City of Commerce

Comprehensive Plan

2021 Update

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

This comprehensive plan, updated for the City of Commerce in 2020, serves as a guide for local government officials and community leaders for making decisions in support of the community's stated vision. Based on input from the public and a Citizens Advisory Committee, the plan identifies needs and opportunities for the community, as well as goals for the city's future, and policies that provide guidance and direction for achieving these goals. The plan also offers insight into what types of land use and development are appropriate in the City of Commerce. A community work program is included that specifies a route for working towards implementation of the plan.

This comprehensive plan should be used as a guide by the local government for public projects and initiatives, assessing development proposals, rezoning applications, and redevelopment plans. Residents, business owners, and developers may access the plan as well, to learn about appropriate land use, development, and the trajectory of growth for the City of Commerce. Essentially, the plan seeks to answer the questions:

Where are we?, Where do we want to be?, and How will we get there?
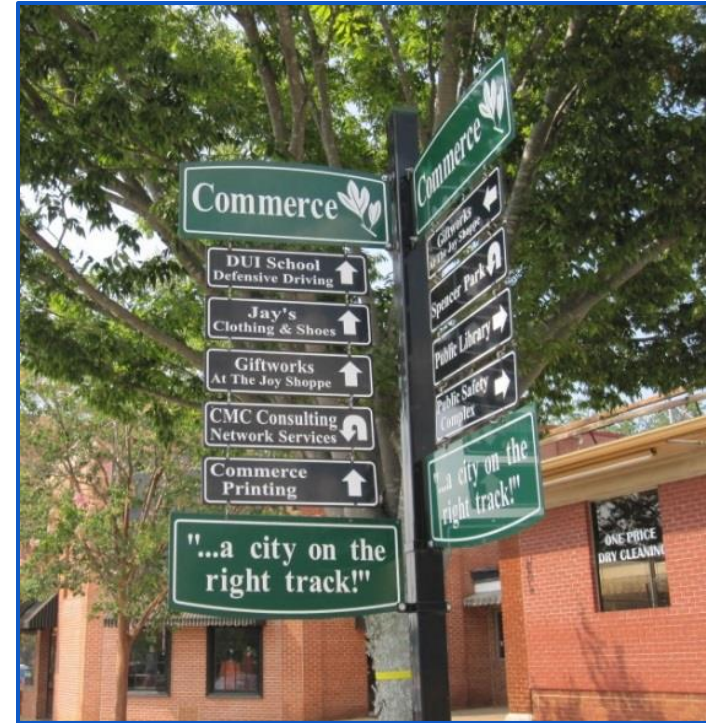
PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan process follows the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs ("DCA"), Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective October 1, 2018. The DCA rules state that the Comprehensive Plan consists of the following distinct components:

COMMUNITY GOALS:

Through public and committee meetings, the City's vision, goals, and policies are developed to determine the community's future direction. These elements were identified through an analysis of the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). As a part of this process, policies are identified to assist in making decisions that are consistent with community goals. Additionally, character areas, or focused areas of planning with special conditions or needs, are defined. This will help determine which parts of the community are to be enhanced or preserved, and how to guide zoning and policies in the future.

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

An analysis of the community's needs and opportunities will help determine the existing conditions of the city. This will assist the community in identifying the issues that it needs to address and the opportunities on which it can capitalize.

LAND USE

An updated land use element that analyzes existing land use in order to create a vision for the City's future development is included. Development density and type were both brought into consideration when creating the policies. The land use element is meant to serve as a framework for staff and local decision makers. In order to develop this element, the citizen advisory committee and staff worked together to combine the existing environment, ideal development patterns, resources, and potential annexations to create a plan that identifies the priorities of the City and its residents.

BROADBAND SERVICES

A new requirement since the 2015 plan, the Broadband Services Element includes goals and actions that are related to cost-effective broadband accessibility. The majority of the City of Commerce is identified as "served" by DCA and the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), however, all services can be improved and expanded. The City of Commerce also acts as a utility service provider for commercial broadband clients.

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM:

The final component of the comprehensive plan, the Community Work Program, outlines steps and strategies for achieving the community's goals and implementing its plans. The Work Program will include a short-term work plan, identifying priority projects, potential collaborations, and funding strategies. This element also includes the report of accomplishments from the 2015 plan.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

CITY OF COMMERCE STAFF'S ROLE

The City of Commerce Planning and Development Department facilitated the 2020 update of the City's plan. Leading community input sessions and Citizen Advisory Committee meetings, staff gathered feedback and guidance from the public, and used this information to assemble the Comprehensive Plan and make recommendations that are reflective of the community's desires. The City Council and Mayor hold ultimate responsibility and authority to approve and direct the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan documents.

PUBLIC INPUT AND CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The 2020 update of Commerce's Comprehensive Plan was driven by public involvement. The planning process began with the launch of a community input survey that was conducted digitally beginning on August 8, 2020. An introductory steering committee meeting was held on September 9, 2020 where the SWOT analysis of the community was conducted. The first public hearing meeting was held on September 28, 2020, followed by a regular planning and zoning commission meeting. An additional steering committee meeting was held September 29, 2020 to continue the SWOT analysis. On November 18, 2020 the steering committee discussed land use. The survey questions and materials are located in the appendix along with a summary of the results.

The steering committee meetings were treated like work sessions, and each were attended by group of stakeholders representing various interests in Commerce. This Committee provided valuable feedback, guidance, and recommendations about the comprehensive plan and served the integral role of guiding the plan as a document representative of Commerce's vision. These members attended meetings both in-person and digitally, in respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee included:

- Stacey Rucker- Local Real Estate Agent and Business Owner
- Johnny Eubanks- Member of City Council
- Joe Leffew- Chairman of the Planning Commission
- Melinda Cochran-Davis- Member of the Planning Commission
- Kyle Moore- Commerce City Schools Board of Education
- Natalie Thomas- DDA Director
- Zach Ardis- Executive Director for Public Safety and Policy
- David Evans-Local Business Owner
- Rick Massey- Resident
- Doug Westmoreland- Local Business Owner
- Alicia Vargas- Downtown Restaurant Owner
- David Zellner- Resident
- Jim Yates- Resident
- Rochard White-Local Business Owner
- Claudia Amaya- Resident
- Kristi Young- Local Real Estate Agent
- Allison Davis- Resident
- Darren Ownesby- Member of City Council
- Melissa Morris- Resident
- Rochica White- Local Real Estate Agent
- Dylan Wilbanks- Local Attorney
- Kelly Lacey- Resident
- Ann Rhodes- Commerce Library Board Member

REVIEW PROCESS

According to the DCA's new rules for comprehensive planning, effective March 1, 2014, the City must transmit the plan to the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) when all components are complete. The transmittal must also include the community's certification that it has considered both the Regional Water Plan and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria. Once it completes its review, the NEGRC will forward the plan to the DCA for review. Once the plan has been found by the DCA to be in compliance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures, the City Council must adopt the approved plan. Adoption must occur at least 60 days, but no more than one year, after submittal to the NEGRC for review.


Resident input during the land use stakeholder meeting

PLANNING CONTEXT

The City of Commerce is located near the foothills of the North Georgia Mountains and adjacent to the Interstate 85 corridor. Originally named Harmony Grove, the City became incorporated in 1884 and initially flourished as a cotton and later textiles market.

Commerce has a population of 6,858 (U.S. Census estimate for 2019) and is located in one of the fastest growing counties in the region. With a population of 72,977 (U.S. Census estimate for 2019), Jackson County's population is projected to grow to 129,487 by 2040.[1]

Commerce has a small town character, with a historic downtown and a supportive and engaged community. Residents of Commerce identified many positive attributes of their City, including its vibrant downtown, good education system, family-oriented and safe community, and its central location to many urban centers. Looking to the future, residents want to maintain and enhance these valuable assets of their community through targeted and managed growth.

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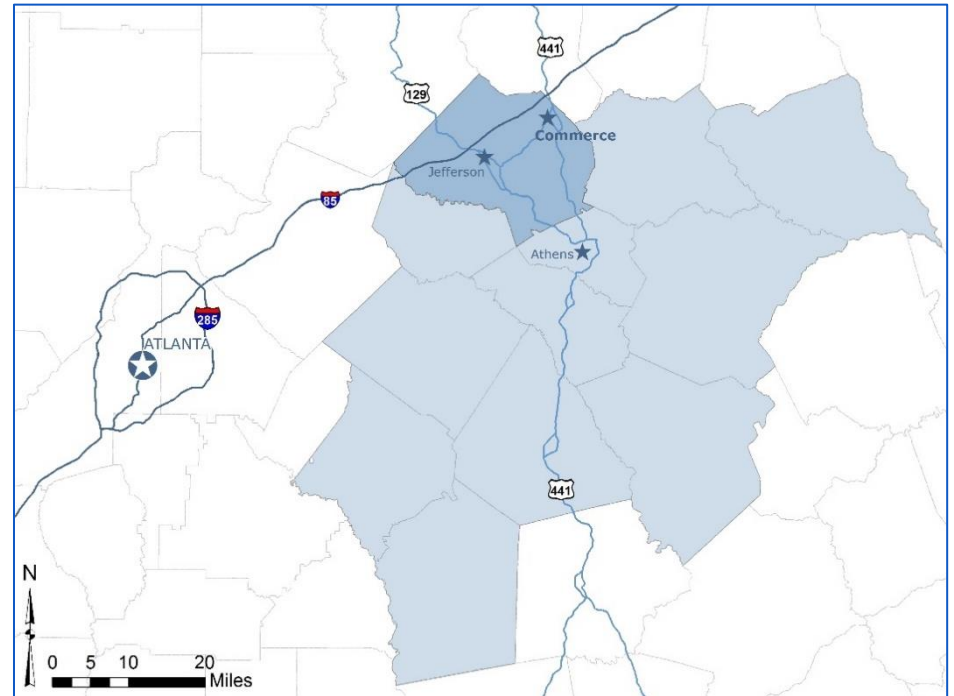
[1] Population Projections Visualization, State of GA, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2020.

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NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The needs and opportunities presented in this chapter are divided into five categories: Downtown, Community Amenities and Infrastructure, Housing, Land Use, and Economy. These categories represent the predominant and recurring themes that were identified by the public and steering committee. The list is compiled from needs and opportunities identified by the public while conducting a SWOT analysis, the Citizens Advisory Committee, the public survey, and from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

DOWNTOWN

NEEDS

a. Increase foot traffic is needed to support downtown retail and businesses
b. In order to attract tourists for leisure and business, lodging opportunities and a greater number and diversity of restaurants is needed
c. Diversity in retail and service businesses is needed
d. More activities and destinations are needed to draw people to downtown
e. Many older structures need to be attended to before they are beyond repair

OPPORTUNITIES

a. Retail and office space in downtown is affordable and attractive to start-ups and internet-based retail in need of a store front
b. There are opportunities for attractive infill, allowing for attractive buildings and spaces for more new business
c. Opportunities for redevelopment exist, both on publicly and privately owned properties

d. In close proximity to Banks Crossing, there are opportunities to capture visitation from this area to Commerce through targeted branding and marketing
e. Utilize and promote existing incentives and tools, such as the Opportunity, Enterprise, and Rural Zones, to encourage business downtown
f. Expanding festivals and events can boost tourism traffic and the economy
g. The Civic Center space is a versatile space with many potential uses and clients
h. Commerce's community has a strong sense of pride and is engaged, creating an opportunity to encourage volunteerism
i. Commerce has a unique story that can serve to attract both tourists and residents

COMMUNITY AMENITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

NEEDS

a. Parks and recreational equipment in need of updates and expansion
b. More recreational facilities are needed, particularly multi-purpose sports fields and a gym
c. Recreational opportunities need to expand to support a growing population
d. More reliable internet connectivity is needed, particularly in residential areas
e. Water and sewer infrastructure is aging and is in need of replacement
f. Water leaks throughout the City need to be addressed and repaired
g. Maintain the positive public safety level of service in the City and focus on improving and maintaining ISO rating

OPPORTUNITIES

a. With positive existing amenities and facilities such as the library, City school system, and parks and recreation, opportunities exist for attracting new residents interested in these aspects of the community
b. With full-service utilities provided, the needed resources are available for new business and development
c. Expanding and improving the existing systems will allow for a better quality of service

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

NEEDS

a. Entry corridors that lead to town are in need of beautification
b. There are a number of buildings located along major corridors that could be redeveloped
c. The downtown corridor is in need of a streetscape strategy and improvements
d. The streetscape and safety concerns along the 98 and 326 corridors needs to be addressed
e. The City may wish to work to preserve and maintain the rural landscape and greenspace that surrounds the City
f. Blighted areas in commercial and residential zones need to be addressed for aesthetic purposes and community improvement
g. While homeownership is increasing within the City limits, homeownership and the conversion of rental units into homeowner units needs to be encouraged
h. A balance in housing-stock is needed that corresponds to demand and demographic need
i. Absentee landlords present a challenge that needs to be addressed
j. Existing neighborhoods, particularly the mill house area, need to be maintained and enhanced
k. High quality housing needs to be available and prioritized

OPPORTUNITIES

a. Vacant buildings along corridors coming into the City and in downtown provide opportunities to attract business and for redevelopment
b. There is an opportunity for infill along the 441 corridor

c. The City may wish to explore the opportunity for pursuing a land bank, community improvement incentives, and other programs to encourage redevelopment

d. Beautification of the corridors leading into the City may help draw visitors and support community pride

e. Consider public/private partnerships in development activities

f. With a high quality of life, including a good school system and safe environment, there may be an opportunity to attract new home-buyers to the City

g. Mill houses offer interesting and unique architecture and may provide an opportunity for rehabilitation

h. There is an opportunity for loft-style apartments in downtown

i. Rapid commercial and industrial development will encourage residential development- but that development needs to be managed correctly

b. Building off of the large investment SK Battery brought to the City by attracting suppliers and support businesses to locate or annex into the City

c. Niche retail may be attracted to downtown, through providing brick and mortar space for online presence businesses

d. With a strong agri-business presence already found in the City, there are opportunities to attract similar businesses to the City

e. Developing a new-business recruitment packet will help inform prospective entrepreneurs about the City's opportunities and business-friendly environment

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

NEEDS

a. Responsible economic development post-SK Battery

b. Continued positive partnerships and relationships with industry and business are needed

c. Incentives are needed for business development in the downtown business district to reinvigorate this area and prevent further greenfield development- better utilization of existing programs and creation of additional programs

OPPORTUNITIES

a. With Lanier Technical College located in the community, opportunities may exist to attract jobs that require skilled labor and train Commerce residents

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VISION, GOALS, AND POLICIES

THE VISION

The intent of this Comprehensive Plan Update for the City of Commerce is to collect and refine the most relevant portions of the previous Plan from 2015, and other planning efforts since. The goal of this effort is to produce an accessible and useful document. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan will frame the aspirations of the community in the form of a vision that will support and direct the decisions of local elected officials and City staff. Establishing a cogent and realistic vision that defines what the community as a whole values, and is committed to achieving, will inform decisions made day-to-day.

The vision presented in this chapter is structured around a framework of goals and policies that address priorities for the City's future. Priorities for the City were developed by inviting the community to describe what they want their City to become: how it will look and function, and the types of services and facilities it will offer. Additionally, the community was asked to discuss and identify the likely challenges they will face, as well as the assets the City possesses. Building upon these assets will assist in getting from where the City is now, to where citizens want it to be in the future.

During the course of this conversation, distinct patterns became apparent in the descriptions given of the City's challenges and assets. These patterns informed the City's priorities for their Comprehensive Plan, and serve as the framework for the City's vision.

The vision is composed of the following elements, some of which focus on a specific geographic location or a particular need, while others apply to the City as a whole. Each element represents a critical component of the greater vision that the City and its residents are committed to working towards.

THROUGH TARGETED, MANAGED GROWTH AND BY FORMING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, THE CITY OF COMMERCE IS COMMITTED TO ADVANCING BY:

1. *CREATING A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN BY ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS TO LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY.*

2. *SUSTAINING AND IMPROVING THE CITY THROUGH INVESTING IN AND IMPROVING NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY AMENITIES.*

3. *SEEKING A BALANCE IN LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT THAT MERGES DEMAND, DEMOGRAPHIC NEED, GROWTH, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.*

4. *PROMOTING ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.*

In order to translate the vision into a reality, this section outlines the goals related to each of the five priorities and lists the policies that the City will follow to achieve them.

