from 3-8 units per acre to 2-3 units per acre.

(Source: Cherokee County Planning Department)

Also removed from the original Future Land Use map was the concept of transition zones that would serve as the boundary of the Township. In the revised Future Land Use Plan, traditional step down zoning was put in place where residential and commercial uses were separated. Commissioner Lemcke was quoted in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution as saying the townships in the original land use plan were too large and that the plan was never going to fly (Hannigan, 1999). According to Ken Patton, Cherokee County Planning Director at the time, the majority of citizens and elected officials in Cherokee County were generally opposed to the concept of high-density development that was intended to be incorporated into the Townships (interview with Ken Patton, 5/30/2000).

Another change to the Township Concept that occurred was a revision to the Township Planning Process Policies and Procedures. At the July 29, 1999 Board of Commission meeting, Commissioner Sanders proposed a change in the Township process that would strip the Township Committee of the authority to delineate land uses within the Township and would only allow them to develop architectural guidelines. According to the proposed legislation, the designation of land-use categories would be the sole responsibility of the Board of Commission. The proposed amendment to the Township Planning Process Policies and Procedures was unanimously approved (Minutes of the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners, 1999). Commissioner Sanders, one of the earliest supporters of community based planning, indicated in a June 5, 2000 interview that she has given up on residents working together to solve land use issues. Her involvement in the heated Sixes and Hickory Flat Township efforts helped lead her to that conclusion. Ms. Sanders further stated that she originally thought of everybody sitting down working together to find common ground, but that never happened (interview with Ilona Sanders, 6/5/2000). Commissioner J.J. Bello, who watched a Township effort divide the Hickory Flat community, stated in an April 19, 1999 article of the Atlanta-Journal Constitution that self-interest and greed prevented people from reaching consensus. "Show me a township that works," Bello said. "It's pie in the sky" (Bennett, 4-19-1999).

This change in the Township Policies and Procedures was a negative to Gary Hite, a member of the Citizen Advisory Committee who helped write the original Comprehensive Plan. "The underlying principle of township planning which made it so

viable was intensity and the depth of the involvement from the community”, Hite said, “If you remove that, you go back to what the government dictates. That would be a serious mistake. That is what defines it and makes it unique” (Bennett, 4-22-1999).

Even though the Future Land Use Map revision threatened the future viability of future townships, the Township Concept is still part of the text of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan and the Policies and Procedures are still valid. However, in the June 5, 2000 interview with Commissioner Ilona Sanders, she felt that there would be no more communities trying to establish themselves as Townships given the negative experiences when Hickory Flat and Sixes attempted to form Townships.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When Cherokee County incorporated the Township Concept into their 2017 Comprehensive Plan, it was under the recognition that growth and development was inevitable in Cherokee County. However, the mindset was that through innovative planning concepts such as the Township Concept, urban sprawl could be avoided and Cherokee County would not assume many of the same impacts associated with growth that many find unappealing in other counties within the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. The original intent for the Township Concept was to accommodate future growth by concentrating it into dense unincorporated Townships. The Townships would be formed around certain nodes within the County that already had some form of historical identity. The key component of the Township Concept was that it would empower the citizens to organize and develop their own vision for their Township. The Township would not be another layer of government, but instead it would represent a strong example of community based planning.

Conclusions

The Township Concept ultimately was not successful in Cherokee County in part because of the divisiveness it caused in communities that underwent the Township Planning Process. There was not one specific attribute of the Township Concept that resulted in a consensus of opposition in the communities that underwent the process. Rather, all of the components of the Township Concept had both significant support and opposition. It was the overall lack of compromise and common ground by the different

factions that ultimately led the Township Concept to lose momentum in both the Sixes and Hickory Flat communities.

One of the components of the Township Concept that made it unique was its community-based concept where the residents could play a large role in developing their own plan for their community. However, rather than developing a shared vision, residents fought bitterly over different issues associated with the Township Concept. One side consisted of larger landowners that wanted to be able to sell their property for the highest intensity use possible. They were afraid a Township Plan that placed their property in a non-commercial zone would hurt the profitability of their land. The other side consisted of new residents that were against additional growth and didn't approve of the density aspects associated with the Townships. Many of the newcomers live in subdivisions and wanted to maintain the County's bucolic feel that lured them from the city. Many of these newcomers migrated from more populous parts of Metropolitan Atlanta and left those areas to escape dense development and sprawl. The new residents typically favored the idea of site and architectural guidelines in a Township Plan, as it would help prevent the "cookie cutter" style development that many of them fled from in the first place. The longtime residents disapproved of the concept of architectural or site guidelines. Many of them lived most of their lives in an agrarian culture and were not used to concepts that would place new guidelines in the utilization of their property. The "newcomers" mostly have come from other suburban environments and have experienced the idea of neighborhood covenants and strong neighborhood associations. These different dynamics within the community and their

failure to find common ground doomed the community based concept aspect of the Township Concept.

