

07



COMMUNITY RESOURCES



Introduction

CONTEXT

Gwinnett County is known throughout the Atlanta metropolitan region for its high quality of life. While there is no universal definition for high quality of life, residents often credit the County's educational, artistic, recreational, and health resources as significant components. Amenity-filled parks, high-achieving schools, and diverse cultural offerings have defined and enhanced the county's reputation as a great place to live. This is apparent from Gwinnett County's mission, which holds its ability to deliver quality services in high importance.

The County's continued success in these areas hinges on its ability to grow in community-supportive ways. As explored in previous elements, one method of accommodating Gwinnett County's projected growth by 2045 involves encouraging the development of Daily Communities. Community Resources are a key component that makes the Daily Community concept work: outside of home, work, and school, Daily Communities are filled with entertainment options, arts and culture, public space, and other features that make a place feel welcoming and special.

GWINNETT'S MISSION STATEMENT

Gwinnett proudly supports our vibrantly connected community by delivering superior services.

For the purposes of the 2045 Unified Plan, the Community Resources Element examines the following:

- 1** Parks and Recreation
- 2** Public Safety
- 3** Arts and Culture

- 4** Education
- 5** Health and Wellness

Several County departments are entirely dedicated to providing the above resources. Far from duplicating their efforts, this Community Resources Element seeks to understand how growth and development may impact each area. Through the planning team’s interviews with these departments and additional analysis, one single word describes growth and development’s impact on Gwinnett’s Community Resources: more. This manifests into two distinct needs: scaling up operations and assets to have more resources in anticipation of population growth and supporting more coordination between departments.



Rhodes Jordan Park Summer Camp
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOCUS AREAS

1 SCALING SERVICES FOR ANTICIPATED GROWTH

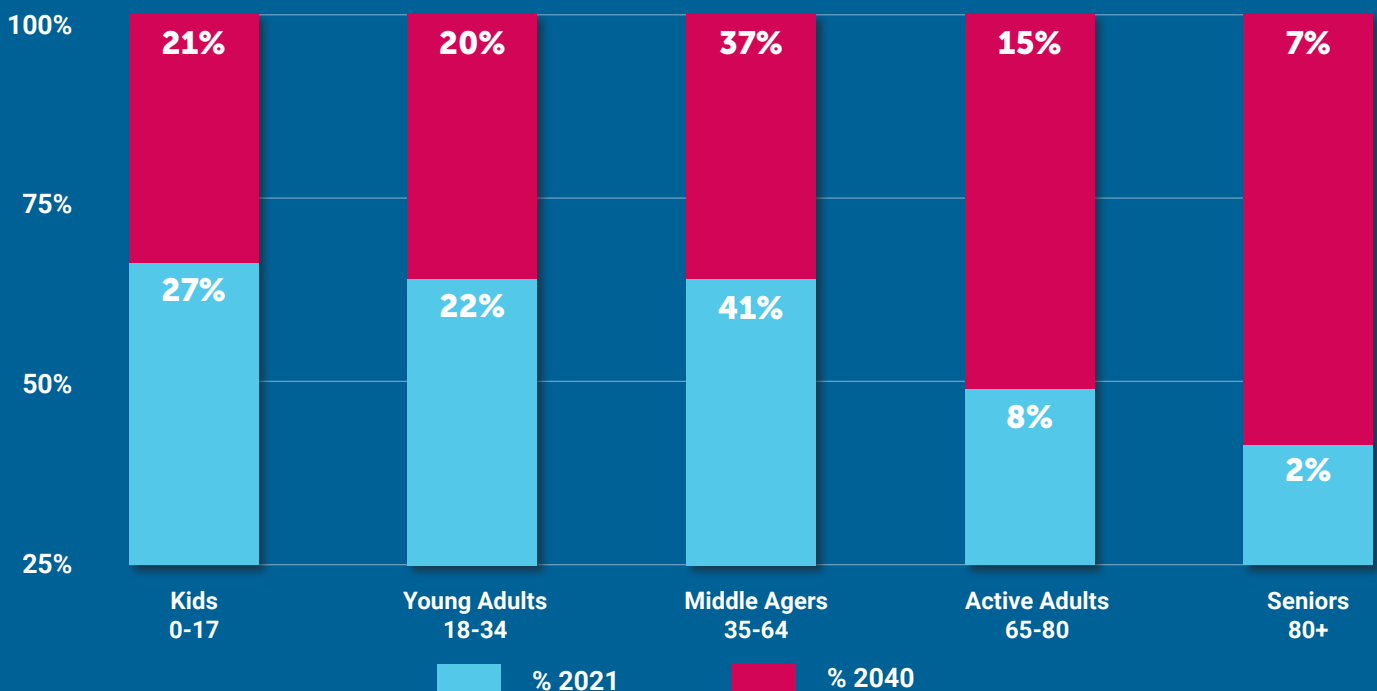
Gwinnett County's projected population growth is both a challenge and an opportunity. Each stakeholder interviewed for this element defined current and projected growth as a challenge to delivering the quality of services Gwinnett is renowned. Rather than shy away from this challenge, many service providers are seeking to scale up their resources to meet the projected future demand increase. They also acknowledged that different communities have different needs, and providing their services equitably is essential to successfully scaling for growth. The Daily Community framework is uniquely positioned to assist with this challenge. While it is clear that Gwinnett is growing, specific demographic trends—such as the growth in school-aged and elderly populations—significantly impact how to plan for Community Resources.

SCHOOL AGE POPULATION

Children (ages 0 to 17) comprise 27 percent of Gwinnett's population, totaling approximately 256,000 (Figure 7-1). Although their portion of Gwinnett's population is projected to decrease to 21 percent in 2040, the number of children is expected to increase to 315,000 in the same year. This translates to an estimated increase of 58,900 additional children over the next 20 years. While this category includes children who have not yet entered school and those who may not enroll in Gwinnett County Public Schools, the District can anticipate a significant surge in enrollment over the next 20 years. The demand for additional services, such as sports leagues, summer programs, family doctors, and arts

FIGURE 7-1: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

SOURCE: GWINNETT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING STUDY & U.S. CENSUS ACS 2016-2021



and culture offerings, is also expected to rise. While public education is almost exclusively targeted toward Gwinnett’s youth, other sub-areas such as parks and recreation, arts and culture, and health and wellness provide programs and resources for youth. Understanding how this demographic group may change is crucial to appropriately planning resources.

SILVER TSUNAMI

On the other end of the age spectrum, the County must also consider the specific needs of seniors. Select residents ages 60 years or older qualify for amenities and services for seniors provided by Gwinnett County’s Department of Community Services. Gwinnett’s senior population is expected to grow significantly through 2045. The combined population of active adults (ages 60–80) and seniors (ages 80 and above) currently accounts for 10 percent of Gwinnett’s population. By 2040, this group is projected to surge to 22 percent of the population, with numbers increasing from 94,850 active adults and seniors to roughly 330,000, signifying an almost 250 percent increase.

2 STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS

Stakeholders from County departments highlight collaboration as the key to their greatest successes. Yet, collaboration is more of the exception than the norm. Given that many Community Resources needs are influenced by development patterns and the built environment, it is crucial for Planning and Development to work closely with other departments and public agencies, including Community Services, Fire and Emergency Services, Police, and Gwinnett County Public Schools to ensure their priorities are integrated into development and redevelopment opportunities.



2023 Gwinnett Public Safety Fall Festival
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)

Existing Conditions


This analysis provides an overview of existing conditions for the five Community Resources topic areas and explores their relationships to land use. The objective is to identify areas for improvement and potential opportunities to ensure community resources remain one of Gwinnett County's best strengths and meet the diverse needs of its Daily Communities.

PARKS & RECREATION EXISTING CONDITIONS



Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, a Division within the Department of Community Services, manages 10,000 acres of parkland across 51 parks. The team also manages an extensive network of recreation fields, playgrounds, and buildings. Management and growth of these resources are guided by the extensive and detailed 2020 Gwinnett Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Gwinnett Parks and Recreation also works with the County's Department of Transportation to manage 145 miles of multiuse paths, aiming to triple this distance as projected in the Gwinnett Countywide Trails Master Plan adopted in 2018. Recently, DoCS has expanded its cross-departmental collaboration to work with the Department of Water Resources to obtain trail easements in conjunction with DWR obtaining utility easements. This process has led to more streamlined trail development.

Funding for these initiatives comes from department specific funds and the Special Purpose Location Option Sales Tax. The most recent SPLOST program from 2017 raised \$97.6 million for projects, including an expansion for the Dacula Park Activity Building. From its new Senior Wing, to a gym and dance study, this project is an excellent example of how cross-departmental collaboration can fulfill multiple community resource needs: expanding access to parks and recreation and providing services to all ages. Gwinnett Parks and Recreation is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies, one in only 13 in the state to achieve this status, and was the Georgia Recreation and Park Association State Agency of the Year in 2022.



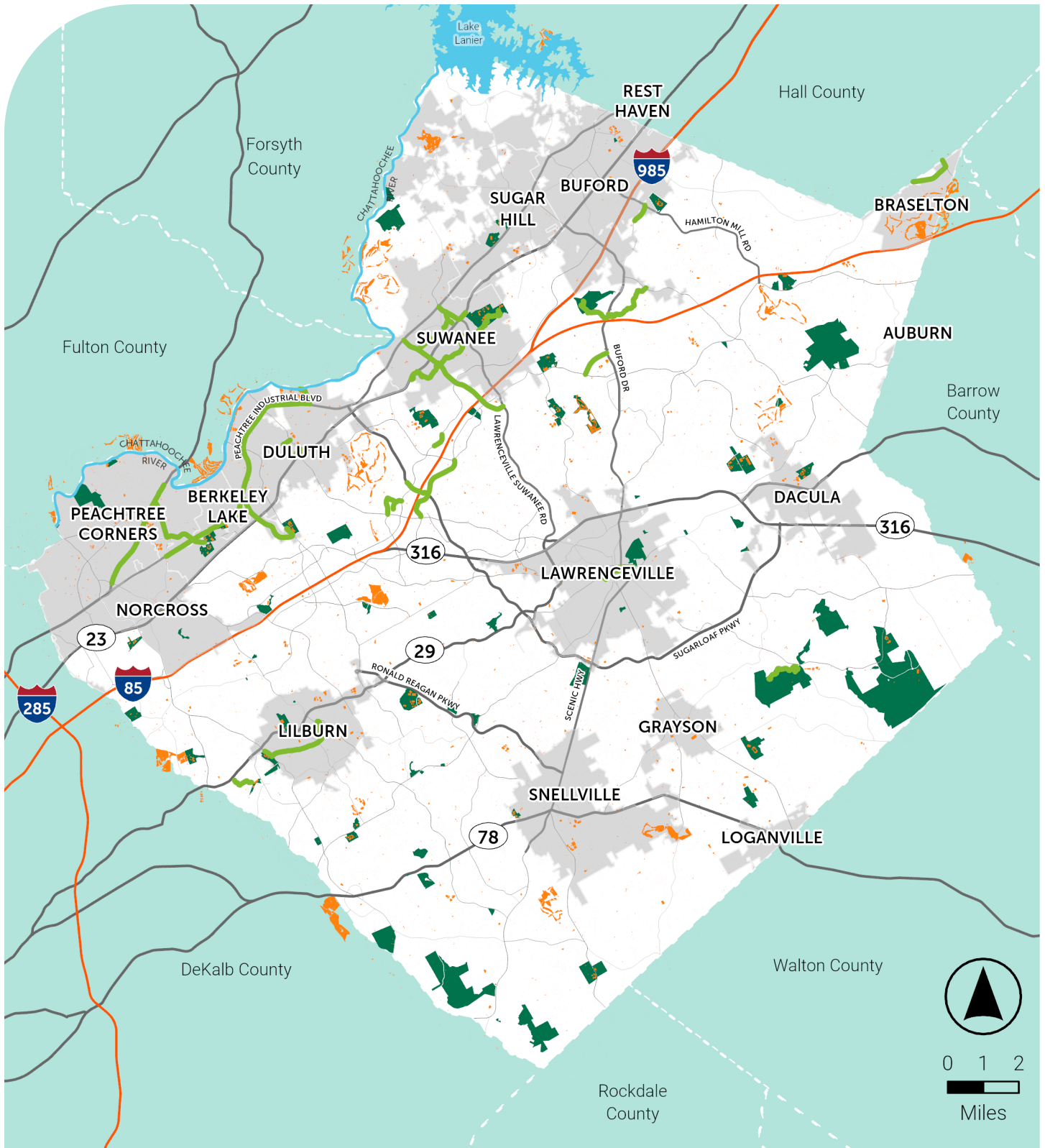
Gwinnett County was a finalist for the 2023 National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management.