GOALS AND POLICIES

1. DOWNTOWN

We will create a vibrant downtown where residents can live, work, and play by:

- Promoting opportunities for revitalization of downtown
- Encouraging business development
- Addressing infrastructure and amenity needs
- Creating opportunities for downtown living
- Seeking out businesses that provide entertainment, dining, or enrichment to downtown in order to draw individuals and families
- Promoting the history and unique story of Commerce to attract tourism

2. COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

We will sustain the City through investing in and improving necessary infrastructure by:

- Maintaining our roads
- Expanding the sidewalk network to promote walkability
- Expanding the capacity of water, sewer, gas, and fiber systems
- Maintaining the current level of electrical service
- Expanding and improving internet connectivity capabilities
- Upgrading recreational and park facilities
- Developing recreational opportunities to improve quality of life
- Seeking out alternative funding opportunities for infrastructure projects
- Maintaining public safety level of service

3. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

We will manage land use and development in a sustainable manner by:

- Revising and maintaining the City's code
- Addressing the need for beautification along gateways coming into the City
- Continuing to maintain use of the overlay district along gateway corridors
- Promoting industrial development along the I-85 Corridor
- Encouraging infill and redevelopment of vacant buildings through incentivizing use
- Continuing appropriate annexations
- Utilizing available resources, tools, and funding to enhance and upgrade housing found in existing neighborhoods, particularly in the mill house area
- Addressing vacancy and blight to enhance existing neighborhoods
- Seeking a greater percentage of owner-occupied homes
- Maintaining and enforcing standards for new housing developments
- Promoting construction of high-quality homes that maintain value

4. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We will promote economic and workforce development by:

- Undertaking a branding and signage initiative
- Utilizing a marketing packet to recruit businesses
- Recruiting employers that will benefit from the workforce trained in Commerce at Lanier Tech

- Identifying available office space and recruit potential business to occupy
- Pursuing public/private partnerships
- Capitalizing off of SK Battery by recruiting support businesses and industries
- Attracting niche businesses to downtown

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LAND USE

Under the most recent iteration of the Minimum Standard Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning for the State of Georgia (effective March 1, 2014), communities with zoning ordinances in places are required to incorporate a Land Use Element into their comprehensive plans. Communities must choose to either develop a Character Areas Map or adopt a more conventional Future Land Use Map. The City of Commerce has opted to include Character Areas in the 2015 Update, and include them again in the 2020 update, refining those identified in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to reflect changes that have occurred since its adoption.

EXISTING LAND USE

Based upon data provided in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan and by the City of Commerce, the table to the right indicates how land use acreage has changed over the last five years. Commerce has annexed 876.5 acres into the city limits since the last comprehensive plan was developed.

Of note is the apparent change in residential land use, which has decreased by approximately 130 acres between 2009 and 2015. This decrease in residential land acreage is seen most considerably in multi-family land use. This may be explained by the mobile/manufactures homes which were no accounted for in 2009.
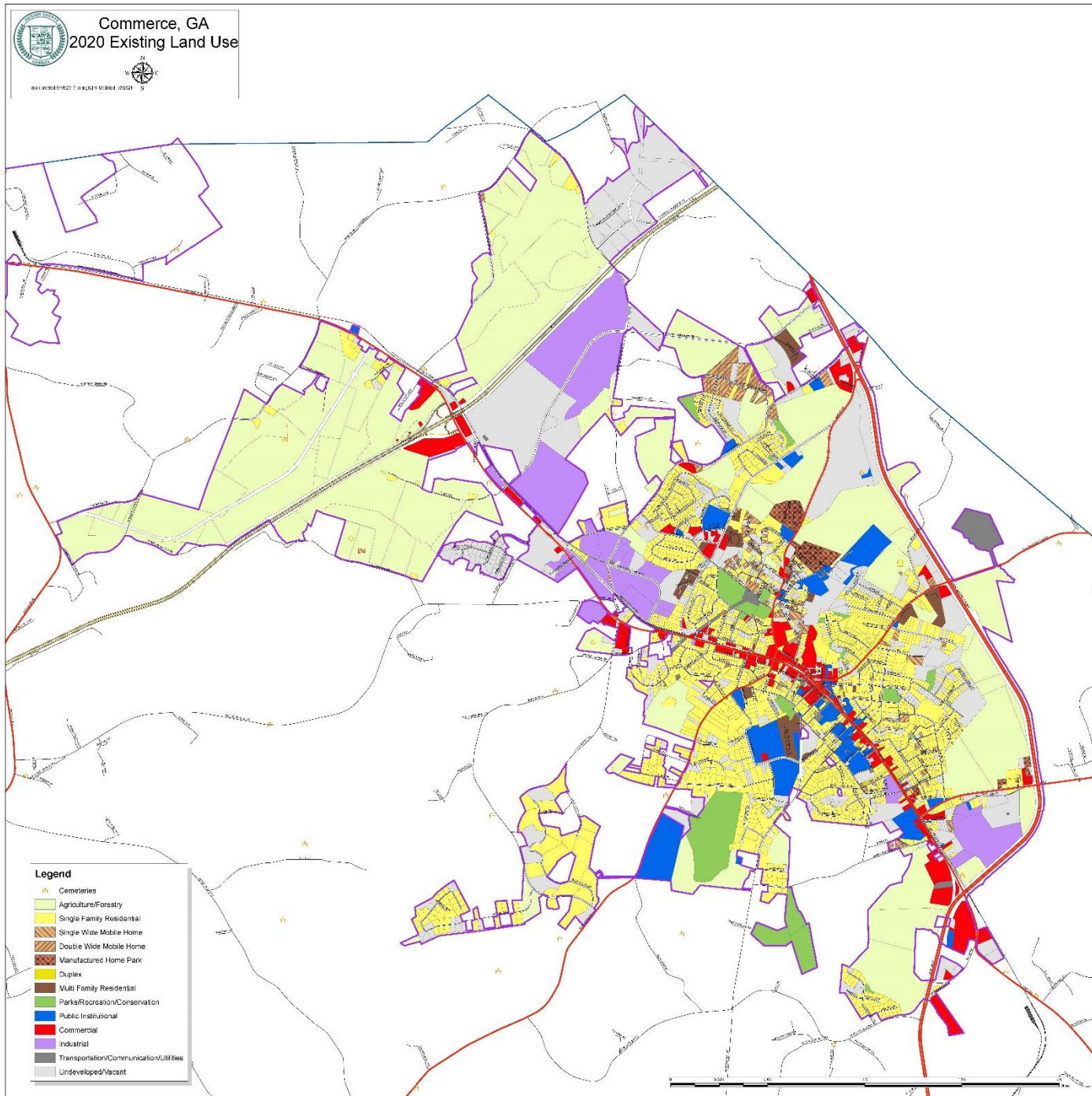
Other significant changes are seen in the Parks/Recreation/Conservation land use category, which has increased by approximately 80 acres. Both industrial and public institutional land use acreage have increased by approximately 40.

Land Use	2009		2015		2020	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Agriculture and Forestry	2,540	36.70%	2,600	34.10%	3,139	36.67
Commercial	283	4.10%	302	4.00%	296	3.46
Single Family Residential	1,728	25%	1,496	19.60%	1622	18.95
Multi-Family Residential	120	1.70%	63	0.80%	80	0.94
Mobile/Manufactured Home	*	n/a	158	2.10%	169	1.97
Park/Recreation/Conservation	141	2%	220	2.90%	227	2.65
Industrial	270	3.90%	307	4.00%	554	6.47
Public Institutional	206	3%	250	3.30%	274	3.20
Utilities	55	0.80%	55	0.70%	58	0.68
Vacant	1,578	22.80%	1,491	19.60%	1321	15.43
ROW/OTHER	*	n/a	681	8.90%	820	9.58
Total (acres)	6,921	100%	7,623	100%	8560	100.00

Source: 2015 Comprehensive Plan, City of Commerce GIS

*values for these categories were not specified. This may account for the incongruence in acreage of multi-family land use in 2009 and 2015; additionally a new zoning category was created shifting some residential areas to commercial.

Commerce, GA
2020 Existing Land Use

Legend
- Cemeteries
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Single Family Residential
- Single Wide Mobile Home
- Double Wide Mobile Home
- Manufactured Home Park
- Duplex
- Multi Family Residential
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Public Institutional
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Undeveloped/Vacant

CHARACTER AREAS

Character Areas are defined as a specific geographic area or district within the community that:

- has unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced,
- has potential to evolve into a unique area with more intentional guidance, or
- requires special attention due to a unique development issue.

Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more detailed, small-area planning and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the community's goals.

For the City of Commerce, the Character Areas defined in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan were assessed by the steering committee and refined for use in the 2015 update. The 2020 update continues to refine the Character Areas and adjust the map for current conditions. For each Character Area, a description of the area is provided, along with allowable land uses within the area, the existing zoning category, and identification of implementation measures to achieve the desired development patterns for the area. The City of Commerce has elected to use the following character areas, which are shown on a map on the following page.

MIXED-USE AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

- Downtown Commercial Core
- Greater Downtown
- Neighborhood Retail Service Mixed-use
- Master Planned Mixed-use
- Highway Commercial
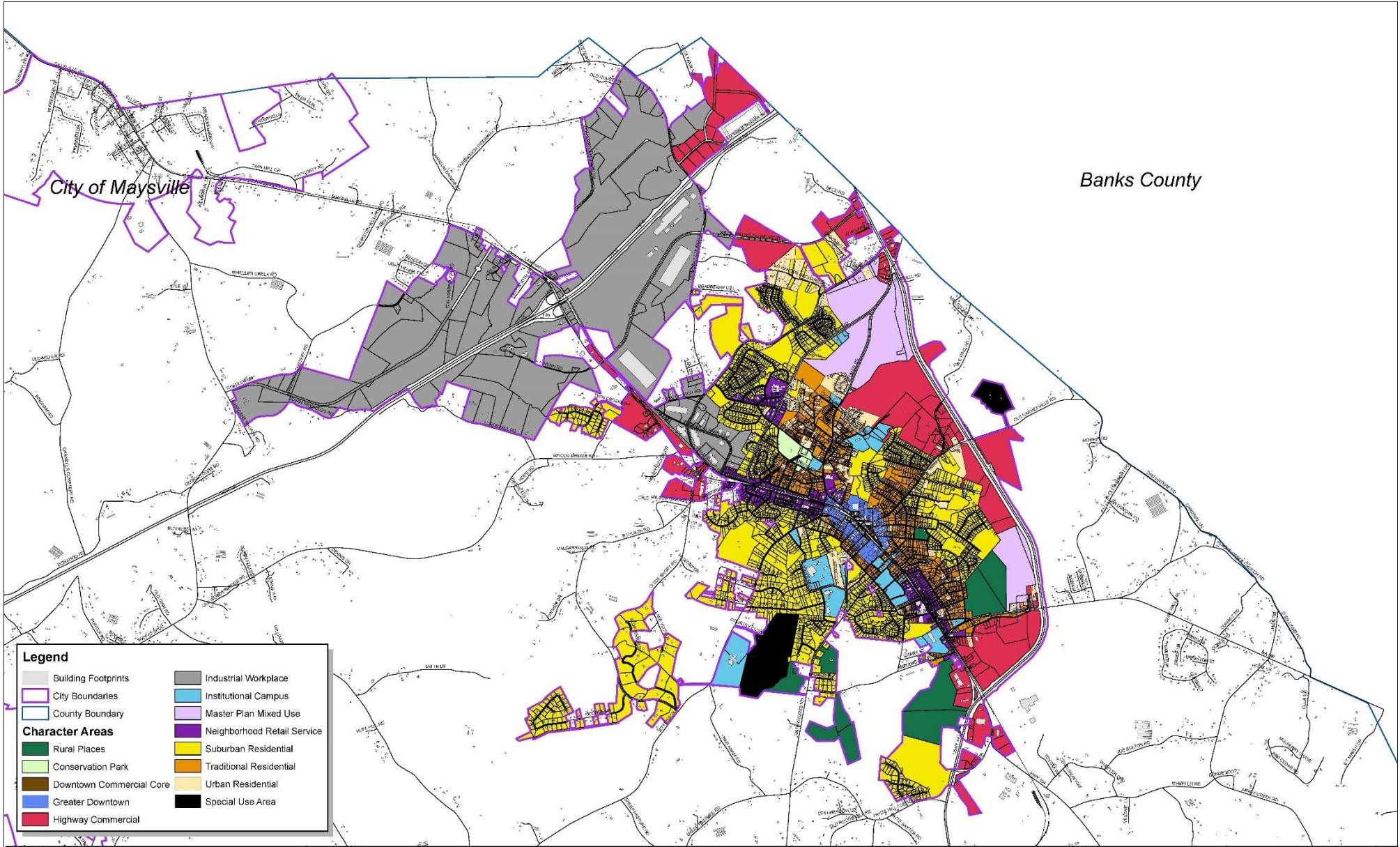
RESIDENTIAL AREAS

- Urban Residential
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Suburban Residential
- Rural Places

CONSERVATION AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS

- Conservation – Park
- Agricultural Preservation

SINGLE-FUNCTION AREAS

- Institutional Campus
- Industrial Workplace
- Special Use Area

Banks County

City of Maysville

Legend

Building Footprints	Industrial Workplace
City Boundaries	Institutional Campus
County Boundary	Master Plan Mixed Use
Character Areas	Neighborhood Retail Service
Rural Places	Suburban Residential
Conservation Park	Traditional Residential
Downtown Commercial Core	Urban Residential
Greater Downtown	Special Use Area
Highway Commercial	

City of Commerce
Character Areas

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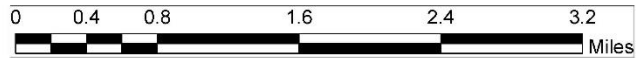
Layout & Mapping By
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DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL CORE

DESCRIPTION

The downtown core consists primarily of retail and service businesses, as well as important civic institutional uses such as city hall, a post office, library, civic center, and cultural center. In addition to dining and shopping opportunities, annually-held events and festivals attract residents to the commercial core. Since 1876, the railroad has run through the middle of downtown, impacting the City's layout. With the central location of the rail line, railroad crossings at grade, and businesses and homes that front the tracks, the railroad is a significant feature in the City, greatly influencing the character of and movement throughout downtown.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Commercial (retail and service)
- Secondary: Office, Institutional, Housing

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- CBD (Central Business District); currently allows upper floor residential apartment

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Improve streetscapes to promote walkability
- Preserve sense of place through historic preservation
- Revitalization through infill and redevelopment
- Promote residential use on upper floors of downtown buildings
- Refer to the Downtown Target Area for implementation measures that can be taken to meet the goals of this character area

Historic buildings and the railroad tracks are defining characteristics of the downtown that are valued by residents.

Maintaining and enhancing pedestrian-friendly streetscapes is a development strategy for the downtown commercial core.

GREATER DOWNTOWN

DESCRIPTION

Still considered downtown, but with less compact development characteristics, this character areas consists of commercial land uses, as well as a mixture of residential and institutional uses. While there are some industrial sites located within the greater downtown, a few industrial buildings have been adaptively reused (e.g., the civic center was an old mill site). There is potential for further conversion of old industrial sites to adapted uses. Greater downtown is transitional in nature, and there is much potential for the downtown core to grow into this transitional area, with concerted effort and economic development incentives.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Commercial (retail and service)
- Secondary: Office, Institutional, Housing

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- CBD (Central Business District)
- OCR (Office-Commercial Residential)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Improve streetscapes to promote walkability through tree plantings and sidewalk extension
- Revitalize area through infill that is compatible in size, design and use, and through redevelopment
- Encourage reuse of older buildings and industrial sites to maintain character
- Refer to the Downtown Target Area for implementation measures that can be taken to meet the goals of this character area

Redevelopment opportunities exist in the greater downtown by repurposing older buildings for new uses, while maintaining the building form found in downtown.

Higher density housing on smaller lots is appropriate within mixed-use areas of the greater downtown and in places transitioning away from this character area into more residential neighborhoods.

NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL/SERVICE

DESCRIPTION

This mixed-use character area is found along major thoroughfares or the railroad in a linear pattern. These areas are transitional in nature, with a mix of single-family dwellings on small lots, and adaptive reuse of dwellings for offices, services, and retail.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Single-family Residential
- Secondary: Professional offices, service and retail use

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial District)
- OCR (Office-Commercial Residential District)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Encourage development of compatible, low-intensity neighborhood mixed-use
- Revitalize area through infill that is compatible in size, design and use, and through redevelopment
- Incorporate plazas and/or pocket parks in revitalization efforts

U.S. Highway 441 Business has a mixed-use of residences and businesses developed in a linear fashion along the railroad and parallel streets.

Vacant commercial space along Homer Rd can be redeveloped and serve as focal point for adjacent neighborhood.

