

CHAPTER 11 POLICIES

This chapter contains a consolidated set of policies, except for those related to character and land use, which are presented in Chapter 9. The location of non-character area policies in a single chapter represents a change from the original Community Agenda document (2006) which presented policies in each chapter as appropriate. The consolidation of non-character policies in one chapter facilitates easier review for consistency. Policies are divided generally along the same topics as the chapters of this Community Agenda (housing, economic development, community facilities and services, etc.).

HOUSING

In considering annexations, residential rezonings, and master plan approvals for mixed use and planned unit developments, the city will consider the extent to which residential development proposals retain or detract from the policies adopted below, both on a citywide basis; and within individual developments. Maintaining these policies will help promote diverse housing opportunities. Significant deviations from the policies on individual development sites or citywide may be cited as a reason to deny rezoning, and/or master plan approvals. However, the city is not required to deny such development proposals even though individual development proposals may not be consistent with these housing policies.

1. ***Housing opportunities objective.*** Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.
2. ***Housing unit mix.*** A desirable mix of housing types for Flowery Branch is as follows: Detached, single-family – 60%; Manufactured homes – 5%; Townhouses – 15%; and Apartments and Condominiums – 20%.
3. ***Occupancy mix.*** A desirable mix of owner-occupied to renter-occupied housing units is 2:1 (i.e., two-thirds owner-occupied and one-third renter occupied).
4. ***Age and condition of housing.*** Programs and incentives should be established to assist homeowners in upgrading existing, smaller homes in Flowery Branch so that they better meet existing and future market needs. In cases where such small housing is concentrated and meets age qualifications, such neighborhoods of smaller homes should be retained and considered for historic district status. Where homes are in disrepair, housing maintenance requirements and appearance standards should be imposed. Where transitions of land use are contemplated in the future land use plan, such homes may be appropriately replaced with larger homes or transitioned to offices or other land uses compatible with the residential neighborhood.
5. ***Housing for the elderly.*** A senior household should be allowed to add an accessory apartment to an existing, smaller existing home as a means of “aging in place,” and retaining and upgrading their current housing unit while adding a new source of income. The needs of seniors should be considered in new housing designs. When planned unit and mixed-use developments are considered, strong consideration should be given to providing a small percentage (10-20%) of units designed specifically for senior living and life-cycle housing. Over time with an aging population, the need for nursing home beds

and other institutionalized residential living facilities will increase. Institutional residential facilities such as nursing or personal care homes should therefore also be considered as a part of planned unit and mixed-use development proposals. Institutional residential living should also be considered appropriate in transitional areas between established residential neighborhoods and office/commercial centers.

6. **Residential property maintenance and housing “code” enforcement.** Where existing housing units or residential neighborhoods have visible signs of disrepair or initial signs of neighborhood instability due to housing conditions, Flowerly Branch will enforce housing codes and property maintenance standards. Where manufactured homes are established outside of manufactured home parks, they should adhere to regulatory standards that will ensure they are compatible with other homes in the neighborhood.
7. **Housing grants and programs.** Flowerly Branch will identify and pursue various private, state, and federal housing programs designed to improve the housing stock. These may include but are not limited to Community Home Improvement Program (CHIP), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Habitat for Humanity initiatives, and weatherization programs for improving the energy efficiency of existing homes. The City will also consider the prospect for establishing a nonprofit community-based housing organization to provide a rehabilitation program for existing homes in Flowerly Branch.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. **Appropriate business objective.** The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.
2. **Employment options objective.** A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.
3. **Educational opportunities objective.** Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.
4. Flowerly Branch should work with the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce and other economic development agencies to attract new businesses and industries, preferably those with above-average wages. The city will assess the effectiveness of the Economic Development Council with regard to its economic development recruitment efforts in Flowerly Branch adjust strategies if necessary.
5. Retain existing businesses and encourage new business relocations by maintaining a positive business climate.
6. Capitalize on the City’s access to Interstate 985 (including a second proposed interchange) and its close proximity to Lake Lanier and the Atlanta region.

