

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

The Analysis of Existing Development Patterns consists of three major sections: (1) evaluation of the existing land use patterns within the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins and unincorporated Houston County (see Maps ____ in the Appendix; (2) a discussion of the areas requiring special attention; and (3) the identification of recommended character areas.

Existing Land Use

This section of the report includes an inventory and analysis of existing land use patterns within the WRATS Study Area. It begins with a review of the methodology used to obtain the existing land use.

Methodology for Deriving Existing Land Use

The Middle Georgia RDC Information Technology (IT) Department staff coordinated with the Houston County Tax Assessors Office to obtain several of their files to establish most of the parcel-based existing land use information. The first file was the Georgia Department of Revenue's Tax Digest program called WinGap. The WinGap file classifies each parcel of property based on certain property codes. Below are the property codes from WinGap that were used by the RDC staff to establish the individual land use categories for this report:

<u>WRATS Land Use Category</u>	<u>WinGap Equivalent</u>
Residential	Residential; Residential Transitional
Commercial	Commercial
Industrial	Industrial
Public/Institutional	Exempt Property
Trans/Comm/Utility	Utility
Agriculture/Forestry	Agricultural; Conservation Use

Because WinGap incorporates manufactured home parks and multi-family dwellings having four or more units into its commercial property code, separate Tax Assessor files had to be accessed to properly place the location of these uses on the existing land use map.

Several sources were used by the RDC staff to locate the Parks/Recreation/Conservation category for the existing land use map. These sources include the State GIS Clearinghouse, discussions with local planners, and intuitive knowledge of the Houston County area.

From the various sources and files noted above, the RDC IT Department prepared draft existing land use maps. To verify the information on the maps, the RDC staff conducted several in-field surveys and held meetings with local planning and zoning officials. These methods were important tools in deriving the undeveloped/vacant land use, since WinGap had classified most of this property as either residential, agricultural, or conservation use. Using the results of these surveys and the meetings, changes to the draft maps were made.

The City of Perry Building Department has developed for their use a parcel-based existing land use database. This database was used by the RDC IT Department to augment the data from WinGap for those parcels within the City of Perry.

Existing Land Use Definitions

For this study the following existing land use categories were used:

- **Residential:** The predominate use of the land within this category is for single-family and multi-family dwelling units.
- **Commercial:** This category is for land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities, organized into general categories of intensities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building.
- **Industrial:** This category is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses.
- **Public/Institutional:** This category includes certain state, federal, or local government uses and institutional uses. Government uses include city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc.
- **Transportation/Communication/Utilities:** This category includes such uses as major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, airports, or other similar uses.
- **Park/Recreation/Conservation:** This category is for land dedicated to active or passive recreation uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers, or similar uses.

- **Agriculture/Forestry:** This category is for land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or commercial timber, or pulpwood harvesting.
- **Undeveloped/Vacant:** This category is for lots or tracts of land that are served by typical urban public services (water, sewer, etc.) but have not been developed for a specific use or were developed for a specific use that has since been abandoned.

City of Centerville

Residential

- Single-family subdivisions in the design of classic traditional neighborhoods are located off Elberta Road, Church Street, Collins Avenue, and Houston Lake Boulevard north of Church Street/Gunn Road.
- Lower density suburban neighborhoods can be found west of Houston Lake Boulevard to US 41.

Commercial

- Strip highway commercial along Houston Lake Boulevard north of Wilson Drive and portions of Gunn Road.
- Neighborhood Commercial along Elberta Road.
- Regional Commercial activity including the Galleria Mall along Watson Boulevard and Houston Lake Boulevard south of Church Street.

Public/Institutional

- Local government buildings and complexes along with numerous institutional uses including churches along Houston Lake Boulevard, Church Street, and Thomson Road.

Parks/Recreation/Conservation

- Several parcels along Thomson Road and Collins Avenue are considered as conservation/open space areas.