MASTER PLANNED – MIXED-USE

DESCRIPTION

Greenfield sites planned for freestanding, complete communities with residential, commercial, office, civic-institutional, park and recreation uses that are primarily non-auto oriented.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Residential, commercial, office, civic-institutional, park and recreation, primarily non-auto oriented commercial
- Secondary: None specified, all uses expect industry are appropriate; auto-oriented uses by special use permit

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- Combination of current zoning districts, however, a new, master-planned mixed-use zoning district is needed.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Develop guidelines for mixed-use master-planned developments
- Conduct traffic impact study when necessary
- Seek appropriate developer for development of this character area
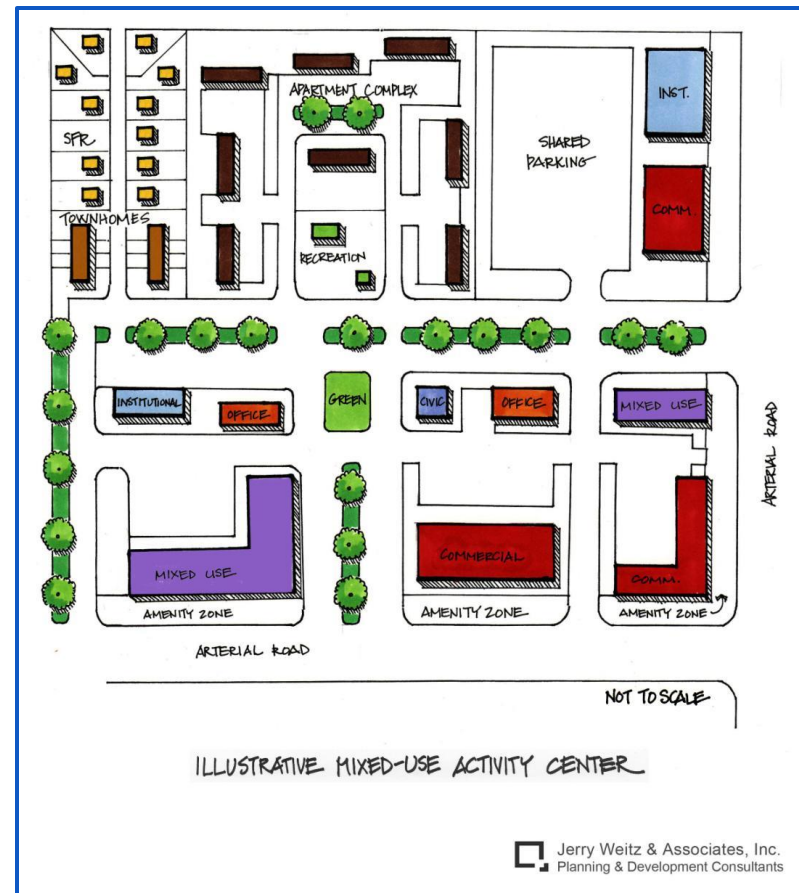
Example of mixed-use activity center that includes a mix of residential, commercial, office, institutional, and park space.

HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

DESCRIPTION

The highway commercial character area consists of predominately automobile-service commercial uses. Found along U.S. Hwy. 441, U.S. Hwy 441 Business, SR 98, and at I-85 near Banks Crossing, these commercial areas offer larger-scale lodging, big box retail, convenience stores, auto sales, and chain restaurants and retail. These areas are geared towards automobile access.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Commercial
- Secondary: Office and Institutional

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- C-2 (General Commercial District)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Encourage revitalization and redevelopment along existing corridors
- Improve aesthetic of development and streetscape by enforcing overlay district
- Encourage walkability by improving pedestrian environment through connecting gaps in sidewalk and planting trees
- Enforce architectural overlays
- Consider enacting a big-box retail ordinance (to discourage long-term vacancies)
- Encourage infill of compatible development in vacant areas with targeted economic development efforts

Ingles shopping center, located on U.S. 441 is an automobile-dependent shopping area.

Improvements to the pedestrian environment, such as installation of sidewalks and tree planting will encourage walking and improve the aesthetic.

URBAN RESIDENTIAL

DESCRIPTION

The urban residential character area consists of higher-density neighborhoods with six to eight units per acre. These areas are where multi-family housing is supported and consist of mobile home parks, apartments, condominiums, and townhouses.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Multi-family residential, single-family residential, manufacture homes, duplexes
- Secondary: civic-institutional, active recreation

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- R3 (Two-family Residential District)
- R4 (Multi-family Residential
- R5 (Single-family Residential District of Manufactures Homes)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Inventory sidewalk network within urban residential neighborhoods and access to surrounding commercial districts.
- Maintain and enhance housing through code enforcement
- Evaluate permitted densities
- Improve utility service and infrastructure

Example of apartment units in Commerce that are part of the urban residential character area.
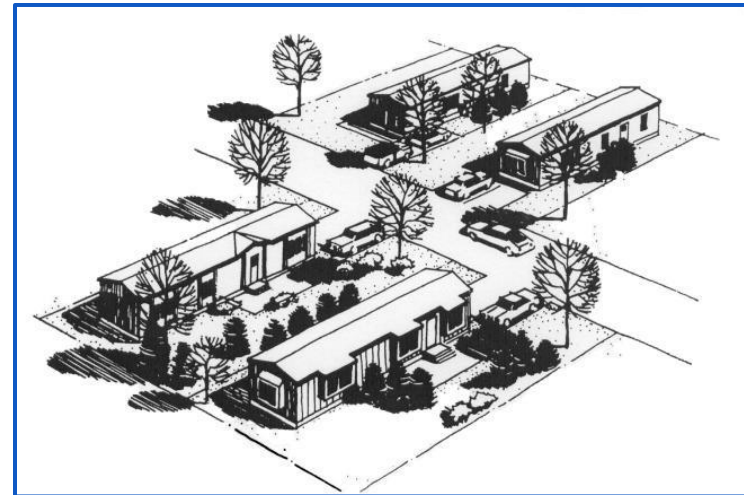
Illustration of a mobile home park that incorporates landscaping a street grid pattern to create a neighborhood feel. Image courtesy *Time-Saving Standards for Housing and Residential Development*.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

DESCRIPTION

Traditional neighborhoods consist of residential areas located in close proximity to downtown and are largely composed of single-family, pre-1960s homes. Houses are situated on smaller lots within a grid street pattern. These neighborhoods are found primarily north and south of the downtown core and greater downtown character areas.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Residential
- Secondary: Civic-institutional, Parks and Recreation, Accessory dwelling units

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- R1 (Single-family Residential, low density)
- R2 (Single-family Residential, medium density)
- R3 (Two-family Residential District)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties
- Maintain and enhance housing through code enforcement
- Inventory opportunities for infill of architecturally compatible housing
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Improve utility service and infrastructure

A traditional neighborhood without sufficient pedestrian amenities.
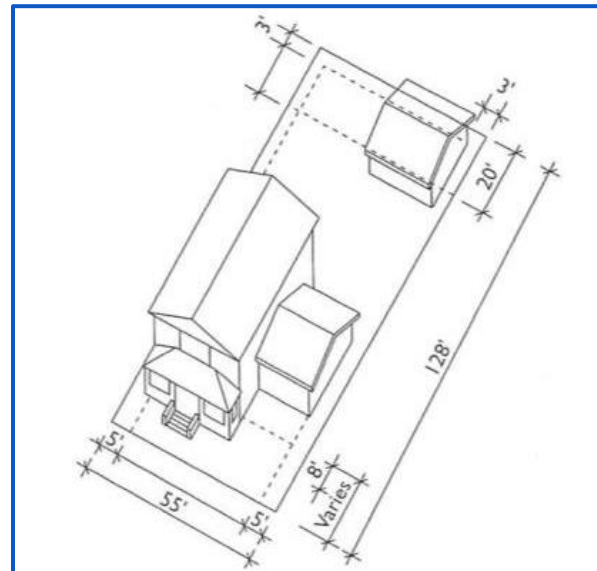
Narrow lots, shallow front building setbacks, front porches, and garages located to the rear are desirable characteristics in traditional neighborhoods. Image courtesy *Planning and Urban Design Standards*.

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

DESCRIPTION

The suburban neighborhood character area consists of detached, single-family homes on individual lots. Homes are located along curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs with front setbacks typically 25-35 feet or more. Lots range from approximately .5 to 1 acre in size. Suburban neighborhoods are located outside of walking distance to downtown.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Detached, single-family dwellings
- Secondary: civic-institutional, parks and recreation, accessory dwelling units

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- R1 (Single-family Residential, low density)
- R2 (Single-family Residential, medium density)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Inventory opportunities for infill of architecturally compatible housing
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the neighborhood's character

An example of an upper-range home in a suburban neighborhood. There is a need for homes of higher value in the City.

A suburban neighborhood in Commerce with homes of similar architectural design.

RURAL PLACES

DESCRIPTION

This character area consists of single-family residential dwellings located in rural areas that are primarily composed of undeveloped and agricultural land. The dominate character and feel is of open spaces and agrarian landscapes. These areas are typically found at the edges of suburban neighborhoods and have very low density. Setbacks of 60-100 feet are typical. Sanitary sewer is not available in these areas.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Detached, single-family dwellings on individual lots (agricultural residential district and single-family estate residential)
- Secondary: Farms, forest, gardens, orchards, livestock, farm buildings

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- AR (Agricultural Residential District)
- R1E (Single-family Estate Residential)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Encourage compatible architectural styles that maintain and reflect the regional rural character

Rural residences are on narrower, unpaved roads adjacent to agricultural land.

Rural settlements along Woods Bridge Road are of similar size and pattern.

CONSERVATION – PARK

DESCRIPTION

This character area consists of undeveloped, active or passive recreation areas. The defining character is open and green space, generally located within residential neighborhoods. Recreational facilities consist of picnic tables, playground equipment, ball fields, and passive recreation spaces.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Parks, playgrounds, passive recreation
- Secondary: none

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- Not applicable (permitted use in virtually all zoning districts)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Conservation easement guidelines needed
- Pursue purchase of development rights and transfer of development rights program
- Inventory existing parks and equipment to determine need for updates

A playground and gazebo in Commerce's downtown Spencer Park.

Willoughby Park is primarily a passive park with picnicking space.

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION

DESCRIPTION

Large tracts of farmland and forests predominate this character area which is rural and agrarian in nature. Ten acres is the minimum lot size to qualify for the current use assessment program, though large farms are considered 35 acres are more. These areas are located beyond the suburban fringe outside of urban service areas.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Farms and farm-related uses and buildings; farm dwellings (single-family)
- Secondary: None

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- A-F (Agricultural Farm District)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Conservation easement guidelines needed
- Encourage the preservation of open space and farm land to maintain character

Agricultural land in Commerce that is in the current use assessment (conservation valuation) program of Jackson County.

Pasture land in the conservation valuation program located in Commerce north of I-85.

INSTITUTIONAL CAMPUS

DESCRIPTION

The Institutional Campus character area refers to existing and future sites that consist of free-standing, single-function uses. These include public and private schools, future hospital sites (note the former Northridge Medical Center is located within Neighborhood Retail Service character area), large religious institutions, utility offices, major government campuses, and institutionalized residential living facilities.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Public and private schools, hospitals, large churches and other religious institutions, utility offices, government installations, institutionalized residential living facilities
- Secondary: None specified, may be flexible through special use process, may be mixed-uses integrated

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- Not applicable (generally permitted in all zoning districts)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Traffic impact study may be required for new or expanded institutional campuses
- Coordinate with school board for infrastructure
- Connect institutional campuses to surrounding neighborhoods with sidewalks to improve walkability

This historic church campus is located off of U.S. Highway 441 Business and part of the institutional campus character area.

The Commerce Middle School campus is an example of an institutional campus.

INDUSTRIAL WORKPLACE

DESCRIPTION

The industrial workplace character area consists of manufacturing, industrial, storage, and warehousing sites. These are typically truck-oriented storage and distribution centers and business parks located along major roads and thoroughfares. The industrial workplace areas provide employment that capitalize on accessibility to major roads and highways for movements of freight and goods.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: Manufacturing, industrial, storage, and warehousing (usually single function)
- Secondary: Selected business, restaurants, and offices

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- M-1 (Light Industrial District)
- M-2 (Heavy Manufacturing)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Consider developing industrial and business park covenants
- Capitalize on new industry to attract related support businesses
- Continue infrastructure and utility improvements
- Work with partners to fill developable spaces
- Continue annexation
- Strengthen development standards and requirements

SK Battery North America has already had a tremendous impact on the City's industrial workplace centers, and that impact will continue and expand to other character areas

GE's distribution site along Maysville Road/Highway 98 serves as an anchor for the industrial workplace character area

SPECIAL USE AREA

DESCRIPTION

This character area refers to single-function special land use areas, for example, a golf course or treatment plant. This character area is assigned to existing facilities only.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Primary: any special use as assigned and described
- Secondary: uses accessory or incidental to the principal uses

APPROPRIATE ZONING

- Not applicable (handled through special use permit process)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Specific-use regulations may be needed

Commerce's treatment plant is an example of a special, single-use character area.

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TARGET AREA

DOWNTOWN TARGET AREA

The Blueprint Strategy, developed for the City of Commerce in 2014-2015 by the NEGRC, focuses on a plan for downtown Commerce. While this plan is 5 years old, the objectives of the plan still have not been completed. The concepts identified in the Blueprint Strategy were also on the minds of the stakeholders and the survey respondents. Thus, the Downtown Target Area is still a relevant and necessary focus of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The following items were identified in the Blueprint Strategy and are still relevant in this update. The Strategy offers a plan for downtown Commerce that builds upon its existing assets, meets the needs of the community, and fosters a vibrant economic town center.

A map of the area is shown on the following page.

The existing land use found within this boundary consists primarily of commercial and public institutional, with some residential, park space, and industrial land use. The chart to the right shows the acreage and percentage of existing land use types found in downtown Commerce. The map on the following page shows the boundary of the downtown Target Area within which the Blueprint Strategy was planned.

DOWNTOWN EXISTING LAND USE SUMMARY

Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Agricultural/Forestry	0.0	0.0%
Total Residential	26.8	15.2%
Single Family	25.9	14.7%
Multi Family	0.9	0.5%
Mobile Home	0.0	0.0%
Commercial	55.2	31.2%
Industrial	23.1	13.1%
Public/Institutional	27.4	15.5%
Parks, Recreation, Conservation	0.6	0.3%
Transportation/Utilities	34.8	19.7%
Vacant/Undeveloped	8.8	5.0%
Total	**176.7**	

Source: Jackson County GIS

Commerce, GA
DDA & Central Business
District Boundaries

Mapscale
1:2,670

Legend

DDA Boundary
Central Business District
Accessory
Agricultural
Commercial
Industrial
Public Inst
Residential
TCU
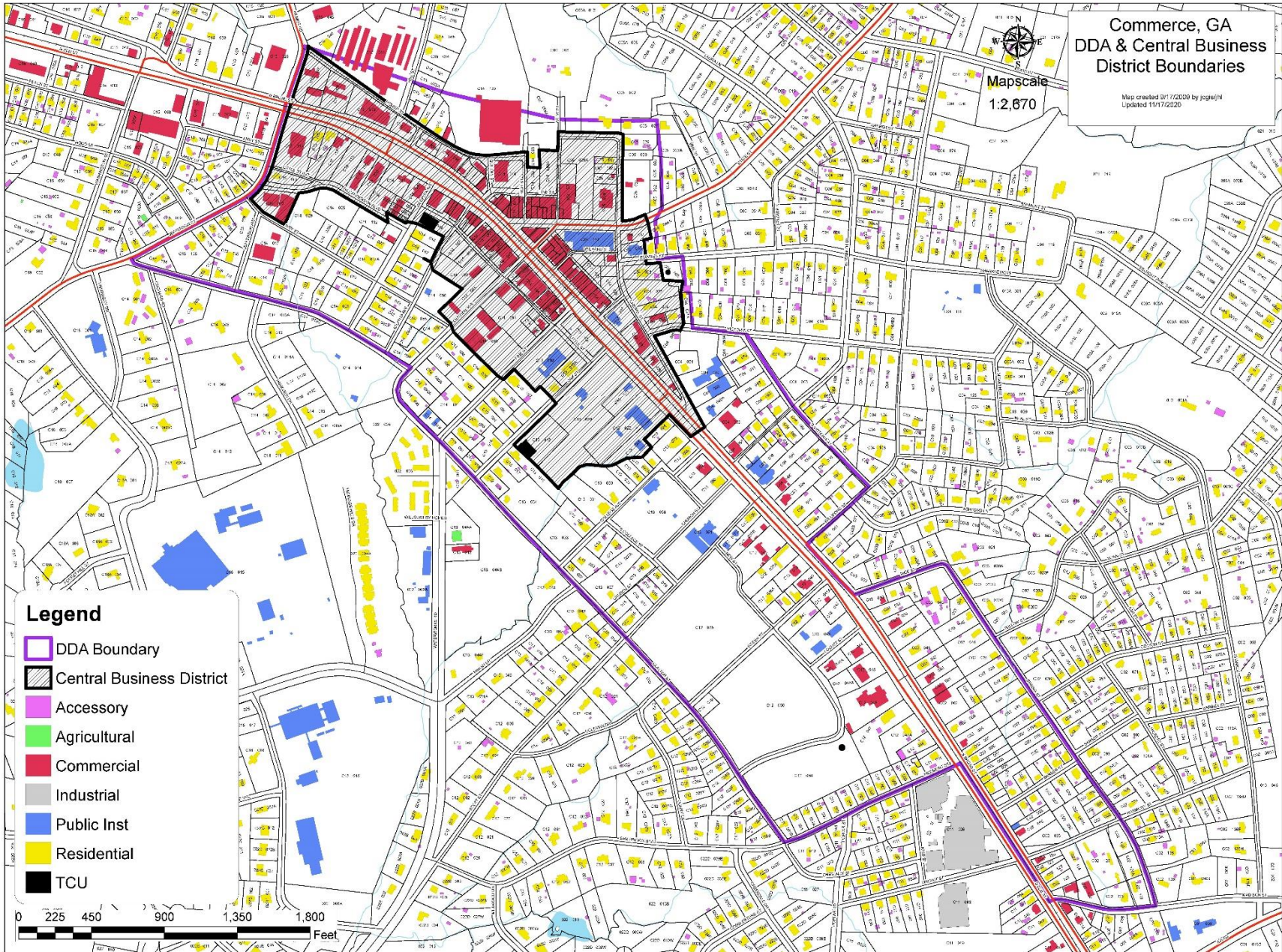
As a result of the Blueprint Strategy in 2015, four main goals were developed that apply to the downtown Target Area. These are listed below, along with corresponding objectives for each goal. For more detailed information, including action steps to work towards accomplishing each objective, the Blueprint Strategy document may be referenced.