RELATIONSHIP TO LAND USE AND THE DAILY COMMUNITY

Public spaces, including parks, plazas, and trails, provide multiple benefits to a community. These benefits include better physical health and well-being, protection of natural resources, and greater connectivity. They also contribute to community aesthetics and culture. Providing these public spaces in Daily Communities—particularly their centers—can create gathering places that enhance a sense of place. If communities do not have easy access to these amenities, they cannot enjoy the full extent of these benefits. Figure 7-2 shows current facilities managed by Gwinnett Parks and Recreation. The 2020 Gwinnett Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan highlights areas where these resources may not fully meet the service needs of Gwinnett residents. The Countywide Trails Master Plan will be updated in the future to identify further gaps to increase connectivity. These trails can also serve as connectors within and between Daily Community centers.



*GREAT Little Minds Library at Shorty Howell Park
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)*



- Legend**
- Recreational Amenities
 - Parks
 - Trails
 - Municipalities

FIGURE 7-2: PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES



*Gwinnett County Rock Springs Park Trail
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)*

PARKS AND RECREATION: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

NEEDS

1 ADJUST PUBLIC SPACE POLICY

While the County enjoys a robust and well-planned parks and recreation system, some policies keep the Division from executing that vision. Outdated amenity requirements in new subdivisions and trail developments that go unreported to the County make it more difficult for the Division to accomplish its goals of a well-connected system. Past Unified Development Ordinance requirements have burdened the Division with 477 acres of inaccessible recreation set-asides left over from developments (Figure 7-3). These tracts, which were deeded back to the County, are often the worst sections of land, providing few greenspace benefits and taking up division resources. On average, they are about 3 acres in size.

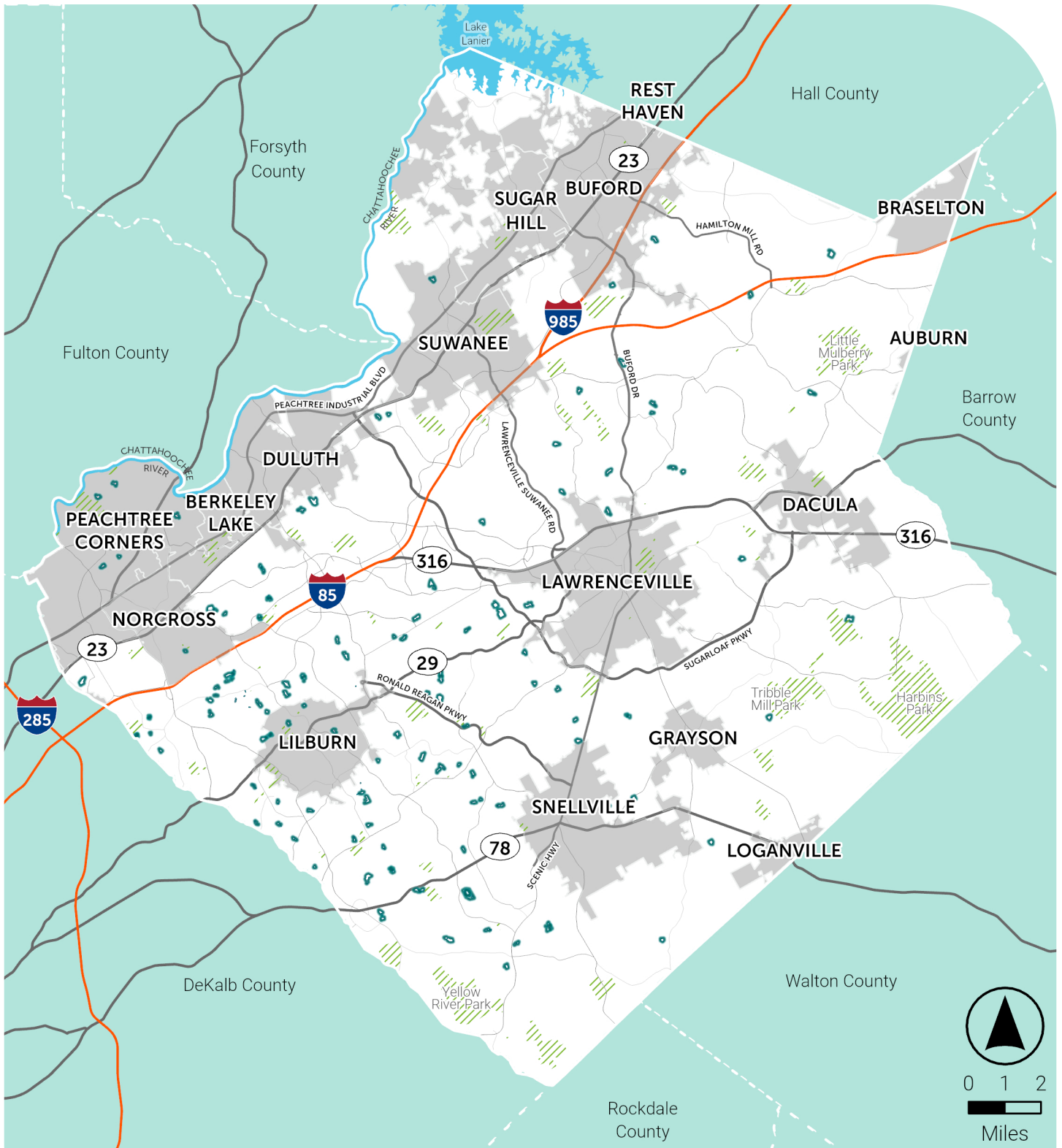
OPPORTUNITIES

1 UTILIZING COUNTY BUILDINGS FOR MULTIPLE PURPOSES

Including multiple uses within one building allows departments to provide services more efficiently and take advantage of synergies between their work. Gwinnett Community Services has begun to integrate its own programming in County facilities, setting a model other departments could follow. Future County facilities and renovation projects should recognize that residents' needs evolve over time and explore options for how cross-departmental use of buildings, as well as features of the built environment, such as shared parking, can strengthen communities.

2 TYING NEW PUBLIC SPACE CREATION WITH REDEVELOPMENT

As underutilized sites are redeveloped, they bring opportunities for new amenities to be incorporated into site design. Public spaces, trails, and other community spaces can be accounted for alongside housing and retail space. Providing clear guidelines and partnering with developers can make new public spaces enjoyable and inviting, but clear and sustainable management and maintenance strategies are needed.



Legend

- Parks
- Recreation Set-Asides
- Municipalities

**FIGURE 7-3:
RECREATION SET-ASIDES**

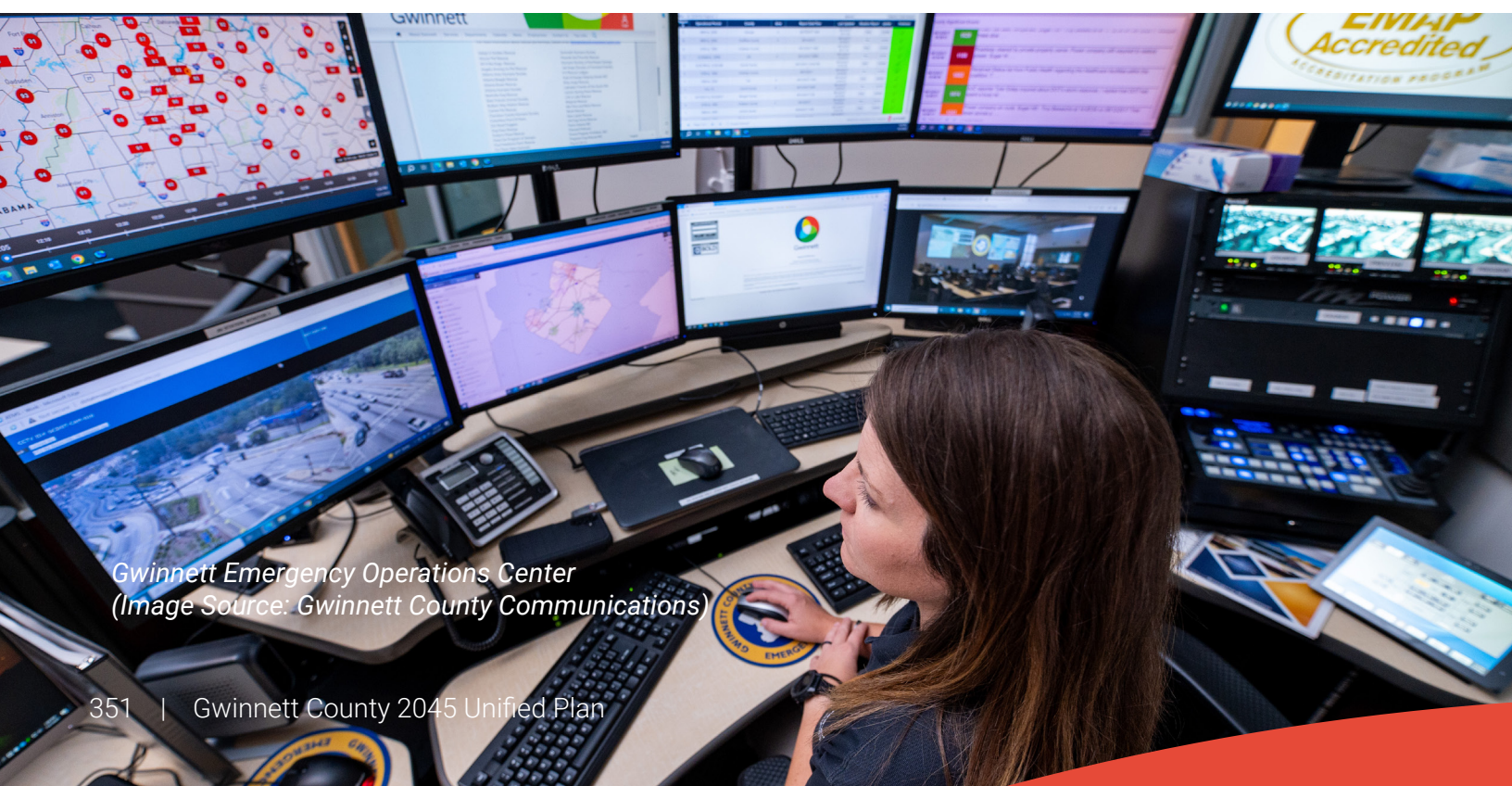
PUBLIC SAFETY EXISTING CONDITIONS

Public safety refers to government-enabled resources that ensure the wellbeing and security of residents. In Gwinnett County, law enforcement agencies such as the Gwinnett County Police Department, Sheriff's Office, and the Fire and Emergency Services Department are responsible for extending these services.

