City of Bowdon
Comprehensive Plan 2014-2034

Prepared with assistance by

Three Rivers Regional Commission
P.O. Box 1600, Franklin, GA 30217

City of Bowdon Comprehensive Plan

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INTRODUCTION

This plan update was completed in accordance with the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

The City of Bowdon, known as "The Friendly City," was founded in 1853. It is located in Carroll County in west Georgia, approximately 10 miles south of Interstate 20 and three miles east of the Alabama state line. According to the 2010 census, the population is 2,040.

Purpose of the plan

The City of Bowdon Comprehensive Plan shall provide guidance and policy standards for future growth and development. The plan also identifies needs and opportunities which currently exist within the community. Goals, polices, and specific implementation measures are also listed to set policy for particular segments and specific areas of the city. At the time of the plan update, the members of the Bowdon City Council were:

City Council

Keith Crawford, *Mayor*
Jan Johnson, *Ward 1*
Jim Chaffin, *Ward 2*
Wes McEntyre, *Ward 3*
Martin Johnson, *Ward 4*

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Public Participation

The City of Bowdon Council appointed a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to assist and guide the update of the comprehensive plan. A series of consecutive meetings took place to address the components of the plan update. The Steering Committee included members of the city council, city government and other community stakeholders. The members of the committee were:

Jan Lloyd, *Main Street Manager*
Kathie Holz, *Businesswoman*
Carolyn Crawford, *Businesswoman*
Matt McCord, *Businessman and Main Street Board*
Jan Johnson, *City Council and Main Street Board*
Mignon Wessinger, *Planning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission*

As part of the public participation component, a community survey was developed and distributed to gather input from the greater public. Two public hearings were held in regards to the comprehensive plan update process in which citizens could obtain information about the planning process, review, and comment on the plan. The public hearings were held May 27th, 2014 and September 8th, 2014.

COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

The purpose of the Community Goals and Policies section is to guide and direct the City of Bowdon's decision making process for the future of the community.

Vision Statement

The City of Bowdon shall continue to enhance the prosperity of the community and the overall quality of life of its citizens while preserving its rural small town character, encouraging diverse economic development and employment opportunities, protecting its historic resources and the environment.

List of Community Goals and Policies:

POPULATION

Goal: Provide for all residents access to services, programs, safe neighborhoods, and employment opportunities which increases the overall community sense of pride.

Policies:

- Eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing
- Encourage the development of housing close to employment centers
- Increase activities and programs for its citizens, especially children and seniors
- Encourage home ownership
- Create walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the city
- Support the creation of community-wide pedestrian and bike network
- Collaborate with Keep Carroll Beautiful for beautification efforts and volunteer opportunities

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Provide for the expansion and creation of business, industry, and economic development within the city while increasing job opportunities and the overall economic vitality of the community.

Policies:

- Encourage participation from residents and business owners alike in the Main Street Program for the increased revitalization of downtown
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic integrity, sense of place, and small town setting of the community
- Conduct beautification efforts for the downtown commercial district

- Collaborate with Keep Carroll Beautiful, the garden club and other civic clubs on various beautification efforts
- Continue to support Carroll Tomorrow in the recruitment of business and industry
- Encourage development of commercial nodes to meet the needs of citizens while avoiding unattractive and inefficient strip centers.
- Promote the redevelopment and enhancement of existing commercial areas
- Encourage the use of existing infrastructure and infill development before investing in new construction
- Collaborate with Carroll Tomorrow on the recruitment of new business and industry.
- Consider annexation to accommodate future growth and increase tax revenue

HOUSING

Goal: To provide a range of safe, affordable, diversified housing for all citizens.

Policies:

- Provide opportunities for diverse housing options for various income levels
- Utilize grant programs to increase the quality of housing and revitalize blighted areas
- Protect residential character through the use of historic overlay districts and the adoption of local historic districts
- Reinvest in existing neighborhoods
- Eliminate substandard and dilapidated housing
- Consider a housing assessment or inventory

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Goal: To protect and use efficiently the natural and cultural resources within the City of Bowdon.