GOAL 1: ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFILL, REDEVELOPMENT, AND REVITALIZATION IN DOWNTOWN COMMERCE

Objective 1. Address problems that affect Downtown's appeal (sewer smell, aesthetics, etc.) with short-term solutions until long-term improvements can be made.

Objective 2. Address issues of blight in Downtown through improved code enforcement on both commercial and residential structures.

Objective 3. Identify and prioritize suitable properties for revitalization efforts, such as infill or redevelopment.

Objective 4. Redevelop the Pole Barn site.

Objective 5. Explore potential for land bank properties in downtown.

Objective 6. Redevelopment of Oxford building.

GOAL 2: PROMOTE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN COMMERCE

Objective 1. Continue to attract new business, retail, and restaurants to downtown.

Objective 2. Document and preserve the historic nature of downtown.

Objective 3. Encourage visitation of and tourism in downtown.

Objective 4. Complete a comprehensive branding initiative for downtown.

Businesses in downtown Commerce

GOAL 3: ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN DOWNTOWN COMMERCE

<u>Objective 1.</u> Implement Commerce fiber project and provide free downtown wireless capabilities.

<u>Objective 2.</u> Address aging water and sewer infrastructure.

<u>Objective 3.</u> Identify needs and implement actions to improve parking and flow of truck and pedestrian traffic in   downtown.

Retaining wall repair on Broad St.

GOAL 4: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOWNTOWN LIVING

<u>Objective 1.</u> Determine housing needs and demands in downtown.

<u>Objective 2.</u> Address parking issue for downtown residents.

<u>Objective 3.</u> Ensure consistency in design for the development of housing in downtown.

Since the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update, certain objectives have progressed into completion. For example, the landbank is in the process of being created and will be created and funded by the end of 2021. Parking needs have been addressed through the construction of the Cherry Street parking lot, and further parking strategies will be implemented with the new streetscape plan. The Oxford Building is currently being redeveloped by a private developer into housing and a brewery. The pole barn site has been demolished and the lot is used for city events. The City has strengthened their code enforcement and blight reduction strategies, allowing for visual and safety improvements downtown.

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Broadband Services

BROADBAND SERVICES

The Broadband Services element of the comprehensive plan was adopted in 2018 in the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act, stating that "The governing bodies of municipalities and counties shall provide in any comprehensive plan for thepromotion of the deployment of broadband services by broadband services providers" (O.C.G.A. 36-70-6). Local comprehensive planning must include "the promotion of the deployment of reasonable and cost-effective access to broadband services by broadband services providers"[2] as a minimum element. Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for local planning were revised (effective October 1, 2018) to incorporate this new element. Under this new rule, "an action plan for the promotion of the deployment of broadband services by broadbandservice providers into unserved areas within its jurisdiction. The action plan must describe steps for the promotion of reasonable and cost-effective access to broadband to parts ofthe local government's jurisdiction designated by the Department as unserved areas."

The City of Commerce offers fiber internet service for commercial and industrial clients as a utility, with an ever-growing system. While the City acts as a provider for commercial and industrial clients, residents are served by private companies, mainly Windstream, with little competition.

Portions of the City are outside of the served by Jackson EMC. The Broadband Service by Electric Membership Corporations Electric Membership Corporations(EMCs) are now authorized by Georgia state law to furnish broadband services on anondiscriminatory basis, plus EMCs may form, fund, support, and operate a broadbandaffiliate, directly or indirectly. (O.C.G.A. 46-3-200; Senate Bill 2 (2019)) EMCs, and EMCs that have a broadband affiliate that provides retail broadband

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[2] O.C.G.A. 50-8-7.1

services, shall have a duty to provide access to the poles, ducts, conduits, and easements of suchelectric membership corporation to all communications service providers on rates, terms, and conditions that are just, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory. (O.C.G.A. 46-3-200.2; Senate Bill 2 (2019)) Electric easement owners can install, maintain, lease and operate broadband serviceswithin electric easements "so long as no additional poles or other ground based structuresare installed..." (O.C.G.A. 46-3-205; Senate Bill 2 (2019)). Telephone cooperatives are nowauthorized by Georgia state law to furnish broadband services directly or indirectly througha contractual arrangement or through a broadband affiliate. (O.C.G.A. 46-5-61 and 46-5-63; Senate Bill 17 (2019)

DEPLOYMENT OF BROADBAND RIGHT OF WAYS

The 2019 Georgia General Assembly passed and the governor signed Senate Bill 66, the *Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act* (O.C.G.A. Chapter 36-66C), to streamline the deployment of wireless broadband in the public rights of way.

Definitions:

To provide clarity about the terminology used in this chapter for elected officials and the general public, definitions from state laws are provided here for better understanding of the technology and legal requirements:

Broadband affiliate: Any person, which directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control of one or more electric membership corporations and which is used to provide broadband services. (O.C.G.A. 46-3-171; SB 2 (2019))

Broadband facilities: Any facilities and equipment utilized to provide or support broadband services. (O.C.G.A. 46-3-171; SB 2 (2019))

Broadband network project: Any deployment of broadband services. (O.C.G.A. 50-39-1)

Broadband services: A wired or wireless terrestrial service that consists of the capability to transmit at a rate of not less than 25 megabits per second in the downstream direction and at least 3 megabits per second in the upstream direction to end users and in combination with such service provides: (A) Access to the Internet; or; (B) Computer processing, information storage, or protocol conversion. (O.C.G.A.50-39-1)

Broadband services provider: Any provider of broadband services or a public utility or any other person or entity that builds or owns a broadband network project. (O.C.G.A. 50-39-1)

Communications service provider: A provider of cable service as defined in 47U.S.C. Section 522(6), telecommunications service as defined in 47 U.S.C. Section153(53), or information service as defined in 47 U.S.C. Section 153(24), as each such term existed on January 1, 2019. (O.C.G.A. 46-3-171; SB 2 (2019))

Electric easement: A right of way or an easement, whether acquired by eminent domain, prescription, or conveyance, that is used or may be used for transmitting, distributing, or providing electrical energy and services by utilizing aboveground or underground wires, cables, lines, or similar facilities. (O.C.G.A. 46-3-171; SB 2 (2019)

Retail broadband services: Any broadband services other than those provided for:(A) The internal use of an electric membership corporation; (B) The internal use of another electric membership corporation; (C) Resale by another electric membership corporation or other communications service providers; or (D) Use as a component part of

communications services that other communications service providers offer to their customers. (O.C.G.A. 46-3-171; SB 2(2019))

Served area: A census block that is not designated by the Department of Community Affairs as an unserved area.

Unserved area: A census block in which broadband services are not available to 20percent or more of the locations as determined by the Department of Community Affairs pursuant to Article 2 of chapter 3

BROADBAND SERVICES ACTION PLAN

Access to broadband services in today's society is essential to everyday life. Access to broadband services is an essential service as fundamental as electricity, gas, water, sewer, or phone service. There is a growing need to provide the much-needed infrastructure to the homes and businesses currently without access to broadband services due to their location in unserved areas. Ensuring broadband services deployment will have a positive impact on education, health care, public safety, business and industry, government services, and leisure activities. Promoting an equitable deployment of broadband services is a public need, one of the basic functions of government, and a benefit to the entire community.

The State of Georgia allows for local governments to provide broadband services, and with the addition of electric membership corporations to the list of providers, service in the City of Commerce and surrounding area will experience greater access to service and service quality. The General Assembly also finds that utilizing existing electric easements to provide broadband services, without the placement of additional poles or other ground-based structures, does not change the physical use of the easement, interfere with or impair any vested rights of the owner or occupier of the real property subject to the electric

easement, or place any additional burden on the property interests of such owner or occupier.

The City of Commerce is dedicated to expanding our commercial and industrial broadband service, while also working with Jackson EMC, should they ever decide to expand into the City limits, and private companies to offer quality internet services. The City shall do so through a streamlined telecommunication permitting system, thorough easement documentation and maintenance, and building public-private partnerships. The areas indicated as unserved on the Georgia

Broadband Deployment Initiative (GBDI) map within the City limits are primarily undeveloped industrial land, which will have access to either city utility fiber or private broadband service. However, several areas on the map have recently been approved for residential developments. The City is dedicated to ensuring those residents receive quality internet service. Quality broadband service is essential to the successful rapid industrial, commercial, and residential growth currently underway in the City of Commerce. The City's ability to ensure high-speed service will preserve the longevity of our community.
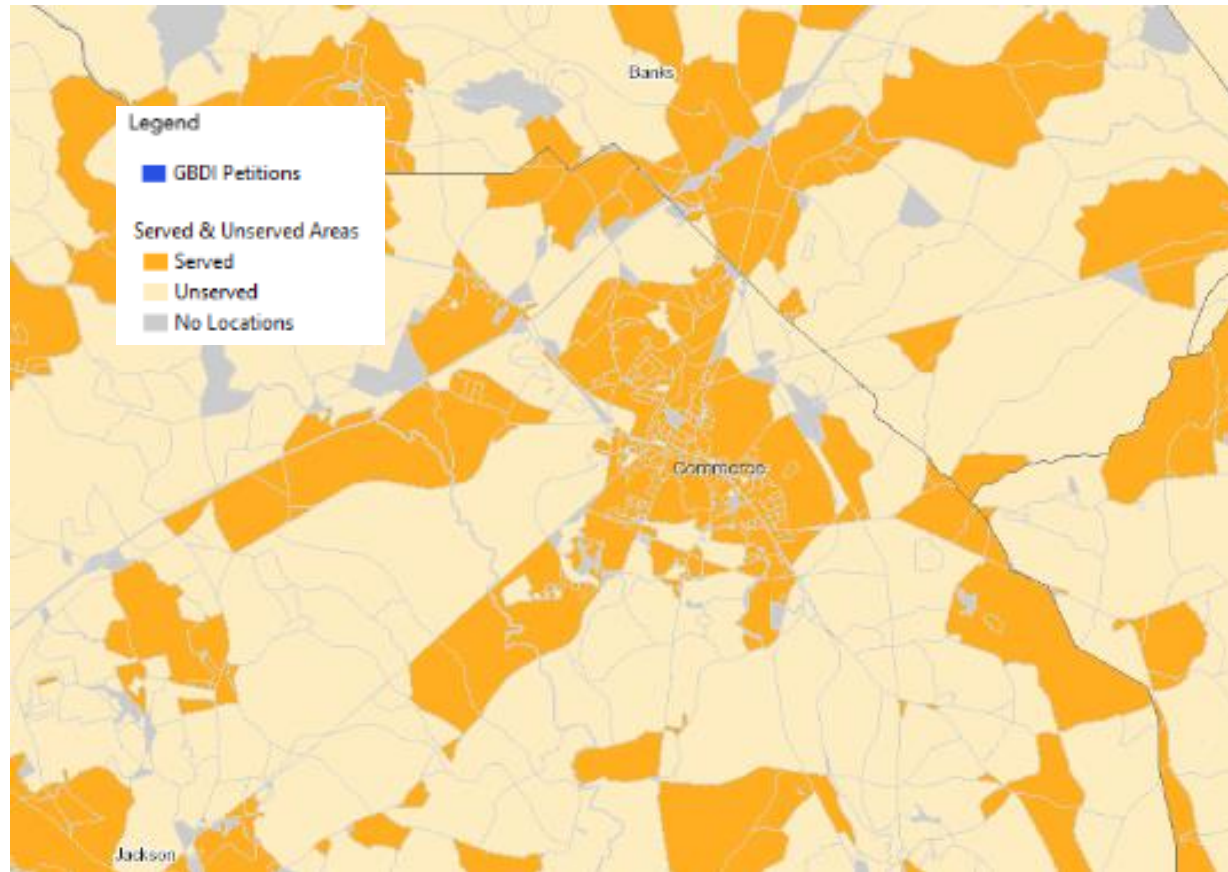
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COMMUNITY
WORK PROGRAM

The Community Work Program chapter includes a listing of specific actions that the City plans to take in order to achieve the vision developed by the plan. This chapter is divided into three tables:

1) ## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

   Identifies the City's accomplishments from the previous comprehensive plan's Short Term Work Program.

2) ## SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM:

   Provides a list of projects that can be accomplished over the next five years, including a project description, timeframe, cost, funding source, and responsible party.

3) ## PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM:

   Identifies public works and utilities work items the City would like to accomplish over the next five years. For each item, a project description, timeframe, cost, funding source, and responsible party is identified.