7. Diversify the city's economy to reduce its reliance upon any one employment sector or industry (e.g., manufacturing or retail).
8. Remove unnecessary regulatory and other impediments which may negatively affect the retention and expansion of existing businesses.
9. Provide the necessary infrastructure (especially water, sewer, and pedestrian facilities) to support tourism and job growth within activity centers, neighborhood commercial areas, industrial employment areas, and the revitalization of Old Town.
10. Protect resources, natural and cultural, that can increase tourism in the community.
11. Support activities that bring attention to and sustain the economic vitality of the City's historic district.
12. When mixed-use or planned unit developments are proposed, consider the development's overall contribution to the economic base of the City in relation to local labor force employment needs.
13. Tap the resources and volunteer labor pool of senior residents in all economic development and redevelopment efforts.
14. Consider the viability of attracting seniors as an economic development strategy.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Generally

1. ***Level of service standards.*** Establish and maintain level-of-service and/or performance standards for all community facilities and services provided by the City.
2. ***Police protection.*** Ensure that the police department has adequate personnel, equipment, training, and facilities. Maintain a target officer to population ratio as may be established by national professional organizations.
3. ***Solid waste management.*** Implement the City's comprehensive solid waste management plan. Pursue waste diversion, composting, and recycling strategies.
4. ***Emergency preparedness.*** Periodically review and revise the disaster preparedness and emergency management plans in conjunction with Hall County.

Water System

1. Meet at a minimum the strict water quality standards established pursuant to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, as amended.
2. Whenever possible, water supply lines should be laid out in a grid-like manner so that there are no dead ends (i.e., a practice called "looping"). The advantage of looping is that there are no dead ends where water can stagnate, and if repairs are required, smaller areas will have the water supply cut off.

3. It is important for the City to anticipate the need to replace obsolete water lines. Flowers Branch will spend money each year for replacements of water lines so as to avoid the costs of replacing a major portion of the water system at a later time.
4. Fire flows of 1,500 gallons per minute will be maintained in commercial areas and at least 1,000 gallons per minute be available in residential areas.
5. The optimum range for water system pressure is between 50 and 70 pounds per square inch (psi). A minimum pressure of 20 psi is needed during fires, and customer complaints can be expected when water pressure falls below 20 psi. Too much pressure can cause leakage and failure of older hot water heaters, so a maximum main pressure is 100 psi.
6. Flowers Branch will develop and implement a master plan and water conservation management program that meets the requirements of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.
7. Contingency plans should be prepared for dealing with major water line breaks, loss of water sources during drought, and other possible damages to the water system such as flooding.
8. Water rates will be established with conservation in mind. The revenue produced by the system should be sufficient to pay for all necessary capital expenditures, operation and maintenance costs, debt service, administrative costs, and provide a contingency fund for emergencies.
9. Developers of new subdivisions should be required to install the water mains and appurtenances through or along the tract and deed the facilities to the City.
10. The City should establish a policy for the "oversizing" of water mains so that when a larger water main is needed than would serve the subdivision or development, the City can contribute a prorated share of the cost to construct a water main that serves a larger population or area.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

1. **Regional cooperation objective.** Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.
2. **Regional solutions objective.** Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.
3. **Annexation.** Consider municipal boundary expansion opportunities as appropriate, including any properties identified as potential annexation areas and when unincorporated property owners petition for annexation. Proactively pursue annexation of areas adjacent to the city to square off city limit boundaries.

4. **Intergovernmental agreements.** Periodically assess existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as appropriate.
5. **Information sharing.** Share resources and information with all government entities.
6. **Cooperative land use planning.** Participate in cooperative efforts between Hall County and its cities to jointly plan land uses, which contributes to the overall future development and quality of life throughout the county, region, and state.
7. **Conflict resolution.** Resolve conflicts with other local governments through established mediation processes or other informal or formal means.

