

Community Assessment

Volume 2 Technical Analysis

Prepared as an Element of the
Joint Comprehensive Plan 2030
for
**Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals,
Watkinsville and Oconee County,
Georgia**

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Community Assessment

Volume 2: Technical Analysis

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Demographic Overview

Population growth and characteristics are important to the overall land use demand and the services and infrastructure to service this demand. The purpose of assessing Oconee County’s demographics is to:

- Look at past population trends and how they relate to the future;
- Project the rate of growth and actual growth in order to determine the demand for land use types and infrastructure needs;
- Determine where those needs are currently;
- Analyze household characteristics to determine housing type and cost, retail and employment market, and special needs populations; and
- Look at types and levels of service that will be required.

■ Historic Population

Between 1970 and 1990, Oconee County’s population increased 123 percent, with an average annual growth rate of 6.1 percent. Between 1990 and 2000, the County’s population increased by 48.9 percent, up to 26,225, with growth to 29,895 by 2005. Table 1.1 summarizes the historic population growth for Oconee County, its cities, and its surrounding counties between 1960 and 2000.

Table 1.1									
Population Growth 1960-2000									
Oconee County and Cities, State and NEGDRG Region									
Area Name	Census Year					% Change			
	2000	1990	1980	1970	1960	90-00	80-90	70-80	60-70
State of Georgia	8,186,453	6,478,149	5,462,989	4,587,930	3,943,116	26.40%	18.60%	19.10%	16.40%
Northeast GA Region	438,300	328,223	275,449	224,983	190,746	33.50%	19.20%	22.40%	17.90%
Barrow County	46,144	29,721	21,354	16,859	14,485	55.30%	39.20%	26.70%	16.40%
Clarke County	101,489	87,594	74,498	65,177	45,363	15.90%	17.60%	14.30%	43.70%
Elbert County	20,511	18,949	18,758	17,262	17,835	8.20%	1.00%	8.70%	-3.20%
Greene County	14,406	11,793	11,391	10,212	11,193	22.20%	3.50%	11.50%	-8.80%
Jackson County	41,589	30,005	25,343	21,093	18,499	38.60%	18.40%	20.10%	14.00%
Jasper County	11,426	8,453	7,553	5,760	6,135	35.20%	11.90%	31.10%	-6.10%
Madison County	25,730	21,050	17,747	13,517	11,246	22.20%	18.60%	31.30%	20.20%
Morgan County	15,457	12,883	11,572	9,904	10,280	20.00%	11.30%	16.80%	-3.70%
Newton County	62,001	41,808	34,666	26,282	20,999	48.30%	20.60%	31.90%	25.20%
Oconee County	26,225	17,618	12,427	7,915	6,304	48.90%	41.80%	57.00%	25.60%
Bishop	146	158	172	235	214	-7.59%	-8.14%	-26.81%	9.81%
Bogart	1,049	1,018	819	667	403	3.05%	24.30%	22.79%	65.51%
North High Shoals	439	268	256	165	122	63.81%	4.69%	55.15%	35.25%
Watkinsville	2,097	1,600	1,240	986	758	31.06%	29.03%	25.76%	30.08%
Oglethorpe County	12,635	9,763	8,929	7,598	7,926	29.40%	9.30%	17.50%	-4.10%
Walton County	60,687	38,586	31,211	23,404	20,481	57.30%	23.60%	33.40%	14.30%
Source: Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center, U.S. Census 1960-2000									

In the decade between 1990 and 2000, Oconee County's population increased at a higher rate than the Northeast Georgia region and the State, at a 48.9 percent increase as compared to 33.5 and 26.4 percent respectively. The counties surrounding Oconee County have not all experienced the same rate of growth. Most of the region's population growth has been occurring in the western half. Counties closer to the Athens and Atlanta metro area, including Oconee, Barrow, Walton, Jackson, Clarke and Newton counties, have experienced over 3 percent annual growth over the past twenty years. This is most likely attributed to the effect of experiencing suburban growth spillover from neighboring urban counties. Those counties farthest away from the Atlanta and Athens areas, as well as other urbanizing counties, such as Elbert, Greene, and Oglethorpe counties, have had an average annual growth ranging from less than 1 percent to almost 2 percent for the past 40 years.

In Oconee County, The unincorporated area had the greatest proportion of the population in 1980, over 80 percent, and currently (2005) contains almost 87 percent of the County total. Between 1980 and 2005, the County captured 90 percent of the total County growth.

Historic trends of population change within the Oconee County cities from 1980 to 2000 vary significantly between cities. Between 1960 and 2000, the City of Bishop has seen a 32 percent overall decrease in population, from 214 persons in 1960 to 146 in 2000. The largest loss in population, -26.8 percent, occurred between 1970 and 1980, although numerically this is 63 people. In contrast, the City of Bogart has increased overall by 160 percent over the 40 years, from 403 persons in 1960 to 1,049 in 2000, with the greatest growth occurring between 1960-1970, and again between 1980 and 1990. The City of Watkinsville has increased consistently through the decades, averaging between 25 and 31 percent per decade, for an overall population increase of 177 percent. The most significant numerical increase in Watkinsville occurred between 1990 and 2000, with an addition of almost 500 persons. The City of North High Shoals, although still a small town, increased almost 260 percent over the past 40 years, with almost 64 percent growth in the past decade.

■ **Population Forecasts**

Residential demand for future services is based on population size expressed as either numbers of persons or number of housing units. Nonresidential demand for services is based on number of employees. The population forecasts used for this assessment report are based on the following basic assumptions: 1) Establishment of historic population data from 1990 to 2004 based on annual population estimates from the U.S. Census; 2) Projection of the 1990-2004 historic data stream out to 2030 using regression analysis techniques that examine future growth according to three scenarios; 3) Choice of the "most likely" population growth scenario considering each projection for its "fit" to the historic data, the expectation that the trend represented will continue, and the extent to which the results are

reasonable within the context of growth trends in the county, the region and the state.¹

According to forecasts prepared by ROSS+associates, Oconee County’s population is projected to increase from 29,895 in 2005 to 34,593 people by 2010, and 54,405 by 2030. Population will almost double in the County between 2005 and 2030; in absolute numbers, the County will add 24,510 persons over the next 25 years. Growth pressures are increasing from the Atlanta Metro area, principally flowing from GA 316, Oconee County’s role as a bedroom community is expanding to a more mature, self-sustaining community, although it is anticipated that its connection to Athens-Clarke will remain strong.

**Table 1.2
Population Forecasts - 1990 to 2030
Oconee County and Cities**

Jurisdiction/Year	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Bishop	158	152	146	153	162	178	201	231	268
Bogart*	1,018	1,034	1,049	1,117	1,159	1,202	1,244	1,287	1,329
North High Shoals	268	354	439	534	643	752	862	971	1,080
Watkinsville	1,600	1,849	2,097	2,361	2,800	2,800	3,019	3,238	3,458
Total Incorporated Area	3,044	3,389	3,731	4,165	4,764	4,932	5,326	5,727	6,135
Unincorporated Area	14,783	18,705	22,612	25,874	30,178	34,499	38,938	43,578	48,345
Total County	17,618	21,922	26,225	29,895	34,593	39,314	44,161	49,216	54,405

Source: Ross+associates, 2006

Note: The figures shown for Bogart are the totals for the City, including the portion in Athens-Clarke County (not included in Oconee total)

In 2005, the unincorporated area population comprised 86.5 percent of the total County population. By 2030, the unincorporated county area is anticipated to increase its share slightly to 89 percent and to attract 92 percent of the population growth. Population growth within the cities is anticipated to remain fairly constant but slow slightly overall over the next 25 years, although North High Shoals and Watkinsville will continue their recent growth patterns.

In the City of Bishop, a population increase just over 100 persons (75 percent) is forecast over the next 25-year period, despite the City’s past population losses. It is assumed that as the Oconee County population increases, Bishop will receive a portion of the County’s growth, based on the availability of vacant land and a public water system, although the public sewer system has not been extended to the City, and new development will rely primarily on septic systems for many years into the future.

Bogart is anticipated to continue its slow but consistent growth to 2030, adding 212 persons over the 25-year period, for a growth rate of 19 percent, as the focus in the city becomes employment growth. The City’s location bordering Clarke County to the east and proximity to Barrow County to the north and west contributes to its growth potential. In addition, the City has an extensive water system that has potential for expansion, as well as vacant land for future development. A number of new housing developments are located near Bogart, while important industrial and commercial/office properties are located in and near the City.

¹ See the Population, Housing and Employment Forecast report for Oconee County and its Cities, May 31, 2006, for the detailed methodology.

North High Shoals is forecast to continue to experience population growth, doubling its population with growth of 546 persons over the next 25 years.

Watkinsville, the political and geographic center of the county, is anticipated to experience moderate growth over the next 25-year period. Approximately 1,097 additional persons are expected, with an almost 50 percent increase in population. The City has an improving infrastructure network to accommodate moderate growth, and many of the County’s community facilities are located in the City. Many new housing developments are located near Watkinsville.

The more recent population growth is closely tied to the County’s continuing transformation from a rural community to a mature suburban community. Oconee County will continue to receive growth as Athens-Clarke County becomes more developed. In addition, growth can be contributed to the County’s overall perception as a high quality place to live, with a low crime rate, lower tax rate than comparable jurisdictions, and excellent schools, supported by concentrated efforts to strive to become a more self-encompassing community in terms of the jobs/housing ratio, cultural and recreational amenities. Over the last decade, the County has begun to promote itself to attract commercial, business and employment opportunities to support its residents. As well, the County has actively increased quality of life indicators such as parks and recreation and cultural amenities. Location, quality of life, availability of relatively affordable housing, economic opportunities, the continuing and proposed Highway 316 transportation link improvements and improving infrastructure will ensure that population growth will be sustained into the future.

■ Household Composition

Table 1.3 summarizes key demographic characteristics for the County and its cities, as well as the incorporated areas as a total, and the unincorporated area. As of 2000, 84 percent of households resided in the unincorporated portion of the County.

Table 1.3							
2000 Population Characteristics							
Oconee County and Cities							
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total Population	26,225	146	1,049	439	2,097	3,731	22,494
Households:	9,051	57	425	144	827	1,453	7,598
Dwelling Units	9,528	81	459	161	879	1,580	7,948
Household Size	2.87	2.56	2.47	3.05	2.51	2.65	2.96
In group quarters:	240	0	0	0	18	18	222
Source: 2000 Census STF 3							

Approximately 81.3 percent of the households in the County are family households, with 15.4 percent single person households and the remaining 3.3 percent being non-family households. The majority of households are married couple families, at 69.4 percent of total households, and 11.9 percent are either female

headed or male headed families with no spouse present. Within the unincorporated county, the proportions vary slightly, with a lower percentage of single person households, and a slightly higher proportion of family households, at 83 percent of the total. Of the family households, 86 percent are married couple families. Similar to the County in general, approximately 3 percent of the households are non-family.

Table 1.4
2000 Types of Households by Size
Oconee County and Cities

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	9,041	46	430	129	843	1,448	7,593
1-person household:	1,401	8	109	13	220	350	1,051
Male householder	523	4	37	3	65	109	414
Female householder	878	4	72	10	155	241	637
2-or-more-person household:	7,640	38	321	116	623	1098	6,542
Family households:	7,346	36	300	116	585	1,037	6,309
Married-couple family:	6,272	34	239	102	452	827	5,445
With own children under 18 years	3,334	21	126	72	238	457	2,877
No own children under 18 years	2,938	13	113	30	214	370	2,538
Other family:	1,074	2	61	14	133	210	864
Male householder, no wife present:	243	0	25	2	17	44	199
With own children under 18 years	174	0	18	2	8	28	146
No own children under 18 years	69	0	7	0	9	16	53
Female householder, no husband present:	831	2	36	12	116	166	665
With own children under 18 years	510	0	16	5	74	95	415
No own children under 18 years	321	2	20	7	42	71	250
Nonfamily households:	294	2	21	0	38	61	233
Male householder	163	0	9	0	24	33	130
Female householder	131	2	12	0	14	28	103

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

In Bishop, 78 percent of the households (36) are family households, the majority of which are married couple families, and two are female householders with no husband present. Bogart has a slightly higher proportion of single person households than the County or Bishop, at 25 percent of the total households. Almost 70 percent are family households, with just over 20 percent of the family households being headed by a single female or a single male. The majority of households are comprised of married couple families, at 56 percent of the total households. Like Bogart, Watkinsville has a similar representation of single person households, at 26 percent of the city total, of which three-quarters are female. Almost 70 percent of the households are family households, of which 77 percent are married couples. Like Bogart at 4.9 percent of the city total, Watkinsville has a representation of 4.5 percent of the households being non-family households. North High Shoals is comprised predominantly of families, at 90 percent of the total, with 88 percent of these being married couple families. The remainder of households is comprised of single persons, the majority of which are male, with no non-family households.

Approximately 32 percent of the households in the County are comprised of two persons. Three-and-four person households comprise 40.7 percent of the total, with the remaining 11.8 percent of the households being larger households of five or more persons. Family households usually prefer single-family detached products, when within financial attainment, relative to one and often two-person

households, and are assumed the future market audience to the majority of new residential development, which for the past five years have been predominantly single-family detached units. Typically, one and two-person households represent the primary market audience for condos, townhomes and rental apartments, as well as some of the smaller two bedroom detached units.

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	9,051	61	433	146	835	1,475	7,576
1-person household	1,397	13	113	15	213	354	1,043
2-person household	2,898	15	122	27	252	416	2,482
3-person household	1,830	15	91	41	189	336	1,494
4-person household	1,857	9	63	29	113	214	1,643
5-person household	756	3	39	20	37	99	657
6-person household	190	0	3	10	31	44	146
7+person household	123	6	2	4	0	12	111

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

The average household size is forecast to remain consistent countywide, with a slight drop in size by 2030, following the trends of the state and nation as a whole. Presently, there is a nationwide trend of more single household dwellers, combined with a declining birthrate among non-ethnic populations, which is the predominant ethnic/racial composition in Oconee County. A larger percentage of people are choosing to delay marriage, or not to marry at all. Divorce rates in the nation have increased, resulting in more single headed households, and married couples may wait longer to begin childrearing due to economic and other considerations. In addition, extended families with multiple generations are decreasing. Based on such factors, average household sizes are becoming slightly smaller.

The current household size in 2005 was 2.82, a drop from 2.87 in 2000. Household size is projected to decrease to 2.78 by 2015 to 2020. This might be due to the aging of children who then leave for higher education and/or move away, resulting in a temporary drop in persons per household ratio of existing households. The ratio is forecast to rise slightly by 2030 to 2.83, indicating a consistent average household size over the period. The household size within the unincorporated area is higher than in most of the cities and the County as a whole, at 2.88 in 2005 as compared to 2.59 in the incorporated areas. The persons per household ratio in 2005 reflect a drop from a household size of 2.93 in 2000, similar to the County as a whole. Between 2005 and 2030, the persons per household ratio in the unincorporated area are anticipated to increase slightly to 2.9 by 2030, although this ratio is comparable to the ratio of 2.93 in 2000.

Table 1.6
Persons Per Household Forecasts
Oconee County and Cities

Year	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
2000	2.87	2.56	2.46	3.04	2.51	2.64	2.93
2005	2.82	2.51	2.42	2.99	2.47	2.59	2.88
2010	2.79	2.49	2.40	2.96	2.44	2.57	2.85
2015	2.78	2.48	2.39	2.95	2.43	2.56	2.83
2020	2.78	2.48	2.39	2.95	2.43	2.56	2.84
2025	2.80	2.50	2.41	2.97	2.45	2.58	2.86
2030	2.83	2.53	2.43	3.01	2.48	2.61	2.90

Source: ROSS+associates, 2006

The higher persons per household size in the unincorporated area appear to reflect the family-oriented nature of the County, as compared to the cities, which, with the exception of North High Shoals, have lower persons per household ratios. This correlates with a larger percentage of one- and two-person households in the incorporated areas of Bishop, Bogart and Watkinsville than in the unincorporated area. All of the incorporated cities reflect a drop in persons per household between 2000 and 2005. In all of the cities the projected household size in 2030 rises just slightly from the 2005 persons per household ratio, yet reflects an overall drop in household size from the 2000 statistics. The persons per household size in North High Shoals is higher than in the County overall, the unincorporated area or any of the other cities, supported by a prevalence of three and four person households as compared with the other jurisdictions, and indicates that North High Shoals is an attractive location for families.

■ Age Characteristics

Current Population

Oconee County is primarily a mid-life age community. As of 2005, based on forecast percentages from Woods and Poole, 46.4 percent of the population in the County ranged from age 25 to 54, up slightly from 2000 at 45.9 percent. This age component is the primary workforce cohort in the County.

In 1990, the mid-life age cohort countywide comprised 46.2 percent, which is slightly higher than in 2000 and 2005. Within the incorporated areas, the proportion of the population within the primary workforce age group was comparable to the distribution in 2000 at 47.4 percent, which was slightly higher than in the overall county, and higher than in the unincorporated area at 45.9 percent. Within the individual cities, this age cohort varied, from a low of 41.1 percent in Bishop to a high of 48.1 percent in Watkinsville. The difference in age distribution between the incorporated and unincorporated area lies in the younger age cohorts, where 29.2 percent of the population in the unincorporated area was under the age of 21 as compared to 26.1 percent in the incorporated areas. The proportion of persons aged 55 and over was greater in the incorporated areas at 18.1 percent, as compared to 15.7 percent in the unincorporated areas.

Table 1-7A							
1990 Population by Age							
Oconee County and Cities							
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
0 – 4 Years Old	1,394	11	88	15	126	240	1,151
5 – 13 Years Old	2,870	18	147	42	229	436	2,434
14 – 17 Years Old	794	7	31	15	65	118	676
18 – 20 Years Old	700	4	38	11	51	104	596
21 – 24 Years Old	878	5	66	9	76	156	722
25 – 34 Years Old	2,973	29	216	43	332	620	2,353
35 – 44 Years Old	3,190	25	149	53	291	518	2,672
45 – 54 Years Old	1,982	11	112	31	147	301	1,681
55 – 64 Years Old	1,213	18	64	23	100	205	1,008
65 and over	1,624	30	107	26	183	346	1,278
Total	17,618	158	1,018	268	1,600	3,044	14,574

Source: DataViews, STF-1

In 2000, within the incorporated areas, the proportion of the population within the primary workforce age group is slightly higher than in the overall county, at 47.4 percent. Within the individual cities, this age cohort varies, from a low of 40.4 percent in Bishop to a high of 49.4 percent in Watkinsville. North High Shoals is comparable to the overall county at 46.2 percent, with Bogart following slightly lower at 44.9 percent. The difference in age distribution between the incorporated and unincorporated area lies in the younger age cohorts, where 33.8 percent of the population in the unincorporated area is under the age of 21 as compared to 31.8 percent in the incorporated areas. The proportion of persons aged 55 and over is equivalent in both areas, at 16.8 percent of the population.

Table 1.7							
2000 Population by Age							
Oconee County and Cities							
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
0 – 4 Years Old	1,822	8	72	35	146	261	1,561
5 – 13 Years Old	4,760	27	149	95	305	576	4,184
14 – 17 Years Old	1,349	1	38	22	110	171	1,178
18 – 20 Years Old	901	5	44	14	85	148	753
21 – 24 Years Old	935	9	34	12	96	151	784
25 – 34 Years Old	3,256	22	155	56	323	556	2,700
35 – 44 Years Old	4,672	19	161	82	370	632	4,040
45 – 54 Years Old	4,119	18	155	65	342	580	3,539
55 – 64 Years Old	2,173	11	102	26	133	272	1,901
65 and over	2,238	26	109	32	187	354	1,884
Total	26,225	146	1,049	439	2,097	3,731	22,494

Source: DataViews, STF-1

The age cohorts of 18-20 and 21-24 years are relatively small in the County as a whole, reflecting a possible shortage of entry-level jobs that would attract younger

singles and couples who may prefer to reside in closer proximity to their work-place.

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville
Both sexes	35.2	35.5	35.2	32.9	34.5
Male	33.9	38	33.8	32.8	33.2
Female	36.1	33.8	36.4	33	35.7
Source: 2000 Census STF-1					

The median age in the County is 35.2 years of age. The male population, with an average age of 33.9 years, is slightly younger than the female population, with an average age of 36.1 years. The average age in Bishop and Bogart is generally comparable to

that of the County, at 35.5 and 35.2 years respectively, with that of Watkinsville slightly lower at 34.5 years. The City of North High Shoals has a significantly younger population.

Approximately 74 percent of family households in the County are comprised of heads of households in the 25 to 54 years old range, as compared to 44.2 percent of the non-family households with heads of household in that age group. Almost 61 percent of the family households in the County indicate the presence of children under the age of 18. Approximately 28.6 percent of households are 55 or older, both family and non-family.

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	9,041	46	430	129	843	1,448	7,493
Family households:	7,346	36	300	116	585	1,037	6,309
Householder 15 to 24 years	163	2	21	0	20	43	120
Householder 25 to 34 years	1,265	9	74	21	116	220	1,045
Householder 35 to 44 years	2,168	11	63	40	210	324	1,844
Householder 45 to 54 years	2,001	4	78	35	137	254	1,747
Householder 55 to 64 years	1,018	2	34	8	50	94	924
Householder 65 to 74 years	490	5	15	10	28	58	432
Householder 75 to 84 years	225	3	12	0	24	39	186
Householder 85 years and over	16	0	3	2	0	5	11
Nonfamily households:	1,695	10	130	13	258	411	1,284
Householder 15 to 24 years	107	1	15	0	28	44	63
Householder 25 to 34 years	222	2	21	0	25	48	174
Householder 35 to 44 years	180	2	13	0	43	58	122
Householder 45 to 54 years	348	0	27	4	61	92	256
Householder 55 to 64 years	235	2	13	2	15	32	203
Householder 65 to 74 years	284	2	4	1	30	37	247
Householder 75 to 84 years	251	1	31	4	36	72	179
Householder 85 years and over	68	0	6	2	20	28	40
Source: 2000 Census, STF-3							

Within the incorporated areas, almost 77 percent of the family households were comprised of households in the 25 to 54 year age range, as compared to 48.2 percent of non-family households. Approximately 25.2 percent of households are 55 or older, both family and non-family. The proportion of older householders, both family and non-family, is also higher in the unincorporated area, at 29.7 percent.

Projected Population by Age

By 2030, the mid-life range 25 to 54 years old portion of the community will increase to almost 47.6 percent of the population, although the 25-34 year cohort will decrease significantly from 12.4 percent in 2000 to 9.7 percent by 2030, with corresponding increases in the 35-44 and 45-54 year cohorts as the resident population ages. Children under the age of 18 will remain around 30 percent of the total population, although the age cohorts of 1-4 and 14-17 years are projected to decrease while the 5-13 year cohort is forecast to increase slightly.

Category	1990	2000	2005	2015	2025	2030
0 – 4 Years	7.9%	6.9%	6.9%	6.8%	6.7%	6.7%
5 – 13 Years	16.3%	18.2%	18.4%	18.7%	18.9%	19.0%
14 – 17 Years	4.5%	5.1%	4.9%	4.6%	4.4%	4.3%
18 – 20 Years	4.0%	3.5%	3.3%	3.0%	2.9%	2.8%
21 – 24 Years	5.0%	3.6%	3.2%	2.7%	2.3%	2.3%
25 – 34 Years	16.9%	12.4%	11.7%	10.7%	10.0%	9.7%
35 – 44 Years	18.1%	17.8%	18.3%	18.9%	19.4%	19.6%
45 – 54 Years	11.2%	15.7%	16.4%	17.4%	18.1%	18.3%
55 – 64 Years	6.9%	8.3%	8.4%	8.6%	8.8%	8.8%
65 and over	9.2%	8.5%	8.5%	8.5%	8.5%	8.5%

Source: DataViews STF-1

As the workforce population that located into the County between 2000 and 2010 ages, the 55-64 year cohort also increases to 8.8 percent by 2030 from 6.9 percent. However, although increasing numerically, the population over 65 actually remains static over the period. The greatest reductions in representation are the young adults, many of which most likely leave the County to attend college, or to pursue career opportunities in surrounding, more urbanized Athens-Clarke County and the Atlanta metro area. Between 2000 and 2030, the age 18-20 and 21-24 year cohorts are anticipated to drop from 3.5 percent and 3.6 percent respectively to 2.8 and 2.3 percent respectively, reflecting possibly the shortfall of professional and technical entry-level employment opportunities in the County.

The age distribution differs significantly in some cohorts between the incorporated and unincorporated areas. Overall, in 2005, there seems to be a greater proportion of young and school age children in the unincorporated area, at 30.6 percent of the unincorporated area population as compared to 28.6 percent in the incorporated areas. This age cohort distribution reflects the housing type predominate in the unincorporated portion of the County. In contrast, there are a higher proportion of young adults and the college age cohorts – the 18-20 and 21 through 34-year age group in the incorporated areas, at 22.9 percent of the population, compared to only 17.5 percent of the population in the unincorporated area. This may relate to the job opportunities in the towns. Conversely, the proportion of the population in the mid-range ages (35-54) is comparable, at 34.2 percent in the in-

corporated area and 34.8 percent in the unincorporated area. The active adult (55-64) community is more highly represented in the unincorporated areas at 8.7 percent of the population as compared to 7.0 percent in the incorporated areas, possibly due to the opportunities for recent development of active adult residential communities. The older age cohort is more heavily represented proportionally in the incorporated areas, most likely due to the aging of existing residents.

By 2030, the proportions of young and school age cohorts remain similar to those in 2005 in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. However, the proportion of the population in the young adult cohorts (age 18 to 34), although remaining higher in the incorporated areas, significantly drops to 13.9 percent from 17.0 in the unincorporated area, and 19.9 percent in the incorporated areas from 22.9. The primary workforce age group increases to 39.7 percent in the incorporated area, surpassing the proportion of 37.7 percent in the unincorporated area. The population in the unincorporated area becomes older, with 9.2 percent in the upper ranges of the workforce population (age 55-64) and 8.7 percent above 65 years as the existing family households age. In the incorporated areas, as the older populations represented in 2005 ages and relocate to care facilities, relatives or become deceased, the older age cohort actually decreases to 7.4 percent of the population.

The age distributions in 2005 vary within each town within the County. North High Shoals is represented by a high concentration of families in the mid-workforce age cohorts (46.6 percent), with large proportions of young and school age children at 34.9 percent. Watkinsville has a similar profile, with 26.8 percent of the population under age 17, and over 50 percent of the population between 25 and 54 years old. Both have lower proportions of older adults (55-64 and 65+) at 13.0 and 14.5 percent respectively, as compared to Bishop and Bogart at 21.8 and 19.8 percent respectively. Bishop has a very large proportion of older adults (over 65) as compared to other cities, at 16.9 percent, although numerically this is small. In comparison, Bishop and Bogart appear to attract a greater concentration of young adult and entry workforce level persons than the other two cities, both at 10.5 percent as compared to 5.6 percent in North High Shoals and 8.1 in Watkinsville. These two cities have comparable proportions of younger children at around 24 percent each. Approximately 43 percent of the population in Bishop is mid-workforce age, and almost 46 percent in Bogart, comparable to North High Shoals.

**Table 1.11
Age Forecasts by %
Oconee County and Cities**

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
2005							
0 – 4 Years Old	6.9%	4.9%	6.7%	8.4%	7.1%	7.0%	6.8%
5 – 13 Years Old	18.4%	19.7%	14.2%	22.0%	14.7%	15.6%	18.8%
14 – 17 Years Old	4.9%	0.0%	3.0%	4.5%	5.0%	4.2%	5.0%
18 – 20 Years Old	3.3%	4.2%	4.2%	3.1%	3.9%	3.9%	3.2%
21 – 24 Years Old	3.2%	6.3%	6.3%	2.5%	4.2%	4.7%	3.0%
25 – 34 Years Old	11.7%	15.5%	14.1%	12.1%	14.8%	14.3%	11.3%
35 – 44 Years Old	18.3%	13.4%	15.8%	19.3%	18.4%	17.6%	18.4%
45 – 54 Years Old	16.4%	14.1%	16.0%	15.2%	17.4%	16.6%	16.4%
55 – 64 Years Old	8.4%	4.9%	9.7%	6.0%	6.1%	7.0%	8.7%
65 and over	8.5%	16.9%	10.1%	7.0%	8.4%	9.0%	8.5%
2015							
0 – 4 Years Old	6.8%	4.4%	6.3%	9.2%	7.2%	7.1%	6.7%
5 – 13 Years Old	18.7%	21.3%	14.2%	22.8%	15.0%	16.0%	19.1%
14 – 17 Years Old	4.6%	0.0%	1.8%	3.6%	4.7%	3.7%	4.7%
18 – 20 Years Old	3.0%	5.1%	4.2%	2.8%	3.7%	3.8%	2.9%
21 – 24 Years Old	2.7%	6.6%	6.6%	1.9%	3.7%	4.3%	2.4%
25 – 34 Years Old	10.7%	16.9%	12.9%	11.1%	13.8%	13.3%	10.3%
35 – 44 Years Old	18.9%	14.7%	16.5%	20.4%	19.6%	18.8%	19.0%
45 – 54 Years Old	17.4%	15.4%	18.0%	15.7%	19.0%	18.2%	17.3%
55 – 64 Years Old	8.6%	0.0%	9.7%	5.9%	5.9%	6.5%	8.9%
65 and over	8.5%	15.4%	9.7%	6.6%	7.6%	8.2%	8.8%
2030							
0 – 4 Years Old	6.7%	2.9%	6.1%	9.9%	7.3%	7.2%	6.6%
5 – 13 Years Old	19.0%	22.0%	14.1%	23.6%	15.4%	16.3%	19.4%
14 – 17 Years Old	4.3%	0.0%	0.8%	2.7%	4.3%	3.2%	4.5%
18 – 20 Years Old	2.8%	5.9%	4.1%	2.7%	3.6%	3.6%	2.6%
21 – 24 Years Old	2.3%	6.6%	7.0%	1.3%	3.2%	3.9%	1.9%
25 – 34 Years Old	9.7%	17.6%	12.0%	9.9%	12.9%	12.4%	9.4%
35 – 44 Years Old	19.6%	16.9%	17.2%	21.5%	20.9%	20.0%	19.5%
45 – 54 Years Old	18.3%	16.2%	19.7%	16.2%	20.6%	19.7%	18.2%
55 – 64 Years Old	8.8%	0.0%	9.8%	6.0%	5.1%	6.2%	9.2%
65 and over	8.5%	11.8%	9.3%	6.2%	6.7%	7.4%	8.7%

Source: DataViews, 2000 Census, STF-3

By 2030, the proportional age cohort over 65 is forecast to decrease in all cities, for reasons as discussed above, with proportions in North High Shoals and Watkinsville well below the other cities and county in general. The proportion of younger and school age children is forecast to increase slightly, but with a drop in the high school age cohort in both. The proportion of school age children in Bishop is anticipated to remain similar to that of 2005, but with increases in the younger ages and literally, no population forecast in the high school age group. The proportion of school age children in Bogart is forecast to drop to around 20 percent, with also almost negligible number of high school age students, while the young adult age cohorts increase as the children grow, remain in the county and enter the workforce, or as a result of in-migration. Within Watkinsville, the total

proportion of working age adults is forecast to remain steady, but become older as those who in-migrated one or two decades before increase remain and become older. In North High Shoals, the mid-range of working age adults will increase slightly as the previously younger cohort age and are not replaced by in-migration, but overall the proportions remain consistent from 2005. The working age population in Bishop is forecast to increase over its 2005 levels, but numerically the increase is very slight. In Bogart, as the resident working adults age, the proportions in the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups increase, with a drop in the younger 25-34 age group as in-migration may slow.

Implications for the Community

Residents require different accommodations and services throughout their lifestyle. The needs of a single person are different when compared to those of a family and then again to what is now termed “empty nester.” Various housing types and services will be required to meet the lifestyle characteristics of the County and its cities. Although the County is forecast to remain primarily a bedroom community to the Athens-Clarke County area and Atlanta Metro region, not only will a diversified housing stock be important to younger families, single persons and empty nesters as appropriate housing alternatives, they will provide construction jobs and available housing for a slow, yet steadily growing labor market. Typically, one and two person households require smaller and often less permanent housing opportunities, and represent the primary audience for smaller two bedroom detached units, mobile homes, townhomes and rental units. However, only a small percentage (6 percent) of the County’s housing stock is classified as townhome or duplex, with less than one percent classified as multi-family, although this housing product has been steadily increasing as alternative housing types are developed as part of master planned developments. There appears to be a relationship between the limited amount of this kind of housing in the County and the cities and the proportional representation of smaller households in the community, particularly within the young adult age group. Older single person or two person households do not appear as impacted by the limited supply of alternative housing choices, as they may continue to reside in units that were purchased in earlier years, smaller ownership single family detached units, newer “active adult” communities, or mobile homes. If opportunities for alternative housing products increase, including both rental and ownership choices, the proportion of younger, workforce population may begin to shift. Forecasts for the County, however, do not support this scenario, and it is anticipated that the County will continue to remain primarily a detached single family community whose workforce commutes to adjacent localities for employment.

Household composition and age shifts will result in planning implications in order to match the economic, social service and housing needs of its citizens. Such needs could include impact on the school system in terms of shifts in enrollment, capacity and services, job training, employment opportunities, and as the demand for housing types appropriate to older and younger adults, health care facilities, and parks and recreation/cultural amenities. Although forecast to remain fairly constant proportionally, as greater numbers of persons in the over 65 age group enter the population, a larger portion of the County’s services and financial budget will be consumed to meet this age cohort’s special needs. The County will need a

high quality service and infrastructure base to accommodate this numerical increase in population, such as access to high quality medical facilities, senior services and housing types now and in the future to accommodate this segment of the population.

The educational, job training, health services and services for the elderly should remain satisfactory if they increase capacity incrementally with the increase in overall population. Services related to the middle-aged population such as those supporting transportation, retail trade, public safety and household services would require an increasing share of resources.

■ Race and Ethnicity

As the County and its cities continue to grow, yet housing prices remain moderate, the racial and ethnic composition of the County has begun to experience a slow increasing representation following regional and national trends. However, the County remains primarily Caucasian as young families, mature and senior households, established households and some young adults seek the various housing, (primarily ownership), and increasing economic opportunities that Oconee County offers.

Table 1.12							
1990 and 2000 Racial Composition							
Oconee County and Cities							
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
1990							
Total:	17,618	158	1,018	268	1,600	3,044	14,574
White Alone	16,154	143	986	255	1,430	2,814	13,340
Black Alone	1,315	5	24	11	160	200	1,115
American Indian and Alaska Native	33	0	2	2	0	4	29
Asian or Pacific Islander	88	10	3	0	9	22	66
Other	28	0	3	0	1	4	24
Hispanic Origin	178	0	6	4	14	24	154
2000							
Total:	26,325	146	1,049	439	2,097	3,731	22,494
White Alone	23,492	146	987	420	1,868	3,421	20,071
Black Alone	1,683	0	47	7	154	208	1,475
American Indian and Alaska Native	46	0	1	2	1	4	42
Asian or Pacific Islander	388	0	4	8	44	56	332
Other	616	0	10	2	30	42	574
Hispanic Origin	833	0	24	7	41	72	761

Source: DataViews, STF-1

In 2000, the Caucasian population represented 89.2 percent of the population, slightly down from 90.9 percent in 1990. The minority population in the County comprised 10.8 percent of the total population. Currently there are approximately 6 percent African American residents. Persons of Hispanic origin, which typically are reported as White alone, Black alone, or other, comprised 3.2 percent of the population. Although a very small portion of the overall County population, this distribution grew from 1.0 percent through the 1990s and is expected to continue into the future. It is clear that even though the percentage of minority population is increasing slowly, the concentration of minority population is occurring within

the unincorporated area, with 8.3 percent of the population reported as minority in the total incorporated areas, as compared to 10.8 percent in the unincorporated area. The cities of Bishop and North High Shoals are almost predominantly Caucasian, with Bogart not far behind at 5.9 percent ethnic. In Watkinsville, the largest city, the proportional representation of ethnic and racial population closely mirrors the unincorporated area at 10.9 percent.

The majority of the Hispanic population resides in the unincorporated area, at 3.4 percent as compared to 1.9 percent in the incorporated area. The largest proportional concentration of Hispanic population was in Bogart, at 2.3 percent, but numerically this represented only 24 persons as of 2000. Hispanics comprised 1.9 percent of the population in Watkinsville, and 1.6 percent in North High Shoals. The entire city of Bishop is Caucasian.

Oconee County is less ethnically diverse than the Northeast Georgia region as a whole (at 78% white-only population), as well as a number of other counties in the Northeast Georgia region. Oconee County ranked second out of 12 counties in proportion of white-only population (at 90%), after Newton County at 91 percent, followed closely by both Jackson and Madison counties at 89 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, Greene County was the most ethnically diverse, with 53 percent of the population reported as white-only. Clarke and Elbert counties also had notably high proportions of ethnic populations.

Table 1.13A
2000 Racial Composition
Oconee and Northeast Georgia Counties

Division/County	% White	% Black	% Other	% Hispanic	Total
Barrow	85%	10%	6%	4%	46,144
Clarke	65%	27%	12%	10%	101,489
Elbert	67%	31%	3%	4%	20,511
Greene	53%	44%	5%	6%	14,406
Jackson	89%	8%	4%	3%	41,589
Jasper	71%	21%	3%	3%	11,426
Madison	89%	8%	3%	0%	25,730
Morgan	70%	29%	3%	2%	15,547
Newton	91%	7%	2%	6%	20,146
Oconee	90%	6%	4%	4%	26,225
Oglethorpe	78%	20%	2%	2%	12,635
Walton	83%	14%	3%	2%	60,687
Region	78%	18%	6%	5%	396,445

Source: NEGRDC , Comprehensive Plan: 2000 Census
 Note: Percentages may not match those in Table 1.12 due to rounding and Census file used by NEGRDC

The racial and ethnic populations in the County are forecast to remain steady over the period between 2005 and 2030, with shifts occurring between the types of ethnic or racial group. Overall, the Caucasian population is forecast to remain at 89.6 percent, with a gradual decrease in the Black population from 6.4 percent of the population in 2005 to 4.9 percent in 2030, and a concurrent increase in the proportion of persons classified as “Other”, (including American Indian, Asian, and Other) from 4.1 percent in 2005 to 5.5 percent in 2030. Although the proportional representation of the Hispanic population is expected to increase during the period, it is slight, from 3.2 percent in 2005 to 4.2 percent in 2030. The majority of the Hispanic population will most likely continue to reside in the unincorporated area.

Table 1.13
% Ethnic and Racial Forecasts - 2000 to 2030
Oconee County and Cities

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
2000							
Caucasian	89.5%	100.0%	94.1%	95.7%	89.1%	94.7%	89.3%
African American	6.4%	0.0%	4.5%	1.6%	7.3%	3.4%	6.6%
Other	4.1%	0.0%	1.4%	2.7%	3.6%	1.9%	4.2%
Hispanic Origin	3.2%	0.0%	2.3%	1.6%	2.0%	1.5%	3.4%
2005							
Caucasian	89.6%	100.0%	93.7%	96.7%	89.4%	95.0%	89.2%
African American	6.0%	0.0%	4.6%	0.0%	6.6%	2.8%	6.2%
Other	4.4%	0.0%	1.7%	3.3%	4.0%	2.3%	4.6%
Hispanic Origin	3.4%	0.0%	2.6%	1.8%	2.0%	1.6%	3.6%
2015							
Caucasian	89.6%	100.0%	93.1%	96.3%	89.9%	94.8%	89.2%
African American	5.5%	0.0%	4.7%	0.0%	5.4%	2.5%	5.6%
Other	4.9%	0.0%	2.2%	3.7%	4.7%	2.7%	5.2%
Hispanic Origin	3.8%	0.0%	3.2%	2.0%	2.0%	1.8%	4.0%
2030							
Caucasian	89.6%	100.0%	93.1%	96.3%	89.9%	94.8%	89.3%
African American	5.5%	0.0%	4.7%	0.0%	5.4%	2.5%	5.1%
Other	4.9%	0.0%	2.2%	3.7%	4.7%	2.7%	5.6%
Hispanic Origin	3.8%	0.0%	3.2%	2.0%	2.0%	1.8%	4.4%

* Other category includes Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American, and Other categories
 Source: DataViews 2000 Census STF-3 and Woods and Poole Forecasts
 Note: Total percentages do not add up to 100% as Hispanic origin may be included within another ethnic classification

Although Oconee County is forecast to remain predominantly Caucasian over the next 25 years, the racial and ethnic composition of the county is forecast to change proportionally, with the black population decreasing slightly and the representation of the Hispanic community increasing slightly. Persons who identify themselves as an ethnic or racial classification are a part of the schools, recreation, workforce, commercial sector, and other parts of daily life in Oconee County. By creating and expanding programs for this component of the population, citizens will be able to participate in a two-way dialogue in which all residents can learn from each other.

■ Income

Median and Per Capita Income

Income statistics and indicators appear to vary among resources, although comparisons may be made on a general level with adjacent counties in the state and region, predicated that the same data source is utilized for the comparison. The 2005 Georgia County Guide ranks Oconee County Number 7 in the state utilizing a 2002 estimated income with a \$57,290 annual median household income.

According to data reported by NEGRDC, Oconee County had the highest median household, median family and per capita incomes in the 12 county Northeast Georgia region, at \$55,211, \$61,502 and \$24,153 respectively. Both median household and median family incomes exceed the next ranked (Walton) county by approximately \$10,000 each. In terms of per capita income, only Greene County appears to have a comparable income figure, which might indicate a high percentage of single person households, as the other variables are lower. Although Oconee County ranks highest among these income indicators within the Northeast Georgia

region, the per capita income of \$24,153 remains lower than that of the State, adjacent Atlanta MSA, and U.S. at \$28,523, \$33,769, and \$30,413 respectively.

Table 1.14A presents the median household, median family and per capita incomes for Oconee County and each city in 1990 and 2000. According to the Census, the median *household* income in the County was \$55,211 in 2000, up from \$34,566 in 1990. The 2000

median household income varies within the cities, at \$43,125 in Bishop; \$41,190 in Bogart; \$60,208 in North High Shoals; and \$45,729 in Watkinsville. This represents increases over the 1990 median household incomes of \$21,250; \$26,875; \$28,125 and \$31,970 respectively, with a particularly notable increase in the City of North High Shoals. In contrast, the Census reports a 2000 median *family* income of \$61,502 in the County, up from \$31,417 in 1990. Median family incomes

are also higher than the median household incomes in all of the cities, with median family incomes in the cities of Bishop and North High Shoals doubling between 1990 and 2000.

Per capita incomes have also risen between 1990 and 2000, with an increase from \$15,164 in 1990 to \$25,153 in 2000 in the county. Per capita incomes in all of the cities were lower

than that of the County in both 1990 and 2000. The City of Bishop, and interestingly North High Shoals, had the lowest per capita incomes in 1990 and 2000.

Income Distribution

The 2005 HUD Median Family Income (MFI) for the Athens-Clarke County Metropolitan Area, of which Oconee County is considered a part by HUD, was \$54,250, which closely approximated the median family income in the County. Based on the HUD MFI Income Distribution is as follows:

- Very low income household (50 percent County median) - up to \$27,150;
- Low income (51 percent to 80 percent County median) - between \$27,151 and \$43,450;

Table 1.14
2000 Income Characteristics
Oconee and Northeast Georgia Counties

Division/County	Median H.H. Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
Barrow	\$45,019	\$49,722	\$18,350
Clarke	\$28,403	\$41,607	\$17,123
Elbert	\$28,724	\$34,276	\$14,535
Greene	\$33,479	\$39,794	\$23,389
Jackson	\$40,349	\$46,211	\$17,808
Jasper	\$39,890	\$43,271	\$19,249
Madison	\$36,347	\$42,189	\$16,988
Morgan	\$40,249	\$46,146	\$18,823
Newton	\$44,875	\$49,748	\$19,317
Oconee	\$55,211	\$61,502	\$24,153
Oglethorpe	\$35,578	\$41,443	\$17,089
Walton	\$46,479	\$52,386	\$19,470

Source: NEGRDC, Comprehensive Plan: 2000 Census
Note: These statistics differ from Oconee County income data reported by U.S. Census 2000 datasets from STF-3 and are presented here for regional comparison only.

Table 1.14A
1990 and 2000 Income Statistics
Oconee County and Cities

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville
1990					
Median Household Income	\$34,566	\$21,250	\$26,875	\$28,125	\$31,970
Median Family Income	\$38,417	\$25,114	\$31,172	\$33,929	\$34,223
Per Capita Income	\$15,164	\$9,764	\$17,148	\$11,912	\$13,573
2000					
Median Household Income	\$55,211	\$43,125	\$41,190	\$60,208	\$45,729
Median Family Income	\$61,502	\$51,250	\$45,682	\$63,333	\$55,170
Per Capita Income	\$24,153	\$15,630	\$20,081	\$17,444	\$20,968

Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000, STF-3

- Moderate income (81 percent and 120 percent County median) - \$43,451 and \$65,100.

The County and its cities are all well above the state median income of \$34,990. (Source: 2004 Georgia County Guide).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines the poverty level for a family of four as an income of \$20,000 and below. In terms of persons living in poverty, there were 1,688 persons, representing 6.5 percent of the total county population, living in poverty in 2000. The Georgia County Guide estimates that as of 2002, 6.7 percent of the total population was in poverty. There were 660 Female Headed Families below the poverty level, constituting 39 percent of the total households in poverty. Married couple families comprised 33.1 percent of the total, with the remaining 30 percent being non-family, or male-headed families. Of the number of families living below poverty, 76.3 percent had children under age 18 residing with them. The rate of children living in poverty (636 children) was 8.0 percent of total children under age 17 in the County.

# in H.H.	Income
1	\$9,800
2	13,200
3	16,600
4	20,000
5	23,400
6	26,800
7	30,200
8	33,600

Source: Federal Register, 1/24/06

Table 1.16A reports 1990 income distribution in \$10,000 increments within the

Income	Oconee County						Incorporated	Unincorporated
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville			
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Less than \$9,999	12.1%	23.0%	19.4%	14.0%	9.7%	16.9%	10.9%	
\$10,000 - \$14,999	6.2%	14.8%	8.0%	9.0%	6.4%	8.0%	5.7%	
\$15,000 - \$19,999	7.7%	6.6%	10.0%	7.0%	9.2%	9.6%	7.3%	
\$20,000 - \$29,999	16.4%	34.4%	18.2%	23.0%	20.4%	19.1%	15.8%	
\$30,000 - \$34,999	8.2%	4.9%	8.3%	9.0%	12.2%	11.7%	7.4%	
\$35,000 - \$39,999	7.9%	0.0%	8.3%	4.0%	7.4%	7.3%	8.1%	
\$40,000 - \$49,999	12.4%	6.6%	11.4%	8.0%	16.7%	13.2%	12.2%	
\$50,000 - \$59,999	10.3%	3.3%	6.6%	8.0%	9.5%	8.2%	10.7%	
\$60,000 - \$74,999	8.6%	3.3%	6.8%	7.0%	3.0%	4.7%	9.5%	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	5.7%	0.0%	1.7%	7.0%	3.7%	3.2%	6.3%	
\$100,000 - \$124,999	1.8%	3.3%	0.5%	2.0%	0.7%	0.7%	2.0%	
\$125,000 - \$149,999	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	
\$150,000 and above	2.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.6%	2.3%	

Source: DataViews, STF-3
Note: % of incorporated and unincorporated areas are based on total households within incorporated and unincorporated areas

County, its cities and unincorporated/incorporated areas. The County appeared to be primarily lower income, and above moderate income in nature, with 42.4 percent of the population with incomes below \$29,999, which roughly correlates with 1990 HUD definitions of very low and low income households for the area, and slightly over 41 percent of the population correlated with the 1990 HUD upper income categories. Only a small proportion of the population fell within the moderate-income range. In 2000, this distribution changed.