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	STATUS	NOTES
DOWNTOWN		
Identify, inventory, and prioritize suitable properties for revitalization efforts, such as infill or redevelopment	Complete	DDA maintains a list of properties ready for redevelopment
Conduct a marketing study to identify commercial opportunities	Complete	
Develop a recruitment packet designed to attract new business	Underway	City staff is developing an overall business recruitment and City processes packet; Updated date: 2021-2022
Organize additional events and festivals in downtown	Complete	BBQ Festival and Folk to Fine have been added to the festival calendar
Establish a marketing campaign to attract visitors to downtown	Underway	This item is underway and has been combined with re-branding efforts for the City as a whole; Updated date: 2021
Inventory existing and potential living opportunities in downtown	Underway	The list is updated as properties and building uses change
COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
Inventory sidewalks to determine gaps	Complete	
Conduct a Safe Routes to School program	Complete	
Install expanded and upgraded water and sewer infrastructure in downtown area	Postponed	Updated date: 2021-2025; updated cost $3 million
Conduct needs assessment for existing park infrastructure	Complete	
Update existing park infrastructure	Underway/Complete	New lights at Ridling Field, Ridgeway Park new playground, American Veterans Parks improvements- parks are in need of constant maintenance and upgrades
Install multi-purpose, rectangular sports fields	Postponed	Additional park space needs to be acquired
Revise parks and recreation plan at five-year intervals	Underway	
HOUSING		

Develop a GICH team, or similar, to focus on housing needs in Commerce	Complete	Graduated GICH in 2019, currently a part of the alumni program
Conduct a housing inventory to determine location of blight, vacancy, owner-occupied vs. rental properties, infill, etc.	Underway	Survey is 75% complete
Develop a plan to promote home ownership	Underway	Working with community partners to promote programs and opportunities
Encourage non-profit sector to establish community-based housing organization to rehabilitate substandard housing	Underway	Strong partnerships with Jackson County Habitat for Humanity and other community groups
LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT		
Develop a record-keeping system for code enforcement	Complete	Integrated into City-wide software
Inventory property condition and determine options for revitalization of residential and commercial properties	Underway	Commercial and residential inventories are due to be completed in 2021
Offer incentives to attract businesses that repurpose vacant or underutilized buildings	Complete	Designated Rural Zone community
Develop a plan for beautification of gateway corridors	Underway	This item is an ongoing task and will be moved to the Ongoing/Long Range Work Program schedule
Review overlay districts to ensure they support architectural and aesthetic standards	Complete	
Develop a strategy for annexation	Complete	
Revise and readopt zoning ordinance to implement comprehensive plan	Underway	Individual ordinances have been adopted from 2015-2020, the entire zoning ordinances have been rewritten and will be adopted in 2021
Revise and readopt subdivision and land development regulations to implement comprehensive plan	Underway	Component of the zoning ordinance rewrite. Will be adopted in 2021
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
Develop a branding initiative to include signage and marketing components	Underway	Updated date: 2022
Develop a strategic marketing plan to attract businesses, employers, and industry; including offering incentives to prospective developers and tenants	Underway	Updated date: 2021-2022

Inventory available office space	Underway	DDA maintains a list of properties available downtown, inventory for the rest of the City is due to be completed in 2021
Maintain an inventory of vacant industrial lands, vacant industrial buildings, and vacant commercial building spaces; market vacant sites and spaces to new users	Underway	DDA maintains a list of properties available downtown, inventory for the rest of the City is due to be completed in 2021
Reconsider and revise boundary of Downtown Development Authority (DDA)	Cancelled	Unnecessary
Prioritize and pursue redevelopment opportunities in the DDA boundary	Underway	DDA is constantly exploring redevelopment opportunities and programs
NATURAL RESOURCES		
Adopt revisions to soil erosion and flood plain management ordinances	Complete	
Strengthen wetlands protection as part of the zoning ordinance rewrite	Complete	
HISTORIC RESOURCES		
Conduct a detailed survey of historic resources (participate in countywide survey)	Postponed	Updated Date: 2022
Add eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places	Postponed	Will be done when needed/identified
Prepare and adopt local historic preservation ordinance establishing local historic districts	Cancelled	An overlay focused on maintaining integrity will be introduced in 2021
Investigate participation in and/or implementing historic preservation programs and becoming a CLG	Cancelled	No longer needed
PUBLIC WORKS		
Run water line from Water Works Rd to Sheep Pasture Rd. to make loop	Postponed	Updated date: 2024
Purchase new back hoe for department	Underway	Budgeted for 2021
Purchase new outfall line equipment for maintenance and clearing of vegetation	Complete	
Purchase 2 4-wheel drive vehicles to access outfall lines and for inclement weather	Underway	1 purchased
Implement valve location program to local all valves	Underway	Continuous process that is regarded as a long-term goal

Install two-way pump station or water tank at South end of Commerce	Complete	
Maysville Road water extension	Postponed	Updated date: 2021-2025
Allen Road sewer extension	Complete	
Clyde Short water replacement	Cancelled	No longer needed
South Broad St. water upgrade/relocation	Complete	
Emergency power Lift Stations	Ongoing	Updated date: 2021-2023
UTILITIES – GAS		
Replace regulator station on Roosevelt Blvd., kill gas main on Clayton St., and install 4" high pressure gas main on Clyde Short Rd.	Complete	4" high pressure gas main on Clyde Short Rd. moved to Ridgeway Rd.
Extend 4" high pressure line on Maysville Rd to Steve Reynolds Ind. Parkway	Complete	
Complete 6" gas main loop through Dr. Bouchard property and to Steve Reynolds	Cancelled	Lack of development
Replace 3" gas main on Homer Rd with 4" gas main	Postponed	Updated date: 2021-2022
Replace 2" gas main on Troy St.	Postponed	Updated date: 2021-2022
Replace 2" gas main on Brookwood Ave.	Postponed	Updated date: 2022-2023
Replace 2" gas main on Orchard Cir.	Postponed	Updated date: 2024
Replace gas main on Carson St.	Cancelled	No longer needed
Replace gas main on Pine Ave.	Postponed	Updated date: 2021-2025
Replace gas main on Harper St.	Cancelled	No longer needed
Main extension on Clayton St.	Complete	
Replace 2 rectifiers on Shankle Heights and Ridgeway Rd.	Complete	
Replace 3 trucks	Complete	2 trucks purchased
UTILITIES – ELECTRIC		
Purchase bucket truck	Complete	
Purchase fiber equipment (splicer, trailer, TDR)	Complete	
Hire fiber crew staff person	Underway	Updated date: 2021-2022
Fiber Optic Back Bone / Wireless Internet	Complete	
TRANSPORTATION		

Improve aesthetics and function of city and DDA public parking	Ongoing	The Cherry Street lot has been constructed and work is beginning on the Oxford Building parking lot
ADMINISTRATION		
Document Imaging System	Underway	Part of city software; digitization underway

LONG RANGE AND ONGOING WORK PLAN ITEMS

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	STATUS	NOTES
DOWNTOWN		
Address issues of blight in downtown through code enforcement of commercial and residential structures	Ongoing	Code Enforcement, Planning and Development, and DDA are actively working to issue violations, provide incentives, and increase inspections
COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
Work to maintain public safety level of service and increase ISO rating	Ongoing	Maintaining the ISO rating is a constant activity
NATURAL RESOURCES		
Monitor environmental conditions at "brownfield" (environmentally contaminated) sites, and encourage/apply for remediation grants	Ongoing	Brownfield sites will continually be monitored and updated as needed
Actively participate in regional habitat protection plan once initiated	Postponed	Waiting on regional habitat protection plan to be initiated
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT		
Residential Property Maintenance and Housing Code Enforcement	Ongoing	Code Enforcement and the Planning and Development Department have increased enforcement and inspections
Maintain standards for new home development	Complete	Adopted by City Council

Promote construction of homes with higher/lasting value	Ongoing	This is an active policy of City Council, the Planning Commission, and the Planning and Development Department
Develop guidelines for mixed-use master-planned developments	Underway	Prepared and will be adopted in 2021
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT		
Continue façade improvement program for downtown buildings	Ongoing	Program is funded and active
UTILITIES – WATER AND SEWER		
Upgrade all GIS to include all Water, Sewer, Electric, Gas lines, and Storm Drains	Underway	Updated date: 2022
Hwy 326/Dan Waters Rd water extension	Cancelled	No longer needed
Ridgeway/Hwy 98 water and sewer extension	Cancelled	No longer needed
On site CL2 generation and chemical feeders	Complete	Plans altered, resulting in a new liquid lime system instead of a CL2 generation and chemical feeders
Install a 1,000,000 Gallon elevated storage tank on south end of water system	Postponed	Cost increases and need have delayed this project
Automatic Meter Reading	Underway	Partially implemented at this time
UTILITIES – GAS		
Continue replacement of older gas mains and services	Ongoing	Maintenance of the system is necessary for continued operation
Identify and replace all PVC services	Complete	
Install CNG Station	Cancelled	No longer needed
UTILITIES – ELECTRIC AND FIBER		
Repair and replace Electric Lines	Ongoing	Maintenance of the system is necessary for continued operation
Continue to expand fiber	Ongoing	New commercial and industrial clients are added regularly, expanding the City system
PUBLIC WORKS		

Implement the regional comprehensive solid waste management plan short-term work program	Postponed	Updated date: 2021
Participate in efforts to begin a countywide stormwater planning program and utility	Ongoing	A stormwater utility will likely be needed before the next update
Seal 3 miles of road each year	Ongoing	Annual project, roads are either repaved or sealed
TRANSPORTATION		
Participate in countywide public transportation plan; expand rural public transit program	Complete	
Improve and extend existing sidewalk network	Ongoing	Nearly complete; updated date: 2021-2022
Widen roads and extend new roads per Table 9.2 (see Comp Plan, 2009)	Ongoing	
Establish regional bicycle loop route from Nicholson via SR 334 to the Commerce area then southbound via Waterworks Road, to SR 335 and returning eastbound back to Nicholson	Ongoing	
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION		
Annex unincorporated islands	Underway	Annexations continue at property owner's request
Renegotiate existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as recommended in this plan or as otherwise needed or required	Complete	

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMEFRAME	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
DOWNTOWN				
Develop a recruitment packet designed to attract new business	2021	Staff time	Various (private investment, RLF funds, etc.)	City
Inventory existing and potential living opportunities in downtown	2021	Staff time	City (staff time)	City
Develop a downtown streetscape plan	2023	$20,000	Various (General fund, grants)	City/ Consultant
Implement downtown streetscape plan	2023-2033	$3.5 million	Various (General fund, grants)	City
Establish farmer's market	2022	$10,000	Various (General fund, private investment, grants)	City/ DDA
Address issues of blight in downtown through code enforcement of commercial and residential structures	2021-2025	Staff time and legal fees	General fund, façade grants, private funds	DDA/Code Enforcement/Planning and Development
COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE				
Update existing park infrastructure	2021-2025	Unknown	General Fund/SPLOST	City
Install multi-purpose, rectangular sports fields	2021-2023	Unknown	General Fund/SPLOST	City
Revise parks and recreation plan at five-year intervals	2024	$10,000	General Fund	Parks and Recreation/ Consultant

Develop a large park complex	2025	$25 million	General Fund/ SPLOST, grants	City
Develop a biking/hiking trails plan	2021-2022	$5,000	General Fund	City, NEGRC
Install hiking/biking trails improvements, including signage, rest accoutrements, trail infrastructure, etc.	2022-2025	$15,000	General Fund, public/private partnerships, grants	City, NEGRC
HOUSING				
Continue to operate GICH team, or similar as an alumni community	2021-2025	$2,000	General Fund	City
Conduct a housing inventory to determine location of blight, vacancy, owner-occupied vs. rental properties, infill, etc.	2021	Staff time	General Fund	City
Develop a plan to promote home ownership	2021-2023	Staff time	General Fund	City
Encourage residential property maintenance and housing code compliance through code enforcement	2021-2025	Staff time	General Fund	Code Enforcement/ Planning and Development
LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT				
Inventory property condition and determine options for revitalization of residential and commercial properties	2021-2025	Staff time	General Fund	City
Develop a plan for beautification of gateway corridors	2021-2022	Unknown	Gateway Grant/General Fund	City
Revise and readopt zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development regulations	2021	$20,000	General Fund	Planning and Development

Establish a land bank	2021	$15,000	General Fund	Planning and Development
Create a community improvement incentive plan to encourage redevelopment and property improvements	2021-2022	Staff time	General Fund	Planning and Development
Monitor environmental conditions at "brownfield" (environmentally contaminated) sites, and encourage/apply for remediation grants	2021-2025	Staff time	Grants (EPD, GEFA)	Planning and Development
Promote construction of homes with higher/lasting value	2021-2025	Staff time	General Fund	Planning and Development
Develop guidelines for mixed-use master-planned developments	2021	$10,000	General Fund	Planning and Development/Consultant
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT				
Develop a strategic branding and marking initiative, including signage and marketing components, to attract visitors, businesses, and industry	2021-2022	Staff time	General Fund	City
Inventory available office space, industrial space, and developable land	2021	Staff time	General Fund	City/Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce
Continue façade improvement program for downtown buildings	2021-2025	Staff time	General fund, DDA budget, façade grant program	DDA/City
HISTORIC RESOURCES				
Conduct a detailed survey of historic resources (participate in countywide survey)	2021-2025	$10,000	General Fund, DNR grant	Planning and Development
Add eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places	As needed	$2,500 per nomination	General Fund	Planning and Development/NEGRC

PUBLIC SAFETY				
Work to maintain public safety level of service and increase ISO rating	2021-2025	Staff time	General Fund	Commerce Police/Commerce Fire/ City
ADMINISTRATION				
Document Imaging System	2016-2020	Staff time	General Fund	City
Construct a unified government building	2021-2025	$10 million	General Fund, SPLOST	City
Acquire control of downtown roads from the Georgia Department of Transportation	2021-2025	$200,000	General Fund, SPLOST	City

PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMEFRAME	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
PUBLIC WORKS				
Upgrade all GIS to include all water, sewer, electric, fiber, gas lines, and storm drains	2022	Staff time	General fund	Public works/City/County GIS
Run water line from Water Works Rd to Sheep Pasture Rd. to make loop	2024	$500,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Install expanded and upgraded water and sewer infrastructure in downtown area	2021-2025	$3 million	Enterprise/Grant Funds	Public Works
Purchase new back hoe for department	2021	$100,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works

Purchase 1 4-wheel drive vehicle to access outfall lines and for inclement weather	2022	$42,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Implement valve location program to local all valves	2021-2025	$50,000-$60,000	Enterprise/General Fund	Public Works
Seal and/or repave 2 miles of road each year	Annual Project	Unknown	General Fund	Public works
Upgrade Beck lift station	2023-2024	$2 million	Enterprise/General Fund, GEFA loans, grants (ARC, CDBG)	Water and Sewer
Upgrade Waterworks lift station	2025-2026	$1 million	Enterprise/General Fund, GEFA loans, grants (ARC, CDBG)	Water and Sewer
Upgrade Lathan lift station	2023	$750,000	Enterprise/General Fund, GEFA loans, grants (ARC, CDBG)	Water and Sewer
Identify and repair inflow and infiltration (staged process)	Annual Project	$1.5 million	Enterprise/General Fund	Water and Sewer
Maysville Road water extension	2021-2025	$300,000	Water and Sewer Fund/Developer Funded	Water and Sewer
Emergency power Lift Stations	2021-2023	$240,000	SPLOST	Water and Sewer
Identify and replace old clay lines	2020-2025	$1-3 million	Enterprise/General Fund	Water and Sewer
Identify future water sources	2022	Staff time	Enterprise/General Fund	Water and Sewer
Expand wastewater treatment capacity	2021-2025	$25 million	Enterprise/General Fund, GEFA loans, grants (ARC, CDBG)	Water and Sewer, City
Replace and improve downtown water and sewer infrastructure	2024-2025	$10 million	Enterprise/General Fund, GEFA loans, grants (ARC, CDBG, USDA)	Water and Sewer, City

Install a 1,000,000 Gallon elevated storage tank on south end of water system	2025	$2 million	SPLOST	Water and Sewer
UTILITIES – GAS				
Replace 3" gas main on Homer Rd with 4" gas main	2021-2022	$2,000-$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2" gas main on Troy St.	2021-2022	$2,000-$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2" gas main on Brookwood Ave.	2022-2023	$2,000-$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2" gas main on Orchard Cir.	2024	$2,000-$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Replace 2" gas main on Pine Ave.	2021-2025	$2,000-$3,000	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Install redundant 8" high pressure main along Highway 334	2025	$5 million	Gas sales/General Fund, GEFA loans, grants (ARC, USDA, EDA)	Gas Department
Expand 6" line near Bouchard Farms	2023	$500,000	Gas sales/General Fund, GEFA loans, developer funded	Gas Department
Extend high pressure mains along Highway 98 and Highway 15	2024	$1 million	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
Install gas line along B. Wilson Road	2025	$1 million	Gas sales/General Fund	Gas Department
UTILITIES – ELECTRIC AND FIBER				
Hire fiber crew staff person	2021	unknown	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department/ Fiber Department
Purchase new line truck	2021-2022	$250,000	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department
Install fiber along Steve Reynolds Boulevard	2022-2025	$400,000	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department/ Fiber Department

Repair and replace electric lines	Annual Project	$300,000	Enterprise Fund	Electric Department
TRANSPORTATION				
Improve aesthetics and function of city and DDA public parking	2016-2020	$100,000 annually	General Fund, grants (ARC, USDA, EDA)	DDA
Oxford parking lot project	2023	$600,000	General Fund, grants (ARC, USDA, EDA)	City
Establish regional bicycle loop route from Nicholson via SR 334 to the Commerce area then southbound via Waterworks Road, to SR 335 and returning eastbound back to Nicholson	Unknown	Unknown	County capital funds; state funds; federal funds	Intergovernmental Partnership

APPENDIX

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Demographic data is provided here to provide City staff with current and forecasted population trends. Sources for this data include U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI Business Analyst Online, and the American Community Survey.