Policies:

- Acquire, when available, additional greenspace for use as community parks
- Establish clean-up days with citizen volunteers and utilize Keep Carroll Beautiful
- Utilize existing tourism initiatives such as the Southern Quilt Trail and West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail for cultural tourism
- Promote the National Register listed Bowdon Historic District
- Promote the city's historic and cultural resources
- Educate the public regarding the preservation tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic structures
- Utilize and develop existing city owned parks and greenspace for the use of the community
- Provide safe and accessible community gathering spaces

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Goal: To provide adequate infrastructure, services, and facilities to meet the variety needs of the community.

Policies:

- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities prior to expanding and constructing new sites to minimize expenses
- Promote recycling and waste reduction initiatives
- Expand and enhance parks and other recreational opportunities
- Enhance the police presence throughout the community
- Encourage additional training for public safety personnel
- Seek community park connections through trail development
- Improve and extend the sidewalk network to increase overall connectivity
- Encourage the use of underground utilities
- Seek full time codes enforcement staff
- Create safer environments such as increased lighting in the historic downtown

TRANSPORTATION

Goal: To provide safe and efficient transportation facilities to all citizens within the City of Bowdon while striving to increase alternative modes such as bike, pedestrian, and transit options.

Policies:

- Provide additional sidewalks throughout the city
- Provide traffic calming improvements especially within the downtown commercial district.
- Support the development of a pedestrian and bike trail network

LAND USE

Goal: To ensure the most appropriate and best use of available land while maximizing existing infrastructure.

Policies:

- Establish local historic and overlay districts to allow for appropriate development and infill
- Continue to collaborate with Carroll Tomorrow to recruit new business and industries for the industrial park
- Utilize existing infrastructure and land availability
- Encourage the use of more pervious surface materials within developments
- Consider appropriate annexation to accommodate future growth

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Needs and Opportunities section addresses what the City of Bowdon currently lacks or sectors of the City where improvements are needed. This section also lists existing opportunities available which should be utilized.

To help gain a more accurate and balanced list of needs and opportunities, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis is conducted.

SWOT Analysis Chart
(**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats)

STRENGTHS

- City leadership
- Good schools
- Strong faith community
- Water and sewer infrastructure
- Community facilities such as Copeland Hall
- Sense of place and community
- Greenspace
- Location
- Low crime rate
- Quality of life
- Historic district & CLG community

OPPORTUNITIES

- Downtown revitalization and increased economic development through the newly established Main Street Program.
- Recreation
- Greenspace and park development
- Golf course
- Heritage tourism
- Lake Tisinger
- Design review through the Historic Preservation Commission

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of citizen involvement
- Lack of industry
- Empty retail spaces
- High unemployment rate
- Lack of community activities and programs
- Blighted areas

THREATS

- Poverty
- Drugs
- Lack of industry
- Lack of home ownership
- Loss of younger population to larger cities
- Lack of code enforcement
- Financial limitations
- Lack of quality development
- Lack of tree ordinance

List of Needs and Opportunities

The Plan Steering Committee identified needs and opportunities which exist within the City of Bowdon. This list should help guide future planning efforts and prioritize projects undertaken by the City.

COMMUNITY AND POPULATION

Needs

- The high rate of rental property and absentee owners needs to be addressed
- Additional employment opportunities
- There is a need to address the lack of population growth and retention
- Provide additional sidewalks and pedestrian facilities
- Encourage citizens to shop and dine locally
- Attraction and retention of the younger population
- Increased litter control and prevention
- Increased housing specifically for senior citizens

Opportunities

- Volunteer opportunities through the new Main Street Program
- Beautification initiatives through the collaboration with Keep Carroll Beautiful
- Residential loft living in the historic downtown
- Bowdon Educational Foundation for the enhancement of learning
- Availability of workforce with manufacturing skills

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Needs

- Promotion of the ongoing revitalization of downtown
- Promotion of reinvestment and revitalization of declining areas of the community
- Creation of more job/employment opportunities
- Fill vacant land with new or expanding businesses
- Recruit additional industry within the Bowdon Industrial Park
- Promotion of the development of housing near employment centers
- Promotion of additional connectivity to employment centers with existing residential neighborhoods
- Education of the public on the benefits of shopping local
- Improve the aesthetics of existing businesses