City of Perry

Residential

- Classic traditional neighborhoods that contain primarily medium density single-family residential (with some areas containing mixture of single-family, duplexes, and multi-family uses) are located south of Hwy. 341S, between Hwy. 341 S and Hwy. 127, and off US 41N, Courtney Hodges Boulevard, and portions of Marshallville Road and Hwy. 341N.
- In-town historical residential uses are situated east and west of the downtown area.
- Low-density suburban single-family development is found north and south of the Perry Parkway and in the extreme western fringes of the Perry service area.

Commercial

- Central Business District - The City of Perry, Downtown Development Authority, Perry Chamber of Commerce, and the business owners have made a considerable investment in the downtown area over of the last decade to make it an attractive place to shop and work. In addition, the shared-use trail system that is currently under development will connect the downtown area with the community's residential areas and the State's Agricenter, thus bringing more residents and visitors into the area, but without the traffic congestion and the need for more parking.
- Strip Commercial Development - Along Sam Nunn Boulevard, Courtney Hodges Boulevard and the area near I-75 and the Agricenter.
- Neighborhood Commercial – Hwy. 41 north of the downtown area, Hwy. 341S, Hwy. 127N, and along portions of Kings Chapel Road.

Industrial

- Four primary areas along Valley Drive, south of the downtown area, south of Courtney Hodges Boulevard, and along I-75 between Perry Parkway and Thompson Road.

Public/Institutional

- Includes the local government complexes and churches in the downtown area and vicinity, the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter, the Houston County Government Complex near the intersection of Perry Parkway and Kings Chapel Roads, and schools and churches along Hwy. 41N, and other scattered institutional sites.

Parks/Recreation/Conservation

- Concentrated north, south, and east of the downtown area and includes the passive and active recreational areas owned by the City and a private golf course.

Agriculture/Forestry

- Large area east of the Perry Parkway is beginning to transition to suburban residential growth.
- West of Perry Parkway and north of Hwy. 127/224 will likely see some suburban residential growth, but not at the pace that is occurring in the eastern quadrant of the Perry Service Area.

City of Warner Robins

Residential

- Medium-density development with a mixture of single-family, duplex, and multi-family east of Houston Lake Road, south of Dunbar Road, and north of Russell Parkway.
- The area south of Russell Parkway towards Hwy. 96 is primarily single-family, low-density suburban residential.

Commercial

- Strip Highway Commercial - Includes the older section of Warner Robins on Watson Boulevard and North Davis Drive, and from there it has now spread all along Watson Boulevard/Highway 247 Connector to US 41, Russell Parkway from just west of Highway 247 to Houston Lake Road, and portions of Houston Lake Road from Watson Boulevard to Russell Parkway.
- This type of commercial is characterized by its variety and intensity of commercial uses; both retail and service, numerous curb cuts (that impacts traffic flow), and general unattractiveness due to the amount of signage and utility poles and a lack of building design controls.
- Another concern about strip commercial developments is the tendency for businesses to move out of older strip areas and move into new developments. From a business point of view, this makes sense because the new development is more attractive, has more parking, and is closer to the growing residential markets. From a community standpoint, these older commercial areas become abandoned and create a blighted effect on the surrounding area, thus reducing property values, tax base, and the initiative for private investment.
- It will be important for the communities in the WRATS Study Area to: (1) establish redevelopment strategies for these older strip commercial areas that correspond with the overall neighborhood redevelopment plans; and (2) establish a balanced approach

for encouraging new commercial developments in the growing urban area, while at the same time making it more attractive for private investment in older neighborhoods, both in terms of creating new residential and commercial opportunities.