TRANSPORTATION

1. **Transportation alternatives objective.** Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged.
2. **Level of service standard for roads.** Flowers Branch adopts a level of service (LOS) "D," which means that vehicle speed begins to decline slightly with increasing flows and the speed and freedom of movement are severely restricted.
3. **Access management.** Access management specifications will be applied when existing development is modified or new buildings are added. It is desirable to limit access onto arterial roads to mostly existing access points. For those parcels that do not currently have direct access to abutting arterials, it is desirable to provide connections to access roads as opposed to new curb cuts or access points directly onto the arterial. The necessary spacing of driveways (and roads) depends on speed limits and must account for driver perception and reaction time. On state highways, driveways are subject to *Georgia Department of Transportation Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control*, any official revisions thereto, and other adopted local or state regulations. Aligning access points on opposite sides of a road or highway is important in terms of vehicular safety and the economy of road construction. Aligning access points (curb cuts) on opposite sides of the roads is considered essential when the road is divided by a median and a median break occurs. The entire parcel, rather than simply a particular project, needs to be considered in formulating and approving access plans. In the event that a subdivision or land development required to file development plans with the City has access to a city street which is an unimproved or substandard road, improvements need to be considered through a development agreement.
4. **Interparcel access.** Consideration needs to be given to how each land development will connect with compatible land use developments that it abuts. In order to do so, each land development has to be planned with driveway connections across property lines, when the abutting land uses are compatible. When cut or fill is involved in the grading of an individual building pad or development site, the finished grade of the parking lot or driveway needs to be terminated far enough inside the property to allow for the slope to return to that of the natural ground at the property line. The finished grade of any parking lot or driveway should be no more than fifteen (15) percent higher or lower than the natural ground elevation of the property at each abutting property line with frontage on the highway, to allow for driveway connections at acceptable grades. In addition to transportation benefits, proper grading at property lines also provides for a blending of

the finished site elevations in a manner so that stark contrasts in the landscape will not occur and so that grading practices will be more in keeping with the natural topography.

5. **On-site circulation standards.** Service functions (e.g., deliveries, maintenance activities) need to be integrated into the circulation pattern in a manner which minimizes conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians. Access for service vehicles, trash collection and storage areas need to be located on alleys where alleys exist. When no alley exists, access needs to be provided to the rear or sides of buildings being served.
6. **Traffic impact study.** A traffic impact study is needed for developments generating 100 or more trips in a peak hour or 1,000 vehicle trips per day, to determine the most appropriate road improvements. Prior to development approval, additional road right-of-way for a local road or frontage road may be needed at intersections or at other locations fronting the property where turning lanes, storage lanes, medians, or realignments are required for traffic safety, and where the existing right-of-way would be inadequate to accommodate the road, drainage, and utility, and other improvements necessitated by the development.
7. **Local street standards.** Flowery Branch will permit flexible, contextual street standards, depending on the type of development and character area. For instance, within the traditional neighborhood development character area, alleys are encouraged, with garages and carports fronting the alley rather than the street. Development regulations will accommodate variations in street design standards (width, construction materials, engineering geometry, etc.) and provide street standards appropriate for the various contexts found in the community (e.g., historic districts, environmentally sensitive areas, rural areas, skinny streets in the downtown, etc.).
8. **Extend Old Town street grid where possible.** The small block pattern found in the center of downtown should be extended as more dense, urban development proceeds outward. To ensure compatibility with the unique street grid pattern in Flowery Branch's Old Town, development in and near the downtown core needs to be served with adequate road capacity, pedestrian friendly design features, good connectivity, and improved streetscapes.
9. **Street trees.** Street trees should be required in Old Town, mixed-use, traditional neighborhood development, neighborhood commercial, and activity center character areas. They should be encouraged if not required in suburban residential areas. In conservation subdivisions, natural groupings of trees (left in their original state) are preferred over the replanting of non-indigenous tree species.
10. **Street lighting.** Street lights should be required unless considered out of character with the development, such as in conservation subdivisions. Where provided, street lights need to conform to construction standards and specifications for light levels, glare reduction, uniformity, and color. In Old Town and adjoining areas, street lights should conform to design standards for the streetscapes.
11. **Bicycle facilities.** Bicycle facilities should be installed when called for in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. When installed, bike paths, bike lanes, and other bicycle facilities need to be designed in accordance with the *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, or acceptable alternative.