Opportunities

- New Main Street Program for the revitalization of downtown and enhance the economy
- Workforce development training through the nearby West Georgia Technical College
- Property owners within The National Register listed Bowdon Historic District can utilize preservation tax incentives for the rehabilitation of structures

- Availability of low rents
- Availability of loft style apartments in the historic downtown
- Small town charm as an amenity
- Increased economic development through tourism by promoting the Southern Quilt Trail, West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail, and the Bowdon Historic District.
- Industrial growth and expansion along GA Highway 100
- Expansion of retail opportunities within available vacant space in the historic downtown
- Economic growth and expansion of tax base through the annexation of land along the proposed bypass.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Needs

- Address visual clutter and discourage excessive signage
- Promotion of the development of vacant sites and abandoned structures
- Promotion of the preservation tax incentives for rehabilitation work within the Bowdon Historic District
- Improvement of the curb appeal of commercial areas
- Increase the amount of greenspace and parkland in the community
- Increase connectivity of existing parks through multi-use trails
- Development of bike trails
- Promotion of housing near employment centers
- Increase the amount of street lighting
- Promotion of greenspace and parks for community gathering spaces
- Enhancement of existing community parks
- Protection of existing tree canopy
- Delineation and adoption of local historic district(s)
- Implementation of the Historic Preservation Commission's design review authority and issuance of Certificate's of Appropriateness for structural changes to historic resources
- Full time codes enforcement
- Stricter enforcement of existing codes, ordinances, and laws
- Adopt a tree preservation ordinance
- Consideration of becoming a Tree City USA community

Opportunities

- Availability of retail space in downtown businesses
- City owned park space for community gathering and recreation
- Historic Preservation Commission promotion of initiatives and awareness
- Heritage tourism initiatives
- Increased community involvement and investment through the Main Street Program.
- Historic preservation funding and technical assistance to Certified Local Governments which includes the City of Bowdon

CHARACTER AREAS AND LAND USE

Character areas are geographic sub-areas of a community which contain unique characteristics and physical form. According to the Department of Community Affairs, Character areas have unique or special characteristics, have potential to evolve into a unique area when provided specific and intentional guidance, or require special attention due to unique development issues. Character areas may be identified by the types of development found there which vary from historic downtowns, commercial/industrial areas, or residential neighborhoods. Other character areas may lack development and include more natural features such as greenspace or parkland.

The following list identifies character areas found within the City of Bowdon. Each character area listed contains a description and desired development patterns, recommended land uses, and a list of implementation measures. Current photos are also included which give an actual snap shot into each distinct character area.

GATEWAYS

Description and Development Patterns:

There are four major entrance points into the City of Bowdon which act as gateways into the community. The major gateways are located at the east and west city limits along GA Highway 166 and the north and south city limits along GA Highway 100. The City has erected "Welcome to Bowdon" signage at the points which give visitors an aesthetically pleasing entry.

Land Uses:
Residential, Neighborhood commercial Centers, Industrial, and Public/Institutional

Implementation Measures:

- Maintain signage and landscaping
- Encourage buffers
- Include signage for civic groups

NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT

Description and Development Patterns:

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, the Bowdon Historic District is located in the heart of the City. The district contains most of the historic built environment within the city and encompasses the historic downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. Structures vary and include historic commercial buildings, civic buildings and homes. The National Register District also overlays other character areas delineated within the City of Bowdon. The National Register District character area covers much of the historic downtown, main street district, parks, industrial area, suburban area, traditional neighborhoods, and the commercial nodes.

The Bowdon Historic District overlays much of the Main Street Program boundaries, which offer mutual benefit for the revitalization of downtown. Property owners in the downtown area will have the ability to utilize preservation tax incentives for rehabilitation work on their structures.

The City of Bowdon is designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG) by the National Park Service. As a Certified Local Government, the City is eligible for additional technical assistance and funding through the Historic Preservation Fund for preservation activities which include historic resource surveys, plans and studies, educational activities & publications, and bricks & mortar (development) projects.