Table 1.16 reports 2000 income distribution in \$10,000 increments within the County, its cities and unincorporated/incorporated areas. As supported by the median household and median family income statistics for the County and cities, the unincorporated areas of the County are somewhat more affluent than within the cities. As of 2000 Oconee County was primarily a middle-income community with 47.1 percent of households falling within the \$40,000 to \$99,000 lower through upper middle-income range, and the lower ranges of upper income categories. On the two other ends of the spectrum, almost 13 percent of the households fall within the very low-income ranges of less than \$20,000, and 18.8 percent earn over \$100,000. Although the income distribution varies significantly

Table 1.16							
2000 - % Household Income Distribution							
Oconee County and Cities							
Income	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Less than \$9,999	4.9%	10.9%	6.3%	9.3%	3.2%	4.9%	4.9%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	3.5%	4.3%	8.4%	3.1%	3.8%	5.1%	3.2%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	4.5%	13.0%	5.6%	1.6%	5.8%	5.6%	4.3%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	10.3%	13.0%	10.7%	7.8%	14.4%	12.6%	10.0%
\$30,000 - \$34,999	5.8%	0.0%	7.9%	4.7%	9.4%	8.2%	5.3%
\$35,000 - \$39,999	5.1%	0.0%	8.8%	3.9%	5.0%	5.9%	5.0%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	10.5%	19.6%	12.1%	10.1%	14.4%	13.5%	9.9%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	10.3%	8.7%	12.3%	9.3%	10.7%	11.0%	10.2%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	11.9%	4.3%	10.2%	17.1%	14.2%	13.0%	11.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	14.4%	21.7%	11.2%	17.1%	13.0%	13.1%	14.6%
\$100,000 - \$124,999	7.5%	4.3%	1.9%	7.0%	3.8%	3.5%	8.2%
\$125,000 - \$149,999	3.8%	0.0%	1.9%	4.7%	0.8%	1.5%	4.2%
\$150,000 and above	7.5%	0.0%	2.8%	4.7%	1.5%	2.1%	8.6%

Source: DataViews, STF-3
 Note: % of incorporated and unincorporated areas are based on total households within incorporated and unincorporated areas

within the individual cities, there are a greater proportion of households within the middle-income range, at 50.6 percent. The incidence of very low-income households is higher in the incorporated areas, at 15.6 percent and conversely, the unincorporated area contains a higher proportion above moderate-income households, at 21 percent.

Table 1.17 Wage and Income Sources - 2000 Oconee County and Cities							
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
With Earnings	9,029	40	384	131	783	1,338	7,691
With wage or salary income	7,657	36	334	112	698	1,180	6,477
With self-employment income	1,372	4	50	19	85	158	1,214
With interest, dividends, or net rental income	3,903	13	126	56	394	589	3,314
With Social Security income	1,787	15	84	24	189	312	1,475
With Supplemental Security Income	300	6	23	1	18	48	252
With public assistance income	192	2	4	1	21	28	164
With retirement income	1,380	9	56	15	151	231	1,149
With other types of income	910	5	41	13	98	157	753
No wage or salary earnings	1,384	10	96	17	145	268	1,116
Total Households	9,041	46	430	129	843	1,448	7,593

Source: 2000 Census, STF 3

The 2000 Census provides data on the sources of income for the County and city households. Clearly, the households in the County are self-supporting in some fashion. As of 2000, 99.9 percent of the households in the County had some kind of earning, with 84.8 percent earning a wage or salary income, and 15.2 percent earning self-employment income. Social Security income was cited as a resource by 19.8 percent of those earning a wage. Only 2.1 percent of the total households in the County reported public assistance income as a source of income. Persons citing retirement income rose to 15.3 percent in 2000.

■ Education

Oconee County provides education facilities for all of its cities and unincorporated areas. Table 1.18 looks at different segments of educational attainment within the County, the incorporated areas, and the unincorporated area. Table 1.19 presents the same information by individual city. Major indicators of education levels are highlighted, including number of high school and college graduates.

Table 1.18					
Educational Attainment - 1990 to 2030					
Oconee County and Cities					
Category	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Oconee County					
Less than 9th Grade	1,075	742	378	14	0
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	1,441	1,450	1,496	1,541	1,587
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	2,991	3,831	4,815	5,799	6,783
Some College (No Degree)	1,834	3,048	4,124	5,200	6,276
Associate Degree	518	803	NA	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degree	1,715	3,739	5,233	6,727	8,221
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,407	2,814	3,847	4,879	5,912
Incorporated					
Less than 9th Grade	217	113	8	0	0
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	290	269	245	219	202
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	630	614	1027	830	940
Some College (No Degree)	349	417	529	641	755
Associate Degree	105	261	NA	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degree	236	498	694	889	1085
Graduate or Professional Degree	212	314	395	472	553
Unincorporated					
Less than 9th Grade	858	629	370	14	0
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	1,151	1,181	1,251	1,322	1,385
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	2,361	3,217	3,788	4,969	5,843
Some College (No Degree)	1,485	2,631	3,595	4,559	5,521
Associate Degree	413	542	NA	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degree	1,479	3,241	4,539	5,838	7,136
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,195	2,500	3,452	4,407	5,359
Source: DataViews 2000 Census STF-3					

Education levels have drastically increased within the County since 1990, and are projected continue to increase during the planning horizon. In 1990, 9.8 percent of the population having attended school had less than a ninth grade education. In 2000, this percentage has been reduced to 4.5 percent, and will be eliminated by the year 2030. The County has also indicates an increase in the number of college graduates from 15.6 percent in 1990 to 22.8 percent in 2000. By 2030, almost 29 percent of the school population will hold at least a bachelor's degree, with another 20.5 percent going on to graduate or professional school. An additional 21.8 percent will finish a portion of a college education. The percentage of the school population that graduated from high school (including General Equivalency Diplomas) is anticipated to remain stable, at around 23.4 percent of the population.

Table 1.19					
Educational Attainment - 1990 to 2030					
Oconee County Cities					
Category	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Bishop					
Less than 9th Grade	26	10	0	0	0
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	18	17	9	1	0
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	28	26	37	47	58
Some College (No Degree)	8	6	0	0	0
Associate Degree	8	2	NA	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degree	13	28	42	56	70
Graduate or Professional Degree	10	6	5	3	2
Bogart					
Less than 9th Grade	91	51	8	0	0
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	120	99	87	75	63
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	191	230	266	301	337
Some College (No Degree)	112	117	148	178	209
Associate Degree	54	56	NA	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degree	56	59	78	97	116
Graduate or Professional Degree	37	56	67	77	88
North High Shoals					
Less than 9th Grade	20	7	0	0	0
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	31	25	26	26	27
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	67	53	53	52	52
Some College (No Degree)	19	35	50	64	79
Associate Degree	8	16	NA	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degree	16	65	95	124	154
Graduate or Professional Degree	22	39	48	56	65
Watkinsville					
Less than 9th Grade	54	45	0	0	0
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	113	128	123	117	112
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	344	305	368	430	493
Some College (No Degree)	210	263	331	399	467
Associate Degree	35	64	NA	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degree	151	346	479	612	745
Graduate or Professional Degree	143	213	275	336	398
Source: DataViews 2000 Census STF-3					

Within both the incorporated and unincorporated areas, as of 2000 the percentage of the school population with less than a ninth grade education is identical to the County, and by 2030, will not have any of their school age population within this population. Compared to the unincorporated area, the incorporated areas had a slightly larger percentage of students who graduated high school in 2000, at 24.6 percent of their school age population as compared to 23 percent. At the next level of major educational attainment, the incorporated and unincorporated areas reverse in their comparisons. The percentage of the incorporated area school

population that graduated from college, at 20 percent, is less than that of the unincorporated area at 23.3 percent. As well, 17.9 percent of the unincorporated area attained graduate level degrees as compared to 12.6 percent in the incorporated areas. This trend of increasing educational levels will continue into the future. However, the proportion of persons in the incorporated areas with a college degree are forecast to slightly exceed that of the unincorporated area by 2030, at 30.7 percent as compared to 28.3 percent respectively. However, the proportion of the population attaining graduate level degrees in the unincorporated area is projected to exceed that of the incorporated area, at 21.2 percent as compared to 15.6 percent respectively. Overall, the unincorporated area of the County will reflect a slightly more highly educated population in the future.

Within the individual cities, as of 2000, North High Shoals and Watkinsville contained the highest percentages of combined college graduates and graduate school degrees, at 43.4 percent and 41 percent respectively. They also had the lowest incidence of population with less than a 9th grade education. In terms of high school graduates, both cities were comparable, at around one-quarter of the post school age population. The City of Bogart had the lowest proportion of college and post-graduate degrees, at a total of 17.6 percent. Correspondingly, it had the highest proportion of high school graduate attainment at 34.4 percent, and 7.6 percent with less than a 9th grade education. Although the City of Bishop had the highest incidence of 9th grade attainment, it had a fairly high proportion of college and graduate level degrees, at 35.8 percent of its post school age population, and a high school attainment level of 27.4 percent. By 2030, over one-half of the post school age population in Bishop is anticipated to achieve a college degree, with the remaining population attaining a high school diploma (or equivalent).

Housing

Due to the desirability of the region, Oconee County faces increasing development pressures as a bedroom community to Athens-Clarke County and the Atlanta metropolitan area, as well as an area with potential limited emergent employment opportunities within its own boundaries. The Housing Assessment promotes a mix and balance of residential development options available to existing and future residents of the County and its cities, in the spirit of maintaining the quality, small town character as desired by many residents.

The characteristics and trends within a community are important indicators of future housing needs and policies.

The purpose of assessing Oconee County's housing stock is to:

- Assess the current housing stock in terms of overall population demographics, special needs populations, economic development and affordability characteristics;
- Determine the County and cities' future housing needs in conjunction with population projections, economic development and community goals and policies;
- Discover and investigate any local housing problems such as substandard housing, over building, infrastructure and land use suitability;
- Assess whether an adequate, appropriate, affordable and varied supply of housing is being offered in the County and cities to meet the future needs of its citizens; and
- Develop an implementation plan to promote the County and the cities' vision and to provide the adequate provision of housing for all sectors of the population in the future.

■ Housing Forecasts

In 2000, there were 9,528 housing units within the County, increasing to 10,989 units in 2005 with a vacancy rate of 5 percent. This translated into 10,439 households in 2005. Forecasts were made from the year 2006 to the year 2030 utilizing the current vacancy rate of 5 percent as a constant. According to the County's Building and Inspection Department, by mid 2006, there were 11,868 dwelling units, which are either existing or permitted in the County, inclusive of all of the cities. The number of housing units is expected to more than double to 23,608 units between 2005 and 2030, for a total net increase of 12,619 units. The number of households is anticipated to increase by 11,987 households to 22,426 by 2030.

The housing stock in the City of Bishop is forecast to more than double with an increase by 99 units between 2005 and 2030. The number of households is also anticipated to more than double, from 71 in 2005 to 155 in 2030, a growth of 84 households. The number of housing units in North High Shoals is also forecast to double between 2005 and 2030 with 203 new units, from 200 in 2005 to 403 in

2030 in 2030. As well, the number of households is projected to double, with the addition of 180 new households during the 25-year period. Although greater numerically, housing stock growth and household formation in Watkinsville is projected to occur at a slower pace than in Bishop and North High Shoals. The stock is anticipated to increase by approximately 45 percent, (448 units), from 987 in 2005 to 1,435 in 2030, with a corresponding increase in household formation of 430 households. Housing units and household formation is forecast to increase by approximately 25 percent between 2005 and 2030 in Bogart (portion of City within Oconee County). The number of housing units is forecast to increase by 121 units, from 431 in 2005 to 552 in 2030. Correspondingly, the number of households is projected to increase by 112, from 401 in 2005 to 513 in 2030.

Table 2.1 Housing Forecast - 2005 to 2030 Oconee County and Cities							
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart*	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated**	Unincorporated
2005 Housing Units	10,989	83	431	200	987	1,701	9,288
2005 Households	10,439	71	401	178	947	1,597	8,842
2010 Housing Units	12,958	135	460	244	1,090	1,929	11,029
2010 Households	12,309	115	428	217	1,046	1,806	10,503
2020 Housing Units	17,704	154	513	327	1,280	2,274	15,430
2020 Households	16,818	131	477	291	1,228	2,127	14,691
2025 Housing Units	20,506	167	534	367	1,362	2,430	18,076
2025 Households	19,479	142	497	326	1,307	2,272	17,207
2030 Housing Units	23,608	182	552	403	1,435	2,572	21,036
2030 Households	22,426	155	513	358	1,377	2,403	20,023

Source: ROSS+associates Technical Report: Population, Housing and Employment Forecasts, 2006
 * Includes only the portion of population of Bogart located within Oconee County
 ** Note : Incorporated total does not include the portion of Bogart with Clarke County

Within the unincorporated areas of the County, the housing stock is projected to almost double (86 percent increase) between 2005 and 2030, with an increase of 12,689 housing units, from 9,288 in 2005 to 21,036 in 2030. An additional 11,989 households are anticipated.

■ Housing Type

Housing Trends

In 1990, there were 6,561 housing units in the County. Single-family detached units comprised 75.2 percent of the County housing stock. Townhomes or duplexes comprised 6.5 percent of the units, and 16.2 percent were mobile homes. Just 1.4 percent of the stock was considered multi-family. Almost 19 percent of the total units were located within the incorporated areas. All of the multi-family units were located within the unincorporated area, as well as 84.3 percent of the manufactured homes. Almost 70 percent of the attached products were located in the unincorporated area, and 81 percent of single-family detached homes.

By 2000, the housing stock had increased to 9,528, an increase of 2,967 units. Single-family housing units remain the predominant housing type of the County, constituting 80.7 percent of the total housing stock. Single family attached, including townhomes and duplexes, comprised 6.0 percent of the stock. Mobile homes, representing both ownership and rental opportunities, constituted 12.6

Table 2.2						
Dwelling Unit by Type - 1990 and 2000						
Oconee County, incorporated and Unincorporated						
Category	Incorporated		Unincorporated		Total County	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
TOTAL Housing Units	1,243	1,580	5,318	7,948	6,561	9,528
Detached Units	936	1,262	4,001	6,428	4,937	7,690
Single Units (attached)	129	158	299	412	428	570
Multi-family	0	4	92	58	92	62
Mobile Home or Trailer	167	156	898	1,044	1,065	1,200
All Other	11	0	28	6	39	6

Source: 2000 Census STF-3
 Note: Single units (attached) includes attached single family and duplexes
 Note: County total excludes a portion of Bogart located in Athens-Clarke County. However, the incorporated total includes the entire City of Bogart. Due to inclusion of entire city of Bogart in incorporated area calculation, the total number of housing units in the incorporated area may be actually slightly higher than reflected in above table.

percent of the stock, with multifamily representing less than one percent of the total housing units in the County.

Countywide, approximately 16 percent of the total detached units, 28 percent of the total attached units, and 13 percent of the total mobile homes were found in the incorporated areas. The distribution of single-family unit type within the incorporated area at 79.8 percent is comparable to that of the unincorporated area. However, 10 percent of the total units were single family attached as compared to 5.2 percent in the unincorporated area, and not quite 10 percent of the stock was mobile homes as compared to 13.1 percent in the unincorporated area. All but four units of multifamily housing products were found in the unincorporated areas

Table 2.3					
Projected Types of Units - 2000 to 2030					
Oconee County					
Category	2000	2005	2015	2025	2030
Single Detached Units	80.7%	81.0%	81.5%	81.8%	81.9%
Single Units (attached)	6.0%	5.7%	5.4%	5.2%	5.1%
Multi-family	0.7%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
Mobile Home or Trailer	12.6%	12.7%	12.8%	12.9%	12.9%
All Other	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: DataViews, 2000 Census STF-3
 Note: Single attached units includes townhomes and duplex units

of the County, with a loss of 34 units between 1990 and 2000.

This distribution of housing units is anticipated to remain constant over the planning horizon period, with slight adjustments. The proportion of single family detached and mobile homes are projected to increase slightly to 81.9 and 12.9 percent respectively, with corresponding decreases in the proportion of multifamily and attached unit products. Overall,

projected to increase slightly to 81.9 and 12.9 percent respectively, with corresponding decreases in the proportion of multifamily and attached unit products. Overall,

however, over 99 percent of the housing stock is forecast to be primarily owner-ship type single family attached or detached, and mobile home units.

**Table 2.4
Types of Units by % - 2000
Oconee County and Cities**

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	9,528	81	459	161	879	1,580	7,948
1, detached	80.7%	86.4%	66.7%	92.5%	83.8%	79.9%	80.9%
1, attached	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.8%	1.4%
2	4.7%	2.5%	11.5%	0.0%	10.2%	9.2%	3.8%
3 to 9	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%
10 to19	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
20 to 49	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
50 or more	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Mobile Home	12.6%	11.1%	21.8%	7.5%	4.0%	9.9%	13.1%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: 2000 Census STF-3
 Note: Percentages represent proportion of type of unit within each jurisdiction's total dwelling units
 Note: County total excludes a portion of Bogart located in Athens-Clarke County. However, the incorporated total includes the entire City of Bogart. Due to inclusion of entire city of Bogart in incorporated area calculation, the total number of housing units in the unincorporated area may be actually slightly higher than reflected in above table, as incorporated was subtracted from County total to get unincorporated area.

Within the individual cities, there is more variety of types of units, although single-family detached units predominate in Bishop, North High Shoals and Watkinsville. In North High Shoals, 92.5 percent of all units were single-family. In contrast, just over 66 percent of the units in Bogart are single family detached, and 11.5 percent of the units in Bogart were considered duplexes. Watkinsville also reported a higher proportion of duplexes at 10.2 percent of the units in the City. The proportion of mobile homes in North High Shoals and Watkinsville is significantly lower than the County, with Bishop’s representation just slightly less than the

**Table 2.5
Occupancy Characteristics - 1990 and 2000
Oconee County, Incorporated and Unincorporated**

Category	Oconee County		Incorporated Area		Unincorporated Area	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
TOTAL Housing Units Built	6,561	9,528	1,285	1,580	5,276	7,948
Housing Units Vacant	405	477	89	105	300	372
Total Occupied Housing Units	6,156	9,051	1,196	1,475	4,960	7,576
Housing Units Owner Occupied	4,770	7,260	814	1,077	3,956	6,183
Housing Units Renter Occupied	1,386	1,791	382	398	1,004	1,393
% of Total Units Built	1990%	2000%	1990%	2000%	1990%	2000%
Housing Units Vacant	6.2%	5.0%	6.9%	6.6%	5.7%	4.7%
Total Occupied Housing Units	93.8%	95.0%	93.1%	93.4%	94.3%	95.3%
Housing Units Owner Occupied	77.5%	80.2%	68.1%	73.0%	79.8%	81.6%
Housing Units Renter Occupied	22.5%	19.8%	31.9%	27.0%	20.2%	18.4%

Source: 2000 Census STF-3
 Note: Percentage occupied calculated on total occupied units as a base

County. The proportion of mobile homes in Bogart constitutes 21.8 percent of its total housing stock, exceeding the representation in the County as a whole and the unincorporated area.

The ratio of home ownership occupancy to rental occupancy in the County, inclusive of the incorporated and unincorporated areas, appears to be shifting toward higher home ownership rates, with a corresponding decreased in rental occupancy. In 2000, owner occupied units constituted 80.2 percent of housing units in the County, up from 77.5 percent in 1990, while rental occupied constituted 19.8 percent of the total housing units, a decrease from 22.5 percent in 1990. Within the incorporated areas, the proportion of home ownership, although lower than in the unincorporated area and the County as a whole, followed a similar trend, increasing between 1990 and 2000, from 68.1 percent in 1990 to 73.0 percent in 2000, with rental occupied status decreasing from 31.9 percent in 1990 to 27.0 percent in 2000. The proportion of rental occupied units in the unincorporated area is significantly lower in than in the cities, at 18.4 percent in 2000, down from 20.2 in 1990, as compared to 81.6 percent home ownership occupancy in 2000, an increase from 79.8 percent in 1990.

Within the cities, the distribution of owner and renter occupancy varies. The City of Bishop has the lowest owner occupancy rate, at 67.2 percent; followed by Bogart at 70.0 and Watkinsville at 72.2 percent. North

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville
Total:	9,051	61	433	146	835
Owner occupied	7,260	41	303	130	603
Renter occupied	1,791	20	130	16	232

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

High Shoals is predominantly owner occupied at 89 percent, well exceeding the unincorporated area and the County as a whole.

In 2000, 99.5 percent of owner-occupied units in the County were single-family detached units and mobile homes. Among rental units, the product type was more widely represented, with the proportion of single family detached at 44.4 percent of the rentals; attached products, such as townhomes and duplexes at 27.9 percent of the rentals; and mobile homes at 24.2 percent of the rentals.

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville
Total:	9,051	61	433	146	835
Owner occupied:	7,260	41	303	130	603
SF Detached	6,534	36	243	123	569
SF Attached	26	0	0	0	4
Mobile home	693	5	60	7	30
Boat, RV, van, etc.	6	0	0	0	0
Renter occupied:	1,791	20	130	16	232
SF Detached	796	18	47	11	129
SF Attached	499	2	48	0	94
Multi-Family	62	0	0	0	4
Mobile home	434	0	35	5	5

Source: 2000 Census, STF-3
Note: Attached units include townhomes and duplexes

The distribution differs somewhat among the cities. Approximately 59 percent of the occupied units are owner occupied single family detached, and 30 percent are renter occupied single-family detached units. Similarly, in Bogart, 56 percent of the occupied units are owner occupied

single family detached. However, rental occupied units, which comprise 30 percent of the total occupied units in the City, are more equally represented between single-family detached (10.9 percent); attached units (11.0 percent); and mobile homes (8.1 percent). Almost two-thirds of the mobile homes in the City are owner occupied. In North High Shoals, the majority of owner occupied and renter occupied units are single-family detached units. In Watkinsville, single-family detached units also comprise the bulk of occupied housing, with 68.1 percent of the total occupied units, being owner occupied single family detached, and another 15.4 percent being renter occupied single family units, for a total of 83.5 percent. Almost all of the attached units in Watkinsville are renter occupied, and almost all of the mobile homes are owner occupied.

Table 2.8							
Development Permit Records - 2000 to 2005							
Oconee County and Cities							
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Total:	279	328	480	473	458	485	150
Single Family	227	247	414	435	439	436	142
Multi-Family	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 Unit/Townhome Structures	0	33	36	12	9	40	5
Mobile Homes	52	48	30	26	10	9	3

Source: Oconee County Building and Permit Department
* Through June 2006

Balancing housing types and cost are important and should reflect the needs of future Oconee County residents. Table 2.8 shows permit activity in the County over the last 5 years in their entirety and the first half of 2006. The number of units permitted for the past 5 years for single-family, mobile homes and attached single-family housing does not suggest a significant deviation from past trends. There were no multi-family units constructed in the County over the past 5 years. In 2005 a 40-unit ownership condominium project was completed, and has been recorded as an attached product. The housing mix available in Oconee County today is likely to be very similar to the mix recorded in the 2000 Census. However, the mix is likely to change somewhat in the next few years due to the adoption of the new MPD zone, which allows mixed-use commercial and a variety of residential products such as condominiums, townhomes, and cluster units.

Commuting Patterns

Although the County continues to grow economically, it continues to remain primarily a bedroom community associated with Athens-Clarke County based on analyses of commuting patterns. Table 3.11 in the Economic Development chapter identifies the number of persons who commuted outside of the County, and outside of the State, for employment. As of 2000, just over 99 percent of the workforce in the County remained worked within the State. According to the data, the number of persons living and working within Oconee County was 28.1 percent of employed residents of the County. Although additional employment opportunities

have been added to the employment base within the County, it is likely that a similar proportion of people that commute to work outside of the County exist as of 2005. Additional commuting information is found in the Economic Development chapter.

■ Quality of Housing

In 2000, 491 of the County’s 9,528 housing units were constructed prior to 1939, which amounted to 5.2 percent of all housing units. Almost 37 percent of the units were constructed prior to 1980. Most of these homes are still in use and a portion may be occupied by renters.

Within the cities, there appears to be a larger number of older units. Almost 45

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	9,528	81	459	161	879	1,580	7,948
Built 1999 to March 2000	509	0	15	18	12	45	464
Built 1995 to 1998	1,733	4	68	26	129	227	1,506
Built 1990 to 1994	1,451	2	33	11	153	199	1,252
Built 1980 to 1989	2,340	24	132	31	201	388	1,952
Built 1970 to 1979	1,701	2	71	26	112	211	1,490
Built 1960 to 1969	772	0	49	12	110	171	601
Built 1950 to 1959	315	13	12	11	46	82	233
Built 1940 to 1949	216	0	16	0	42	58	158
Built 1939 or earlier	491	36	63	26	74	199	292

Source: 2000 Census STF-3
 Note: County total excludes a portion of Bogart located in Athens-Clarke County. However, the incorporated total includes the entire City of Bogart. Due to inclusion of entire city of Bogart in incorporated area calculation, the total number of housing units in the unincorporated area may be actually slightly higher than reflected in above table, as incorporated was subtracted from County total to get unincorporated area.

percent of the units in Bishop were constructed prior to 1939, and almost 73 percent were constructed prior to 1980. Almost 14 percent of the units in Bogart were constructed prior to 1939, with 46 percent built over 25 years ago. In North High Shoals, 16 percent were constructed prior to 1939, and 47 percent are older than 25 years old. Watkinsville has a slightly lower proportion of very old homes, with 8.4 percent built prior to 1939, although almost 44 percent are over 25 years old, comparable to the other cities.

There were very few homes within either the cities or the county lacking adequate plumbing facilities in the 2000 Census. Less than one percent of the units lacked complete plumbing facilities, and less than one percent of the units lacked com-

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total housing units	9,528	81	459	161	879	1,580	7,948
Complete Plumbing Facilities	9,455	81	456	161	867	1,565	7,890
Lacking Plumbing Facilities	73	0	3	0	12	15	58
Complete kitchen facilities	9,465	81	459	161	879	1,580	7,885
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	63	0	0	0	0	0	63
Source: 2000 Census STF-3							

plete kitchen facilities. The number of units lacking kitchen facilities has dropped since 1990, from 1.5 percent of total units to 0.6 percent in 2000. The number of units lacking plumbing has remained constant, although proportionately decreased from 1.1 percent to 0.8 percent. All of the homes that are lacking kitchen facilities are located within the unincorporated county areas. Approximately 80 percent of the units lacking plumbing facilities are located in the unincorporated areas. Within the incorporated areas, the majority of units lacking plumbing facilities are located in Watkinsville, although numerically this account for only 12 units. Apparently, most of the older homes Countywide were constructed with plumbing or have been upgraded.

■ Affordability and Demographics

Housing Costs

The median property value in the County increased from \$77,800 in 1990 to \$145,900 in 2000. This median housing value is slightly higher than the regional median of \$144,504 and significantly higher than the statewide median of \$100,500. In 1990, the median rent in the County was comparable to that of the region, although both were higher than the state. Data compiled by the Oconee County Tax Assessor for 1999 through 2005 indicates that the average new home sales price in 2005 was \$315,062, up from \$241,333 in 1999. The average existing home price increased from \$171,432 in 1999 to \$255,661 in 2005, and the average combined home value rose from \$196,235 in 1999 to \$278,426 in 2005.

Table 2.11
Property Values and Rent - 1990 and 2000
Oconee County, State and Region

Category	1990			2000		
	State	Region	County	State	Region	County
Median Value	\$71,200	\$92,300	\$77,800	\$100,500	\$144,504	\$145,900
Median Rent	\$344	\$422	\$436	\$505	\$661	\$589

Source: 2000 Census STF-3; 1990 Census STF-3

In 2000, although the median rent has increased over \$150, the average rent in the County is now lower than in the region as a whole, at \$589 compared to \$661 respectively, but remains higher than the state's median rent of \$505.

Table 2.12
Comparison of Median Home, Mobile Home Price, and Rents
Oconee County and Surrounding Counties

Community	Median Price	Median Rent	Median Mobile Home
Oconee County	\$151,600	\$589	\$39,900
Barrow County	\$103,400	\$583	\$53,200
Clarke County	\$111,300	\$540	\$20,300
Greene County	\$87,100	\$386	\$34,100
Jackson County	\$102,900	\$501	\$53,100
Madison County	\$87,300	\$452	\$47,700
Morgan County	\$99,700	\$470	\$60,200
Oglethorpe County	\$87,500	\$457	\$41,900
Walton County	\$113,300	\$558	\$41,200

Source: 2000 Census STF - 3

Within the Northeast Georgia region, Oconee County is a relatively expensive place to own and rent a home. The County had the highest median home value in 2000, as well as the highest median rent. However, the median mobile home value was one of the lowest in the region, ranking fourth lowest out of nine coun-

ties. This indicates that mobile homes in the County represent an affordable ownership and rental opportunity.

Table 2.13
Comparable Home Values - 2000
Oconee County and Adjacent Counties

Price Range	Oconee County		Barrow County		Clarke County		Greene County		Jackson County		Madison County		Walton County	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Up to \$99,990	1,983	27%	6,412	52%	8,812	53%	2,612	63%	6,426	57%	5,434	69%	6,842	42%
100,000 - 149,990	1,814	25%	4,135	33%	4,367	26%	341	8%	2,136	19%	1,304	17%	5,105	31%
150,000 - 249,990	2,124	29%	1,222	10%	2,971	18%	227	5%	1,846	16%	727	9%	2,853	18%
250,000+	1,339	18%	584	5%	566	3%	996	24%	875	8%	392	5%	1,508	9%
Total	7,260	100%	12,353	100%	16,716	100%	4,176	100%	11,283	100%	7,857	100%	16,308	100%

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

Table 2.13 presents comparable home values for other counties in the region, based on 2000 home values, by price point. Oconee County had the lowest proportion of homes (27 percent) in the lower price ranges (less than \$99,000), as compared to Barrow (52 percent); Clarke (53 percent); Greene (63 percent); Jackson (57 percent); Madison (69 percent) and Walton (42 percent) counties. With the exception of Greene County at 24 percent, Oconee County had the highest proportion of homes valued over \$250,000, at 18 percent of the total stock. Almost half of the homes in Oconee County were valued at \$150,000 and above, whereas

homes of this value comprised less than 30 percent of the total stock in comparable counties.

Overall, 21.7 percent of the ownership housing stock was valued under \$99,000 in 2000 (which is generally affordable to households with income below 50 percent of the County median), with 27.6 percent reported in the \$100,000 to \$149,000 range (which is generally affordable to households with income between 50 percent and 80 percent of the County median). Housing values in unincorporated Oconee County were generally higher than in the cities, with the exception of North High Shoals, where 36 percent of the homes were priced over \$200,000, comparable to that of the unincorporated area. Although numerically small, (348 units) almost 39 percent of the ownership units in the incorporated areas were valued under \$99,000 as compared to 18.7 percent (884 units) in the unincorporated area. Approximately 387 units (43 percent of incorporated ownership housing) fell within the \$100,000 to \$149,000 price range as compared to 24.7 percent (1,168 units) in the unincorporated area. In total, almost 82 percent of the ownership units in the cities were valued below \$149,000. In contrast, almost 57 percent of the ownership units in the unincorporated area were valued over \$149,000.

Table 2.14
Home Prices - 2000
Oconee County and Cities

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	5,629	31	229	99	542	901	4,728
Less than \$10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
\$10,000 to \$14,999	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
\$15,000 to \$19,999	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
\$20,000 to \$24,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
\$25,000 to \$29,999	11	0	0	0	0	0	11
\$30,000 to \$34,999	15	2	3	0	0	5	10
\$35,000 to \$39,999	29	0	0	0	4	4	25
\$40,000 to \$49,999	48	0	0	4	0	4	44
\$50,000 to \$59,999	56	6	5	4	0	15	51
\$60,000 to \$69,999	74	3	20	3	12	38	36
\$70,000 to \$79,999	231	9	17	4	43	73	158
\$80,000 to \$89,999	315	2	28	3	39	72	243
\$90,000 to \$99,999	428	0	47	11	79	137	291
\$100,000 to \$124,999	689	3	63	20	140	226	463
\$125,000 to \$149,999	866	0	26	2	134	162	704
\$150,000 to \$174,999	596	3	11	7	34	55	541
\$175,000 to \$199,999	497	3	5	5	13	26	471
\$200,000 to \$249,999	725	0	0	19	18	37	688
\$250,000 to \$299,999	305	0	0	13	13	26	279
\$300,000 to \$399,999	326	0	0	4	4	8	318
\$400,000 to \$499,999	214	0	0	0	0	0	214
\$500,000 to \$749,999	123	0	0	0	9	9	114
\$750,000 to \$999,999	46	0	4	0	0	4	42
\$1,000,000 or more	20	0	0	0	0	0	20

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

Note: County total excludes a portion of Bogart located in Athens-Clarke County. However, the incorporated total includes the entire City of Bogart. Due to inclusion of entire city of Bogart in incorporated area calculation, the total number of housing units in the unincorporated area may be actually slightly higher than reflected in above table, as incorporated was subtracted from County total to get unincorporated area.

An overview of home prices listed on MLS in June 2006 indicates appreciation has occurred since the 2000 Census. The following findings were made:

- Out of a 50-unit sample of the lowest priced single-family homes in the County, there were two units listed below \$100,000, and one at \$103,000, representing 6 percent of the sample. Two units had two bedrooms and the other had three;
- Out of the same sample, 14 units (28 percent of sample) were listed at prices below \$150,000. Two of the 14 units had 4 bedrooms, the remainder were three bedroom units;
- The remaining 66 percent were offered at prices over \$150,000 to \$196,500, indicating a large stock of moderately priced housing units. Over 90 percent of this group were three bedroom units;
- Listings under the category of “Townhome” yielded a 24-unit sample of small lot detached and “cluster” type units as well as the more traditional attached ownership units. Asking prices began at \$144,900 for the majority of two bedroom townhomes, and \$184,900 for three bedroom detached “cluster” units; between \$204,900 to \$225,900 for three bedroom attached townhome units, and between \$238,900 and \$405,000 for four bedroom attached townhome units. Four bedroom “cluster” units ranged from the mid to high \$400,000’s;
- A second townhome listing search found four units in Bogart with three bedrooms ranging from \$179,900 to \$188,900 and 3 units with two bedrooms in Watkinsville in the Trotters Walk townhome complex for \$128,900.
- Listings under the “Condos” category included 14 products. None of the units were listed below \$100,000. Units listed 4- two bedroom for under \$150,000 and six - two and three bedroom units listed between \$211,900 and \$240,000. The remaining four units were listed in the high \$200,000 price ranges.

Complex	Cost Range	Nearest City
Triple Creek	\$144,900-\$155,900	Bogart
Villas at Creekside -TH	\$180,000-\$300,000	Bogart
Christian Lake	\$229,000-\$320,000	Watkinsville
Lane Creek Plantation	\$250,000-\$450,000	Bishop
Mulberry Plantation	\$290,000-\$300,000's	Watkinsville
Pecan Bluff	\$229,000+	Watkinsville
Triple Creek	\$200,000's+	Bogart
Boulder Springs	\$400,000's+	Bishop
Copperville	\$350,000's+	Watkinsville
Manors at Belfair	\$300,000's+	Bogart
Pembroke Estates	\$350,000's+	Watkinsville
Silver Leaf	\$400,000's+	Bogart
Somerset	\$370,000-\$450,000's	Watkinsville
Southwest Manor	\$300,000's+	Bishop
Bridle Gate	\$500,000-\$1,000,000	Watkinsville
Georgian Ridge	\$500,000's+	Watkinsville
Moss Creek	\$890,000's-\$1,000,000's	Watkinsville
Settler's Ridge	\$500,000's+	Watkinsville
Trotter's Walk - TH	\$128,900	Watkinsville

Source: Communities publication, May 2006

Table 2.15 presents representative new home prices in the County, based on internet listings. There were no listings of new products under \$100,000. Two of the new home projects presented homes with asking prices of less than \$150,000, one of which is a townhome project. The majority of the new home communities were priced in the low to mid 300,000’s, with seven of the 19 developments near the \$400,000 and above range.

According to the 2000 Census, there were 1,689 rental units in the County in 2000, which is 17.7 percent of total housing units. The majority of rental

properties are located within the unincorporated county, with the incorporated areas containing 398 units of rental housing, which is just over 4 percent of the total housing stock in the County. Rental properties in the incorporated areas tended to fall within the low to moderate range. Over 58 percent of the rental units in the incorporated areas fell within the \$350 to \$599 price range, with an additional 26.6 percent falling within the \$600 to \$899 range. In comparison, 47.3 percent of the rental units in the unincorporated area fell in the low to moderate range of \$350 to \$599, with 18.5 percent falling in the \$600 to \$899 rental range. Approximately 27.1 percent of the rental units in the unincorporated areas reported rents below \$350 per month, as compared to 11.3 percent in the incorporated ar-

Table 2.16
Rent - 2000
Oconee County and Cities

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	1,689	20	130	16	232	398	1,291
With cash rent:	1,536	12	114	13	214	353	1,183
Less than \$100	22	0	2	0	0	2	20
\$100 to \$149	27	0	0	0	0	0	27
\$150 to \$199	26	0	0	0	0	0	26
\$200 to \$249	45	0	6	2	0	8	37
\$250 to \$299	73	3	2	0	0	5	68
\$300 to \$349	168	0	17	3	5	25	143
\$350 to \$399	151	3	9	0	21	33	118
\$400 to \$449	130	2	15	3	14	34	96
\$450 to \$499	182	0	11	0	14	25	157
\$500 to \$549	149	4	17	0	58	79	70
\$550 to \$599	154	0	6	0	29	35	119
\$600 to \$649	53	0	8	5	12	25	28
\$650 to \$699	100	0	3	0	9	12	88
\$700 to \$749	59	0	8	0	0	8	51
\$750 to \$799	44	0	9	0	13	22	22
\$800 to \$899	57	0	1	0	26	27	30
\$900 to \$999	32	0	0	0	0	0	32
\$1,000 to \$1,249	20	0	0	0	5	5	15
\$1,250 to \$1,499	37	0	0	0	8	8	29
\$1,500 to \$1,999	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
\$2,000 or more	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No cash rent	153	8	16	3	18	45	108

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

Note: County total excludes a portion of Bogart located in Athens-Clarke County. However, the incorporated total includes the entire City of Bogart. Due to inclusion of entire city of Bogart in incorporated area calculation, the total number of housing units in the unincorporated area may be actually slightly higher than reflected in above table, as incorporated was subtracted from County total to get unincorporated area.

areas, possibly reflecting the higher proportion of mobile homes in the unincorporated county areas, which typically rent for less than other detached or even multi-family housing. The unincorporated areas also had a higher proportion of rental properties in the upper rental ranges over \$900 per month.

An internet survey of properties for rent in June 2006 yielded very limited results:

- Units in the 60 unit Meadowland Apartment Complex in Bogart ranged from \$423 for a studio to \$609 for a two bedroom/two bath unit.

- Two – three bedroom units were available in the Stone Shoals subdivision at \$1,100 monthly;
- A three bedroom condo was offered in the Jennings Mill complex at \$1,295 monthly, and a two bedroom/two and one half bath townhouse for \$750 per month;
- A four bedroom/three bath home was listed at \$1,600 per month;
- A two-bedroom apartment was listed at \$450 per month, and a two bedroom duplex unit for \$475 per month.
- Rentals may be found in Highlands Oaks, a duplex community, in the \$850 to \$950 per moth range.

Other potential lower rental cost options include the Arbor Glen and Moreland Heights mobile home parks, although no units were advertised.

■ **Barriers to Affordability**

Constraints to the provision of adequate and affordable housing are posed by both governmental and non-governmental factors. Although Oconee County has a relatively affordable housing stock in the context of the Atlanta and Athens-Clarke County metro areas, there does not appear to be a sufficient number of rental and ownership units affordable to the lower income workforce households, particularly those with incomes below 30% of the area median. Hence, many of the employees of service, retail and manual labor based businesses in the County live outside of the County and commute in to their jobs, while those who can afford the higher market rate housing commute outside of the County to more professional and technical occupations. The proximity of Oconee County to Athens-Clark County, and the short commute time, facilitates this pattern.

Many factors affect the ultimate cost of housing to the consumer, be it rental or owner-occupied. Those factors, which either prevent construction or raise the cost of construction and/or improvement of housing, can be considered barriers or constraints. Some of these potential constraints are the result of local governmental actions, policies, regulations and standards. The Comprehensive Plan land use designations, the Future Land Development Map, Character and Zoning and Development Codes may contain barriers or constraints. Other factors are non-governmental market factors, which are typically beyond the control of local government. However, governmental and non-governmental constraints are interrelated and affect one another. Therefore, action programs that influence governmental constraints can also affect primarily market-related non-governmental constraints on a localized basis.

It is a goal of the County to adopt local policies and procedures that foster private-sector housing for all income levels that do not unreasonably add to escalating county costs. Although state and local governments, as well as private industry, have important roles in the provision of housing affordable to the lower ranges of workforce households, federal funding of existing and/or new housing programs is essential for provision of housing to segments of the workforce population. Without these resources, the ability of local government to address the housing needs of these lower income groups is reduced. The County currently does not have any

housing assistance programs in place, relying instead on the individual developers to seek state or federal funding assistance, typically state tax credit financing, on their own initiative.

The County and its Cities will need to address a number of concerns in order to meet future housing needs. Future housing needs will be increasingly translated into greater demand for alternative housing types to the detached single-family home, such as multiple-family, townhome, cluster home and mixed-use products. While the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Development Map and associated Character Areas will provide for a full range of housing types and densities, future decisions regarding public improvements, zoning and development standards, as well as consideration of the potential for creation of housing assistance and incentive programs, will determine the extent to which these creative housing products will be successfully utilized in meeting anticipated housing needs.

■ Cost Burdened Households/Households in Need

The State Department of Community Affairs has compiled information on households reporting some kind of housing problem. These include persons with AIDS, persons having sustained family violence, the elderly, persons with a disability, and persons encountering substance abuse. The characteristics of persons with housing problems are further evaluated by size of household, income, tenure, household type, age and race. Using income guidelines as provided by the De-

Table 2.17 Housing Problems - 2000 Oconee County						
Category	Total Cost Burdened	Severely Cost Burdened	Total Problems	Total Households	Overcrowded	
Total County	1,089	577	2,001	8,997		
Total County @ 50% MFI	140	381	618	1,084		
Total Renter	203	203	608	1,782	197	
Total Renter @ 50% MFI	56	195	320	457		
Total Owner	886	374	1,392	7,215	104	
Total Owner @ 50% MFI	84	186	298	627		
Elderly Renter	22	33	59	174	0	
Elderly Renter @ 50% MFI	18	33	55	111		
Elderly Owner	138	78	224	1,285	4	
Elderly Owner @ 50% MFI	50	62	116	314		
Large Family Renter	8	0	127	203		
Large Family Renter @ 50% MFI	0	0	22	26		
Large Family Owner	96	18	207	868		
Large Family Owner @ 50% MFI	0	4	28	40		
Small Family Renter	96	122	299	1,020		
Small Family Renter @50% MFI	34	118	195	256		
Small Family Owner	535	245	807	4,456		
Small Family Owner @ 50% MFI	30	100	130	208		

Note: Cost burdened is 30-50% of income for housing. Severely cost burdened is over 50% of income for housing.
Source: Georgia Planning Dataviews

partment of Community Affairs, households paying between 30 percent and 49 percent of their income are considered “cost-burdened” and households paying over 50 percent are “severely cost-burdened.”

The DCA data indicates that 2,001 households (22.2 percent of total County households) reported some kind of housing problem. Of these, 609 (30.4 percent) were renter households and 1,392 (69.6 percent) were ownership households. Of the total, 376 households were extremely low income (incomes less than 30 percent of the County median); 242 were considered very low income (30 and 50 percent of the County median); and 542 were considered low income, (between 50 and 80 percent of the County median). A greater proportion of the lower income households were also renters, with over one-half of the renters reporting incomes less than 50 percent of the median as compared to only 21 percent of the owners. Small family households (2 or less) reported the highest incidence of housing problems, although 65 percent of small renter families fell within the low-income categories as compared to only 16 percent of small owner families.

Review of the number of households paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing, both ownership and rental, provides an indication of households in need. Based on Census information, approximately 18.7 percent of Ownership households in the County are considered cost burdened, with a higher proportion of cost burdened owner households located in the incorporated areas, at 21.2 percent as compared to 18.2 percent of households in the unincorporated area.

There were 1,089 households, 12.1 percent of total County households, reporting a housing cost burden of between 30 percent and 50 percent. Interestingly, 949 of these households (87.1 percent) fell within the moderate and above moderate-income categories, with incomes above 80 percent of the County median. While the severely overburdened category includes approximately 577 households, of which 65 percent are homeowners, and 35 percent are renters, the percentage is still relatively low, at 6.4 percent of total County households. Within the renters, 96 percent were considered lower income (less than 50 percent of median), as compared to 50 percent of the owners.

The HUD median family income (MFI) for Oconee County was \$45,400 in 2000 and \$54,250 in 2005 (HUD uses the Athens-Clarke County MSA figure for several of the larger counties in the area, and does not break out Oconee County individually). Table 2.18 identifies the income ranges, based on the HUD MFI guidelines, and the rent or purchase price affordable to each income group in 2005. The proportions of persons in each income category, for comparison with preceding

tables reporting housing cost and rent ranges, is based on the 2000 Census income breakdowns and the 2000 HUD MFI. This table assumes a 10 percent down payment, one percent property tax and P&I.

Table 2.18
HUD Income Classifications - 2005
Oconee County/Athens-Clarke County MSA

Classification	Annual Income (2005)	% of Population (2000)*	Maximum Affordable Rent (2005)	Maximum Affordable Purchase Price (2005)
Very Low	0 - \$27,150	20.2%	\$679	\$99,610
Low	\$27,151-\$43,450	11.2%	\$1,086	\$142,000
Moderate	\$43,451-\$65,100	20.7%	\$1,628	\$217,925
Above Moderate	Above \$65,100	47.9%	\$1,628+	\$304,000
Median	\$54,250		\$1,356	\$179,000

Source: HUD Median Family Income Limits
Maximum purchase price assumes a 10% downpayment and 1% property taxes at a 7% fixed interest rate

Based upon the distribution of housing prices in 2000, there appears to be an adequate stock in the income range affordable to Very Low income households (less than 50 percent of MFI) with a notable proportion located in the incorporated areas. According to the Census, the County also has a wealth of homes in the range affordable to persons in the low income classifications (between 50 and 80 percent of the MFI) and a growing inventory of homes affordable to moderate and above moderate income households, with the bulk of higher priced homes located in the unincorporated portions of the County.

