CITY OF TOCCOA

2017 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

City of Toccoa

MAIN STREET TOCCOA

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of planning and community development is to provide guidance for everyday decision-making by local government officials and other community leaders. This document, the City of Toccoa *2017 Comprehensive Plan*, represents the culmination of the efforts to plan for the future well-being of the government, the residents and various stakeholders by identifying the critical, consensus issues and goals for the community. Implementing the plan will help the community address those critical issues and opportunities while moving towards realization of the unique vision for its future. These planning strategies are identified by Georgia's planning standards (see below):

Statewide benefits of comprehensive planning
(Local) comprehensive planning should be conducted in the context of Georgia's strong and vibrant intergovernmental system that clearly recognizes the important role cities and counties play in fostering the state's image as an attractive place to invest, conduct businesses and raise a family. City and county comprehensive planning enhances coordination at many levels.

Local benefits of comprehensive planning
The highest and best use of comprehensive planning for local governments is to show important relationships between community issues. A local comprehensive plan is a fact-based resource for local constituents that tracks implementation of community-based policies. Furthermore, local comprehensive planning creates an environment of predictability for business and industry, investors, property owners, tax payers and the general public. In addition, the plan helps local governments to recognize and then implement important economic development and revitalization initiatives. For these reasons, the state finds that well-planned communities are better prepared to attract new growth in a highly competitive global market.

In short, local planning should recognize that:

*Assets can be **accentuated** and **improved**;*

*Liabilities can be **mitigated** and **changed** over time; and*

*Potential can be **sought after** and **developed**.*

Scope

This document addresses the local planning requirements and community development of the City of Toccoa, Georgia. Some consideration has been given to neighboring areas and political entities that influence conditions within the city, but all the cited issues, objectives and opportunities discussed herein are solely focused on the City of Toccoa.

Plan Elements

This comprehensive plan serves to meet the requirements and intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affair's "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," as amended in 2013, and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. It is essential that the plan be prepared in compliance with these rules and guidelines in order for the City of Toccoa to maintain their Qualified Local Government (QLG) status. Further, State law requires that the governments update their comprehensive plan every 5 years.

> *"The purpose of Minimum Standards is to provide a framework for the development, management and implementation of local comprehensive plans at the local, regional and state government level. They reflect an important state interest: healthy and economically vibrant cities and counties are vital to the state's economic prosperity."*
>
> ***Community Goals**. The purpose of the Community Goals element is to lay out a road map for the community's future, developed through a very public process of involving community leaders and stakeholders in making key decisions about the future of the community. The Community Goals are the most important part of the plan, for they identify the community's direction for the future, and are intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community, thereby leading citizens and leadership to act to ensure that the plan is implemented.*
>
> ***Needs and Opportunities.** This is the locally agreed upon list of Needs and Opportunities the community intends to address. Each of the needs or opportunities that the community identifies as high priority must be followed-up with corresponding implementation measures in the Community Work Program. The list must be developed by involving community stakeholders in carrying out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or similar analysis of the community.*
>
> ***Community Work Program.** This element of the comprehensive plan lays out the specific activities the community plans to undertake during the next five years to address the priority Needs and Opportunities, identified Target Areas (if applicable), or to achieve portions of the Community Goals. This includes any activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems (such as site plan review, design review, etc.) to be put in place to implement the plan.*

Lastly, local comprehensive plans in Georgia are now required to include an assessment of compliance and consideration for the appropriate regional water plans for each community.

> ***Consideration of the Regional Water Plan and the Environmental Planning Criteria.** During the process of preparing its comprehensive plan, each community must review the Regional Water Plan(s) covering its area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria… to determine if there is need to adapt local implementation practices or development regulations to address protection of these important natural resources. The community must certify that it has considered both the Regional Water Plan and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria when it transmits the plan to the Regional Commission for review.*

This is to certify that as part of this planning process appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed the *Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Plan*, the *Georgia Mountains Regional Plan*, and the Georgia State *Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria* (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating this local plan. No conflicts were identified between this document and the other documents

In addition to the core required elements the City of Toccoa must also include a land use element to aid in the coordination of their development goals and improvement projects. This element is required for communities that have zoning or other land use management policies to ensure the coordination of activities on behalf of partner organizations, and with regards to infrastructure and utilities.

> ***Land Use Element.*** *The Land Use Element, where required, must include at least one of the two components listed below:*
>
> > *(a) Character Areas Map and Defining Narrative. Identify and map the boundaries of existing or potential character areas (see definition in Chapter 110-12-1-.05) covering the entire community, including existing community sub-areas, districts, or neighborhoods.*
> >
> > *(b) Future Land Use Map and Narrative. Prepare a Future Land Use Map that uses conventional categories or classifications to depict the location (typically parcel by parcel) of specific future land uses. If this option is chosen, prepare the Future Land Use Map using either of the land use classification schemes described below and include a narrative that explains how to interpret the map and each land use category.*

Public Participation

As a part of the planning process each local government must provide and implement opportunities to encourage public participation. The purpose of this is to insure that citizens and other stakeholders are aware of the planning process, are provided opportunities to comment on the local plan elements, and have adequate access to the process of defining the community's vision, priorities, goals, policies, and implementation strategies.

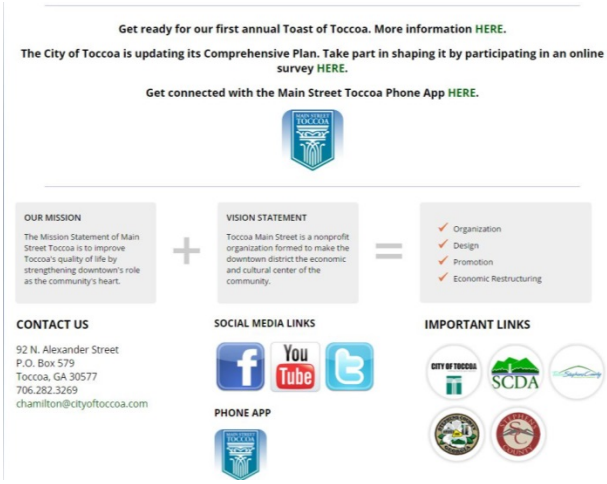
At a minimum, the public participation program must provide for: adequate notice to keep the general public informed of the emerging plan; opportunities for the public to provide written comments on the plan; hold the required public hearings; and, provide notice to property owners through advertisements in the newspaper (legal organ) of the planning effort soliciting participation and comments. In addition, the local government must provide opportunities for public participation through other means and methods to help articulate a community vision and develop associated goals and implementation program.

To lead the process the City did establish an Advisory Committee comprised of 5 public individuals and 2 staff members. The public representatives featured experience serving on the Planning Commission as well as extensive histories of living and working within the community. Staff chosen for the process were nominated for their experience with the City's current planning programs and knowledge of area development patterns and issues.

The City held 4 public meetings to discuss the comprehensive plan update, sharing copies of past materials as well as drafts of the prospective new material. These meetings were used to foster discussion among the Advisory Committee and any other attendees concerning the vision, strengths and weaknesses of the community and the surrounding region. The initial meeting focused on the plan process and the contents of a local comprehensive plan, then quickly moved into identifying the prevailing values used to establish the vision for Toccoa's future. The remaining meetings established the priority needs and issues facing the city as well as outlining opportunities in how Toccoa and her partners can address each concern. Themes prevalent within the public meetings echoed those shared through alternate input means, such as public surveys and direct comments, with the preservation of the City's form and character tantamount to a strong interest in securing stable economic growth going forward.

In addition, surveys were made available to everyone via online outlets. By the end of April more than 50 different responses had been received by the GMRC. (Summary of results and comments provided in the appendices.) These provided valuable insight into the prevailing concerns and desires of area residents, and gave the Advisory Committee and elected officials some direction on how to address the issues facing Toccoa.

Surveys would remain available through May 7 to ensure area residents and stakeholders have ample opportunity to provide their comments and voice their goals for the community.



Advisory Committee

Kinloch Dunlap: Before retiring, he worked for eight Fortune 500 companies and was brought in to help develop zoning ordinances for the City of Southfield, Michigan. He also serves on the Stephens Co. Board of Equalization.

Don Pruitt: Mr. Pruitt serves on the Stephens County Board of Equalization. Having lived his whole life in Toccoa, Mr. Pruitt has vast knowledge of the area and the people that it serves.

Suzy Bellamy: Before retiring, she served as a school teacher at Stephens County Schools for many years. Mrs. Bellamy has lived in Toccoa for much of her adult life and has a passion for zoning that serves Toccoa well.

Billie Thompson: She is a retired educator and currently works part-time for the Stephens County Literacy Council. She also runs several ministries, Walking Through the Word and Ablaze Prayer Ministry. She is active in community affairs and brings much local experience to the Planning Commission.

Angie Garland: She is retired from Regions Bank and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Toccoa-Stephens County Humane Shelter. Mrs. Garland was active in leading the city and county to construct the Humane Shelter as part of a joint effort. She is also a volunteer for Neighbors 4 Neighbors, a food pantry program.

Connie Tabor: Mrs. Tabor is the Community Development Director for the City, managing all planning, community and economic development activities for the city. Through her efforts, Main Street Toccoa has been selected as a top 10 Great American Main Street City by the National Main Street Center and a Georgia Exceptional Main Street by the State of Georgia. She is a Certified Main Street Manager, a Master Georgia Downtown Development Professional, and has previously served as the Georgia Downtown Association President.

Christian Hamilton: Mr. Hamilton is the Community Development Specialist for the City, working primarily on grant writing and grant administration. He received his Master in Public Administration from the University of Georgia. He assists the Community Development Director in city planning and economic development activities.

Critical issues and ideas submitted by the Advisory Committee:

- Expand manufacturing facilities
- Recruit new commercial businesses
- Establish education opportunity to train new workers
- Recruit interesting & diversified shops for the downtown area
- Recruit short term sleeping motels for over-night stay
- Recruit different type restaurants to be located in different locations
- Remove run-down housing/ Improve housing (both medium & expensive) and apartments for seniors
- Ensure roadways are maintained
- Investigate upgrading telecommunications for city
- Maintain adequate water & sewer services
- Establish a plan for continued upgrade of historical downtown
- Restructure taxes to support acceptable standards of living
- Define unacceptable locations & establish renovation plans
- Define acceptable locations & specify how to expand them

COMMUNITY VISION

The Minimum Standards and Requirements for Local Comprehensive Planning defines a community vision as something *"… intended to paint a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction."* It is required as an element of the comprehensive plan so that communities can truly establish a pure and simple ideal for themselves in a format that is easily expressed and understood.

Visioning provides communities with an opportunity to pause and consider the "big picture" as well as to attempt to clearly define their ideal future. Developing a vision means that the community has at least tried to identify current values, describe how they're to be realized in the future and use that image as a foundation for short and long-term planning. As a process this also requires the community to develop a consensus on what conditions to change or to preserve.

Vision Statement

A vision for the community's future must be included in the comprehensive plan. The community vision is intended to provide a complete picture of what the community desires to become. The community vision must be based on public input, the assessment of current and future needs and be supported by the goals, policies and objectives in the comprehensive plan. In addition, there must be consistency between the community vision and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Quality Community Objectives as well as consistency with the community visions of other communities within the region.

The following vision statement was derived from the various comments and suggestions raised during public meetings and through the available survey process. They reflect the prevailing themes and issues cited in discussions about prioritizing the local residents over the strong desire to retain the current level of "*small town charm*" that is felt to define the community. *(Even the Main Street Toccoa web site has a page dedicated to the "Advantages of Small Town Living!")* In this the residents and stakeholders are speaking to a vertical fabric of being both geographically small and close knit in that most businesses are locally owned and unique and people have a sense of comfort that they're familiar with one another. This cyclical relationship is defined by the community's investment in the local businesses and the local business' investment into the community. Many events are used to bring all of Toccoa and Stephens County together to reflect this desire.