GWINNETT COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

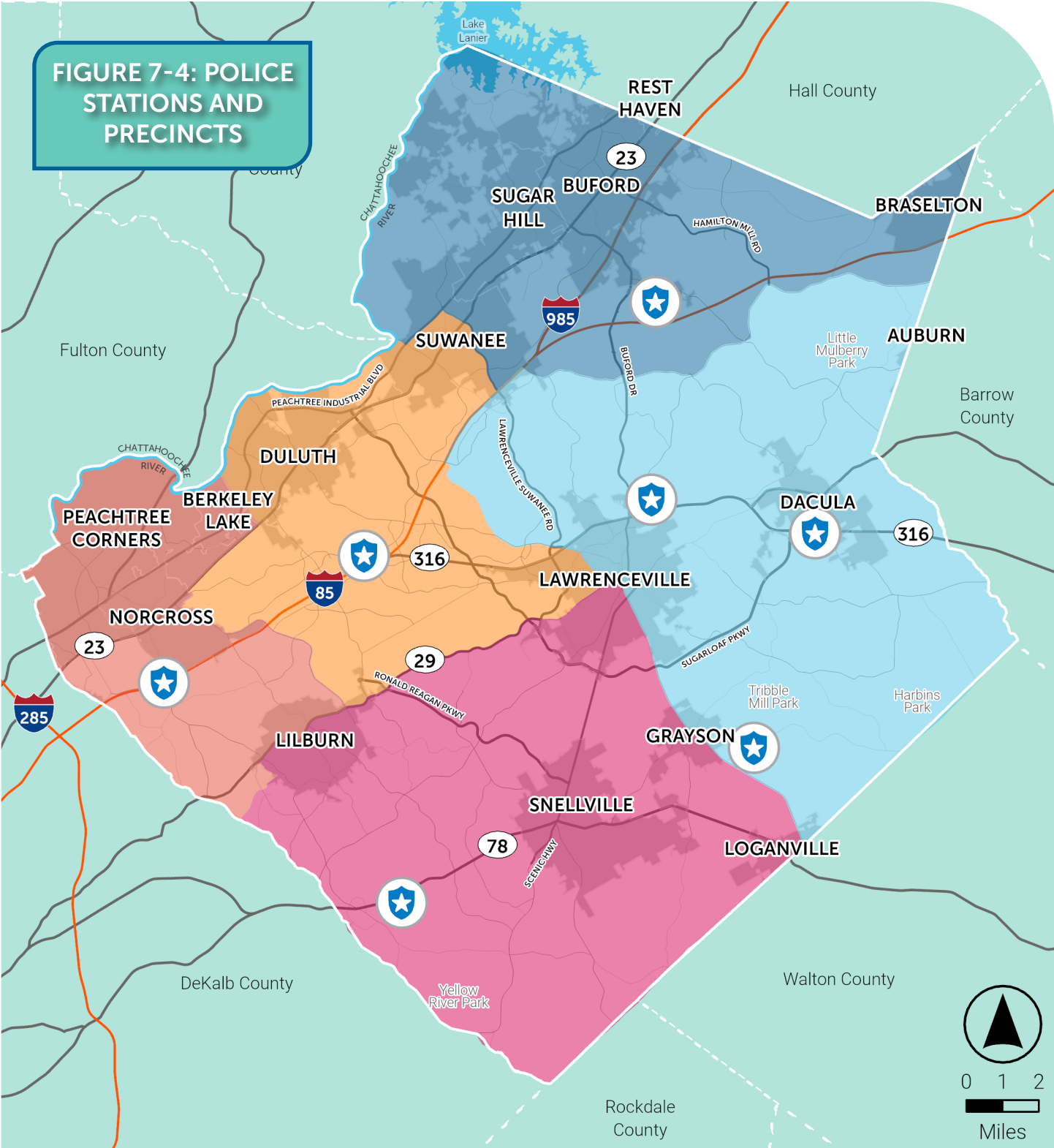
The Gwinnett County Police Department consists of 930 sworn officers and 129 communication officers, whom 296 civilian employees support. Their jurisdiction spans the entirety of the unincorporated county and seven municipalities that do not have their own police force (Berkeley Lake, Buford, Dacula, Grayson, Peachtree Corners, Rest Haven, and Sugar Hill). To successfully provide safety services to such a large area, they work across six precincts throughout the county (Figure 7-4). The County plans to build a new GCPD headquarters in 2025 to expand its coverage and operational capacity. The Department has maintained its Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies certification for 30 years.

The GCPD's primary goal is maintaining response time among an ever-increasing call volume. To accomplish this, the Department must be appropriately staffed. Staffing is one of the most significant challenges, as their officers often are recruited away from the Department by Gwinnett County Public Schools or neighboring police departments. The Department expanded and updated their training facility in 2023 to assist with recruiting, training, and retaining new officers. In future planning exercises conducted for Gwinnett County at large and for the Department specifically, they are also exploring the use of technology to add capacity where they may have staff shortages. This includes Flock cameras, drones as first responders, and access to Gwinnett County Department of Transportation cameras.



Gwinnett Emergency Operations Center
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)


FIGURE 7-4: POLICE STATIONS AND PRECINCTS

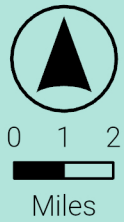


Legend

-  Police Stations
-  Municipalities

District Number

-  1
-  2
-  3
-  4
-  5



FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services employs 1,044 staff across 31 fire stations, each with engine and medic companies, responding to over 96,000 aid requests annually (Figure 7-5). The Department is responsible for training the staff and has maintained its excellent Insurance Services Office rating of 2/2x. All emergency response vehicles are staffed with EMTs and paramedics. GCFES completed an extensive master planning process in June 2023 that evaluated current conditions, identified future needs, and provided recommendations and strategies to deliver its goals. Key recommendations include two sites for new fire stations, one in eastern Gwinnett off Highway 316 and the other in the Centerville community. Adding these fire stations will address anticipated population growth in areas currently less developed but expected to densify. Like GCPD’s needs, the master plan also recommended increasing staff capacity to meet industry standards regarding workloads and response times. The Department is using SPLOST funds to begin implementation of these recommended projects.



The Gwinnett County Fire & Emergency Services Department

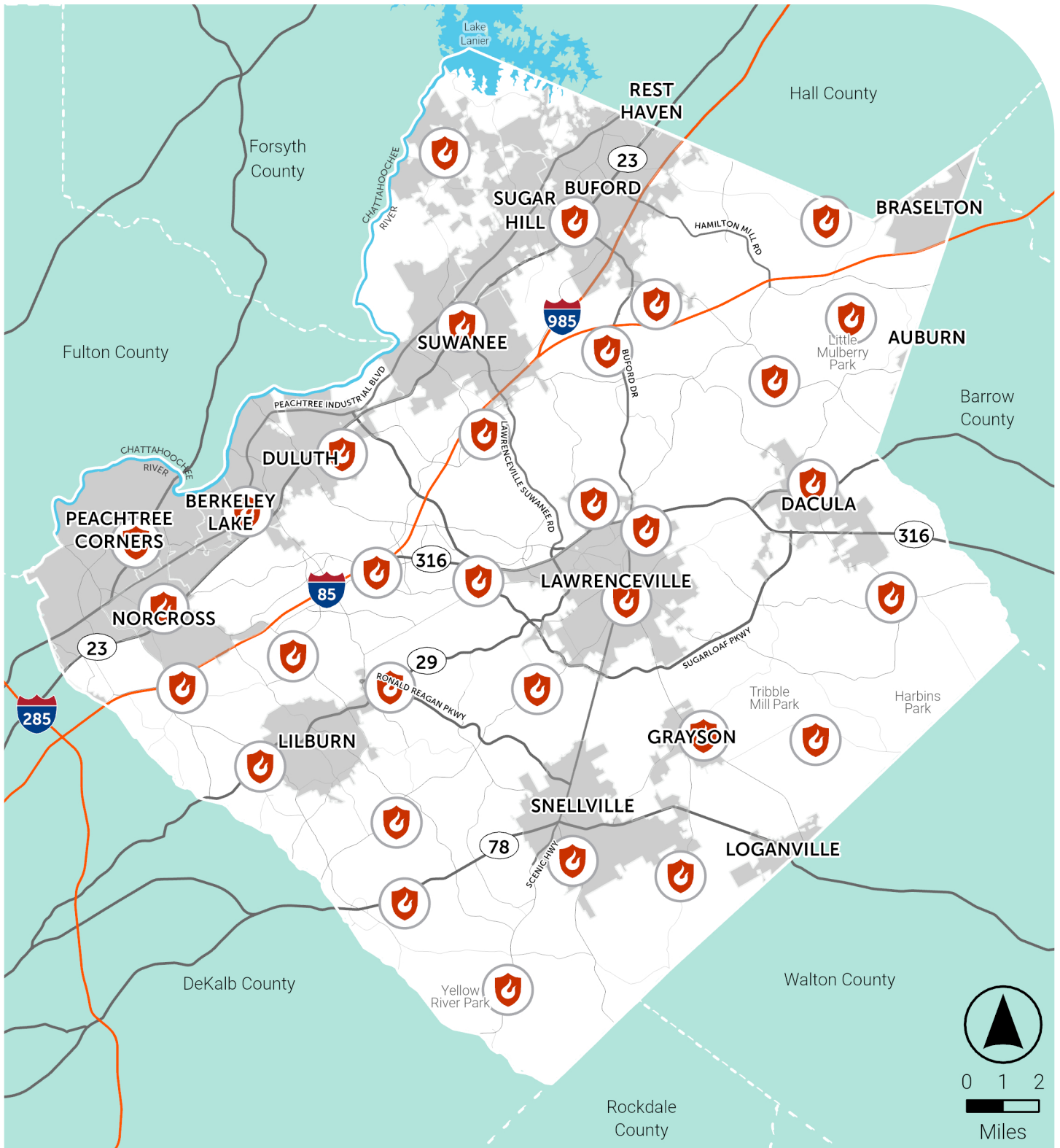
RESPONDS TO OVER

96,000 REQUESTS ANNUALLY

RELATIONSHIP TO LAND USE AND THE DAILY COMMUNITY

2022 TOTAL CALL VOLUME BY QUARTER					
TOTAL CALLS	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	TOTAL
Fire Calls	1,197	1,130	957	-	-
Medical Calls	17,946	18,503	19,227	-	-
Other Calls	4,702	4,950	5,150	-	-
Total	23,845	24,583	25,334	-	-

Credit: Gwinnett County. Fire calls include all fire and suspected fire calls. Medical calls include any medical emergency, including drowning, stroke, and cardiac arrest. Other Calls include alarms, assisting residents, gas leaks, water in buildings, hazmat, and cave-in/collapse.



Legend



-  Fire Stations
-  Municipalities

FIGURE 7-5: FIRE STATIONS

There are several connections between public safety and land use. As land use policy encourages areas to develop more densely, public safety officers must consider alternative approaches to accessing certain types of development and allocating resources accordingly. Strategies for this could include different types of service vehicles that can navigate tighter spaces. Additionally, densifying development may increase public transit service and walkability, reducing vehicular trips and congestion and helping decrease response times amidst a growing population needing assistance. Less vehicular trips can also contribute to fewer car accidents, which police officers and EMTs respond to often.

Another consideration is that aspects of the built environment can also impact these departments' accreditation ratings. For example, Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services Department's top rating is due to factors such as 99.5 percent of streets and roads within their service area being within a five-mile travel distance of a fire station, and 97.4 percent of the service area being within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant. This success stems from proper community servicing, as lower service ratings may impact residents' and businesses' insurance costs. Finally, as land use and development patterns change, methods of accessing areas to provide these vital services may also need to be updated. Current considerations of the Gwinnett Police and Fire teams are using all-terrain vehicles to access the far reaches of large parks that have trail systems rather than access roads, using smaller fire trucks in developed areas with narrow roads, and implementing high-rise fire safety training as buildings within the county increase vertically.

99.5% of streets/roads within their service area fall within

5 MILES of a fire station



97.4% of the service area falls within

1,000 ft of a fire hydrant



PUBLIC SAFETY: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

NEED

1 MAINTAIN PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONSE TIMES

The primary responsibility of public safety officials is to respond to calls for assistance. With significant growth and development, hiring more staff and building or expanding facilities will be necessary, but they are far from the only solutions. With redevelopment comes the potential to reduce roadway congestion by expanding transportation options and shortening trips, which can lead to faster response times. In addition to using technology to identify public safety hot spots, maintaining the County's efficient public safety response times can also be achieved by improving each Daily Community's built environment.

OPPORTUNITY

1 SHARING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA TO AID IN SAFETY PLANNING

Besides building new facilities or expanding transit service—which either take significant time, are governed by other departments, or both—public safety agencies can invest in new technology to maintain response times and improve efficiency. Understanding the location of crash hotspots or utilizing advanced traffic signaling can aid in fast response times for fire, EMT, and police services. Being able to see building footprints to plan response tactics ahead of an emergency can also help with safety planning. This data and technology may be readily accessible to other departments, such as GCDOT or P&D, and sharing with public safety departments can increase their resources without significant costs. Other technologies to consider are different vehicles, including vans and ATVs, which are already being deployed on a small scale countywide.

ARTS & CULTURE EXISTING CONDITIONS

While generally appreciated as a community resource of great value, arts and culture programming within Gwinnett County has been supported mainly by a decentralized group of private companies, nonprofits, volunteer associations, and cultural organizations. In recent years, Gwinnett has explored ways to support arts and culture activities more centrally, building partnerships with multicultural groups and coordinating with theaters, art centers, and other organizations to hold festivals, fairs, and other County events.

A conclusive step in this direction is the Artworks Board of Directors’ approval of **Create Gwinnett: Arts and Culture Master Plan**. The plan includes an extensive registry of Gwinnett’s arts and culture assets. The County’s cultural assets have not been inventoried since the Atlanta Regional Commission conducted a regionwide study in 2011. Another step in centralizing arts and culture is redeveloping Central Gwinnett High School as the School of the Arts, which re-opened in Fall 2023.

Arts & Culture Assets by the Numbers:							
18 sites on the National Register of Historic Places				28 sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places			
				15+ Murals			
12+ Live music venues (including one Arena sized venue)				12 Museums			
9 Art Galleries				8 Theaters			

In addition, there is a wide range of both eastern and western religions supported by places of worship in the county, some notable across the region, such as BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. With such a wide variety and extensively dispersed set of assets, a full-time staff position may be considered to coordinate with the hundreds of active cultural and artistic organizations that have been leading the charge in this area for the last several decades.