TOTAL POPULATION
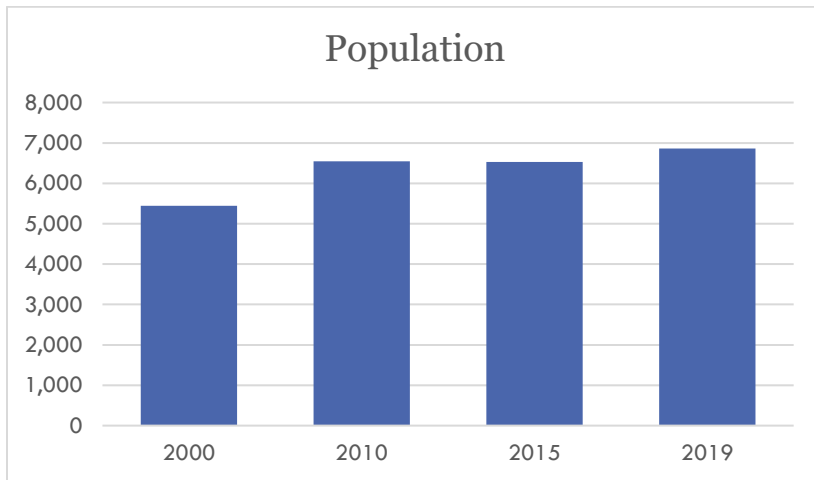
RACE 2015 AND 2020

MEDIAN AGE

Median Age by year:
- 2010: 36.7
- 2015: 37.9
- 2020: 38.8

HOUSING UNITS

	2010	2015	2020
Occupied (Owner)	1,515	1,401	1,366
Occupied (Rental)	910	1,003	1,042
Vacant	375	426	529
Total	2,800	2,830	2,937
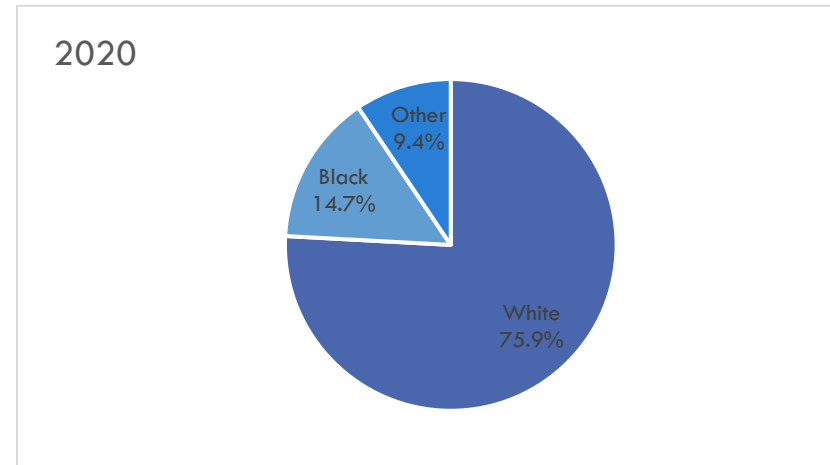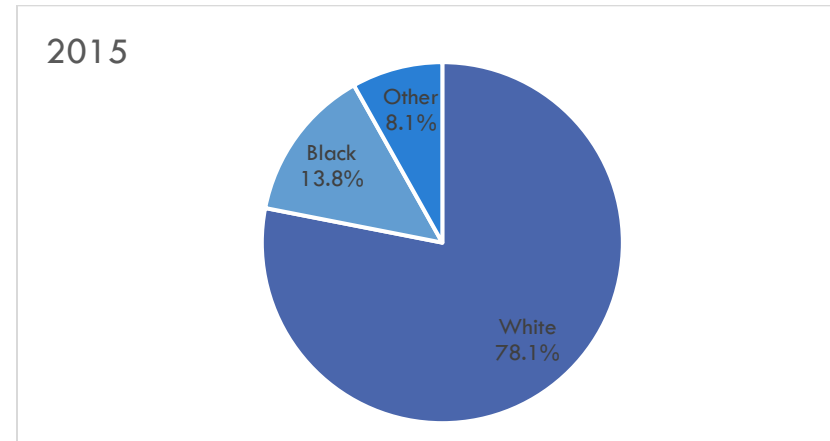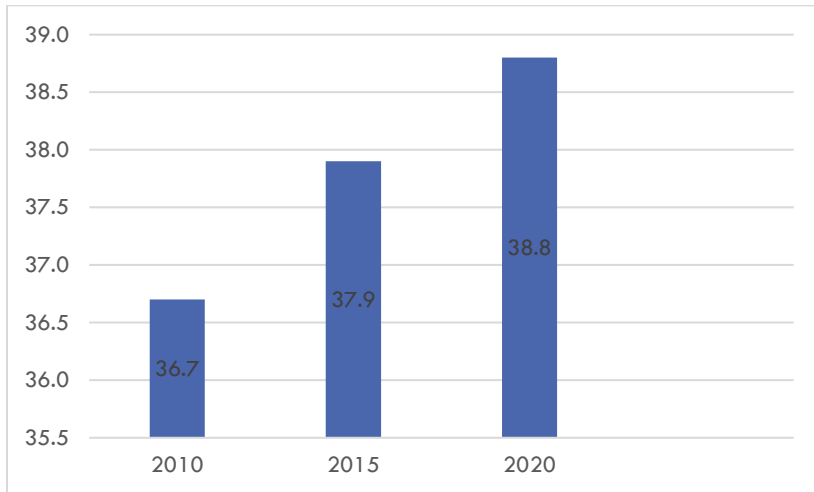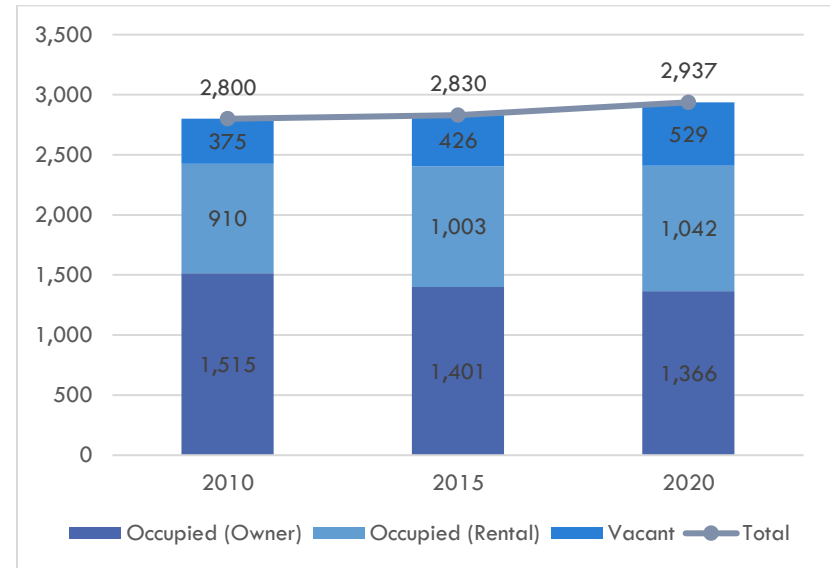
2019 HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINMENT (25+)

- Did Not Complete High School: 15%
- High School/GED: 39%
- Some College: 20%
- Assoicate's Degree: 8%
- Bachelor's Degree: 10%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 8%

HOUSING VALUES IN 2019

Value Range	Count
Less than $50,000	214
$50,000 to $99,999	412
$100,000 to $149,999	544
$150,000 to $199,999	172
$200,000 to $299,999	189
$300,000 to $499,999	100
$500,000 to $999,999	
$1,000,000 or more	
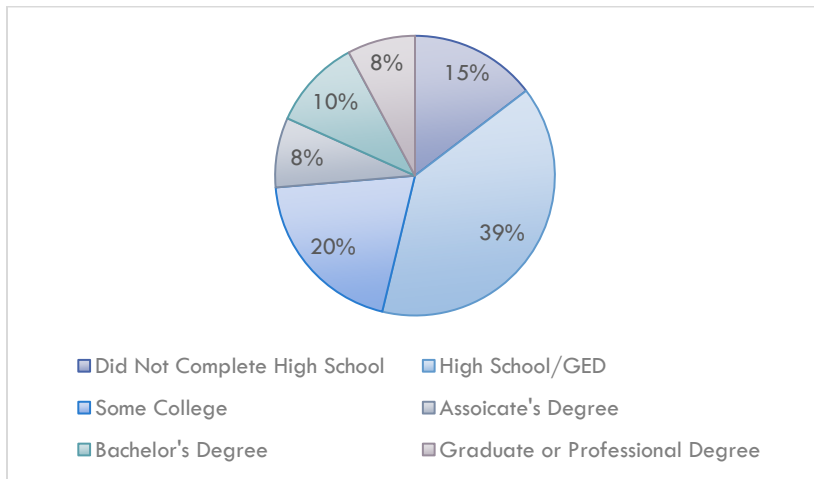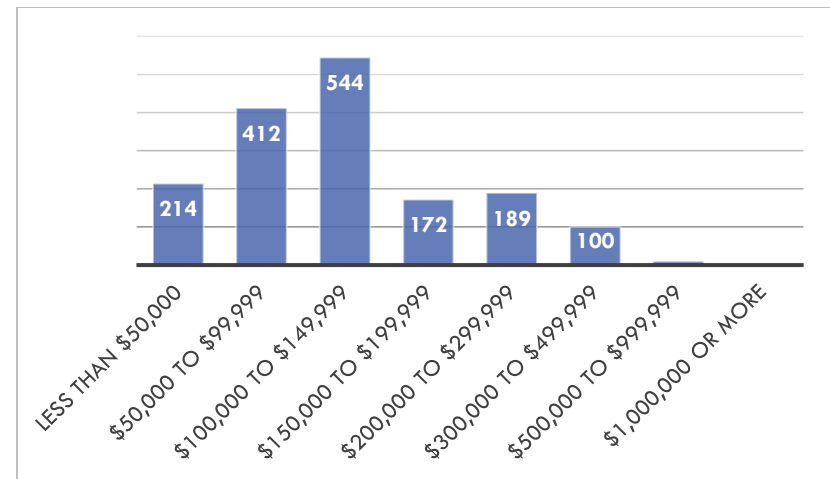
INCOME
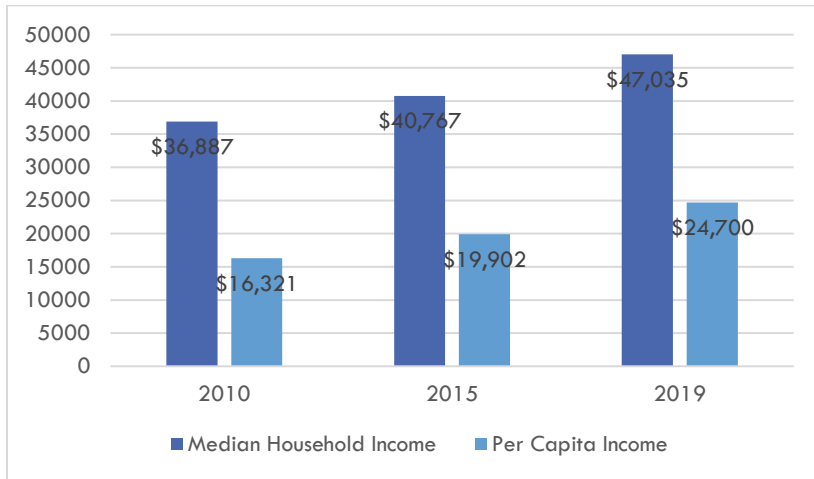
2015 EMPLOYMENT OF WORKFORCE (16+)
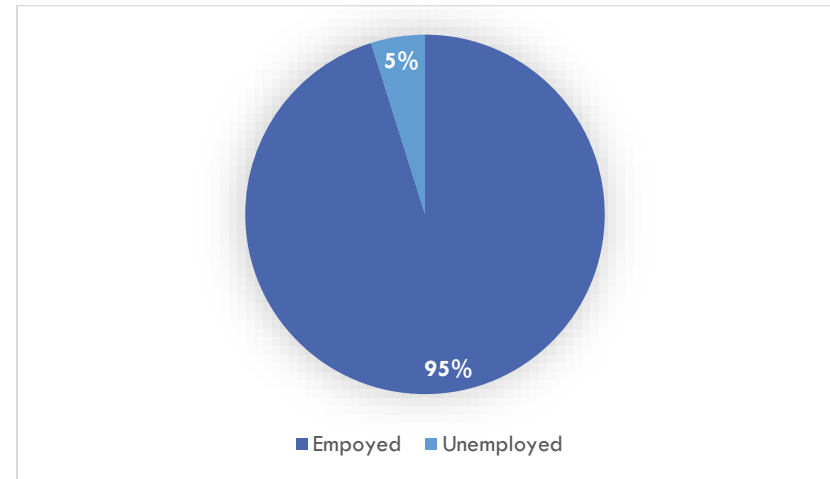
POPULATION BELOW POVERTY
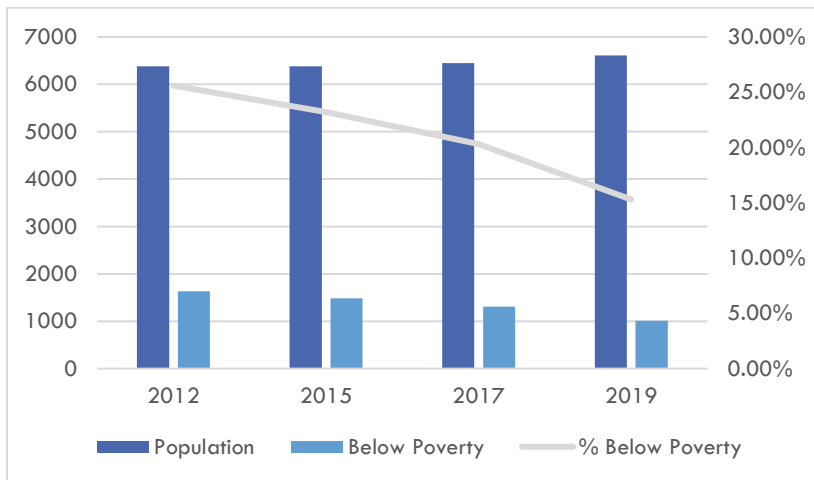
PUBLIC-INPUT SURVEY RESULTS

The following tables represent the results of the public input survey from Google forms. The results of each survey question were divided into ranges or categories depending on the question. This allowed for a snapshot of the results and what participating residents think of as the most important challenges and strengths for Commerce's future and the realities of the present.

While each question revealed answers that addressed aspects of the City of Commerce, upon reviewing the results, there were a few noticeable recurring themes. Many residents stated that many infrastructure improvements were needed, especially to roads and the water system. Residents were also concerned with cost of utilities and tax burden.

Another common theme was strengthening downtown through cosmetic improvements, filling empty storefronts, fostering small business, expanding business variety, and encouraging development in the downtown core.

Other recurring topics included, but are not limited to, the desire to not add any additional low income or rental housing, responsible growth, internet/cable service, and overall beautification and improved landscaping of the City including the entrance corridors, parks and recreation facilities, older historic buildings, and the downtown area.