Cost Burdened Renters

Although proportions differ slightly from DCA data, the Census reports by tenure and income category, households that paid over 30 percent of their income for housing costs. The Census reports approximately 27 percent of the renters (456) were considered cost burdened. Of these, almost 98 percent of the cost-burdened renters were comprised of lower income households. Almost 58 percent of cost burdened households are considered extremely low income (incomes less than 30 percent of County median), and another 22.5 percent of cost burdened households reported incomes between 30 and 50 percent of the County median, resulting in a total of 80.2 percent of cost burdened households with incomes under \$27,500 (less than 50 percent of the median City income). This constitutes 13.5 percent of all renters in the County. An additional 17.7 percent of the cost burdened renters are considered low-income households (incomes between 50 and 80 percent of the County median), which is 4.8 percent of total County renters.

Table 2.19
Renters Paying More than 30% by Income
Oconee County, Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas

Category	Total County		Incorporated Area		Unincorporated Area	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
TOTAL Renters	1,689	100.0%	398	100.00%	1,291	100.0%
Less than \$10,000	212		31		180	
30% or more	140	8.3%	19	4.8%	121	9.4%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	248		57		191	
30% or more	154	9.1%	35	8.8%	119	9.2%
\$20,000 to \$34,999	423		132		291	
30% or more	144	8.5%	65	16.3%	79	6.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	311		65		246	
30% or more	9	0.5%	2	0.5%	7	0.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	270		50		220	
30% or more	9	0.5%	0	0.0%	9	0.7%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	124		54		70	
30% or more	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	101		9		92	
30% or more	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total Paying over 30%	456	27.0%	121	30.4%	335	25.9%

Source: 2000 Census STF-3
Note: Percentages represent proportion of households overpaying within respective jurisdiction

The proportion of renter households overpaying is slightly higher in the incorporated areas, where 30.4 percent of the renters (121 households) report overpayment for rental housing. Of those households reporting overpayment, 71.9 percent

are considered very low income (less than 50 percent of County median), and the remaining 28.1 percent are considered low income (between 50 and 80 percent of County median). It is interesting to note that numerically, a higher number of households in the \$20,000 to \$34,999 income range experience rental overpayment than in the lower income categories, although almost two-thirds of the households earning less than \$20,000 annually are cost burdened. Households in the moderate and upper income ranges do not appear experience overpayment.

Within the unincorporated County, just fewer than 26 percent of the renters (335) are considered cost burdened. Cost burdened renters are comprised almost completely of renters falling within the very low-income range, constituting 1.7 percent of renters, and 83.6 percent of all cost-burdened renters. Approximately 13 percent of the cost burdened renters in the unincorporated area fall into the low-income category. A small portion of cost burdened renters are considered moderate income, and possibly may be overextending themselves to rent or lease a more exclusive single family home.

Cost Burdened Owners

In 2000, there were 1,051 ownership households paying more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing, which is 18.7 percent of households with a mortgage. Overall, almost 74 percent of all of the households overpaying are considered to be in the lower income ranges. Of these, 16.8 percent of the cost burdened owners had incomes under \$20,000 (less than 30 percent of the median County income),

Table 2.20
Owners Paying More than 30% by Income
Oconee County, Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas

Category	Total County		Incorporated Area		Unincorporated Area	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
TOTAL with a Mortgage	5,629		901		4,728	
Less than \$10,000	143	2.5%	37	4.1%	106	2.2%
30% or more	70	1.2%	27	3.0%	43	0.9%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	253	4.5%	70	7.8%	183	3.9%
30% or more	107	1.9%	27	3.0%	80	1.7%
\$20,000 to \$34,999	658	11.7%	134	14.9%	524	11.1%
30% or more	350	6.2%	68	7.5%	282	4.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	750	13.3%	187	20.8%	563	11.9%
30% or more	246	4.4%	60	6.7%	186	3.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	1,469	26.1%	274	30.4%	1,195	25.3%
30% or more	190	3.4%	8	0.9%	182	3.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	935	16.6%	124	13.8%	811	17.2%
30% or more	53	1.0%	0	0.0%	53	1.1%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	839	14.9%	54	6.0%	785	16.6%
30% or more	27	0.5%	0	0.0%	27	0.6%
\$150,000 and above	582	10.3%	21	2.3%	561	11.9%
30% or more	8	0.1%	0	0.0%	8	0.1%
Total Paying over 30%	1,051	18.7%	190	21.1%	861	18.2%

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

33.3 percent of the overburdened households are considered Very Low income (between 30 and 50 percent of County median), and almost 23.4 percent are consid-

ered Low income (incomes between 50 percent and 80 percent of County median). In sum: 3.1 percent of all owners are extremely low income and overpay for housing; 6.2 percent of all owners are very low income and overpay for housing; and 4.4 percent of all owners are low income and overpay for housing.

From another perspective, almost 45 percent of the extremely low income households (less than 30 percent median) overpay for housing, 53.2 percent of the very low income households (30-50 percent of median) overpay for housing, and 32.8 percent of the low income households (50-80 percent of median) overpay for housing.

In the incorporated areas, almost all of the households overpaying are in the lower income ranges, greater than Countywide and in the unincorporated areas. Over 46 percent of the households overpaying are considered Very Low Income, (below 50 percent of median) and almost 50 percent are considered Low income, as compared to 30.1 percent and 38 percent respectively in the unincorporated area.

These low-income households are the population that merits consideration, as households in the higher income ranges may be over-extending themselves for the privileges of home ownership, such as a greater investment return and larger home.

Comparison of Housing Cost to Affordability

Although essential to meeting housing needs, the provision of a sufficient number of dwelling units will not in itself ensure that the entire population will be adequately housed. For example, households with insufficient income to purchase or

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	1,689	20	130	16	232	398	1291
Less than 10 percent	170	0	5	3	14	22	148
10 to 14 percent	252	2	20	2	30	54	198
15 to 19 percent	295	4	19	0	31	54	241
20 to 24 percent	161	3	17	0	38	58	103
25 to 29 percent	175	0	9	3	32	44	131
30 to 34 percent	84	0	12	3	7	22	62
35 to 39 percent	88	0	4	0	27	31	57
40 to 49 percent	67	0	4	0	12	16	51
50 percent or more	225	3	24	2	23	52	173
Not computed	172	8	16	3	18	45	127

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

rent quality housing may be denied a choice of housing location, adequate size, or type because appropriate housing at acceptable cost is not adequately dispersed throughout the community. Historically, the private sector generally responds to the majority of the community’s housing needs through provision of market rate housing. However, due to economic conditions and trends within the State, the affordability of market rate housing is declining.

A distinction between renter and owner overpayment (paying 30 percent or more of income for housing) is important because, while homeowners may overextend themselves financially to afford a home purchase, the owner maintains the option of selling the home and may realize tax benefits and appreciation in value. Renters, on the other hand, are limited to the rental market, and are generally required to pay the rent established by that market. The discrepancy between owner and renter households is largely reflective of the tendency for year round renter households to have lower incomes than do owner households. While efforts to reduce the cost burden of ownership housing should be considered, particularly lower income rental households, this is not among the County's most pressing problems, as this segment of the population represents only 16.6 percent of renters and 3.1 percent of the total households in the unincorporated county area.

The supply of rental units affordable to different segments of the population can be roughly estimated using 2000 Census counts with the 2005 HUD income limits and associated rents.

Based on 2000 Census data, when comparing the need of approximately 672 total households requiring rents (in 2005 dollars) of \$679 or less per month (for households with incomes up to 50 percent of County median), with the 2000 Census findings there were 1,180 units with rents below \$650 per month. Up to 300 of those households required rents of \$340 or lower per month (households with incomes up to 30 percent of County median). According to the Census, there were 361 rental properties reporting rents of less than \$349 per month. Although the exact numerical distribution of units with the lowest rents is not available, it can be deduced that there are sufficient rental units to meet the needs of the workforce households with incomes at or near 50 percent of the County median. However, the units available at the rents affordable to these households in the lower income ranges may not provide a sufficient number of bedrooms to accommodate the household, thus creating an overcrowded situation. However, the rent limits used for analysis purposes are for a family of four, which can be accommodated in a two-bedroom unit. The supply of three bedroom rental units at rents not exceeding 30 percent of the household income may not be sufficient to accommodate larger households.

When comparing the need of over 350 households requiring homes of \$99,600 or less (for households with incomes up to 50 percent of City median), with over 100 of those households requiring homes of approximately \$55,000 or lower (households with incomes up to 30 percent of City median) with the findings of the 2000 Census, there were 1,222 units under \$99,000. However, with appreciation of up to 7 percent per year over the past 5-6 years, this number may be significantly reduced, as a home that sold for \$99,000 in 2000 may not be market valued in the vicinity of \$135,000 or higher. For extremely low-income households with incomes less than 30 percent of the median, there is a shortfall of affordable units. Approximately 118 homes reported values of \$50,000 or less. As well, the majority of these lower priced units are mobile homes, with a median value of \$39,900, which may not meet the needs of larger, low-income households in terms of size and number of bedrooms.

There are no assisted units in Oconee County, although DCA reports an estimated 300 to 400 Housing Choice Vouchers used in the Athens/Clarke County region, of which 18 were utilized in Oconee County in 2005. One complex, Magnolia Estates

of Oconee, an assisted living facility located in Bogart, reserves units for Housing Choice Voucher recipients. There are currently 1,225 assisted living apartments operated by the Athens Housing Authority. However, these units are administered by the Athens Housing Authority for residents of Clarke County and are not an applicable resource for Oconee County.

Overcrowding

In response to higher housing prices, lower income households must often be satisfied with smaller, less adequate housing for available money. This may result in overcrowding. Overcrowding places a strain on physical facilities, does not provide a satisfying environment, and eventually may cause conditions which contribute both to deterioration of the housing stock and neighborhoods in general. The Bureau of Census defines overcrowded housing units as “those in excess of one person per room average.”

Although the 1990 Census does not provide comparable data to conduct analysis with 2000 Census tables on the size of units, the number of bedrooms by tenure can also provide similar conclusions. The proportion of ownership homes

with four or more bedrooms, comparable to units with seven or more rooms, has significantly increased from 18.1 percent of the total housing stock in 1990 to 29.0 percent in 2000, particularly the number of units with 4 bedrooms. Conversely, the proportion of units with smaller number of bedrooms (none, one and two) which correlates to homes with less than four rooms decreased from 13.7 percent of the total housing stock in 1990 to 10.5 percent in 2000, although numerically there was a 137-unit increase in stock of smaller units.

Between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of larger rental units decreased from 9.6 percent of the total stock to 8.7 percent, although numerically larger rental unit stock increased by 165 units. The relatively small growth in larger size rental units is a potential concern, as renter households may not be able to find a unit within their financial means to accommodate their household size. Two bedroom rental units remain the predominant unit size, with an increase of 231 units over the decade.

Table 2.22
Bedrooms by Tenure - 1990 to 2000
Oconee County

	1990		2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
Owner occupied:	4,770	77.5%	7,260	80.2%
No bedroom	4	0.1%	10	0.1%
1 bedroom	79	1.7%	94	1.0%
2 bedrooms	734	11.9%	850	9.4%
3 bedrooms	2841	46.2%	3,682	40.7%
4 bedrooms	855	13.9%	1,848	20.4%
5 or more bedrooms	257	4.2%	776	8.6%
Renter occupied:	1,386	22.5%	1,791	19.8%
No bedroom	18	0.3%	9	1.0%
1 bedroom	115	1.9%	133	1.5%
2 bedrooms	663	10.8%	894	9.9%
3 bedrooms	490	8.0%	626	7.3%
4 bedrooms	69	1.1%	120	1.3%
5 or more bedrooms	31	0.5%	9	0.1%
Total	6,156	100.0%	9,051	100.0%

Source: 2000 Census STF-3
Note: % of number of bedrooms are calculated on total number of units as baseline

Table 2.23
Rooms by Tenure - 2000
Oconee County and Cities

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	9,051	61	433	146	835	1,475	7,576
Owner occupied:	7,260	41	303	130	603	1,077	6,183
1 room	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
2 rooms	26	0	4	0	0	4	22
3 rooms	138	0	13	2	27	42	96
4 rooms	441	6	20	4	30	60	381
5 rooms	1,111	16	78	22	138	254	857
6 rooms	1,542	13	85	24	205	327	1,215
7 rooms	1,231	0	47	28	103	178	1,053
8 rooms	1,042	3	35	26	49	113	929
9 or more rooms	1,727	3	21	24	51	99	1,628
Renter occupied:	1,791	20	130	16	232	398	1,393
1 room	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 rooms	75	0	4	0	0	4	71
3 rooms	170	5	8	3	8	24	146
4 rooms	598	7	58	5	75	145	453
5 rooms	439	0	26	3	70	99	340
6 rooms	299	8	25	2	66	101	198
7 rooms	115	0	8	3	9	20	95
8 rooms	58	0	0	0	0	0	58
9 or more rooms	37	0	1	0	4	5	32

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

*Note: Reflects the entire city of Bogart, including the portion within Clarke County. Therefore, the incorporated total is slightly higher than actual, and the unincorporated total is slightly lower than actual

The number of rooms available in a residence, and the proportion of larger or smaller units in a jurisdiction influence the incidence of overcrowding. Since 1990, based on the bedrooms by tenure analysis, housing units have been getting larger on a countywide basis. As of 2000, the proportion of large units (7, 8, and 9 rooms) represents almost 47 percent of the total housing stock. The proportion of smaller units (1, 2, 3 and 4 rooms) represents 16.0 percent of the total housing stock, and the proportion of average sized homes with five and 6 rooms is 37.5 percent. The proportion of larger homes is slightly higher in the unincorporated area, at 68.5 percent of the total stock, as compared to 55.1 percent in the unincorporated area. Larger units equate to 58.4 percent of owner occupied units in the unincorporated area compared to 36.2 percent of occupied units in the incorporated areas, where the majority of owner occupied units (54 percent) are moderate sized with five and 6 rooms, as compared to 33.5 percent in the unincorporated area.

In terms of rental units, over 48 percent of the rental units in the unincorporated area are small (four or less rooms), 38.6 percent are moderate sized, and 13.4 percent have seven rooms or more. In the incorporated areas, 43.5 percent of the units are small, 50.3 percent are medium sized, and only a small proportion, 6.2 percent, is larger units. Since 2000 however, a number of townhome and cluster home products have been constructed which have three and four bedrooms, thereby increasing the stock of larger ownership and potential rental options.

Table 2.24
Occupants by Room by Tenure - 2000
Oconee County and Cities

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	9,051	61	433	146	835	1,475	7,576
Owner occupied:	7,260	41	303	130	603	1,077	6,183
0.50 or less occupants per room	5,524	26	205	73	422	726	4,798
0.51 to 1.00 occupants per room	1,632	15	94	55	164	328	1,304
1.01 to 1.50 occupants per room	56	0	2	0	9	11	45
1.51 to 2.00 occupants per room	40	0	2	2	8	12	28
2.01 or more occupants per room	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
Renter occupied:	1,791	20	130	16	232	398	1,393
0.50 or less occupants per room	975	10	85	11	166	272	703
0.51 to 1.00 occupants per room	619	4	43	5	56	108	511
1.01 to 1.50 occupants per room	131	6	0	0	10	16	115
1.51 to 2.00 occupants per room	57	0	2	0	0	2	55
2.01 or more occupants per room	9	0	0	0	0	0	9

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

*Note: Reflects the entire city of Bogart, including the portion within Clarke County. Therefore, the incorporated total is slightly higher than actual, and the unincorporated total is slightly lower than actual

According to the Census, approximately 3.4 percent of all households (260) in the unincorporated county area reported overcrowded housing conditions, of which 31.1 percent were owner occupied units and 68.8 percent were renter occupied units. Proportionately, renters experienced overcrowding at a higher rate than owners did – with 12.8 percent of renters living in overcrowded units as compared to 1.3 percent of owners. This is reflected in the fact that within the total unincorporated county area, owners experiencing overcrowding comprised 1.1 percent of the total households, while renters experiencing overcrowding comprised 2.4 percent of the total households, although proportionately renters represented only 18.4 percent of the total households. Within the incorporated areas, 2.8 percent of the total households experienced overcrowded conditions. Overcrowding among owners represented 1.6 percent of the total households, and 2.1 percent of owners. Overcrowding among renters represented only 1.2 percent of the total households and 4.5 percent of renter households.

Although the proportions and actual numbers are low and not considered an extremely pressing issue, this may be an indication that renters and homeowners are not finding suitable housing with adequate number of rooms with rents/prices affordable to their incomes.

■ Special Need Populations

A variety of populations within Oconee County has special housing needs.

Disabilities

Within the County as a whole, 6,174 persons, or 25.3 percent of the population over age five were reported as having a disability. It should be noted that the reporting of a disability does not equate to the actual number of persons reporting disabilities. A single person may have reported more than one kind of disability. For example, a person may report a physical disability that in turn results in a

self-care disability and an inability to work, resulting in being counted in three categories. In terms of age, 57.4 percent of the persons reporting a disability were between 16 and 64 years of age, and 34.6 percent were over 65, although persons over 65 represent 8.5 percent of the total population. In other terms, over 80 percent of seniors reported some kind of a disability. Over 36 percent of reported disabilities in the workforce age were an employment disability.

By jurisdiction, 1,031 (4.2 percent of the County population over 5 and 39.7 percent of incorporated area population) of the persons reporting disabilities resided in the incorporated areas, and 5,143 (21.0 percent of total County population and 24.6 percent of unincorporated area population over age 5) of the persons reporting disabilities resided in the remaining unincorporated county. Within the unincorporated county, persons between the ages of 17 and 65 represented 69.8 percent of the total population over age 5. Comparatively, 56.6 percent of all disabled persons were reported between age 16 and 65. Persons over 65 constituted 35.2 percent of all persons reporting a disability in the unincorporated area. Approximately 38.0 percent of all disabilities reported in the workforce age (16-65) were an employment disability.

**Table 2.25
Persons with Disabilities by Age - 2000
Oconee County and Cities**

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total disabilities tallied:	6,174	68	369	85	509	1,031	5,143
Total disabilities age 5 to 15 years:	494	0	32	7	34	73	421
Sensory disability	59	0	0	2	0	2	57
Physical disability	49	0	2	0	6	8	41
Mental disability	296	0	19	5	28	52	244
Self-care disability	90	0	11	0	0	11	79
Total disabilities age 16 to 64 years:	3,546	51	239	59	285	634	2,912
Sensory disability	271	0	20	4	19	43	228
Physical disability	723	8	59	7	73	147	576
Mental disability	450	12	31	5	54	102	348
Self-care disability	164	6	8	0	4	18	146
Go-outside-home disability	649	10	51	22	59	142	507
Employment disability	1,289	15	70	21	76	182	1,107
Total disabilities age 65 years and over:	2,134	17	98	19	190	324	1,810
Sensory disability	359	3	8	4	44	59	300
Physical disability	789	5	32	9	56	102	687
Mental disability	283	5	19	1	29	54	229
Self-care disability	200	0	5	2	22	29	171
Go-outside-home disability	503	4	34	3	39	80	423

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

Within the incorporated county area, seniors accounted for 31.4 percent of the disabilities, persons between 16 and 65 accounted for 61.5 percent of the disabilities, and persons under 15 represented the remaining 7.1 percent. Approximately 28.7 percent of all disabilities reported in the workforce age (16-65) were an employment disability.

Many of these disabilities simply require design modification to existing residences. Other populations, such as individuals with extreme mental disabilities, or self-care limitations, require long-term residential care. Within the Athens-

Clarke County metropolitan area specialty housing, such as residential group homes and shelters exist to meet the needs of this group. There are shelters for victims of domestic violence and their families, rehabilitation centers for individuals recovering from drug addiction or mental illness, and transitional housing for homeless families. However, facilities assisting these populations are limited or non-existent in the County and the needs of this population must take advantage of the services offered through organizations outside of Oconee County.

Elderly

There were 2,238 persons over the age of 65, comprising 16 percent of the total population in 2000, with an estimated 2,541 persons in 2005. By the year 2030, an even greater number of residents will move into the 65 over age range, al-

Table 2.26 Age Forecasts by Percent - 2005 to 2030 Oconee County and Cities							
	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
2005							
0 – 4 Years Old	2,042	7	74	41	163	285	1,757
5 – 13 Years Old	5,456	28	157	107	341	633	4,823
14 – 17 Years Old	1,461	0	33	22	116	171	1,290
18 – 20 Years Old	969	6	46	15	91	158	811
21 – 24 Years Old	947	9	70	12	98	189	758
25 – 34 Years Old	3,474	22	156	59	342	579	2,895
35 – 44 Years Old	5,425	19	175	94	426	714	4,711
45 – 54 Years Old	4,868	20	177	74	402	673	4,195
55 – 64 Years Old	2,502	7	108	29	140	284	2,218
65 and over	2,533	24	112	34	194	364	2,169
Total	29,677	142	1,108	487	2,313	4,050	25,627
2015							
0 – 4 Years Old	2,481	6	77	53	197	333	2,148
5 – 13 Years Old	6,847	29	173	132	412	746	6,101
14 – 17 Years Old	1,685	0	22	21	128	171	1,514
18 – 20 Years Old	1,104	7	51	16	102	176	928
21 – 24 Years Old	971	9	81	11	102	203	768
25 – 34 Years Old	3,909	23	158	64	379	624	3,285
35 – 44 Years Old	6,930	20	202	118	538	878	6,052
45 – 54 Years Old	6,365	21	220	91	521	853	5,512
55 – 64 Years Old	3,159	0	119	34	153	306	2,853
65 and over	3,124	21	119	38	207	385	2,739
Total	36,575	136	1,222	578	2,739	4,675	31,900
2030							
0 – 4 Years Old	3,141	4	81	71	248	404	2,737
5 – 13 Years Old	8,933	30	189	169	520	908	8,025
14 – 17 Years Old	2,021	0	11	19	146	176	1,845
18 – 20 Years Old	1,308	8	55	19	120	202	1,106
21 – 24 Years Old	1,007	9	93	9	108	219	788
25 – 34 Years Old	4,563	24	160	71	436	691	3,872
35 – 44 Years Old	9,187	23	230	154	706	1,113	8,074
45 – 54 Years Old	8,610	22	263	116	699	1,100	7,510
55 – 64 Years Old	4,144	0	131	43	174	348	3,796
65 and over	4,010	16	125	44	228	413	3,597
Total	46,924	136	1,338	715	3,385	5,574	41,350
Mental disability	283	5	19	1	29	54	229
Self-care disability	200	0	5	2	22	29	171
Go-outside-home disability	503	4	34	3	39	80	423

Source: 2000 Census STF-3

though the proportion of approximately 8.5 percent of the population is forecast to remain consistent. As the County's age characteristics continue to diversify, special planning attention should be aimed towards community facility improvements, "live, work, play" environments, linkages and housing to meet the needs of a wide range of ages and lifestyles.

Various housing types will be required to meet the lifestyle characteristics of the area. Master planned developments that incorporate a non-residential component and special considerations to linkages, and mixed uses within the new MPD zone will enable people of all ages and household composition to remain within the County.

Homeless and Housing Needs

A less visible component of special needs populations are the homeless. Based on a 2005 study conducted by Athens/Clarke County, there were 475 persons in need of shelter and related services. Of these, 319 were individuals, and 156 were in families (a total of 59 families), of which 94 were children. It was estimated that 216 of the homeless persons originated in the Athens/Clarke County area. The remainder of the persons requiring assistance were referrals from adjacent counties and jurisdictions, including Oconee County. As there are no homeless shelters in Oconee County, the Oconee County Social Services Department refers the majority of persons requiring housing assistance to non-profit organizations and agencies headquartered in the Athens area. Organizations and facilities in the Northeast Georgia metro area, which accommodate and/or aid homeless persons from Oconee County include, but are not limited to:

- The Salvation Army;
- The Athens Area Homeless Shelter - a transitional housing shelter for women and children;
- Project Safe - a temporary shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, organized and run by a non-profit organization;
- Our Daily Bread - run by the Oconee Street Methodist Church, this service provides meals on-site and distributes food to the needy;
- Almost Home - a facility for homeless families with children and single women, with a capacity for five families and 4 single women at one time;
- The Healing Place - a comprehensive facility for men providing transitional housing, overnight shelter, and alcohol and drug recovery programs;
- Sparrows Nest Mission - provides food service and meals, bath/shower and laundry facilities;
- Nancy Travis House - in conjunction with the Athens Area Homeless Shelter, this facility provides emergency day care to families who are homeless, serving approximately 80 children per year;
- The Interfaith Hospitality Network - a network of 14 Athens area churches and communities of faith providing emergency shelter, meals and support for homeless and nearly homeless families;

- The Ark united Ministry Outreach center – provides financial assistance for acquisition of lodging, utilities and medicine;
- Community Connection of North East Georgia – provides referral services to available facilities, shelters, programs and support services.

■ Available Housing Programs

There are no programs administered by the County, nor is the County involved in coalition with a larger jurisdiction administering CDBG or HOME grant allocations. Residents and developers are eligible to apply for any applicable state and federal program that may be available.

Economic Development

■ Labor Force Overview

This chapter provides an inventory and assessment of Oconee County's economic base, labor force characteristics, and local opportunities and resources for economic development. This data provides a basis for economic needs and goals for the County that, in combination with information from other chapters of this Comprehensive Plan, lead to strategies for the economic well-being of Oconee County and the designation of appropriate future land use plan categories.

Several factors will contribute to Oconee County's positive growth outlook. The Oconee County population is becoming more highly educated, providing skilled workers for high tech companies. Major infrastructure improvements have been made or are planned to the water and sewer system and transportation system. Oconee County has a favorable image with a small town atmosphere conveniently located near the major city of Athens and its university. The lower cost of land in comparison to nearby counties in the Atlanta region makes it an attractive location for new businesses and has kept the housing market reasonably priced. The County has begun to attract a range of light industrial, technological and business parks in addition to the retail, service and commercial uses that serve as the foundation of the County's economic base. Oconee County's industrial and employment areas have excellent access to the State highway system. Combined with an increasingly diverse housing stock providing a wealth of well priced market rate housing, an expanding move-up market and new executive housing opportunities, preserved natural resources, and an abundance of land to accommodate employment growth, the County is well poised to undertake a transformation from a commuter community to a well balanced and fiscally sound community.

A strong and diverse economy is important because it creates jobs, increases income and provides a more stable tax base, and thereby provides a better quality of life. Although the County continues to grow economically, it continues to remain primarily a bedroom community for the Clarke County/Athens, and in part the Atlanta Metro area. Because of its status as a "bedroom community" in the northwestern quadrant of the metro area, and its proximity to major employment centers in Athens/Clarke County, Gwinnett County, and the general Atlanta metropolitan area, residents of Oconee County have unlimited access to employment within the region. Oconee County's business future is closely allied with that of the NEGDRS and Atlanta Metro area, although the County is striving to become a balanced community that offers a range of residential lifestyles, employment options, and recreational opportunities.

For Oconee County to provide for the necessary services to meet the needs of its population, the County will have to continue to diversify its economic base. Nevertheless, Oconee County has served primarily as a bedroom community to Athens-Clarke County over the past decade, and this trend is expected to continue.

Historic Employment

Historically, Oconee County’s farming and agricultural sector has been an important part of the local economy. In 1970, farming accounted for almost 20 percent of all employment in the County and was second only to manufacturing in number of jobs. By 1980, the percentage of manufacturing jobs declined significantly, yet the farming sector continued to increase. During the 1980’s the County began a transformation from an agricultural and manufacturing based economy as other service, FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate), construction and retail oriented employment sectors began to expand to accommodate the dramatic growth in housing. The FIRE sector has kept pace with the County’s population growth over the past 20 years, ranking first in the region in terms of employment growth. By 1990, the Service sector comprised the County’s largest employment sector, representing nearly one-third of all of the business establishments in the County.

Taxable sales are a common barometer used to measure an area’s economic growth, representing revenue retained through local economic activity. During the last half of the 1980’s, Oconee County’s government revenue growth ranked first in the Northeast Georgia region, with property

taxes representing the largest source of revenue in the County, followed by sales tax. In recent years, the County’s economy has advanced in many areas. By 1991, the County’s master economic indicator rank (which measures personal income, sales tax receipts, motor vehicle tags and assessed property values) was 72nd out

of 159 counties and 7th in the region. By 1992, the County ranked 11th in the State and first in the region in adjusted gross personal income, with per capita income significantly increasing throughout the 1990’s.

Table 3.1
Employment by Industry - 1970 to 1990
Oconee County

Category	1970	1980	1990
Farming	18.3%	18.1%	8.1%
Agricultural services	1.0%	1.1%	4.3%
Mining	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Construction	5.7%	8.5%	11.2%
Manufacturing	20.3%	12.2%	11.8%
Transportation, Communication, Public Utilities	1.1%	2.2%	1.8%
Wholesale Trade	2.2%	3.2%	2.5%
Retail Trade	8.5%	8.0%	8.6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5.6%	1.1%	16.4%
Services	16.0%	18.9%	21.8%
Federal Government - Civilian	4.1%	2.6%	1.3%
Federal Government - Military	3.0%	1.8%	1.4%
State and Local Government	13.4%	11.8%	10.2%

Source: Georgia DCA Document #DP66-402-D4A-13219 March 1994

Table 3.2
Employment by Occupation - 1990 and 2000
Oconee County

Category	1990		2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
Executive, Administrative and Managerial	1,275	14.1%	1,950	15.0%
Professional and Technical Support	1,553	17.2%	3,818	29.3%
Technicians and Related Support	334	3.7%	n/a	n/a
Sales	1,139	12.6%	1,576	12.1%
Clerical and Administrative Support	1,307	14.5%	1,766	13.6%
Private Household Services	28	0.3%	n/a	n/a
Protective Services	114	1.3%	n/a	n/a
Service Occupations	642	7.1%	1,241	9.5%
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	342	3.8%	135	1.0%
Precision Production, Craft and Repair	1,111	12.3%	826	6.3%
Machine Operators, Assemblers & Inspectors	573	6.4%	1,141	8.8%
Transportation and Materials Moving	366	4.1%	577	4.4%
Handlers, Equipment Cleaners, Helpers & Laborers	228	2.5%	n/a	n/a
Total	9,012	100.0%	13,030	100.0%

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Economic Analysis

Occupations

Table 3.2 provides a breakdown of the resident labor force by occupation in 1990 and 2000. In both 1990 and 2000, the top three sectors of employed persons residing in the County were Professional and Technical Support; Executive, Administrative, Managerial; and Clerical, and Administrative Support. These top three occupations captured 45.9 percent of the total residential occupations in the County. In 2000, these three occupational categories increased their capture rate to 57.8 percent of the occupational share. This is explained largely by the large number of persons employed by the University of Georgia who reside in Oconee County, and the above average educational attainment of County residents.

Category	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total Employed Civilian Population	13,054	64	567	204	1,139	1,974	11,081
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	220	1	8	5	11	25	195
Construction	855	10	82	7	59	158	697
Manufacturing	1,397	3	71	32	147	253	1,144
Wholesale Trade	534	0	24	5	27	56	478
Retail Trade	1,529	14	97	20	123	254	1,275
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	408	3	13	10	12	38	370
Information	248	0	18	5	28	51	197
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	747	0	17	13	64	94	653
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	1,152	13	35	12	81	141	1,011
Educational, health and social services	4,295	19	126	72	402	619	3,676
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	628	0	26	3	63	92	536
Other Services	465	1	21	6	34	62	403
Public Administration	576	0	29	14	88	131	445

Source: 2000 Census, STF-3
 Note: Universe includes employed persons residing in Oconee County

Table 3.3 presents occupation of residents by jurisdiction within the County. In 2000, the unincorporated area contained 82 percent of the employed workforce population in the County. The proportions of residents employed in particular industries within the unincorporated and incorporated areas varies, with the unincorporated area having a slightly higher representation in the F.I.R.E.; Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative and Waste Management Services; Education, Health and Social Services; Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities; Other Services; and Wholesale Trade sectors. Employment in the Agricultural sector is also slightly higher in the unincorporated areas, as would be expected due to remaining farming and other agricultural pursuits outside of the city boundaries. Within the incorporated areas, there appears to be a higher representation of residents in service and manual labor industries, which typically may require less educational attainment, including Manufacturing; Retail; and Construction sectors. However, a larger proportion of residents within the incorporated area are employed in the Public Administration sector, possibly reflecting the concentration of City and County employees residing in Watkinsville where the administrative offices are located. It is interesting to note that proportionately, there is a high representation of residents employed in white collar type occupations in North High Shoals, particularly the Education/Health sector, F.I.R.E. sector, and Public Administration. Conversely, it also has the highest representation of residents em-

ployed in the Manufacturing sector, although these may be managerial positions and not physical labor positions.

■ Employment Forecasts

For employment forecasts, data and projections prepared by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs are used. Employment opportunities within the County as a whole increased 143 percent between 1980 and 2005. While growth to 2030 is anticipated to reflect an increase of only 59 percent, this represents a numerical increase equal to the past 25 years. Between 2005 and 2030, 8,600 new jobs will be added countywide.

Employment opportunities in the County are anticipated to almost double between 2000 and the 2030 horizon, with the majority of growth occurring in the unincorporated area. The different capture rates for the unincorporated area of the County reflect the continuation of an active housing market in these portions of the County, the larger average size of households moving into the County outside of the cities, and the slight but notable propensity for non-residential development to occur in one or more of the cities.

Table 3.4						
Employment Projections - 1990 to 2030						
Oconee County and Cities						
	1990	2000	2005	2010	2020	2030
Bishop	65	64	66	72	81	93
Bogart	489	567	594	641	730	830
North High Shoals	153	204	219	241	280	327
Watkinsville	824	1,139	1,231	1,352	1,598	1,851
Unincorporated	7,481	11,080	12,406	13,923	16,955	19,993
Oconee County Total	9,012	13,054	14,516	16,229	19,644	23,094

Source: Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs, Data Views, 2006.

The unincorporated portion of the County had the greatest proportion of county-wide employment in 1980, which grew to over 85 percent by 2005. By 2030, the proportion in the unincorporated area is anticipated to increase to 87 percent, capturing over 88 percent of number of new jobs created in the County between 2005 and 2030. The City of Bishop, which has experienced a loss in employment opportunities since 1980, is expected to regain its 1980 employment level by 2025 and continue to grow. The City of Bogart is forecast to add more employment opportunities (236) than new residents (212) between 2005 and 2030, reflecting a shift in growth emphasis to non-residential uses in the City. Like the other cities, North High Shoals is anticipated to expand its employment base to a greater extent than over the past 25 years, adding about 110 new jobs between 2005 and 2030 as compared to almost 90 over the past 25 years. The City of Watkinsville is expected to continue to show robust employment growth. Between 1980 and 2005, the City doubled its employment base by 600 jobs. This trend is anticipated to continue in the coming years with the addition of approximately 620 new jobs.

■ Employment Trends

Labor Force Participation

In 2000, there were 19,129 persons of employment age in the County. Statistically, 70.8 percent participated in the civilian labor force, with 28.9 percent not participating in the civilian labor force, and less than 1 percent in the armed forces. Approximately 25 percent of the potential workforce age population who did not participate in the labor force resided in the unincorporated area, with 4 percent of the potential labor force not participating in the labor force residing in the incorporated areas. Labor force participation in the unincorporated county was 70.6 percent of its potential workforce population, comparable to the county-wide rate, with the rate in the incorporated areas slightly higher at 72.1 percent of its total potential workforce. This might reflect the slightly higher proportion of families with children residing in the unincorporated area, where one of the spouses may remain out of the workforce during child rearing years. In 2000, over 96 percent of the total county civilian labor force was employed. This rate has increased as of 2005 to 3.1 percent as described in the following analysis. Approximately 85 percent of the civilian labor force resided in the unincorporated area. The labor force participation rate in the unincorporated area was 96 percent, comparable to the countywide percentage, whereas, the participation rate in the incorporated area was slightly higher at 98 percent. Overall, males had a higher participation rate than females, with 78.3 percent of the male population in the labor force as compared 63.7 percent of the female population. A slightly higher proportion of females participated in the labor force in the incorporated areas, at 65.9 percent as compared to 63.4 percent in the unincorporated areas.

	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total:	19,129	107	830	278	1,578	2,793	16,336
In Civilian Labor Force	13,551	64	582	205	1,163	2,014	11,537
Employed	13,054	64	567	204	1,139	1,974	11,080
Unemployed	497	0	15	1	24	40	457
In Armed Forces	45	0	10	0	0	10	35
Not in labor force	5,533	43	238	73	415	769	4,764
Male:	9,304	51	379	142	701	1,273	8,031
In Civilian Labor Force	7,288	45	288	113	567	1,013	6,275
Employed	7,109	45	288	112	555	1,000	6,109
Unemployed	179	0	0	1	12	13	166
Not in labor force	1,977	0	81	29	134	244	1,733
Female:	9,825	56	451	136	877	1,520	8,305
In Civilian Labor Force	6,263	19	294	92	596	1,001	5,262
Employed	5,945	19	279	92	584	974	4,971
Unemployed	318	0	15	0	12	27	291
Not in Labor Force	3,556	37	157	44	281	519	3,037

Source: 2000 Census STF 3

Employment Rates

Since 1999, Oconee County has experienced a low rate of unemployment, particularly in comparison to other jurisdictions within its region. Following national trends, this low rate has risen slightly each year to 3.1 percent in 2005. Following national trends the employment rate decreased in the 2003 estimates, and began rising again in 2004. Indications are that this will continue for the near future. Oconee accounts for 10 percent of the region’s work force and its employed persons. Unemployed persons amount to only 5 percent of the region’s unemployed.

Year	Unemployment Rate
1999	1.5%
2000	1.4%
2001	1.7%
2002	2.1%
2003	1.9%
2004	2.6%
2005	3.1%

Source: 2006 Georgia County Guide

In 2003, there were potentially 14,554 persons over 16 that were employable. Of this, total 14,275 were actually employed. The unemployment rate was very low at 1.9 percent. In terms of Oconee County’s 2003 labor force participation in comparison to its neighbors in the Northeast Georgia region; it had the lowest unemployment rate, followed by Clarke County at 3.1 percent.

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Oconee	14,554	14,275	279	1.9%
Clarke	51,327	49,758	1,569	3.1%
Barrow	25,035	23,754	1,281	5.1%
Morgan	8,117	7,779	338	4.2%
Greene	5,821	5,397	424	7.3%
Walton	32,744	31,372	1,372	4.2%
Oglethorpe	6,915	6,646	269	3.9%
Regional Totals	144,513	138,981	5,532	

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

All the other surrounding counties reported twice the unemployment rate of Oconee County. In 2004, the unemployment rates had increased in the County, up to 2.6 percent. However, the unemployment rate in the County still remained lower

than all of the surrounding counties, followed by Oglethorpe and Clarke counties reporting 3.5 percent and 3.6 percent unemployment respectively.

Compensation

The sources of personal income are indicators of how a community receives its income. Table 3.8A compares sources of income for the County, the cities, the state and the nation in 2000.

As in the state and nation, Oconee County residents receive the majority of their personal income through Wages and Salaries, although the county receives a slightly higher proportion in wages and salaries than both, at 84.7 percent as compared to 81.3 percent statewide, and 77.7 percent nationally. As the second largest source of personal income for both the county and state, the county receives a larger proportion of personal income from Interest, Dividends and Rents, at 43.2 percent compared to 28.8 percent for the state and 35.9 percent nationally. The third largest source of personal income, Social Security Payments, is lower at the county level than the state and nation, at 19.8 percent as compared to 21.9 percent for the state and 25.7 percent nationally. It is anticipated that social security payments might increase proportionally in the county, corresponding to the aging of the population in the future as discussed in the Population in

chapter. However, as the county is primarily a middle-aged community, and is forecast to remain as such, it is likely that this form of income will remain lower at the county level in comparison to the state and nation. At the county level, roughly 15 percent of the population receives retirement income and self-employment income. The County's proportion of self-employment income is significantly higher

Table 3.8A
Source of Personal Income - 2000
Nation, State, Oconee County and Cities

Income	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinsville	State	Nation
Total:	9,041	46	430	129	843	3,007,678	105,539,122
With wage or salary income	7,657	36	334	112	698	2,445,262	82,024,820
With self-employment income	1,372	4	50	19	85	328,063	12,556,526
With interest, dividends, net rental income	3,903	13	126	56	394	866,894	37,860,638
With Social Security income	1,787	15	84	24	189	658,862	27,084,417
With Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	300	6	23	1	18	134,980	4,615,885
With public assistance income	192	2	4	1	21	87,403	3,629,732
With retirement income	1,380	9	56	15	151	433,034	17,659,058
With other types of income	910	5	41	13	98	373,733	13,888,738
Source: U.S. Census 2000, STF-3							

than both the state and the nation, with retirement income higher than the state and lower than the nation.

Although the following table 3.8 does not show the weekly salary of University employees, it does provide an idea of the range of salary differentials across the region and within the goods producing and service sectors of the region's economy. Oconee County's average private sector wage of \$520 per week is slightly greater than the region's \$517 per week; yet it is almost 15 percent less than Clarke County's average private sector salary of \$587 per week.

A compensation study was conducted as part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Oconee County, 2005. This analysis looked at the relationship between employee payroll and company revenues. This study showed that the region tends to outpace the state in terms of productivity and income. When the County is analyzed or compared to the state, it is positive in terms of retail trade and with respect to productivity in the manufacturing sector, but not income levels in the same sector. The County lags in every other category. However, when compared to the region, the County is a solid performer. This is true with respect to manufacturing, retail trade, and professional, science and technical. Although it outpaces the region in the category of real estate productivity, it simply holds its own with respect to the income ratio.

**Table 3.8
Labor Force Wages - 2003
Oconee County**

Area Weekly Wages	Oconee	Clarke	Barrow	Greene	Morgan	Walton	Oglethorpe
Agriculture	739	498		412	459	562	435
Mining	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	449
Utilities	n/a	1,295	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction	540	565	581	553	435	614	459
Manufacturing	602	700	638	498	621	651	441
Wholesale trade	636	692	697	657	726	675	334
Retail Trade	350	387	454	346	362	438	434
Transportation/Warehousing	409	594	593	485	547	687	n/a
Information	489	601	570	361	818	848	n/a
Finance and Insurance	882	765	702	523	907	696	630
Real Estate, Rent, Lease	442	458	358	291	413	383	n/a
Professional, Tech, Scientific	466	729	595	673	540	638	428
Management	0	1,019	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,330	n/a
Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt.	462	355	515	411	313	450	253
Educational Services	462	629	258	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Health Care/Social Services	450	742	518	425	293	491	401
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	311	599	444	403	n/a	290	n/a
Accommodations, Food Services	163	203	210	381	190	195	113
Public Administration	422	331	366	506	335	381	513
Industry Not Assigned	605	527	388	521	523	530	n/a
Total Private Sector	489	540	517	467	490	529	429
Total Government	483	724	557	523	504	587	478
Federal Government	712	983	796	652	597	624	650
State Government	520	n/a	470	527	547	611	535
Local Government	460	581	554	515	492	581	467
All Industries	488	593	525	478	493	541	445

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

■ Economic Base

Employment by Industry

Utilizing data obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Employment, Wages, and the University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center, during the period from 1992 to 2002, employment increased by 3,215 or 128.3 percent. In comparison, according to the Bureau of Labor, national employment increased by only 10.3 percent between 1997 and 2006, from 124,361,000 to 137,147,000. Table G-1 provides a general comparison of the distribution of employees by occupation in the County, the Northeast Georgia Region, and the State.

**Table 3.9A
% Total Employees - 2000
Oconee County, Region and State**

	Total Employees	Management, Professional & Related	Services	Sales and Office	Farming and Fishing	Construction, Extraction, Maintenance	Production, Transportation & Material Moving
Oconee County	13,054	44.2%	9.7%	25.6%	1.0%	8.7%	10.7%
NEGRDC Region	200,659	28.5%	13.7%	25.6%	0.8%	12.6%	18.6%
Georgia	3,839,756	32.7%	13.4%	26.8%	0.6%	10.8%	15.7%
Nation	129,721,512	33.6%	14.9%	26.7%	0.7%	9.4%	14.6%

Source: NEGRDC Comprehensive Plan, U.S. Census 2000

In comparison to the nation, state and the region, employment in the County is heavily concentrated in the Management, Professional and Related sectors, at 44.2 percent as compared to 28.5 percent, 32.7 percent and 33.6 percent, in the region, state, and nation respectively. In contrast, Service sector employment is lower than in the nation, region and state, at 9.7 percent as compared to 14.9, 13.7 and 13.4 percent respectively. Although the construction industry has grown in the County to 8.7 percent, and is anticipated to continue, it is lower than the region at 12.6 percent, and state at 10.8 percent, yet closer to the nation at 9.4 percent. The heavy concentration in the professional sectors is further evidenced in the lower rate of employment in the Production, Transportation and Material Moving sectors, at 10.7 percent as compared to 18.6 percent in the region, 15.7 percent at the state, and 14.6 percent in the nation.

There has been remarkable growth in the Retail Trade, Transportation, Utilities, Professional, and Business Services sectors over the last ten-year period. As mentioned, County economics follow trends in the national economy. Transportation and Utilities sectors employed the most workers, followed by Professional and Business Services, and the Education and Health Services sectors in 2002. The Education and Health Services, Construction, Financial, Insurance and Real Estate and Leisure and Hospitality sectors also experienced considerable growth. Though quite small now, the Information sector bears watching. Together all sectors underscore the influx of middle income well educated families into the area.

A component of the shift-share analysis developed in the Economic Development Plan is called competitive share. In Oconee County, the top three sectors in competitive share were TCU, Professional and Business Services, and Education and Health Services sector. This calculation indicates that Oconee County is competitive in securing additional employment. A positive competitive share component also indicates that the County has a productive advantage. This advantage could be due to local firms having superior technology, management or market access,

**Table 3.9
Employment by Industry - 2005 to 2030
Oconee County**

Category	2005	%	2010	%	2020	%	2030	%
Total Employed Civilian Population	14,516	100.0%	16,229	100.0%	19,644	100.0%	23,094	100.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	179	1.2%	138	0.8%	55	0.3%	28	0.1%
Construction	971	6.7%	1,087	6.7%	1,318	6.7%	1,550	6.7%
Manufacturing	1,411	9.7%	1,425	8.8%	1,453	7.4%	1,481	6.4%
Wholesale Trade	597	4.1%	661	4.1%	787	4.0%	914	4.0%
Retail Trade	414	2.9%	421	2.6%	433	2.2%	446	1.9%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	1,727	11.9%	1,925	11.9%	2,320	11.8%	2,716	11.8%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	857	5.9%	967	6.0%	1,187	6.0%	1,407	6.1%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	1,396	9.2%	1,640	10.1%	2,128	10.8%	2,616	11.3%
Educational, health and social services	5,058	34.8%	5,822	35.9%	7,348	37.4%	8,875	38.4%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	726	5.0%	825	5.1%	1,021	5.2%	1,218	5.3%
Other Services	540	3.7%	614	3.8%	763	3.9%	912	3.9%
Public Administration	640	4.4%	704	4.3%	831	4.2%	959	4.2%

Source: Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs, *Data Views*, 2006.

or the local labor force having higher productivity and/or lower wages. By examining the competitive share components for each industry, the development official

can easily identify which local industries have a competitive share component, or which industries have competitive advantages over other counties and regions.