RELATIONSHIP TO LAND USE AND THE DAILY COMMUNITY

Land use regulations such as zoning often include requirements around signage and sometimes even dictate requirements about public art. Usually, the signage requirements within ordinances restrict public art. However, when created or updated with community input, these ordinances can be written to promote public art and determine an appropriate governmental relationship with its creation and maintenance. Another area of connection is through the preservation of historic places. Public art, historic preservation, and culturally relevant development practices such as multi-generational homes can strengthen the sense of belonging and the identity of a Daily Community. Gwinnett has seen positive reactions to the efforts in historic preservation particularly.

ARTS & CULTURE: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

NEED

1 DEDICATE STAFF FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

As Gwinnett County continues to formalize its commitment to arts and culture planning, determining an optimal role is the County's most basic need. Hiring dedicated staff to build partnerships with existing cultural groups and arts associations, identifying gaps in programming, and building out support for art within the built environment should be a top priority.

OPPORTUNITY

1 REQUIRING PUBLIC ART WITHIN DAILY COMMUNITY CENTERS

As Daily Community concepts are advanced through redevelopment across Gwinnett County, there is a natural opportunity to work with community leadership to install new public art that improves aesthetics and reinforces the unique identities of Gwinnett County's diverse communities.

EDUCATION EXISTING CONDITIONS

Gwinnett County Public Schools manages public education services. The school system operates separately from the Gwinnett County Government and is overseen by its own governing board.

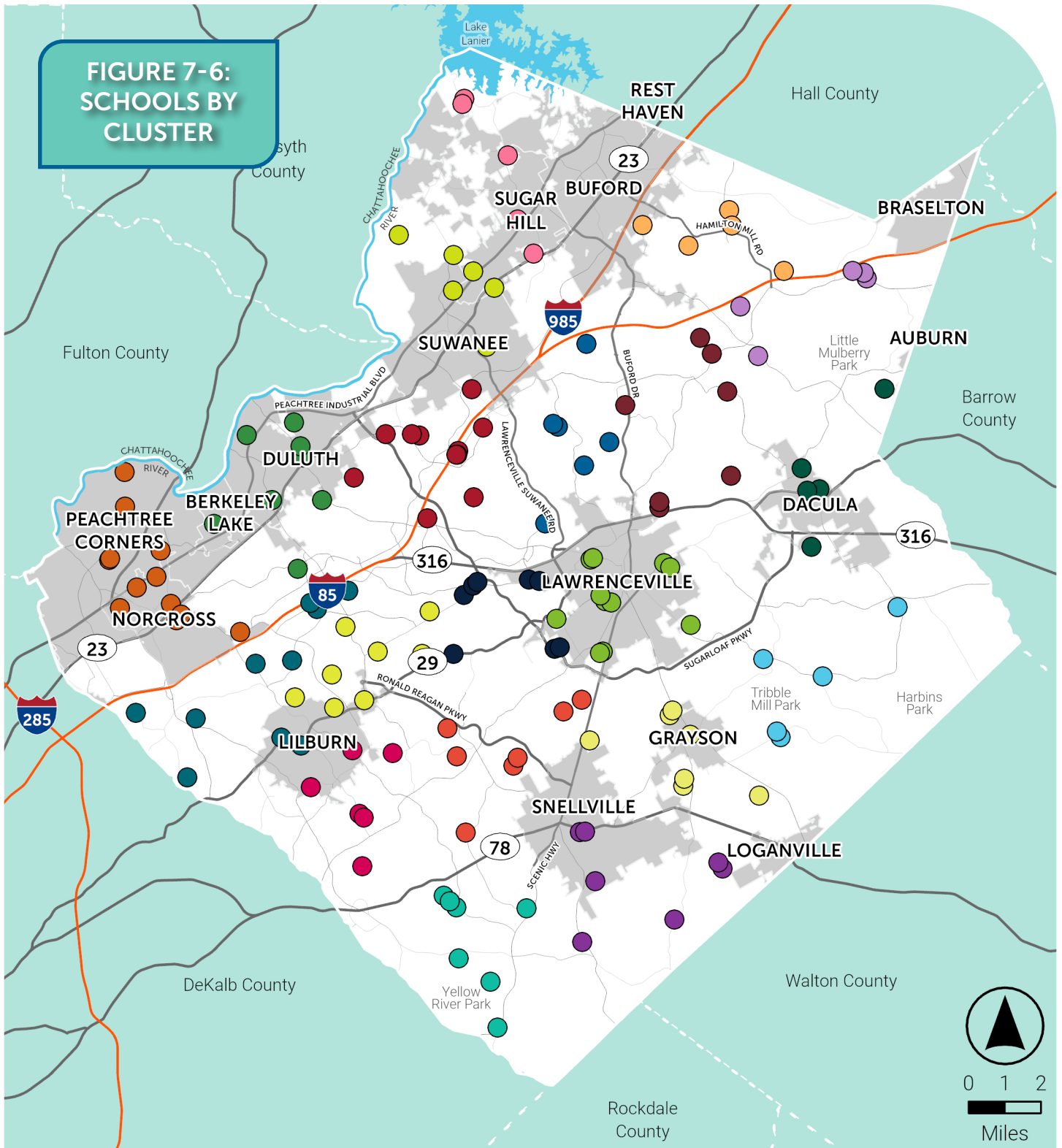
The district covers all 437 square miles of the county, consisting of 142 schools (81 elementary, 29 middle, 24 high, and eight specialty schools) organized into 20 clusters (Figure 7-6). The City of Buford has its own school district, but the two districts have an agreement in which the County provides more specialized services as needed. Most attendance for Gwinnett children is determined by where they live in the cluster, but not always. GCPS is the largest employer in Gwinnett County and the fourth largest employer in the Metropolitan Atlanta area.

GCPS operates under its master plan, *Our Blueprint to the Future*, finalized in Winter 2022, which guides the system from 2023 through the 2026-2027 school year. The district utilizes an online, real-time Key Performance Indicator tracker to analyze data from the plan's initial year (the 2021-2022 school year), assessing their advancements towards the plan's objectives. Funding for GCPS comes from property taxes and education specific SPLOST funds, which are allocated for developing the system's facilities and infrastructure.



*Gwinnett County Hamilton Mill Library
(Image Source: Gwinnett County
Communications)*

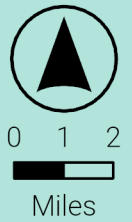
**FIGURE 7-6:
SCHOOLS BY
CLUSTER**



Legend

School Cluster

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| ● Archer | ● Central Gwinnett | ● Lanier | ● Parkview |
| ● Berkmar | ● Collins Hill | ● Meadowcreek | ● Peachtree Ridge |
| ● Brookwood | ● Discovery | ● Mill Creek | ● Seckinger |
| | ● Duluth | ● Mountain View | ● Shiloh |
| | ● Grayson | ● Norcross | ● South Gwinnett |
| | | ● North Gwinnett | |

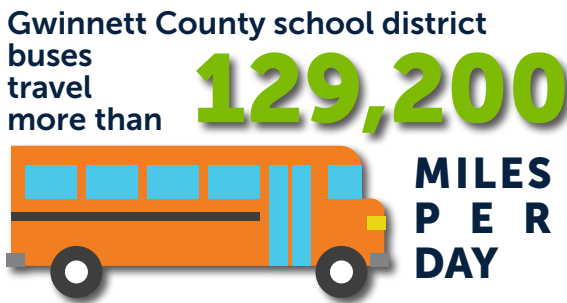


RELATIONSHIP TO LAND USE AND THE DAILY COMMUNITY

GCPS is particularly sensitive to the demands of a growing population and where land use policies funnel that growth. Clusters are routinely updated to ensure schools are not exceeding their capacities; these will need to be continuously monitored as the number of young people in the county is expected to increase by approximately 58,900 children over the next 20 years. Currently, 179,581 students attend GCPS, which leaves about 76,500 students who attend private schools, schools outside GCPS, such as Buford City Schools, or are homeschooled. Assuming the ratio of GCPS to non-GCPS students remains the same, GCPS can expect 44,000 more students to enroll over the next 20 years.

To ensure schools can accommodate new students appropriately, the GCPS Planning Department works closely with Gwinnett County's Department of Planning and Development. Gwinnett County P&D shares development permit and rezoning requests with GCPS, while GCPS shares estimates on projected school age population impacts from residential projects through monthly reports to P&D, Gwinnett County Planning Commission, and the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners. This exchange of information allows GCPS to plan for more efficient resource distribution and ensure development decisions consider impacts on the school system.

As evidenced by Education-Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) spending, building new schools is an expensive undertaking. School development patterns have followed the same pattern of suburban sprawl Gwinnett has historically seen in its residential development. It has been more cost-effective for the school system to build fewer schools, each with higher capacity, rather than smaller, neighborhood level schools throughout the county, even if that increases other costs.



To accommodate this pattern and get children across the county to school while avoiding overcrowding, GCPS has created and maintains one of the largest school district owned bus fleets in the nation at 1,968 buses. The fleet transports 127,269 students twice daily over 8,308 routes, traveling more than 129,200 miles per day. To fund this, the GCPS's annual transportation budget for FY 2022 was \$131,345,284. FY23 and FY24 budgets expect that number to grow by \$20 million in the next two years. Reliance on this expensive system limits

what GCPS can provide students access to programming outside of standard school hours. Students who do not have access to regular transportation at home or live within walking distance of their school cannot participate in extracurricular activities before or after school.

GCPS and the Department of Community Services seek to correct the challenges created by dispersed development patterns through the Community Schools Model. This national strategy uses the Coalition of Community Schools framework to unlock additional resources in historically underserved areas through strengthening partnerships between the schools, families, and the community. The model is adaptable to each community's unique needs and assets, with each school specific application designed for the community by the community.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS MODEL

The Four Pillars of Community Schools are: Integrated Student Supports, Expanded and Extended Learning Time and Opportunities, Active Family and Community Engagement, and Shared Leadership and Practices.

The model was first introduced through GCPS's most recent strategic plan, Blueprint for our Future. Currently, there are 21 community schools, led by a community school coordinator at each comprehensive high school and one shared by Gwinnett School of Math, Science and Technology and Maxwell. The Community Schools Coordinator is a licensed school administrator who works afternoons and evenings Monday through Thursday and the regular school day on Fridays. There is currently a pilot expanding the program at Shiloh High School. If successful, Gwinnett Community

Services will support the implementation of a comprehensive community school in every Gwinnett County cluster over the next five years.

While the model is student focused, DoCS is exploring how close collaboration with families and residents can benefit communities surrounding the schools. There is a natural synergy between the Community Schools Model and the Daily Community framework in that schools are often at the center of many families' daily social lives. Ensuring greater access and support for community schools can help build stronger communities and provide vital resources to residents of all ages and backgrounds.

EDUCATION: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

NEED

1 INTEGRATE EDUCATION WITHIN DAILY COMMUNITIES

Schools are community hubs that organize a large part of residents' social lives. The Daily Community framework seeks to capture and promote this social structure within the built environment. GCPS's commitment to advancing the Community Schools Model aligns well with the objective to create active, thriving community centers across Gwinnett. Identifying ways to integrate educational opportunities could strengthen a community's access to education while also encouraging different forms of school siting that refocus on the neighborhood aspect of neighborhood schools. Growth can aid in this objective rather than serve as an obstacle.

OPPORTUNITY

1 IMPROVING YOUTH EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Between the Community School Model pilot programming and potential redevelopment opportunities, there are multiple ways to provide social benefits to youth. First, projects that offer shorter bus times or even allow children to walk to school can be pursued by aligning school growth with redevelopment. Situating new schools within the Daily Community context or fostering redevelopment around existing schools can strengthen connections between Gwinnett County's exemplary educational institutions and the daily lives of their students and families.



*Elizabeth H. Williams Library and City of Snellville Business Center
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)*

HEALTH & WELLNESS EXISTING CONDITIONS

Resources devoted to the health and wellness of Gwinnett's diverse communities are primarily housed under the Department of Community Services' Health and Human Services Division, with other departments supporting initiatives promoting health and wellness in Gwinnett County. The Division maintains several centers from which they execute their extensive programming. There are three OneStop Centers and the Gwinnett Senior Services Center at which they provide OneStop 4 HELP programming and resources to residents of all ages facing hunger, health, housing, and other issues. They also manage four Senior Centers and a satellite program that offer a variety of services ranging from weekday programming, meals, and transportation services to qualifying residents (Figure 7-7). In the past year, over 176,000 meals were served to Gwinnett seniors in their homes and at the Gwinnett Senior Services Center.