- Neighborhood Commercial Centers - Developed within the strip commercial areas along Watson Boulevard and Russell Parkway in Warner Robins. New neighborhood commercial centers constructed in the suburban areas (along Highway 96) to keep up with the demand for retail and services of those residents moving to the area. In addition to Highway 96, another popular area for new neighborhood centers is along the Highway 247 Connector west of Houston Lake Road. These centers are taking advantage of the proximity to Galleria Mall and the growing population in Centerville and east Peach County.
- Local planners should take advantage of this nodal development by encouraging a mixture of residential, office, and retail development to occur along Highway 96 and connect them to these nodal areas with alternative transportation modes. Enacting certain regulatory measures in the near future will likely prevent a reoccurrence of strip commercial development that has taken place along the major thoroughfares to the north; establish an attractive living, shopping, and working environment; reduce traffic congestion; and also establish a trend for development along other major thoroughfares likely to face commercial pressures such as Highway 127 and Perry Parkway. Such regulations are being recommended along the Russell Parkway Extension in hopes of accomplishing the above objectives.
- Interstate Commercial Development - Located at the interstate interchange at Highway 247 Connector are the typical uses that generally serve the interstate traveling public; service stations, restaurants and motels, and other entertainment venues.
- Though there are land development regulations in place, there are no overall development plans for this area that address building design and appearance, signage, ingress/egress, etc. This interchange is an opportunity to establish striking entranceways that will leave a positive and lasting impression on the visitor about that community. These opportunities exist for the new interchanges at the Russell Parkway Extension and Highway 96 and the interstate corridor north to White Road.

Industrial

- Industrial areas in the City of Warner Robins include the Warner Robins Industrial Park off Hwy. 247 south of Russell Parkway, and two smaller areas; one at the intersection of Hwy. 247 and Elberta Road and one at the intersection of Dunbar Road and Carl Vinson Parkway.

Public/Institutional

- There are numerous public/institutional uses scattered throughout the City of Warner Robins, and they include Robins Air Force Base, government office

buildings, fire stations, public schools, Macon State College satellite center, Houston Medical complex, churches, etc.

Parks/Recreation/Conservation

- Included in this land use category are all of the public parks operated by the City of Warner Robins and several passive recreation areas.

Agriculture/Forestry

- There are few parcels of land within the City of Warner Robins that have been classified as in agriculture/forestry and they are located along Houston Lake Road south of Russell Parkway and Dunbar Road.

Unincorporated Houston County

Residential

- Single-family, low-density suburban type residential development located north and south of Hwy. 96, north of Dunbar Road, and east of the City of Perry.
- Rural residential uses south and west of Perry.

Commercial

- Strip commercial development along Hwy. 247 north and south of Hwy. 96
- Interstate commercial development at I-75 and Hwy. 26.
- Convenience commercial development scattered throughout the rural area south of Perry.

Industrial

- Large industrial corridor along Hwy. 247S that includes Frito-Lay, Medusa, and Perdue Chicken plant.

Public/Institutional

- Includes a public school off Hwy. 96 east of Hwy. 247, and churches and cemeteries in the rural area south and west of Perry.

Parks/Recreation/Conservation

- Oaky Woods and the state park south of Perry are the two P/R/C sites in unincorporated Houston County.

Agriculture/Forestry

- Most of unincorporated Houston County is classified as agriculture/forestry.
- It is likely that during the planning period, the area south, east, and west of Perry will become suburban residential, while the remainder of the area will continue its rural residential character.

Areas Requiring Special Attention

Areas requiring special attention include:

- **Areas of significant natural or cultural resources, particularly where these are likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development:**
 - An area requiring special attention in unincorporated Houston County is Oaky Woods. Oaky Woods is an area of land, approximately 19,000 acres in South East Houston County below Highway 96 and adjacent to the Ocmulgee River. Originally owned by the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, the property was managed as timberland to be used in Weyerhaeuser's pulp and paper operations. The Company also leased the acreage to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as a wildlife management area (WMA). As such, Oaky Woods has served as wildlife habitat for many species of animals and has provided hunters with a unique opportunity to hunt deer, hogs, bear, and turkey. Black bear and other indigenous wildlife have made this area their home for many years. It is also the home of some of the State's best "black belt" prairies and endangered plant species.