The aim for the community is to grow from within, with the bulk of change coming from the revitalization of existing structures and neighborhoods rather than expanding outward. There is a preference to see older homes fixed before newer ones are built, to see existing industrial sites brought to use before new ones are added to the outskirts. Some of this is built on the nostalgia and appreciation for the urban fabric of the city, while much of it stems from wanting to make the most of the existing properties and not see the aging and dilapidated structures fall further into disrepair. The hope is that if Toccoa can achieve economic growth within this vision then it will be an even stronger and more unique small city amidst the slowly suburbanizing region.

Comments regarding the values, strengths and weaknesses of Toccoa:

Values to be emphasized:

- Advantages of small town living
- Being "local" in living, work and play
- Sense of identity
- Connection to the past
- Slower/comfortable pace of life
- Safe
- Emphasis on family/the people
- Respect for our history
- Vision for the future

Things to be preserved:

- Downtown
- Historic structures
- Outdoor recreation/ Parks

Things to be changed:

- Empty/worn out properties; Code enforcement
- Need more businesses & commercial options
- Outdoor recreation/ Parks
- Leadership
- Telecommunications
- Cost of living/ transportation

VISION STATEMENT	CITY OF TOCCOA

The City of Toccoa, Georgia, will strive to be family-friendly civic and commercial destination serving area residents, business and visitors offering small-town living and southern hospitality.

The City of Toccoa will maintain its unique identity by preserving its historic downtown as the cultural center for the community, fostering many events and occasions to bring people together in celebration of its military, agricultural and Appalachian heritage.

The City of Toccoa will provide efficient and high quality services in support of local residents and businesses, protect and promote the region's mountains and natural resources, work to foster a more diverse and growing economy, and build partnerships with adjoining governments and other organizations in pursuit of all these objectives.

Needs & Opportunities

To achieve its stated vision a community must understand those obstacles and issues that must be addressed in order to reach the goals implied. The comprehensive planning process asks communities to assess the information outlined in an effort to identify issues and opportunities that should be considered when trying to plan for the future. In doing so the communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions so as to better achieve the desired vision.

The following represents a refined listing of Issues and Opportunities for Toccoa. Some were carried over from the previous plan, but the list has been confirmed and/or refined based on the discussions and analyses throughout the current planning process. *(Also shows year proposed or listed as policy)*

City of Toccoa

Needs & Opportunities	Mitigation Strategies
• Need for long-term management/ expansion plans for utilities and infrastructure.	• Update water/sewer demand forecast; Amend water/sewer network expansion plan as needed ('17)
• Need for more sidewalks, bicycle trails and facilities	• Develop bicycle and sidewalk master plan (w/ County) ('18)
• Need to expand downtown streetscape efforts, pursue more infill.	• Develop bicycle/ sidewalk master plan ('18) • Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted properties ('18) • Promote Urban Redevelopment Plan and funding resources for historic properties (P)
• Need options for affordable housing and senior housing	• Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted properties ('19) • Develop reference guide for urban housing models for seniors/ young adult households ('19)
• Need to expand commercial options within and around downtown • Need/Desire to bring office employment to downtown	• Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted properties ('18)
• Need to protect historic structures	• Update inventory of historic sites and adopt preservation policies ('18)
• Need to improve telecommunications services (both cellular and landline based)	• Inventory infrastructure and service areas throughout county ('17) • Develop improvement plan with North Ga. Network and GDEcD ('17)
• Need to address possible blighted and distressed properties	• Performance review of code enforcement procedures and policies ('18) • Develop annual monitoring report of code enforcement activity. ('17)

• Need to ensure optimal levels of natural resource protection and greenspace planning	• Develop Parks and Rec Master Plan w/ Stephens County; Include greenspace component (’19) • Adopt/Promote conservation design policies (’18) • Develop report assessing all State listed waters in need of resource protection (’20)
• Need for overnight lodging within the city	• Develop report identifying industry needs for hotel locations; Identify critical issues for Toccoa (‘17) • Inventory properties that would be suitable for use as a hotel/motel/inn, including assessment of obstacles for development (’18)
• Need to rehabilitate older industrial areas	• Maintain eligibility for Opportunity Zone status (P) • Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted properties (’17)
• Need long-term plan for maintenance and possible expansion of railway spurs	• Develop report assessing current and planned status of existing rail routes in the region (’20) • Develop study assessing options for expansion of new spurs in the area (’19)
• Need to identify long-term space for farmer’s market.	• Develop facility needs report; establish conceptual building plan (’17) • Identify potential properties and cost estimates (’17)
• Need to improve education and skill levels for local labor force	• Support greater coordination among local industry, North Georgia Tech, Toccoa Falls College and Stephens County schools; Explore more options for internships and practical training exercises (P) • Develop annual forum with Stephens County on education and employment conditions within the region (’17)
• Need to address character of gateway corridors into the city	• Performance review of code enforcement procedures and policies (’18) • Develop annual monitoring report of enforcement activity. (’18) • Develop beautification plans for major arterials coming into downtown (’19) • Start roadside clean-up campaign (’21)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Land Use Assessment

Land use management policies and programs represent guidelines for shaping development patterns that provide for efficient growth while also protecting sensitive social and environmental areas. As such communities should take into account their current and immediately projected conditions and assess the identified needs and issues regarding the built landscape and community services for the area. This section presents an inventory of existing land use patterns and development trends for the community, allowing the local government to produce the most effective policies needed to manage the demands from projected development.

Land use, settlement patterns and economic development throughout Stephens County are clearly related to predominant physiographic features. Farming and pastures are located along gentle slopes or in the bottom lands where the soil is rich and the land level. Timber management and lumbering of woodlands have occurred in areas too poor to support farming. Mountain tops and steep slopes were maintained in a natural state because of their unsuitability for intensive use. Roads tend to follow narrow valleys, along ridge lines and streams. Since most of the valleys and ridges occur in a north-south alignment, most of the roads and rail follow the same direction.

With the establishment of the railroad, Toccoa began to grow and prosper to become a major transportation and shipping outpost, as well as an industrial center manufacturing a variety of products and goods. Downtown Toccoa evolved a traditional urban street grid pattern, branching predominantly east-west along the rail line, with downtown encompassing several blocks of classic zero-lot-line structures and streetscapes, surrounding by more bucolic neighborhoods that yielded to roads with more scenic, winding forms and blocks shaped by the landscape.

Eventually the automobile industry became more prominent and housing developed further and further outside the urban core, with select arterials receiving destination status for regionalized commercial hubs. Indigenous growth is now following transportation corridors, with the most intense urban-scale development occurring along arterial road corridors and intersections, primarily where supporting infrastructure is available. The Toccoa By-pass opened in 1987 and was soon followed by water and gas infrastructure, greatly influencing development south of the city.

The most recent decades have brought an influx of older people living in retirement homes and resort locations. In addition, much of the county contains a large, transient, second home or vacation lot population, which swarms into the area during the summer months, weekends and holidays. Engineering technology improvements and affordable construction costs have encouraged development to take place on sites (steep slopes) that were once impossible to access and build upon. “Retiree” residential development is occurring along connecting collector roads scattered throughout the County. Vacation

homes are primarily located along the shores of Lake Hartwell, as well as various creeks and streams, and along the high ridge-lines that provide scenic views. Homes are also being constructed in areas adjacent to the Chattahoochee National Forest. The National Forest brings a quality of life amenity to the Stephens County area with it numerous recreational opportunities. Many retirees are interested in building homes that are either adjacent or in close proximity to the National Forest so that they can be protected or surrounded by permanent greenspace.

Areas Requiring Special Attention

Analysis of prevailing trends assists in identifying preferred patterns of growth for the future. Such analyses can identify those areas requiring special attention with regard to management policies, such as natural or cultural resources likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development.

- *Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur*

  Development on the outskirts of Toccoa along SR17 consists of variations of commercial and residential use, as the county seat continues to experience natural outward expansion. The area has been targeted for such growth and development, but the City and the County may wish to review development options and potential for each area after updating GIS files and the reconsideration of land use management measures currently underway at Stephens County. (See *Big A Road Corridor* character area)

- *Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation*

  Utilities are present in most areas of the City, including those experiencing development pressures. Current utility service areas are in accordance with community development goals for the local governments, and projected land use remains within existing utility capacities. This does, however, require the County from continuing to ensure high intensity development does not occur outside sewer services.

- *Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness (including strip commercial corridors)*

  Several small sections of the county have been cited for a need for redevelopment, most within or immediately outside Toccoa. The City is already engaged in programs to revitalize these areas, and is addressing the effort one neighborhood at a time. Sections remaining in need of attention include the Trogdon Furniture Mill and surrounding district, the Toccoa Casket Company property and 2 of the main gateway corridors leading into downtown Toccoa. (See *Urban Industrial* character area)

- *Large abandoned structures or sites, including possible environmental contamination.*

  The Trogdon Furniture Mill and the Toccoa Casket Company are the most notable vacant properties within the city. Neither is suspected of environmental contamination but both sites would require significant rehabilitation to be considered viable for modern business or residential use. (See *Brownfield Redevelopment* character area)

- *Areas with significant infill development opportunities.*

  Beyond the sites already mentioned there are a few concentrations of sites suitable for infill development except the City owned parking lots. Toccoa is actively pursuing measures to assist with residential and small business development within existing properties.

- *Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole*

  Current economic conditions make it difficult to distinguish parts of the community as significantly more impoverished such that special attention is required. Toccoa is actively assisting with redevelopment in and around downtown and the Trogdon Mill district, and Stephens County is promoting economic development for the county as a whole. Stephens County and the three municipalities are actively partnering in programs to bring economic development, support the schools and local job training programs.

- *Areas of significant natural or cultural resources in need of attention*

  Most of the historic or notable cultural attractions within the county are within the Toccoa City historic preservation district, for which the City is actively pursuing resource preservation and adaptive reuse. The City has an HP Commission that assists with design guidelines and the City and County have jointly participated in several joint ventures to promote the region's history. At the moment neither Toccoa nor Stephens County are being called upon to do more than current actions are providing. (See *Historic District/ Urban Design Overlay Area*)

  With respect to natural resources, both Toccoa and Stephens County have enacted the necessary Environmental Planning Criteria and related development regulations. Much of the land within the county is protected through US Forest Service ownership. No significant action above existing measures has been identified for this element.

Character Area Assessment

Character area planning is designed to focus on the physical appearance (aesthetics) and function of a particular area. Development strategies are tailored and applied to each individual area. The goal is to enhance the existing character/function or promote a new, more desirable character for the future. Character areas identify portions of the community that have a unique or special character that needs to be preserved or require special attention because of unique development issues

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the development of a Character Area Map that reflects the city's vision for future growth and development during the course of the planning period. This vision was developed through an extensive public visioning process and expresses the unique character of various portions of the city. The various character areas, then, are intended to support the overall future development strategy by organizing common themes of development patterns throughout the community. They promote the desired development patterns and provide a framework for coordination of capital improvement projects that may impact development. The following pages present the map and narratives of each Character area associated with the City of Toccoa.

Each identified character area outlines a specific vision or plan that includes the following:

- Written description and pictures or illustrations that identify the patterns and scales of development encouraged in that area.
- Identification of implementation measures to achieve the desired development patterns for the area, including more detailed sub-area planning, new or revised local development regulations, incentives, public investments, and infrastructure improvements.