Land Uses:
Single family Residential, Multifamily Residential, Public/Institutional, Mixed Use Development, Neighborhood Commercial/Retail, Parks and Recreation, Industrial

Implementation Measures:

- Utilize historic tax incentives for rehabilitation of structures
- Connect new streets to existing road network for increased connectivity
- Encourage connectivity through bike lanes and greenspace
- Screen and buffer between uses such as residential and commercial uses
- Encourage mixed use
- Encourage architecturally compatible infill
- Encourage walkability and pedestrian safety
- Adoption of local historic district
- Adoption of a tree ordinance

MAIN STREET DISTRICT

Description and Development Patterns:

The City of Bowdon has recently been designated a National Main Street City which will encourage the continued revitalization of the downtown core. The main street district comprises the historic downtown and surrounding commercial redevelopment areas. Successful redevelopment initiatives have taken place within the area with the adaptive re-use of former textile mill structures. Additional adaptive re-use opportunities exist with the former primary school facility. The historic art deco city hall facility is located within the character area along with other civic spaces.

The area has the potential for increased economic development through tourism due to two heritage tourism initiatives which include the Southern Quilt Trail and the West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail.

The City of Bowdon, with the new main street program in place, has the ability to increase community engagement, focus on strengthening the economic vitality of its historic commercial core while building upon recent revitalization efforts.

ONE
WAY

Land Uses:
Single-family Residential, Public/Institutional, Neighborhood Parks and Community Gardens, Neighborhood Commercial Centers

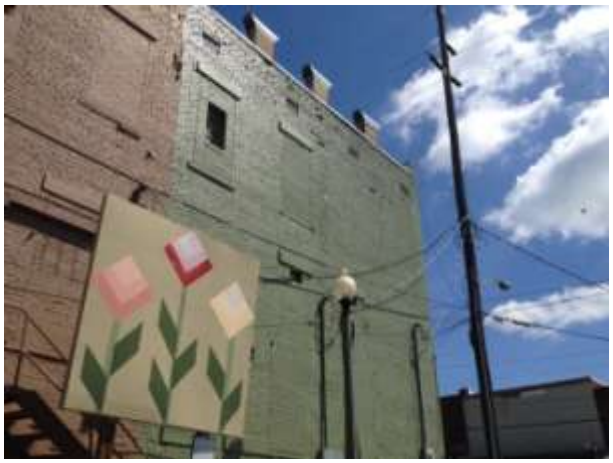
Implementation Measures:

- Historic overlay zoning
- Encourage bike and pedestrian connectivity
- Maintain strict code enforcement
- Adoption of local historic district
- Compatible infill development
- Encourage mixed use
- Encourage architecturally compatible infill
- Encourage increased walkability and pedestrian safety
- Consider utilizing the Georgia Conservancy "Blueprints for Successful Communities" program
- Utilize existing vacant space for redevelopment
- Utilize historic tax incentives for rehabilitation of structures
- Consider a façade grant program
- Consider Community Improvement Districts
- Consider urban redevelopment programs

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

Description and Development Patterns:

Historic downtown Bowdon is located at the intersection of GA Highway 100 and GA Highway 166 and is the commercial heart of the city. It is included within the larger National Register listed Bowdon Historic District and the anchor of the newly designated Main Street District. Downtown is comprised of historic storefront buildings including the Victorian style old Bowdon Inn. Many of the retail spaces contain active businesses such as restaurants and antique stores. Much of downtown looks just as it did at the turn of the last century. One of the most prominent structures, which was first built as a bank, features the well known Mesker Brothers Iron Works metal facade. Downtown also contains mixed used elements as a few of the structures contain loft apartments.