Over the next 25 years, Oconee County will see dramatic changes in its employment base, not only in the total number but also in the type of jobs that will be available. Projected labor force data shown in Table 3.7 shows a growing labor force for Oconee County to 2030. Employment projections are broken down by industry employment group and the percent for each category is shown. The information reveals several major “themes” in past and future trends in employment. By the 2005 baseline, agricultural employment in the County had dropped to less than one-half of its 1980 level, and represented only 1 percent of all employment in the County. By 2030, agricultural employment is anticipated to all but vanish from Oconee County.

At the other end of the spectrum, employment in the services sectors, (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate; Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management services; Educational, Health and Social Services; Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food services; and Other services) has grown from an equivalent proportion to the Industry categories in 1980 (Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, and Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities) to become the dominant employment base in the County in 2005 at almost 60 percent of all of the jobs. This dominance will continue and increase somewhat over the next 25 years, adding almost 6,500 total jobs to the County’s economy. Conversely, the number of jobs in the Industry categories will continue to increase, particularly in Wholesale Trade, but also have a lessening influence on local economic opportunities.

The continuing increases of the past in the number of Construction, Retail and Public Administration jobs are also expected to continue in the future. These three employment groups, while maintaining their importance to the Oconee County economy by adding more jobs, are expected roughly to maintain their current “share” of the total County employment.

Table 3.10
Labor Force by Location of Employment - 2000
Oconee County and Cities

Category	Oconee County	Bishop	Bogart	North High Shoals	Watkinville	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Total population	26,225	146	1,049	439	2,097	3,731	22,494
Worked in State of residence	12,791	62	572	204	1,120	1,958	10,833
Worked in county of residence	3,630	9	36	9	190	244	3,386
Worked outside of county of residence	9,161	53	536	195	930	1,714	7,447
Worked outside of state of residence	112	0	0	0	0	0	112

Source: DataViews, 2000 Census STF-3

Employment growth in Oconee County has been and will continue to be heavily influenced by population growth. Many businesses have moved to the County that are “local serving” in nature, providing convenience shopping goods, restaurants and recreation, personal and professional services, attracted by the disposable income that new housing represents. Concomitantly, population growth means construction of new houses, and education of more children, which in turn generates activity in real estate sales, building supplies, financing, insurance and such services as religious institutions and medical services.

While this type of employment is traditionally called “non-basic” in terms that it tends to circulate money between spenders and employees and not bring new money into the economy, this may not be entirely the case in Oconee County. In 2000, for instance, the Census reported that 28 percent of the workers who lived in Oconee County actually worked in the County. The other 72 percent worked outside the County, suggesting a potential “paycheck transfer” of money into the County’s economy. Most notably, almost 62 percent worked in Athens-Clarke County. This effect may continue under the forecasts of this Comprehensive Plan. While both housing and employment growth will continue, the number of jobs in the County per household will actually decrease slightly from 1.3 to 1.2 between 2005 and 2030.

Employment and Commuting Patterns

A strong and diverse economy is important because it creates jobs, increases income and provides a more stable tax base, and thereby provides a better quality of life. Although the County continues to grow economically, it continues to remain primarily a bedroom community for the Athens-Clarke County based on analyses of commuting patterns. Table 3.11 identifies the number of persons who commuted outside of the County, and the State, for employment. As of 2000, just over 99 percent of the workforce in the County remained within the State. According to the data, the number of persons living and working within Oconee County was 28.1 percent of employed residents of the County. Although additional employment opportunities have been added to the employment base within the County, it is likely that a similar proportion of commuters outside of the County exist as of 2005.

As shown in Table 3.11, the majority of commuters from Oconee County are commuting to Clarke County. A very small percentage of commuters from Oconee County are commuting to other surrounding counties. Over 28 percent of commuters to Oconee County come from Clarke County. Very few other county residents commute to Oconee County. The net result is that Oconee County experienced in 2000 a net commute outflow of 5,946 employees.

■ Economic Trends

An approach focused almost exclusively on getting more jobs does little to help residents earn higher incomes and enjoy a better quality of life. The central focus of economic development in Oconee County is to boost incomes and create better jobs for all residents. To do this, the metric of success is to produce income growth.

Shifting the goal from getting big to getting prosperous requires shifting the means from trying to get cheap to getting better. Past governmental efforts provided physical infrastructure for factories, gap financing for big industrial projects and financial and tax incentives to cut the cost for industry. General business costs were kept as low as possible, even if it meant investing less in economic fundamentals like infrastructure and education and scrimping

Destination	Count
Oconee Co. GA	3,630
Barrow Co. GA	358
Clarke Co. GA	6,696
DeKalb Co. GA	135
Fulton Co. GA	220
Gwinnett Co. GA	349
Greene Co. GA	136
Jackson Co. GA	192
Morgan Co. GA	185
Walton Co. GA	241
Other Counties	761
Total Employed	12,903
Source: 2000 Census	

on programs like unemployment insurance. Rather than simply trying to be a less expensive place in which to do business, the County should focus on being a better place. This means boosting skills and ensuring a high quality of life that will be attractive to knowledge-based workers.

Several different analyses were conducted as part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan including a Compensation Analyses, Shift-Share Analysis and a Cluster Analysis to determine the most productive focus for future economic development.

Cluster analysis refers to a group of industries that are linked by common product markets, labor pools, knowledge base, similar technologies, supplier chains, specialized services, networks, and research and development or other economic ties. Clusters are determined with the use of local labor market information, anecdotal information and employer feedback. By aggregating industries into clusters, economic development professionals can develop the appropriate cross training needs for multiple firms with similar skill needs and help derive a market based approach to workforce development. This analysis suggests that at least four target clusters and emerging clusters should be pursued by Oconee County in its economic development efforts.

Advanced Materials and Diversified Manufacturing.

This analysis suggests that despite a national decline in manufacturing employment, this sector provided significant wages for many citizens of Oconee and its surrounding counties. In this cluster would be a host of sub-clusters such as electronics, electrical equipment, appliances, and components, metals and metal fabrication, printing and machinery.

Food Production/Processing Technologies

Another cluster, given the proximity to the University of Georgia's School of Agriculture and the School of Agricultural Engineering, would be focused on the growing of food, as well as landscaping materials (nurseries), and the implements and structures that are pertinent to farming, refrigerated warehouses and food production/processing technologies.

Building and Construction Technologies

This includes industries directly involved in the construction of housing, roadways and other physical structures. It addresses buildings and construction technologies and includes those retail and wholesale establishments catering to the industry. Average wages in this cluster are eleven percent higher than other county or regional wages, particularly for those without a high school education.

Knowledge Intensive Emerging Industries

A fourth cluster is suggested by the prominence of the information, professional, scientific, technical, and educational services sub-clusters. This cluster captures the knowledge intensive aspects of emerging industries such as information and telecommunications technologies and services, bio-science technologies, equipment and materials. It also gives evidence of the incredible array of research that goes on in the University laboratories operated by and or peopled by Oconee residents. One aim of this cluster is to explore ways to transfer that research and in-

tellectual property into an applied environment that conceivably resulted in marketable products and services.

Ambulatory Health Care Services

Over the past few years, this cluster has emerged in Oconee County. Employment in this sector has jumped from 2.7 percent of county employment in 1999 to 10.3 percent in 2002, when it became a new industry cluster. Ambulatory care health services are also known as outpatient care. The services of ambulatory care centers hospital outpatient departments, physicians’ offices and home health care services fall in this cluster.

Tourism

Oconee County should focus on developing their position in the tourism market as an Arts/Studio Community specializing in day-trip visitations that will include specialty and craft shopping with many opportunities for lunch and dinner. The two most prominent opportunities are Restaurant Tourism and Studio Art Tourism. Both of these specialty visitor opportunities have become established and recognized in the region. However, the full potential of these two unique services are only moderately supported and marketed by the current operating tourism program.

Table 3.12 is a list of the ten largest employers in the County, and within the region. The largest employer in the County is the Oconee County School System. The majority of the employees are Government, Service or Retail based. Within the region (primarily Clarke County), the sectors include education, medical and agricultural products.

As shown in Table 3.12, as of 2006, all but one of the major employers in the County employed less than 200 persons. There are four establishments with between 100 and 250 employees, with none actually exceeding 200 employees. This indicates that larger employment ventures, typically retail or manufacturing jobs, may actually be decreasing in the County from those in existence in 2000, as there were 11 establishments with between 100 and 249 employees in 2000.

Table 3.13 identifies the number of establishments, by industry, by the number of employees. There were no establishments with more than 500 employees in 2000. As of 2006, the Oconee County School System employs over 700 persons, although in 2000 it had not reached the 250-employee threshold. The largest employer in 2000, with over 250 employees, was a retail trade establishment. As in 2006, Kroger, a major retail food chain, employs less than 250 employees, and is the second largest employer in the County. It appears that the greatest number of employment opportunities in the County was small businesses, particularly those

Table 3.12 Largest Employers Oconee County	
Company Name	# Employees
Oconee County School System	770
Kroger	200
Oconee County Government	160
General Cable	145
Benson's, Inc.	120
Family Life Enrichment Centers	110
LOWE'S	95
Oconee State Bank	90
The Home Depot.	80
Vend, Inc.	80
Publix	75
Ameripride, Inc.	70
Power Products	50
Ikon	45
Setzer & Sons of Georgia, Inc.	40
Engineere Fabrication, Inc.	26
Industrial Mechanical, Inc.	24
Ru-Wood Company	20
Source: Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 2006	

with four or less employees, followed by ventures with 5 to 9 employees. These establishments are the backbone of the County and will continue to retain their importance in the economy as the County seeks new business ventures.

Important New Developments

There are several distinct developmental nodes and associated corridors located within Oconee County. Perhaps the most dynamic area is the SR 316/Loop 10 (Athens Bypass) area. This area consists of the SR 316 interchange at the Athens

Table 3.13
Number of Establishments by Employment Size
Oconee County

Industry	Total	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 19	20-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999
Total	714	442	123	71	55	11	11	1	0
Forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture support	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mining	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Utilities	5	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	132	96	21	12	3	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing	30	7	7	4	8	2	2	0	0
Wholesale trade	38	26	4	3	5	0	0	0	0
Retail trade	69	33	15	9	8	1	2	1	0
Transportation & warehousing	15	11	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
Information	13	9	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
Finance & insurance	40	26	8	2	3	1	0	0	0
Real estate & rental & leasing	35	31	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Professional, scientific & technical services	93	67	12	10	3	0	1	0	0
Management of companies & enterprises	4	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation services	41	27	6	5	2	0	1	0	0
Educational services	15	8	4	1	1	0	1	0	0
Health care and social assistance	60	26	13	7	9	4	1	0	0
Arts, entertainment & recreation	12	9	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
Accommodation & food services	28	11	6	3	5	1	2	0	0
Other services (except public administration)	77	48	20	3	4	1	1	0	0
Unclassified establishments	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: 2000 Census, STF-3

Bypass and extends northeast along Epps Bridge Parkway to the Oconee County/Clarke County line and west along SR 316 to the Oconee Connector. Inside the Loop, the area has quickly developed predominately with retail, restaurants and some professional offices. Just outside the Loop, several large scale two and three story Class A office developments have been completed in the past several years. There are also several large state and federally funded transportation projects planned for this node over the next 10 years. These will improve circulation and provide access to additional land that is expected to continue the foregoing development trends in this area.

Another retail, office and institutional corridor exists in and around the Butler’s Crossing area. This node includes the SR 53/Mars Hill Road intersection and extends:

- North on Mars Hill Road to Cliff Dawson Road;
- East on Hog Mountain Road past Stonebridge Parkway;
- South along SR 53 to US 441 and Watkinsville; and
- West along SR 53 past Union Church Road.

This area is rapidly developing with retail, restaurants, professional offices, schools and the Gainesville College campus. This node is in close proximity to large existing residential developments and includes plans for several mixed-use planned unit developments (PUDs) and retirement communities. Large-scale transportation improvements are also planned for this area.

Finally, the US 78 highway corridor and the SR 53 corridor are beginning to receive several large scale mixed use planned developments, which will include high-end residential, commercial, recreation and office uses.

Unique Economic Situations

Oconee County is strategically located adjacent to the University of Georgia and close to the Metro Atlanta area. The presence of Oconee's excellent public school system, UGA, Athens Tech, Gainesville College and the proximity to Georgia Tech, Emory College, Gwinnett Tech and an emerging Bio-tech and IT industry, place it in an excellent and unique position as fertile ground for new and expanding business in these and other related fields. Added to this mix are a high quality of life, low crime, relatively low taxes and excellent recreational and cultural opportunities within an unspoiled environment. There also are two large undeveloped "Industrial and Technology/Business" zoned tracts totaling approximately 1,000 contiguous acres located in northwestern Oconee County. These tracts have direct access via the existing and planned interchanges at SR 316 and US 78. Both tracts have redundant and ample sources of water service, wastewater service, natural gas and electric power as well as close proximity to rail service. These tracts have been actively marketed jointly by the State Department of Economic Development and the local governments and educational institutions. There has been significant international interest in these tracts. There are also ongoing plans to begin developing a high quality commercial park at this location. It appears quite likely that this area is destined for very significant economic development in the near future. Such development would surely act as a catalyst for housing, retail, office and institutional growth in northwestern Oconee County.

■ **Economic Resources**

Development Agencies

Effective economic development programs are a group effort, involving not only local government staff but also the cooperation of and resources available from other potential partners that have programs underway at various levels. The Chamber of Commerce, the Development Authority, county officials, and the School Board are all dedicated to the smooth and timely selection of a location for a facility. A number of existing office, business and industrial sites are available. In addition, the Development Authority can assist in the acquisition of other sites and help arrange financing and construction.

In the Spring of 2004, the Oconee County Board of Commissioners, along with support from the Oconee County Board of Education, the Oconee County Industrial Development Authority and the Oconee County Chamber of Commerce, solicited proposals from qualified firms and individuals for a Comprehensive Economic

Development Plan. The Economic Development Plan sets forth strategies addressing: workforce and educational institutions, land use and business development, cluster and target industry potential industrial park strategies, tourism strategies; the establishment of an incentives program; and sets forth an implementation plan.

Oconee County has created an economic development department with staff that is responsible for promoting economic development. In December 1994, a Joint Economic Development Agency was established at the state level to capitalize on Georgia's Business and Expansion Act, which divides counties into three tiers based on their current economic status. Jackson, Madison, Athens-Clarke, Oconee, Walton, Morgan and Oglethorpe counties joined to create a "Tier Two" development agency. Companies creating more than 25 jobs in a Tier Two county may receive a \$1,500 tax credit.

The Joint Economic Development Agency has since held the primary role of financing targeted development projects through the issuance of revenue bonds. The Development Authority, working in tandem with the County's Economic Development Department is the central point of contact for businesses looking to expand or locate operations in Oconee County and its cities. The office maintains a database of available buildings and sites, tracks business financing programs and assists entrepreneurs in starting businesses throughout the county. Additionally, it is responsible for assisting and building relationships with existing businesses and industries. The Development Authority provides services designed to assist these businesses with every facet of the location or expansion process. Services provided include:

- Confidential site selection services for commercial and industrial;
- Program Financing and Incentives;
- Demographic and Consumer Information.

Community leaders have ensured a competitive tax structure conducive to business, including a 40% Freeport Tax Exemption on all categories of inventory. Property taxes and other taxes affecting business are among the most attractive in Georgia.

Oconee County Chamber of Commerce

The Oconee County Chamber of commerce was established in 1975. The Oconee County Chamber of Commerce holds memberships in the following organizations: Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Economic Development Association and the Georgia Agribusiness Council. Information and applicable benefits as a result of the Chamber's membership in these organizations is made available to the Oconee County Chamber Membership accordingly. The chamber participates in other local, state and national associations as the executive board deems appropriate.

The Oconee County Chamber of Commerce provides its membership with opportunities to network with fellow members and establish business and political contacts. Chamber members are also kept abreast of state legislative issues that affect local business. Members ultimately become a part of a "customer referral

service” for future business activities. Staff members of the Oconee County Chamber coordinate various seminars and workshops open to the membership. These seminars provide members insight into areas such as advertising, business management, communication skills, customer service, financial management, human resources, marketing and promotional work.

The Chamber of Commerce is composed of five permanent committees: 1) Agribusiness; 2) Fall Festival; 3) Economic Development and Business Development; 4) Member Services; and 5) Education. There are also 11 subcommittees to organize annual events and festivals. Activities of the Chamber of Commerce include:

- Monthly Coffees/Business After Hours - Monthly Chamber Meetings are hosted by Chamber members at their place of business.
- Annual Meeting - A special recognition event to honor special people and projects, and to award Sharon Johnson Volunteer of the Year, Chamber Volunteer of the Year, Larry Risse Agribusiness Person of the Year, and the James McClain Leadership Award.
- Annual Business Expo - An opportunity to display your business products and services to the trade population.
- Membership Directory & Website Listing - A complete listing of members and chamber services.
- Mailing Labels - Available to members at a nominal fee.
- Oconee County Maps - Up-to-date maps of Oconee County.
- Business/Industry Seminars - Selected seminars for business and industry based on their need and membership feedback, sponsored by the Economic Development Committee.
- Annual Fall Festival and Scarecrow Road Race - The largest single event in Oconee County featuring original arts and crafts, food, entertainment, children's events and a road race.
- Farm/City Tour - An opportunity to view agriculture and business working together for a better economy.
- Education Foundation of Oconee County, Inc - The support of public and private education in the county through the further enhancement of existing educational efforts. Supports Education Foundation Mini-Grants and Raffle.
- Public Forums - The opportunity to hear from political candidates and the discussion of public issues which enlighten voters and citizens in the trade area sponsored by the economic development committee.
- Bi-Monthly Newsletter - An opportunity to stay up-to-date on current and future Chamber activities and networking opportunities among Chamber membership.
- Youth Leadership Oconee - Tenth and eleventh grade students who live in the county or attend school in the county have an opportunity to enhance their leadership skills through involved learning experiences.
- STAR - Student Teacher Award Recognition of the outstanding student and teacher from Oconee County High School, North Oconee High School, Athens

Academy, Westminster Christian Academy and Prince Avenue Christian School.

- Teacher of the Year - Further recognition of the teachers from each of the nine public schools.
- Third Grade Ag-Day - An opportunity for students to learn more about agriculture and its role in the regional economy. Sponsored by the Agribusiness Committee.
- Partners In Education - Over seventy businesses who are “Partners” with the schools in the area. Supported by the Education Committee.
- Annual Membership Appreciation Day - An opportunity to begin the summer in a relaxed atmosphere for members.
- Leadership Oconee - Adult leadership project for persons interested in learning more about Oconee County and sharpening their leadership.
- Ambassador Program - A mentoring program for new members, as well as outreach to existing members as a means to increase member retention and improve member participation in events and committees.
- Lunch & Learn Seminars - Bi-monthly seminars during lunch about topics important in today's business. Recent Lunch & Learn Seminars have included topics such as Organization in the Workplace, Marketing 101 and Stress Reduction.
- Mentoring Program - Pairing local business people with students in the Oconee County school system to explore educational opportunities and leadership advice.
- Ribbon Cuttings/Groundbreakings - Support to announce new businesses and/or new additions to existing businesses.
- Junior Board - A Board of local high school students created to provide a young perspective in Chamber work and to educate the students on the importance of the Chamber in the community.
- AM Exchange - Bi-Monthly program to network among business peers.

The Oconee County Chamber's web page at www.oconeechamber.org is an interactive site that is promoted throughout the county, state, and nation. The site provides a member with a presence on the worldwide web as members are listed alphabetically and categorically.

Resources – Programs and Tools

University of Georgia Small Business Center

The University of Georgia Small Business Center provides management consulting for entrepreneurs. Also, the Center conducts marketing analyses and surveys designed to evaluate a community's economic development potential.

Quick Start

The Quick Start Training Program provides high quality, tailored training at no cost to area business. Both manufacturing training and service training are avail-

able to manufacturing operations, warehouse and distribution centers, national and international corporate headquarters, information technologies and customer service operations. Program training is performed at the employer's facility or at other arranged locations. The program includes a training needs analysis, a detailed training program, high quality training and expert training staff. Quick Start training covers a broad spectrum of areas, including: company orientation, core manufacturing skills, equipment operation, productivity enhancement techniques, world-class manufacturing, total quality management, and other areas.

The Quick Start site available to businesses and employees of Oconee County is through the Athens Area Technical Institute. Training is customized to the individual company at no cost. When a company selects a plant site in Oconee County, the Director of Quick Start and the State Training Coordinator from the Department of Technical and Adult education, consult with company officials. They discuss the company's manpower needs, job requirements and start up schedule. Training coordinators develop a training plan and submit it to the company for approval. Employees will be trained and ready to begin work the day a facility opens for business.

Athens Tech Center for Continuous Improvement

The Center for Continuous Improvement (CCI) at Athens Tech provides valuable consulting services to key firms in the Northeast Georgia region. The services include changing the culture of the organization to one of teamwork; teaching all employees, from top management to line workers, how to focus on the customer; and teaching the employees how to work in teams. The CCI is both a retention and expansion tool and a recruiting tool for the Northeast Georgia region. By increasing the productivity of firms in the area, CCI has helped guarantee that these firms will have a healthy future in the region.

Workforce Incentive Board (WIB)

The Workforce Incentive Board is implemented by the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center. The purpose of this board is to facilitate collaboration among all job training service providers in the region. The goal is to provide the trained employees needed by the region's businesses and to meet the training, educational and employment needs of individuals.

Georgia Center for Advanced Telecommunications Technology (GCATT)

GCATT is an initiative of virtual clusters of excellence in advanced telecommunications. GCATT supports development of the latest technologies and applications in communications, computing and content processing. Formed in 1991, GCATT is a program of the Georgia Research Alliance, a public/private partnership fostering technology-based economic development across the state. Although GCATT is based at Georgia Tech, it supports research programs in advanced telecommunications at the Georgia Research Alliance's six research universities.

The GCATT partnership of industry, government and universities works together in a three-pronged strategy of Technology, Policy and Commercialization for high-tech economic development in Georgia. There are approximately 20 different research centers that fall under the GCATT umbrella. The research programs of the centers are funded by industry and government through grants, industry consortia and directed research projects. GCATT staff provides support by promoting

collaboration across the various research centers, leveraging the knowledge and resources that already exist.

Yamacraw

Yamacraw is an economic development initiative to make Georgia a world leader in the design of broadband communications systems, devices and chips—thus creating in Georgia both high-paying design jobs and support and supply-chain jobs. Yamacraw research is grouped in three targeted areas of broadband technology: Embedded Software, Broadband Access Devices and System Prototyping. At its core, Yamacraw is made up of 200-300 world-class researchers who take the best of technologies one-step further by integrating them to patent a new generation of compatible infrastructure products.

Georgia Power Company, Economic Development Division

Georgia Power has the oldest economic development activity in Georgia, and has an Economic Development Division whose primary role is to attract businesses to the state. The Economic Development Division of Georgia Power has two sections, a domestic section and an international section. Each section is responsible for marketing Georgia as a positive place to do business. There are 130 local offices statewide with a primary concern of job development. Although Georgia Power has offices throughout the state, it does not provide any specialized programs for any particular city or county. Georgia Power's primary local contact for economic development issues are generally with the local Chamber of Commerce. Alternative points of contact are with the various levels of government in Georgia Power's service area. Georgia Power has in the past formed different alliances with other organizations and agencies for the purpose of attracting businesses to an area.

Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism

The Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism (GDITT) is a state funded agency mandated to serve as agent for all the cities and counties in the State. GDITT's primary purpose is to assist potential businesses considering locating in the State in identifying an optimal location for their operational needs. The Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism also assist the movie industry in locating appropriate movie sets throughout Georgia. The identification of international markets for the export of Georgia goods and services is another duty of GDITT.

Because GDITT is a statewide agency, there are no specific programs or projects tailored to the needs of Oconee. In the event that a potential business client is interested in the Oconee area, GDITT policy is to work with both the Chamber of Commerce and the local governmental entity. GDITT has a working relationship with the utility companies, rail systems, banks, universities and other agencies with resources to facilitate economic development. GDITT maintains a substantial computer based inventory of commercial and industrial sites throughout Georgia.

Oglethorpe Power

Oglethorpe Power maintains a robust economic development program that works in concert with the local communities, the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism and other statewide economic development programs to bring industry into Georgia. Over the past 20 years, these efforts have resulted in numerous

commercial and industrial firms locating or expanding in the state. Oglethorpe Power is a founding member of the Georgia Alliance, a public-private economic development partnership of ten private companies with statewide economic development interests and the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. The Georgia Center for Site Selection was established to help businesses, both large and small, establish or expand operations in Georgia. Information on how to find the most appropriate community in Georgia, and information regarding available industrial buildings and sites, to statistical information on communities across Georgia is provided free of charge.

Georgia Business Expansion Support Act

In 1994, the State passed legislation for tax credits against state income taxes to encourage economic development in Georgia. Some of the programs are targeted to specific industry groups: manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, processing, telecommunications, tourism or research and developmental but do not include retail business).

Job tax credits and investment tax credits are available to the targeted industry groups at different levels, depending on the relative need of the area for economic development. Some credits are available to specific industry groups, while others apply to all employers. Overall, Oconee County and its cities are categorized, as "Tier Two" communities within the plan and qualifying companies are eligible for associated credits. The following is a summary of the various provisions of the Act as they relate to Oconee County.

Special Tax Programs

There are several special tax programs in place that may also be utilized in Oconee County:

Urban Enterprise Zone

Under an Urban Enterprise Zone, specific areas are delineated where deteriorating physical or market conditions have resulted in little or no investment in property improvements or development. Within an Urban Enterprise Zone, if a property owner renovates or develops a site, the County's property taxes can be frozen at the pre-improvement level for a specified time period, then rising in annual steps to full value taxation at the end of the period. This approach is useful in encouraging investment that would otherwise not occur, and in eventually increasing the tax base where taxes would otherwise continue to fall through depreciation.

Urban Enterprise Zones can be set up for commercial, industrial or housing investment, but can be used only where development would not otherwise occur.

Tax Increment Financing

This approach allows property taxes to rise as sites are developed or improved, but directs all or some of the increase over and above the pre-improvement tax level into public facilities that have been built to support the area's revitalization. In effect, the government takes the risk through provision of public improvements up front, and then pays itself back through the higher tax collection increment while assuring that the pre-improvement tax collections continue to go into the general fund. Once the improvements are paid for, all of the taxes will go into the general

fund. This approach can be very useful in a carefully controlled revitalization effort for a deteriorating area, where future renovations and development can be reasonably anticipated but are dependent on a general improvement to the area.

Community Improvement Districts:

The Georgia Constitution provides for a special kind of tax district called a Community Improvement District (CID). This type of district can be created only upon the petition of the property owners themselves, and is managed by a board that includes representatives of the property owners and local jurisdiction. Under a CID, only nonresidential property is subject to the special tax, and the funds must be used only for certain public facilities, such as roads and water and sewer utilities. The funds can be used for both capital and operating expenditures, and the special nature of the Act allows the basis of taxation to be the development density or impact of a property as well as its assessed value. The Act also allows debt financing without referendum since a majority of the property owners (who must own at least 75% of the properties by value) must request the CID designation. A plus for the local jurisdiction is that debts of a CID are not debts of the government and do not affect the jurisdiction's debt limit, while the CID can enjoy a lower interest rate due to its quasi-governmental structure. In order to implement a CID program, the local jurisdiction must first obtain state enabling legislation.

■ **Workforce Development**

As businesses establish themselves and grow in Oconee County, a total program to maintain an available workforce should be established. This program should address training, education, housing, transportation and day care.

Training and Education

Several respected institutions support the job training needs of the area. Gainesville College is a two-year institution which operates a satellite campus in the heart of Oconee County. The University of Georgia is within minutes of the County and offers unparalleled educational and research opportunities.

Athens Technical College

Athens Technical College (ATC) provides a vital link between the area's labor force and the workplace. Athens Technical College has as its specific mission the education of the region's workforce. A wide selection of business and technical courses are available to the individual who receives hands-on training in a chosen field. Athens Tech offers 34 credit programs of study in a wide range of vocational fields. In addition to adult literacy programs, it offers many customized ongoing job-training programs for existing employees and first line supervisors for specific industries. The college's business and industry services foster growth and development of area companies by providing consulting services and customized training. The college coordinates state economic development programs and services for current, expanding and new companies. Available services include skills assessment and training for entry-level personnel, training to improve intermediate skills, and advanced customized training in mechanical, electrical, computer, manufacturing, warehousing and customer service.

Athens Tech is also the local administrator of Quick Start, Georgia's internationally renowned training program designed to assist new and expanding industries.

The Education Foundation of Oconee County

The Education Foundation of Oconee County was established through a joint effort of the Oconee County Chamber of Commerce, the public schools and Athens Academy. The primary goal is to develop the greatest resource in Oconee County – the people. The Education Foundation is a team of private and corporate citizens working with professional educators to achieve excellence in education. It is founded on the premise that a sound education is the key to addressing and solving the problems facing society today and tomorrow. The function of the Foundation is to receive and administer funds for enhancing education in Oconee County. Funds are sought through gifts, grants, bequests, donations, memorials and philanthropic sources.

The Education Foundation has developed a four-point “Strategy for Success” to help children, and those adults in need, achieve their educational goals:

- **Encourage Innovative Teaching:** Teachers are a key factor in student performance. The Education Foundation supports them with projects such as the “Mini-Grant” program, which provides funds for teachers to implement the new ideas and innovative techniques. Such programs encourage teachers to find ways to challenge students.
- **Providing Continuing Education:** To stay on the cutting edge in their profession, teachers continually hone their skills and develop new methods of sharing knowledge with their students. The Education Foundation offers scholarships for deserving teachers to fulfill their need for continuing education.
- **Recognize Outstanding Excellence:** Performance by both teachers and students should be recognized and encouraged. The Education Foundation will establish methods for honoring teachers, students and administrators who excel in fulfilling their potential in educations.
- **Maintain Sound Fiscal Status:** Funds of the Education Foundation are administered by the Board of Directors. The Education Foundation is a tax-exempt corporation.

Summer Youth Program

The Summer Youth Program is designed to increase the employment potential of eligible youth. This program is a vital part of year round job training efforts to help disadvantaged persons. It targets and provides training to school dropouts and youth who are experiencing significant barriers to employment, including attitudes, aptitudes and socialization.

Mobile Learning Laboratory

The Mobile Learning Laboratory is a 32 foot recreational vehicle specifically designed to meet the training and educational needs of Northeast Georgia. The lab is currently equipped with a variety of state-of-the-art training software. These interactive packages can help users with many skills, ranging from welding to

typing. Academic packages provide lessons in reading, math, history or GED preparation.

Natural Resources

An important element of land use planning is the assessment of how natural resources are responsibly utilized, managed, developed and preserved within a community. This chapter provides an inventory and assessment of locally significant and unique natural resources and presents a determination of natural resource vulnerability to the impact of growth and development. This assessment also identifies opportunities and constraints on the way land is developed. Natural resources inventoried include mineral resources, soils, water and water supply, native vegetation, native fauna.

Oconee County is taking a proactive stance on the protection of its natural and sensitive resources. As Oconee County continues to develop, more and more effort is being put into finding a balance between environmental needs of clean air and water, the availability of water, retaining areas of natural significance for animal and plant habitats, and those of development and growing population. Increased education of the general public and developers with regard to environmental issues, as well as adherence to these regulations, will bring about increased awareness of the importance of maintaining a proper balance between people and their environment.

Since the inception of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, the County has worked to ensure that local, state, and federal requirements regarding environmental management have been complied with and fully enforced. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has established minimum protection standards for natural resources, the environment and vital areas of the state, including water supply watershed, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains. In order to balance development pressures with the need to preserve both the rural character and sensitive environmental resources, the County has taken pro-active measures within this Plan and on the Future Land Use Plan. As part of the implementation of this Plan, the County has determined it necessary to further revise its Codes and Regulations to guide development away from sensitive areas. As a result, Article 9 of the 2006 UDC update contains standards, regulations and development policies, which guide the protection of the County's significant environmental resources in adherence with DNR Article 5 Minimum Standards. Topics include: River and Stream Protection; Watershed Protection; Aquifer Area Recharge Protection; Wetlands Protection; Natural Resource Conservation Areas; and Conservation and Natural Resources Easements. In addition to the regulations of Article 9, the use of the Floodplain Zone standards and the updated Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, the Conservation Use Exemption program, the updated Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance, the Scenic Preservation Zone, Conservation Subdivision standards, Master Planned Development open space requirements, and adoption of the minimum DNR standards where specific ordinances have not been adopted will ensure the protection of these important features within the County. The County also preserves resources through its Greenspace Program and utilizes a number of tools, as well as utilization of available financial resources for acquisition.

■ Topography

Oconee County, located in the Southern Piedmont Major Land Resource Area, covers 186 square miles (119,040 acres) of moderate to steeply sloping plateau. Near stream channels, the topography is nearly level, and others have short, steep slopes. There are also a few escarpments.

The Apalachee River forms the southwestern boundary of the County while the Oconee River and McNutt Creek form the northeast boundary. Tributaries of these rivers dissect the County. The drainage divide between the Oconee and Apalachee Rivers splits the county into two along its long southeast/northwest axis. The Apalachee and two-thirds by the Oconee drain approximately one-third of the County.

Elevations in the County range from 400 feet above sea level in the southeast edge to 800 feet in the northwest. The greatest concentrations of steep slopes are found along the Oconee and Apalachee Rivers and along tributaries in the southeast part of the County. Steep slopes with grades above 15 percent cover approximately 24 percent of the total acreage of the County. Slopes of more than 15 percent, such as these shown on Exhibit 4.1, typically require substantial alteration for building development and pose severe limitations to septic tank drain fields. Erosion may become a potential problem once steep slopes have been altered and natural vegetation removed. Development activity on steep slopes, when necessary, should always employ erosion control measures.

Elevations and topographic conditions of the four cities in Oconee County are summarized in the following:

- Bishop lies on U.S. Highway 129/441 in the central part of the County. The town straddles the drainage divide between the Apalachee and Oconee Rivers, and ranges in elevation from 680 to 780 feet above sea level.
- Bogart lies along U.S. highway 29 in the extreme northwest part of the County and is in the Oconee River watershed. Elevations range approximately from 740 to 860 feet above sea level.
- North High Shoals lies along the Apalachee River on the southwestern boundary of the County. Elevations range from 600 to 750 feet above sea level.
- Watkinsville lies in the central section of the County along U.S. Highway 129/441, about four miles north of Bishop. Elevations range from 600 to 780 feet draining to the Oconee River watershed.

■ Mineral Resources

Geologically, Oconee County is underlain by biotitic gneiss, mica schist, amphibolite, and sillimanite schist. The only significant minerals found in the County are sillimanite, and aluminum silicate.

■ Soils and Steep Slopes

Slope severity, depth to bedrock, water table, and limitation for septic tank drain fields determine the soil's suitability for development. The soil maps represent

prime agricultural soils and soils, which are not suitable for development. Table 4.1 lists the soils in the County, total acreage of each of these soils, and various characteristics of these soils that determine associated suitability for development. Additionally, soil limitations for urban uses are classified as slight, moderate or severe. The geographic location of these soils was determined through analysis of the soil survey maps.

Table 4.1 Suitability of Soils Associations for Selected Land Uses Oconee County						
Soil Type	Land Use					
	Acres	Picnic Area	Playground	Septic	Foundation*	Commercial**
Appling sandy clay loam, 6-10% slope, severely eroded	300	M	S	M	SL	M
Appling coarse sandy clay loam, 2-6% slope, eroded	2,070	SL	SL	M	SL	M
Appling coarse sandy clay loam, 6-10% slope, eroded	910	SL	M	M	SL	M
Buncombe loamy sand	375	S	S	S	S	S
Colfax Sandy Loam, 2-6% slope	570	S	S	S	S	S
Congaree soils and alluvial lands	3,885	M	S	S	S	S
Chewacia soils and alluvial lands	940	S	S	S	S	S
Cecil sandy loam, 2-6% slope, eroded	14,835	SL	SL	M	SL	M
Cecil sandy loam, 6-10 % slope, eroded	11,320	SL	M	M	SL	M
Cecil sandy loam, 2-6% slope, severely eroded	1,130	SL	M	M	SL	M
Davidson clay loam, 2-6% slope, severely eroded	1,130	M	M	M	SL	M
Davidson clay loam, 6-10% slope, severely eroded	1,750	S	S	M	SL	M
Davidson clay loam, 10-15% slope, severely eroded	1,500	S	S	M	M	S
Davidson clay loam, 15-25% slope, severely eroded	900	S	S	M	M	S
Davidson sandy loam, 2-6% slope, eroded	1,620	SL	SL	M	SL	M
Davidson sandy loam, 6-10% slope, eroded	2,070	SL	M	M	SL	M
Davidson sandy loam, 15-25% slope, eroded	1,320	M	S	M	M	S
Louisburg stony loamy sand, 10-25% slope	635	S	S	S	S	S
Louisburg loamy sand, 6-10% slope	235	SL	M	S	M	M
Louisburg loamy sand, 10-25% slope	765	M	S	S	M	S
Madison sandy loam, 2-6% slope, eroded	3,440	SL	SL	M	SL	M
Madison sandy loam, 6-10% slope, eroded	2,070	SL	M	M	SL	M
Madison sandy loam, 15-25% slope, eroded (MgD2)	2,170	SL	M	M	M	S
Madison sandy loam, 15-25% slope, eroded (MgE2)	6,900	M	S	M	M	S
Madison sandy clay loam, 2-6% slope, severely eroded	300	M	M	M	SL	M
Madison sandy clay loam, 6-10% slope, severely eroded	2,170	M	S	M	SL	M
Madison sandy clay loam, 10-25% slope, severely eroded	8,275	S	S	M	M	S
Madison-Louisa complex, 6-10% slope, eroded	430	SL	M	M	M	M
Madison-Louisa complex, 10-15% slope, eroded	750	M	S	M	M	S
Madison-Louisa complex, 15-25% slope, eroded	2,545	M	S	M	M	S
Musella clay loam, 15-25% slope, eroded	855	M	S	S	M	S
Pacolet sandy loam, 10-15% slope, eroded	5,150	M	S	M	M	S
Pacolet sandy clay loam, 10-15% slope, severely eroded	8,470	M	M	M	SL	M
Pacolet sandy clay loam, 10-15% slope, severely eroded(PDg3)	9,620	S	S	M	M	S
Pacolet-Gullied land complex, 6-10% slope	3,530	M	S	M	S	M
Pacolet-Gullied land complex, 10-15% slope	5,890	S	S	S	S	S
Pacolet stony sandy loam, 6-15% slope, eroded	260	M	S	M	S	S
Pacolet stony sandy loam, 15-25% slope, eroded	475	S	S	S	S	S
Rock Outcrop	75	M-S	S	S	S	M-S
Worsham sandy loam, 2-6%	530	S	S	S	S	S
Wedadkee and alluvial land, wet	3,195	S	S	S	S	S

Legend
 SL = Slight limitation; M = Moderate limitation; S = Severe limitation
 Source: USDA Soil Survey Manual

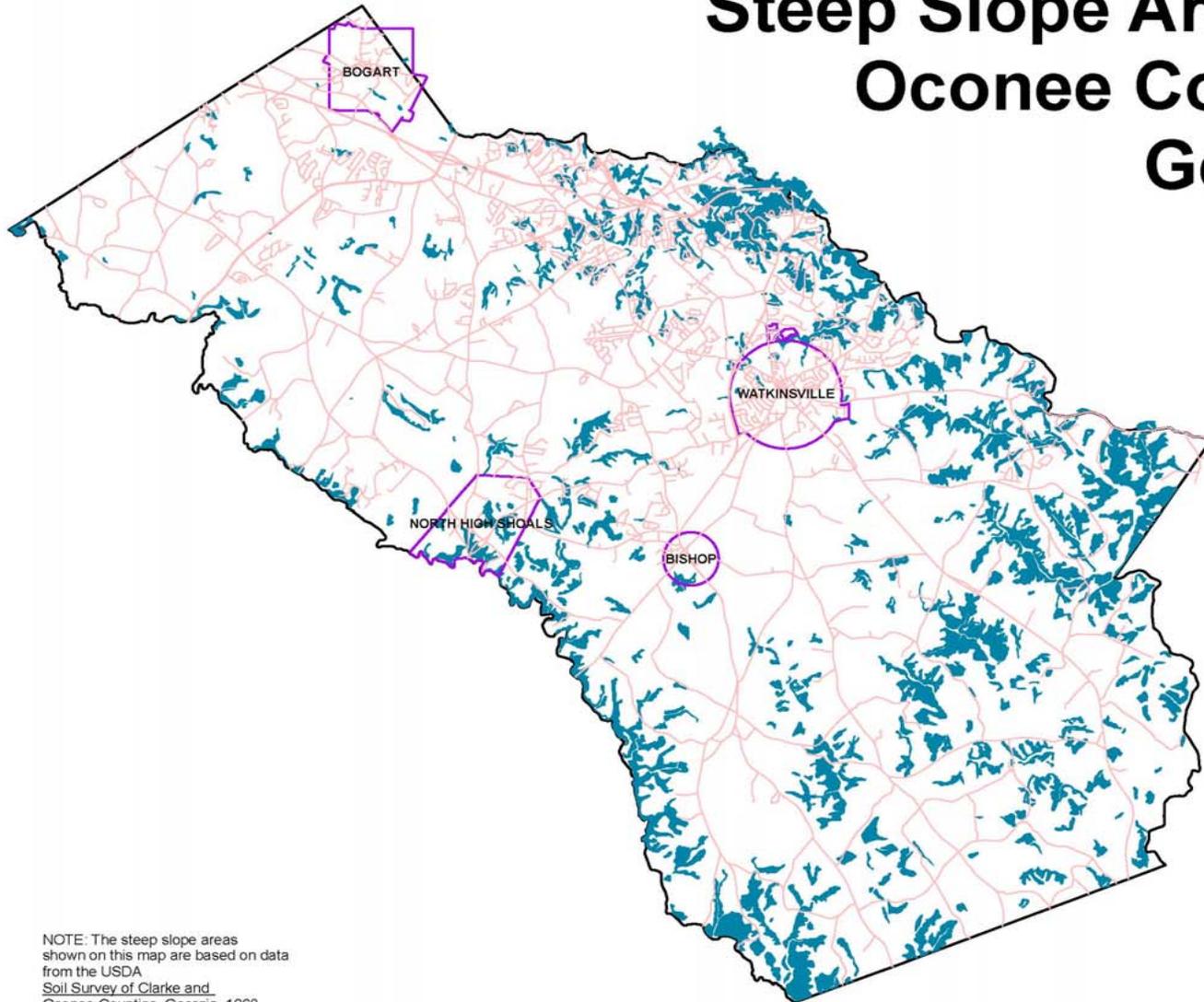
The most common soil types in Oconee County are Cecil sandy loam, 2-6 and 6-10 percent slopes; Pacolet sandy clay loam, 6-10 and 10-15 percent slopes; Madison sandy clay loam, 10-25 percent slope; and Madison sandy loam, 15-25 percent slope. These types comprise 50 percent of the soils in the County. The soils determination survey for Oconee County was conducted in the 1970's. Since then, erosion, and/or development have removed much of the original surface layers of

the predominant soils of the County. Three of the predominant soils pose severe limitations to commercial development due to steepness of slopes, although none of the predominant soils types poses a significant limitation to residential development. Countywide, 17 percent of the soils pose severe limitations to residential development and 47 percent pose severe limitations to commercial development.

Countywide, 32.2 percent of the soils pose severe limitations to septic drain fields. Properties with features that affect absorption of the effluent are permeability, depth to seasonal high water table, depth to bedrock and susceptibility to flooding.

Soils indicated as having high water tables are those for which the water table is less than 6 feet below the surface for a continuous period of more than 2 weeks out of the year. Information about the seasonal high water table helps in assessing the need for specifically designed foundations, the need for specific kinds of drainage systems, and the need for footing drains to ensure dry basements. Soils associated with a high water table cover 8 percent of the County.

Steep Slope Areas of Oconee County, Georgia



Legend

- Road Centerlines
- City Limits
- County Outline
- Steep Slope Soils

NOTE: The steep slope areas shown on this map are based on data from the USDA Soil Survey of Clarke and Oconee Counties, Georgia, 1968

1 inch equals 10,000 feet
Produced Using OCGIS
June 12th, 2007

■ **Conservation Areas**

Under the County's Greenspace Program, the County proposes to protect a variety of land types in order to meet as many of their goals as possible. Priority is given to the preservation of water quality through the protection of floodplains, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas and river and stream corridors. Other types of land include agricultural and forest land; new and existing parks and open space; significant historic resources; and greenspace in residential developments.

There are two "significant areas" in Oconee County as identified by the Freshwater Wetlands and Natural Heritage Inventory (FWNHI). A "significant area" includes a broad range of sites, National Natural Landmarks and all state Registered Natural Areas, in addition to areas deemed worthy of being listed based on files from the DNR's Heritage Trust and Natural Areas programs. Significant areas in the County include the Oconee River and Apalachee River.

The protection of vegetative buffers along these rivers and their tributaries with 100 foot buffers along the rivers and 50 foot buffers along intermittent streams, as established by Article 9 of the Unified Development Code, will ensure the preservation of those qualities which make a river suitable for: wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors; recreation; a resource for clean drinking water; erosion and sediment control; and flood absorption. As well, maintenance of these buffers provides an opportunity for the creation of natural linkages that sustains a greenway system.

A portion of the 30,000 acre Redlands Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located in the northern tip of the Oconee National Forest in southern Oconee County. The U.S. Forest Service contracts with the Fish and Game Division of DNR to manage the area. Redlands WMA is open to the public for camping, hiking and hunting. The northern tip of the Oconee National Forest is located in southern Oconee County. Oconee County has no jurisdiction over the Oconee National Forest or the Redland WMA.

Oconee County participated in the Regionally Important Resources (R.I.R.) nomination of all streams and rivers for the region, and has adopted all DNR Part V stream buffer requirements into Article 9: Environmental Protection of the 2006 Update of the Uniform Development Code. As well, the County is implementing post development storm water management requirements in conjunction with soil erosion and sediment control regulations, revised in June 2006.

Greenspace Program

The County, in concert with the City of North High Shoals, has implemented a Greenspace Program. The goal of the Oconee County Community Greenspace Program is the preservation of critical resources and community open space. The County's overall goal is to permanently preserve a minimum of 20 percent of its lands in greenspace. This goal amounts to the preservation of 23,894 acres, of which more than 2,000 acres are in permanent protection as of 2006. To achieve this goal, the County aims to preserve 450 acres annually over a 50-year period (to approximately 2050). The long-term goal is to preserve lands with an interconnected greenway system that preserves river corridors, passive recreation areas, active farmland, and historic resources.

The Greenspace Plan calls for preservation of approximately:

- 8,214 acres of stream and river vegetative buffers;
- 5,500 acres of prime agricultural farmland;
- 2,089 acres of non-riparian wetlands and floodplains;
- 1,500 acres of groundwater recharge area;
- 500 acres of passive recreation park space;
- 100 acres of significant historic resources; and
- 4,500 acres of residential greenspace.