The City of Toccoa has had some form of land use management policies since 1958 and historic resource protection measures since 2006, necessitating analysis of recommended or priority land uses within the character areas. As the City applies its land use management regulations and standards in the future it must ensure compliance between its policies and Character Area descriptions accordingly.

CHARACTER AREAS	
Area	**Development Types Encouraged**
Downtown CBD	Urban form development (zero-lot-line); Retail, dining and other commercial uses; Urban residential; Office and institutional uses
Central Transitional District	Urban form development (zero-lot-line); Retail, dining and other commercial uses; Urban residential; Office and institutional uses
Brownfield Redevelopment Areas	Light industrial; Warehousing; Office and institutional uses; Regional scale economic centers
Big A Road Corridor	Retail, dining and other commercial uses; Office and institutional uses; Regional scale economic centers
Falls Road Corridor	Institutional and office uses; Residential; Neighborhood scale commercial; Rural landscaping and scale
Parks and Recreation	Passive and active use parks; Trails; Preserved greenspace; Gardens; Passive gathering spaces
Mixed Use Redevelopment Area	Light industrial; Warehousing; Office and institutional uses; Neighborhood scale commercial; Residential
Neighborhood Infill and Rehabilitation Area	Urban neighborhood residential (single-family); Schools, parks, churches, and neighborhood-compatible uses; Neighborhood scale commercial (on arterial roads)
Historic District/ Urban Design Overlay Area	Development must/should be compliant with the City's Urban Design Guidelines

Narrative | *Downtown CBD*

Toccoa is the county seat of Stephens County and is among the first true mountain cities for tourists coming from south of the region. It is the home to Toccoa Falls College (and the falls, themselves) and was the location for historic military training operations in World War II. Today Toccoa is among the larger cities within the region, with a strong industrial base, a local hospital and a regional airport.

The Downtown Central Business District, which features a National Historic District featuring many classic urban buildings, retains the scale and ambiance of a traditional urban core. It features some of the most retained and restored such structures in the region and has worked to revitalize their downtown that is considered a defining trait of the community. Since the 2007 removal of the concrete canopies that once covered a street-turned pedestrian mall, Toccoa has experienced a modest renaissance downtown. Several buildings have undergone renovations of at least their facades if not the whole interior, and more businesses have come into downtown based on the restored urbanity.

Toccoa is also a higher grade of urban environment compared to most other rural cities in north Georgia. Most structures in Toccoa are 2 stories (or taller) with more ornamentation and stonework. The density of turn of the century buildings in downtown depicts Toccoa as a once truly vibrant city. The orientation around the courthouse and prevailing block structure reinforces this character, as downtown has a uniform pattern for parking, sidewalks, and traditional urban form.

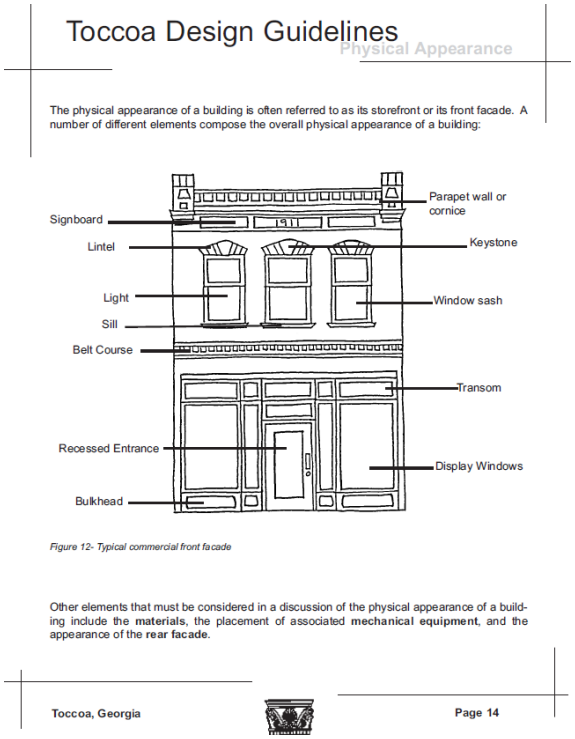
The City is in the middle of an economic revitalization based around downtown. The streetscape effort along E. Doyle Street has helped draw visitors and give local businesses a more inviting setting. The DDA and its partners are also aware of the need to give downtown special attention in the types of businesses to recruit and works closely with existing businesses in listening to their needs and objectives.

The primary traffic generators for Toccoa are the courthouse and government buildings, plus the COC building that doubles as the Currahee Military and History Museum. The latter facility is in the old train depot just one block off the courthouse square and features a modest conference room that hosts many events. The Amtrak train station is located downtown, as well, providing another unique draw to the city.

Toccoa's efforts to improve the downtown have been well received and buoyed an already high level of public support and hometown pride. Festivals and downtown markets perform well and business and land owners invest in the upkeep and improvements of their downtown properties. That there is a well received and clear vision has helped ensure a high level of consensus support from both the private sector and public leaders.

Toccoa is a very walkable city, both by virtue of city scale and form and in the quality of the sidewalks. The urban core of downtown has sidewalks on both sides of the street that feature mostly ADA compliant crosswalks and pedestrian amenities throughout. Curbside parking helps buffer walkers from traffic, and the accessibility reaches for several blocks all around the city, even into adjoining residential neighborhoods. Some sidewalks could use additional improvements, and select intersections could use better signage to outline pedestrian safety, but as a larger urban setting for mountain communities Toccoa is highly conducive to walking.

The mix of businesses in downtown is improving since the initial streetscape improvements in 2007, and has only slowed due to the recession. Doyle Street features a blend of retail and dining that can appeal to tourists as well as locals, and the type of service industries (studios, government offices) tend to feature more traffic than other industry options, aiding the foot traffic along downtown sidewalks.



Toccoa Design Guidelines

Physical Appearance

The physical appearance of a building is often referred to as its storefront or its front facade. A number of different elements compose the overall physical appearance of a building:

Figure 12- Typical commercial front facade

Other elements that must be considered in a discussion of the physical appearance of a building include the **materials**, the placement of associated **mechanical equipment**, and the appearance of the **rear facade**.

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Implementation Measures | ***Downtown CBD***

- ***Pursue infill development.*** Toccoa features a number of redevelopment options and new construction possibilities. Immediate options for undeveloped lands should be explored. The City should pursue a comprehensive property survey of the urban core and surrounding areas that can be used to monitor structures and lots targeted for (re)development or use. This would not only facilitate future capital investment programs but could be beneficial in knowing exactly the scope and conditions of available properties.

- ***Explore urban design guidelines.*** Toccoa has an established urban form based on neighborhoods and a core downtown, character areas that ideally should be preserved and improved in order to retain the City's cherished identity. Anchored by their National Historic District the City has an abundance of properties worth preserving and whose architecture helps define the community. Consideration of formal design guidelines for areas outside the historic district would help define the structural elements that contribute to this character and allow the City to better protect critical structures and places while also ensuring new development adds to the surrounding context.

- ***Expand and maintain pedestrian accessibility.*** This is crucial for any urbanized area like Toccoa that has made great strides at improving the streetscape downtown to lure more people there. Improving and expanding sidewalks, trails and other elements that foster walkable connections across properties and blocks should be a priority for the City moving forward. This would include developing a network expansion plan, a long-term maintenance strategy and policy, and an assessment of streetscaping opportunities and renovation work at the Broad Street underpass to serve as a gateway to downtown Toccoa.

- ***Development of a targeted marketing program.*** An exercise designed to identify the best types of industries that could succeed in small urban centers like Toccoa, based on labor force, location and development conditions, should be orchestrated to give the City and all stakeholders a list of industries to target for recruitment and expansion. This can be done in conjunction with the Main Street program, the Ga. Dept. of Economic Development, the Dept. of Labor, the GMRC, and area colleges.

- ***Continue to push the Façade Rehabilitation Program.*** This program endows local property owners with access to tax credits and professional assistance in the restoration and adaptive reuse of older building exteriors. Toccoa has several properties that could benefit from this program and offer brighter, more inviting fronts to their businesses that would also enhance the public streetscape. The GMRC and the State offer assistance and guidance as part of their regular operations and could be available to help Toccoa with any of these efforts. The Main Street Program and DDA also offer a façade grant program that is available to any property located in the Main Street District.

- ***Expand the Arts in Downtown Toccoa.*** The historic Ritz Theater at the Schaefer Center serves as an iconic anchor to downtown Toccoa. Since the City took ownership, extensive renovation work is ongoing, funded through grant monies and other sources. The City would like to continue renovation work and expand the programming at the theater to draw visitors to, and increase the economic vitality of, downtown.

- ***Continue implementation of Historic Resources Survey.*** To maintain Certified Local Government (CLG) status and for the benefit of increased grant funding, the City of Toccoa will

continue to implement its city-wide Historic Resources Survey, beginning with the Historic Downtown District.

- ***Implement Overarching Downtown Wi-Fi Network.*** Rural areas have been susceptible to wireless network outages and decreased capability for internet use. A fully-integrated downtown wireless fidelity network would allow Toccoa to remain competitive in rural areas and increase economic development and tourism.

- ***Design and install lighting and wayfinding signage to market Downtown Toccoa.*** Increased lighting and wayfinding signage serve to market Downtown Toccoa as a tourism destination in addition to increasing beautification efforts.

- ***Revitalize the Amtrak station.*** The City of Toccoa is dedicated to the sustainability of the Toccoa Amtrak Station. Currently, lighting upgrades are needed to allow for better visibility during Amtrak stops, and the sidewalk/platform area requires repaving for reasons of safety and accessibility.

- ***Create and market the Ritz Theatre Plaza.*** As the City of Toccoa continues to market its downtown economic anchor, the Historic Ritz Theatre, efforts must be made to expand the Ritz Theatre plaza, including the establishment of an annex focused on exhibit space, restrooms, and additional lobby space, an amphitheater allowing for outdoor artistic endeavors, and increased greenspace surrounding this downtown focal point.

- ***Continue to expand greenspace.*** Downtown Toccoa is in a constant state of revitalization. Expanding the greenspace in the city serves to create a sense of place that is marketable in historic downtown districts for the purposes of tourism product development and economic vitality.

Narrative | *Central Transitional District*

Immediately adjacent to the downtown CBD is the extension of urban blocks that provide the transitional space between the historic urban core and the surrounding traditional neighborhoods. This area features a blend of historic and more modern architecture depicting the city's evolution into the automobile era, as the once tight urban core that served as the primary commercial and social center of the community began to feel pressures from an expanding Toccoa.

Most of the structures are placed along urban street fronts with sidewalks, with minimal surface parking and typically 1-2 story structures. There are some houses that have been converted to commercial use as well as conventional commercial structures of varying styles.

An area of declining development west and south of Toccoa's CBD, this area is currently a mix of commercial, heavy commercial, and aging residential along a commercial highway corridor. The area has high vacancy rate and dilapidated building conditions. There is potential for streetscape improvements, higher density mixed use including residential, commercial, and retail along main corridor. There is potential for residential redevelopment, especially workforce and starter properties. Close proximity to the CBD provides opportunity for connectivity and pedestrian amenities.

Revitalizing this area would go along with the community's vision for enhancing the existing character of Toccoa, providing it with a vibrant urban fabric relatively distinct within the region. It would also aid in connecting the residential and commercial activities at a more pedestrian scale. If possible, the City would aspire to bring more back-office and professional service employment centers to this area to serve as an additional source of customers for the existing retail and dining options within downtown.