ONESTOP 4 HELP

Gwinnett County provides emergency services to all residents through its OneStop 4 HELP program. Originally proposed in a previous Unified Plan, the OneStop program offers emergency assistance related to hunger, health, housing insecurity, and other challenges. Requests can be filed over the phone, email, through an online form, and also at four physical locations throughout the County (Figure 7-7).

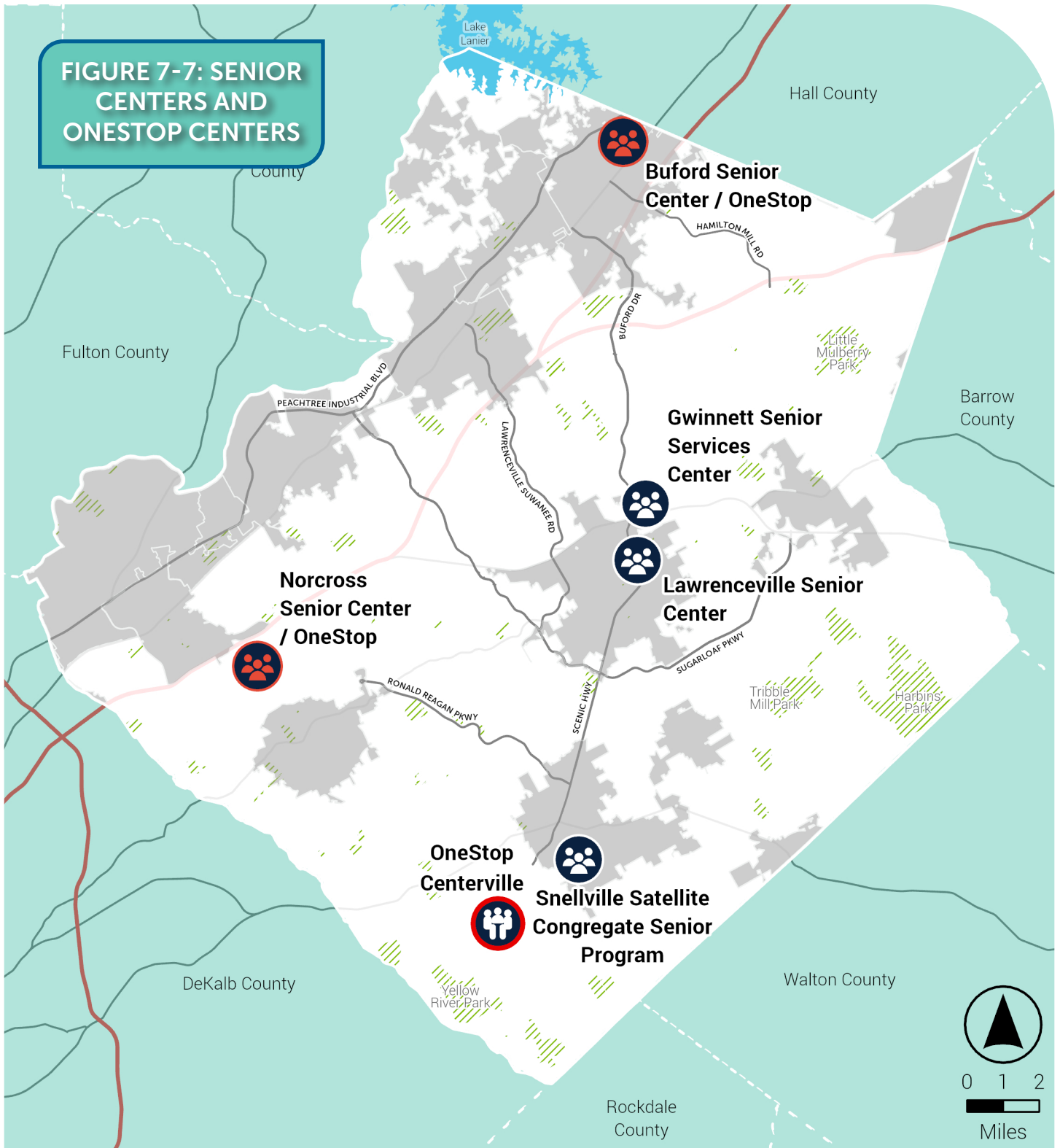
In addition to these targeted efforts and centers, Health and Human Services also has programs geared toward veterans, children and families, and anyone needing additional physical or mental health support. Prevention-focused resources are provided through Live Healthy Gwinnett, a countywide Health and Wellness Initiative in Community Services. This work is critical to address preventable chronic illnesses that impact individuals of Gwinnett. To better understand the human services ecosystem holistically, the Division recently conducted a Health and Human Services Needs Assessment scheduled for adoption at the end of 2023. This comprehensive analysis will include a community needs assessment to understand what is needed beyond what Health and Human Services provide.

RELATIONSHIP TO LAND USE AND THE DAILY COMMUNITY

The built environment directly affects community health and wellness by facilitating or limiting how physically active residents can be. Being able to walk or bike to a destination safely can reduce poor health outcomes such as cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

Land use planning can support health and wellness by ensuring all residents have access to these health benefits despite their base physicality. Transportation and aging in place are both priorities for H&HS. Their transportation services are separate and unique from transit programs run by the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation. The 56,000+ trips provided using H&HS transportation services are in conjunction with care management plans as well. Design and transportation requirements that promote accessibility between places and within buildings and homes can aid in allowing seniors to age in place.

FIGURE 7-7: SENIOR CENTERS AND ONESTOP CENTERS



Legend

-  Municipalities
-  Senior Center
-  Senior Center/OneStop
-  OneStop

HEALTH & WELLNESS: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

NEED

1 PROVIDE SPECIALIZED SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Attainable housing and accessible transportation are two of the most urgent health and wellness needs across all population groups in Gwinnett County. However, seniors are adversely affected due to insufficient suitable housing and transportation services. Given the incoming silver tsunami expected in Gwinnett County, planning initiatives and redevelopment projects should incorporate provisions for seniors to ensure they enjoy robust social lives within their Daily Communities.

OPPORTUNITY

1 PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

The built environment influences how people of all ages navigate through their community. To ensure Daily Communities are accessible to all people, the built environment must accommodate mobility and accessibility needs across different ages and ability levels. New development and redevelopment can advance these concepts on a small scale before they are expanded to other parts of each community. Prioritizing the needs of individuals who require particular safety and accessibility features can lead to spaces that everyone can enjoy.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM RESIDENTS

Residents were eager to talk about their appreciation for Gwinnett's high quality community resources and expressed their desire for more of the services they have come to enjoy. Some of these included:

- 1 More world-class parks, especially parks within walking distance
- 2 More arts and education programming
- 3 More programmatic support for youth and seniors

Through survey questions and specific activities at the Daily Community Cafes, residents were asked to select which resources belong in their ideal Daily Community. Other activities at these workshops sought to educate residents on how redevelopment could bring these amenities to bear. Public space was of particular interest to residents.

For a full summary of engagement, see Appendix C.

COMMUNITY PREFERENCES: COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Improve access and connectivity to resources (e.g. parks, libraries, educational institutions)

Create public spaces with amenities and interactive features

Expand and connect trail network between neighborhoods, centers, and public spaces

Provide more programming for seniors

Provide more ways for youth to get involved in their communities

Expand and enhance OneStop facilities

Communicate with Gwinnett County Public Schools regarding large scale housing developments that may impact attendance

Centerville Senior Center
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)

Needs & Opportunities

Though the central theme of Gwinnett County's future vision of Community Resources is summed up by one word—more—the needs and opportunities associated with that vision are intricate and specifically tied to different subject areas. They are consolidated here for convenient reference.

NEEDS

MORE RESOURCES NEEDS:

1 MAINTAIN PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONSE TIMES

The primary responsibility of public safety officials is to respond to calls for assistance. With significant growth and development, hiring more staff and building or expanding facilities will be necessary, but they are far from the only solutions. With redevelopment comes the potential to reduce roadway congestion by expanding transportation options and shortening trips, which can lead to faster response times. In addition to using technology to identify public safety hot spots, maintaining the County's efficient public safety response times can also be achieved by improving each Daily Community's built environment.

2 DEDICATE STAFF FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

As Gwinnett County continues to formalize its commitment to arts and culture planning, determining an optimal role is the County's most basic need. Hiring dedicated staff to build partnerships with existing cultural groups and arts associations, identifying gaps in programming, and building out support for art within the built environment should be a top priority.

3 PROVIDE SPECIALIZED SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Attainable housing and accessible transportation are two of the most urgent health and wellness needs across all population groups in Gwinnett County. However, seniors are adversely affected due to insufficient suitable housing and transportation services. Given the incoming silver tsunami expected in Gwinnett County, planning initiatives and redevelopment projects should incorporate provisions for seniors to ensure they enjoy robust social lives within their Daily Communities.

MORE COLLABORATION NEEDS:

1 ADJUST PUBLIC SPACE POLICY

While the County enjoys a robust and well-planned parks and recreation system, some policies keep the Division from executing that vision. Outdated amenity requirements in new subdivisions and trail developments that go unreported to the County make it more difficult for the Division to accomplish its goals of a well-connected system. Some of these requirements have burdened the division with 477 acres of inaccessible recreation set-asides left over from developments (Figure 7-3, page 356). These tracts, which are deeded back to the County, are often the worst sections of land, providing few greenspace benefits and taking up division resources. On average, they are about 3 acres in size.

2 INTEGRATE EDUCATION WITHIN DAILY COMMUNITIES

Schools are community hubs that organize a large part of residents' social lives. The Daily Community framework seeks to capture and promote this social structure within the built environment. GCPS's commitment to advancing the Community Schools Model aligns well with the objective to create active, thriving community centers across Gwinnett. Identifying ways to integrate educational opportunities could strengthen a community's access to education while also encouraging different forms of school siting that refocus on the neighborhood aspect of neighborhood schools. Growth can aid in this objective rather than serve as an obstacle.

OPPORTUNITIES

MORE RESOURCES OPPORTUNITIES:

1 TYING NEW PUBLIC SPACE CREATION WITH REDEVELOPMENT

As underutilized sites are redeveloped, they bring opportunities for new amenities to be incorporated into site design. Public spaces, trails, and other community spaces can be accounted for alongside housing and retail space. Providing clear guidelines and partnering with developers can make new public spaces enjoyable and inviting, but clear and sustainable management and maintenance strategies are needed.

2 REQUIRING PUBLIC ART WITHIN DAILY COMMUNITY CENTERS

As Daily Community concepts are advanced through redevelopment across Gwinnett County, there is a natural opportunity to work with community leadership to install new public art that improves aesthetics and reinforces the unique identities of Gwinnett County's diverse communities.

3 PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

The built environment influences how people of all ages navigate through their community. To ensure Daily Communities are accessible to all people, the built environment must accommodate mobility and accessibility needs across different ages and ability levels. New development and redevelopment can advance these concepts on a small scale before they are expanded to other parts of each community. Prioritizing the needs of individuals who require particular safety and accessibility features can lead to spaces that everyone can enjoy.

MORE COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES:

1 UTILIZING COUNTY BUILDINGS FOR MULTIPLE PURPOSES

Including multiple uses within one building allows departments to provide services more efficiently and take advantage of synergies between their work. Gwinnett Community Services has begun to integrate its own programming in County facilities, setting a model other departments could follow. Future County facilities and renovation projects should recognize that residents' needs evolve over time and explore options for how cross-departmental use of buildings, as well as features of the built environment (like shared parking), can strengthen communities.

2 SHARING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA TO AID IN SAFETY PLANNING

Besides building new facilities or expanding transit service—which either take significant time, are governed by other departments, or both—public safety agencies can invest in new technology to maintain response times and improve efficiency. Understanding the location of crash hotspots or utilizing advanced traffic signaling can aid in fast response times for fire, EMT, and police services. Being able to see building footprints to plan response tactics ahead of an emergency can also help with safety planning. This data and technology may be readily accessible to other departments, such as GCDOT or P&D, and sharing with public safety departments can increase their resources without significant costs. Other technologies to consider are different vehicles, including vans and ATVs, which are already being deployed on a small scale countywide.

3 IMPROVING YOUTH EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Between the Community School Model pilot programming and potential redevelopment opportunities, there are multiple ways to provide social benefits to youth. First, projects that offer shorter bus times or even allow children to walk to school can be pursued by aligning school growth with redevelopment. Situating new schools within the Daily Community context or fostering redevelopment around existing schools can strengthen connections between Gwinnett County's exemplary educational institutions and the daily lives of their students and families.