Land Uses:
Commercial and Retail, Parks and Greenspace, Office, Public/Institutional, Mixed-Use

Implementation Measures:

- Encourage mixed use
- Encourage architecturally compatible infill
- Encourage walkability and pedestrian safety
- Consider utilizing the Georgia Conservancy "Blueprints for Successful Communities" program
- Utilize existing vacant space for redevelopment
- Utilize historic tax incentives for rehabilitation of structures
- Consider a façade grant program
- Adoption of local historic district
- Historic overlay districts

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Description and Development Patterns:

Traditional neighborhood style development exists along and radiates out from the main highway thoroughfares of GA Highway 166 and a portion GA Highway 100. Historic homes with distinctive architectural styles lead into the commercial core of the city and date from the early 1850's to the late 1950's. Architectural styles include folk Victorian, colonial, English cottage, craftsman, and mid-century modern. Within the traditional neighborhood character area the residential lots are well maintained, compact, sidewalk accessible, and contain mature tree canopies. The majority of the existing traditional neighborhoods lie within the National Register listed Bowdon Historic District.

Land Uses:
Single-family Residential, Public/Institutional, Neighborhood Parks and Community Gardens, Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Implementation Measures:

- Historic overlay zoning
- Encourage listing of structures and districts on the National Register of Historic Places
- Encourage bike and pedestrian connectivity
- Maintain strict code enforcement
- Adoption of local historic districts
- Compatible infill development
- Promote rehabilitation of historic homes
- Encourage the use of the historic tax incentives programs.
- Housing assessment or inventory

SUBURBAN

Description and Development Patterns:

Suburban style residential development exists just beyond the traditional residential areas and encircles the city closer to the city limits. Early suburban development began as linear extensions to existing streets during the 1960s. Later into the 1990s and 2000s suburban style residential subdivisions started to develop. These later types, which contain curvilinear streets and cul-a-sacs are located on the extreme edge of the city limits. The suburban area acts as a transition zone between the rural countryside surrounding the city and the historic core. Along with residential development, this character area contains public facilities, schools, active recreation parks, and small scale commercial activity.

Land Uses:
Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Neighborhood Commercial Centers, Public/Institutional, Active Recreation

Implementation Measures:

- Link new development to existing sidewalk network
- Encourage neighborhood associations
- Encourage conservation subdivisions
- Connect new streets to existing road network for increased connectivity
- Encourage connectivity through bike lanes and greenspace
- Screen and buffer between uses such as residential and commercial uses
- Housing assessment or inventory

COMMERCIAL NODES

Description and Development Patterns:

Located along the major highway thoroughfares of GA Highway 166 and GA Highway 100 exist small commercial nodes which are nestled within existing residential areas. These commercial nodes are concentrated commercial activity centers which include only small scale businesses and do not involve any strip center type development. These commercial nodes contain single-service “mom and pop” style businesses.

Land Uses:
Commercial and Mixed-Use

Implementation Measures:

- Build commercial structures near street front
- Encourage rear parking
- Landscape buffers
- Proper signage
- Façade improvements
- Provide sidewalks to link adjacent residential areas
- Utilize historic tax incentives for rehabilitation work for structures within the National Register listed Bowdon Historic District
- Adoption of local historic district

INDUSTRIAL

Description and Development Patterns:

The City of Bowdon has had a vibrant industrial past. Specifically, the textile industry has played a key role within the industrial sector as the Sewell Manufacturing Company employed thousands from the surrounding area. Sewell Manufacturing is now known as the Bremen-Bowdon Investment Company which continues to offer employment within textile manufacturing. Employment opportunities within the industrial sector have decreased within the City in the recent past, especially with the destruction of the Carlisle Tire Plant in 2008. Replacing those jobs has been a priority for local officials and residents alike. The City of Bowdon has an industrial park dedicated to serve light industrial uses and has successfully attracted businesses with the potential for expansion. There exists enough space for increased industrial recruitment which could include additional manufacturing, wholesale trade, and distribution activities.

Land Uses:
Heavy and Light Industrial, Commercial, Distribution Centers, Manufacturing, Redevelopment

Implementation Measures:

- Maintain sewer access
- Expand sewer where possible
- Adequate roadways and access
- Buffer and landscape requirements
- Collaboration with Carroll Tomorrow
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas from industrial uses
- Brownfield site remediation

PARKLAND AND CONSERVATION

Description and Development Patterns:

Within the City of Bowdon, there exists greenspace and undeveloped land in the form of small neighborhood parks. These spaces should be protected and conserved for recreational use. The City of Bowdon owns most of these park spaces and has plans to minimally develop them for increased use for the citizens. An improvement plan exists for Watts Park which may include a small educational amphitheater and picnic areas. See the site plan on the following page. Other parks which have the potential for enhancement include Whatley Park and Barr Park, all of which contain ample greenspace and mature tree canopies.