Implementation Measures | *Central Transitional District*

- ***Attain/Maintain Enterprise Zone designation.*** The City should utilize every available State-authorized program and resource for encouraging job development within the area. Properties eligible for Enterprise and/or Opportunity Zone designation should be nominated for such, with the city implementing the policies and programs necessary to support those designations.

- ***Workforce/Starter housing strategic plan.*** The City will work with local realtors and bankers to develop a profile for affordable housing in the area, based on price points and prevailing wages. This will include recommendations for new/amended policies and identification of sites for available housing (re)development.

- ***Review and update development regulations.*** The City should annually review the performance of their development regulations, and identify and make changes as necessary.

- ***Establish business incubator program.*** The City should seek ways to establish business incubators within or near downtown, especially within properties available for revitalization. This would involve the identification of funds for property acquisition and improvement, and coordination with the local colleges, the Chamber and Development Authority about contact with entrepreneurs to use the spaces.

- ***Establish Community Improvement Districts if viable.*** The City should explore special tax districts for areas in need of rehabilitation. Develop a report identifying the potential budgets and targeted improvements within the candidate districts. For any district deemed potentially viable the report should outline the steps for enacting possible designation.

- ***Establishment of a beautification program/ Streetscape improvements.*** The City should create a general beautification program for prominent streets within and outside the historic district. This would include guidelines for signage and landscaping, public amenities such as benches and lighting, as well as coordination of litter control and Gateway signage.

- ***Develop and implement a Bike & Pedestrian Master Plan with the County.*** The City should work with Stephens County and other stakeholders to establish a formal network of trails throughout the area, as well as plans for sidewalk expansion and long-term maintenance policies.

- ***Adopt traditional neighborhood development ordinances.*** The City should adopt policies that support the development and expansion of traditional neighborhood forms with regard to block and lot sizes, Complete Street conditions, pocket parks and other conditions that expand upon the characteristics of the existing older neighborhoods.

- ***Maintain landscape ordinance.*** The City should annually review the performance of their landscape regulations, and identify and make changes as necessary.

- ***Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan with the County.*** The City should work with Stephens County and other stakeholders to establish a formal strategy for the identification and protection of natural habitats, both to preserve local ecology and environmental resources and to promote passive outdoor recreation.

Narrative | *Brownfield Redevelopment Area*

This refers to the vacant or under-utilized industrial areas (existing and potential brownfields) located along the western rail corridor of Toccoa, as well as a few parcels south of the Downtown Central Business District. There is the potential for re- development as a mix of industrial and commercial uses, with incentives for remediation and integration into the larger community.

Most of these sites served as the original industrial production centers for Toccoa and the region long ago. The footprints are smaller than conventional industrial properties but most do have railroad access and close proximity to the majority of city residents. Some environmental mitigation has already taken place at two of the properties to aid in their potential reuse, and the City is working with the Development Authority to identify businesses capable of utilizing such urban footprints. The City has also worked to secure Opportunity Zone status for these properties to aid in the financial incentives for new employment located in the area.

As these properties are also along one of the arterial roads leading into the city they could easily handle some commercial traffic, feeding directly to the Toccoa Bypass just to the south. The goal is to regenerate the industrial activity of this side of town to put these properties to good use, maximizing the access to the rail spurs, and provide another source of employment in and around downtown. Targeted industries would need to have minimal nuisance impact due to the proximity to residential areas.

Implementation Measures | *Brownfield Redevelopment Area*

- ***Attain/Maintain Enterprise Zone designation.*** The City should utilize every available State-authorized program and resource for encouraging job development within the area. Properties eligible for Enterprise and/or Opportunity Zone designation should be nominated for such, with the city implementing the policies and programs necessary to support those designations.

- ***Establish/Utilize brownfield redevelopment incentives.*** The City should establish an incentive package, through local resources or combined with State and federal options that can be used to attract redevelopment and reuse of suspected brownfield properties. This could include environmental assessments or job tax credits or other means that lead to the rehabilitation of vacant properties in the targeted areas.

- ***Establish business incubator program.*** The City should seek ways to establish business incubators within or near downtown, especially within properties available for revitalization. This would involve the identification of funds for property acquisition and improvement, and

coordination with the local colleges, the Chamber and Development Authority about contact with entrepreneurs to use the spaces.

- ***Review and update development regulations.*** The City should annually review the performance of their development regulations, and identify and make changes as necessary.

- ***Establishment of a beautification program/ Streetscape improvements.*** The City should create a general beautification program for prominent streets within and outside the historic district. This would include guidelines for signage and landscaping, public amenities such as benches and lighting, as well as coordination of litter control and Gateway signage.

- ***Maintain landscape ordinance.*** The City should annually review the performance of their landscape regulations, and identify and make changes as necessary.

- ***Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan with the County.*** The City should work with Stephens County and other stakeholders to establish a formal strategy for the identification and protection of natural habitats, both to preserve local ecology and environmental resources and to promote passive outdoor recreation.

Narrative | *Big A Road Corridor*

This district represents the main commercial corridor of Toccoa and Stephens County in the form of SR 17 as it runs southeast/northwest from the city. It is a conventional arterial road with multiple lanes of traffic in each direction and harbors a variety of retail, dining, service and office operations that cater to both local residents and travelers in the area. Much of the development along this particular stretch is oriented around automobiles and drive-in customers, with only modest attention to pedestrian traffic. There are a few parcels available for redevelopment in the Big A Road Corridor. The road is designed to handle higher speeds and assist in getting travelers through the scene. The signage and curb-cuts imply the corridor is for moderate to heavy traffic, making it a conventional commercial area.

This highway features the connection with the Toccoa Bypass, providing a critical connection on the south side of the city to the western part of the county and US 441. Both roads handle a high volume of school-related traffic and serve several businesses. The length of Big A in and near Toccoa features comparable retail and office development, including more fast-food dining options, additional shopping centers and gas stations.

The corridor has developed due to the access of the road way and the eventual connection southward to I-85 in Lavonia. It is considered an appropriate catchment area for such development patterns, affording the City the chance to retain downtown in a more historic manner and reserving the rest of the county for traditionally rural forms. Utility demand will be the driving factor for any expansion as the City and County both with to maximize capacity for existing residents and in a manner that keeps the county in a rural manner as desired by locals.

Implementation Measures | *Big A Road Corridor*

- ***Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity*** of corridor to ensure safety and general appearance of structures and properties.

- ***Develop/Update an inventory of local business*** to identify mix of local commerce and retail; Assess needed or desired businesses for potential recruitment.

- ***Update traffic profile of corridor*** to identify any hazardous conditions and plan for any needed improvements.

- ***Establishment of a beautification program/ Streetscape improvements.*** The City should create a general beautification program for prominent streets within and outside the historic district. This would include guidelines for signage and landscaping, public amenities such as benches and lighting, as well as coordination of litter control and Gateway signage.

- ***Amend development regulations to minimize automobile parking demands.*** The City should amend development standards and recommendations to reduce the amount of parking required and produce parking lots that are more environmentally sensitive, conducive to pedestrian connectivity and exhibits urban design characteristics.

- ***Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan with the County.*** The City should work with Stephens County and other stakeholders to establish a formal strategy for the identification and protection of natural habitats, both to preserve local ecology and environmental resources and to promote passive outdoor recreation

Narrative | *Falls Road Corridor*

This is the light arterial road reaching northwest from downtown headed toward Clayton, with its primary role serving as the route toward Toccoa Falls College and the Stephens County Hospital. It is mostly a two lane road with some turn lanes as needed, and does provide eventual access for tourists traveling to the mountains, parks and US Forest Service land that lures so many visitors to the region.

Falls Road is a mostly bucolic and winding drive with a variety of residential and institutional development on either side within and just outside the City limits. It's often regarded a scenic corridor by locals and does pass by a local golf course and historic cemetery. Particularly with the access to the college this is considered one of the idealized transitional corridors between the urban core of the city and rural Stephens County.

The goal for this corridor is to maintain its passive level of activity and general beauty. Development should be monitored for maintaining the general scale and architectural styles of the area, with an emphasis on landscaping and sign maintenance.

Implementation Measures | *Falls Road Corridor*

- ***Continue landscape plan at the City Cemetery.*** The City should complete and sustain landscape and beautification efforts at the City Cemetery, and make a priority to emphasize the cultural and historic benefit of keeping the cemetery clean and attractive.

- ***The City should update their historic resources survey.*** The City must update and expand their records of historic sites and resources, then utilize this information to improve communication and promotion of historic resources as part of Toccoa's brand and cultural appeal. This should include a set of recommendations on existing resource needs and opportunities, as well as projections of future designated historic resources for preemptive protection.

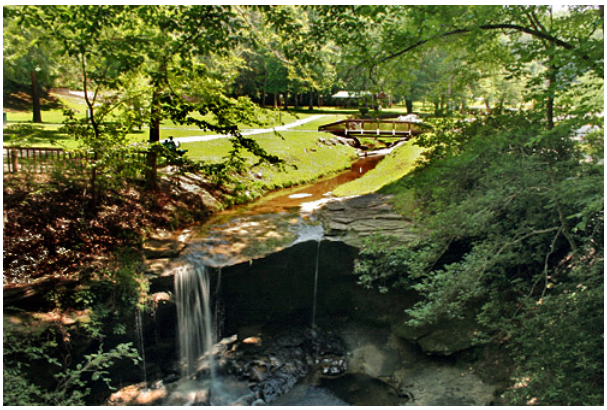
- ***Amend development regulations to minimize automobile parking demands.*** The City should amend development standards and recommendations to reduce the amount of parking required and produce parking lots that are more environmentally sensitive, conducive to pedestrian connectivity and exhibits urban design characteristics.

- ***Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan with the County.*** The City should work with Stephens County and other stakeholders to establish a formal strategy for the identification and protection of natural habitats, both to preserve local ecology and environmental resources and to promote passive outdoor recreation.

Narrative | *Parks and Recreation*

The City of Toccoa has several municipal parks – Henderson Falls Park, Emory Johnson Park, Alewine Park, Lake Toccoa, Doyle Street Park and Paul Anderson Park. The City also runs the Doyle Street Swimming Pool complex.

This district is reserved for natural and landscaped areas that are designated for specific recreational use and/or as a buffer within developed areas. This can include passive or active parks, trails, larger public gardens or popular spots designated for hiking, fishing, camping, etc. Greenways can provide safe, efficient pedestrian linkages and at the same time give users an opportunity to enjoy the natural environment. Properly designed greenways can serve as an alternative transportation network, accommodating commuting to work or shopping as well as recreational biking, walking, jogging, and other activities.



These are spaces restricted from new development except for maintenance and expansion of amenities designed to enhance the property's role as a park. Parking and facilities should be minimized and development should incorporate high degrees of appropriate landscaping. These spaces should be attractive to, and serve the interests of, the residents and visitors to the area as a primary way to appreciate the rural culture and mountainous landscape of Toccoa.

Implementation Measures | *Parks and Recreation*

- ***Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan with the County.*** The City should work with Stephens County and other stakeholders to establish a formal strategy for the identification and protection of natural habitats, both to preserve local ecology and environmental resources and to promote passive outdoor recreation.

- ***Develop and implement a Bike & Pedestrian Master Plan with the County.*** The City should work with Stephens County and other stakeholders to establish a formal network of trails throughout the area, as well as plans for sidewalk expansion and long-term maintenance policies.

- ***Develop and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.*** The City should work with other stakeholders to establish a formal strategy for maintaining and expanding parks and recreation facilities and services. This should include additional passive and active recreational opportunities at existing parks, as well as target new park opportunities and enhancing options at new or proposed parks. A special emphasis should be placed on outdoor adventure activities such as canoe and kayaking, off-road bicycling, and more.

