



## Strategic Growth Planning Essential to Oconee County

Oconee County will continue to see new residents move here in the coming years to enjoy our rural quality of life, diverse amenities and world-class school system.

How we manage this growth is key to ensuring that we all continue to enjoy the many benefits of living in our county.

One of the four goals of Oconee County's Comprehensive Plan is smart growth that fits our citizens' vision for our shared community. Smart growth requires us to continue to implement the priorities of our Comprehensive Plan, which was developed with citizen input and which serves as our guiding document for land use, development, community improvement and investment.

Citizens have been clear in their desire that Oconee not turn into another metro Atlanta county. The Comprehensive Plan, which was updated last year, defines specific character areas that limit growth to the areas of our county in which it is most appropriate.

Appropriate business development is allowed at key nodes in the central and northern parts of the county, while the rural character of the southern part of the county is preserved.

For planning purposes, we project a 2 percent annual population growth rate, which supports a sustainable rate.

The Comprehensive Plan further focuses on several goals that will help achieve smart growth, including promoting growth that builds lasting value in our community by enhancing or complementing the existing character of the surrounding area.

The plan also promotes economic activity that will generate work opportunities by recruiting, supporting and retaining a range of employers from local and small businesses to major employers that will strengthen the tax base and improve our quality of life.

Additionally, we must ensure that the water, sewer and internet infrastructure needs of both current and future residents can be served by safe, efficient and cost-effective systems.

Finally, our park system is integral to our community, and supporting a network of parks, recreational facilities and natural areas that meets the needs of area residents is important to us all.

Smart economic growth is necessary to ensure that we have the funds to meet the service needs of our citizens. A diversified tax base, achieved through appropriate economic development, will ensure that our community's economy continues to thrive.

Following through on our plan of controlled, planned growth will ensure that we preserve our county's quality of life for generations to come.

*County Talk Columns are submitted to the Oconee Enterprise and appear in the print edition on the date listed.*