On February 20, 2004, Weyerhaeuser announced that it would sell all of its timberland in Georgia, including the Oaky Woods tract. While environmental groups, hunters, and the State scrambled to come up with the cash to protect the acreage from development, the property was eventually sold to a development corporation with plans to create a large scale private residential development with private taxing authority. The property has not been immediately developed, and there is still hope that at least some of Oaky Woods might be acquired through the State's land conservation program.

Due to Houston County's high growth rate and the development of available land and greenspace, these 19,000 acres require special attention. The future of Oaky Woods is unclear. It may or may not succumb to development. If development plans proceed, however, the County should have the appropriate land use tools in place to ensure that development occurs in such a way as to preserve Oaky Woods' sensitive areas, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

- **Areas where rapid development or change of land use is likely to occur:**
 - The area south of Hwy. 96 and east of Moody Road, past Hwy. 127 and Hwy. 224 will see enormous residential growth during the planning period. Hwy. 96 and Moody Road area is already transitioning from rural residential/agriculture and forestry to suburban residential. Within the next 5-10 years, the area between Hwy. 127 and Hwy. 224 will likely become suburban residential in character. During the remainder of the planning period, the area from Hwy. 224 to Felton Road, Firetower Road, Pyles Road, and Grovania Road will gradually move from its current rural residential character to that of suburban residential.
- **Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation:**
 - This area includes the transitioning area mentioned above. To accommodate the growth, the City of Perry will likely have to expand sewer service to this area necessitating a change in the service delivery map, and Houston County will have to continue expanding and improving its water system. Some improvements are currently being made along Hwy. 127 and Hwy. 247S.
- **Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness.**
 - Base Environs Area - Much of the land use in the vicinity of Robins Air Force Base is incompatible with aircraft noise and encroaches on the Base by potentially creating a more severe accident zone for crashes. This area contains an eclectic mix of house trailers, low-end housing (apartments, duplexes and houses), industrial uses, and some commercial. The housing needs to be removed, and the land use converted to industrial use and some retail or wholesale uses.
 - Downtown Warner Robins - This area needs upgraded housing, commercial businesses, and office complexes to create jobs. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) needs to develop a revitalization plan for this area, and to concentrate on the Commercial Circle and First Street areas. The First/Second Street area could be an

attractive office area for RAFB or for companies doing business with RAFB along with some retail/service commercial uses. The **DCA Resource Team** conducted a study in the area several years ago, and recommendations from this study could be used as part of this revitalization plan.

- **Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated:**
 - Includes portions of the Base Environs Area described above.
- **Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites):**
 - Includes several areas within the Downtown District and are highlighted in the DCA Resource Team report.

Recommended Character Areas

One aspect of the Joint Comprehensive Planning process that differs from previous efforts is the employment of the Character Area planning concept. In accordance with Department of Community Affairs (DCA) recommendations, the use of character areas in planning acknowledges the visual and functional differences of varying neighborhoods and allows for more intentional guidance of future development through adequate and specific planning and implementation. Under the program, all incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County are assigned one of a number of described Character Area designations. These designations are used to define areas that either have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved, have the potential to evolve into unique areas, or that may require special attention due to unique development issues. In the process of identifying and defining character areas, it is important to create recommendations that include the present character of an area as well as the future desired character for these places in the community.

Below are the Character Areas that the Coordinated Planning Committee have received preliminary recommendation for inclusion in the Joint Comprehensive Plan for Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins. The CPC will make a final recommendation of the Character Areas after it has received extensive community input obtained from its Community Participation Program. The final Character Areas will be shown on the Future Development Map in the Community Agenda portion of the Plan.