Goals & Best Practices

The Daily Community framework offers an opportunity to redevelop some of the County's underutilized spaces into active community centers with various amenities, including new greenspace, public art, safety infrastructure, and more. This section outlines several goals that expand community resources along with redevelopment opportunities. The first goal is specific to the issue of scaling resources for anticipated growth and increasing collaboration between departments. The remaining goals aim to use land use strategies to expand community resources in the county.



COLLABORATE BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS AND PARTNERS TO SCALE UP COMMUNITY RESOURCES

1

INCREASE COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

As Gwinnett County grows, collaboration between County departments, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and resident groups will be crucial for moving forward together without duplicating efforts or putting up barriers to others' objectives. Collaboration also keeps all parties informed of each other's goals and progress and could lead to joint ventures that co-locate services, such as OneStop centers being located on park property. These collaborations can also be mutually beneficial in that they leverage multiple funding sources and staff time available to provide resources at scale and equitably throughout Gwinnett County.

The most important actions P&D can take regarding interdepartmental collaboration is (1) to continue sharing updates on current and upcoming pipeline projects and (2) to involve other departments in long range plans for the redevelopment of areas within Gwinnett County. Enhancing collaboration in long term growth planning can resolve concerns from various departments regarding resource distribution, such as new facilities and staff, as well as service delivery, including equipment needs and delivery obstacles. Growth, particularly when strategically planned to include diverse housing and land uses, offers numerous community benefits but may also cause concern among service providers. Incorporating other departments' needs into long-range planning can build partnerships across departments and allow greater lead time for their own service delivery strategies.

2

ENSURE NEW PUBLIC SPACES SUPPORT COMFORT, SAFETY, AND A SENSE OF PLACE FOR ALL RESIDENTS

Providing robust Community Resources is not limited to the built environment, but it often starts with it. For example, it is often more expensive and time consuming to add accessibility features after an area has been developed than during its initial construction. There are many aspects to what makes a place accessible, including removing physical impediments for people with disabilities and enabling

multiple transportation methods to that place. Perceptions of safety and feeling welcome can also limit a place's accessibility.

The built environment forms the foundation of a great place. Wide sidewalks, bike lanes, streetlights, public space, and visual art all, to some extent, depend on development patterns that promote interaction and engagement. A solid community foundation makes it much easier to provide programming that further establishes a sense of place and identity in communities, encouraging activity and promoting quality of life. The Daily Community framework is built on these principles, with a crucial emphasis on making its benefits accessible to everyone. An essential part of the Daily Community framework is a thriving community center where residents can attend to their daily needs and enjoy various services and amenities. Well-designed public spaces, like parks and plazas, can support these kinds of activities. As the County develops more public spaces, including features that facilitate social interaction, comfort, and safety in their design, it could provide Daily Communities with worthy and enjoyable centers.

Similarly, this applies to streetscapes. In many ways, streets are the original public spaces where people socialize, exercise, and travel between private places. Often, streets are designed to optimize the convenience of drivers and car traffic. Within the Daily Community context, streets should balance the needs of all user types, rather than defaulting to maximizing efficient travel for cars.

CASE STUDY:

JOINT AD HOC ALEXANDRIA MUNICIPAL FACILITIES PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE - ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

In the city of Alexandria, Virginia, the local school board and the city council were challenged to work together to align their unique visions for long term capital improvements planning in the city. To tackle this challenge, they created a third-party entity in 2017, the Joint Ad Hoc Alexandria Municipal Facilities Plan Steering Committee, to synthesize their visions for the city's future. The committee was comprised of consultants, representatives from relevant education institutions, local development companies, and nonprofit leaders who were nominated from across the general community and interviewed by the city manager with input from the school board. The committee's work has guided both the city and the school board's capital improvements program for the next 10 years. This process has provided increased transparency for the community into two department's planning practices, increased community participation in the planning process, and helped create a unified growth vision for their city. A similar board may help streamline communications and vision setting between Gwinnett County P&D and GCPS.

Source: City of Alexandria, Task Force Subcommittees

CASE STUDY:

THE FRONT PORCH - CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

The Front Porch is an early-intervention program that provides youth services in the City of Savannah and Chatham County with an opportunity to avoid entering the justice system. With population growth, the area wanted to address the increase in juvenile-committed crimes. The program creates a Multi Agency Resource Center – the MARC – that is comprised of The Chatham County Juvenile Court System, City of Savannah Police Department, and Savannah-Chatham County School District. These agencies worked with a local nonprofit that provided staff, technical assistance, and facilitated strategic planning efforts with regional stakeholders. Through joining forces to share resources and create new programs and services, Chatham County and City of Savannah were able to achieve their objective of decreasing youth crime. Referrals from Savannah Chatham schools to the County Juvenile Court declined by 85% in the Front Porch's first year of Operation. In the first three years of operation (October 2018 - October 2021), 700 youth have been served. Though Gwinnett may not have the same exact objective, the MARC system may be a way to foster interagency collaboration to tackle other population growth issues. Perhaps Senior Services and GCDOT could collaborate with cities on expanding senior transit services.

CASE STUDY:

ALPHA LOOP - ALPHARETTA, GEORGIA

The Alpha Loop is a network of existing and planned multiuse trail segments currently being constructed in Alpharetta, Georgia. When fully built out, it will offer safe, active transportation connections to several popular activity centers across the City—including Downtown, Avalon, and North Point Mall—as well as to the Big Creek Greenway, which runs just south of North Point Mall. Originally proposed through a series of concept designs in 2016 by the City of Alpharetta, the idea quickly gained steam and was reinforced through a series of plans, including a 2018 Livable Centers Initiative study for the North Point District. With such strong momentum and public support, the City was able to partner with private developers to build out Phase 1 of the trail incrementally. Currently, the trail connects Avalon (via Avalon Fitness Park and streetside connections) to Thompson Street Park before terminating in downtown Alpharetta at Brooke Street Park. The trail provides a few key takeaways for Gwinnett County, especially as it builds out its vision for an extensive trail network. Not only does the Alpha Loop provide safe, comfortable, and accessible greenspace for its users, it also details a path forward for implementation that utilizes redevelopment as a vehicle for incremental improvements to the built environment. Gwinnett County can leverage these types of partnership and spirit of collaboration to create community connectivity and public space benefits.



Image Source:
City of Alpharetta



PARKS AND RECREATION - INFUSE COMMUNITIES WITH CONTEXT-APPROPRIATE GREENSPACE

The 2020 Gwinnett Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan outlines a clear vision of creating great public spaces and greenspace that serve their neighborhoods. Building high quality public spaces within these areas can anchor the County's collection of neighborhoods and provide social connectivity for its residents. The best practices below offer several strategies to prioritize creating new greenspace within redevelopment projects, existing rights of way, and prospective trail networks.

1 INCENTIVIZE QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES WITHIN PRIVATE REDEVELOPMENT

It can take a long time to find land for and develop a new public greenspace or public space, despite how much public support Parks and Recreation Divisions usually have. Another vehicle for developing new public space is through private redevelopment. As highlighted above, this does not always result in high quality public space; however, with active collaboration with developers interested in investing in Daily Community concepts, new public spaces at the neighborhood scale could be created.

2 EXPAND SHARED SPACE WITHIN THE PUBLIC REALM, INCLUDING IN STREET RIGHTS OF WAY

As mentioned in Goal #2, streets are often overlooked as public spaces. Despite clear traffic and safety issues, many Gwinnett rights of way possess the potential for streetscape improvements that can create public spaces and enrich pedestrian experiences. New greenspace in the right of way can also improve stormwater management through green infrastructure and offer opportunities for public art and wayfinding resources. Different designs will be needed for different urban scales, but the point remains: streets are for people and should be designed accordingly.

3 EXPAND AND CONNECT NEW PUBLIC SPACES ALONG LINEAR CORRIDORS, INCLUDING TRAILS

Outside of Daily Community centers of activity, other public spaces can be delivered through trails. The County's ambitious goal for new trail miles offers many opportunities for new public space. Structured activities and passive greenspace could offer new public space with clear access points for maintenance.

CASE STUDY:

NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA PARK PROVISION AND PARK IMPACT FEES - NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA, 2021

Nassau County, FL, is one of the few remaining undeveloped counties in Florida and is considered the Eastern Gateway to Florida. As the County continues to grow, the County's Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual establishes policies that ensure all new private developments containing a residential component address both the neighborhood and regional parks and recreation needs of existing and future residents.

The Design Manual states that all developments containing 25 units or more in nonrural residential development areas would construct and maintain a Neighborhood Park that is based on the standard of four acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. While Neighborhood Parks are recommended to be within 5-10 acres, the Design Manual provides a series of Prototypical Neighborhood Parks that guide the type of land, layout, design, and orientation of proposed parks.

Additionally, all new development containing a residential component would dedicate a proportionate share of recreation land or pay the applicable impact fee for parkland to mitigate the new demand on Regional Parks created by new residents within the proposed development based upon the level of service standards adopted in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The County has the sole decision to require land dedication or accept payment of impact fees in accordance with the adopted Impact Fee Regulations. Gwinnett County could work with private developers early in the master planning process to explore strategies of how proposed parkland from one development could be located along the edges of the development boundary and be combined with the proposed parkland of adjacent future developments to create a larger, integrated green space for the community.

Source: (Nassau County, 2021)



CASE STUDY:

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (NYCDOT) PLAZAS PROGRAM - CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, NEW YORK, 2023

While Manhattan Island is urbanized to a vastly different degree than Gwinnett County, the City of New York's Plazas Program offers some insightful lessons for how to set aside public space within existing infrastructure corridors.

The City of New York has established a goal for all residents to be able to live within a 10-minute walk of a quality open space. One of the strategies to achieve this goal is to transform underused streets into vibrant, social public spaces. To accomplish this, NYC DOT partners with select organizations to transform these underutilized streets and create neighborhood plazas that contain tables, seating, trees, plants, lighting, bike racks, public art, and drinking fountains.

The design and construction of the sites are funded by the NYC DOT and designed through a community engagement process. Community groups are then responsible for these spaces' operations, maintenance, management, and programming so they continue to be vibrant pedestrian plazas. This public partnership requires high community engagement and trust but has yielded impressive results. This model could fit nicely within the Daily Community framework: it would build community buyin and repurpose existing infrastructure to create the

connected communities that Gwinnett County residents want to see.



*Image Source:
Ryan Russo/NYC DOT*

CASE STUDY:

LAFITTE GREENWAY, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA - LAFITTE GREENWAY, 2023

The Lafitte Greenway is a 2.6 mile linear park and multiuse trail in the heart of New Orleans. The Greenway transforms one of the city's most historic transportation corridors—originally a canal connecting to Bayou St. John to the edge of the French Quarter and later a railroad right of way that sat vacant since the mid 20th century—into a multiuse transportation corridor and linear park. The Greenway features recreational facilities, fitness and cultural programming, open green space, and innovative stormwater management features. The path is fully lit with LED energy efficient trail lighting and includes curb extensions, signalized high visibility crosswalks, Americans with Disabilities Act compliant curb ramps at sidewalk corners, environmental remediation, a crushed stone walking path and a bicycle and pedestrian roundabout. While these kinds of existing linear structures are less common in Gwinnett County, the programming around the trail provides a good example of how the County might infuse future trail corridors with high quality public space.



Source: Dana Brown & Associates



PUBLIC SAFETY – MAINTAIN RESPONSE TIMES AMIDST INCREASE IN CALL VOLUME

While maintaining response times amidst increases in call volumes are the top priorities for the Gwinnett County Police Department and Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services, the responsibility for maintaining the county as a place of choice falls on all departments. As previously discussed, land use and consequent transportation issues have impacts on departments tasked with Public Safety; therefore, Planning and Development should consider growth best practices that facilitate public safety's top priorities where possible.

1 SHARE RESOURCES ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

While Gwinnett County is fortunate to have a strong tax digest, the growing demands of an increasing amount of residents can put a strain on budgets, making hiring staff, acquiring equipment, and keeping up with workloads challenging. However, sharing resources, such as staff knowledge and time, advanced technology (particularly digital tools), and proactively providing information can help reduce the burdens of growth. Pertinent technology may include GIS data, license, and modeling. As previously mentioned, sharing development plans well in advance can help give proper planning time. Sharing data on traffic accident hot spots can inform GCDOT's roadway improvements, aiming to reduce accidents and subsequently decrease the emergency calls requiring response from officers, firefighters and EMTs.