12. **On-street parking in Old Town.** Through redevelopment planning the City will anticipate and help to serve the anticipated needs for parking to serve future development in Old Town. The City will permit some of the required minimum parking spaces in mixed use, traditional neighborhood, and Old Town character areas to be met with on-street parking.
13. **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility.** The ADA is federal civil rights legislation passed in 1990 which requires accessibility for disabled persons. Curb (wheelchair) ramps provide access between the sidewalk and roadway for people using wheelchairs, strollers, walkers, crutches, handcarts, bicycles, and also for pedestrians with mobility impairments who have trouble stepping up and down high curbs. Curb ramps must be installed at all intersections as mandated by federal legislation. Wheelchair ramps must have a slope of 1:10 and must be designed in accordance with the ADA guidelines. All newly constructed and altered roadway projects must include curb ramps. Existing facilities without curb ramps should be upgraded where deficient. While curb ramps are needed for use on all types of streets, priority locations are in downtown areas and on streets near schools, parks, medical facilities, shopping areas, and near residences with people who use wheelchairs.
14. **Porous paving.** Porous pavement designs and grass pavers may be appropriate in some developments. Porous pavement and grass pavers reduce runoff by allowing it to pass through the paved surface and infiltrate back into the soil and groundwater. Utilizing porous pavements and grass pavers also reduces or eliminates land dedicated to surface storm water management facilities.
15. **Road resurfacing program.** The City needs to carry out road maintenance and rehabilitation projects to upkeep the local road system. Surface treatment, crack filling, and pothole filling are a routine part of a pavement management program. The city's pavement maintenance program should include correction of any soft spot locations (weak base) and the routine filling of potholes.

NATURAL RESOURCES

1. **Open space preservation objective:** New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.
2. **Environmental protection objective:** Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.
3. **Water quality.** Install, maintain, and enforce best management practices for water quality.
4. **Environmental protection.** Evaluate each proposed development's compatibility with the existing environment to determine the limitations and capabilities of the site for development. Limit development to a level that does not exceed the capabilities and requirements of a healthy environment. Limit development in environmentally sensitive areas such as water supply watersheds, severe topography, and areas with drainage

problems. Prohibit development within flood plains and designated stream buffers and acquire the most environmentally sensitive areas in the City, while protecting the private property rights of landowners.

5. **Environmental restoration and mitigation.** Restore and enhance environmental functions damaged by prior site activities.
6. **Steep slopes.** Development should respect, and blend with, the existing topography of the land. Development proposed on slopes of 25 percent or more should be subject to greater scrutiny and limitations to protect them from adverse development impacts.
7. **Scenic Views.** Development shall not be allowed to dominate or overwhelm the scenic view of the hillside from Main Street in Old Town looking east across Atlanta Highway.
8. **Tree protection and landscaping practices.** Use reclaimed water on large landscaped areas. Promote the preservation of trees as part of the land development and construction process on nonresidential and multi-family residential properties, including maintenance of a minimum tree density. Prevent the indiscriminate removal of trees and reduction of canopy cover within the City. Prevent massive grading of land, without provision for replacement of trees. Encourage or require the planting of street trees in subdivisions.
9. **Connectivity of open spaces.** Creation of new open space and connection to existing or planned open spaces are priorities and will be sought in the review of development proposals, as appropriate. The requirement of open spaces, and their designs, will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the city's objectives of creating pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use places and destinations in Old Town and accessible linkages to them. Improving accessibility to parks and creating pedestrian links between the open spaces and the public park(s) in Old Town will greatly strengthen the urban core of the City and will therefore be a key guiding principle when reviewing open space proposals.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

1. **Sustainability and energy efficiency.** Promote sustainable and energy-efficient development.
2. **Reduce energy consumption.** Reduce energy consumption through comprehensive planning and urban design that incorporates strategies for both mobile and non-mobile energy efficiency.
3. **Support programs to increase energy efficiency.** Support programs to increase energy efficiency and reduce life-cycle costs of all construction projects, including public and institutional projects.
4. **Encourage renewable energy applications.** Develop and encourage appropriate applications of renewable energy.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

1. ***Heritage preservation objective.*** The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.
2. ***Increase community support.*** Strive to increase community support for historic preservation. Continue to expand upon programs and activities that will instill an appreciation and pride in the city's historic resources.
3. ***National Register district.*** Publicize the benefits and incentives of National Register District status.
4. ***Design guidelines.*** Provide and maintain formal guidance to development and demolitions within the historic district in the form of design guidelines.