Table 4.2 summarizes lands held under various forms of conservation in the County.

Location/Type	Ownership	Public Access	Acreage
Conservation Subdivisions (6)	Oconee Rivers Land Trust	No	341.58
Oconee National Forest	National Forest Service	Yes	150
USDA Farmland	US Department of Agriculture	No	1,135
Redlands WMA	US Forest Service/DNR	Yes	150
Herman C. Michaels Park	Oconee County	Yes	12
Heritage Park	Oconee County	Yes	250
Bogart Recreation Complex	Oconee County	Yes	6
Oconee Community Complex	Oconee County	Yes	85
North High Shoals Park	City of North High Shoals	Yes	11 acres
Powers Tract	Oconee County	No	57.6
Historic Resources	Oconee County	Yes	unknown

Source: Oconee County Planning Department, July 2006

USDA Farmland

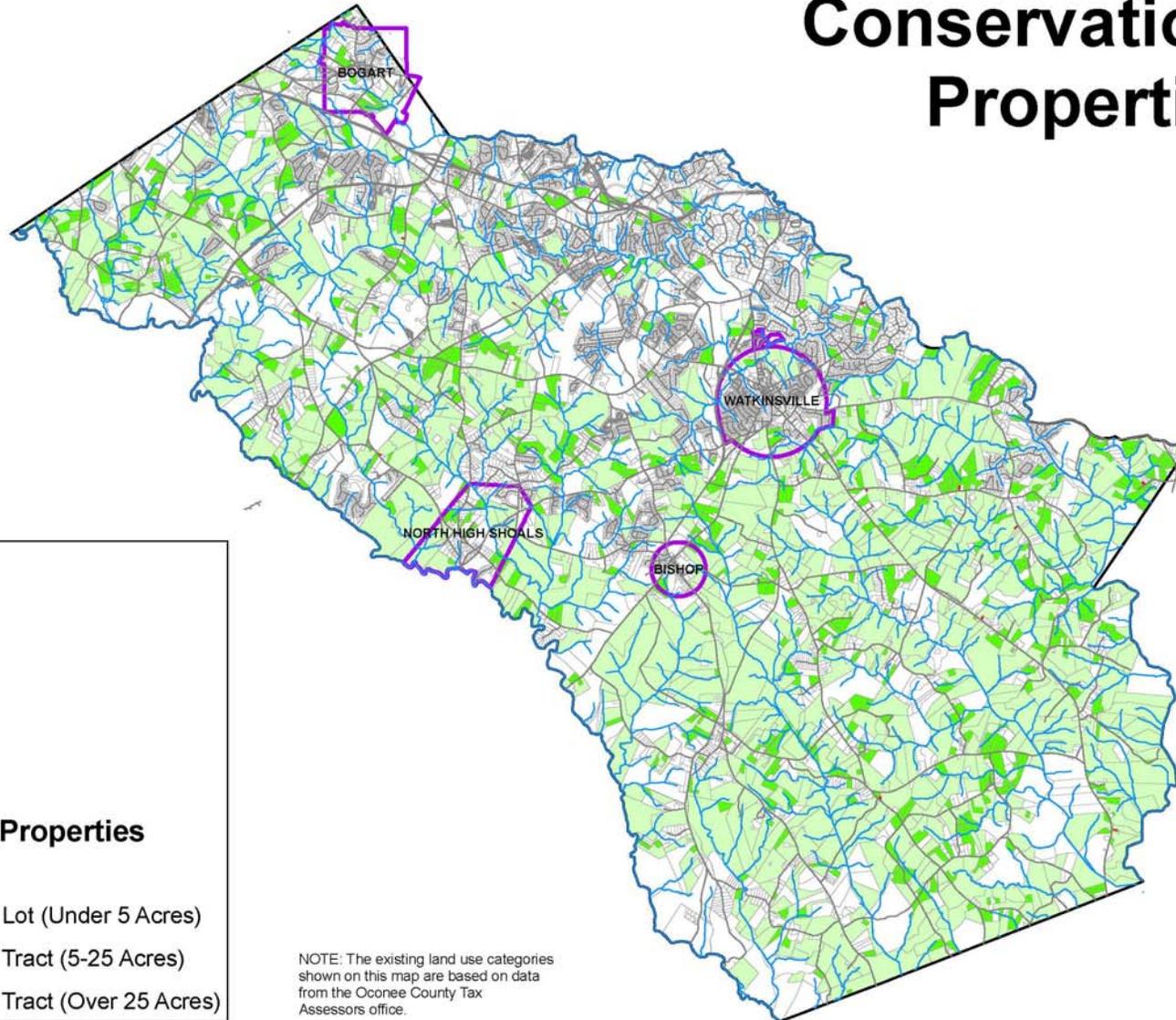
The USDA holds approximately 1,135 acres of prime agricultural farmland in the County. In 2004, the County acquired 57.6 acres of farmland within the Powers Tract, a 350-acre farm located south of Column Ferry and Rose Creek Road.

Conservation Use Exemption Program (Agricultural Land)

A number of properties are also temporarily protected under the Conservation Use Exemption program. Under this program, the State of Georgia offers a tax incentive to qualifying property owners who wish to enter into a conservation covenant. Owners of qualified agricultural property must enter into a covenant with the state stipulating that the land will be maintained in its current condition for a period of 10 years. In exchange for the covenant, ad valorem tax will be assessed on the value of the property’s current use rather than the fair market value. There are 1,519 parcels comprising a total of 61,103.7 acres participating in this program as of June 2006.



Conservation Use Properties



Legend

- Road Centerlines
- Rivers
- ▭ County Outline
- ▭ Parcel Lines
- ▭ City Limits

Conservation Use Properties

LANDUSE

- Conservation Use Lot (Under 5 Acres)
- Conservation Use Tract (5-25 Acres)
- Conservation Use Tract (Over 25 Acres)

NOTE: The existing land use categories shown on this map are based on data from the Oconee County Tax Assessors office.

1 inch equals 10,000 feet
Produced Using OCGIS
May 29th, 2007

Conservation Subdivisions

Developments site planned under Section 505 of the UDC, Conservation Subdivisions, foster a flexibility of design in order to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and create efficient use of the land. There are six conservation subdivisions, which have been approved in the County, which will ultimately yield 325.16 acres of conservation lands. Ownership may be helped by equal share by the lot owners, the Homeowner’s Association, a land trust, or a public entity. The Oconee River Land Trust currently holds the conservation easements in the subdivisions.

Table 4.3					
Oconee County Conservation Subdivisions - 2006					
Oconee County					
Name	Zone	Total Project Acreage	APPROVED		
			Acreage in Conservation	% Acreage in Conservation	
Boulder Springs	AR-1	321.25	142.17	44%	
The Village at Dove Creek	AR-2	88.54	45.58	51%	
Rolling Glen	AR-1	84.41	34.1	40%	
Wilkes Meadows	AR-1	110.14	15.41	14%	
Whitlow Creek Estates	AR-1	236.64	87.9	37%	
Southwind Manor Estates	AR-1	68.85	16.42	24%	
TOTAL		909.83	341.58	38%	
Source: Oconee County Planning Department, June 2006					

Passive Open Space in County Parks

The Oconee County Parks and Recreation Authority holds an approximate 627.5 acres of improved open space/parkland, which includes acreage in natural and passive open space. The majority of the 360-acre Oconee Heritage Park is currently held in natural open space, primarily natural forest, and approximately one-third of the new 196 acre Oconee Community Complex will remain in natural open space. As well, Herman C. Michael Park retains over one-quarter to one-third of its 37.5 acres in natural condition. The Bogart Recreation Complex is approximately one-quarter passive area. In the City of North High Shoals, approximately 10-11 acres of its new 22-acre park are held as passive open space. In total, it can be estimated that approximately 375-400 acres of the County’s total 649.5 acres of parkland is retained in its natural state. The County’s 2050 goal is for 500 acres of parkland to be preserved within its parks. Improved parkland and recreation resources in the County are further discussed in the Public Services Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan document.

Major Parks and Recreation Areas

The Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department manages a broad range of beautiful, functional, and well-maintained facilities that are conveniently located

across the County. The County operates four park facilities, with a total of 627.5 acres of active and passive open space, supplemented by Harris Shoals Park in Watkinsville. These facilities are described in greater detail in the Community Facilities chapter.

■ Scenic Views and Sites

Most of the County's scenic resources are associated with existing wetlands and stream corridors, which are protected waterways or lands. Several of the scenic roadway corridors are situated in the southern portion of the County and outside of the vicinity of the emerging development area. Scenic views and sites in Oconee County are divided into three categories: Scenic Rivers and Stream Sites; Scenic Roadway Corridors; and Other Scenic Views, as listed below:

Scenic Rivers and Streams

- Little Lake Oconee
- Apalachee River Corridor
- The Shoals at North High Shoals
- Price Mill Bridge
- The Shoals at Apalachee Beach
- The Shoals at Barber Creek
- Harris Shoals
- Whites Dam
- Barnett Shoals Dam

Scenic Roadway Corridors

- GA Highway 53 from Union Church Rd. to Lane Creek Rd.
- New High Shoals Road near Family Life Enrichment Center
- U.S. 441 from Lavista Rd. to Rockinwood Rd.
- GA 15 from Astondale Road to Greene County line
- Elder Mill Rd. from GA 15 to Antioch Church Rd. and back to GA 15
- Oconee Community Complex – 196 acres on SR 53

Other Scenic Views

- Crawford Mill
- Elder Covered Bridge

The County has adopted sign regulations, which assist in the protection of these scenic roadway corridors. As well, the County utilizes a Scenic Preservation Zone, which protects such resources from development. The County does not participate in the Georgia Department of Transportation Scenic Byway Program.

■ Forest Resources

As of 2004, Oconee County contained 118,900 acres, a 383-acre decrease from the 1989 acreage of 119,283. The County remains predominantly forested. Forestland comprised 62.4 percent of the County land (74,200 acres) in 2004, an increase of almost 20 percent from 1997. This increase may be attributed to the establishment of USDA privacy restrictions in 2000, or other reasons.

Table 4.4 Land Area by Land Class 1989, 1997 and 2004 Oconee County					
	1989 Acreage	1997 Acreage	% Change	2004	% Change
Total Land Area	119,283	118,900	-0.3%	118,900	0.0%
Total Forest	66,651	62,000	-7.0%	74,200	19.7%
Timber land	66,651	62,000	-7.0%	74,200	19.7%
Productive Reserved	NA	100	N/A	NA	N/A
Other Land	52,722	56,900	7.9%	44,600	-19.7%

Source: USDA Forest Service, SRS, FIA - Forest Statistics for Georgia, 1989 and 1997, 2004

Oconee County has over 54,000 acres or 45.3 percent of its total area under agricultural and timberland property covenant agreements as provided for in O.C.G.A. Section 48-5-7.4.

The majority of the percentage of forestlands lost has been primarily to development. Saw timber of mature trees decreased by 9.8 percent between the periods of 1989 – 1997, primarily due to a decrease of almost 50 percent in the pine/softwoods category, but increased in the hardwoods category, at 25.9 percent

Table 4.5 Forested Acreage by Ownership Class 1989, 1997 and 2004 Oconee County			
Owner	1989	1997	2004
All Ownerships	66,561	62,000	74,200
Federal, State and Municipal Forest	452	400	N/A
Forest Industry	66,109	4,400	N/A
Corporate		7,100	N/A
Private Individual*		50,200	74,000

Source: USDA Forest Service

* Due to privacy restrictions established in 2000, privately owned land may not be reported by ownership type. Therefore, private individual includes land holdings of farming, forest industry, corporate and private non-farm holdings. 2004 statistics no longer break federal holdings out of the total

Note: Sampling errors for county level data are high and often not reliable. It is recommended that breakdown into areas be limited to areas over 1,000,000 acres by consolidating counties

for soft hardwoods and 42.2 percent in the hard hardwoods category, reflecting the increasing amount of development. Growing stock overall declined significantly by 63.7 percent. Although the percentage of growing stock in the soft hardwood category actually almost doubled, and growth was recorded in the hard

hardwoods category of 21.4 percent, significant losses were recorded in the pines/softwoods, where no new stock appears to have been planted at all.

Category	Species	1989	1997	% Change
Saw Timber (in board feet)	All Species	391,429,000	353,000,000	-9.80%
	Pine/Softwoods	209,586,000	106,400,000	-49.20%
	Soft Hardwoods	73,608,000	92,700,000	25.90%
	Hard Hardwoods	108,235,000	153,900,000	42.20%
Growing Stock Average net annual growth	All Species	3,854,000	1,400,000	-63.70%
	Pine/Softwoods	1,861,000	-1,300,000	-143.60%
	Soft Hardwoods	757,000	1,200,000	58.50%
	Hard Hardwoods	1,236,000	1,500,000	21.40%

Source: USDA Forest Service, SRS, FIA - Forest Statistics for Georgia, USDA, 1989 and 1997

Farmland

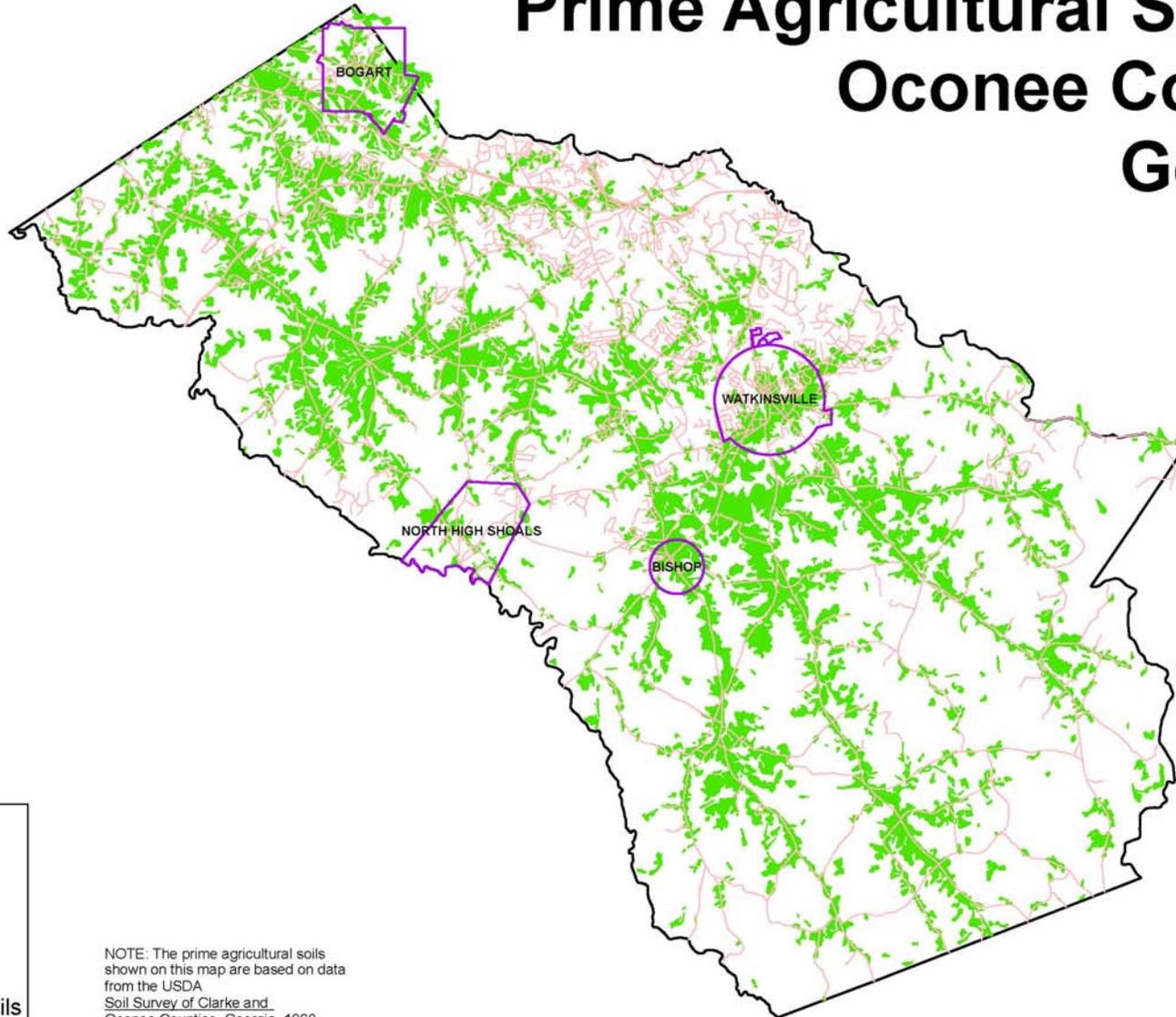
The Georgia County Guide classified approximately 54,077 acres as farmland in 2002, comprising 54.5 percent of the total land area, an increase of 1.1 percent from 1997. The majority of land is held in pastures, with Oconee County ranking in the top three hog raising counties in the Oconee River Basin area. In 2002, there were 411 farms in the County, an increase of 12.3 percent from 1997. The average size was 132 acres, although the median farm size was approximately 77 acres. In comparison, representative counties in Georgia held an average of 67,574 acres of land in agriculture, (generally about 28 percent of total land), and an average of 310 farms, although the average sizes were much greater at 244 acres, with the median size at 125 acres. Almost 38 percent of the farms in the County are between 10 and 49 acres, 36 percent are between 50 and 179 acres and 15.6 percent are between 180 and 500 acres. Farms over 500 acres comprise just over 5 percent of the total number of farms.

Prime Farmland consists of soil types that are the most suitable and productive for agricultural purposes, such as sandy loams. As a result of cotton monoculture in the County, by 1935 most or all of the Piedmont topsoil had been eroded. This was accompanied by extensive gully erosion. The remaining prime agricultural land accounts for 19.1 percent of the land in Oconee County. According to the latest data, in 1978, there were 22,640 acres of prime farmland in Oconee County. The Soil Conservation Service has also identified land in Oconee County that is considered to be of statewide importance. Prime farmland does not always correspond to land areas that are actually committed to agricultural land uses.

Areas designated as prime farmland may also be considered attractive for commercial, industrial and residential development due to the typically flat nature of the land. Oconee County continues to recognize the contribution of agribusiness to its economic base and local employment. Protecting valuable soils is an important part in achieving this goal. Through the County's Greenspace Plan, the County has established a goal to preserve 25 percent of its prime agricultural soils. Currently, 61,943 acres are held in the 10-year Conservation Use Program.



Prime Agricultural Soils of Oconee County, Georgia



Legend

- City Limits
- Road Centerlines
- County Outline
- Prime Agricultural Soils

NOTE: The prime agricultural soils shown on this map are based on data from the USDA Soil Survey of Clarke and Oconee Counties, Georgia, 1968

1 inch equals 10,000 feet
Produced Using OCGIS
June 12th, 2007

The County is targeting the majority of future growth to occur generally in the vicinity of the northern portion of the County where the majority of existing and emerging development is established. The southern portion of the County, south of Bishop, is identified as primarily rural, which would support continuing agricultural use. The County has recently completed UDC limits density in agricultural and rural areas and to concentrate infrastructure, public facilities and services, and major roadway corridors in the northern portions of the County. Where residential development is proposed in primarily rural or natural areas where significant environmental conditions exist, the use of Conservation Subdivision standards is recommended in order to retain a minimum of 50 percent of the site in its natural condition.

As the County continues to develop, it is anticipated that farm, timbering and livestock production will continue to decrease as agricultural uses are converted into residential and commercial uses. As of June 2006, there were 1,519 covenants with approximately 40 average acres of land, for a total of 61,103 acres held under conservation tax credit land. As the County continues to grow, land use policies and controls should promote the continuance of farming where compatible with other goals. As farms are rezoned, it may create land use conflicts with adjacent non-farm uses. Buffering techniques to limit environmental impact are required between Agricultural and other land uses in the updated 2006 UDC.

■ **Water Resources**

Water Supply Watersheds

Oconee County is located in the Oconee River Basin, which drains approximately 5,320 square miles. Oconee County is drained by two river systems. The eastern portion of the County is drained by the Oconee River and the western part by the Apalachee River. Both of these rivers are classified as large supply watersheds. Criteria for the protection of large water supply watersheds are less stringent than those for small water supply watersheds because large drainage basins are less vulnerable to contamination by land use development. Stream corridors of the perennial tributaries within a seven-mile radius of a water supply reservoir must be protected through maintenance of a 100-foot buffer and exclusion of impervious surfaces, septic tanks, and septic tank drain fields within 150 feet of the stream banks.

In 2003, the Bear Creek Reservoir, located along the northern portion of the Oconee River in Jackson County, was completed, with an ultimate storage capacity of 4 billion gallons of raw water. Oconee County is permitted to withdraw 2.25 MGD for its residents. With the completion of the reservoir and associated treatment facility, an intake on the Oconee River was established, and for the first time the County became subject to the DNR Part 5 minimum protection standards for streambed protection. The County has identified streambed corridor on the Future Land Use Map and adopted appropriate standards recently in Section 1 of Article 9: Environmental Protection, of the updated 2006 Unified Development Code. In addition, the County is presently moving forward with the permit and construction phases of the Barnett Shoals Rd. Reservoir located on the Oconee River along the northeastern boundary of the County. This facility will also include intake fa-

cilities on the Oconee River, and therefore the minimum DNR stream corridor regulations for large water supply watershed areas will be applicable.

Flood Prone Areas

Development in flood prone areas is at risk for flood-related damage. These areas should be reserved for open space, limited development parks, overflow parking, and other uses where flood damage would be minimized.

Flood Hazard boundary maps have been prepared for the unincorporated areas of Oconee County and the towns of Watkinsville and North High Shoals. These maps indicate areas of potential flooding in the event of a 100-year flood. Oconee County and North High Shoals have participated in the National Flood Insurance program since 1989 and 1986 respectively. Bishop and Bogart do not participate in the Flood Insurance Program since no flood prone areas exist in these towns.

The County is bounded on the northeast by McNutt Creek, Middle Oconee River, and the Oconee River, and on the southwest by the Apalachee River. The majority of development has occurred since zoning and flood plain protection regulations have been enacted, so there is little development in the flood plains. Watkinsville is drained by Butler Creek and Porters Creek and has no reported incidents of flooding.

Potential damage areas include pastures and fields scattered along the larger streams in the County. The Soil Conservation Service Barber Creek watershed project is located in Oconee County, and includes four floodwater retarding structures. Since the annual damage due to flood damage is scattered and in non-developed areas, additional permanent flood damage measures may not be feasible.

As the County continues to develop, flood maps should be updated as increased urbanization can alter drainage patterns. Prior to 2000, revised F.I.R.M. maps were completed for portions of the Apalachee River. The County has been working with FEMA in an ongoing effort to update and revise the mapping for the entire County, and will continue to evaluate the need for additional updates in specific areas where more detailed data is necessary and where development may impact the historical flood elevations.

Wetlands

The Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior has mapped wetlands for Oconee County. Wetlands were identified by an analysis of aerial photographs based on vegetation, visible hydrology, and geography in accordance with "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States." The photographs typically reflect the conditions during a particular year and season in which they were taken. Therefore, a detailed site walkover, and historical analysis of a single site may result in the revision of wetland boundaries identified on these maps, as the accuracy of the map is limited at the local scale, and its use should be guided by local discretion. Wetland delineation should be performed for any development where wetlands may be an issue.

According to the mapping, Oconee County has a total of 1,822.4 acres of wetlands of which all are forested. The more extensive wetlands are associated with Rose Creek and the Apalachee and Oconee Rivers. Smaller wetlands are scattered throughout the County. The State of Georgia has provided criteria in O.C.G.A. Section 391-3-16, "Criteria for Wetlands Protection" which describes minimal considerations for wetlands protection in the land use planning process concerning wetlands identified in the DNR freshwater wetlands database. All freshwater wetlands identified by DNR are also protected by federal law and subject to the same minimal land use planning considerations defined by the State of Georgia.

Although all wetlands are protected under the law, the quality, extent, or present use of some wetlands may qualify them for special consideration regarding mitigation requirements if those wetlands must be altered or degraded. Wetlands in Oconee County, which are likely to require substantial or excessive mitigation, include:

1. Wetlands of Extensive Area:

- Rose Creek in southern Oconee County;
- Oconee River in southern Oconee County adjacent to the Oconee and Greene County line;
- Apalachee River adjacent to the Oconee/Morgan/Greene County line; near the Walton/Oconee County line near Highway 78; and adjacent to the Oconee/Barrow/Walton County line.

2. Wetland Classification of Significant Wildlife Habitat Value:

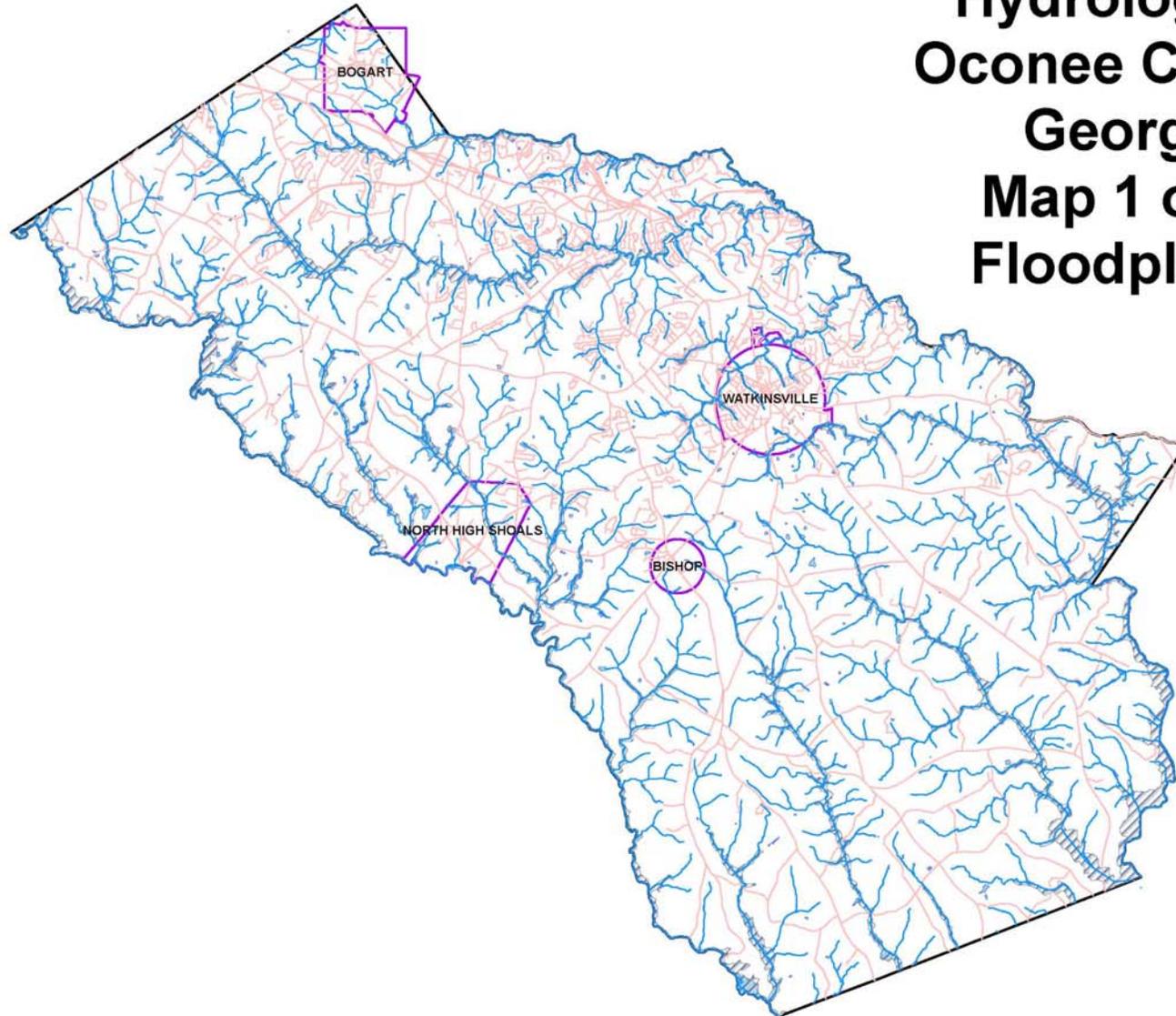
- Seasonally flooded deciduous forest;
- Temporarily flooded beaver pond;
- Semi-permanently flooded deciduous forest;
- Semi-permanently flooded deciduous scrub-shrub;
- Semi-permanently flooded deciduous scrub-shrub beaver pond;
- Permanently flooded river corridor.

3. Wetlands which are rare in the Piedmont, which support unique plant communities, or endangered plant or wildlife species.

To meet DNR standards, the County adopted a Wetland Protection Ordinance. In Section 4 of Article 9: Environmental Protection of the 2006 UDC. On the Future Land Use Map, NWI wetlands were removed from the supply of vacant land to determine suitable land for development.



Hydrology of Oconee County, Georgia Map 1 of 3: Floodplains



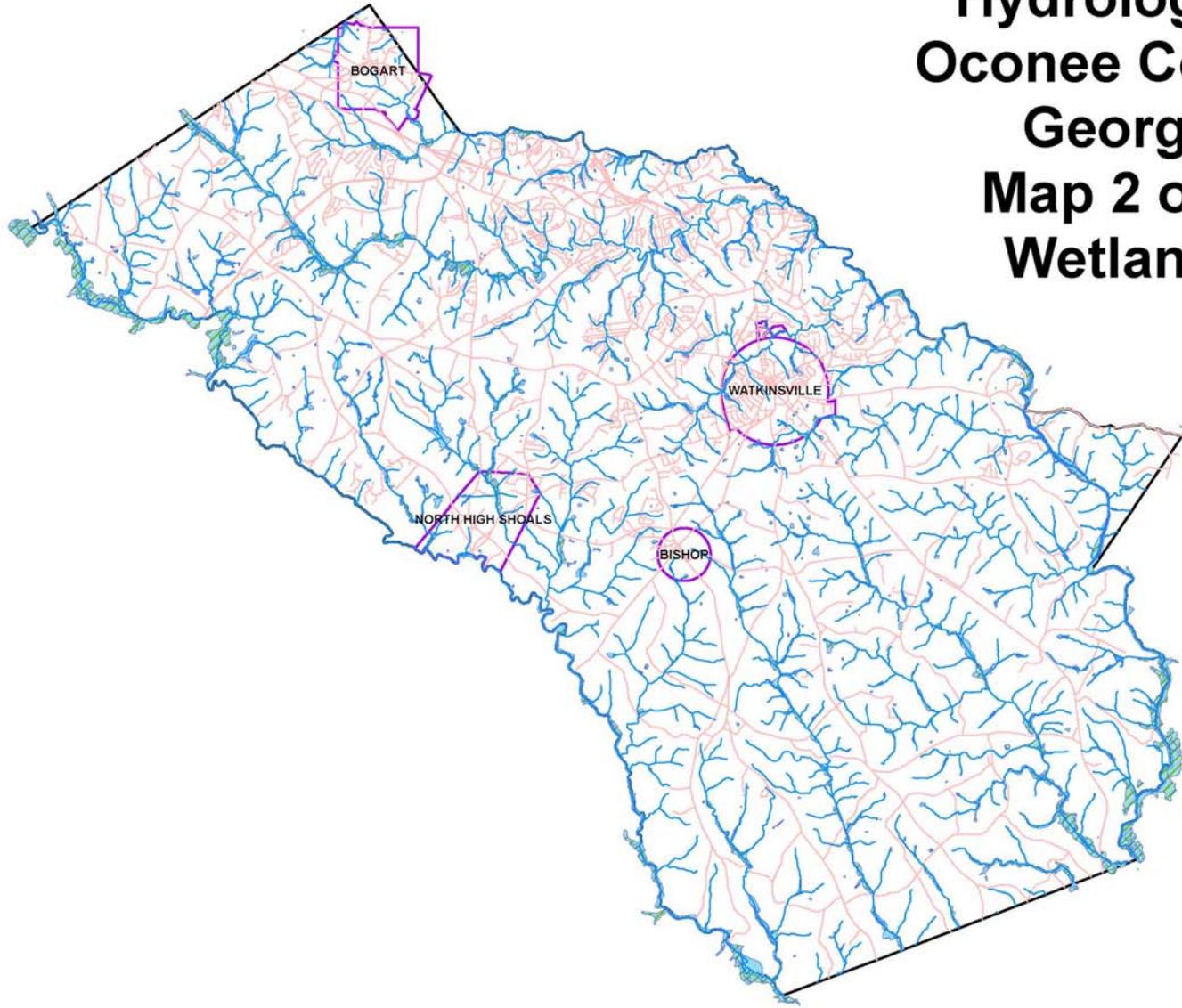
Legend

- Road Centerlines
- ▭ City Limits
- ▭ County Outline
- Rivers & Streams
- Lakes
- ▨ 100 Yr Floodplains

1 inch equals 10,000 feet
Produced Using OCGIS
June 12th, 2007



Hydrology of Oconee County, Georgia Map 2 of 3: Wetlands

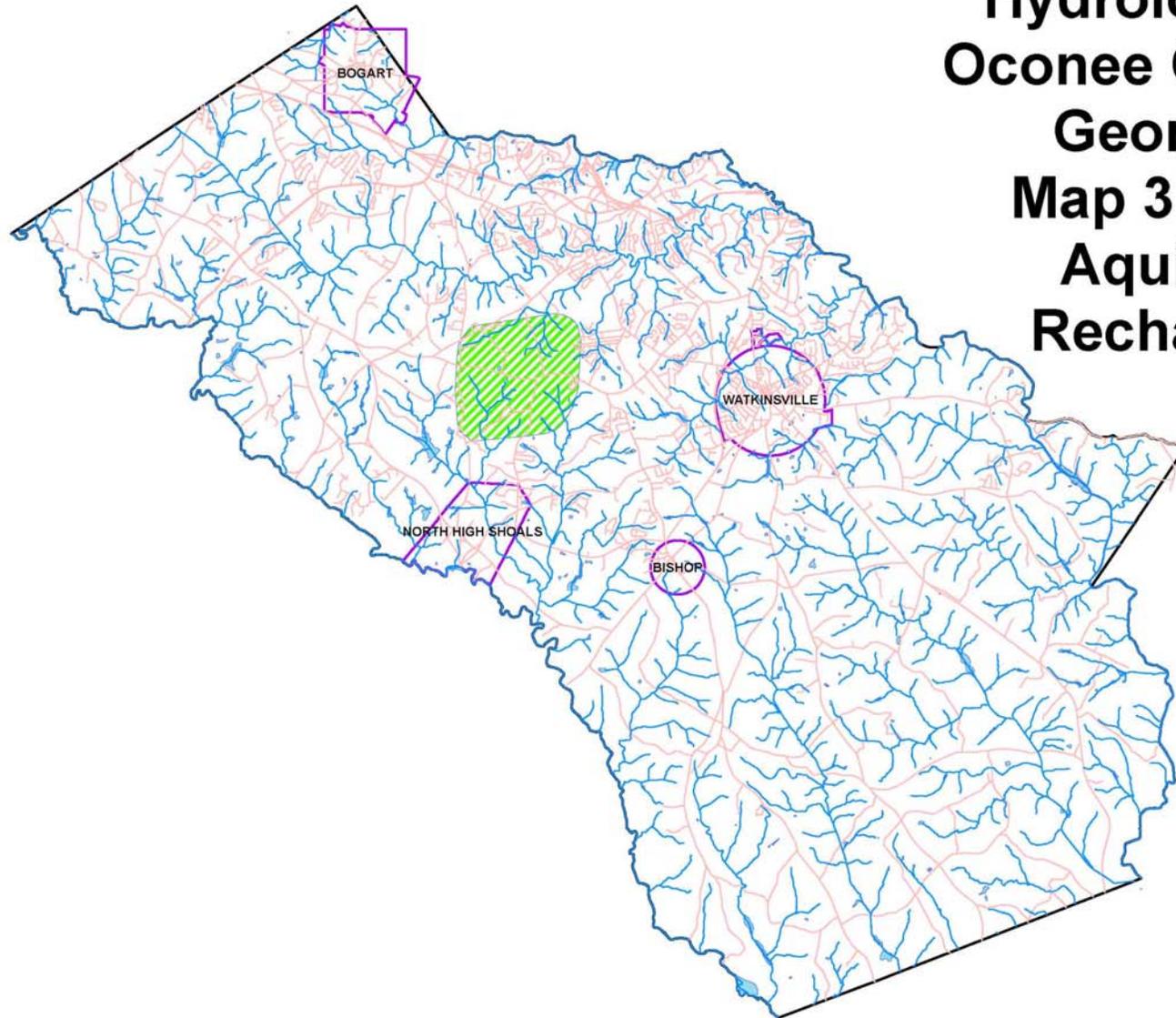


Legend

- Road Centerlines
- City Limits
- County Outline
- Rivers & Streams
- Wetlands
- Lakes

1 inch equals 10,000 feet
Produced Using OCGIS
June 12th, 2007

Hydrology of Oconee County, Georgia Map 3 of 3: Aquifer Recharge



Legend	
	Road Centerlines
	City Limits
	County Outline
	Rivers & Streams
	Lakes
	Aquifer Recharge

1 inch equals 10,000 feet
Produced Using OCGIS
June 12th, 2007

Groundwater Recharge Areas

According to information available, recharge areas are located in the unincorporated area of Oconee County between Watkinsville and the Eastville community. Other recharge areas include lands within the flood plains. DNR Part 5 Environmental Regulations regulate limitations on impervious surfaces and septic tank drain fields. Suitable land uses include low-density housing, parks, open space, or planned developments that retain a high percentage of permeable land surfaces.

On November 2, 1993, Oconee County adopted a Wellhead Protection Ordinance in response to state regulations for community water supply wells. Aquifer recharge areas in Oconee County are largely not subject to development pressures and are offered some level of protection through existing regulations. However, the County, in response to DCA requirements, adopted an Aquifer Recharge Area Protection Ordinance that complies with DNR minimum protection criteria.

■ **Environmentally Sensitive and Ecologically Significant Areas**

The greatest threat to threatened and endangered species in the County does not result directly from killing, hunting, poaching or extermination, but rather indirectly from loss of habitat. The 30,000 acre Redlands Wildlife Management Area, a portion of which is located in Oconee County, is managed for licensed hunting and provides primitive campsites. The existing wildlife management area belongs to private landowners or entity and is secured by short-term leases. Wildlife needs quiet consolidated core areas for breeding, hiding and foraging. These critical habitats are continually shrinking due to the expansion of residential and commercial development into the undeveloped lands. It is recommended that the County develop a strategy for acquisition of land, and/or extension of existing lease agreements on additional properties for WMAs for habitat conservation.

Plant, Animal and Wildlife Habitat

Before western settlers arrived around the early 1800's, forests and wetlands dominated Oconee County. These forests consisted of a combination of hardwoods and evergreens. Both wetlands and forest areas provided natural habitats to wildlife and animals. Due to growth and development, most of the old growth forests were lost by the turn of the century. Before adequate regulations were in place, many hundreds of acres of wetlands have been lost to development, construction and flooding by dams throughout the county. Wetlands provide habitat areas for fish, wildlife and vegetations that provide opportunities for study and education. While many of the county's remaining wetlands are well buffered with natural vegetation, there are several areas where development is encroaching. Several habitat protection measures are available through the State of Georgia.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has created the Georgia Natural Heritage Program to focus on natural elements of concern within the states. Elements of the program include plant species, animal species, or natural community types that are especially rare or threatened. In 1989, the Freshwater Wetlands and

Natural History Heritage (FWNHI) listed two element occurrences in Oconee County:

- Granite Outcrops – Specific species/communities observed are lichens, herbaceous vegetation, and shrub/scrub vegetation;
- Ocmulgee Shiner, ranked as rare or uncommon in the state.

The Oconee River Basin supports a diverse and rich mix of terrestrial and aquatic habitats and is home to a number of federally and state protected species. The following table identifies known (documented) Threatened and/or Endangered, Rare and Special Concern Animals and Plants in Oconee County as reported in the 1998 Oconee River Basin Management Plan prepared by DNR.

It is recommended that future site and development guidelines include assessments for these rare and endangered species. Once identified, site plans may be modified to accommodate human uses and natural habitat. The use of the Conservation Subdivision development standards is recommended in areas where sensitive habitats are found. It is recommended that the County develop an Environmental Checklist and Regulations for development for rare and endangered vertebrate, invertebrate and plant species, or areas of special habitat.

Table 4.7 Known Occurrences of Special Concern: Aquatic and Wetland Species in Oconee River, Upper Watershed North East Georgia				
Vertebrate Animals	U.S. Rank	State Status	Ranking	Habitat
Cyprinella Callisema [*] Ocmulgee shiner		S3		Flowing water of larger brown and blackwater streams over sand or rocky substrates
Cyprinella xanura: Altamaha Shiner		S2		Medium-sized streams in runs or pools over sand to gravel substrate
Haliaeetus leucocephalus: Bald Eagle	(PS,LT,PDL)	S2	E	Edges of lakes & large rivers; seacoasts
Hemidactylum scutum: Four toed salamander		S3		Swamps; boggy streams & ponds; hardwood forests
Hybognathus regius: Eastern silvery minnow		S3		Medium-sized streams to large rivers in pools or backwater areas
Moxostoma robustum: Robust Redhorse		S1S2	E	Medium to large rivers, shallow riffles to deep flowing water; moderately swift current
Myotis austroriparius: Southeastern myotis		S3		Caves & buildings near water
Myotis grisescens: Gray myotis	LE	S1	E	Caves with flowing water
Picoides borealis: Red-cockaded woodpecker	LE	S2	E	Open pine woods; pine savannas
Scartomyzon sp.1: Brassy jumprock		S3		Medium to large streams with rocky substrate
Plants				
Aesculus glabra: Ohio buckeye		S2		Mesic forests in circumneutral soil
Amphora schwemii : Schwein indigo bush		S2		Rocky upland woods
Amphianthus pusillus: pool sprite	LT	S2	T	Vernal pools on granite outcrops
Anemone berlandieri: Glade windflower		S1S2		Granite outcrop ecotones; openings over basic rock
Aster georgianus: georgia Aster	C	S2		Upland oak-hickory-pine forests and openings; sometimes with Echinacea laevigata or over amphibolite
Cybripedium acule: Pink ladyslipper		S4	U	Upland oak-hickory-pine forests; piney woods
Draba aprica: Open ground whitlow grass		S1S2	E	Granite and amphibolite outcrops, usually in redcedar litter
Elatine triandra: longstem waterwort		SE1		Old quarry pools on granite outcrops
Eriocaulon koemickianum : Dwarf pipewort		S1		Granite Outcrops
Hydrastis canadensis: Goldenseal		S2	E	Rich woods in circumneutral soil
Isoetes melanospora: Black spored quillwort	LE	S1	E	Vernal pools on granite outcrops
Isoetes tegetiformans: Mat forming quillwort	LE	S1	E	Vernal pools on granite outcrops
Listera australis: Southern twayblade		S2		Poorly drained circumneutral soils
Melanthium latifolium: Broadleaf bunchflower		S2		Mesic deciduous hardwood forests
Melanthium woodii: Ozark bunchflower		S2	R	Mesic hardwood forests over basic soils
Nestronia umbrellula (Indian Olive)		S2	T	Mixed with dwarf shrubby heaths in oak-hickory-pine woods; often in transition areas between flatwoods and uplands
Panax quinquefolius: American ginseng		S3		Mesic hardwood forests; cove hardwood forests
Pilularia americana: American pillwort		S2		Granite outcrops; seasonally exposed muddy shores
Quercus oglethorpensis: Oglethorpe Oak		S2	T	Broad River bottomlands; upland seepage swamps over Iredell and Enon soils with seasonally wet clay beds
Schisandra glabra: Bay starvine		S2	T	Rich woods on stream terraces and lower slopes
Scutellaria nervosa: Bottomland skullcap		S1		Floodplain forests
Sedum pusillum: Granite stonecrop		S3	T	Granite outcrops, often in mats of Hedwigia moss under Juniperus virginiana
Trepocarpus aethusae : Trepocarpus		S2		Floodplain forests
Waldsteinia lobata: Piedmont barren strawberry		S2	T	Stream terraces and adjacent gneiss outcrops
Legend				
State Rank	U.S. Rank	State Status		
S1 = Critically imperiled due to extreme rarity (<5)	LE = Endangered	T = Threatened		
S2 = Imperiled due to rarity (6-20)	LT = Threatened	E = Endangered		
S3 = Rare or uncommon	PE/PT = Candidate Species	R = Rare		
	PS = Partial Status	U= Uncommon		
	PDL = Listed			
Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Updated 10/22/2004				

Protected River Corridors

River corridors are the strips of land that flank the major rivers in Georgia. A “protected river” includes any perennial river or watercourse with an annual flow of at least 400 cubic feet per second as determined by the U.S.G.S. Portions of the Middle Oconee and Oconee Rivers have been designated by DNR as protected rivers under this definition and are subject to DNR Part 5 Regulations. Portions of these rivers are within the jurisdiction of the Oconee County government. The County participated in the preparation of the Oconee River Basin Management Plan, completed in 1998, which was produced by Georgia DNR’s Environmental Protection Division as part of Georgia’s River Basin Management Planning approach.

These rivers currently exist in a relatively natural state, or are used primarily for agricultural uses. In addition to protection of environmentally sensitive wildlife areas, the Oconee Rivers provide potential recreational, environmental and economic value.

It is not known if any archaeological resources exist within the river corridor, as the location of such resources is restricted in compliance with the Natural Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Executive Order 11593. Therefore, in order to evaluate whether a proposed project will endanger such resources, appropriate sources should be contacted. The specific location of known archeological resources can be verified on a project by project basis.

Oconee County made an independent nomination to the RIR program for the Apalachee River. Although the Apalachee River is under the 400-cfs threshold for mandated protection, it is considered one of the cleanest rivers in Georgia and may become a source of drinking water for the County in the future.

Although the County implements the DNR Part 5 standards for Streambed Protection, it also implements a number of regulatory tools including: requiring adherence to the updated Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance which prevents soil erosion and protects water quality both inside and above the mandated river protection areas; participating in the FEMA flood insurance map program, which is currently being updated; utilizing a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance which regulates development in floodways throughout the County; the Aquifer Recharge Area Protection Ordinance; Wetlands Protection Ordinance; and the Floodplain and Scenic Preservation Districts. These development and regulatory tools have been updated to insure compatibility with the minimum standards for river corridor protection, where applicable.

■ **Environmental Programs**

One of the County’s primary attractions is its rural character. Although the County favors growth to support its economic development objectives, it is not to be at the expense of its fundamental rural character. To address this issue, the County has adopted regulations under a Scenic Preservation District, which is intended to maintain and enhance the character of historic, archaeological, natural and scenic areas of interest in the County. As well, Conservation Subdivision provisions allow for reduced lot sizes and other provisions to cluster development away from significant natural resources. In the future when sewer services have

been extended into the southern portion of the County, and development potential for larger projects becomes a more realistic option, the County should consider the implementation of a Transfer of Development Rights Program (TDR) as a means of preservation of prime agriculture and forestlands.