Narrative | *Mixed Use Redevelopment Area*

Made up primarily of large, under-utilized land parcels within the proposed Enterprise Zone, these parcels may currently be industrial, wooded, abandoned, or low density residential. The potential for future mixed used development exists due in part to large lots and transportation connections. These areas consist of the transitional zones between the Neighborhood Infill and Rehabilitation district and the remaining portions of the city and county. This is largely where the urban fabric began to face suburban development patterns as new non-residential development moved to the outskirts of the City and along arterial roads.

These areas feature a collection of building types, with an emphasis on more auto-oriented properties and more regional-scale commercial, service, and institutional uses. The building heights are less uniform and landscaping takes on less importance since these areas see less pedestrian accessibility.

The goal for these areas is to retain their commercial viability but help manage their compatibility with the surrounding parts of the city. Infill development and using the area to bring jobs and retail to the area is key, with a growing emphasis on incorporating more aesthetic design measures where possible. Maintaining the viability of the roadway corridors is also critical.

Implementation Measures | *Mixed Use Redevelopment Area*

- ***Workforce/Starter housing strategic plan.*** The City will work with local realtors and bankers to develop a profile for affordable housing in the area, based on price points and prevailing wages. This will include recommendations for new/amended policies and identification of sites for available housing (re)development.

- ***Establish/Utilize brownfield redevelopment incentives.*** The City should establish an incentive package, through local resources or combined with State and federal options that can be used to attract redevelopment and reuse of suspected brownfield properties. This could include environmental assessments or job tax credits or other means that lead to the rehabilitation of vacant properties in the targeted areas.

- ***Attain/Maintain Enterprise Zone designation.*** The City should utilize every available State-authorized program and resource for encouraging job development within the area. Properties eligible for Enterprise and/or Opportunity Zone designation should be nominated for such, with the city implementing the policies and programs necessary to support those designations.

Narrative | *Neighborhood Infill and Rehabilitation Area*

The largest overall character area for Toccoa is that of the traditional neighborhoods that surround the urban core. Consisting primarily of aging single family homes, some of which are dilapidated and many of which have been well kept or restored, these neighborhoods help define the historic and rustic character of the community. They complement the historic downtown with a deep residential component on almost 3 sides, featuring many beautiful streets and homes and providing people with a sense of what the area was like before suburbanization.

Blending older homes with some vacant lots and the occasional commercial or institutional building, these neighborhoods form the largest base of Toccoa's residential activity. There is significant potential for home rehabs and developing new housing stock within all areas of these neighborhoods, with the City aggressively pursuing infill development standards that ensure new construction and property rehabilitation respects the context of the blocks and streetscapes. Within these neighborhoods the scale is predominantly 1-2 stories with a variety of classic architectural styles. Landscape standards and sign controls are critical to the area, as is minimizing the through or commercial traffic on local streets.

The goal for these areas is to retain the character of the development and simply "fill in the gaps." It is targeted for continued residential use and compatible activities.

Implementation Measures | *Neighborhood Infill and Rehabilitation Area*

- ***Workforce/Starter housing strategic plan.*** The City will work with local realtors and bankers to develop a profile for affordable housing in the area, based on price points and prevailing wages. This will include recommendations for new/amended policies and identification of sites for available housing (re)development.

- ***The City should update their historic resources survey.*** The City must update and expand their records of historic sites and resources, then utilize this information to improve communication and promotion of historic resources as part of Toccoa's brand and cultural appeal. This should include a set of recommendations on existing resource needs and opportunities, as well as projections of future designated historic resources for preemptive protection.

Narrative | *Historic District/Urban Design Overlay Area*

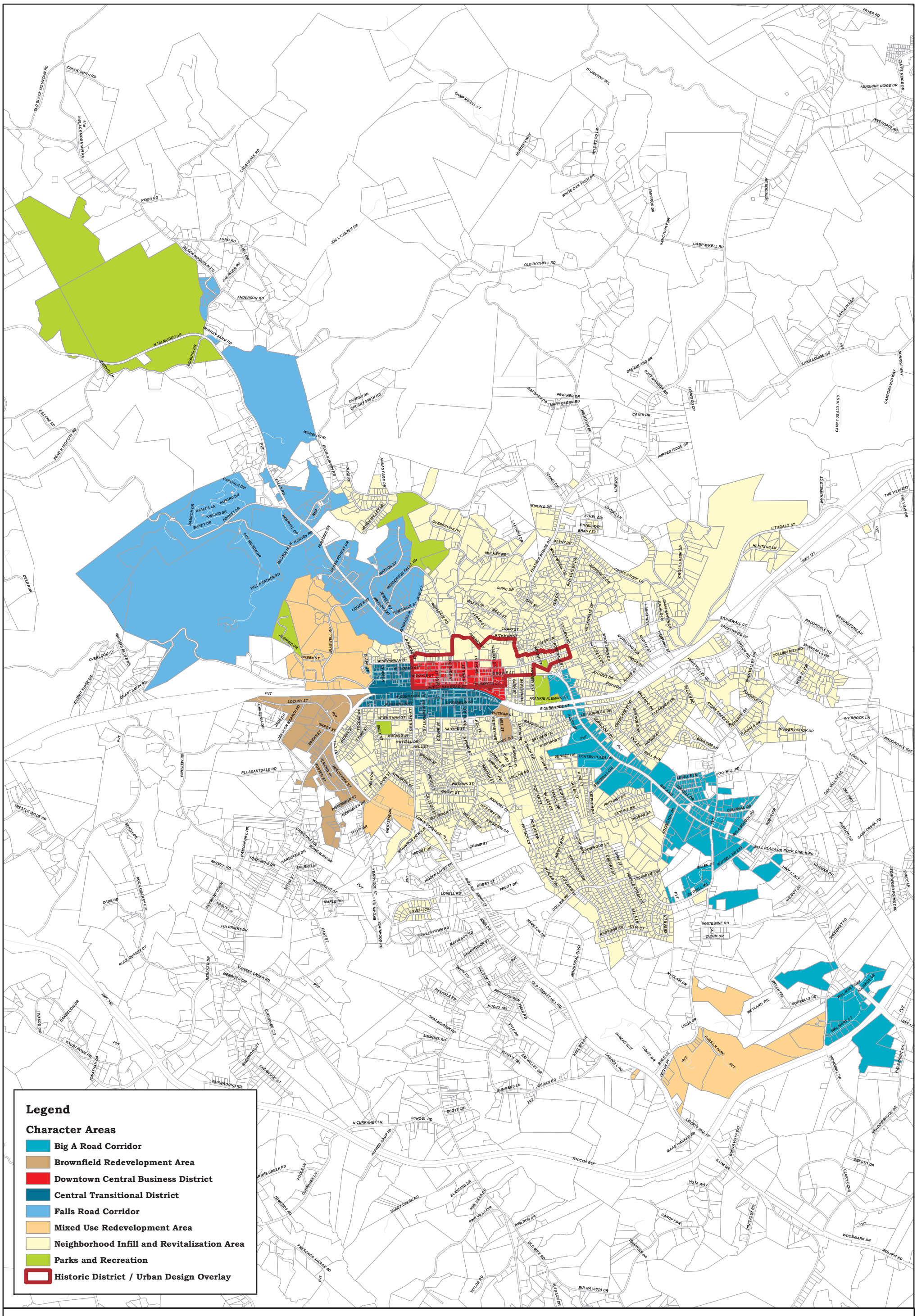
This overlay district is intended to preserve the local and regionally important architectural resources in the community in a fashion that recognizes their contribution to the overall character of the City. The formally established Downtown Historic District remains the core of the city, but many surrounding blocks and structures combine with that district to provide the prevailing historic themes and styles that define Toccoa's identity. These historically significant areas outside of existing historic districts could encompass industrial, commercial, or residential properties adjacent to downtown Toccoa (such as old mill housing). Guidelines for new and existing structures in each of these districts can be established as an overlay to the existing requirements in order to preserve their character.

Implementation Measures | *Historic District/Urban Design Overlay Area*

- ***Need to sustain Certified Local Government status and historic district ordinance.*** The City should prioritize sustaining their Certified Local Government (CLG) status with the State Historic Preservation Division, as well as maintaining the ordinances necessary to protect and promote the downtown area and surrounding blocks and neighborhoods.

- ***Review and update development regulations.*** The City should annually review the performance of their development regulations, and identify and make changes as necessary.

- ***The City should update their historic resources survey.*** The City must update and expand their records of historic sites and resources, then utilize this information to improve communication and promotion of historic resources as part of Toccoa's brand and cultural appeal. This should include a set of recommendations on existing resource needs and opportunities, as well as projections of future designated historic resources for preemptive protection.



City of Toccoa
Character Areas

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission

Map Prepared By: May, 2017

0 1,500 3,000 6,000 9,000 Feet

Quality Community Objectives Assessment

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. This assessment should be used a tool by a community to compare how it is progressing toward the sustainable and livable objectives, but no community will be judged on its progress. The questions focus on local ordinances, policies, and organizational strategies intended to create and expand quality growth principles. A majority of positive responses for a particular objective may indicate that the community has in place many of the governmental options for managing development patterns. Negative responses may provide guidance as to how to focus planning and implementation efforts for those governments seeking to achieve these Quality Community Objectives. Should a community decide to pursue a particular objective it may consider this assessment a means of monitoring progress towards achievement.

1. Economic Prosperity

Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

> *The City and their partners recognize the importance of a strategic approach to sustaining their strong economy and maintaining the area's vital character. The City supports the local Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Development Authority, and the Main Street Program as part of ongoing efforts to support economic development for the community. The government also maintains contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the State for pursuit of assistance and outside funding opportunities in support of economic development opportunities.*

2. Resource Management

Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.

> *The government maintains contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of cultural resources in the area. The government also employs policies and practices related to State Vital Areas, National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.*

3. Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

> *Through this planning process, ongoing efforts to update area mapping, and regular communication with each other, the City works to ensure local development policies support*

sustainable development that enables economic growth while managing local resources, utilities and infrastructure.

4. Local Preparedness

Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

Through this planning process and ongoing coordination among emergency responders, and through regular communication with other stakeholders (such as the regional hospital), the City of Toccoa and Stephens County work together to ensure the community is properly poised to prevent, manage and respond to growth pressures and natural and man-made hazards.

5. Sense of Place

Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

Through the use of the Main Street Approach and downtown rehabilitation activity Toccoa has made tremendous strides in the development of its sense of place. Current development patterns are a result of this success.

6. Regional Cooperation

Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

Toccoa actively coordinates with the County and the other cities in maintaining their local Service Delivery Strategy and SPLOST program, and participate with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and other appropriate regional organizations. The governments also maintain regular contact with various State Departments to ensure knowledge of, and access to, their programs and resources. The City and County are considered active partners in regional activities and do not feel threatened or adversely impacted by any regional partners.

7. Housing Options

Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.

As the county seat and most urbanized area, Toccoa has the greatest capacity and support for housing variety. Toccoa has initiated participation in the GICH Program and is incorporating measures that would allow lower income residents to take advantage of historic preservation

related incentives. Stephens County policies encourage higher density housing to locate in accordance with utility capacity, but not necessarily within or adjacent to the cities.

8. Transportation Options

Address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments; or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.

Neither Stephens County nor the cities provide any form of sponsored public transit service. There is minimal service through State sponsored rural transit vans and shuttle programs. This will be reevaluated in 2018 once the Georgia Mountains Regional Transit Plan is completed and provides additional information about possible multi-jurisdictional programs.

Toccoa's growth has advanced to the level where sidewalk placement is key to the development of new commercial and residential properties. A considerable amount of work and expense has been incorporated in the several phases of new streetscape design in the central business district.