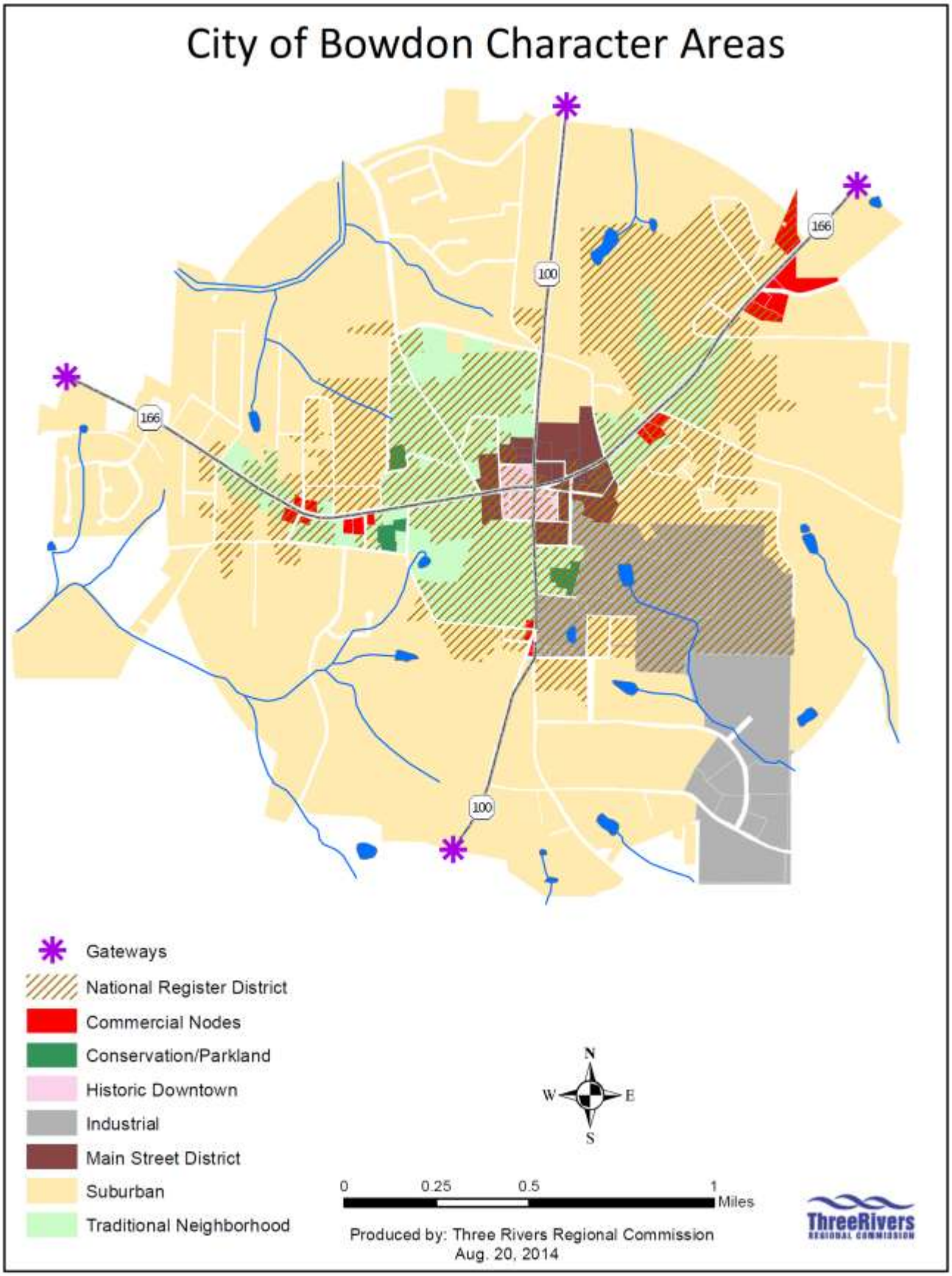
Conservation of these areas will not only protect the environment, watersheds, and wildlife but will also increase recreational opportunities for the citizens. Expansion of conservation areas via land acquisition should be considered.