Scenic Preservation District

The intent of the regulations within Section 1216 (SP-Scenic Preservation District) of the Oconee County Code is to maintain and enhance the character of significant historic, archaeological, natural and scenic areas of interest in the County. Such regulations are designed to provide for the preservation of the designated areas without unreasonably denying the right of private use of land. Permitted uses include:

- Natural, historic, archaeological, scenic areas; buildings and associated structures and digs which are necessary to the improvement, restoration, maintenance and study of such areas, so long as buildings and associated structures do not conflict with the intent of these regulations to preserve the special characteristics of these areas.
- Pasture lands and forests;
- Passive recreation areas;
- Public parks maintained by the County or the State of Georgia or the United States Government;
- Uses listed within the UDC.

Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

This ordinance provides density neutral cluster development for greater flexibility of design and environmental protections. Two main features of the ordinance are: 1) it is density neutral and encourages permanent preservation of significant areas; 2) it has broad authority to protect “wetlands, aquifers, topographical or soil features, marine and wildlife habitat; and other features having conservation values, including views, vistas, and indigenous vegetation.

It is the purpose of a conservation subdivision ordinance to provide flexibility in ensuring permanent preservation of open space within a master-planned residential development. A conservation subdivision design preserves open space while maintaining the prorated density of residential units for the overall site area. Neutral density is achieved by allowing smaller individual owned residential lots in neighborhoods that are surrounded by aesthetically and ecologically important areas. The goal of the design process is to identify and set aside conservation open space areas prior to the delineation of transportation and residential pod layouts. Open space areas include wetlands, river buffer zones, woodlands, playing fields, and meadows, depending on the resources of the land. Under the regulations, the County has established a target of 50 percent of the site for preservation. The intent of the conservation subdivision regulations is to:

- Preserve significant areas of land for ecological, recreational, and agricultural purposes in perpetuity;

- Encourage more efficient development of land consistent with public health, safety, and general welfare;
- Afford greater flexibility of design and placement of buildings and structures;
- Preserve and protect exceptional terrain, natural beauty, or sites of historic interest from inconsequential placement of homes, roadways, utilities and appurtenances;
- Preserve the Oconee and Apalachee Rivers and its streams and tributaries as natural resources;
- Prevent flooding, erosion, and water pollution, and protect the quality and quantity of drinking water;
- Preserve wetlands, aquifers, topographical or soil features, marine and wildlife habitat; and other features having conservation values, including views, vistas, and indigenous vegetation; and
- Promote a less sprawling form of development.

The County has targeted the use of conservation subdivisions for the permanent preservation of river corridors and their required buffer areas; non-riparian wetlands and floodplains; groundwater recharge areas; prime agricultural lands; and residential greenspace.

Environmental Regulations

The County has a number of environmental regulations, including Article 9 of the 2006 UDC, which contains standards, regulations and development policies that guide the protection of the County's significant environmental resources in adherence with DNR Article 5 Minimum Standards. Topics include: River and Stream Protection; Watershed Protection; Aquifer Area Recharge Protection; Wetlands Protection; Natural Resource Conservation Areas; and Conservation and Natural Resources Easements. These regulations can restrict and establish the types and intensity of uses within these sensitive areas, but do not establish permanent protection.

Zoning and Subdivision Standards

The County has zoning regulations in place that directs development to suitable areas. In addition to the regulations of the UDC, the use of the Floodplain Zone standards and the updated Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, the Conservation Use Exemption program, the updated Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance; the Scenic Preservation Zone, Conservation Subdivision standards as described previously Master Planned Development open space requirements, and adoption of the minimum DNR standards where specific ordinances have not been adopted will govern the amount and type of development that can occur within these important features within the County, but the regulations alone do not ensure permanent protection. The County has been working to identify areas within its Agricultural zones that qualify for preservation as greenspace and is working toward their permanent protection.

Where a subdivision is not processed as a conservation subdivision, the UDC may stipulate that certain areas are not buildable and should be set aside as open space. For example, a tree buffer along a road frontage may be required intact to meet the UDC for road setbacks. These areas are not considered permanently preserved (though some may warrant such a status if it meets the County's green-space preservation goals).

Non-regulatory programs include incentive programs, citizen involvement efforts, and technical assistance and education.

Restrictive Covenant

The County may choose to record with the property a permanent restrictive covenant that benefits the public through the preservation of an environmentally significant resource. These may be used to permanently preserve vegetative buffers along the County's streams and rivers.

Fee Simple Property Acquisition

The County may choose to purchase a property using funds from the general revenue fund, or another grant program for the permanent preservation of green-space. Fee simple acquisition may be used for the acquisition of: buffer areas (both 100 foot and 50 foot) along river corridors; non-riparian wetlands and floodplains; passive recreation parkland; and significant historical resources.

Conservation Use Program

Tax benefits for land conservation are provided through the Conservation Use Program. Under this program, the State of Georgia offers a tax incentive to qualifying property owners who wish to enter into a conservation covenant. Owners of qualified property must enter into a covenant with the state stipulating that the land will be maintained in its current condition for a period of 10 years. In exchange for the covenant, ad valorem tax will be assessed on the value of the property's current use rather than the fair market value. Strict penalties are enforced if the covenant is broken before the 10-year agreement expires. Covenants can be re-established after each 10-year period. According to the Oconee County Tax Assessor, as of June 2006, there were 1,519 parcels participating under this program for a total of 61,103.7 acres.

Conservation Easements

The use of conservation easements may be of voluntary nature through land donations from private landowners, or through the purchase of development rights by the County using general revenue or other grant programs. The County may also choose to convey a conservation easement to a land trust on a publicly owned property for recreation purposes. The County has identified the use of Conservation Easements in the preservation and protection of river corridors; non-riparian wetlands and floodplains; prime agricultural areas; residential greenspace; passive recreational parkland; and historic resources.

Under the Georgia Uniform Conservation Easement Act, conservation easements are non-possessory, in-perpetuity interests in real property created for any of the following purposes:

- Retaining or protecting natural, scenic, or open-space use;
- Assuring the availability of land for agricultural, forest, recreational, or open-space use;
- Protecting natural resources;
- Maintaining or enhancing air or water quality; or
- Preserving historical, architectural, archeological, or cultural aspects of real property.

A Conservation Easement is a legal agreement a property owner makes to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on the property. Each conservation easement's restrictions are tailored to the particular property and to the interests of the individual landowner.

Oconee River Land Trust

The Oconee River Land Trust is a private, nonprofit organization, incorporated in 1993. Its mission is to preserve open space in the Oconee River Watershed. They are committed to preserving many different types of land, including woods, stream corridors, wetlands, wildlife habitat, productive farms and forests, historic sites and scenic vistas.

The organization's first priority is protection of critically important land along the Oconee River and its tributaries. Protection is vitally needed for water quality and supply; for the river's scenic and recreational qualities; for wildlife habitat and connecting corridors; and to support economic prosperity and sustainable growth in this region.

The Oconee River Land Trust was formed by a group of volunteers whose first priority was to help the local government develop a protected Greenway along the North and Middle Oconee Rivers through Athens. One of more than 1,200 land trusts in America, the Oconee River Land Trust has expanded steadily over its first decade, building a solid foundation of experience and expertise. A conservation easement is one important tool that the Oconee River Land Trust uses to accomplish its goal of preserving open space in the Oconee River watershed. It is a popular tool with landowners because it makes it possible to permanently protect privately owned land without giving up ownership and use of the land.

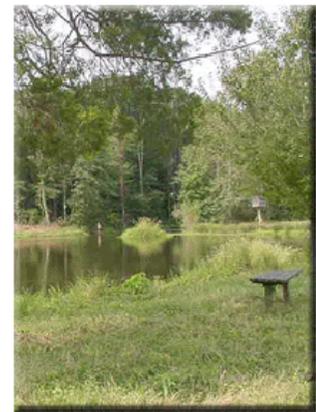
The County has been working with the Land Trust toward the more permanent preservation of any significant habitat land adjacent to the Oconee River.

Oconee River Resource, Conservation and Development Council

The Oconee River RC&D Council Area is comprised of 14 northeast Georgia counties and is one of 11 RC&D Council Areas in the state. The Oconee River RC&D Council strives to represent the diversity of its population and land uses with the projects it supports. Diversity is significant to the Council considering it serves the metro and suburban areas of Athens, Commerce, Milledgeville, and Monroe, while supporting extensive agricultural land use activities associated with poultry, beef and dairy operations throughout the 14 county area.

A significant project of the RC&D Council is the David Henry Hardigree Wildlife Sanctuary. In 1992, Vivian Ward, granddaughter of David Henry Hardigree, and the Oconee River RC&D entered into an agreement that created a wildlife sanctuary on approximately 83 acres just south of Watkinsville in Oconee County. The agreement also provides for Council funding of the Polly Hardigree Ward Scholarship, which provides college tuition to a deserving Oconee County student. The land under agreement not only serves as a sanctuary for wildlife, but is also a working agricultural farm used to grow hay, oats, wheat, and other grasses and grains that attract wildlife to the site. The Council has developed a wildlife management plan that will be implemented over a number of years.

Immediate efforts in the sanctuary have focused on planning and planting wildlife habitat, and providing educational and training opportunities for youth and USDA personnel. The Council participates in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and Wildlife Incentives for Nongame and Game Species (WINGS) Project developed by Georgia's Two Rivers RC&D Council to accomplish its goals. Current focus points include wildlife food plots, deer feeders, wildflower plots, bird and duck boxes, and a butterfly garden. Planning is underway to construct a pavilion to provide a comfortable setting for hosting various educational and social events organized by the Council.



Georgia Adopt-A Stream

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream is a citizen involvement and water quality-monitoring program focusing on nonpoint source pollution. Volunteers adopt a section of stream, river, lake or wetland for one year. During that time, they evaluate water quality and habitat conditions, pick-up litter, and increase community awareness of these resources. Georgia Adopt-A-Stream provides education on nonpoint source pollution and protection of stream and river corridors. Currently more than 5,000 volunteers participate in individual and community sponsored Adopt-A-Stream Programs.

River Care 2000 Program

River Care 2000 is a conservation program established by Governor Zell Miller in September 1995. One key objective of this program is acquisition of river corridor lands for purposes of protection and to forestall unwise development in flood prone areas. The Coordinating Committee has approved procedures for three

types of projects - Riverway Demonstration Projects, which improve public access to a river with scenic and recreation uses and protect natural and historic resources by acquiring and managing land in the river corridor; Significant Sites, tracts of land the DNR will acquire and operate as traditional state public-use facilities and Restoration Sites, which are tracts of land the state will identify, acquire, and manage to reduce nonpoint source pollution.

Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) Land Acquisition

DNR's Wildlife Resources Division began a land acquisition program in 1987 to acquire 60,000 acres of additional lands for Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Public Fishing Areas (PFAs). This initiative was funded by a \$30 million 20-year obligation bonds to be paid off by hunting and fishing license increases and WMA permit fees.

Nonpoint Source Education: Project WET (Water Education for Teachers)

A report outlining a plan for nonpoint source education in Georgia was completed in 1994. Titled Georgia Urban Water body Education Plan and Program, the report laid out nonpoint education strategies for seven target audiences—general public, environmental interest organizations, civic associations, educators, business associations, local government officials and state government officials. EPD initially targeted its education efforts towards educators and students in grades K to 12. Covering impacts on ground water and surface water, the curriculum addresses the following nonpoint sources: agriculture, forestry, urban and construction. EPD began implementing Project WET in December 1996. In 1997, WET Facilitator Training Workshops were successfully completed in Alpharetta, Macon and Savannah, Georgia. Currently there are 86 Project WET Facilitators in Georgia.

Greenprint Georgia

The Greenprint Georgia program is an innovative way to help local governments protect their critical natural and cultural resources and build enduring, prosperous communities. The Trust for Public Lands is helping Georgia communities create practical greenprints that not only protect important natural resources—like drinking water, watersheds, wetlands, parks and other open space, but also the special places that define an area's history and unique character.

Public Education

In order to attain its greenspace and conservation goals, public approval of the program, as well as financial and land donations will be necessary. The County continues to work with local conservation groups to promote the greenspace and conservation program to local residents and inform them of how they can participate to help the County achieve its overall goal.

Historic and Cultural Resource

■ Historic and Cultural Resource Overview

Historic resources include landmark buildings, historic resources and sites, commercial and residential districts, historic rural resources, archaeological and cultural sites and the historic environment in which they exist. Historic resources serve as a visual reminder of the community's past, providing a link with its cultural heritage and a better understanding of the people and events that helped shape its development. Preservation of these important resources makes it possible for them to continue to play an integral role in the community. Currently the County has a number of sites and districts on the National Register of Historic Places, and other properties, which are potentially eligible or are important to the community's heritage. Resources cited in the NEGRDC Comprehensive Plan include: the Antebellum Trail; the Old Jail in Bishop; the Iron Horse; the Eagle Tavern; the Elder's Mill Covered Bridge; Bethabara Baptist Church (1843); the Antioch Christian Church (1822); Haygood House (1827); Ashford Memorial Church (1893) and the homesite of Jeannette Rankin (first woman in Congress). This is not a comprehensive list; rather, the above sites may be of particular tourism value to the County.

Historical and Cultural Activities

There is substantial community support for preservation and protection of selected historic resources in Oconee County. In 1993, the Oconee County Board of Commissioners created by resolution a "Historic Sites and Tourism Advisory Committee of Citizens," which is a subcommittee of the Recreation and Cultural Affairs Committee. This committee consists of eight members that meet monthly. The duties of the committee include the identification of significant historic sites and resources and advising the County relative to the preservation, restoration and promotion of these resources.

Through the on-going efforts of the subcommittee, County staff, City representatives and the Board of Commissioners, a number of historic sites and structures have been better identified and others have been protected and/or restored and are now promoted as sites of interest. Examples of these efforts include:

- Secure state and local funding for the completion of the restoration of the Elder Covered Bridge (Pre-1927 structure) on Elder Mill Road (restoration completed in 1998);
- Restoration and maintenance for the Eagle Tavern (circa 1789-1801) in downtown Watkinsville;
- Enacting a Zoning Ordinance amendment (5/5/98) for the protection of the Daniel House (circa 1820) on Daniels Bridge Road;
- Application to the Georgia Department of Transportation for a Scenic Byway Designation including 27+/- miles of roadway within Oconee County and the cities of Watkinsville, Bishop and the Farmington Community, which will

showcase numerous sites and buildings including National Register Historic Structures and districts (1999);

- Preservation and renovation of the historic Old Jail in downtown Watkinsville (circa 1901-1906) for continued use by County agencies (1998-99);
- Identification, through the now terminated Georgia Historic Marker Program, of various sites in Oconee County;
- Rezone the cemetery property on Ruth Jackson Road, where an 1812 Congressman is buried, in order to protect the site by ordinance.

Business groups, the arts and crafts community, and various city and county agencies support preservation efforts as both an asset to the cultural heritage and the continued economic growth of the county.

The cities may actively work in concert with the County, as does the City of Watkinsville, or independently toward preservation of their individual resources.

Archaeological Landmarks and Sites

There are no known archaeological landmarks or sites of significance in Oconee County. Potential but undiscovered sites include Native American burial grounds and prehistoric habitation sites, the latter of which tend to be located along a stream or river. Such sites, when found, are protected by State and federal laws.

■ Federally Registered Sites

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect our historic and archaeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that are significant to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

National Register properties are distinguished by the fact that they have been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards. These criteria recognize the accomplishments of all people who have contributed to the history and heritage of the United States and are designed to help state and local governments, federal agencies, and others identify important historic and archaeological properties worthy of preservation and consideration in planning and development decisions.

There are nine properties/areas, which have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

**Table 5.1
National Register Listed Properties
Oconee County**

District	Location	City	Date Listed
Bishop Historic District	Roughly along Price Mill, Old Bishop Rds., and US 441 within the Bishop city limits	Bishop	5/10/1996
William Daniel House	Epps Bridge Rd., 3 1/2 mi. NW of Watkinsville	Watkinsville	2/13/1995
Eagle Tavern	U.S. 129	Watkinsville	5/13/1970
Elder's Mill Covered Bridge	4/5 mi. S of jct. of Elder Mill Rd. and GA 15	Watkinsville	5/5/1994
Farmers and Citizens Supply Company	U.S. 129	Watkinsville	7/2/1987
Abe Jones House	2411 Hog Mountain Rd.	Watkinsville	1/28/1994
South Main Street Historic District	S. Main St. and Harden Hill Rd.	Watkinsville	3/26/1979
Oconee County Courthouse	23 N. Main Street	Watkinsville	2/28/1980
Durham Homeplace	Located near city - burned 11/2000	Watkinsville	3/15/2000
Source: Northeast Georgia Regional Comprehensive Plan, Appendix A-5			

Potential Historic Resources Eligible for National Register Listing

There are three districts and one area comprised of individual buildings in the County that were identified in the 1990 Preservation Plan as potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register listing. These include:

- North High Shoals Historic District – The North High Shoals area contains concentrations of historic resources related to numerous historical themes during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The actual shoals in the Apalachee River provide a natural resource used by Native Americans. The Apalachee River also fostered the rise of the mills in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The North High Shoals area also witnessed the organization of the North High Shoals Baptist and united Methodist Churches that provide historical evidence related to religion. The Walker Harris Institute and a school on Jefferson Street served the community’s education needs in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Commercial structures are also evident. The potential district lies along County Road 268 and CR 212 that is bound by the Apalachee River to the south, CR 196 to the west, and CR 101 to the north. Funding for the nomination of this District to the National Register was allocated in the 2002-2007 STWP. The nomination has been made.
- Bogart Residential and Commercial Historic District – The town of Bogart contains late 19th and early 20th century historic resources. The residential buildings consist primarily of Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, and Craftsman style architecture. These buildings exist on both sides of the railroad line and State Route 8 within the town limits. A commercial block of circa 1880’s commercial buildings, for the most part, is single story buildings. Because both types of buildings developed because of the railroad, a district nomination could be pursued, as resources have historical significance related to transportation, commerce and architecture. The City has begun undertaking a downtown revitalization effort, with the addition of landscaping, securing DOT grants for sidewalk improvements, and the eventual nomination of the downtown area as a National Register district in order to pursue funding options for restoration

and enhancement of the historic buildings. It is anticipated that the nomination will occur by 2010.

- Farmington Depot and Historic District – The Farmington community includes residential and commercial resources related to the town’s mid-19th century beginnings and later development. Most of the structures are located in the central activity area, with the old depot and Freeman Creek Church lying outside the central portion. The historic resources possess historical significance related to transportation, agriculture, commerce, religion and architecture.

■ Historic Districts

Preservation of character-defining elements of historic buildings is a priority within the historic districts within the County. There are currently two: The South Main Street Historic District in Watkinsville and Bishop Historic District in the City of Bishop.

South Main Street Historic District

This historic district located on South Main Street and Harden Hill Road in the City of Watkinsville is significant for its architecture, entertainment and recreational venues and landscape architecture. The district encompasses approximately one-half mile and includes approximately 38 residential buildings. This district was developed during the times of 1825-1849 and 1900-1924 and represents styles of Queen Anne, Greek revival and Gothic Revival architecture. Its historic function was domestic and religious. This district was added to the National Register in 1979.

Bishop Historic District

This historic district is roughly bounded along Price Mill, Old Bishop Roads and US 441 in the City of Bishop, and includes approximately 175 acres of private and public property. This district built by D.H. Huff and Howard Ash is significant for its architecture, commerce, community planning and development and transportation, spanning a period from 1880 to the 1940’s. Building styles are a variety of Colonial Revival, Queen Anne and Classical Revival. The district currently functions as a commerce/trade, domestic, religious and social area. This district was added to the National Register in 1996.

■ Historic Sites

Oconee County Courthouse

The very first courthouse was constructed of logs in 1801. Oconee’s second courthouse was built at this location in 1826. Fire destroyed the building and many nearby businesses in 1887. The next courthouse overlooked an oval park with a well and gas lanterns at both ends. A dirt road circled the park. In 1938 this courthouse also burned. The courthouse standing today was built in 1939 under the Public Works Administration of Franklin Roosevelt. The Courthouse

was recently renovated in 1998. The courthouse was added to the National Register in 1984.

Elder Mill Covered Bridge

Just four miles south of Watkinsville on Highway 15, the Elder Mill Covered Bridge (built 1897) carries traffic across the rushing Rose Creek. The bridge was built by Nathaniel and David Richardson and was moved to this picturesque site in the early 1920s. This bridge is one of only a few bridges in Georgia that still carries traffic without help from underlying steel beams. This property was added to the National Register in 1994.

William Daniell House

William Daniell built this dwelling in the Colonial Revival style in 1810, built on property he purchased in 1801. This dwelling is an example of a typical architectural homestead. The property includes the original house, a secondary structure and agricultural outbuildings. This residence was added to the National Register in 1995.

Durham Homeplace

This agricultural homestead is located on Watson Springs Road in Watkinsville. This dwelling place is representative of a typical agricultural homestead and includes the residence, agricultural outbuildings and agricultural fields. This homestead was added to the National Register in 2000.

Abe Jones House

This residence is located on Hog Mountain Road in Watkinsville. This residence is adaptively being reused as a medical office.

Ashford Manor

Ashford Manor estate is an 1893 Victorian manor house with cottage and landscaped gardens on five acres overlooking Watkinsville's Main Street.

Farmers and Citizens Supply Company Block

This commercial block is located on US 129 in Watkinsville. It was built between 1900-1924 and has held several types of trades, including a department store. It was added to the national register in 1987.

Central School House

This two-story structure is typical of rural independent schools in Georgia prior to the 1950s. It is located on Colham Ferry Road south of Carson Graves Road.

The Old Watkins School Building

The original building at the end of School Street in downtown Watkinsville was constructed in 1902 and served as public school housing grades 1 through 11 up until the mid 1950's at which time a new high school was constructed on Mars Hill Road. The OCAF Art Center is currently researching the history of this school, and would like to preserve the building as a community cultural arts center.

Eagle Tavern Museum and Welcome Center

The Eagle Tavern is one of the earliest surviving structures in the County. The Eagle tavern was built before 1801 and possibly as early as 1794 when Watkinsville was a frontier town on the edge of Creek and Cherokee territories. It is believed by some that this site was once called Fort Edwards and served as a gathering place for early settlers who needed protection from attacks by many Creek and Cherokee Indians who flourished in this area. Later, the tavern served as stagecoach stop between Milledgeville and Athens for over 100 years.

There are a number of legends that surround the existence of the Eagle Tavern. Some claim that the University of Georgia was not established in the town of Watkinsville because the potential close proximity of the Eagle Tavern was deemed inappropriate for an institution of higher education. Although students were forbidden to come to the Tavern in Watkinsville, student political gatherings often took place there. Many who visited the Eagle Tavern proclaimed it to have "good food, pure water, and commodious stables." Still standing on its original site, the infamous Eagle Tavern remains a "diamond in the rough" untouched by urban sprawl and modern times.

Many travelers stopped at the Eagle Tavern and, in 1839, the need for additional sleeping space resulted in the addition of 16 rooms to the original "four-down, four-up" structure. Stage passengers were given a private room but often shared beds. For 50 pence, a traveler received feed for his horse, a meal, one spirit, and a place to sleep. Meals at the Eagle Tavern were said to be excellent, as were the accommodations.

In 1963, the threat of demolition became a reality. Lanier Billups, who bought the property in 1925, deeded it to the State in hopes that it would preserve and restore the historic Eagle Tavern. A grant by the Governor of Georgia in 1963 provided \$25,000 to restore the Eagle Tavern and save it from destruction.

■ **Historic Markers**

In 1996, the Georgia legislature did not approve continuous funding for the Georgia Historical Marker Program. The marker repair shop was eliminated and funds were not appropriated for erecting any new markers in the state. The program, as it now stands, only provides maintenance for existing markers.

Jeannette Rankin's "First Woman to Serve in Congress" Home

This marker marks the site of a renovated farmhouse and 44 acres purchased in 1933 by Jeannette Rankin, who was the first woman to serve in Congress in 1916

(elected in Montana). The home was used as a seasonal residence that became her “shady grove.”

Courthouse Historic Marker

This marker located on the lawn of the courthouse describes the birth and evolution of Oconee County.

Eagle Tavern

A Georgia Historical Marker is located outside of the Eagle Tavern on U.S. 129/441/Main Street in Watkinsville. It cites, “The Eagle Tavern, or Hotel, was the center of social and political life in Watkinsville for more than a hundred years. It was saved from destruction in 1934 by Lanier Richardson Billups of Decatur, GA, who then deeded it to the State in 1956.” The remainder of the marker describes the architecture and layout of the tavern, and its history of renovations and restoration.

The Stoneman Raid

This Georgia Historical Marker is also located in front of the Eagle Tavern. It describes the events leading to the looting of supplies in Watkinsville by one of General George Stoneman’s brigades on his way to destroy the armory and other government works in Athens.

Birthplace of Bishop A.G. Haygood and Miss Laura A. Haygood

This marker identifies the birthplace of Bishop Atticus Green Haygood in 1839 and his sister in 1845, located on U.S. 129/441, 0.4 miles south of the Eagle Tavern. Both, important figures in the history of the County, are buried on this site, now the Methodist parsonage.

■ **Cemeteries**

Cemeteries provide valuable information about the historic evolution of a specific area. Dates and historical details may reveal the economic prosperity of different eras within the delineated area.

Jackson Cemetery

Jackson Cemetery is located on Ruth Jackson Road. As one of Oconee County’s Historic landmarks, you will find headstones from individuals such as Honorable Zadoc Cook and William Crow. The Honorable Zadoc Cook was a member of the Georgia General Assembly from 1806-1824 and a member of the United States Congress from 1816-1819. Mr. Cook passes away August 3, 1863. William Crow was a volunteer in the Confederate Army serving in Cobb’s Legion under Col. T.R.R. Cobb and was with General Robert E. Lee at the surrender. Mr. Crow passed away January 4, 1882.

Oak Hill Cemetery has been serving the needs of the residents of Cartersville since 1838. The Cemetery was acquired in 1850 from the former Ebenezer Methodist Church and is now owned and operated by the City of Cartersville as a perpetual care cemetery.

■ **Impact of Development on Historic Integrity or Cultural Significance of Resources**

Currently historic, archaeological and rural resources in Oconee County have limited protection. Only those resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places have formal protection. However, this protection is minimal and only relates to impacts of state or federally funded projects. Negative impact is mitigated but mitigation does not preclude demolition if the resource is judged expendable. The County has no local historic resource protection ordinance, although protection measures are now written into zone change requests. As a result, many resources deemed to have features of historic integrity may be lost to new development. On the other hand, cultural and historic resources are of major importance to the County and its Cities as shown through preservation efforts already in place, such as the Central School House.

Census Information

The Census provides information relative to historic preservation. Information on houses built before 1939 estimates the number of historic houses, whereas data on homes built prior to 1960 includes homes older than 50 years, or approaching 50 years, which is the criteria used to determine a historic resource. A comparison among data from 1970 to 2000 helps demonstrate the effect of time on older structures, or the “attrition rate.” In Oconee County, the twenty-year period between 1970 and 1990 resulted in the reduction of 550 “historic” houses, or a 52 percent attrition rate. Between 1990 and 2000, 22 homes built prior to 1939 were lost, from 513 in 1990 to 491 in 2000. However, not all homes built prior to 1939 are historically significant. As well, a number of historically significant structures are commercial or industrial in nature, and therefore not reflected in these counts. Interestingly, the 2000 Census reports a numerical increase in the number of homes built between 1940 and 1949, and 1950 and 1959, although this increase is slight.

1976 Historic Resources Survey and 1990 Preservation Plan

A historic resources survey was conducted in the County in 1976, which identified 400 historic buildings, including:

- 63 in Watkinsville;
- 11 in the Farmington community;
- 27 in Bishop;
- 16 in North High Shoals; 6 in the Eastville community, and
- 30 in Bogart.

By era: 50 buildings were categorized as Antebellum (pre-1865); 200 were categorized as Post-Bellum (1865-1900); and 140 were categorized as early 20th century (1900-1939). However, the 1976 inventory did not include relevant buildings or sites with construction dates of post 1920, thus many potentially historic buildings in the County remain unidentified and undocumented, as the survey is currently 30 years old, lending these structures to be over 80 years in age. The 1976 survey is considered a more accurate number for historic preservation as compared to Census data since it qualified individual buildings according to their historical significance. A Preservation Plan was conducted in 1990, which reviewed the status of the structures inventoried by the 1976 Survey. The Plan estimated that during the approximate 15 year period between 1976 and 1990, approximately 10 percent of the structures had been demolished and approximately 10 percent of the buildings were either abandoned or vacant, resulting in approximately 40 buildings lost and the potential for 40 additional buildings to have been lost. If this percentage is applied to the period between 1990 and 2005, it is possible that another 34 structures could have been lost to new development, although recent preservation efforts on the part of the County and its cities may have affected that potential.

To enhance preservation protection, it is recommended that the County undertake an updated Historic Resources survey to determine the existence or loss of structures previously listed in the 1976 inventory, as well as identify significant resources from the period of 1920 to 1956. Also, it is recommended that the County prepare a Historic Preservation Ordinance or Overlay, including the process of disposition of properties identified in the survey, and a listing of properties potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register. The Ordinance or Overlay could be written to be applicable to the cities or easily adaptable by the cities for adoption. As well, utilization of the Scenic Preservation designation on selected non-urban historic resources should be amplified to ensure additional protection from adjacent land use incompatibilities.

■ **Assessment**

Oconee County's history includes several periods, including pre-history or Native American history; early frontier from circa 1780-1820; and the County's early development during the 19th Century. It also has many early 20th Century historic resources. Many of the County's resources are associated with historic themes, such as industry (i.e. mills); transportation (i.e. stagecoach routes and railroad lines); and agriculture. The majority of the County's remaining resources reflect the post Civil War period of development (1865-2000) reflected in specific building and architectural types. A Historical Resources Survey conducted in 1976 inventoried the County's existing historical resources dating up to 1920. However, the 1976 Inventory is now outdated, although a Preservation Plan was prepared in 1990 to examine the historic resources and opportunities related to tourism and other economic benefits.

According to the Census, over 50 percent of the homes constructed prior to 1939 had been lost to development, abandonment, or neglect between the years of 1970 and 1990. The 1990 Preservation Plan estimated that approximately 10 percent of the 400 historic sites inventoried by the 1976 Historic Resources Survey have been lost between 1976 and 1990. Although the County, in concert with the City

of Watkinsville, had taken steps to nominate three sites and the South Main Street Historic District in Watkinsville prior to 1990, the County has become even more proactive in protecting its historic resources, starting with the 1990 Preservation Plan.

The County plans to increase its involvement by:

- Increasing the role of historic sites protection through trusts, outside donations, and participation in identifying and registering sites with the National Register.
- In addition to historic resource protection criteria required for state and federally funded transportation projects, the Board of Commissioners currently incorporates historic preservation measures into rezone requests, which might entail a rezone to the Scenic Preservation District.
- The County and the Citizen's Committee continue to monitor sites for protection.
- As of 2006, the Committee is working toward the renovation of the upper story of the Old Elder Mill (the lower floor has already been restored into living quarters) and listing of the structure on the National Register.

It is recommended that the County, in concert with the subcommittee, integrate the following activities into the 2003-2007 STWP, or within the 2008-2012 STWP:

- Pursue the nomination of the Farmington historic district, in conjunction with the Freeman Creek Church, and the old depot, to the National Register listing.
- In conjunction with the cities, seek funding for the conduct of an updated Historic Resources Inventory.
- Consider the adoption of a Historic Resources Ordinance or Overlay Zone.
- Review the locations of existing historic resources and rezone appropriate properties to the Scenic Preservation District designation.

Bishop Assessment

The Mayor and Council are dedicated to preserving, rehabilitating and protecting the City's historic resources. Accomplishments include:

- The City successfully obtained the listing of the downtown area as a Historic District on the National Register in 1996.
- The City has purchased and rehabilitated the Chandler-Marable house for adaptive re-use as a meeting space and community facility.
- The City allocates funds to maintain the Bishop Well and Well House (circa 1890).
- The City maintains the present City Hall (formerly built as a jail in 1939).
- The City funded the writing of an award winning history book, which documents historic sites in the City, and continues to promote the book.
- New City limit signs have been erected that promote the historic district.
- The City updates zoning and subdivision regulations on a continual basis.

- The City promotes the use of state and federal tax-incentive programs to property owners for maintenance and rehabilitation of properties.

Within the designated historic district and city limits, few structures are incompatible with the historic designation. It is not determined that these design incompatibilities would have a significant impact on historic resources. The Mayor and Council of the City, using legal zoning and subdivision regulations, strive to ensure that incompatible land uses or other activities are precluded from adversely affecting the historic nature of the City. However, these measures do not offer permanent protection of these resources, particularly in light of the recent and projected growth of the County and the area surrounding Bishop in particular.

Bogart Assessment

The City of Bogart contains several historic properties, primarily residential, and the level of community support for the preservation and protection of these resources is high. However, a number of the resources identified on the 1976 survey have been lost through new development or reuse of the property. Efforts to save these properties were initiated on each of these properties individually. However, efforts to retain these historic properties have been unsuccessful and they have for the most part been lost to commercial development. At this time, there are no management measures in effect to protect these resources other than traditional zoning. The City, in conjunction with the citizen's committee, has begun a downtown revitalization effort, which includes active pursuit of a nomination of a residential and commercial historical district to the National Register listing.

North High Shoals Assessment

The City of North High Shoals supports the preservation and protection of its historic resources, and formed a local historic society prior to 2000. However, they do not have any management measures in place to protect their historic resources. The City has several activities underway, including the intent to nominate the North High Shoals Historic District to the National Register, and the potential to conduct an updated Historic Resources Survey utilizing a matching grant from the HPD of DNR or other potential sources of funding.

Watkinsville Assessment

The City of Watkinsville is strongly committed to preservation of its historic resources. The City coordinates with the Historic Sites and Tourism Advisory Committee and makes donations to assist in the nomination of sites and districts within the City limits. Successful projects include:

- Eagle Tavern restoration.
- Promotion of the historical district as a tourist destination through advertising.

■ Preservation Resources

Certified Local Governments (by the State Historic Preservation Office)

Certified Local Governments (CLG) are towns that have adopted a historic preservation ordinance, established a preservation commission, and regularly review changes within the district. Towns typically become CLGs following a National Register listing and this process serves to protect historic resources. The State Historic Preservation Division provides funding for a variety of preservation related activities to a CLG. CLG status is different than QLG (Qualified Local Government) status and pertains to eligibility under Georgia's Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Division. While the County is not a CLG, it does have the Historic Sites and Tourism Committee that has worked with the County to protect cemeteries, the William Daniell House and other historic resources.

Although the County does not participate in the CLG program, the South Main Street Historic District in Watkinsville and the Bishop Historic District are two National Register Districts that could be locally designated and acquire CLG status. As well, North High Shoals, if nominated and listed in the National Register as a historic district, could potentially seek CLG status.

Funding Mechanisms

Several funding mechanisms are available to assist in historic preservation and planning:

- State Tax Incentives – a state income tax incentive to encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties that includes a 25 percent tax credit for income producing properties; a 30 percent credit for residential properties; a mortgage certificate program; and a pass through provision.
- The Georgia Land, Water and Wildlife and Recreation Heritage Fund;
- Heritage Tourism grants;
- HPD Georgia Historic Resources Survey contracts;
- Cemeteries and archaeological resources are protected through State guidelines.

The Northeast Georgia RDC also provides Preservation Planning Services related to the following preservation programs and activities:

Grant Programs

- Georgia Heritage 2000
- Preservation Services Fund (PSF)
- Certified Local Government (CLG)
- Georgia Survey

Tax Incentive Programs

- Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC)
- State Tax Incentive

National Register Program

- Eligibility assistance
- Form preparation

Technical Assistance

- Secretary of Interior Standards
- Design Guidelines
- Building Materials Conservation
- Historic Resources Survey

Planning

- Rehabilitation and Restoration Projects
- Streetscape Masterplans
- Local Designation (CLG Status)

Membership Regional Participation

- Natural & Historic Resources Advisory Committee
- Section 106 Review
- Advisement and Environmental Assessment

Community Facilities and Services

■ Water and Wastewater Supply and Treatment

The mission of the Oconee County Utility Department is to provide potable water in a quality and quantity that meets the needs of their residential and commercial customers and to provide the treatment of wastewater for commercial, institutional and industrial customers. The Department's primary responsibilities and programs include:

- Continual monitoring and treatment of water and wastewater by State Certified Operators.
- Maintenance of all treatment, distribution and collection facilities and equipment.
- Response to citizen requests and answering grievances when required.
- Preparation of Department budget and submission to Board of Commissioners for approval.
- Performance of all personnel functions for the department (i.e. payroll, benefits, etc.).
- Preparation of monthly operating and maintenance reports and year-end report.
- Preparation and submission of all required reports to EPD, EPA and issuance of yearly Consumer Confidence Report to all customers.
- Purchase of all necessary materials, supplies and equipment.
- Maintenance of Utility records as required by county, state and federal governments.
- Performance of all financial duties related to Utility Operation and Maintenance.
- Assistance to County Auditors with annual audit of the department.
- Analysis of the county's water and wastewater needs and provision of alternatives for meeting those needs.

The Oconee County Utility department administers the County's water and sewer system, as described below. The Utility Department operates two sampling facilities. The first facility is certified to perform microbiological water testing. The second facility is located at the Calls Creek Wastewater Reclamation Facility (WRF) and is certified to analyze wastewater samples. The facilities accept samples from the public and other municipalities on a fee per parameter tested basis.

Water Supply

Distribution Systems

The personnel of the Oconee County Distribution and Collection Section maintain the County's 269 miles of water lines. There are 7,800 water connections on these lines. Between 2006 and 2011, an additional 30 miles of water lines are planned. The crews perform the daily preventative maintenance needed on the system such as making sewer & water taps, renewing and upgrading services, videoing sewer lines to check for blockages, replacing old lines and maintaining a backflow prevention program.

Where well water is utilized, timers on the wells control the rate of flow. The groundwater from the wells is treated by on-site facilities. Each well has individual production capabilities, which on average equal 100 gallons per minute. The Water Section also has the responsibility for the Bacteriological Laboratory, which is located at the Government Annex Building. The lab is responsible for monthly water quality control testing for the two well systems, and at Heritage Park on a quarterly basis, as well as quality control samples sent from point locations throughout the Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority's service area.

**Table 6.1
Water Systems
Oconee County**

Jurisdiction	Source	Permitted Withdrawal (mgd)	Treatment Capacity (mgd)	Average Daily Use (mgd)	Raw Water	(Treated Water)	
						Elevated	Ground
Oconee County	15 wells	1.1 mgd	n/a	0.3 mgd	N/A	See Below	none
Upper Oconee Basin Watershed Authority	Bear Creek Reservoir	52.0 mgd	21.0 (6.0 O.C.share)	7.0 (2.75 O.C. share)	4 mil gallons	1.75 million	none
Oconee County	Apalachee River	2.25 mgd	n/a	n/a	n/a	See above	none

Source: Oconee County Utilities Department, 2007

The primary water supply source is the Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority. Water from the Bear Creek Reservoir in Jackson County is pumped to the distribution lines and to the water tank storage system simultaneously. Average daily water consumption in the County is 2.75 MGD, with a summertime peak demand of 4.6 MGD. Average daily use of the entire Bear Creek system is 7.0 MGD. Estimated peak demand for 2006 is 4.7 MGD, with an increase of peak demand to 6.5 MGD by 2010/2011. When needed, water is drawn from elevated water storage structures (two tanks in Mars Hill and one in Watkinsville) to the County's distribution system. Elevated storage capacity for the County is 1.75 million gallons, and estimated water supply capacity is 7.0 MGD.

Treatment Systems

The Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority controls pretreatment testing and compliance monitoring for the water plant at Bear Creek Reservoir and trunk line distribution system. Highly trained technicians are individually certified by the State of Georgia, a rigorous quality control program system. A state approved pretreatment program is in place that helps monitor, track, and regulate pollutants that might go into the sewer system. This protects the biological process in the wastewater plan as well as the quality of biosolids for land applications.

The plant utilizes anthracite coal filters, sedimentation basins and chemical feed system. Raw water from the Bear Creek Reservoir gravity flows into the plant where it is treated with alum, chlorine, carbon, polymer and lime before flash mixing. It then proceeds through sedimentation tanks and multimedia (sand and anthracite coal) high rate filters. The water then goes through chlorination, fluoridation, and pH adjustment and phosphate before it spends at least 30 minutes in a holding well for disinfection. The water is then pumped to the water system by high service pumps. The plant's water pressure ranges between 95 and 100 PSI.

The Bear Creek Reservoir has treatment capacity of 21 MGD, with a permitted withdraw from the Oconee River of 52 MGD. Of this, approximately 7.0 MGD is the County's share of treated water. Although most of the distribution system is already in place, such as the piping, chemical feed systems and metering, the Water Authority will complete its expansion of the water treatment plant up to 42 MGD to provide water resources to its customers by 2010-2015.

2002-2007 SPLOST Improvements

The County is well aware of the need to expand its capacity and ability to meet demand as the County grows. As development occurs, the water system must expand to meet increased demand, typically following subdivision development and roadway infrastructure. Water line extensions have generally corresponded with a number of large scale road widening and construction plans. These are summarized in Table 6.2.

Description	Start Date	Completion Date	Status
Extension of water lines along U.S. 441 and Epps Bridge and Jennings Mill Pkways.	1999	1999	Completed
Water main projects along SR 53 from Union Church Rd. to U.S. 78	1999	1999	Completed
Water main projects along the Oconee Connector and Morrison St.	1999	2001	Completed
24" water transmission line from Bear Creek to Old Hwy. 29	1999	2000	Completed early
Complete waterline extension, Rocky Branch & Malcolm Bridge Rds.	2001	2002	Completed early
Water line extension Hodges Mill Rd. from Hwy. 53 to Mars Mill Rd.	2007	2010	Schedule modified to 2007 SPLOST
Water line extension at Hwy. 53 from Hwy. 78 to the Barrow County line.	2005	2005	Completed
Water line extension Elder Rd. from Hwy. 53 to Herman C. Michael Recreation Center	2003	2003	Completed
Proceed with planning for Apalachee Regional Water Reservoir & treatment facility and transportation lines	2002	2005	Replaced w/ Barnett Shoals Rd. reservoir
Proceed with EPD withdrawal permit on Apalachee River (Bracewell Agreement)	2002	2003	Completed – have permit for 2.25 MGD
Bogart – Extend water lines to service new landscaping in the downtown.	2002	2005	Need to contact City
North High Shoals – Develop plans, schedule and budget for citywide water system	2002	2006	Water mains completed on Cole Springs and
North High Shoals – Install water line and hydrants on Plantation Rd. & Jefferson Rd.	2001	2002	Completed by County
Investigate and implement additional methods to conserve water.	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Continue financing maintenance, depreciation and expansion costs of water/ sewer system with user fees.	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Dials Mill Road water line extension	2006	2006	Completed
SR 186 water line	2006	2006	Completed
Source: Oconee County Utility Department, June 2006			

The County is currently in the process of acquiring permits for the new Barnett Shoals reservoir and treatment facility, located next to the Oconee River near the northeast corner of the County. This facility, if permitted, will have a permitted withdrawal of 13.0 MGD and serve County residents only.

Table 6.3
Water Service - 1998 to 2006
Oconee County

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Utility Customers	4,390	4,770	5,006	5,321	5,736	6,176	6,636	7,132	7,800
Water Demand-mgd	531	603	626	628	716	686	796	825	1,004
Permitted Wells	16	23	28	25	19	16	15	15	15

Source: Oconee County Utility Department, 2007

The County will be able to draw up to 7 million gallons per day (MGD) from the Bear Creek Reservoir, but estimates indicate that additional water supply is needed. The recent South Oconee Water Supply Evaluation indicates that 2.25 MGD can also be withdrawn from the Apalachee River at High Shoals. The study recommends developing to that facility as a means to augment the County’s water supply. The County acquired this permit in 2003. However, consideration of this facility would be terminated if the County chooses to participate in a multi-jurisdictional water reservoir with Walton County and the City of Winder at Hard Labor Creek in Walton County.

In 2006, the County had a population of 26,225 people and used a little more than 2.5 million gallons of water a day. In 2050, the County will have a projected population of 61,000 people and use close to 17.1 million gallons a day. Hence, the County must find a supplementary source since its primary water supply—Bear Creek Reservoir, which supplies 90 percent of the community’s water – will only sustain the County another 10 years. Oconee is actively studying another joint arrangement for water from Hard Labor Creek.

The County is actively examining strategies for increasing its capacity to provide treated water. Several studies have been completed and a Master Plan for the County’s utilities is nearing completion at this time.

The County’s most prevalent issues in terms of future water provision and its relationship to County growth is water conservation and expanding the sources and supply of water, followed by expansion of the transmission and distribution network to the customer base. The County lists water conservation measures on the County’s website.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

The County’s sewer needs are provided by two facilities: the Calls Creek Water Reclamation Facility and a Land Application System.

Oconee County’s primary sewerage treatment facility, Calls Creek, is located in Watkinsville. A network of collection facilities, including gravity mains, force mains and lift stations serve the treatment plant. There are approximately 1,100 customers on the County wastewater system. Except for the Cities of Watkinsville and Bogart, which have contracts with the County, none of the cities operate public wastewater systems. The residents of the other two cities rely on septic systems.

The Oconee County Wastewater Reclamation Facility at Calls Creek is a state of the art operation. The facility incorporates the use of membrane filtration and

other process components that will allow the County to produce re-use quality effluent under Georgia EPD standards. The County completed a study to determine the potential to upgrade the Calls Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant to tertiary levels using a Membrane Filtration process. The capacity was upgraded from 400,000 GPD to .667 MGD using the Membrane Filter Process in 2002, with additional membranes to be added in 2007 which will increase the capacity to 1 MGD. The County has plans to increase this design capacity to 2.0 MGD by 2010-2011. As of 2006, the average load for the treatment facility is .349 MGD.

The following short-term projects were completed between 2002 to 2006:

- Addition of a wastewater collection system, including a force main and a pump station at McNutt Creek;
- Completion of the Barber Creek sanitary sewer line from Barber Creek to Daniels Bridge Rd with lift station and force main to Mars Hill Road;
- Extension of the Malcom Bridge gravity sewer line;
- Construction of the force main from Jimmy Daniel Rd. at McNutt Creek to LAS site;
- Extension of sewer force main to Benson's Bakery from Gateway Industrial Park;
- Completion of Bogart sanitary sewer line from Mars Hill Road to Gateway Business Park; and
- Installed a force main and gravity system on Highway 53 for the new County park.

By 2010, the number of customers is anticipated to triple up to 3,200 customers. Average daily loads are forecast at 680,000 GPD, with peak loads anticipated at 800,000 GPD. Additional capacity will be needed as demand is projected to increase by 2010-2011. As stated above, the Calls Creek Wastewater Reclamation Facility is planned for addition of additional screens to increase capacity to 1.5 MGD by 2011. In addition, the County has pursued a Land Application System permit with EPD for a 400,000 GPD system in the Eastville area, which is planned for expansion over the next five years. The Rocky Branch Land Application System Site serves North Oconee County and the Georgia SR 316 corridor. This facility has a capacity of about .4 MGD, with about .26 MGD available. The total available sewer capacity is approximately .7 MGD.