What age group do you fall?
121 responses

- Under 18 years old
- 18-29 years old
- 30-39 years old
- 40-49 years old
- 50-59 years old
- 60-69 years old
- 70+ years old
- Prefer not to answer

13.2%
24.8%
30.6%
19%
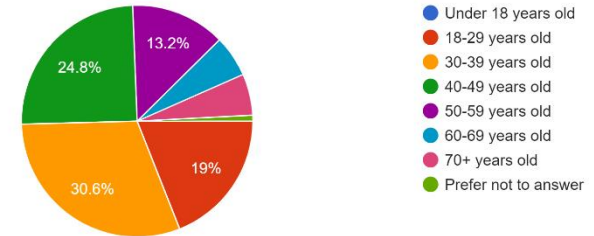
What race/ethnicity do you identify with?
121 responses

- White / Caucasian
- Black / African-American
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Two or More Races
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

85.1%
9.1%
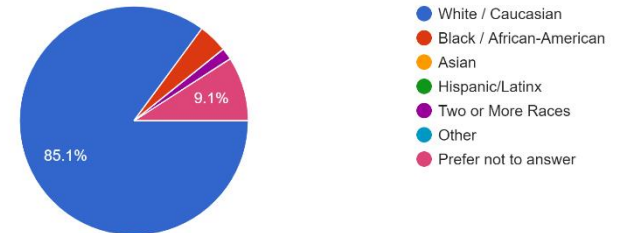
What is your household's income range?
121 responses

- Less than $25,000 per year
- $25,000 to $39,999 per year
- $40,000 to $49,999 per year
- $50,000 to $74,999 per year
- $75,000 to $99,999 per year
- Over $100,000 per year
- Prefer not to answer

24%
23.1%
25.6%
9.9%
8.3%
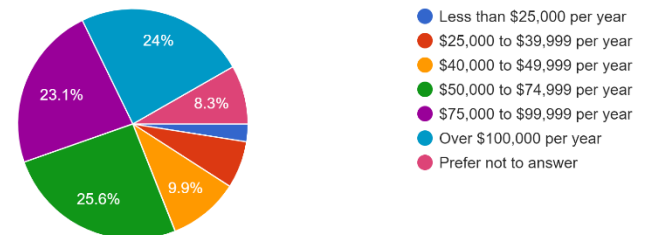
What is your highest level of education?
120 responses
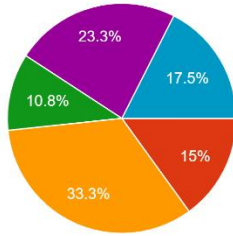
- Less than high school
- High school diploma, GED, or equivalent
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate or post-graduate degree

23.3%
17.5%
15%
33.3%
10.8%

Which of the statements below best describes you?
121 responses
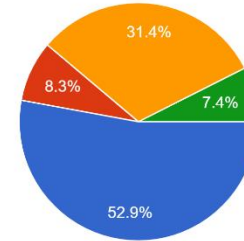
- I live in Commerce
- I work in Commerce
- I live and work in Commerce
- I live and work outside of Commerce, but I visit occasionally
- None of these apply to me

31.4%
8.3%
7.4%
52.9%

What is your household size?
121 responses
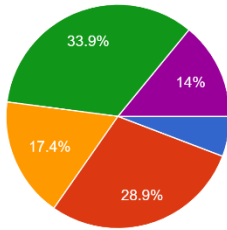
- 1 person
- 2 people
- 3 people
- 4 people
- 5+ people

33.9%
14%
17.4%
28.9%

Using the map below, which part of Commerce do you live, work, or typically visit?
121 responses
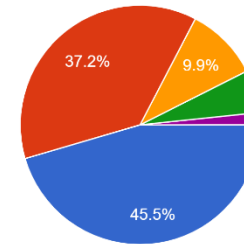
- (A) Commerce City Limits
- (B) Downtown Commerce
- (C) Unincorporated Jackson County
- (D) Banks Crossing/Banks County
- None of the above/I'm not sure

37.2%
9.9%
45.5%

Do you own or rent your residence?
121 responses

- I Own
- I Rent

12.4%
87.6%
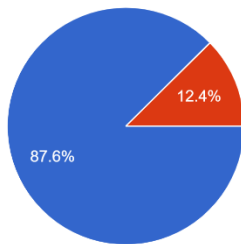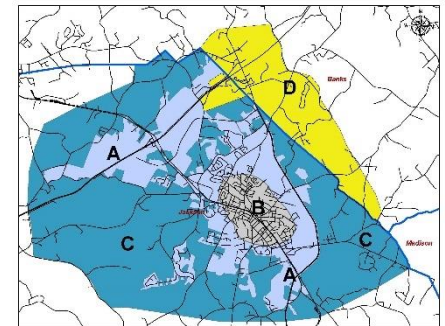
How long have you lived and/or worked in Commerce?
121 responses

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21+ years

28.9%
20.7%
16.5%
28.9%
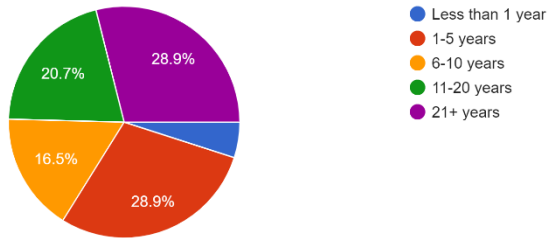
What one word would you use to describe Commerce today?

-Growing
-Old/Outdated
-Small/Quaint
-Rundown
-Slow/Dying
-Small
-Transitioning
-Charming
-Potential
-Peaceful/Calm
-Hometown

What one word best describes what you would like to see Commerce be tomorrow?
-Thriving
-Modern/Updated
-Clean
-Growth
-Stable
-Small
-Refreshed/Renewed
-Progressive
-Restored
-Same
-Better
-Alive

LAND USE

What types of land use would you like to see more, the same, or less?

Legend: ■ More ■ Same ■ Less

Categories (x-axis): Agriculture, Low-densi…, Higher-de…, Retail, Office, Industrial, Civic, Mixed use…, Parks and…, Greenspace
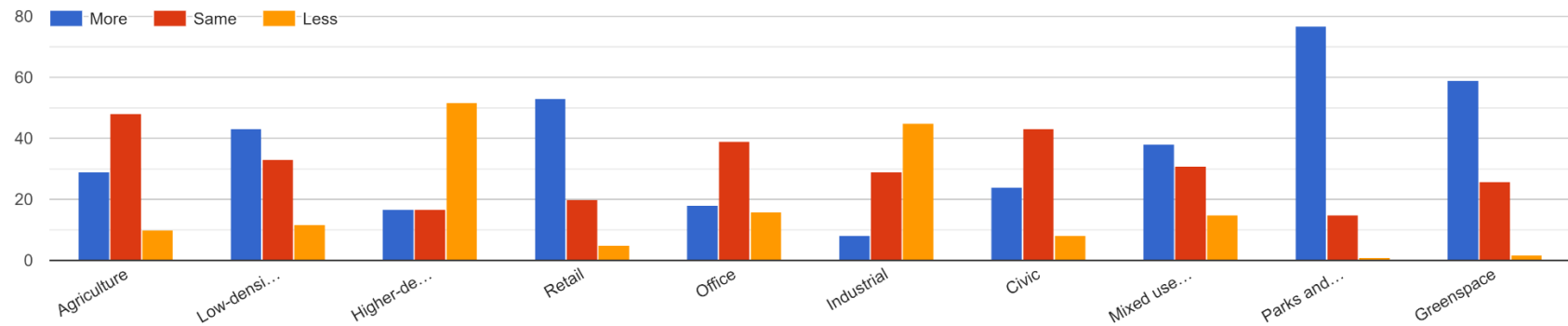
TRANSPORTATION

What is your primary mode of transportation during the week (Monday morning-Friday night)?

121 responses

97.5%

- ● Car/Truck
- ● Carpool
- ● Rideshare (Uber, Lyft, etc.)
- ● Motorcycle
- ● Bicycle
- ● Walk
- ● Golf Cart
- ● None of the above
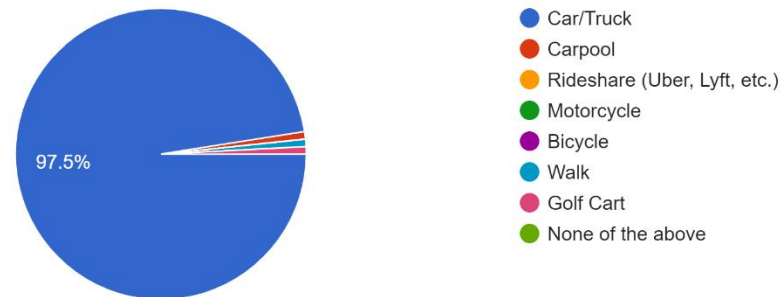
What is your primary mode of transportation during the weekend (Friday night-Sunday night)?
121 responses

- Car/Truck
- Carpool
- Rideshare (Uber, Lyft, etc.)
- Motorcycle
- Bicycle
- Walk
- Golf Cart
- None of the above

95%
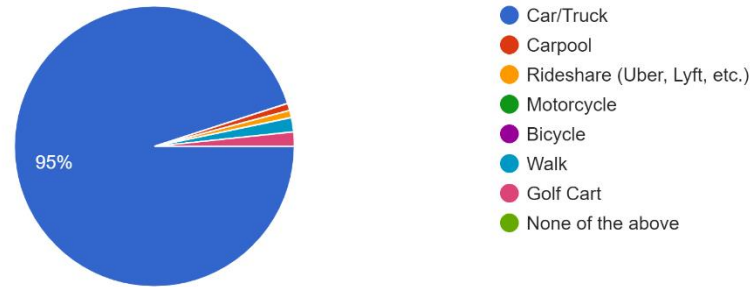
What do you believe is the greatest transportation issue in Commerce?

-Parking

-None/No issues

-Roads

-Train Tracks/Train Delays

-Morning School Traffic

-Commercial Trucks/18-Wheelers

-Road Quality

-Too Many Stop Signs

-No Public Transit/Ride-Share

-Poor Timing at Intersections

Please indicate the condition you believe Commerce's existing infrastructure and services to be: Excellent = Nearly perfect, no changes needed. Satisfactory = Good, needs some minor fixes. Fair ...for improvement. Poor = Terrible condition, needs to be fixed ASAP
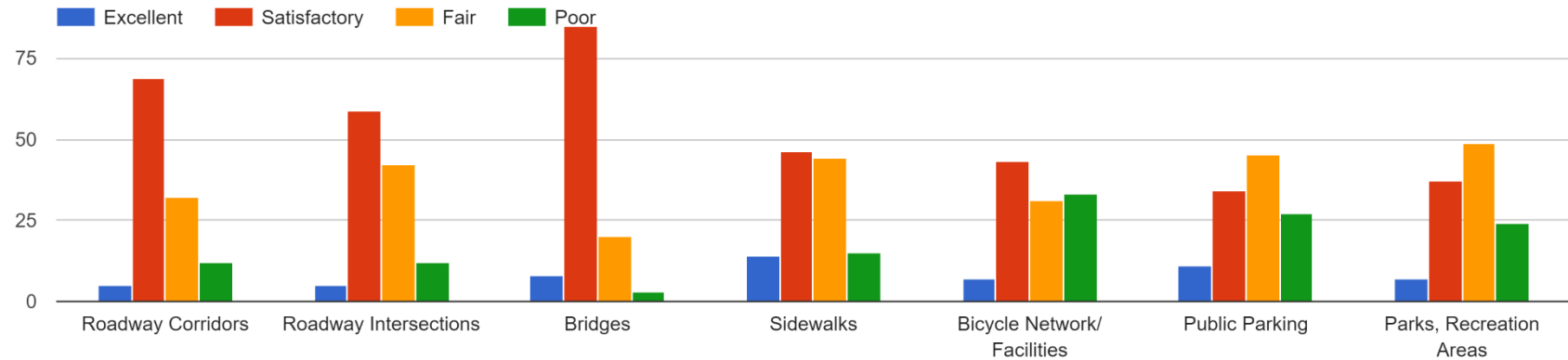
If you answered "poor" or "fair" to any of the above infrastructure or services, please give us more detail:

-Needs overall improvements

-Roads need massive improvements

-Bike stations are not present

-Low visibility at intersections

-Higher and best use of downtown areas

-Larger and better sidewalk network

HOUSING

How would you describe the quality of existing housing in Commerce? Using the scale below to indicate your answer. 1 being "very poor," 5 being "average," and 10 being "excellent."

116 responses
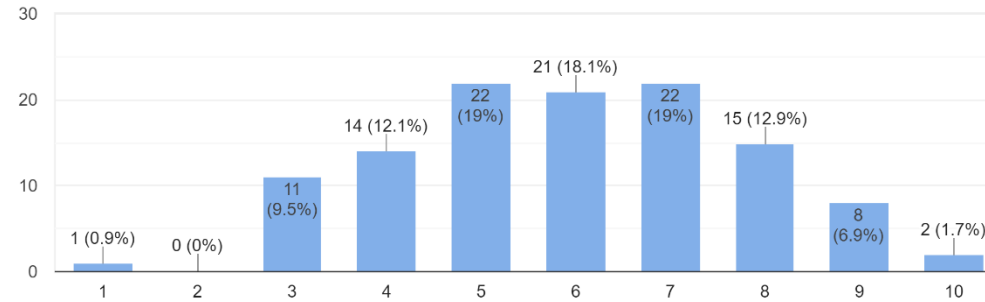
How affordable do you believe housing is in Commerce?

120 responses
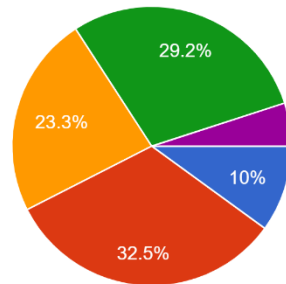
- Very affordable. My neighbors and I don't spend a lot of our income on hou…
- Somewhat affordable. My neighbors and I have low housing costs, but they cou…
- Neither affordable nor unaffordable. Housing costs are just right.
- Somewhat unaffordable. My neighbors and I would have to move if our housi…
- Very unaffordable. My neighbors and I spend most of our income on housing.

What types of housing would you like to see more, the same, or less of in Commerce?
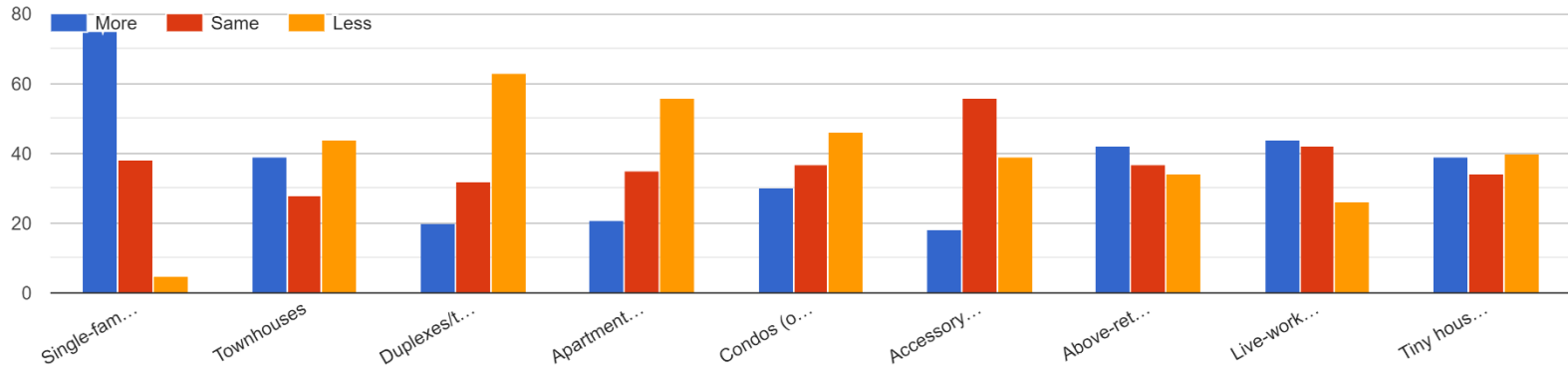
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What types of businesses would you like to see more, the same, or less of in in Commerce?
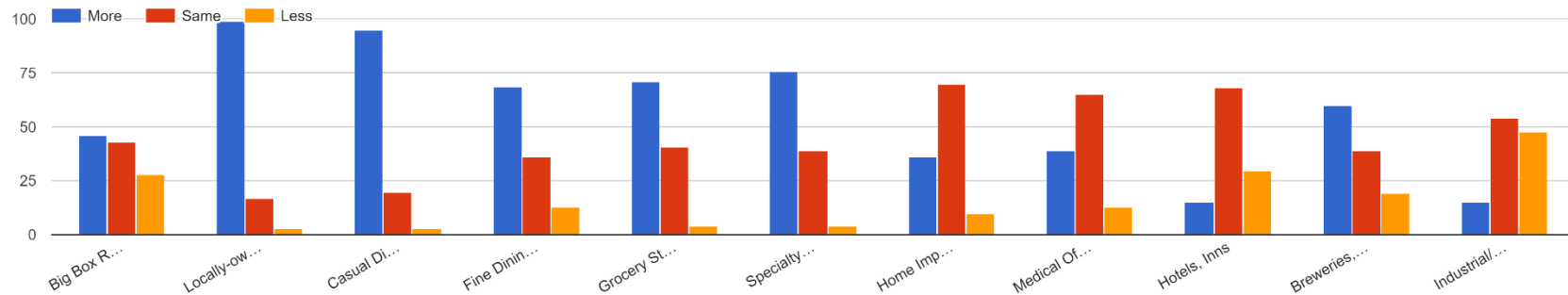
What type of entertainment would you like to see more, the same, or less of in Commerce?
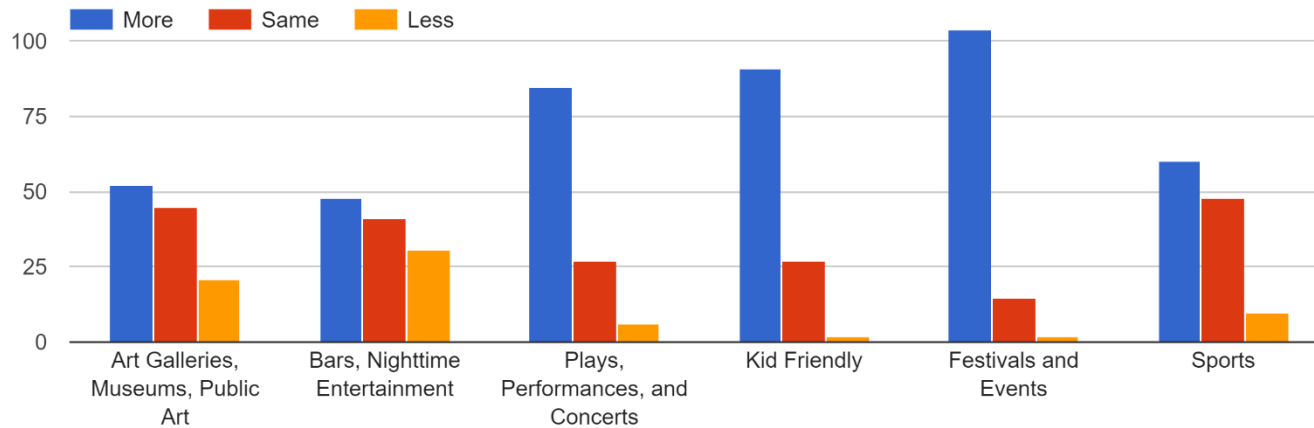
Is there anything else you would like us to know concerning economic development?