9. Educational Opportunities

Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; instituting programs to improve local graduation rates; expanding vocational education programs; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.

The City works with the Stephens County School Board to ensure access for quality primary and secondary educational facilities and programs for area residents. Both governments also work with other partners to ensure access to viable post-secondary resources such as Toccoa Falls College, North Georgia Technical College (with its Toccoa campus), and other area educational institutions.

10. Community Health

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled; instituting programs to improve public safety; promoting programs that foster better health and fitness; or otherwise providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.

The governments work with Stephens County Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital in Lavonia and the Stephens County Health Department to ensure access for quality health care facilities and programs for area residents. The governments also work with other partners to monitor residents' needs and requests in providing access to these services as the area grows.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Community Vision and for addressing each of the Community Needs and Opportunities. It identifies specific measures, both short and long-term, that must be undertaken by the community in order realize the community's goals. Identifying these items helps the community organize their actions

Policies, Long-Term Activities and Ongoing Programs

One type of action a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may compliment single action-items while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing Community Issues and Opportunities.

In addition to establishing policy, communities may also establish long-term or ongoing programs and activities that support identified objectives. These measures may compliment policies or may simply be action items that must be employed more than once. These are recognized here so as to distinguish their need and conditions apart from the single-action items and to identify any required special terms or context.

In addition, several items have been identified as policies, general objections and directions for the City of Toccoa in regards to different issues. These policies will be used as guidelines for general, long-term practices for the respective government.

In addition, several items have been identified as policies, general objections and directions for the communities in regards to different areas of concern. These policies will be used as guidelines for general, long-term practices for each government.

- Improve collaboration with regional and State groups, e.g. DCA's Office of Downtown Development, Georgia Council for the Arts, GA Trust, GMA, NE GA Travel Association
- Continue to improve quality of interaction between communities
- Maintain involvement with tri-county Development Authority
- Maintain or improve levels of service for all public facilities
- Continue to invest in the commercial viability of downtown Toccoa
- Work to improve and sustain the viability of quality housing within existing neighborhoods
- Maintain eligibility for Opportunity Zone status
- Promote Urban Redevelopment Plan and funding resources for historic properties
- Support greater coordination among local industry, Toccoa Falls College, North Georgia Tech, and Stephens County School System
- Continue to expand greenspace
- Continue landscape plan at the City Cemetery
- Continue to push the Façade Rehabilitation Program
- Expand and maintain pedestrian accessibility

- Expand the Arts in Downtown Toccoa
- Maintain landscape ordinance
- Pursue infill development.
- Revitalize the Amtrak station
- Need to sustain Certified Local Government status and historic district ordinance
- Explore urban design guidelines

Report of Accomplishments

This is the review of the STWP from the previous five years. As a new STWP is produced every five years, the items within the previous STWP must be identified for their status as either complete, in progress, postponed or cancelled. Those items that have been postponed or are in progress must be shown in the next STWP where appropriate, while those items that have been postponed or cancelled must also include a reason for their status.

City of Toccoa

Action	Status	Comment
Replace Cardboard Collection Truck with Used Commercial Dumpster Truck	Complete	
Purchase Commercial Dumpster Collection Truck	Complete	
Police Vehicle Purchase	Complete	
Police Vehicle Lease	Cancelled	
PD Equipment Replacement Upgrade	Complete	
Re-Roof Shelter & Bridge at Henderson Falls Park	Complete	
Rebuild Tennis Courts at Henderson Falls Park	Complete	
Update & Repair Chemical Feed Systems	Complete	
Continue Weekly Curbside Recyclables Collection	Reinstated & Complete	Now ongoing policy
Continue Weekly Curbside Brush, Trash, Leaf Collection	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Continue Daily Cardboard Dumpster Collection	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Tub Grind All Yard Trimmings	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Mulch/Compost Give Away to Public	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Purchase New/Replacement Dumpsters, Roll-Outs, & Recycle Baskets	Complete	
Maintain Recycling Center on Swift Street	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Continue Weekly Curbside Municipal Waste Collection	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Continue Daily Commercial Dumpster Collection	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Maintain Braswell Street Public Works	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Deliver All Municipal Waste to Transfer Station (Commercial & Residential)	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Sale of Recycled Materials	Complete	
Continue to Investigate Regional Disposal Options	Cancelled	No longer a priority

Action	Status	Comment
Add Police Personnel Based on Call Volume Increase	Complete	
Airport Facility Improvements (see below)	Complete	
Constructed new airport terminal building	Complete	
Relocated airport fuel farm	Complete	
Constructed 10 unit hangars	Complete	
Enforce & improve codes to remove blighted conditions & beautify all major entryways into city	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Develop & enforce sign ordinance to protect mountain ridgelines & scenic byways	Complete	Now ongoing policy
Develop Strategic Plan to Attract New Businesses	Complete	Attractions and recruitment committee established with monthly meetings; Now ongoing policy
Purchase Recycle Truck	In progress	
Residential Drop Site Recycle Center	Complete	
Develop Countywide greenspace plan	Cancelled	
Support Highway 17 Corridor Study	Complete	
Conduct workshop to review labor force profile	Complete	
Purchase of 1 new ladder truck	Complete	
Purchase of 1 new crew cab pickup and 1 new Crown Vic car	Complete	

Short-Term Work Program

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the Short-Term Work Program (STWP). This identifies specific implementation actions the local government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year time frame of the planning period. This can include any ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to realize the plan goals.

City of Toccoa

Year	Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility
2017	Purchase recycling truck	TBD	City	Public Works
2017	Review/Update Service Delivery Strategy	NA	NA	City, County
2017	Inventory infrastructure and service areas throughout county	NA	NA	City, County
2017	Update water/sewer demand forecast; Amend water/sewer network expansion plan as needed	$5,000	City	City, Dev. Auth.
2017	Develop annual forum with Stephens Co. on education and employment conditions within the region	NA	NA	City, County, Dev. Auth., School Board
2017	Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted industrial properties	$10,000	City	City, GMRC
2017	Develop facility needs report for Farmer's Market	$5,000	City	City
2017	Develop telecom improvement plan with North Ga. Network and GDEcD	TBD	TBD	City, Dev. Auth. GDEcD
2017	Identify potential properties and cost estimates for Farmer's Market	NA	NA	City
2017	Develop report identifying industry needs for hotel locations; Identify critical issues for Toccoa	$5,000	City, Dev. Auth.	City
2017	Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity	NA	NA	City
2018	Inventory properties that would be suitable for use as a hotel/ motel/inn, including assessment of obstacles for development	NA	NA	City, GDEcD
2018	Update inventory of historic sites and adopt preservation policies	TBD	DNR	City, GMRC
2018	Performance review of code enforcement procedures and policies	NA	NA	City
2018	Adopt/Promote conservation design policies	$1,000	City	City

Year	Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility
2018	Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted commercial properties	$10,000	City	City, GMRC
2018	Develop bicycle and sidewalk/ pedestrian master plan (w/ County)	$10,000	City, GDOT	City, GMRC
2018	Attain/Maintain Enterprise Zone designation	NA	NA	City, DCA
2018	Review and update development regulations	NA	NA	City
2019	Develop beautification plans for major arterials coming into downtown	$15,000	City	City
2019	Develop and implement a Greenspace Plan	$5,000	DNR	City, County, GMRC
2019	Develop and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan	$5,000	DCA	City, DCA
2019	Implement Overarching Downtown Wi-Fi Network	$50,000	Grants and loans	City, Main Street
2019	Adopt traditional neighborhood development ordinances	NA	NA	City
2019	Workforce/Starter housing strategic plan	$10,000	DCA	City, County, GMRC
2019	Develop reference guide for urban housing models for seniors/ young adult households	$3,000	DCA	City, GMRC
2019	Develop annual monitoring report of enforcement activity	NA	NA	City
2019	Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted residential properties	$10,000	City	City, GMRC
2019	Develop study assessing options for expansion of new rail spurs in the area	$10,000	City, GDOT	City, GDOT, GMRC, GDEcD
2020	Amend development regulations to minimize automobile parking demands	$3,000	City	City
2020	Create and market the Ritz Theatre Plaza	TBD	Grants and loans	City, Main Street
2020	Design and install lighting and wayfinding signage to market Downtown Toccoa	$50,000	Grants and loans	City, Main Street
2020	Develop/Update an inventory of local business	$1,000	GDEcD	City, Chamber, Dev. Auth.
2020	Establish business incubator program	TBD	TBD	City, Chamber, Dev. Auth. GDEcD
2020	Establishment of a beautification program/ Streetscape improvements	$5,000	GDOT	City

Year	Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility
2020	Develop report assessing all State listed waters in need of resource protection	$1,000	City, EPD	City, GMRC
2020	Develop report assessing current and planned status of existing rail routes in the region	$5,000	City, GDOT	City, GDOT
2020	Update traffic profile of Big A Road corridor	TBD	GDOT	City, County, GDOT
2021	Update Comprehensive plan	$10,000	DCA	County, City, GMRC
2021	Start roadside clean-up campaign	$1,000	City, GDOT	City
2021	Development of a targeted marketing program	$5,000	GDEcD	City, Chamber, Dev. Auth.
2021	Establish Community Improvement Districts if viable	TBD	TBD	City, Chamber, Dev. Auth.
2021	Establish/Utilize brownfield redevelopment incentives	TBD	TBD	City, EPA

APPENDICES

Population and Demographic Profile

Area Labor Profile for Stephens County

Summary of Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

Population and Demographic Profile

2010 Census Profiles

		Toccoa	
		#	%
Total Population		***8,491***	
<15 yrs		1,658	19.53%
15-64 yrs		5,283	62.22%
65+ yrs		1,550	18.25%
Race & Ethnicity			
White		6,209	73.12%
Black or African American		1,852	21.81%
American Indian and Alaska Native		33	0.39%
Asian		96	1.13%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander		0	0.00%
Some Other Race		80	0.94%
Two or More Races		221	2.60%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)		208	2.45%
Not Hispanic or Latino		8,283	97.55%
Households			
In Households		8,442	99.42%
In Group Quarters		49	0.58%
Average Household size		2.37	
Average Family Size		2.94	
Housing Occupancy			
Total housing units		4,195	
Occupied housing units		3,562	84.91%
Owner-occupied housing units		1,891	53.09%
Renter-occupied housing units		1,671	46.91%
Vacant housing units		633	15.09%
Homeowner vacancy rate		5.1%	
Rental vacancy rate		12.8%	

Area Labor Profile for Stephens County

Stephens County

Updated: Feb 2017

Labor Force Activity - 2015

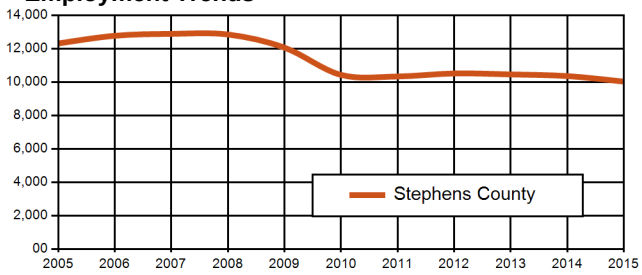
2015 ANNUAL AVERAGES

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Stephens	10,720	10,025	695	6.5%
Banks	8,162	7,718	444	5.4%
Franklin	9,203	8,624	579	6.3%
Habersham	18,844	17,785	1,059	5.6%
Stephens Area	**46,929**	**44,152**	**2,777**	**5.9%**
Georgia	4,770,873	4,490,931	279,942	5.9%
United States	157,129,917	148,833,417	8,296,333	5.3%
Oconee, SC	34,437	32,438	1,999	5.7%