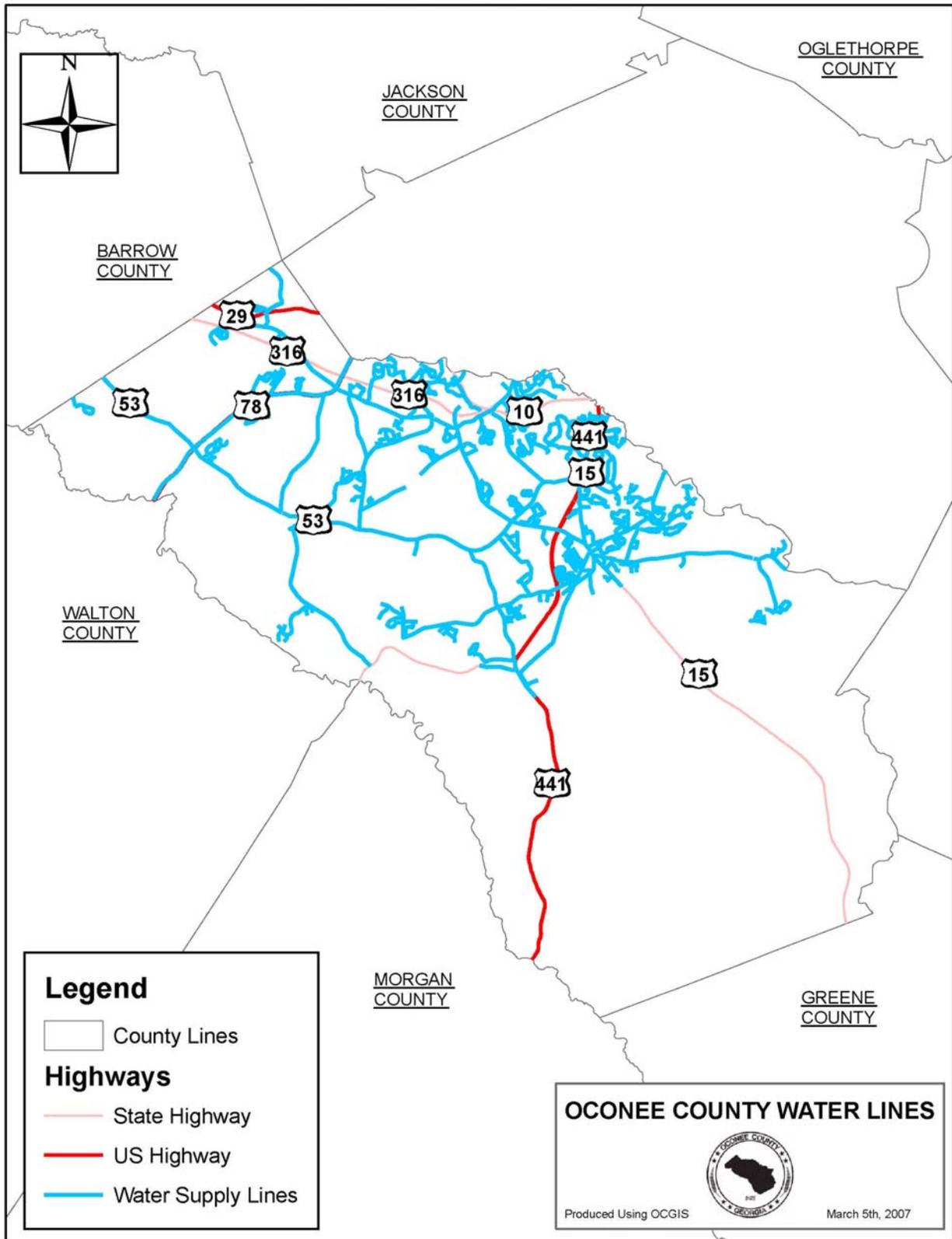
Proposed Improvements

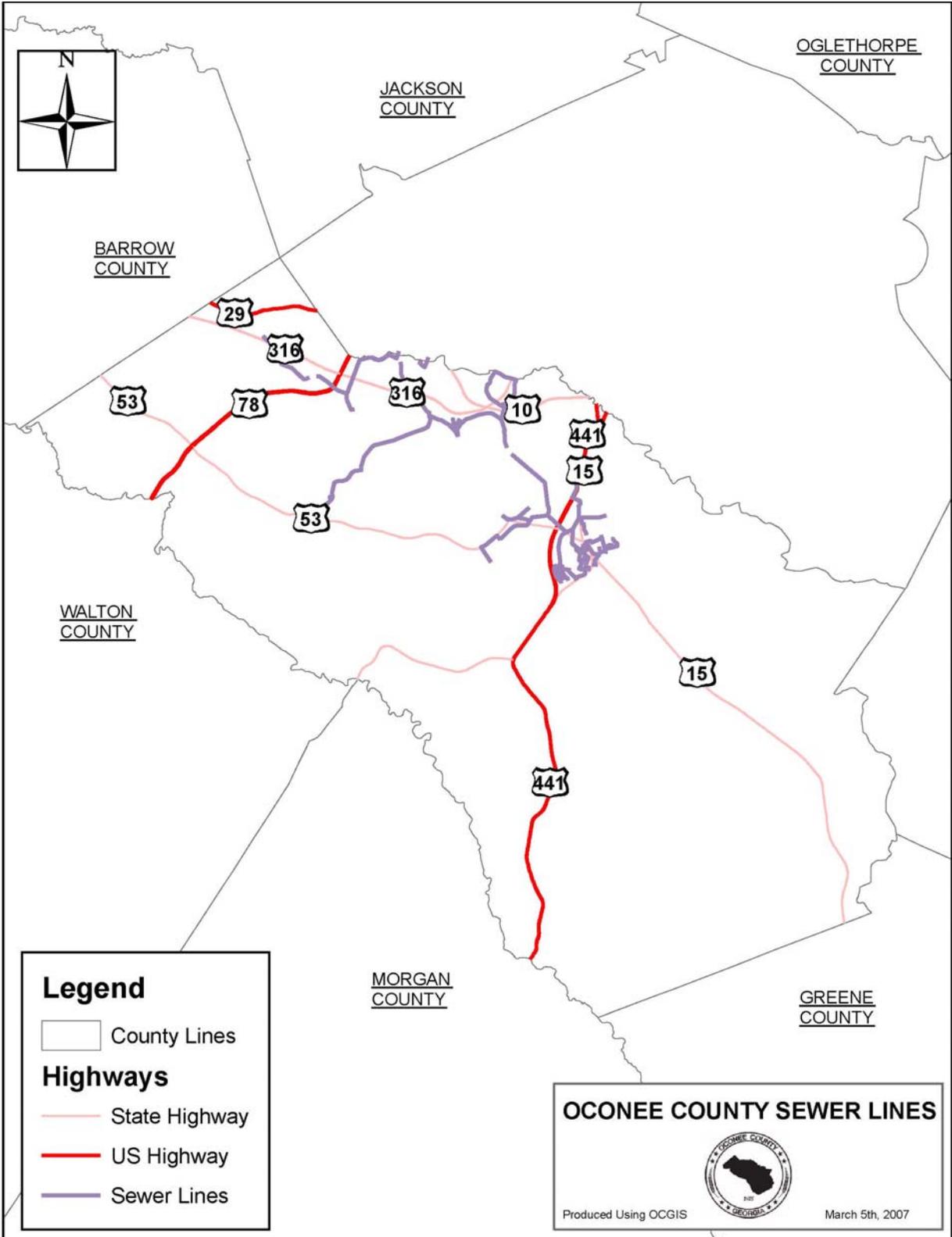
The following projects are planned or being considered to handle demand through 2011 and beyond.

- Upgrade the Rocky Branch LAS to a 1 MGD Membrane Filtration Plant;
- Upgrade Calls Creek Wastewater Reclamation Facility to 2.0 MGD;
- Extend the 441 sewer line to the county line with a master lift station;
- Construction of a new 1 MG elevated storage tank in 2007-2008;

- Extension of a 24 inch water line along Mars Hill Road from SR 29 to the water storage tank;
- Extension of a waterline from Elder Road – Herman C. Michael to the Steeple Chase subdivision; and
- Line size upgrades, fire hydrant installations;

Currently, the County is in the process of conducting a Water Supply Planned Wastewater Master Plan, which will address projected water and wastewater needs.





■ Information Technology

The information technology revolution allows an increasing share of economic activities to remain functionally close (to customers, suppliers, and other parts of an organization) while becoming more physically distant. Providing Oconee County's businesses and residents with the technology they need to more effectively run their businesses, expand the local economy and build stronger community relies on the expansion of fiber optic and DSL capabilities along SR 316. According to BellSouth, about 90 percent of the property owners within 1 mile of SR 316 have DSL capabilities. BellSouth has already provided Fiber Optic at all intersections along SR 316 in Oconee County to help service the area. As a result, the County should continue working with BellSouth to ensure that most parts of the northern portion of the county have high-speed broadband connections, particularly for businesses.

■ Public Safety

Oconee County has excellent public safety services. Separate divisions of the County provide police and fire protection services. Emergency Medical Services (EMS), 911, rescue services and jail facilities are also provided by Oconee County. The 911 service supports all divisions of the public safety services.

Fire

The mission of the Fire Department is to save lives and property in Oconee County, strive to provide the best ISO rating, and promote fire safety to make Oconee County a safer place to live.

In addition, the Fire Department is responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing fire prevention and fire suppression activities of seven volunteer fire stations in Oconee County. The seven fire stations are staffed with 139 volunteer firefighters. The Fire Chief and secretary are full-time paid County employees. The Fire Chief's primary responsibilities & programs include:

- Managing an operating budget for seven fire stations.
- Managing an operating budget for the Fire Chief's department.
- Responding to all structure fires in Oconee County and most other calls.
- Keeping updated records for ISO and working to achieve the best rating.
- Preparing specifications for new fire trucks and equipment.
- Coordinating joint training for all stations.
- Providing fire safety classes for schools and daycare centers.
- Working with local and state agencies on arson fires.
- Recruiting new firefighters and coordinating recruit training.

- Preparing correspondence, proposals, rules and regulations, policies and various reports.
- Preparing media press releases on a weekly basis.
- Serving on the Development Review Committee.
- Serving on the Safety Committee.
- Attending training seminars, workshops, conferences and conventions.

Seven volunteer fire stations and the Georgia Forestry Unit serve Oconee County. In the County, fire protection is provided by the Department to all portions of the County. Oconee County has 178 firefighters, including the Fire Chief, with the following credentials:

- Firefighter – Basic 101 Certified (44)
- Firefighter – NPQ Certified (75)
- Firefighter – No certification (23) (Note: Rookie Firefighters are currently in training program)
- Hazardous Materials Certified (117)
- Crash Extrication Certified (110)
- Pension Fund Members (28)
- Rescue Specialist Certified (40)
- EMT Certified (20)
- EMT-P Certified (4)

Table 6.4 lists the stations, the number of personnel, and equipment affiliated with each station.

Table 6.4
Fire Station Statistics - 2006
Oconee County

Fire Stations	Location	Service Area	Built	Square Footage	Staff Breakdown	Equipment
Station 1: Watkinsville	7580 Macon Hwy	Primary – 5 mile radius Secondary - backup	1999	8,000 sq.ft.	1 - Station Chief 3 - Assistant Chiefs 2 - Training Officers 2 - Captains 45 - Firefighters	1 - 1,250 gpm pumper w/1000 gal booster tank 1 - 300 gpm mini-pumper w/250 gal booster tank/jaws of life 1 - 1560 gal tanker w/150 gpm pump 1 - 1,250 gpm City Pumper w/1,000 gal tank 1 - Ladder truck 1 - Air Truck 1 - Common City car
Station 2: South Oconee	1030 Salem Road	Primary – 5 mile radius Secondary - backup	1980	2,840 sq. ft.	1 - Station Chief 2 - Training Officers 1 - Assistant Chief 1 - Captain 15- Firefighters	1 - 1000 gpm pumper w/1000 gal booster tank 2 - 1,560 gal tankers w/150 gpm pumps 1 - 250 gal mini-pumper/jaws
Station 4: Dark Corner	7620 Hog Mountain Rd.	Primary – 5 mile radius Secondary - backup	1984	4,400 sq. ft.	1 - Station Chief 2 - Captains 1 - Assistant Chief 1 - Training Officer 11 - Firefighters	1 - 1000 gpm pumper w/1000 gal booster tank 1 - 300 gal mini-pumper /jaws of life 1 - 1,560 gal tanker 1 - 1,250 gal tanker
Station 5: East Oconee	4931 Greensboro Highway	Primary – 5 mile radius Secondary - backup	1982	3,200 sq.ft.	1 - Station Chief 2 - Training Officers 1 - Assistant Chief 1 - Captain 11 - Firefighters	1 - 1,250 gpm pumper w/1000 gal booster tank 2 - 1,560 gal tankers w/150 gpm pumps
Station 6: North High Shoals	Hillsboro/250	Primary – 5 mile radius Secondary - backup	1997	4,800 sq.ft.	1 - Station Chief 1 - Assistant Chief 1 - Training Officer 15 - Firefighters	1 - 1,250 gpm pumper w/1000 gal booster tank 1 - service truck 1 - 1,560 gal tanker w/150 gpm pump
Station 7: North Oconee	1931 McNutt Creek	Primary – 5 Secondary -	1986	6,000 sq.ft.	1 - Station Chief 1 - Assistant Chief 1 - Captain 19 - Firefighters 1 - Training Officer	1 - 1,250 gpm pumper w/1000 gal 1 - 1,560 gal tanker w/150 gpm pumps 1 - 250 gal mini-pumper/jaws
Station 8: Barber Creek	l'section Oconee Connector	Primary – 5 Secondary -	1994	6,400 sq. ft.	1 - Station Chief 1 - Assistant Chief 1 - Training Officer 2 - Captains 26 - Firefighters	1 - 1,250 gpm pumper w/1000 gal 1 - 1,250 gpm pumper/jaws 1 - 1,560 gal tanker w/150 gpm pumps 1 - 1,000 gpm reserve pumper

Source: Oconee County Fire Department, February 2007

The County has approximately 2,000 fire hydrants fed by the Oconee County water systems, an increase of 1,400-1,500 new hydrants since 1997. New hydrants are installed as the water system is expanded. An additional 500 plus new hydrants are planned in the next five years. There are two areas where the public water system is not yet in place, and water for fire protection is obtained from wells at the stations and above ground storage tanks. These two areas are located south of Watkinsville and Bishop.

Fire protection provided by the County is estimated to be 60 percent residential/agricultural and 40 percent business/commercial. As the County continues to urbanize, attracting more business and services, as well as alternative housing types to single family detached units, this ratio is anticipated to further change.

Table 6.5
Oconee County Fire Department/EMS Calls
2006

Type of Call	Number of Calls	Avg. Response Time ¹
Structure Fires	17	7.41
Structure Fires - Out Upon Arrival	17	7.76
Structure Fires - Other Counties	2	NA
Vehicle Fires and Farm Equipment	30	7.93
Grass, Woods and Hay Fires	53	6.6
Grass/Woods/Hay Fires Out of County	2	NA
Alarm Activations	83	7.96
Smoke Scares	42	8.04
Control Burns	22	7.14
Haz-Mat and Power line calls	49	7
Automobile Accidents	153	5.91
Auto Accidents - Out of County	6	NA
Medical Assist Calls	25	6.8
Non-Emergency Service Calls	54	NA
Fire Calls cancelled en-route	231	NA
Total	787	6.96

Source: Oconee County Fire Department, January 2007

In 2006, the Oconee County Fire Department responded to 787 emergency calls. Table 6.5 breaks out the types and number of calls.

Historic Fire/EMS emergency response call statistics indicate a gradual increase in the number of calls from 477 in 1997 to 750 in 2005, with slight fluctuations between years, for an overall increase of almost 300 calls. Response times in 2006 were 7 minutes with a less than 30-minute completion time. Although the response time has increased by one minute since 1997, the time required to complete the response

call has considerably been reduced by an average of 45 minutes per call.

Plans for Capital Improvements

To keep fire protection at the existing level of service throughout the planning horizon, two additional fire stations will be needed. The Fire Department does not use a standardized LOS for determination of new facilities and personnel – rather, it is fundamentally based on coverage – if a location which is developing or already contains development is more than 5 miles from a station, it is determined a station is required. New stations are also predicated on response times to particular areas, the number of response calls, the types of responses, and the locations the calls are coming from. The Fire Department will be acquiring land for these new stations in the next five years. The first priority for a land acquisition is in the vicinity of Barnett Shoals Rd., which is more than five miles from an existing station. This station is anticipated to be constructed within the next five years, by 2010. The second station is in the community of Eastville, which, although it is within the five-mile radius coverage of two existing stations, it is just at the perimeter. Therefore, response is not assigned to one station or another due to overlapping coverage areas, and coordination is needed between the stations to determine first response. To reduce the complications and increase responsiveness as the community becomes slowly more urbanized, a new station is planned.

Table 6.6
Oconee County Fire Department Planned Improvements and ISO Rating
2005-2010

	Station 1	Station 2	Station 4	Station 5	Station 6	Station 7	Station 8
Square Footage	8,000	2,840	4,400	3,200	4,800	6,000	6,400
Improvements Planned	No	No	No	No	No	No	Possibly replace station
Additional personnel	No						
Primary Land Uses Served	Urban	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Urban	Urban
ISO Rating	5//9	5//9	5//9	5//9	5//9	5//9	5//9

Source: Oconee County Fire Department, May 2006

Oconee County Emergency Management Agency

The mission of the Oconee County Emergency Management Agency is to prepare for and assist in the protection of lives and property of the county's citizens in the event of natural or manmade disasters through the processes of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The EMA Director and Administrative Assistant are full-time paid County employees. EMA primary responsibilities and programs include:

- Mitigation: activities which may prevent the occurrence of an emergency, reduce the community's vulnerability, and/or minimize the adverse impact of disasters or emergencies. Another mitigation measure is the enforcement of local building codes to minimize such situations;
- Preparedness: activities that exist prior to an emergency to support and enhance disaster response. Planning, training, exercises, community awareness, and education are among such activities;
- Response: activities, which address the immediate and short-term effects of an emergency or disaster. This helps to reduce casualties, damage, and speed recovery;
- Recovery: Activities that involve restoring the community to a normal state. Short-term recovery includes damage assessment and the return of vital functions to minimum operating standards, such as utilities and emergency services. Long-term recovery activities may continue for years when rebuilding and relocating due to damaged property;
- Emergency response to 911 calls involving medical and trauma injuries and/or rescue situations;
- Maintain GEMA standards for licensing of First Responder and Rescue Unit to respond to 911 calls;
- Respond to requests from GEMA and/or other counties for mutual aid assistance;
- In order to qualify for disaster assistance in a presidential declared disaster, maintain, update, and implement a County Emergency Operations Plan to GEMA standards;

- A consolidated Emergency Operations Plan that establishes a framework for emergency management planning and response during an emergency/disaster for the cities and county;
- A Performance Partnership Agreement (P.P.A.) between the County and GEMA - A set of partnership principles to best ensure that state and local governments are fully prepared to help their citizens in times of emergency.
- Maintain the County's Emergency Operations Center (E.O.C.);
- Keep staff members trained and certified in emergency management, emergency operations and response, and working in an E.O.C.;
- Provide on-going training to department heads on responding to emergencies/disasters and reporting to and working with the context of an E.O.C.;
- Maintain and operate WPQX 600, 1610 AM radio to broadcast emergency information;
- Operate emergency response vehicles and maintain rescue trucks to GEMA standards;
- On-going training and re-certification of emergency response personnel; and
- Provide CPR and First Aid training to the community;

Oconee County Emergency Management Agency is the local community-based equivalent of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency at the state level and the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the federal level. We work closely with these agencies (as well as dozens of others, both public and private) before, during, and after emergencies and disasters.

The Oconee County Emergency Management Agency is responsible for assisting in the protection of lives and property of Oconee County citizens in the event of natural or manmade disasters. Emergency Management Agency anticipates emergencies, takes steps to prevent loss of life and property, and provides quick response when havoc strikes.

Oconee County's Emergency Management Agency was established by the commissioners to develop and implement a countywide program. The backbone of the countywide program is that all emergency agency and support agencies work together. Emergency management and other emergency agencies identify hazards that face each community and develop contingency plans for each potential emergency. Emergency management provides the expertise, training, and coordination that local governments need to protect lives and property.

Emergency Medical Services

St. Mary's Hospital EMS provides emergency medical service in Oconee County. A written agreement exists for the provision of this service and ambulance fees are handled by the hospital.

First Responders is the volunteer medical response unit of the Oconee County Rescue Unit, and operates out of the Department of Emergency Services at 1291 Greensboro Hwy. in Watkinsville. First Responders is comprised of 32 volunteers including 3 paramedics, 16 EMTs, and 13 certified first responders. Volunteer

personnel at the first responder level must pass a county sponsored course for certification. Paramedics and EMTs must meet Georgia Department of Human Resources requirements and be certified by the State of Georgia. The County requires on-going training classes to maintain certification.

Table 6.7					
Oconee County Emergency Medical Services Personnel and Equipment					
2006					
Station	Location	Service Area	Built	Staff Breakdown	Equipment
O.C.	1291 Greensboro	Oconee	N/A	3 papramedics	5 medical rescue trucks
Rescue Unit	Hwy.	County		16 EMTs	
				13 First Responders	
Source: Oconee County EMA, February 2007					

The volume of calls has increased by 85 percent over the past 10 years, from 907 calls in 1996 to 1,604 calls in 2005. In 2006, the Oconee County Rescue Unit/Medical Response Unit responded to 1,694 total calls, as follows:

- 1,264 medical trauma
- 300 motor vehicle
- 94 other
- 30 medial standby
- 6 false alarm

The Rescue Unit/Medical Response Units also provided medical backup to the Fire Department on structure fires. The average response time was 6.5 minutes and the average call completion time was 19 minutes. Approximately 44 percent of the calls were answered between 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

The majority of emergency calls are received through an enhanced 911 system located at the Sheriff’s office. Calls are dispatched by central 911 EMD to First Responders and St. Mary’s EMS. Oconee County Medical Rescue operates 5 medical rescue trucks equipped with the same equipment as an ambulance with the exception of a cardiac monitor, stretcher, IV fluids and medication. All patient transports are handled by St. Mary’s EMS. The Fire Department is responsible for extraction of patients trapped in motor vehicle accidents.

Plans for Capital Improvements

After July 1, 2006, a mass casualty truck will be added into service for the Oconee County and entire GEMAL area (24 counties). The division, including the 911 and EMS functions, will be moving into a new 5,800 square foot facility in 2007 at 1120 Experiment Station Road. Within the next five years the EMT positions will transition from volunteer to compensated, and the EMS will then be able to improve service with 24/7 medical stabilization services with personnel on duty at all times as opposed to the present on-call basis. In doing so, medical rescue personnel will be able to carry IV fluids and some medication under DHR Licensed First Responder Program.

Sheriff's Department

The Oconee County Sheriff's Department provides primary law enforcement to the County and three of its cities; Bishop, Bogart and North High Shoals, covering a service area of 186 square miles. Although Watkinsville has its own police department, the Sheriff's Department provides communication services for the Watkinsville Police Department.

The Oconee County Sheriff's Department and the detention facility are located at 1140 Experiment Station Road in Watkinsville. The station was built in 1986 and contains 16,500 square feet, including a 4,000 square foot recreation area. The facility is reported to be in good condition but additional space is needed. As of 2006, in order to relieve some of the space constraints on the current facility, a new detention facility is under construction. The new facility will include space for offices for administration and investigation divisions.

Table 6.8 Oconee County Sheriff's Department Statistics 2006	
Location	1140 Experiment Station Road, Watkinsville
Service Area	186 square miles
Date of Construction	1986
Staff Breakdown	43 uniformed officers 5 detectives 13 jail personnel 14 Administrative/Communications personnel
Equipment	49 police cars 1 pickup truck 2 off-road motorcycles (inoperable) 1 prisoner transport van
Average call completion time	45 minutes
Source: Oconee County Sheriff's Department, May 2006	

The Sheriff's Department consists of 62 professionals, excluding the detention facility. All deputy sheriffs and detectives are certified peace officers, and all communications personnel are certified communications officers. Table 6.8 presents staffing and equipment statistics for the Department.

The Oconee County Sheriff's Department is structured around three major divisions:

Administrative

The Sheriff's Office has five administrative staff who oversee and operate the internal and external operations of the Sheriff's Office, comprised of the Chief Deputy, IT Director, and staff who manage the Sheriff's Office personnel records and all budgetary concerns; the processing of civil and criminal documents which includes all warrants; and reports, citations and all other records in the office.

Patrol Division

Oconee County's patrol division consists of 43 uniformed officers, and is divided into two shifts. Each shift is supervised by a Lieutenant, a Sergeant and 2 Corporals per team. Each team is divided into 12 hour shifts, which allow for flexibility in scheduling and training. The patrol division performs all the expected law enforcement functions, traffic control and enforcement, preventive patrol and criminal apprehension. A recent survey determined that the average patrol deputy has 10 years of patrol experience. Service to the community, the safety of the citizens and professional service are the hallmarks of the patrol division.

Criminal Investigations Division (CID)

The Oconee County Sheriff's Office maintains a Criminal Investigations Section, comprised of a Lieutenant and four detectives, which is responsible for the investigations of all criminal offenses, including drug related crimes, in Oconee County.

Civil/Courts Division

Georgia Sheriffs are the enforcement arm of all local and superior courts, and as such, the Oconee County Sheriff's Office has two deputies assigned to that division, led by a sergeant. They are responsible for routine enforcement duties as well as court security, inmate transport and civil process service. Additionally, they handle out of state extraditions, and dispossessory services as well as fugitive investigations.

Service Calls

The 911 center is operational 24 hours a day, with a total of 8 employees. Between 1997 and 2000, the number of law enforcement related service calls more than doubled from 7,800 average calls in 1997 to an approximate 17,000 calls in 2000. This is most likely attributed to the large spike in growth over that period, particularly as a result of a large number of retailers and businesses establishing themselves in the County. Over the past five years, between 2000 and 2005, the number of law enforcement service calls has increased significantly, from an approximate 17,000 in 2000 (detailed records keeping was instituted in 2003, therefore earlier years are estimates) to 28,202 in 2005. Table 6.9 presents the number of service calls for law enforcement. The average time to complete a call is approximately 45 minutes. The Department utilizes an enhanced 911 system, although most calls are received via telephone. The Department staffs three officers per shift to respond to calls.

Year	Law Enforcement
2000	17,000
2001	20,000
2002	22,000
2003	24,260
2004	26,278
2005	28,202

Source: Oconee County Sheriff's Department, May 2006

The Oconee County Sheriff's Department is dedicated to the training and leadership development of its officers. The department uses a combination of in-service training and state and federal academy training, as well as other private facilities to maintain the professional capabilities of the department. As an example, all patrol and investigative personnel attended 4-hour "Active Response to School Shootings" class. This training provides the patrol personnel with the basic mindset to respond to shootings in schools, or similar environments. Ethics of deadly force

encounters, team movements and locating the attacker were all part of the classroom and hands on training. School safety is on the mind of the Sheriff's Office every day. More training in school environments is in the immediate future. By dedication to training and leadership development, the Department is able to meet its objective of providing competent, efficient law enforcement to County residents.

Additional policing needs include the Fall Festival, high school football games, seasonal parades and civic center functions. Most parades and the Fall Festival, take place within the Watkinsville city limits. Therefore, the Oconee Sheriff's Department supports the Watkinsville Police Department on a request basis. A mutual aid agreement allows Sheriff's Department personnel and Watkinsville police officers to coordinate their efforts. For other activities within the unincorporated county areas that require law enforcement supervision, typically off-duty personnel handle these needs.

Plans for Capital Improvements.

The Sheriff's Department is faced with increasing service demand because of growth. The Department does not plan for additional staff and equipment based on a ratio of population to officers/equipment. The number of officers and support staff is determined by the number of calls for service, amounts of crime, types of service calls, and on anticipated calls based on county population growth. With the completion of the new detention facility, additional jail and support personnel will be needed, although the number has not yet been determined.

The existing facility is inadequate to house the present functions, as the detention facility utilizes space within the structure. Space was made available in the Frank Norris Building for law enforcement staff prior to 2000 in order to free some space in the detention facility for inmate area expansion. However, the Patrol and Communications Division utilized the vacated space in the Detention Center. A new detention center is currently under construction, which will vacate the space utilized for inmate housing and jail operations, as well as the administration and support divisions, which should relieve the overcrowding situation in the Frank Norris Building for the Patrol Division.

Detention Center

The Oconee County Jail is currently located at 1040 Experiment Station Road in Watkinsville, in the same building as the Sheriff's Department. This facility was built in 1989 and has the capacity for 32 male prisoners. Space in other locations is contracted out for the female prisoners. On average, the jail operates above capacity, with an average count in 2005-2006 running between 50 and 60 inmates daily.

In an effort to ease the overcrowding situation, law enforcement staff was relocated to the Frank Norris Building to allow more space for inmates and the Communications Division. However, the Patrol Division, as well as the Communications Division, assumed the space created by the move to the Norris Building, and the overcrowding continued. Inmates sleep in the laundry room on mattresses when the beds are filled.

The 2002-2007 SPLOST identifies 1.3 million in funding for the construction of a new detention center with over 80 beds and associated administrative and personnel support functions. The Sheriff’s Department Patrol functions will remain in the Frank Norris Building.

Watkinsville Police Department

The Watkinsville Police Department is located in a new facility at 191 VFW Drive, adjacent to the City Hall and the Watkinsville Community Center, completed in 2003. The Watkinsville Police Department serves residents within the city limits. The new 2,380 square foot facility contains the following spaces: a booking room; patrol officer’s office; a chief’s office; a detective’s office; records room; evidence room; and restrooms. There are no detention cells in this facility. The new facility is considered adequate to house all required functions for through 2011. The old facility, comprised of 224 square feet in the old fire station, is now utilized for the Watkinsville Street Department Office and Equipment Storage. The Department maintains a mutual aid agreement with Oconee County concerning the use of the County jail, radio communications and mutual assistance during emergencies. The Department pays the County an annual fee for the communication service.

Table 6.10 Watkinsville Police Department 2006	
Location	191 VFW Drive
Service Area	Watkinsville City limits
Date of Construction	2003
Square Footage	2,380
Staff Breakdown	4 uniformed officers 1 Detective 1 Chief
Equipment	6 Patrol cars
Source: Watkinsville Police Department, May 2006	

The Department has on staff four uniformed officers and one detective. The Department employs no administrative staff. Current staffing is one officer per a 24-hour period to respond to calls. All officers are P.O.S.T. certified. The Department continues to provide police protection and/or traffic direction during the Oconee County Fall Festival, held in the City, UGA football games, the Christmas and Homecoming parades, and the Southworks Arts Festival. The City adopted the Oconee County Emergency Management Operation Plan in 1992 to outline and coordinate responsibilities during emergencies.

The Department responds to approximately 2,000 requests for assistance per year. This number has remained constant since 1997, with a peak in 2000, a small decline in 200, and a gradual increase as of the end of 2005. Calls are received by the Oconee County 911 operator and then radioed to the officer on duty. Some calls are placed directly to the Police Department, and even walk in requests are received.

Table 6.11 Assistance Calls/Response Times - 2000 to 2005 Watkinsville Police Department						
Year	2000	20001	20002	20003	20004	20005
# of calls	2,269	2,053	1,925	2,031	2,112	2,106
Avg Response time	2 minutes					

Source: Watkinsville Police Department, May 2006

Plans for Capital Improvements

As the population and non-residential retail and support commercial increases in the City, additional staff will be needed, new personnel requests are determined based on call volume and types of calls. A staffing ratio standard of officers to population is not employed at this time. The Department has identified the need for the addition of three patrol officers (and associated vehicles) over the next 5-year period, by 2011. As stated previously, the new facility is adequate for the next several years.

■ Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation programs and facilities are maintained and administered by the Oconee County Recreation and Parks Department. The Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department, through a coordinated effort, seeks to enrich the quality of life of the citizens served, by providing safe and accessible recreational facilities and a diversified program of recreational activities for all citizens, in an effective, efficient, equitable, and responsive manner.

The Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department manages a broad range of beautiful, functional, and well-maintained facilities that are conveniently located across the County. The County operates four park facilities, with a total of 627.5 acres of active and passive open space, supplemented by Harris Shoals Park in Watkinsville. Using the “ideal” standard of 10 acres per 1,000 population set by the National Recreation and Parks Association, which yields a demand of 299 acres for the estimated 2005 population, the total acreage well exceeds the required parkland. In actuality, the County has adequate acreage to accommodate a population exceeding 60,000 persons, double the current 2005 population estimate. Recreation opportunities abound for biking, hiking, jogging, swimming, tennis, participation in a variety of organized leagues, and other activities. Parkland amenities are listed in Table 6.12, and described in the following section.

**Table 6.12
Parkland and Recreation Facilities - 2006
Oconee County and Cities**

Name	Total	Status in 2006	Facilities as of 2006	Planned Improvements by 2010
Herman C. Michael Park	37.5 acres	Existing – built 1980's	1 - Softball Field (L) 1 - Multi-purpose field (L) 1 - Little League Field (L) 1 - Soccer field (NL) 6 Tennis Courts Playground 2 - Volleyball courts 1.8 miles walking trails 1 - Outdoor basketball Court 14,400 sq.ft. gymnasium Picnic shelter Restroom facilities Concession stand w/conference	2 new restrooms Replacing entrance sign Playground replacement equipment Brown Building renovations Irrigation heads replaced
Bogart Recreation Complex	34.0 acres	Existing – Built 1995	4 - 200' baseball/LL fields (L) 2 - 300' baseball/LL fields (L) Batting cages 0.6 miles walking trails Picnic areas 2 - playgrounds Concession stands Restroom facilities	Replace Field 5 fence Entrance sign replaced Trees boxed Replace Irrigation heads Relighting Fields 5 & 6 Place safety net at quadraplex for safety
Oconee Heritage Park	364 acres	Existing – Built 1999	Open air pavilion (arena) 31 stall feeder barn 2.5 miles walking trails 4.1 miles bike trails Historic wood cabin	New entrance/exit Parking area Security lighting Storm water drainage/detention pond Grading for 200 seat amphitheatre Emergency access road New bike trailhead Moving forward with school relocation Site plans for museum Historic structures
Oconee Community Complex (SR 53)	196 acres	Phase I - In construction phases	Under Construction -- 10,000 sq ft senior center Backbone Infrastructure Tennis complex (8 courts) Soccer complex (4 fields) Softball complex 3 fields) Youth Baseball complex (4 fields) 20,000 sq.ft. Community Center (with Gymnasium (in Community Center) Veterans Memorial	2 picnic structures Off Leash Dog Park Walking Trails 2 Playgrounds Swimming Pool complex 8,000 sq.ft. nature center
Harris Shoals Park (City of Watkinsville)	23.9 acres	1992	basketball court 2 barbeque pavilions baseball field (1) multi-use field (1) 1 picnic pavilion playground walking trails	All planned improvements complete at this time - placed boulders, swings, landscaping, steps to the shoals
Rocket Park (City of Watkinsville)	3 acres	Existing	baseball field (1) concession stand	Paint refreshment stand/dug outs Repair chain link fence
North High Shoals	22 acres	On old fire station site - existing	Baseball/softball field Walking Track Tot lot playground Picnic pavilion Gazebo	None at this time

Source: Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department, City of Watkinsville, City of North High Shoals, June/July 2006

Heritage Park

Heritage Park is 364 acres of attractive park setting with woods, creeks, and the Appalachian River. It currently serves the County needs for passive park space. The park is located in Farmington on Highway 441 seven miles south of downtown Watkinsville.

The large open-air arena at Heritage Park was created with agricultural and special events in mind. The newly completed barn has thirty-one stalls and a small show arena. There are separate wash racks for animal shows or rodeos. In addition, there are 2.5 miles of walking trails, 4.1 miles of bike trails, and a recently restored historic wood cabin.

Herman C. Michael Park

Herman C. Michael Park is a 37-acre park and the headquarters for the Parks and Recreation Department. It is located 1.5 miles west of Oconee County High School on the corner of Hwy 53 and Elder Road. The park has three lighted softball fields, six lighted tennis courts, one gymnasium with 1 basketball court, 2 volleyball courts, soccer/multi-use field, playground, pond for fishing, picnic shelter and a 1.8 mile paved walking trail.

Bogart Sports Complex

Bogart Sports Complex is located behind the Bogart Library at 200 South Burson/Thompson Street. There are six lighted baseball and multi-use fields, a half mile paved walking trail, a picnic pavilion and two playgrounds.

Oconee Community Complex

Plans have been completed for the construction of Phase I of a new 196 acre park. A new 10,000 square foot senior center is to be built on the property. Other items in Phase I are: the main infrastructure, a tennis complex, a soccer complex, a softball complex, a Little League complex, and a community center and gymnasium.

Harris Shoals Park

Harris Shoals Park, located off of Route 441 in the City of Watkinsville, is under the jurisdiction of the City of Watkinsville. This approximate 24 acre park has two barbeque pavilions, a picnic pavilion, a baseball field, a multi-purpose field, basketball courts, a playground and walking trails. All proposed improvements to the park per the 2002-2007 STWP have been completed, including extensive landscaping and steps down to access the shoals.

Rocket Park

This small, three acre facility is located on School Street in the City of Watkinsville, and is also under the City's jurisdiction. Its primary function is a baseball field and concession stand.

North High Shoals Park

North High Shoals Park is under the jurisdiction of the City of North High Shoals, on a site previously used for the old fire station. This 22 acre park is located at the site of the old fire station. Facilities include: a baseball field, a walking track, a tot lot playground, a picnic shelter, a gazebo and gravel parking lot.

Programs

The Parks & Recreation Department offers a wide range of programs for all age groups, including basketball summer day camp, youth football, cheerleading, Girls on the Run, swim teams, adult basketball, lacrosse, smart start, volleyball, softball, tennis and aerobic classes. These activities are held at the Bogart Recreation Complex, Heritage Park, Herman C. Michael Park, Oconee Middle School, Colham Ferry Elementary School, Malcom Bridge Middle School, Malcom Bridge Elementary, and Westminster Christian School. The Oconee County Parks & Recreation Department offers an Afterschool Program at Herman C. Michael Park for children

to keep active during the hours immediately following school. The children are transported from school directly to the park on a school bus. The program is open to all kindergarten through 8th grade Oconee County residents. Day Camp has averaged 100 children per week for the past three years. The After-School Program averaged 100 participants per week in 2002, 105 in 2003 and 110 in 2004. The Parks and Recreation Department also sponsors special events, such as: Step Up to Health; Movies in the Park; NFL Punt, Pass and Kick; Table Tennis Tournament; Disc Golf Tournament; Agency of the Year District 7; Touch a Truck Event; and UGA Golf Tournament throughout the Year. A number of sponsors, termed "Park Partners" provide donations of funds and goods to the special program activities, including Sonic, Chick Fil A, Papa John's, and St. Mary's Hospital.

A new contract is being negotiated with the Oconee County Board of Commissioners for a joint use agreement with the Oconee County Board of Education to use school facilities for after hours activities. With the addition of a new middle school and high school, as well as the Oconee Community Complex underway, the existing joint use agreement is outdated. Under the present agreement, the Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department worked closely with the middle school and high school to arrange basketball and softball programs at Herman C. Michael Park in exchange for use of school athletic fields for soccer and football.

Additional joint use programs include The Little League Baseball Association with the Parks and Recreation Department providing the fields as well as Gainesville State University renting facilities at Herman C. Michael and other parks for their use in physical education classes and sports activities.

The Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department employs 6 full-time employees, including a Director, Assistant Director, Program Director, Youth Sports Coordinator, Youth Program Coordinator, Maintenance Supervisor, and seasonal employees. To ensure high quality instruction, the Parks Department sponsors training and certification programs for all coaches in its youth programs.

Table 6.13
Parks & Recreation Participation Levels - 2002 to 2004
Oconee County

Program	2002	2003	2004
Basketball	569	555	693
Soccer	699	551	659
Soccer Camp	60	0	34
Volleyball	40	38	10
Baseball	98	0	51
Basketball Camp	62	50	49
Golf Camp	15	0	59
Football	278	247	266
Cheerleading	94	55	67
LaCrosse	0	37	43
All Sports Camp	0	11	24
Speed Camp	0	26	39
Football Camp	0	62	65
Girls Softball Camp	0	0	16
LaCrosse Camp	0	0	11
Start Smart Camp	0	0	34

Source: Oconee County website, June 2006

Plans for Capital Improvements.

The Department's operating budget is funded by the Oconee County Board of Commissioner's general fund. The Department also receives SPLOST revenue for new facilities and renewal projects of existing facilities. Approximately \$5,000,000 was allocated in the 2002-2007 SPLOST toward the acquisition of land, construction, equipping and installation costs for the new 196-acre Oconee Community Complex. A number of improvements are underway.

Improvements to the parks, as well as maintenance items, are an on-going responsibility of the Department. Planned improvements to each park facility are identified on Table 6.12. Most specifically, the improvements to Oconee Heritage Park, which include placement of a pond, improved parking, new trails and trail-head facilities, landscaping, construction of an amphitheatre, a museum structure, and a variety of historical structures, and Brown Building renovations in Herman C. Michael Park, are the most costly and extensive. Additional projects completed or under consideration in the incorporated areas include:

- Improvement of landscape and facilities at Harris Shoals Park – complete;
- Conversion of the old fire station into a recreation facility and park in North High Shoals – complete
- Use of abandoned rail lines as bicycle and hiking trails in Bishop – in process.

The County has a great wealth of parkland and recreation facilities in adequate amounts to handle a doubled population through 2030. Continued use of SPLOST funds will enable the phased construction of the Oconee Community Complex. The joint agreement with the school system for mutual use of facilities continues to be successful, providing additional potential resources the County's inventory.

■ Public Works

The function of the Public Works Department is to provide overall coordination and direction to five separate but cooperating divisions (Engineering, Roads & Bridges, Solid Waste, Clean & Beautiful, Stormwater/Environmental), and to interact appropriately with various other state, federal, and local agencies. This Department is responsible for all facets of Road Maintenance and Construction, Engineering and Design, Plan Review and Project Inspection, Solid Waste Collection, and Recycling. Primary responsibilities and programs include:

- Preparation of lists and recommendations, for Board of Commissioners review, for services, purchases, contracts, programs, etc. regarding any phase of Public Works Department activity.
- Preparation, administration, and monitoring of departmental and division budgets.
- Handling of citizen complaints and inquiries and/or referrals to other departments and agencies.
- Coordination of efforts from federal and state agencies that are directly related to the operation and mission of Public Works.
- Provision of civil engineering services as required by any county department.

- Oversight of various ongoing contracts and projects.
- Participation in ongoing development, review, and examination of site development plans.
- Development of technical specifications and oversight of construction/delivery service for capital items and capital projects related to the department.
- Preparation of various reports and documents for consideration by the Chairman and the Board of Commissioners.
- Oversight of purchasing, personnel, policy, procedure, budget and public relations matters for all divisions of Public Works.

Solid Waste Division (including recycling)

The Solid Waste Division is responsible for the disposal of household generated solid waste, junk items, along with limb and leaf removal. The essential mission of the Solid Waste Department is to provide an effective and efficient method of disposal of household solid wastes for County residents, and an effective method for recycling common waste products for which cost-effective markets exist. Primary responsibilities include:

- Operation of six (6) Solid Waste Collection/Recycling Centers.
- Sale of garbage bags (blue bags - the only ones accepted at the centers) to Oconee County residents for disposal at the centers. Bags cost \$1.00 for a 25 gallon blue bag and \$2.00 for a 33 gallon blue bag.
- Distribution of authorized garbage disposal bags to local retailers and handling and accounting for resulting revenues.
- Disposal of bulk solid waste (brought in on trucks) at the former county landfill site (Highway 441 Collection/Recycling Center). Garbage fees are \$55.00 per ton, with \$5.00 minimum. Yards waste fees are \$23 per ton with \$5.00 minimum. This service is available only to Oconee County residents.
- The collection, sorting, handling, and disposal of several types of recyclable wastes (glass, newspaper, metals, white goods, tires, etc.) at the six centers.
- Daily coordination with the County's private contract waste haulers (Roll Off Systems, Oconee Waste Transfer, OWT Recyclables), who disposes of both garbage and recyclables from the centers, and collects garbage and recyclables directly from County buildings and installations.
- Performs financial, accounting, and personnel duties for a large full and part time staff.
- Responds to citizen requests and complaints.

The County maintains a Solid Waste Management Plan, which was updated in 2006. Oconee County operates a volume based solid waste system, which has set a precedent for other counties in the region. Solid waste is collected at six manned drop off centers located throughout the County. These centers accept blue garbage bags that are sold by local retailers and at the collection sites. The volume based Blue Bag system lowers monthly costs for citizens interested in controlling their garbage disposal fees. Use of the Blue Bag with recycling is even

more economical. Recyclables can be disposed of free at any of the county collection sites. Volume-based disposal is based on the simple idea that the more garbage you create the more it will cost you to dispose of it. The cost of the bag is not for the actual blue bag, but to help pay the disposal costs at a federally approved disposal site.

The cities of Bishop and North High Shoals utilize the County system. The City of Watkinsville contracts with Robertson Sanitation for weekly curbside collection of solid waste. This system serves 1,125 customers, who contribute approximately 300 tons of solid waste per year. Robertson Sanitation delivers waste to the Winder/Barrow County Landfill. The Watkinsville Street Department is responsible for leaf and limb service. All leaf and limb refuse collected by the Watkinsville Street Department is transported to the Oconee County Landfill. The City of Bogart provides weekly curbside collection of residential solid waste, which is then transported to the Oak Grove Landfill in Barrow County, which has an approximate 5 to 6 year lifespan in terms of capacity.

Solid waste is compacted at these sites and then transported, by contract hauler, either to a landfill in Walton County or to the City of Monroe transfer station for further transport and disposal at an alternate landfill site. The County contracts with Roll-Off-Systems to haul the compacted solid waste from the collection sites. Guidelines for how to dispose of various kinds of solid waste which cannot be recycled, such as inert trash (leaves, limbs, and yard debris), appliances, mattresses, batteries, and other potential hazards to the environment are posted on the County website. Recyclables are also accepted at the drop-off centers. A number of commercial uses, subdivisions and residents outside of subdivisions employ private trash haulers, which are licensed by the County, to collect residential and commercial solid waste and recyclables on an individual contract basis. Residents of the cities also use the drop off centers for their recycling needs. The six-trash collection/recycling centers in the County are located:

- Oconee County landfill located on 2721 Macon Highway (US. 441), south of Farmington (filled to capacity mid 1990's)
- 6331 Hog Mountain Rd (SR 53)
- 2001 Greensboro Highway (SR 15)
- Jimmy Daniel Rd. at GA 316 Intersection
- Rankin Road – Butler's Crossing
- Bogart area behind Recreation Facility

The County's two landfills – the old Oconee Landfill and the facility at 2721 Macon Highway/US 441 have both reached capacity as of the mid 1990's. Solid waste management has become a regional issue of which all of the neighboring counties are aware. All of the landfills in the Northeast region are nearing capacity, with only about 5 to 6 years of capacity remaining. The Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Authority is addressing this issue and evaluating the potential of a regional landfill. The Authority is inviting County Commissioners in the 10 county to attend a roundtable discussion on this topic. The County, through a representative of the Clean and Beautiful Commission, is participating in these discussions. Until such a decision is made to implement a regional landfill, the County intends

to continue contracting with the hauler company for disposal of its solid waste at alternate locations

Clean and Beautiful Commission

Oconee County funds a Clean and Beautiful program. The mission of the Oconee County Clean and Beautiful Commission is to increase citizen awareness and understanding of the need for individual environmental stewardship and offer opportunities for public involvement in environmental programs and projects.