-High rent for commercial spaces is hurting small business
-Liquor sales
-Aesthetic improvement downtown
-Private investment follows public investment
-More restaurants and business for downtown
-Recruit another big box store
-Local activities

UTILITIES

Please indicate the quality of the utility services provided by the City of Commerce? 1 being "very poor, needs tremendous improvement," 5 being "average, needs minor fixed" 10 being "excellent, no changes needed" and 00 being "Do not receive this service."
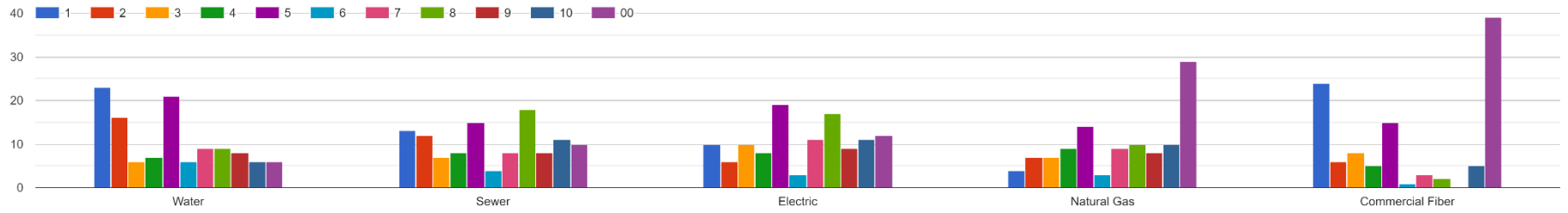
Should the City of Commerce expand, expand and improve, improve, or stay the same with our utility services.
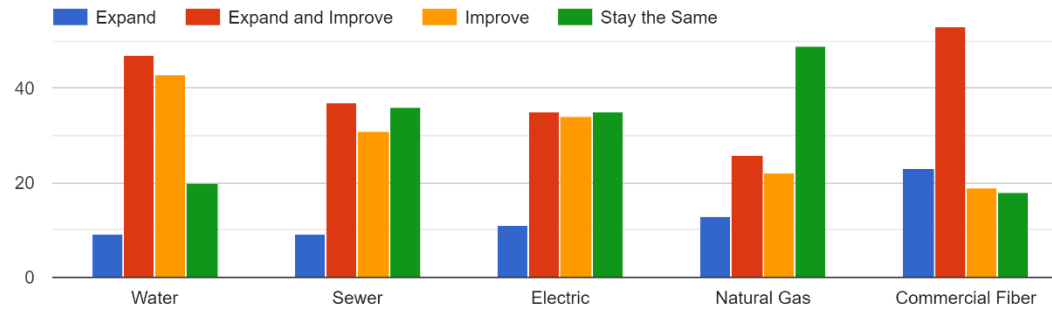
CITY SERVICES

How often do you utilize the available community services?

Legend: Often (blue), Sometimes (red), Never (orange)
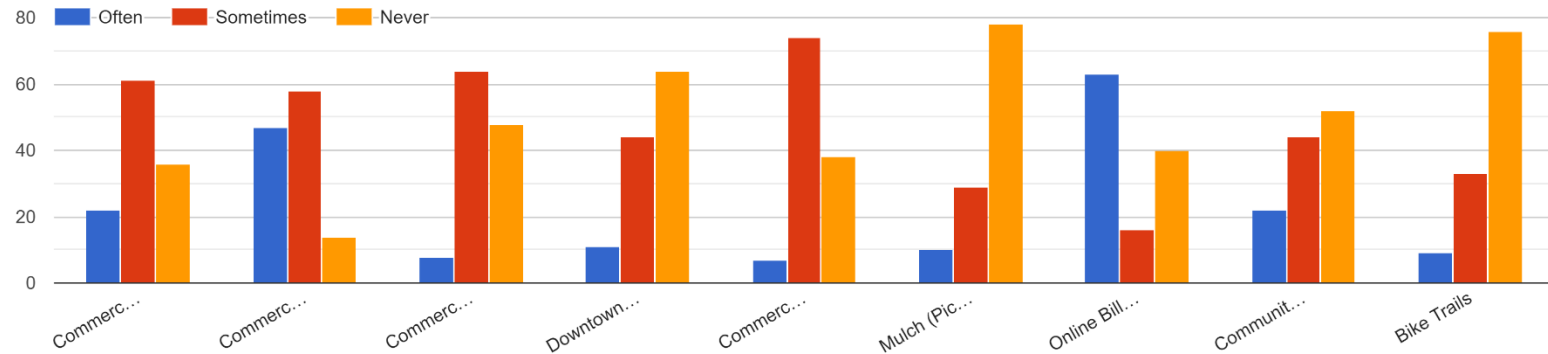
What additional utility or city services would you like to see?

-More internet options

-Free WiFi in public spaces

-Consistent pricing

-Improved water infrastructure

-Recycling

How would you rate the public safety services of the City of Commerce? 1 being "very poor," 5 being "average," 10 being "excellent."
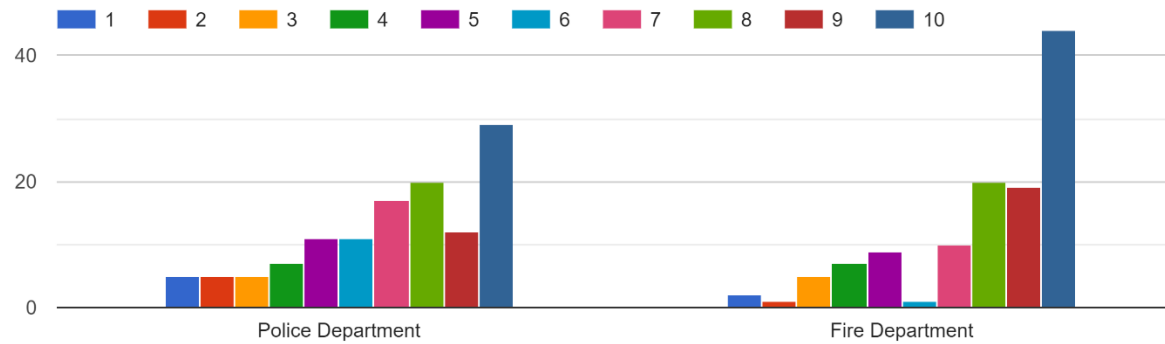
FINAL QUESTIONS

Please rate the following items in order of how important you think they are to Commerce's future over the next decade, with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important.
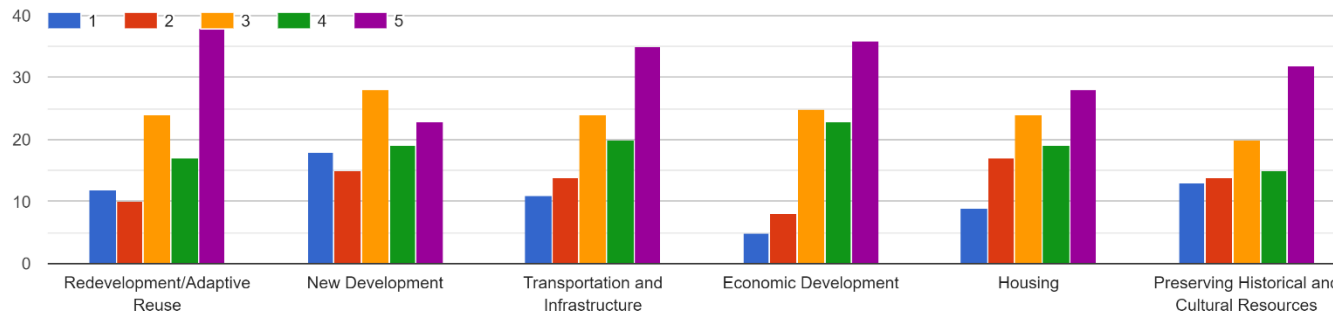
Is there anything else you would like the planning committee to know or consider during this process?

-Greenspaces

-Continue community improvements

-Do more to support small businesses

-Add elevator at the civic center

-Improvements needed at the recreation facilities

-Increase code enforcement

-Allow for green solutions like solar panels

-Improve community communication

-Expand social/night opportunities

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Stakeholder committee members met regularly in socially distance capacities to participate. All meetings also included attendees via WebEx
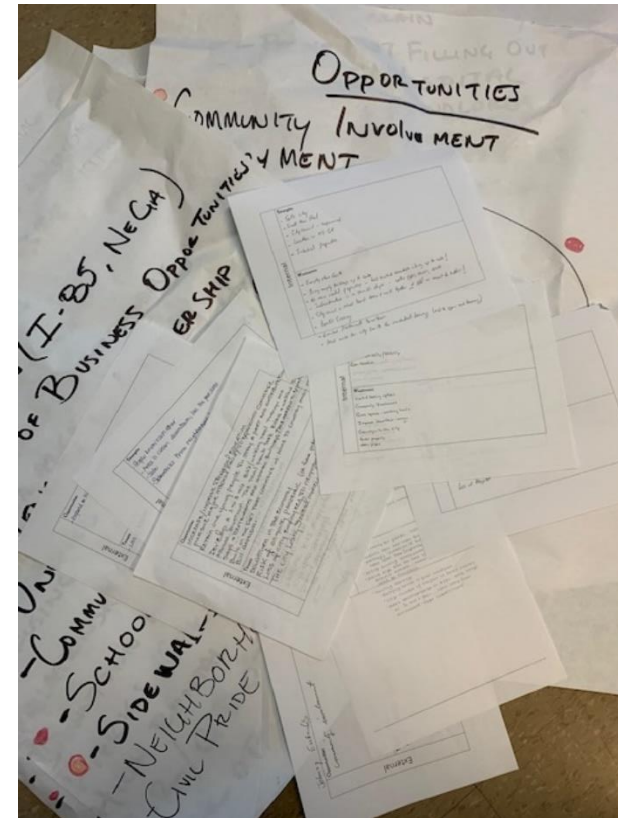
The stakeholder committee conducted individual SWOT analyses and then triaged the results as a group. City employees participated in the same exercise.
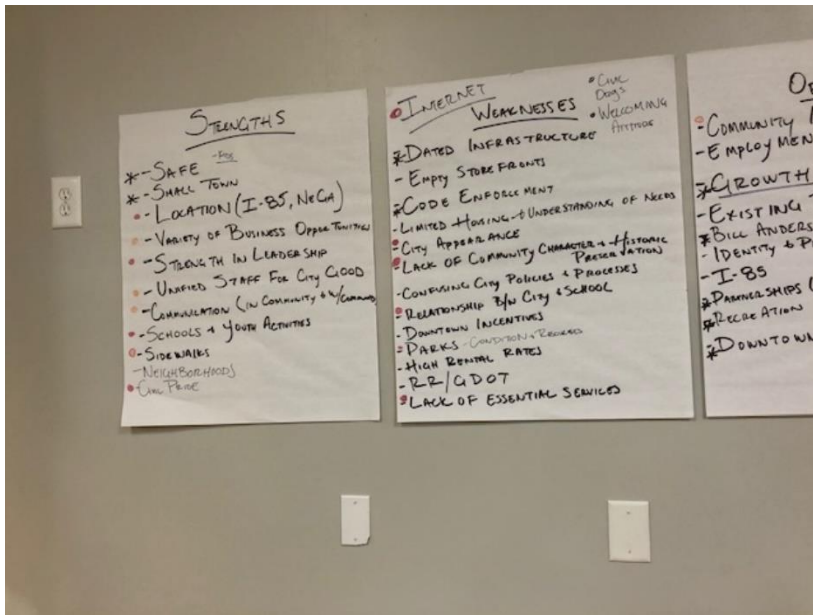
The triage SWOT exercise

Stakeholder committee members during a future land use map exercise
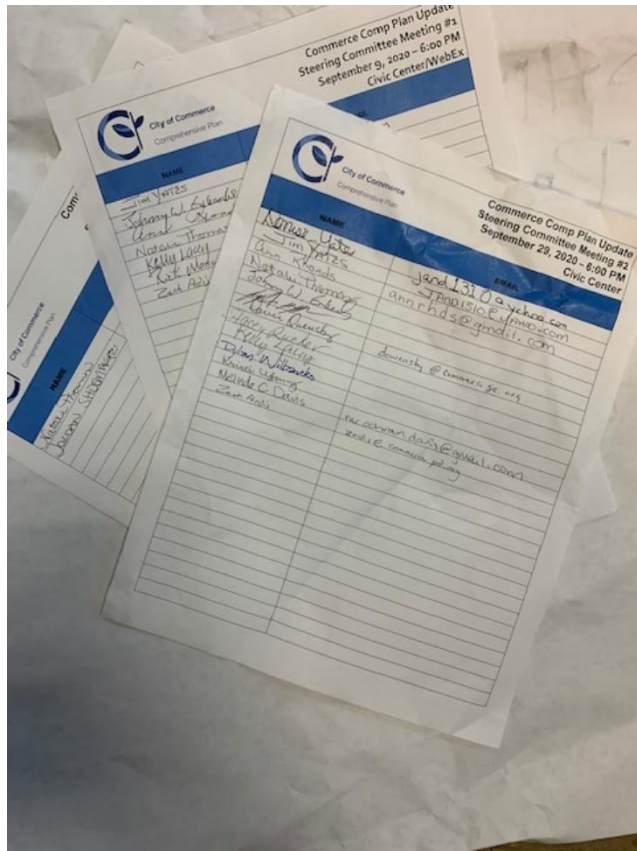
Sign-in sheets from stakeholder meetings
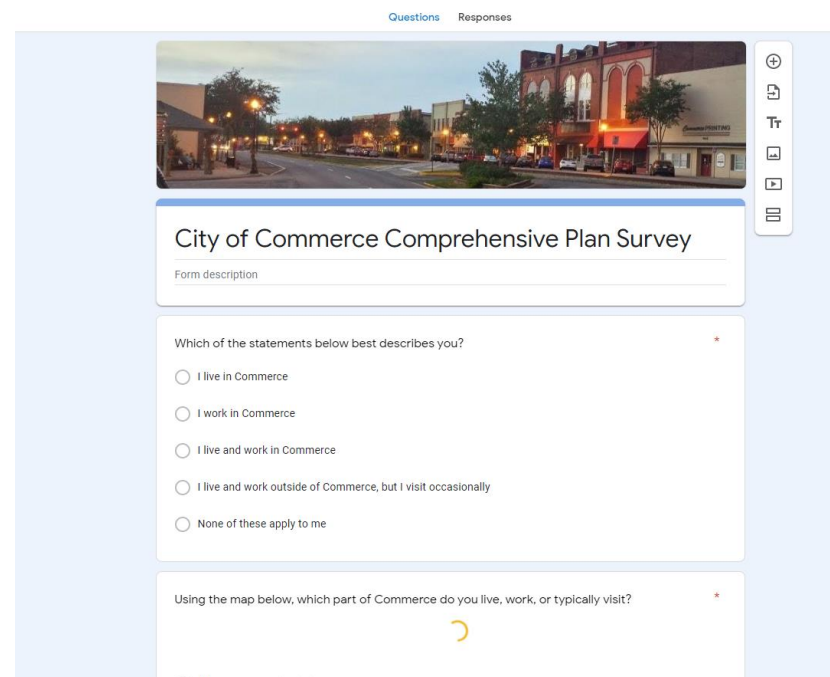
Residents could also participate through an online survey. 121 residents responded. The survey was created through Google Forms and circulated on the Commerce Main Street Facebook page

Agenda from the first public hearing

Ad from the first public hearing from the Jackson Herald

Agenda from the second public hearing

Ad from the second public hearing from the Jackson Herald