Much of the arguments against the Township appeared based on misconceptions regarding the Townships. This included that the Township would be another layer of government and not realizing that a Township Plan was only a recommended policy that could be changed or revised at any time. Many persons also carried a negative perception about high-density development and apartments fearing that they would constitute crime and blight. Mr. Patton, Cherokee County Planning Director during the time of the development of the Comprehensive Plan, felt that a large part of the problem is that the residents were not properly educated on the Township Concept and in the land development process in general ” (interview with Ken Patton, 5/30/2000). The communities that underwent the Township Planning Process did utilize the services of an architect to assist in the plan development. However, without the proper education and guidance from the County Planning staff or a Planning Consultant, it appeared difficult for the citizens to adequately understand the pros and cons of the Township Concept and how it related the overall goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Also, having Planners who are accustomed to working with community groups and citizen input might have been of benefit to help resolve and ease many of the conflicts that arose during the Township Planning Process. An obstacle in that regard was the lack of resources within the Cherokee County Planning Department. During the time period covered in this study, there existed only two professional planners on staff in Cherokee County. Indications from the Planning Department staff was that this

number was barely sufficient to handle the normal course of reviewing re-zoning and variance requests much less devote a significant amount of time into Township Planning

During the public meetings and the Visioning Process that took place during the development of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, the Township Concept and New Urbanism ideas were initially accepted. However, even though citizen participation was deemed good by public meeting standards, it still only represented only a small fraction of the County's population. Therefore, one cannot assume that any countywide consensus was achieved during the citizen input and Visioning process of the Comprehensive Plan. Many of the persons opposing the Township Concept in their communities probably did not participate in or educate themselves on the development of the Comprehensive Plan in its planning stages. Not until the Township Planning Process took place in their specific community where they could see the specific impact the Township Concept would have on their property and/or surrounding neighborhood did many formulate an opinion on the matter. Also, at the time the Visioning Process took place, the specific locations for the Townships and the specific policies and procedures governing them were yet to be developed. Therefore, only a general concept was presented to the community for input at the time without a full education process of how the Township Concept would be implemented in Cherokee County and how specific communities would be impacted. Most of the specific details regarding the Township Policies and Procedures were not developed until after the Comprehensive Plan was approved and adopted by the Board of Commissioners

When the Township Concept was introduced in Cherokee County, many individuals and media labeled the idea as New Urbanism. The components of New Urbanism that many felt could be achieved in the Townships was the development of a pedestrian friendly community by combining businesses and homes in small, dense communities. The Townships were also envisioned to provide a mixture of housing types both in size and affordability, another concept promoted in New Urbanism. However, the concept of high density residential development and multi-family development went strongly against the sentiments of many of the residents and elected officials who had a stake in the proposed Township areas. Even in the case of the two Township Plans that were adopted, densities for residential were no more than 1 to 3 units per acre. An argument can be made that the Township Plans in Union Hill and Free Home were successfully adopted because no policies were yet developed by the County that dictated percentages for commercial development and number of residential units that had to be accommodated. Therefore, minimal controversy existed concerning high-density development within those Townships.

In terms of establishing a land use and density scheme for the Townships, the County's Township Planning Process Policies and Procedures only provided vague requirements. In the Township Planning Process Policies and Procedures, the only requirements set forth was the delineation of a central commercial zone representing a minimum of 10% of the total Township area and providing enough residential units to equal three times the gross acreage of the Township. Therefore, no specific guidelines were set by the

County on the front end in regards to the scale and style of the commercial area (i.e., neo-traditional style, auto-orientation or pedestrian orientation), how mixed-use can be achieved in the commercial node (i.e., promotion of lofts or townhomes), and how the residential component should be distributed and diversified (i.e. number, location, and distribution of detached single-family, attached single family, apartments) The concept as envisioned by the Cherokee County planners suggested that the density for residential should start at its highest level next to the commercial center and gradually decrease further out Other than the recommendations set forth in the Comprehensive Plan, there were no specific requirements that required the residents to incorporate it into a Township Plan. Also, because the Future Land Use Map offered broad based land use delineation's for the entire county and wasn't digitized to identify the use for each exact parcel, it made it difficult to perform the precision planning that was necessary at the Township level.