The Commission is a certified affiliate of the National Keep America Beautiful, Inc., a non-profit organization headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut. They are also a member of the State Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliate program under the direction of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. There are fifty-seven affiliates in Georgia. Twenty-one states have statewide programs.

The commission consists of twelve volunteer members who are appointed by the county board of commissioners to staggered three-year terms. They also have auxiliary members who volunteer to help on a part-time basis.

Responsibilities of the Clean and Beautiful Commission include:

- Develop and execute environmental and educational outreach programs designed to increase citizens' awareness and understanding of the need for individual environmental stewardship.
- Provide supportive educational materials for county programs such as Litter Control and Abatement, Solid Waste Management & Recycling and Beautification Projects.
- Conduct environmental & recycling programs and projects.

■ **Stormwater Management**

The County has recently developed a storm drainage and stormwater management ordinance. The Oconee County Stormwater Division of the Public Works Department was created in 2004, and due to the Division's short history, detailed information on the stormwater drainage system is not yet available. The Division is in the process of conducting a survey of the drainage systems in the northern portion of the Count, covering 22.5 square miles generally north of (and including) Watkinsville and Bogart, in the vicinity of the Athens-Clarke County line, where the concentration of urbanization is occurring. This urbanizing area is covered by the NPDES requirements for stormwater. The division has completed and submitted three annual compliance reports for the NPDES Permit to EPD with satisfactory results. The staff has prepared a Stormwater Management Ordinance to meet NPDES requirements, which has been incorporated into the UDC.

Storm water drainage is handled two ways in the County. In the older, more rural areas, storm water is carried by above ground ditches alongside roadways either to detention ponds, into wooded areas, or to a stream or tributary of one of the major waterways of the County. In the newer residential subdivisions and commercial areas, the system involves sheet flow of the stormwater across impervious surfaces to surface drains that lead to individual drainage detention ponds within individ-

ual subdivisions or commercial centers. The detention ponds serve to reduce the velocity of the flow. The stormwater is then discharged from the detention facilities into either underground pipes or to above ground drainage swales, which ultimately discharge into wooded areas or tributaries of rivers or streams.

■ **Libraries**

The Oconee County Libraries serve as a common ground for informational, educational and recreational needs for Oconee County. The Library is part of the Athens Regional Library System, covering five counties. The libraries provide programs and services, serve as the access point for materials and information, and strive to make area residents aware of the resources and services.

The mission of the Oconee County library is to furnish library service to the people of the county to meet their informational, educational, lifelong learning, and recreational needs. The attainment of this purpose will be fulfilled by acquiring library materials and electronic resources through gifts and purchase, circulating materials to the public through library and other means of library extension, building a reference collection adequate to provide current and reliable information, and also promote the use of the libraries by means of instruction, library centered programs, exhibits, and other public relations activities. There are two libraries located within Oconee County: the Watkinsville Branch in Watkinsville and the Bogart Branch in Bogart.

■ **Cultural Facilities**

Oconee County is well-known throughout the region as a haven for talent. Artisans of pottery and blacksmithing, as well as paint, pen and other fine arts, find a tranquil environment from which to draw inspiration. Two events have occurred recently in support of this burgeoning arts community, the formation of the Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation Inc., and the opening of Oconee County Civic Center.

- The Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation Inc. (OCAF) is an arts council dedicated to developing and coordinating programs and activities for all citizens. OCAF works with the professional arts community through arts and crafts festivals, classes for children and adults, workshops and seminars for artists, and musical and theatrical performances. It is located at the end of School Street in downtown Watkinsville in what was once a four-room brick schoolhouse. The renovated building provides much needed space for local artists and crafters to exhibit their work. Local and regional exhibits of contemporary fine art, crafts and folk art are displayed throughout the year. Musical and theatrical performances are produced and presented in the Center. Classes and workshops for children and adults are offered in the visual and performing arts.
- The Oconee County Civic Center is located adjacent to the new Oconee County High School on Hog Mountain Road. This 28,000 square foot facility houses a 500 seat performing arts theatre with an orchestra pit, stage and excellent acoustics; a 500 seat banquet/multi-purpose area with a central atrium lobby and catering facility. Opened in December 1993, it is used for school

functions, concerts, plays, forums, meetings, trade shows, conferences, banquets, and wedding receptions.

- Local artisans show and sell their wares at a number of shops throughout the county. One of the most widely known is Happy Valley Pottery. Located nine miles from Watkinsville, this 34-acre farm features a studio, workshop and craft shop run by local artists. Happy Valley holds Open House in November and December and sponsors a mini-fair in June.
- Proximity to Athens and the University of Georgia (UGA) significantly broadens the cultural arts opportunities available to Oconee County residents. A case in point is the State Botanical Garden. This "living laboratory" encompasses 313 acres of gardens and nature trails for the study, research and enjoyment of plants and nature. Its focal point is the Visitors' Center/Conservatory exhibiting tropical and semi-tropical plants and original artwork year-round. Native plants and diverse ecosystems line the five miles of nature trails, some of which parallel the Oconee River, while others extend into hardwood forests. Eleven specialty gardens delight visitors with botanical beauty.
- The University of Georgia's Visual Arts Department is one of the nation's finest. The Georgia Museum of Art—the official museum of the state—has become one of America's most prestigious galleries due to its diverse and significant collections. The museum features a permanent collection, as well as visiting exhibitions and displays.
- The Dance Department at UGA presents several fine programs each year featuring many styles of dance ranging from classical ballet and tap to ancient Korean dances and modern dance. Talented students perform under the tutelage of experienced faculty and visiting instructors from some of the best dance companies in the country.
- The UGA School of Music offers excellent performances throughout the year, including presentations and recitals which are free and open to the public. Similarly, the UGA Drama Department brings well-known classics as well as contemporary productions to the stage through University Theatre Productions and the Georgia Repertory Theatre.
- The Athens "music scene" has become internationally famous thanks to the success of rock groups such as R.E.M. and the B-52's. Additionally, there are numerous theatre groups, symphony orchestras, chamber music groups, brass bands, blue grass bands and an assortment of venues in which to enjoy them.
- The Eagle Tavern and Welcome Center is a historic tavern operated and funded by the Oconee County Board of Commissioners and the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism as a Museum and Welcome Center. Located on the Antebellum Trail, the museum depicts life and travel in the 1800s. The furnishings in the Tavern are authentic pieces, all of which are indicative of life in the early pioneer days of Georgia. There are also objects found during an archeological dig in the 1960s and other precious artifacts. The tavern is also the first stop in full day and half-day itineraries for touring the City of Watkinsville. There is also a gift shop that showcase the works of many area artists as well as selling maps of historic sites.

There are several cultural attractions within Oconee County, including art galleries, a cultural center and scenic attractions such as the Eagle Tavern Museum, William Daniell House, Elder Mill Covered Bridge, High Shoals Falls, Happy Valley Artists Community and Haygood House. A sampling of activities include:

- The Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation—OCAF is a non-profit art foundation with exhibits and classrooms
- Happy Valley—a local gallery with eight working artists on site.
- Farmington Pottery—a wide selection of Geoff Pickett’s pottery.
- DeWitt Pottery—a functional and decorative pottery showroom.
- Art Masters Gallery and Framing—a gallery with exhibits from local artists featuring sculptures, glass, metal, wood and more.
- Chappelle Gallery at Historic Haygood House—featuring works of regional artists and tours of the home.
- Sunshine Village—featuring antiques and art including oils, acrylics, and watercolors.
- Ashford Manor Bed and Breakfast—a local bed & breakfast that features ongoing exhibits of local artists including oils, watercolor, pottery and glass work.
- Elizabeth Ann Florist and Gift Shop—a local florist with regular exhibits of paintings and photography from local artists.

Annual Events

- Southworks Juried Art Festival
- July 4th Heritage Celebration
- Library System Family Fun Day
- Bogart Fall Festival
- Oconee County Fall Festival
- Historical Haunts Tour
- Veteran’s Day Celebration
- Downtown Watkinsville Christmas Open House
- Watkinsville Christmas Parade
- Holiday Market and other exhibits by Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation

■ Health and Social Services

The Department of Family & Children Services is responsible for Child Protective Services, Medicaid, food stamps, Foster Care Services, Foster Parent training, temporary financial assistance to eligible needy families, and financial assistance for childcare for eligible families. Additional community and social services information for the region can be attained through Community Connection, a non-profit agency located in Athens, Georgia, serving a 14 county area.

As well, ACTION, Inc. (Area Committee to Improve Opportunities now) is a private, non-profit agency that is a partner in one of the twenty (20) Community Action Agencies in the State of Georgia, comprising a human service network capable of serving all 159 counties in the State. ACTION administers various state and federally funded programs, such as Head Start, Day Care, Weatherization, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Community services Block Grants, Youth services, Homelessness Assistance, case management, and the Job Welfare Reform Program. The ACTION headquarters is located in Athens.

Hospitals and Health Care

The quality and availability of healthcare contribute greatly to making a desirable place to live. Oconee County does not currently have a hospital within its boundaries, but residents are served by two hospitals in Athens-Clarke County and by Morgan Memorial Hospital in Madison, Georgia.

Athens Regional Medical Center

Athens Regional Medical Center (ARMC) is a +/-300-bed facility that serves 14 counties in Northeast Georgia. The facility features a vast array of specialized programs such as emergency services, a MRI unit, heart catheterization lab, a linear accelerator for radiation therapy, an open heart surgery center, an inpatient and outpatient drug and alcohol abuse unit, an outpatient surgery center and an outpatient radiology facility. As a public, not-for-profit institution, ARMC's mission is to provide medical care to everyone who enters its doors, regardless of ability to pay.

St. Mary's Hospital

St. Mary's Hospital is owned and operated by St. Mary's Health Care System, Inc. The system is a progressive care-provider for all stages of a person's life and, includes Wellness Works, Home Health Care Services, Long Term Care Facility and Hospice. The Hospital is a 196-bed high-tech, acute-care facility which includes both adult and neonatal intensive care facilities, a 24-hour emergency center, a perinatal center and a full scope of outpatient and inpatient diagnostic treatment. For fast response to the area's emergency medical needs, St. Mary's has an ambulance service based in Oconee County. St. Mary's Oconee County Women's Resource Center is one of nine branch offices or outreach centers that are located throughout Northeast Georgia. The center, located at 1586 Mars Hill Road, is Oconee County's convenient connection to all of St. Mary's services.

Other Health Care Services

Also available are public health facilities, neighborhood health centers and private physician groups to provide every medical specialty. Locally, Oconee County residents are served by physicians providing family practice care, general/internal medicine, gynecology and pediatrics. Other medical services offered include optometry, dental, orthodontal and periodontal

Many healthcare needs can be addressed by the Oconee County Health Department. The 6,000 square foot County Health Department, completed in 1996, is located at 1060 Experiment Station Road in Watkinsville. Fees are based on income and ability to pay. Staff includes registered nurses, Environmental

Health Specialists, and Clerks. Funding for the Health Department is provided by the Board of Commissioners, state and federal funds and patient fees. Services include family planning, maternal health, child health services, immunizations, blood pressure monitoring, food service inspection, rabies investigation, and home inspection for foster care. Other facilities serving Oconee County include the Northeast Georgia Mental Health Center, Mental Retardation Center and Substance Abuse Center in Athens.

Regional First Care is Oconee County's walk-in medical center. Services include occupational health (including ADA exams and immediate post injury workers' compensation cases), treatment of minor illnesses and injuries, gynecological procedures, pediatrics, vaccinations and many family practice procedures.

Ten veterinarians are located in the county to provide medical care for small and large animals.

The First Responders Program, operated through the EMS office, allows residents to receive first aid before the ambulance arrives. Many of the First Responders are certified Emergency Medical Technicians.

Senior Services

The Oconee County senior center is currently housed in the Government Annex located on Greensboro Highway in Watkinsville. The Senior Center operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. A number of programs are provided by Senior Services, including:

- Transportation assistance (to and from the center, to doctors, shopping, trips)
- Noon meal for center members and homebound seniors
- Outreach services
- Visiting services and telephone reassurance
- Recreational programs
- Socialization activities
- Health related activities (exercise class, nutrition, health screenings, etc)
- Consumer information (legal services, social security and medicare information, insurance information, community services)
- Volunteer opportunities.

The County has recognized the importance of its senior center and has planned a new 10,000 square foot facility in the new Oconee Community Complex on SR 53. The new facility will be located in close proximity to the community pool, walking trails, picnic and nature areas, and well as the community center activity building.

Other facilities and services designed to serve seniors include:

- Family Life Enrichment Centers, Inc. is a skilled nursing facility which provides healthcare to the elderly in a family-centered spiritual atmosphere in the picturesque rural setting at High Shoals. Comprehensive patient care is provided through planned and coordinated services and programs from Family Life Campus.

Table 6.14
Oconee County School System Education Facilities - 2006
Oconee County and Cities

School	Location	Date Built/ Renovation	Square Footage	Number of Classrooms	Capacity	2006-2007 Enrollment	# of Teachers
Oconee Co. Primary School	2290 Hog Mtn. Rd.	1987	61,135	36	700	525	29
Oconee County Elementary	2230 Hog Mtn. Rd.	1968/1996	51,621	34	720	543	34
Malcom Bridge Elementary	2600 Malcom Bridge	1996	69,000	37	555	540	43
Colham Ferry Elementary	190 Colham Ferry	1956/1996	65,610	35	665	547	37
Rocky Branch Elementary	5250 Hog Mtn. Rd.	2002	49,109	35	500	555	41
Oconee Co. Middle School	1101 Mars Hill Rd.	1956/1997	121,492	50	1,140	880	77
Malcom Bridge Middle School	2500 Malcom Bridge	1997	87,500	38	756	587	36
Oconee County High School	2721 Hog Mtn. Rd.	1992	171,000	63	1,297	1,339	77
North Oconee High School	1081 Rocky Branch	2004	230,175	76	1,300	774	47
Subtotal				404	7,633	6,290	421
<i>Planned elementary school</i>	Hwy. 186 - High Shoals	2008	49,109	35	500	N/A	N/A

Note: Enrollment for 2006-2007 may be based on forecast estimates
Source: Oconee County School System, July 2006

- Magnolia Estates Assisted Living on Mars Hill Road is a retirement center with a comfortable home-like atmosphere with creative living for ambulatory adults.

■ Educational Facilities

Oconee County Public School System

The Oconee County School System serves all of the cities in the County and unincorporated county with nine schools: five elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools. Since the school bond referendum was passed in 1995, and as a result of the utilization of SPLOST funding, two new schools have been constructed – Rocky Branch Elementary in 2002 and North Oconee High School in 2004.

Major improvement/expansion projects funded through the SPLOST 1998-2002 include:

- Paid \$1 million toward General Obligation bond debt;
- Purchased 150 acres for what became the locations of Rocky Branch Elementary and North Oconee High Schools;
- Equipped Rocky Branch Elementary, and;
- Set up an escrow fund for the construction of North Oconee High School.

The following Table 6.14 presents a listing of the County schools, their location, and the 2006 August enrollments, of which there are 6,290 students system-wide. The schools are not yet operating at the full capacity of 7,633, with the largest potential for additional student enrollment at the new North Oconee High School. This results in a low student/teacher ratio, which is beneficial to the students.

Oconee County schools 'Expect Success.' Residents of Oconee County, as well as nearby counties, boast about the quality of education available. There are currently an estimated 6,966 children between the ages of 5 and 17 in the County, and an estimated 329 children aged 18, for a total of up to 7,295 school aged children. Of these 6,290 are enrolled in the public school system, while others either attend private school, are home schooled, are too young to enroll or graduated early. By 2030, forecasts estimate that 12,676 children between the ages of 5 and 17, and potentially 508 young adults aged 18 may be added to the population, for a potential estimated total of 13,184 school aged children. At the current enrollment percentage of 86.2 percent, a possible estimated 11,368 children could be added to the county school system – almost double the current enrollment. Although many existing schools will be expanded and new schools constructed, this is equivalent to adding another 8 to 9 schools to the system to accommodate projected growth.

Table 6.15
Oconee County School System Average Daily Enrollment - 2000 to 2006
Oconee County

School	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Oconee Co. Primary School	506	496	469	518	529	533
Oconee County Elementary	544	549	496	520	467	512
Malcom Bridge Elementary	702	704	461	452	469	514
Colham Ferry Elementary	683	642	549	519	525	534
Rocky Branch Elementary	-	-	485	470	513	530
Oconee Co. Middle School	715	768	882	915	904	868
Malcom Bridge Middle School	601	604	537	522	535	567
Oconee County High School	1676	1702	1736	1851	1495	1438
North Oconee High School	-	-	-	-	352	543

Source: Oconee County School Systems, July 2006

The administrative staff at each school includes a principal and one or more assistant principal. The Oconee County School System's instructional approach takes into account the multiple needs of each individual. Basic academic programs are enhanced by art, music and physical education taught by fully certified specialists in each school. All grade levels provide guidance and counseling services, programs for the gifted, and services for students with special education needs. A school nurse, a school social worker, a school psychologist and an attendance officer serve throughout the school system. A professional staff of between 420 to 430 teachers is complemented by a support and service staff of over 424.

Table 6.16 provides a timeline of system enrollment, number of dropouts and associated dropout rate (as statistics are available), number of teachers and student/teacher ratios over the past six years. Current student/teacher ratios in the School System are less than the maximums established, at 14:01 in 2003/2004 and 15:01 in 2004-2005. Maximum established teacher/student ratios are: Kindergarten @ 1:20; grades 1-3 @ 1:21; grades 4-5 @ 1:24; grades 6-8 @ 1:26; and grades 9-12 @ 1:24. The dropout rate, and actual number of dropouts, indicates a decline since 2000-2001, with an upward spike in 2004-2005. The dropout rate is relatively low in comparison to state average, based on 2000 data where

the percentage of students not completing high school at the state level was 21.4 percent as compared to 13.3 percent for Oconee County (source: Georgia County Guide 2005).

Table 6.16						
Oconee County School System: System Wide Totals - 2000 to 2006						
Oconee County						
	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Total System Enrollment	5,427	5,465	5,615	5,767	5,789	6,039
Total Dropouts grades 9-12	42	44	45	50	53	40
Dropout Rate	N/A	2.4	2.4	2.9	2.0	N/A
Total number of graduates	317	334	376	358	425	373
Total Number of Teachers	N/A	N/A	398.5	389	403	434
Student /Teacher Ratio	N/A	N/A	14:01	14:01	15:01	N/A

Source: Oconee County School System, July, 2006

Future school facilities, expansions and/or improvements are planned based on a number of factors. The School System has projected growth, future enrollment and need for new school facilities by looking at a 20-year trend for enrollment growth and determining that the average growth over this period has been approximately 4 percent. In 2005, growth was around 300 students; the year prior, growth was only 12 students. Therefore, a straight formula has not been utilized. The School System looks at housing starts, the number of parents visiting the schools and expressing interest in enrolling, and kindergarten registration in the Spring. Targeted classroom size is closely related to the student/teacher ratio at: Elementary School (20-24); Middle School (26-28); and High School (24-28).

For the 2006-2007 school years, it is anticipated that enrollment will jump dramatically—in the 500-600 student range. Subsequently, the School System has purchased 12 modular classrooms (six doublewide trailers), budgeted for 28 additional teachers and identified other classroom space. Most of the growth is expected to occur in the elementary grades, based on the 20-year trend.

The school system is currently negotiating a new joint use agreement contract

Table 6.17	
Oconee County School System/Parks & Recreation Joint Use Facilities - 2006	
Oconee County	
School	Facilities
Oconee County High School	1 softball, 1 baseball, 1 soccer, 1 practice field, 1 football field/stadium, track, 8 tennis courts
Oconee County Middle School	1 football field/stadium, 1 baseball field, running track and 4 tennis courts
Colham Ferry Elementary	1 softball field and gymnasium
Malcom Bridge Elementary	1 gymnasium and a playground
Oconee County Elementary	1 gymnasium and a playground
Oconee County Primary School	1 gymnasium and a playground
Malcom Bridge Middle	1 gymnasium, 1 football field
Rocky Branch Elementary	1 gymnasium and a playground
North Oconee High School	1 football field/stadium, 1 soccer field, 1 baseball field, 1 softball field, 10 tennis courts

Source: Oconee County School System, July 2006

with the Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department for the use of its playing fields and gyms. Table 6.17 identifies the facilities that may be subject to the terms of the joint use agreement.

An active Partners In Education program has paired over 70 businesses with individual schools to explore areas of mutual assistance and benefits. School system personnel are an integral part of the community, actively serving on community councils and committees with community and business volunteers reciprocating for schools.

Private Primary and Secondary Schools

There are a few private schools in the Oconee County community.

Athens Academy

Athens Academy is an independent, non-profit, college preparatory co-educational day school located in Oconee County. Students are transported or drive to Athens Academy from all over Northeast Georgia. The Academy, a small school with small classes and a low teacher-pupil ratio, is known for its family atmosphere. At Athens Academy it's perfectly all right to like what you're studying. An attitude of doing one's best is obvious in the classroom, on stage, or on the playing field. Beginning with three year olds and going through twelfth grade, over 700 students study in a multicultural environment on a wooded, 107-acre campus. Enrollment is open to people of all races, religions and national origins.

"Excellence with Honor," the motto of Athens Academy, has provided the primary focus of the Academy for more than a quarter century to provide students with a superior liberal arts education that prepares them for higher education and for life in the 21st century. Graduates regularly earn admission to prestigious colleges and universities, compile outstanding records in earning college credit through Advanced Placement, and score high on nationally normed examinations. For a faculty member, teaching at Athens Academy is a way of life. An Athens Academy education is distinctive in large part because of the school's exceptional faculty.

National attention focused on Athens Academy in the spring of 1994 with the opening of a state-of-the-art media and learning complex which involves students in the critical use of all forms of media. Athens Academy's media education project prepares students to think critically in an information age by teaching them to "read" and interpret all forms of media. A partnership with international businessman Reinhard Mohn and the Bertelsmann Foundation has made the program possible.

Westminster Christian Academy

Westminster Christian Academy, begun in 1989, continues to grow its pre-K3 through 12th grade college-preparatory co-educational Christian school. Enrollment is currently approximately 250 students. In 1998, WCA opened its 30-acre campus complete with athletic fields, classroom and administrative buildings, and gymnasium-auditorium and graduated its first senior class with students headed to Vanderbilt and the University of Georgia.

Colleges

Located in nearby Athens, the University of Georgia offers students a comprehensive choice of degrees in a historical university setting. Extensive continuing education series are also an important aspect provided by the university.

In addition, Athens Area Technical College offers courses for associate degrees or diploma programs in vocational and technical subjects to assist in creating a skilled work force prepared for progress.

Gainesville College, part of the University System of Georgia, has set up an Oconee Campus at 1202 Bishop Parkway in Watkinsville providing additional educational opportunities in the area.

Planned Capital Improvements

The Oconee County School System facilities have received renovations and additions over the past 5 years. The Board of Education will continue to monitor the school system's growth and continue to evaluate needs. In addition to the 12 modular classrooms purchased and the addition of 28 new teachers for the 2006/2007 school year, the following improvements, expansions and new construction have been completed or are in progress within the 2002-2007 SPLOST:

- Paid for the educational facilities and equipped North Oconee High School - complete;
- Paid for the Music Suite addition at Oconee Middle School - complete;
- Installed new fire alarms at Colham Ferry and Oconee Elementary schools - complete;
- Replaced the roof on Oconee Middle School - complete;
- Purchased and installed technology for all schools - complete;
- Purchase of land for a new elementary school - in process.

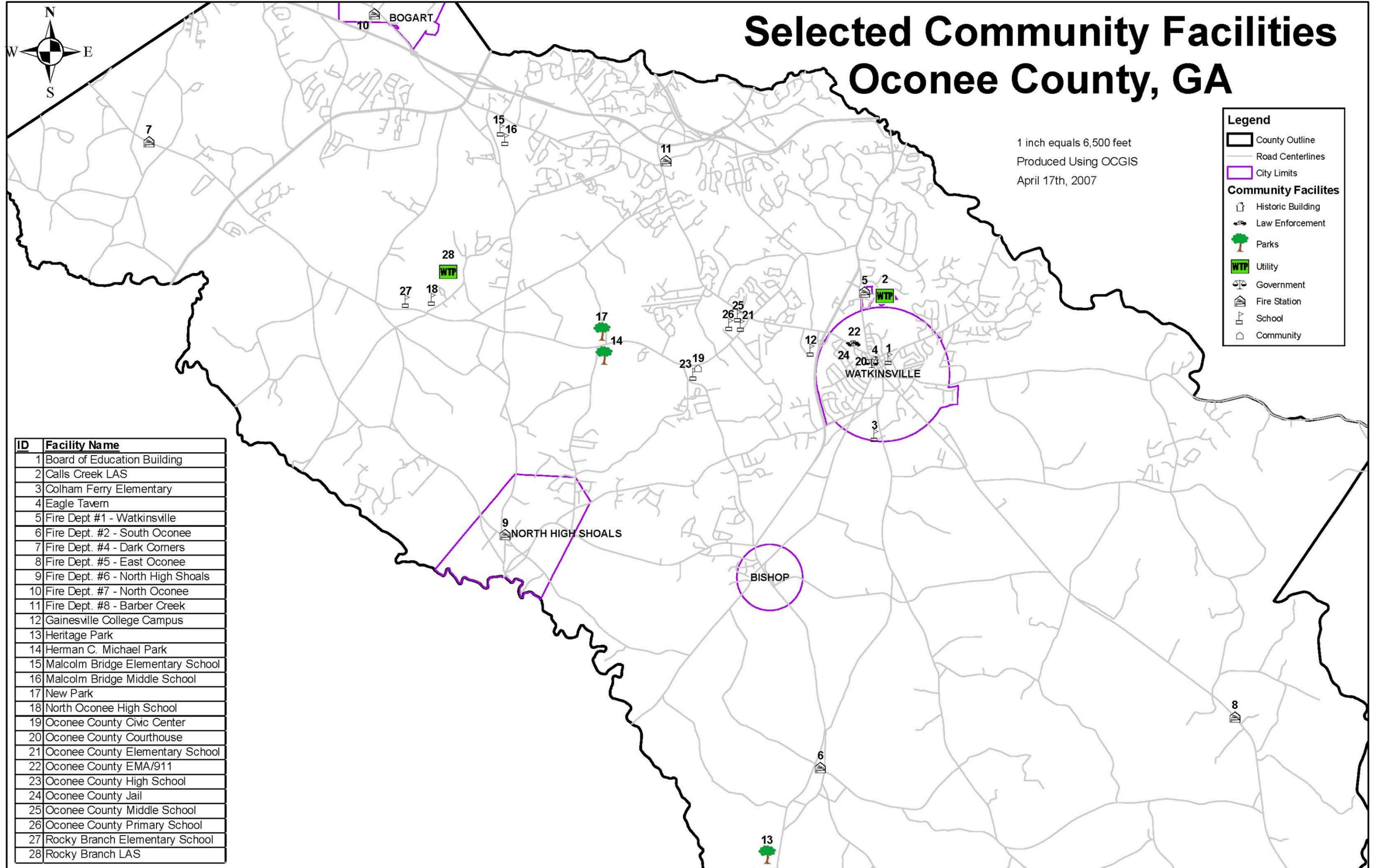
State Capital Project Funds and local funds were used to construct Malcom Bridge Elementary in 1996. General Obligation Bonds were used to fund the construction of Malcom Bridge Middle School in 1997. Additional classrooms for Malcom Bridge Middle are included in the SPLOST III (2008-2012) plan. Rocky Branch Elementary School construction was funded by State Capital Project funds and local funds.

It is anticipated that SPLOST funding, and other sources as available, should be sufficient to provide adequate facilities to accommodate future student enrollment over the next five years. The School System operating budget as of 2006 was \$59,016,270, of which 3.9 percent comes from federal funding, 45.8 percent state funding and 36.9 percent local funding. Projects set forth in the 2008-2012 SPLOST include:

- Purchase land for future schools;
- Construct a new elementary school in High Shoals;

- Build and equip classroom additions and renovations at existing facilities, to include:
 - Classroom additions for Oconee County Middle School, Rocky Branch Elementary School and Malcom Bridge Middle School;
 - Athletic facilities;
 - Road improvements on the campuses;
 - Technology infrastructure;
 - An administrative suite is planned for Oconee County Middle School.
 - Renovations to Oconee County Elementary Schools are planned.
- If funds are available, develop additional new schools and administrative facilities, and;
- The Board may sell bonds up to the amount of \$24 million to fund the above projects.

Selected Community Facilities Oconee County, GA



ID	Facility Name
1	Board of Education Building
2	Calls Creek LAS
3	Colham Ferry Elementary
4	Eagle Tavern
5	Fire Dept #1 - Watkinsville
6	Fire Dept. #2 - South Oconee
7	Fire Dept. #4 - Dark Corners
8	Fire Dept. #5 - East Oconee
9	Fire Dept. #6 - North High Shoals
10	Fire Dept. #7 - North Oconee
11	Fire Dept. #8 - Barber Creek
12	Gainesville College Campus
13	Heritage Park
14	Herman C. Michael Park
15	Malcolm Bridge Elementary School
16	Malcolm Bridge Middle School
17	New Park
18	North Oconee High School
19	Oconee County Civic Center
20	Oconee County Courthouse
21	Oconee County Elementary School
22	Oconee County EMA/911
23	Oconee County High School
24	Oconee County Jail
25	Oconee County Middle School
26	Oconee County Primary School
27	Rocky Branch Elementary School
28	Rocky Branch LAS

Transportation

Oconee County is committed to the development and implementation of connectivity and mobility in cooperation with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure safe, efficient movement of people and commerce in and around our community.

Oconee County is a member of the *Madison, Athens/Clarke, Oconee Regional Transportation Study, (MACORTS)* which is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for all Federal Transportation Funds spent within the MPO. The northern portion of the county is within the boundaries of this MPO. The MACORTS Transportation study is very detailed and addresses far more than the Planning Minimum Standards requires, including inventory, analysis and programmed improvements. This Plan is made a part of this Comprehensive Plan by reference.

The southern part of the County is maintained, monitored and planned within the Oconee County Public Works and Planning Departments. Condition surveys are made each year on all roadways and bridges. As the surveys identify conditions or needs to maintain the integrity and functional classification of the element, action plans are developed. These action plans serve as the basis for the development of the Transportation Improvement & Maintenance Plan (TIM Plan). The TIM Plan serves as the vehicle by which locally funded transportation projects are identified and budgeted. The Board of Commissioners reviews the TIM Plan and provides authorization and funding based on need and available funding. The scope of the plan includes improvements to pavement structures, bridge enhancements, intersection improvements, traffic studies/pattern analysis, signage needs/enhancements and other transportation planning needs. The primary challenge on the planning horizon will be funding due to the sharp increase in material and construction costs.

■ Roads Network (roads, highways and bridges)

Roads in Oconee County form a network of interlinked and inter-related segments, each of which may have its own capacity or surface condition issues. As outlined above, the County is part of the MACORTS Plan for the northern half of the County, while the southern half of the County is surveyed and monitored by the County and part of the TIM plan. The County, internally and through the MACORTS Plan, has identified current and future needs of the road network, as well as potential service areas. The County has also coordinated/completed an update of the roadway network with the Georgia Dept. of Transportation and the statewide inventory maintained by the department. The Bridge Inventory is also updated/maintained with the Georgia Dept. of Transportation bi-annually along with the inspections of the structures. Overall, the County is served by a good system of roads, highways and bridges.

Most of the major thoroughfares are state routes, which reduced the burden on the County for maintenance of these major routes. While SR 15 and US 441 serve primarily as through routes connecting the south, the other major arterial road-

ways are predominantly north of Watkinsville and connect to SR 316. Other major routes include SR 53, US 29 and US 78.

State Route 316, also known as University Parkway, is a major thoroughfare in the County and connects Oconee County with Interstate 85 and other Southeastern markets. Oconee County is located 22 miles from I-20; 25 miles to I-85 and 45 miles from I-285. These roadways in the northern part of the County provide the backbone for the region's transportation infrastructure, and presently have available capacity for future growth.

Within the County, there are 360 miles of paved roads, 40 miles of unpaved roads and 66 miles of state roads.

Within the County, there are a total of 35 bridges maintained by Oconee County. Currently there are no bridge projects underway within the County.

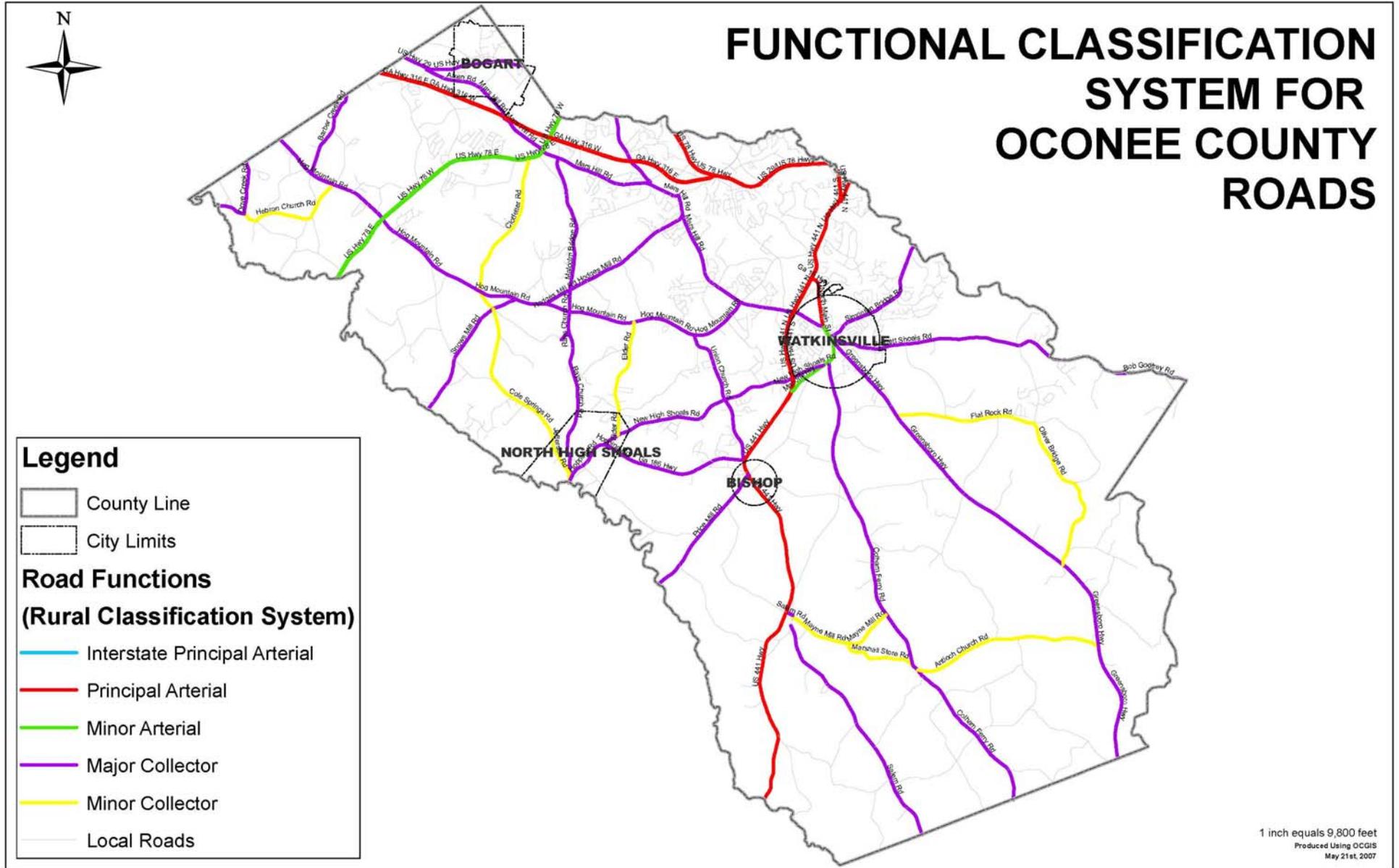
A Functional Classification Map shows the types of roadways within Oconee County.

Level of Service

Level of service is a qualitative measure used to describe traffic conditions. There are six levels of service, given letter designations A through F. LOS A represents the best traffic conditions, and LOS F represents the worst. Level of Service is a function of traffic demand, roadway geometry (number of lanes, lane widths, etc.) traffic control, vehicular mix, terrain, and other factors. These system-wide planning levels of service are based on 24-hour traffic volumes, but imply traffic conditions for peak periods of the day. This type of analysis frequently is used in area-wide transportation studies as an indicator of capacity deficiencies in the roadway network

Currently the majority of congested roadways are in and near Athens. The year 2030 forecasts indicate several congested roadways in Watkinsville and in northern Oconee County, namely SR 316, portions of Mars Hill Road and the bypass. The MACORTS identifies a series of planned transportation improvements including:

- Widening of Mars Hill Road;
- Widening of Daniels Bridge Road;
- Widening of Hog Mountain Road;
- Several new or improved interchanges along SR 316;
- Widening or reconstructing of SR 316 to a limited access facility (with or without a toll);
- Construction of the Epps Bridge Connector; and
- Construction of Jennings Mill Parkway.



Truck Traffic

Truck traffic in Oconee County is comprised of both trucks with destinations within the County and trucks passing through the County. Although detailed truck counts were not available, field reconnaissance confirmed the observation of stakeholders interviewed. Presently, primary truck destinations within the county are in and around Watkinsville or to commercial uses in the northern part of the county. Many through trucks travel SR 316 to the Athens area. Through trucks are also prevalent on US 441 toward Madison and on SR 15 toward I-20. With the anticipated future growth and development, it is expected that the growth of truck traffic will be greatest in the northern part of the county, particularly along and connecting to SR 316.

Signalized Intersections and Signage

There are a total of 19 signalized intersections within the County: the County maintains 5, the state maintains 10, the City of Watkinsville maintains 3, and the City of Bogart maintains 1. Intersections are reviewed on an as need bases, and if necessary warrant studies are conducted to introduce signage or upgrade an intersection for signals. Currently there are no planned intersection improvements or upgrades outside of the MACORTS TIP.

■ Commute Characteristics

Oconee County’s location adjacent to Athens-Clark County and the presence of UGA provide major employment centers for the county. Nearly 52 percent of the employed Oconee County residents commute to Clarke County; Oconee County experienced a net commute outflow of nearly 6,000 employees in 2000.

Commuters To	Count	Commuters from	Count
Oconee Co. GA	3,630	Oconee Co. GA	3,630
Barrow Co. GA	358	Barrow Co. GA	180
Clarke Co. GA	6,696	Clarke Co. GA	1,975
DeKalb Co. GA	135	DeKalb Co. GA	4
Fulton Co. GA	220	Fulton Co. GA	0
Gwinnett Co. GA	349	Gwinnett Co. GA	52
Greene Co. GA	136	Greene Co. GA	66
Hall Co. GA	76	Hall Co. GA	55
Jackson Co. GA	192	Jackson Co. GA	123
Madison Co. GA	66	Madison Co. GA	286
Morgan Co. GA	185	Morgan Co. GA	51
Oglethorpe Co. GA	57	Oglethorpe Co. GA	201
Walton Co. GA	241	Walton Co. GA	189
Other Counties	562	Other Counties	145
Total Employed	12,903	Total Employees	6,957
Source: 2000 Census			

■ **Parking**

Areas with insufficient/inadequate parking

There are no areas within the County or its Cities that have insufficient/inadequate parking. All new developments are required by code to provide adequate parking during the development process.

Surface parking facilities in need of retrofitting or redevelopment.

There are no parking facilities that have been identified that need retrofitting or redevelopment.

■ **Alternative Transportation**

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Included within the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the MPO and within Tier Two of the plan are a number of roadway projects which include sidewalks and bicycle lanes. These are being funded with a mix of federal TEA funds and State and Local funds. These include the Jennings Mill Parkway Extension Project (from Epps Bridge Parkway over Loop 10 to the Oconee Connector), the Mars Hill/Experiment Station Road widening project (from the Oconee Connector to Watkinsville), and the planned Simonton Bridge Road widening project, (from Watkinsville to the Athens/Clarke County line). These Projects, when completed, will form a continuous bicycle and pedestrian corridor from the Athens/Clarke County line at Epps Bridge Parkway, running generally south to Watkinsville then generally east back to Athens/Clarke County at the Simonton Bridge Road Oconee River crossing near Whitehall. It should be noted that when the Oconee Connector Interchange is built at SR 316, (also in the MACORTS Plan) pedestrian and bicycle lanes will need to be included in order to complete this route.

Also, the new Unified Development Code (UDC) for Oconee County requires sidewalks within all new subdivisions except for the large lot Agricultural/Residential projects in the more rural portions of the County.

Largely due to its more rural and suburban history and the resulting distances from UGA and Athens, there has been little demand for alternative forms of transportation such as pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation. Where the bicycle facilities have been built very little utilization has been seen. This is partly due to the lack of connectivity between these facilities and the long distances involved. Where bicycle use in the County has occurred, it has largely been recreational in nature rather than a viable alternative transportation mode and occurs most often in the more rural areas (“touring”).

However, as infill development occurs in the northern part of the County and as more mixed-use developments are built, these alternative forms of transportation will become more viable. This is especially true in the higher density areas near Watkinsville, Athens/Clarke County and UGA. This is also the area where subdivi-

sions are near shopping, schools and employment centers and where mixed-use developments are being built.

For this reason the County will be exploring ways to link these areas over time. Strategies include the consideration for requiring pedestrian/bicycle facilities along the main road corridors in front of all new developments within designated areas of the County and studying other ways to providing linkage between various existing and future developments on existing road corridors and future greenways. The County has also encouraged the mixed-use sustainable form of development through density and commercial development opportunities available in these districts.

Public Transportation

Athens to Atlanta Commuter Rail Program—provide funds for implementation activities for the Athens to Atlanta Passenger Rail Program. A station of this commuter line is designated in the City of Bogart. Currently this project is a second tier project, beginning in the time frame of 2009 to 2011.

■ **Railroads**

In addition to roads, Oconee County is benefited by the location of rail service. There are two rail systems within the County. CSX owns the rail lines to the north, which run through Bogart and into Athens. This rail line is a part of the Georgia Department of Transportation Commuter Rail Program. GDOT plans are to run a commuter rail system on the CSX line from Athens to Atlanta.

Georgia Southern Railroad owns the rail line to the south, which in the past connected Athens-Clarke County to Morgan County. The portion of the rail south of Bishop has been closed for about 10 years. There is a potential for use of this portion of the abandoned rail line for the Rails to Trails program.

There is an active rail line going from Bogart north to Athens. This line provides access to an important rail line linking Athens to Atlanta. While the line to Atlanta will be improved for future passenger service, it will not cause a reduction in freight traffic. Rail planners note that while this is a busy line, the Athens to Atlanta link is far from capacity.

As Atlanta is an important national rail hub, three of the four major rail corridors in Georgia connect to Atlanta. The additional close rail link to Oconee County through the Atlanta to Athens, and then Athens to Bogart line should be highlighted when attracting business reliant on such services.

■ **Airport**

The closest commercial airport to Oconee County is the Ben Epps Airport located approximately 3 miles east of Athens. This airport averages 203 aircraft operations per day with the majority of those aircraft being local general aviation.

■ **Transportation, Land Use and Connectivity**

The MACORTS TIP will continue to address the primary road improvement needs within the development corridor. Land use trends, current rates of growth and future projections are strong inputs into transportation planning. The aim of this Comprehensive Plan is to tighten this connection to proactively plan multi-modal transportation improvements that are proactive to planned growth and development areas, throughout the County. Major land use trends, such as increasing non-residential hub areas, and the overall and commuter orientation of the County will continue to be major influences into transportation planning over the next 20 years.

Underutilized Transportation Facilities

Because transportation facilities within Oconee County are coordinated with land use planning, there are no transportation facilities that are underutilized or over-capacity that have not been programmed to meet current and future transportation needs of the county.

Intergovernmental Coordination

The County and its cities recognize their interdependency within Oconee County and with the surrounding areas. It is a goal of this Joint Plan to maintain or increase cooperation and to work with all appropriate entities for mutually beneficial solutions to improve the quality of life in Oconee County and each of its cities. In achieving this goal, the communities have been active at the local, regional and state levels working cooperatively with public and semi-public agencies on matters of mutual concern.

■ Adjacent Local Governments

Oconee County is adjacent to Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Jackson, Madison, Oglethorpe and Walton Counties. Contact with a specific local government is facilitated, when needed, by the Chairman of the Oconee Board of Commissioners. Further, Oconee County coordinates with all neighboring jurisdictions through its participation in the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center.

Four cities are located within Oconee County—Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals and Watkinsville. The County and the cities coordinate and cooperate in a myriad of ways at the political and staff levels, including planning and zoning activities, library services, fire protection and other public safety services, under the provisions of the adopted Service Delivery Strategy (SDS). The County and each City, following the provisions of State law, will review the SDS to confirm its continuing validity once the Comprehensive Plan has been drafted, and revise it if needed.

■ Economic Development Partners

Oconee County undertakes its economic development activities within the context of a highly cooperative and coordinated effort involving many partners, among them the Chamber of Commerce, Oconee County Industrial Development Authority, University of Georgia Office of Technology Transfer, Georgia Department of Economic Development, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and others. For a complete discussion of coordination on economic development, see the Economic Development chapter of this Community Assessment.

■ Oconee County Board of Education

Primary coordination with the School Board is facilitated by the Chairman of the Oconee Board of Commissioners, with coordination regarding development/construction and programs, such as roads, utilities, public safety, library and recreation programs, etc., handled at the departmental level. Closer coordination at the planning level among all agencies involved in capital improvements is needed to supplement individual contact at the staff level.

■ Federal, State or Regional Programs

- MACORTS

Oconee County and its cities participate with Madison County and Athens-Clarke County in the development of a regional transportation plan. At the staff level, Oconee County is actively represented by key personnel from the Strategic and Long-Range Planning, Public Works and Planning Departments.

- **Bear Creek Joint Partnership**

A consortium between Jackson, Athens-Clarke, Barrow and Oconee Counties is in place to oversee the Bear Creek water supply reservoir, located principally in Jackson County. Coordination with the consortium is achieved at the policy level through the Chairman of the Oconee Board of Commissioners, and at the staff level through the Utility department.

- **GDOT transportation funding**

Coordination with the Georgia Department of Transportation occurs at the project planning and construction phases of State road improvements. Depending on the location of the project, a variety of jurisdictions may become involved, including the local governments in the County and affected public bodies such as the Board of Education, U.S.D.A and UGA. For the local governments, coordination at the policy level occurs at the Board of Commissioners and Mayor and Council levels, represented through the Chairman and appropriate Mayor, respectively. At the implementation level, utility and public safety staff are commonly involved.

- **Athens Regional Library System**

- The Oconee County Library is a partner in the Athens Regional Library System. Coordination with the System is accomplished through the Board of Commissioners at the policy and funding level, and through the County Library Department for operations.