Land Uses:
Conservation, Greenspace, Passive Recreation, Parks.

Implementation Measures:

- Land preservation
- Limit new development
- Conservation easements
- Viewshed preservation
- Open space preservation
- Greenspace acquisition
- Promote passive recreation opportunities
- Buffer requirements
- Utilize Land and Water Conservation Fund for park development
- Partner with the Trust for Public Land for land acquisition and protection

WATTS PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN


City of Bowdon Character Areas
100
166
166
100
Gateways
National Register District
Commercial Nodes
Conservation/Parkland
Historic Downtown
Industrial
Main Street District
Suburban
Traditional Neighborhood
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Miles
Produced by: Three Rivers Regional Commission
Aug. 20, 2014
ThreeRivers
REGIONAL COMMISSION

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

The City of Bowdon Community Work Program is a list of priority projects to be undertaken by the City within in the next five years. The Community Work Program includes the specific activity or project, an estimated timeframe in which to complete the activity, the responsible entity overseeing the activity, the estimated cost, and the likely source of funding.

Report of Plan Accomplishments:
A Report of Plan Accomplishments serves as a status report for the previous Short Term Work Program covering the years 2008-2012.

City of Bowdon - Short Term Work Program 2008-2012 Report of Plan Accomplishments		
Project or Activity	**Status**	**Explanation**
Build New Wastewater Treatment Plant	Complete	
Develop Liquor Pouring License by the Drink ordinance	Complete	
Expand Recreation Department Facilities	Not Complete	Did not purchase the land
Purchase Historic Property for inclusion in Recreation facilities	Not Complete	Owner not selling
Develop a golf cart ordinance	Not Complete	Moved to new CWP
Collaborate with Carlisle Tire & Wheel leadership, as well as city, state and federal agencies to rebuilt plant	Not Complete	New ownership of property
Review and update Personnel Policy Manual	Complete	
Expand City limits	Not Complete	Not a priority
Continue successful annual Founders Day celebration	Complete	
Continue to participate in solid waste reduction activities	Complete	
Maintain active Downtown Merchants Association	Complete	
Obtain funding and permits to expand water production capability	Not Complete	Project on hold
Construct elevated storage tank	Not Complete	Project on hold
Prepare listing of scenic areas	Underway	Ongoing
Develop uniform county-wide watershed protection ordinance	Not Complete	Not a priority
Develop a tourism marketing plan	Complete	
Expand Industrial Park by acquiring 47 acres	Not Complete	Not a priority
Update land use and zoning maps	Complete	
Update Comprehensive Plan and STWP	Complete	

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM 2014-2019

Below is the new City of Bowdon Community Work Program which lists projects the city will address in the next five years.

City of Bowdon - Community Work Program 2014-2019				
Activity	**Years**	**Responsible Party**	**Cost**	**Funding Sources**
Natural and Cultural Resources				
Implement Watts Park Plan	2015-2019	City	$150,000	City/Grants
Develop and implement Barr Park Plan	2015-2019	City	$150,000	City/Grants
Adopt local historic district(s)	2015-2019	City, HPC	NA	City
Prepare a list of scenic and historic sites	2015-2019	City, HPC	NA	City
Community Facilities and Services				
City Hall relocation	2015-2017	City	UNK	City
Start 80/20 program for the old primary school	2014-2019	City	UNK	City
Purchase new police vehicles, bullet proof armor for public safety personnel	2015	City	$165,000	City/SPLOST
New roof for the old school	2015	City	$50,000	City/SPLOST
Sewer line improvements along GA Hwy 100, Rome, Eason, and T Streets.	2014-2015	City	$584,825	City/Grants
Renovate public tennis courts	2015-2019	City	$45,000	City/SPLOST
Community and Economic Development				
Main Street Program implementation	2014-2019	City, Main Street Board	NA	City
Develop a golf cart ordinance	2014-2015	City	UNK	City