CASE STUDY:

ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROTECTION AND CRIME TRACKING (EMPACT), FLORIDA

Geographic Information Systems, commonly referred to as GIS, are computer based tools that help to visualize, analyze, and interpret geographic data. Many public safety departments across the country are already using this software to help respond to emergencies. For example, police departments in Florida implement GIS software through a program called EMPACT: Electronic Monitoring Protection and Crime Tracking. This program automatically correlates data from GPS software used to track parolees, those on probation, or individuals released before their trial with local crime incident data. This can determine whether an individual was at the scene of the incident. While this may not be a tool GCPD is interested in, working with Planning and Development's GIS team may help them discover other uses for the software that can help maintain ideal response times.

2

INTEGRATE PUBLIC SAFETY ACCESS INTO REDEVELOPMENT DESIGNS THROUGH EYES ON THE STREET

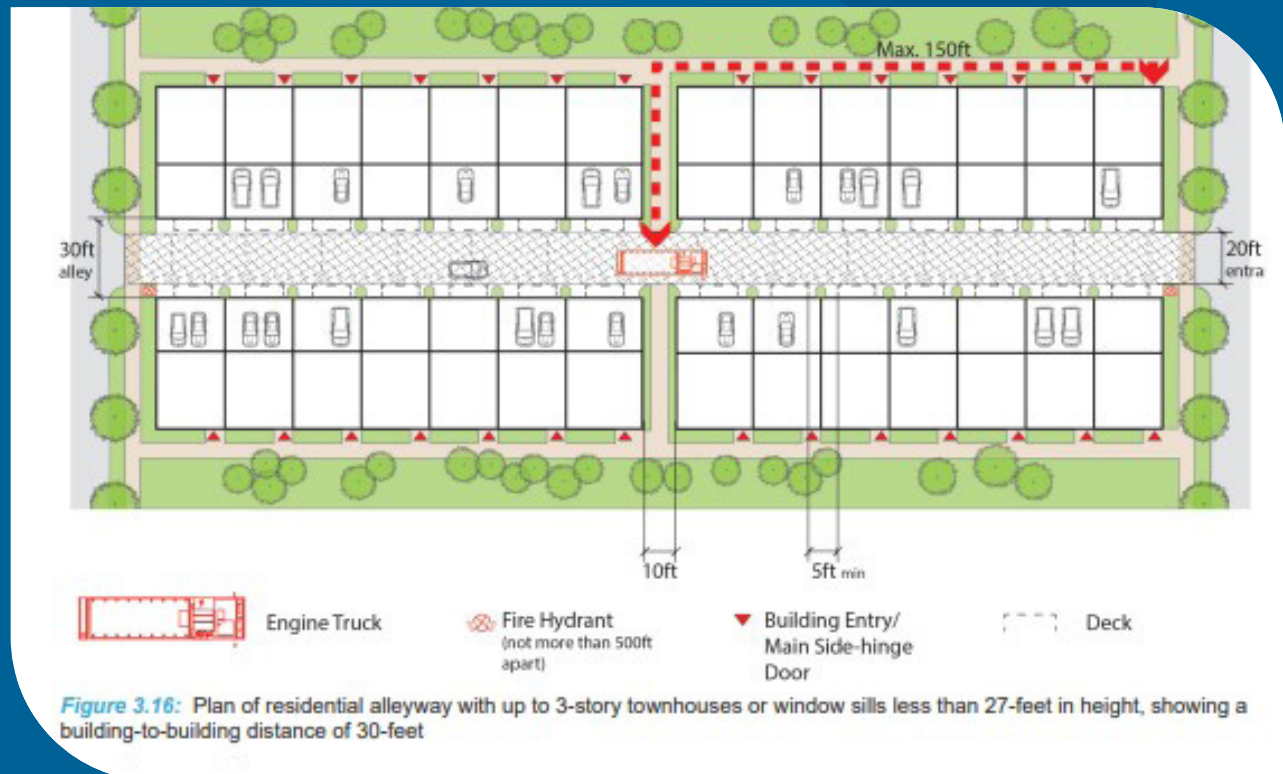
Some aspects of good design, such as human scaled buildings and multi-functional roadways, may make emergency response more challenging. As the Montgomery County Case study highlighted however, good design and safety do not have to be at odds with each other. Design guidelines should be developed with input from public safety. With advanced notice, public safety providers can also explore alternative forms and scales of transportation for fire fighters, police, and EMTs that fit within denser developments, including smaller vehicles and additional mobility options. Again, using new technologies such as drones could also facilitate this.

A primary benefit of good land use planning is decreases in congestion as walkability and connectivity are integrated into redevelopment. Gwinnett County Police and Fire and Emergency Services both recognize this can help decrease response times for their respective departments. P&D partnerships with GCPD and GCFES can help promote public support for these policies throughout the community as both these departments are two of the most public facing throughout the county.

CASE STUDY:

FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCESS PERFORMANCE-BASED DESIGN GUIDE - MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services worked with Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service to produce a design guideline booklet for professional design communities and developers within their county. The Fire Department Access Performance-Based Design Guide was a collaborative effort between MCPDS, MCFRS, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The guide explains existing fire department design elements, provides studies in performance-based access, utility, and street design alternatives, and makes recommendations for streetscapes and pedestrian and bicycle safety infrastructure that are both best design practices and compatible with fire protection services. The guide includes helpful street diagrams that account for both the best practices and fire needs. The diagrams include measurements related to the code requirements as well. Gwinnett County Planning and Development and Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services could either create a similar document specifically using Gwinnett's requirements or look to the collaboration process between the departments when writing larger design guidelines for the County.



Source: Maryland County Department of Public Safety

CASE STUDY:

DURHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT HIGH RISE FIRE TRAINING - RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Like Gwinnett County, the Research Triangle area in North Carolina has seen a rapid increase in its population and a consequent shift in its urban development patterns. Specifically, the Raleigh and Durham skylines are beginning to grow vertically to accommodate denser development patterns and more walkable cities. The Durham Fire Department is responding to the change by instituting high-rise specific training opportunities for its officers. They specifically created the high-rise training course that recruits must complete in response to the 27 high rise development projects that were underway in 2022. This case study shows how planning departments and public safety providers can work together to share information crucial to future resources. Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services may want to explore development specific training, such as mixed use buildings as new development patterns are introduced into the county in the coming year. Gwinnett's P&D department should collaborate with GCFES.



Image Source: Spectrum News



ARTS & CULTURE – STRENGTHEN DAILY COMMUNITY IDENTITIES THROUGH ART AND CULTURAL PROGRAMMING IN CENTERS

Currently in Gwinnett County, people feel connected to their communities through regularly visiting places for daily needs, such as grocery shopping, work, or school. However, these identities could be strengthened through celebrating the intangible aspects of these communities and highlighting their diverse cultures through public art and cultural programming.

1

IDENTIFY UNDERUTILIZED ASSETS IN DAILY COMMUNITY CENTERS

The County should work to identify underutilized arts and culture assets that can be targeted through new programming and investment. The first step is to conduct an asset inventory within Daily Community centers, then work to identify candidate sites for aesthetic improvements. These could be funded through partnerships with local business owners and artists, or through grant funding. Other areas to seek grant finding for are facade and streetscape improvements. These investments can help residents feel a sense of pride in their community, which in turn leads to better civic engagement, better public safety, and increased economic activity.

2

PROVIDE DEDICATED STAFF TIME AND FUNDING FOR ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL WORK

As the County begins to expand its participation in the ongoing arts and culture work of residents, providing a dedicated staff person and funding for both arts and culture funding can accomplish a lot of necessary tasks. This staff member can design and support tactical, low stakes projects as a catalytic project to increase public support. They can further the support by working with property owners and residents to increase buy in. They could then go on to create public private partnerships with existing community groups dedicated to arts promotion countywide, including cities. Finally, they should lead work to update the Unified Development Ordinance to remove barriers to public art, have appropriate requirements around its creation, and formalize a public art maintenance strategy. If a current staff member is tasked with this portfolio, the county should consider applying them for the Georgia Economic Placemaking Collaborative two year curriculum.

CASE STUDY:

THE PARKING SPACES - IOWA CITY, IOWA

The Parking Spaces project is an audio and artistic art project in Iowa City that invites residents and visitors to explore the city and learn about the history of specific places through scanning QR codes posted in artistic installations in parking spaces throughout the city. Upon arriving at an installation, visitors can scan the QR code and begin listening to a 5-10 narration of the site, concluded with recommendations on which site to visit next. The Iowa City Public Library will be providing pre-loaded mp3 players for those who don't have a smart phone to participate with. Residents who have participated in the project, both through its creation and its enjoyment, say that the project has helped them find accessibility and belonging in their city. It's also helped with economic development as visitors return to hear updates to the project as new parking space installations are brought online. Given the extensive history and parking spaces in Gwinnett, the County could explore a similar project.

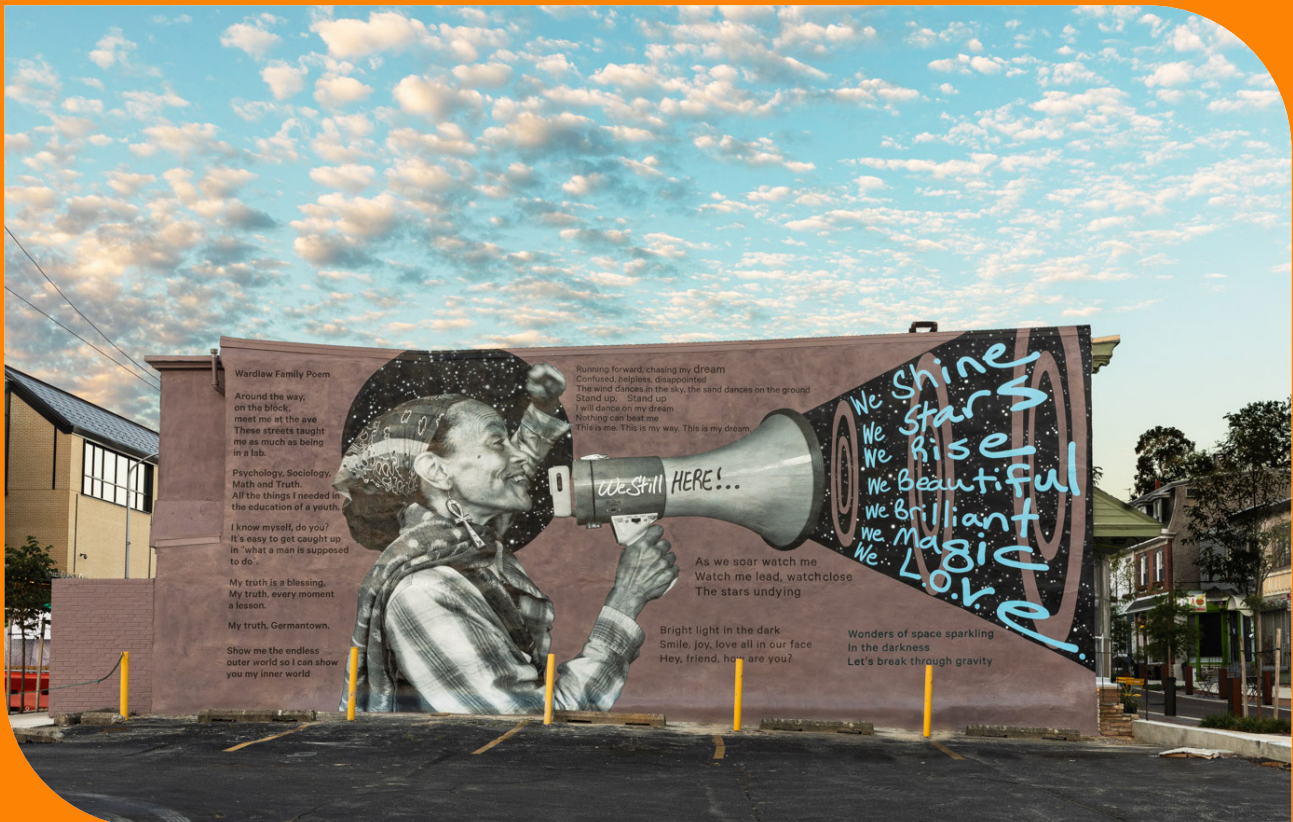


*Contributor Margee Miller near space 7 installation
Image Source: IowaCityPress-Citizen*

CASE STUDY:

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA - PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia has become known as the Mural Capital of the World and is home to 4,000 murals. Many of these were created through the Mural Arts Philadelphia program, which promotes a collaborative process with communities, artists, and the public realm they occupy to create public art. MAP started out as a public program in 1984 out of the mayor's office. The objective was to redirect young graffiti artists into positive public art projects in approved public spaces. As the program grew in success and began attracting renowned artists, it evolved into Mural Arts Philadelphia, as formally recognized by the mayor's office in 1997. They create 50-100 public art projects per year, and fund maintenance and restoration projects as well. In addition to public art, the program engages the community through art education, environmental justice work and restorative justice work. Much of their work is centered in their outdoor art gallery, and an area that attracts over 15,000 residents and visitors per year and contributes to the arts economy in the city. As Gwinnett gears up to be more actively involved in creating public art, it can look to Mural Arts Philadelphia for inspiration on context-centered work driven through partnerships with residents.