Classic/Traditional Neighborhood

Description

A **Classic/Traditional Neighborhood** is a residential area in the older part of the community. Characteristics include high potential pedestrian orientation, small, regular lots; limited open space; buildings close to or at the front property line; alleys; low degree of building separation; neighborhood-scale businesses scattered throughout the area. Neighborhoods of this type may often show various stages of disrepair. Some demonstrate a predominance of high quality, well maintained residences whereas others may exhibit symptoms of decline. These neighborhoods may provide a rich reservoir of affordable housing for first-time homebuyers, fixed income, and low-to-moderate income households.

Location within Houston County

- Centerville-Warner Robins - South of Dunbar Road to Watson Boulevard bounded by Houston Lake and Davis Road; South of Watson Boulevard bounded by Houston Lake Road to SR 247.
- Perry - Areas along Hwy. 41N, Hwy. 341N, Hwy. 341S, along Kings Chapel Road and Courtney Hodges Boulevard, and north of Marshallville Road.

Suburban Neighborhood

Description

Suburban Neighborhood is an area where pressures for the typical types of suburban residential subdivision development are greatest (due to availability of water and sewer service). Without intervention, this area is likely to evolve with low pedestrian orientation, little or no transit, high open space, high-to-moderate degree of building separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear.

Location within Houston County

- Warner Robins - Includes most of the area between Hwy. 96 and Russell Parkway.
- Perry - A large portion of the Perry Service Area is within this Character Area category and involves the areas east of the Perry Parkway and Hwy. 341S, south of the Golden Isles Parkway and the western section of the service area.
- Unincorporated Houston County - South of Hwy. 96 to the Felton Road, Firetower Road, Pyles Road, and Grovania Road and east to Hwy. 247S.

Rural Residential

Description

Rural Residential can be described as rural, undeveloped land likely to face development pressures for lower density (one unit per one acre or more) residential development. Typically, it will have low pedestrian orientation and access, very large lots, open space, pastoral views, and high degree of building separation.

Location within Houston County

- Unincorporated Houston County - Considered as “rural neighborhoods” and is defined by the area south of Felton Road, Firetower Road, Pyles Road, and Grovania Road and the area east of Hwy. 247S to Saddle Creek Road.

Historic District

Description

Historic district is an area containing features, landmarks, civic, or cultural uses of historic interest. Characteristics may vary based on size, location, and history of the community.

Location within Houston County

- Perry - Includes the predominately residential areas north and east of the downtown area.

Downtown District

Description

The **Downtown District** is a traditional central business district of an incorporated area. It generally includes a combination of retail, service, professional, and governmental uses.

Location within Houston County

- Centerville – Parallels Houston Lake Boulevard from Church Street to Thomson Road. It also includes a portion of Church Street to the City Hall complex.
- Warner Robins - Bounded by Green Street at the north, Hwy. 247 on the east, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard on the south, and N/S Davis Drive on the west.
- Perry - Perry City Hall forms its northern boundary, Main Street its southern boundary, Hwy. 41/Macon Road its eastern boundary, and Big Indian Creek the west boundary.

Neighborhood Commercial Corridors

Description

Neighborhood Commercial Corridors are developed or undeveloped land paralleling the route of a street or highways that link emerging town centers and commercial nodes and transportation crossroads. These areas are likely to experience commercial development and provide an excellent opportunity for mixed use and office park development. There is a potential for uncontrolled strip development to emerge if growth is not properly managed.

Location within Houston County

- Perry - Macon Road/US 41N, Hwy. 127 from Swift Street to approximately the Perry Parkway, Hwy. 341S from Main Street to just past Keith Drive, and most of Keith Drive from Hwy. 341S to Kings Chapel Road.

Crossroads Town Center

Description

Crossroads Town Center is a focal point for several neighborhoods that has a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians.