Another problem dealt with the size and scope of the proposed Township areas Except for a requirement establishing a minimum size for the Township areas, no limits were set to how large the residents could make their Townships. Also, the proposed Township areas that were identified in the Future Land Use Map were drawn to be 1,000 to 5,000 acres in size, which is too large to effectively be pedestrian oriented communities For example, Kentlands, Maryland, a community described as an example of New Urbanism development is built only on 352 acres. In general, the Township Concept was set up to empower the community to establish their own standards and land use delineation's, so if it was in the community's desire, many of the Townships

could have been developed without utilizing very many of the tenants of New Urbanism

The elections of 1998 placed a mandate onto the Board of Commissioners to slow the rate of growth in the County. The Township Concept was viewed with criticism because it accommodated enough growth to meet the demands of a project population that "slow growth" advocates claimed was too high. The Land Use Plan revision of 1999, with adjusted population projections, reduced the proposed Township area significantly and eliminated the high-density residential component. Concepts such as transition zones and mixed-use activity centers were also nearly eliminated. The plan in its current form calls for strict segregation of land uses. This revision is indicative of a political shift that occurred soon after the Township Concept was introduced as part of the Comprehensive Plan. That political shift was one that favored specific policies to slow growth and one that was in general opposed to high-density development. Even though the new Board of Commissioners called for slow growth, legally it may be hard to achieve in the long run. History suggests that the revised zoning approach will net the County the same sprawl, scattered development pattern that is commonplace throughout the rest of the Metropolitan Atlanta area.

Recommendations

The effort to implement the Township Concept might have benefited if more education and facilitation was offered to the residents who were seeking to initiate a Township

Planning Process. This could have possibly corrected many of the misconceptions that existed concerning Townships. In order to better educate the public, a Township manual could have been developed which could have included the benefits of the Township Concept for Cherokee County, what the Township Concept hopes to achieve, how the Township meets the goals and objectives in the Comprehensive Plan, how the Township Plan can be implemented through zoning and other development regulations, how the Township Plan can be revised, conceptual drawings of how a Township could look, and specific development guidelines that the Township must follow. Also, examples of high-density development constructed in an innovative, quality manner could be presented along with arguments that would aim to remove many of the negative stereotypes associated with high density and multi-family development.

While it was a good idea to have the Township Concept be a community based planning model, perhaps the residents would have been better served if a Conceptual Plan were presented to them in the beginning from which they could work from as a base and revise as needed. This would also have helped the residents understand and visualize a Township better before beginning the planning process. Implementing the Township Concept could also have benefited if the Planning Department, through either its existing staff or hired Planning Consultant could have devoted more time and effort in educating and facilitating the planning process within the individual communities. However, given the limitation of the existing Planning Department staff, funds appropriated by the County for additional staff to work exclusively with Township Planning would be a necessity. A Planning Consultant to work in conjunction with the

Architectural Consultant in the individual Township planning efforts would also likely have strengthened the process. Planners are generally experienced and skilled in working with community groups, synthesizing citizen input, facilitating public planning processes, and helping resolve and find compromise amongst different factions within the community. However, since the cost of consulting in the Township Planning Process rested half with the community and half with the County, the ability to obtain the adequate amount of funds for an additional consultant might be difficult for a community to raise. Providing the adequate amount of technical assistance to achieve the implementation of the Township Concept is a responsibility that should lie solely on the County. In order to implement the recommendations above to provide for better education and facilitation, a larger appropriation of funds by the Board of Commissioners to be used solely for the formation of all 14 Townships would have been required. It is likely though; that the strong feelings many had against the Township Concept and the loss of political support that developed would have remained unchanged even if better education and facilitation took place in the Township Planning Process.

In conclusion, the Township Concept represented an innovative idea that put the power of planning into the hands of its residents and offered alternative methods for development. The Township Concept initiation in Cherokee County occurred during a time of significant change as the County was beginning an evolution from a rural to suburban County. The fear and concern for this change within the County resulted in

both positive and negative opinions towards the Township Concept. The dynamics of Cherokee County resulted in the Township Concept to be a very difficult idea to implement. The negativity and controversy associated with the Township Concept in Cherokee County will likely mean that the idea will never come to full fruition. However, even though the conditions in Cherokee County was generally not suited for such a venture, the Township Concept should still be considered as a effective method of growth management that other communities should explore. However, in order for the Township Concept to work in other communities the following conditions must exist: 1. A county must be mostly undeveloped and the plan should apply to mainly undeveloped portions of the County, and 2. there must be an acceptance that growth cannot be stopped but can be steered toward certain areas, and 3. residents must be in favor of the idea of medium to high-density development, and 4 commercial and medium to high density residential development should not be scattered throughout the county but instead concentrated in nodes or townships, and 4. Developers must see the value in building mixed-use developments that require architectural conformity and which are pedestrian accessible in scale

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VITA

Kevin D. Keller was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky on December 13, 1972. He was a 1990 graduate of Bowling Green High School in Bowling Green, Kentucky. The following year, he entered Western Kentucky University and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography. He later entered the Graduate School of Planning at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where he received his Master of Science degree in Planning in December 2000. He is presently working in the Community Development field in DeKalb County, Georgia.