*We Are Still here Mural by Chi Thomas aka Jetsonorama and Ursula Rucker
Image Source: Artworks Philadelphia*



EDUCATION – INVEST IN SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY CENTERS

Schools are already focal points for a specific subset of the community: children and their families. From homework to transportation and extracurricular activities, school related logistics and programming organize, at least in part, the lives of many Gwinnett residents. Building stronger connections between schools and the communities they serve is central to the Community Schools Model and can reinforce the Daily Community framework throughout Gwinnett.

1 ESTABLISH STRONG CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DAILY COMMUNITY CENTERS, NEIGHBORHOODS, COMMUNITY FACILITIES, AND SCHOOLS

Like many other Georgia communities, Gwinnett County Public Schools struggle with long student commutes. Extended trips via bus or car exert pressure on both the students and the broader educational system. Busing, especially in Gwinnett, is expensive. When considering new school-site locations, alternatives should be considered for pedestrian access, especially those near Daily Community centers or existing or planned trail corridors.

For existing schools, Planning and Development should coordinate with DOT to conduct sidewalk audits, filling gaps where appropriate. Opportunities could also exist to establish incremental pedestrian connections within existing single family neighborhoods, stitching entire communities together and providing safe school routes.

2 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATORS TO RESIDE IN THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

Teachers provide a crucial resource to the communities they serve. However, across the country, many cannot fully become members of those communities due to nationwide housing affordability issues and Georgia teacher pay shortages. When teachers cannot afford to reside in their school district, or in the case of a district as large as GCPSS, reside close to their school of employment, it can accelerate teacher staffing problems. While Gwinnett teachers enjoy an adjusted average salary of \$63,825, new teacher salaries are about \$47,000. With the housing shortage issues discussed in the Housing Element, Gwinnett needs innovative strategies to ensure housing solutions contribute to teacher staffing stability and support increasing the scale of teachers as new teachers must be hired to continue to meet the demand of Gwinnett's projected 2045 youth population. A stable teacher workforce strengthens the sense of community, improves education outcomes, and can help increase staff for the growing population as teachers with long-standing tenures are able to train incoming teachers more effectively. Helping teachers to reside close to their schools could involve offering housing vouchers beyond regular salaries, constructing residences on school premises or nearby government owned land, or redeveloping unused school buildings into cost effective apartments for teachers.

CASE STUDY:

LINDEN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY PATHWAY - ARGENTINE TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

Argentine Township, and the Linden, Argentine, Fenton and Fenton Township Pathways Group began planning for a community pathway primarily for cyclists across southwest Genesee County in Michigan. LAFF eventually teamed up with Linden Community Schools and the Genesee County Road Commission to expand this vision to turn the project into a multiuse path that would facilitate regionwide connectivity as well as local connectivity to link neighborhoods in the Township to public school campuses. This group used Michigan's Safe Routes to School Guidelines to create an in depth planning process and receive a grant to bring this connected vision to life. Though there were a large number of entities involved in that process, the school board and township leadership credit the community with driving the million dollar project to completion. The trails are getting high use from the students, and they have even inspired neighboring communities to support the creation of a wider regional trail system. A catalytic project such as this could help Gwinnett schools better integrate into their neighborhoods and align the physical environment to the Community Schools Model's goals.



Image Source: Michigan Safe Routes to School

CASE STUDY:

SCHOOL DISTRICT CREATED TEACHER HOUSING - ARIZONA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Several school districts across the state of Arizona are investing in expanding housing options in their communities to support recruiting and retaining teaching staff. Eight school districts are building housing directly using federal pandemic relief money. This new teacher-exclusive housing will be heavily subsidized as well. Many of these housing projects are smaller-scale and meant to be transitional. The Chino Valley Unified School District is building 10 units at 400 square feet and \$5,500 a month, while the Sedona-Oak Creek School District is converting a vacant school building into 1 and 2-bedroom apartments. Another Prescott Unified School District is building six 800 square-foot homes in the long directly behind an elementary school. Gwinnett County should consider explore how partnerships between Departments can foster similar opportunities for school faculty and system staff.



HEALTH & WELLNESS – DEVELOP THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TO INCREASE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Every Gwinnett County resident deserves access to the renowned amenities and opportunities the County offers. This involves ensuring mobility and access is open to people of varying health needs and ability levels. Because the built environment governs the level to which residents can be active safely in their community, special considerations must be made to ensure equitable access for residents of all ages.

1

PURSUE POLICIES THAT CREATE ACCESSIBILITY / PROMOTE AGING IN PLACE

With the silver tsunami on the horizon, the need to provide places for Gwinnett's seniors to age in place will be critical. This will require coordination with housing initiatives that promote alternative housing types across Daily Communities that fit within their context. These could include denser types (townhomes, multifamily) within centers, and duplexes and accessory dwelling units in the surrounding neighborhoods. The County should work with private developers to ensure appropriate community space and amenities exist within new or redeveloped housing projects. Beyond just housing, the greater senior population requires safe access to goods and services, along with enhanced programs to maintain lifelong quality of life. A first step would be to inventory redevelopment opportunities near existing Senior Centers or OneStop Centers as targeted senior housing opportunities.

2

CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SAFE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Personal mobility is a critical component for maintaining mental health. Providing mobility options for those too young to drive or who can no longer drive because of deteriorating health (seniors or otherwise) enables all residents to partake in the benefits of their Daily Community.

In Gwinnett County's case, retrofitting a more connected street grid will be arduous and lengthy. While efforts to build new pedestrian connections are underway, there are other methods for promoting safe roadways for all users, including Complete Streets principles and aligning denser land uses with transportation infrastructure. In the short term, the County can begin to encourage active transportation and other alternative modes through programming. GCPS, DOT, and P&D should collaborate to organize walk/bike/ride to school days for young people, helping children understand their route to school. For seniors, recreational street closure programs in specific areas could begin to reframe the conversation about mobility and shape improvements that encourage that type of environment in Daily Communities.

CASE STUDY:

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS - PORTLAND, OREGON

Accessory Dwelling Units, known by many colloquial names like granny flats or mother-in-law suites provide one housing option for active adults and seniors looking to downsize without relocating completely. While they're becoming more popular among many generations, Portland's approach has kept seniors' desires to age in place at the forefront of its strategy. Through updates to its zoning, the City increased the allowable size of ADUs to 75 percent of the lot up to 800 square feet. The City also suspended fees to support infrastructure improvements, which could in some cases rise to \$10,000, creating burdens for anyone interested in building ADUs but especially retirees. Since these changes were proposed, about 10 times as many ADUs have been built, several by seniors who are interested in remaining in their neighborhoods—and in some cases, on their own lot while they rent out the main structure.



*Case Study Source: AARP
Image Source: John Anderson*

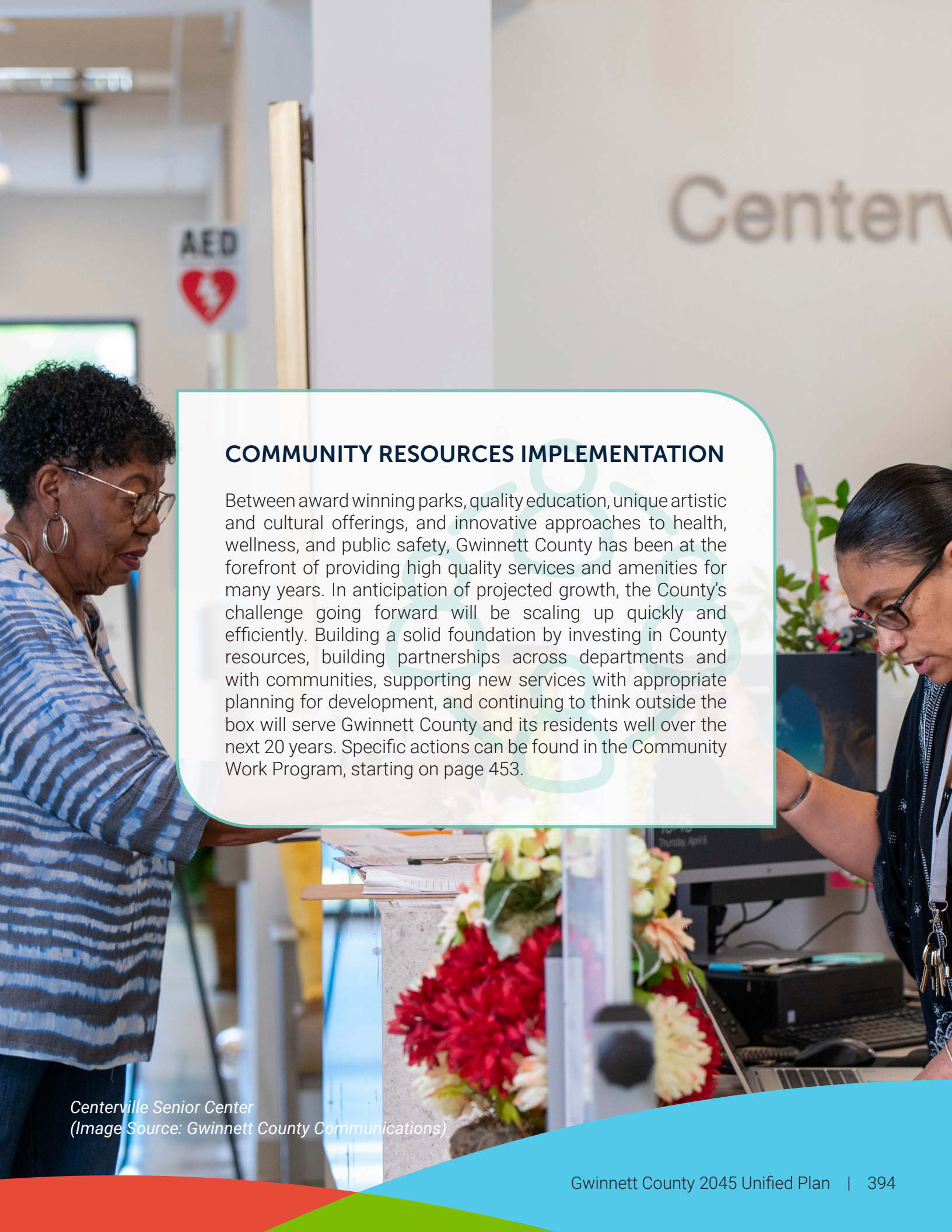
CASE STUDY:

EDUCATIONAL FIELD TRIPS - LITTLE MIAMI SCENIC TRAIL, YELLOW SPRINGS, OHIO

Communities along the Little Miami Scenic Trail in South Central Ohio have taken advantage of the trail's scenic beauty to bring students closer to nature—and encourage physical activity, health, and wellness in the process. This 78-mile trail corridor began humbly in the 1980s when the Ohio Department of Transportation began converting pieces of the former rail corridor to trail segments, starting in Xenia, Ohio before expanding southwest and northeast. The trail now hosts hundreds of thousands of Ohio residents per year who use it for recreation, as well as active transportation. Not only has the trail drawn visitors from far and wide, but it has also built out programs for outdoor education, health, and wellness. In partnership with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the Yellow Springs School District hosts an outdoor education program called Into the Wild every year, which brings in public agencies like the Department of Natural Resources to organize outdoor classroom experiences for middle schoolers in between the miles they spend on their bikes. While the Little Miami Scenic Trail is much longer than Gwinnett's current trail systems, the County can imbue its own trail expansion plans with cross-disciplinary programming along the future Chattahoochee River Corridor, Yellow River Greenway, and others—connecting students with nature, encouraging physical health and wellness, and offering safe ways to explore their communities.



Image Source: Wikimedia Commons



COMMUNITY RESOURCES IMPLEMENTATION

Between award winning parks, quality education, unique artistic and cultural offerings, and innovative approaches to health, wellness, and public safety, Gwinnett County has been at the forefront of providing high quality services and amenities for many years. In anticipation of projected growth, the County's challenge going forward will be scaling up quickly and efficiently. Building a solid foundation by investing in County resources, building partnerships across departments and with communities, supporting new services with appropriate planning for development, and continuing to think outside the box will serve Gwinnett County and its residents well over the next 20 years. Specific actions can be found in the Community Work Program, starting on page 453.

*Centerville Senior Center
(Image Source: Gwinnett County Communications)*