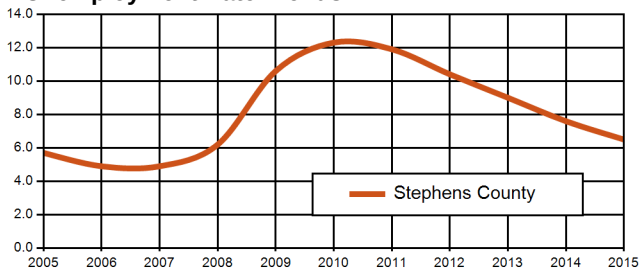
Note: This series reflects the latest information available. Labor Force includes residents of the county who are employed or actively seeking employment.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

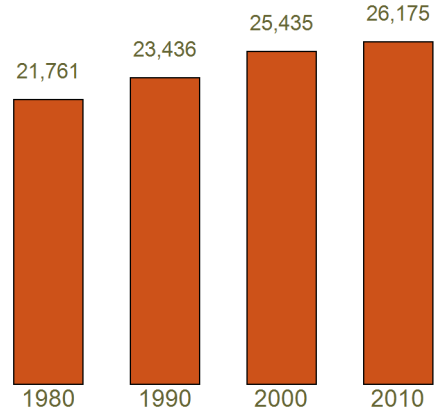
Employment Trends



Unemployment Rate Trends



Population Estimates



Population

	2010 Census	2015 Rank	2015 Estimate	% Change 2000-2015	2025 Projected*	% Change 2010-2025
Stephens	**26,175**	**150**	**25,586**	**-2.3**	**26,087**	**-0.3**
City of Toccoa	8,491					
Stephens Area	**181,678**		**186,101**	**2.4**	**205,565**	**13.1**
Georgia	9,687,653		10,214,860	5.4	11,538,707	19.1
United States	308,745,538		321,418,820	4.1	349,439,199	13.2
Oconee, SC	71,983		75,713	5.2	87,500	21.6

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, *Governor's Office of Planning and Budget.

MARK BUTLER - COMMISSIONER, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program
Auxillary Aids and Services Available upon Request to Individuals with Disabilities

Workforce Statistics & Economic Research; E-mail: Workforce_Info@gdol.ga.gov Phone: (404) 232-3875

Industry Mix - 3rd Quarter of 2016

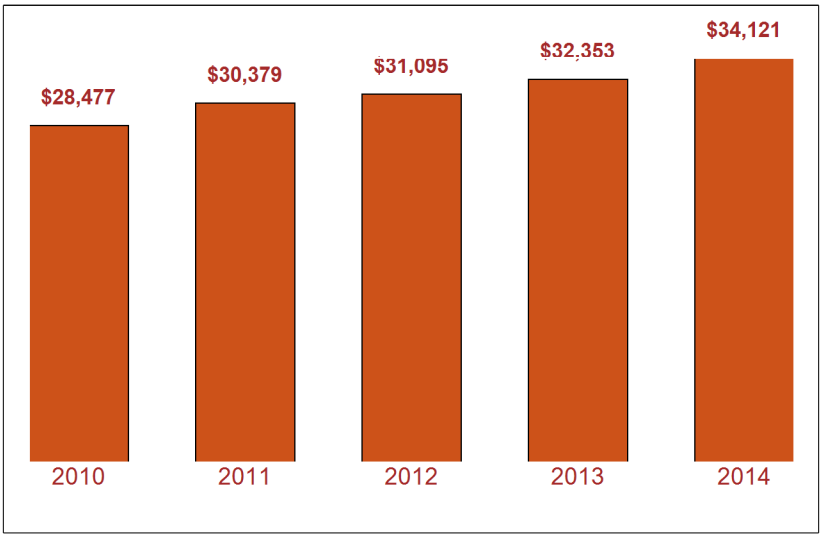
INDUSTRY	Stephens NUMBER OF FIRMS	Stephens EMPLOYMENT NUMBER	Stephens EMPLOYMENT PERCENT	Stephens WEEKLY WAGE	Stephens Area NUMBER OF FIRMS	Stephens Area EMPLOYMENT NUMBER	Stephens Area EMPLOYMENT PERCENT	Stephens Area WEEKLY WAGE
Goods-Producing	**128**	**2,452**	**26.7**	**823**	**441**	**9,580**	**27.0**	**867**
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3	*	*	*	40	815	2.3	999
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	*	*	*	2	*	*	*
Construction	60	258	2.8	804	227	932	2.6	731
Manufacturing	64	2,136	23.3	826	172	7,813	22.1	868
Food	2	*	*	*	9	*	*	*
Textile Mills	6	392	4.3	742	11	1,357	3.8	632
Textile Product Mills	1	*	*	*	2	*	*	*
Apparel	1	*	*	*	4	34	0.1	368
Wood Product	3	83	0.9	469	21	271	0.8	599
Paper	2	*	*	*	3	*	*	*
Printing and Related Support Activities	2	*	*	*	9	157	0.4	739
Petroleum and Coal Products	1	*	*	*	1	*	*	*
Chemical	2	*	*	*	4	233	0.7	976
Plastics and Rubber Products	3	24	0.3	843	7	423	1.2	665
Nonmetallic Mineral Product	3	*	*	*	10	41	0.1	768
Primary Metal	1	*	*	*	1	*	*	*
Fabricated Metal Product	11	197	2.1	874	33	694	2.0	788
Machinery	5	504	5.5	959	10	968	2.7	1,354
Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component	1	*	*	*	2	*	*	*
Transportation Equipment	1	*	*	*	8	387	1.1	989
Furniture and Related Product	18	602	6.6	826	26	649	1.8	805
Miscellaneous	1	*	*	*	11	940	2.7	1,161
Service-Providing	**427**	**4,936**	**53.8**	**634**	**1,715**	**19,250**	**54.4**	**593**
Utilities	1	*	*	*	7	174	0.5	1,435
Wholesale Trade	34	213	2.3	655	124	925	2.6	842
Retail Trade	103	1,171	12.8	487	418	4,521	12.8	476
Transportation and Warehousing	9	92	1.0	833	48	1,088	3.1	915
Information	7	64	0.7	1,180	21	540	1.5	902
Finance and Insurance	34	187	2.0	777	118	605	1.7	861
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	20	59	0.6	450	56	185	0.5	511
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	34	111	1.2	756	130	477	1.3	886
Management of Companies and Enterprises	4	587	6.4	1,302	14	737	2.1	1,236
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	32	329	3.6	538	128	1,377	3.9	499
Educational Services	3	*	*	*	13	956	2.7	665
Health Care and Social Assistance	61	955	10.4	731	202	2,544	7.2	731
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	6	100	1.1	562	25	324	0.9	435
Accommodation and Food Services	43	669	7.3	238	196	4,022	11.4	264
Other Services (except Public Administration)	36	158	1.7	432	129	652	1.8	534
Unclassified - industry not assigned	**23**	**34**	**0.4**	**599**	**86**	**119**	**0.3**	**561**
Total - Private Sector	**578**	**7,422**	**80.9**	**696**	**2,156**	**28,830**	**81.4**	**684**
Total - Government	**31**	**1,757**	**19.1**	**651**	**151**	**6,588**	**18.6**	**676**
Federal Government	4	67	0.7	1,070	25	224	0.6	1,103
State Government	14	124	1.4	536	56	906	2.6	618
Local Government	13	1,566	17.1	642	70	5,458	15.4	669
ALL INDUSTRIES	**609**	**9,179**	**100.0**	**688**	**2,307**	**35,417**	**100.0**	**683**
ALL INDUSTRIES - Georgia					**302,499**	**4,275,556**		**970**

Note: *Denotes confidential data relating to individual employers and cannot be released. These data use the North American Industrial Classification System(NAICS) categories. Average weekly wage is derived by dividing gross payroll dollars paid to all employees - both hourly and salaried - by the average number of employees who had earnings; average earnings are then divided by the number of weeks in a reporting period to obtain weekly figures. Figures in other columns may not sum accurately due to rounding. All figures are 3rd Quarter of 2016.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor. These data represent jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

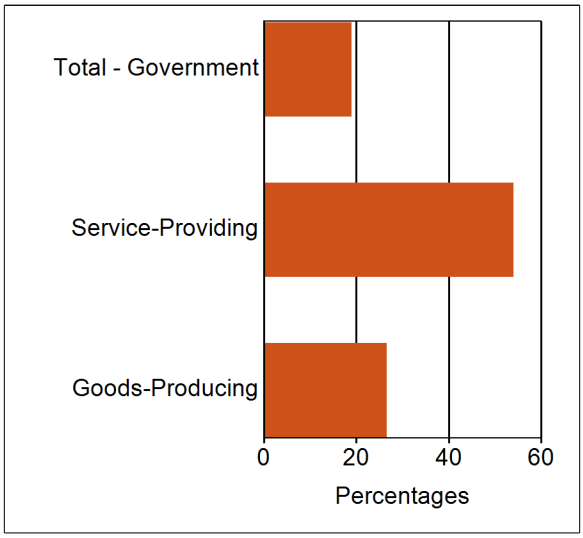
Stephens Per Capita Income

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis



Stephens Industry Mix 2016

Source: See Industry Mix data on Page 2.



Top Ten Largest Employers - 2016*

Stephens

Eaton Aeroquip, LLC
Employment Staffing, Inc.
GEM Southeast, Inc.
Heritage Healthcare of Toccoa, LLC
Patterson Pump Co
Pruitt Corporation
Sage Automotive Interiors
Toccoa Clinic Medical Associates
Toccoa Falls College
Walmart

*Note: Represents employment covered by unemployment insurance excluding all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities. Data shown for the Third Quarter of 2016. Employers are listed alphabetically by area, not by the number of employees.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Stephens Area

	COUNTY
Autozoners, Inc.	Franklin
Carry-On Trailer, Inc.	Franklin
Ethicon, Inc.	Habersham
Georgia Department of Corrections	Habersham
Ingles Markets, Inc.	Habersham
Mt. Vernon Mills, Inc.	Habersham
Patterson Pump Co	Stephens
PCS	Habersham
Piedmont College	Habersham
Pruitt Corporation	Stephens

Commuting Patterns

EMPLOYED RESIDENTS OF

Stephens

COUNTY WHERE EMPLOYED	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Stephens, GA	7,175	69.3
Franklin, GA	993	9.6
Habersham, GA	600	5.8
Hall, GA	321	3.1
Oconee, SC	188	1.8
White, GA	175	1.7
Clarke, GA	127	1.2
Hart, GA	120	1.2
Other	651	6.3
Total Residents:	**10,350**	**100.0**

PERSONS WORKING IN

Stephens

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Stephens, GA	7,175	68.3
Franklin, GA	914	8.7
Habersham, GA	698	6.6
Hart, GA	309	2.9
White, GA	217	2.1
Banks, GA	208	2.0
Oconee, SC	179	1.7
Orange, FL	99	0.9
Other	614	5.8
Total Residents:	**10,512**	**100.0**

Note: Other category represents employment from U.S. counties only.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2010 County-To-County Worker Flow Files.

Education of the Labor Force

Stephens Area

	PERCENT OF TOTAL	PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE				
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Elementary	8.7%	2.5%	9.7%	6.0%	6.4%	18.3%
Some High School	16.0%	16.6%	14.9%	15.0%	15.3%	18.8%
High School Grad/GED	37.6%	40.3%	32.3%	39.0%	40.1%	34.4%
Some College	19.5%	36.5%	20.5%	17.5%	16.9%	13.3%
College Grad 2 Yr	5.0%	1.7%	8.8%	5.7%	5.0%	3.5%
College Grad 4 Yr	8.4%	2.4%	9.2%	10.5%	10.3%	6.7%
Post Graduate Studies	4.9%	0.0%	4.7%	6.4%	6.0%	5.0%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Totals are based on the portion of the labor force between ages 18 - 65+. The "Some College" category represents workers with less than two years of college and no degree.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2010 Decennial Census.