Location within Houston County

- Perry - Includes the following areas: Perry Parkway from Hwy. 341S to US 41N; Hwy. 41N from Perry Parkway to Langston Road; intersection of Arena Road

and Saddle Creek Road; intersection of Arena Road and Kings Chapel Road; and Perry Parkway from Valley Drive to Hwy. 341N

Crossroads Community

Description

Crossroads Community, like a Crossroads Town Center is a focal point for several neighborhoods and has general retail and service commercial but at a much smaller scale.

Location within Houston County

- Unincorporated Houston County - The communities identified are Bonaire, Kathleen, Henderson, Elko and Haynesville; the one at the intersection of Golden Isles Parkway and Hwy. 247S and the one on Grovania Road.

In-Town Corridor

Description

In-Town Corridor is developed or undeveloped land paralleling the route of a street or highway in town that is already or likely to experience uncontrolled strip development if growth is not properly managed.

Areas within Houston County

- Centerville/Warner Robins - Carl Vinson Parkway north of Watson Boulevard, Houston Road, N. Davis Drive, Watson Boulevard from the Downtown District to Carl Vinson Parkway; S. Houston Lake Road, Carl Vinson Parkway from Russell Parkway to Watson Boulevard, and Russell Parkway from Wellborn Road to S. Houston Lake Road.

Outlying Corridor

Description

Outlying Corridor is developed or undeveloped land on both sides of designated high-volume transportation facility, such as arterial roads and highways.

Areas within Houston County

- Warner Robins – Hwy. 41N from Hwy. 247C to approximately Thomson Road, and Russell Parkway Extension.

- Unincorporated Houston County – Hwy. 96 west of Magnolia Hill Road, Hwy. 96 near Peach Blossom Road and from Cartwright Drive to Hwy. 247S, and Hwy. 247S from Sandy Run Road to Beaver Creek Road.

Regional Activity Center

Description

Regional Activity Center is a concentration of regionally-marketed commercial and retail centers, office and employment areas, higher-education facilities, sports and recreational complexes. These areas are characterized by a high degree of access by vehicular traffic and high transit use, including stops, shelters, and transfer points; on-site parking; low degree of internal open space; high floor-area-ratio; large tracts of land, campus or unified development. Incorporated into this area are a wide variety of applications including concentrations of industrial, manufacturing, high density commercial, wholesale trade, and distribution activities. This designation intentionally incorporates a broad range of land uses. The focus is on the fact that this area serves to attract users and visitors from across the region rather than on being land-use specific.

Areas within Houston County

- Centerville/Warner Robins - Watson Boulevard/Hwy. 247S from Carl Vinson Parkway to east of Hwy. 41N, Elberta Road east of Collins Drive, Warner Robins Industrial Park south of Russell Parkway, and Hwy. 96 from Peach Blossom Road to Magnolia Hill Road.
- Perry - I-75 Corridor from the Perry Parkway to Mossy Creek.
- Unincorporated Houston County – Hwy. 247S from Hwy. 127 to Hwy. 341S.

Park/Open Space/Conservation

Description

Park/Open Space/Conservation is undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including views, coast, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas, and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development of any kind.

Areas within Houston County

- Centerville/Warner Robins - Bay Gall Creek Greenway, greenway west of Houston Lake Road, Ocmulgee River Corridor, Landings Country Club, and the active and passive parks within the City of Warner Robins.
- Perry - Greenways along the major creeks and streams including Big Indian Creek and Mossy Creek; Georgia Fairgrounds and Agricenter, new state park on Hwy. 41S and the passive and active recreation areas within the City of Perry.
- Unincorporated Houston County - Oaky Woods and the Ocmulgee River Corridor.

Robins Air Force Base Environs

Description

Robins Air Force Base Environs is identified areas in the vicinity of RAFB that present issues of compatibility related to noise and accident potential. The vision for these areas is a gradual transition of use towards those compatible with mission requirements as described in the Joint Land Use Study.

Areas within Houston County

- Warner Robins - Parallels Hwy. 247 from Echeconnee Creek to Green Street. East of Hwy. 247 is Robins Air Force Base.