High School Graduates - 2015

	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS*	TOTAL
Banks	189	--	189
Franklin	201	--	201
Habersham	366	--	366
Stephens	231	--	231
Stephens Area	**987**	**--**	**987**

Note: Public schools include city as well as county schools systems.

* Private schools data is not available for 2015 from Georgia Independent School Association.

Source: The Governor's Office of Student Achievement of Georgia.

Colleges and Universities

Stephens Area

Franklin

Emmanuel College	http://www.ec.edu
Emmanuel College	www.ec.edu

Banks

Milledgeville Campus (Satellite campus of Central Georgia Technical College)	www.centralgatech.edu

Habersham

North Georgia Technical College	www.northgatech.edu
Piedmont College	www.piedmont.edu

Stephens

Currahee Campus (Satellite campus of North Georgia Technical College)	www.northgatech.edu
Toccoa Falls College	www.tfc.edu

Note: The colleges and universities listed include public and private institutions. This list is updated periodically as information becomes available.

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Technical College Graduates - 2015*

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2013	2014	2015	2013-2014	2014-2015
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping°	31	23	35	-25.8	52.2
Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General°	53	38	43	-28.3	13.2
Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services, Other°	82	71	23	-13.4	-67.6
Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician°	25	28	26	12.0	-7.1
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician°	36	30	28	-16.7	-6.7
Business Administration, Management and Operations, Other	7	12	17	71.4	41.7
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	10	5	5	-50.0	0.0
Commercial Photography°	16	13	13	-18.8	0.0
Computer Installation and Repair Technology/Technician°	2	4	4	100.0	0.0
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General°	68	72	56	5.9	-22.2
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	28	33	35	17.9	6.1
Culinary Arts/Chef Training	26	22	17	-15.4	-22.7
Customer Service Support/Call Center/Teleservice Operation °	2	5	6	150.0	20.0
Electrician°	10	27	24	170.0	-11.1
Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)°	50	55	57	10.0	3.6
Environmental Control Technologies/Technicians, Other	10	5	7	-50.0	40.0
Food Preparation/Professional Cooking/Kitchen Assistant°	18	20	13	11.1	-35.0
Golf Course Operation and Grounds Management°	7	8	4	14.3	-50.0
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General°	29	53	77	82.8	45.3
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/°	52	42	55	-19.2	31.0
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology°	11	37	11	236.4	-70.3
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	31	27	30	-12.9	11.1
Lineworker°	45	52	45	15.6	-13.5
Machine Shop Technology/Assistant°	19	23	22	21.1	-4.3
Marine Maintenance/Fitter and Ship Repair Technology/Technician	10	4	9	-60.0	125.0
Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians, Other	5	1	1	-80.0	0.0
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder°	7	7	8	0.0	14.3
Medical Office Assistant/Specialist°	20	6	16	-70.0	166.7
Medical/Clinical Assistant	18	30	27	66.7	-10.0
Network and System Administration/Administrator°	16	12	22	-25.0	83.3
Pharmacy Technician/Assistant	11	13	11	18.2	-15.4
Professional, Technical, Business, and Scientific Writing°	4	2	3	-50.0	50.0
Tool and Die Technology/Technician°	8	5	7	-37.5	40.0
Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design°	5	7	3	40.0	-57.1

Technical College Graduates - 2015*

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2013	2014	2015	2013-2014	2014-2015
Welding Technology/Welder°	88	87	91	-1.1	4.6

Definition: All graduates except those listed as technical certificates(°) are diploma and degree graduates. Diploma and degree programs are one to two years in length. Technical certificates are less than a year in length. Duplication may occur due to graduates with multiple awards.

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

*Data shown represents Annual 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

Georgia Department of Labor Location(s)

Career Center(s)
112 N Alexander Street
Toccoa GA 30577
Phone: (706) 282 - 4514 **Fax:** (706) 282 - 4513

For copies of Area Labor Profiles, please visit our website at: http://dol.georgia.gov or contact Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Georgia Department of Labor, 148 Andrew Young International Blvd N.E. Atlanta, GA. 30303-1751. Phone: 404-232-3875; Fax: 404-232-3888 or Email us at workforce_info@gdol.ga.gov

Summary of Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

The following represents the summary results of survey's provided February through April of 2017. Combined paper and online (SurveyMonkey) responses totaled more than 45 submissions.

I am a:		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Resident	**81.4%**	**35**
Both	9.3%	4
Business Owner	6.9%	3
Neither	2.4%	1

How much growth and development should Toccoa pursue?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
A lot	69.77%	30
Some	27.91%	12
None	2.33%	1
A little	0.0%	0

Your community's most important asset that should be preserved in the future is:

- History
- The downtown area and surrounding historic buildings and parks
- the rural scenic views
- The beautiful (trees, parks, etc.) calm, safe way of life in Toccoa. Living a good life in a good community, with diverse activities for all ages.
- Keep cleaning up the city, start giving some type of awards for neighborhood improvements.
- Abundant Water Supply
- All sports venue because these are the places where people meet and gather to talk about their week.
- Historic buildings.
- Green space, Tugalo corridor, Lake Hartwell recreation, Lake Yonah area, etc.
- The train station as well as Toccoa Falls College
- Clean water and environment
- Downtown
- Historic downtown should be a thriving district.
- The cohesiveness and tradition of small town America.
- Downtown
- Panther Creek National Forest (city growth I'd like to see would be towards and connecting us to other communities like Lavonia, Cornelia, Carnesville and Clarkesville not north into our preserved wildlands)
- Employment opportunities
- Forest and hunting lands.

- The current relationship with county leadership that has been beneficial in lieu of a consolidated local government.
- Historical sites, Toccoa Falls, Airport, medical professionals, parks & schools..
- The historic look of the downtown area.
- The historic down town part of the city. It need constant care to keep active
- Educated workforce-both college & tech college.
- Downtown Toccoa
- Our natural beauty and outdoor recreation areas.
- Downtown area, Train Depot, Historic Courthouse, Camp Toccoa area at Currahee. Currahee corridor project widened to cleanup blight.
- Military Museum, improved Golf Course, Toccoa the beautiful a good place to live and work.
- Downtown events.
- The surrounding natural environment.
- Friendly small town way of life.
- Museum. Brings a lot of people.
- Historic downtown
- A unique downtown district along with our parks and outdoor recreation areas.
- Historic downtown district

Your community's biggest liability that should be changed in the future is:

- fear of alcohol, and resistance to change. though toast of Toccoa is a good step in the right direction
- I just moved to the area last year and in my inquiries with county and city officials I found a lack of a coordinated comprehensive rejuvenating plan of the area. I'm not sure the people of Toccoa know what they really want and would support in an effort to raise the downtown area to reflect a vibrant business community in which you see people come to our town to enjoy restaurants and businesses and enjoy spending time in the community.
- the high rate of poverty
- Drug use/traffic, child abuse/neglect, unwanted animal neglect/abuse.
- Store vacancies
- Lack of willingness to embrace economic incentives for new businesses.
- Uninhabitable structures abound in our community...blight yields blight.
- I have lived here since I was born. I am now 41. It seems that everyone involved in the management of this city has been against growth. I have watched Habersham County grow and prosper. Why can't we have that same growth? Right now our city is dead. I don't know why anyone would want to move here.
- Relying on retirees for growth instead of attracting entrepreneurial millennials and younger families who want to start small businesses.
- Leaderships lack of vision. Too many petty personal issues.
- The entrance into town via 123 has a tremendous negative impact. Clean up that corridor.
- The abandonment and ugliness of outdated buildings, shopping centers, roadways in Toccoa.
- Lack of Public transportation
- Total lack of affordable public transportation, serious issues with systemic racism in our schools, and local social service agencies fueled by nepotism and cronyism in hiring especially for local government positions
- Fix the roads.

- The ratio of subsidized housing to homeownership is out of balance. Reducing the amount of public and subsidized housing will impact several other statistical indicators of the community in a positive way.
- Housing, Hotel/Motel...
- Entirely too much illegal drug use. It damages the individuals and prevents them from contributing to the city
- Rundown properties such as The Albemarle Hotel-if no one wants to renovate it, please have it demolished. Older, more historic buildings have been torn down in the past.
- Sprawl
- Our refusal to change and poor management of local businesses.
- Poverty, dependence on government entitlement programs and drug use
- Parking deck for downtown area. More businesses in downtown like Starbucks, etc. More businesses and buildup/preservation of Big A Road. Big A Road extended into Eastonollee. Possible annex of Eastanollee into city limits for future expansion of businesses, eateries, etc. Toccoa Bypass preservation and land purchases for business expansions, industry.
- More aggressive action on cleaning up abandoned and dilapidated houses, decayed trees that are potential hazards.
- The aged and dilapidated buildings.
- Lack of good paying full time jobs.
- Downtown. Need retail/restaurants. No more doctors, lawyers, etc.
- lack of traffic direction to downtown area
- Ugly building facades driving down Big A road. A sign ordinance similar to those in Charleston, James Island SC could really improve esthetics.
- Code enforcement needs to do its job. Or the code needs to be strengthened. Housing is horrible off Pond street and nothing is being done about it.

Our top two economic development should be (pick 2):		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Attract/sustain business to downtown areas	47.73%	21
Attract/sustain manufacturing and industry	45.45%	20
Attract/sustain commercial businesses	34.09%	15
Attract/sustain business with high paying jobs	29.55%	13
Attract/sustain agricultural industries	2.27%	1

- attract/sustain quality businesses for recreation and restaurants
- when business come to look at Toccoa thy need a nice place to stay overnight. a nice place to have dinner
- Attract quality restaurants to Toccoa.
- develop a nightlife and serious arts and culture centers
- Consolidate local and county government. There is no sense in all the redundancy given the size of our community.
- I need to choose three things here - with manufacturing and industry, you must have proper hotels and lodging.
- We need housing. Builders to build neighborhoods

Our top two most important housing needs are (pick 2):		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Fewer dilapidated houses	86.05%	37
More affordable housing	39.53%	17
More high-end housing	27.91%	12
More senior housing	11.63%	5
More apartments	9.30%	4
None	4.65%	2

Our top two most important issues regarding cultural resources are (pick 2):		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Design guidelines for new development	69.77%	30
Preserving existing historic structures	60.47%	26
Improving sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility around City	39.53%	17
Need for more park space	18.60%	8
None	4.65%	2

On a scale of 1 (Very poor) to 5 (Very good), please rate the current quality of your services:							
Utility	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Avg.**	**Rsps.**
Water	1	1	2	11	25	**4.45**	40
Fire Protection	1	1	2	12	26	**4.45**	42
Sewer	1	1	0	9	16	**4.41**	27
EMS	1	2	4	17	19	**4.19**	43
General Government	3	2	11	15	11	**3.69**	42
Parks and Recreation	2	1	21	10	9	**3.53**	43
Roads	4	7	16	15	1	**3.05**	43

Please rank the following issues in terms of priority, with 1 being the most important:		
Utility	**Avg.**	**Rsps.**
Preserving the low cost of living	**2.71**	41
Preserving Toccoa's rural character	**2.95**	40
Preserving the standard of living	**3.39**	41
Continued development in/expansion of industrial parks	**3.47**	38
Increasing commercial options	**3.85**	39
Increasing job opportunities of all kinds	**4.72**	40