

# 2025-2029

# JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*For Gilmer County and the Cities of  
Ellijay and East Ellijay*

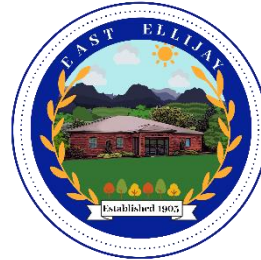


This page is blank for formatting purposes.

# **Gilmer County**

## **Joint Comprehensive Plan 2025-2029**

Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for  
Gilmer County Including the  
Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay



Prepared for:

**Gilmer County**

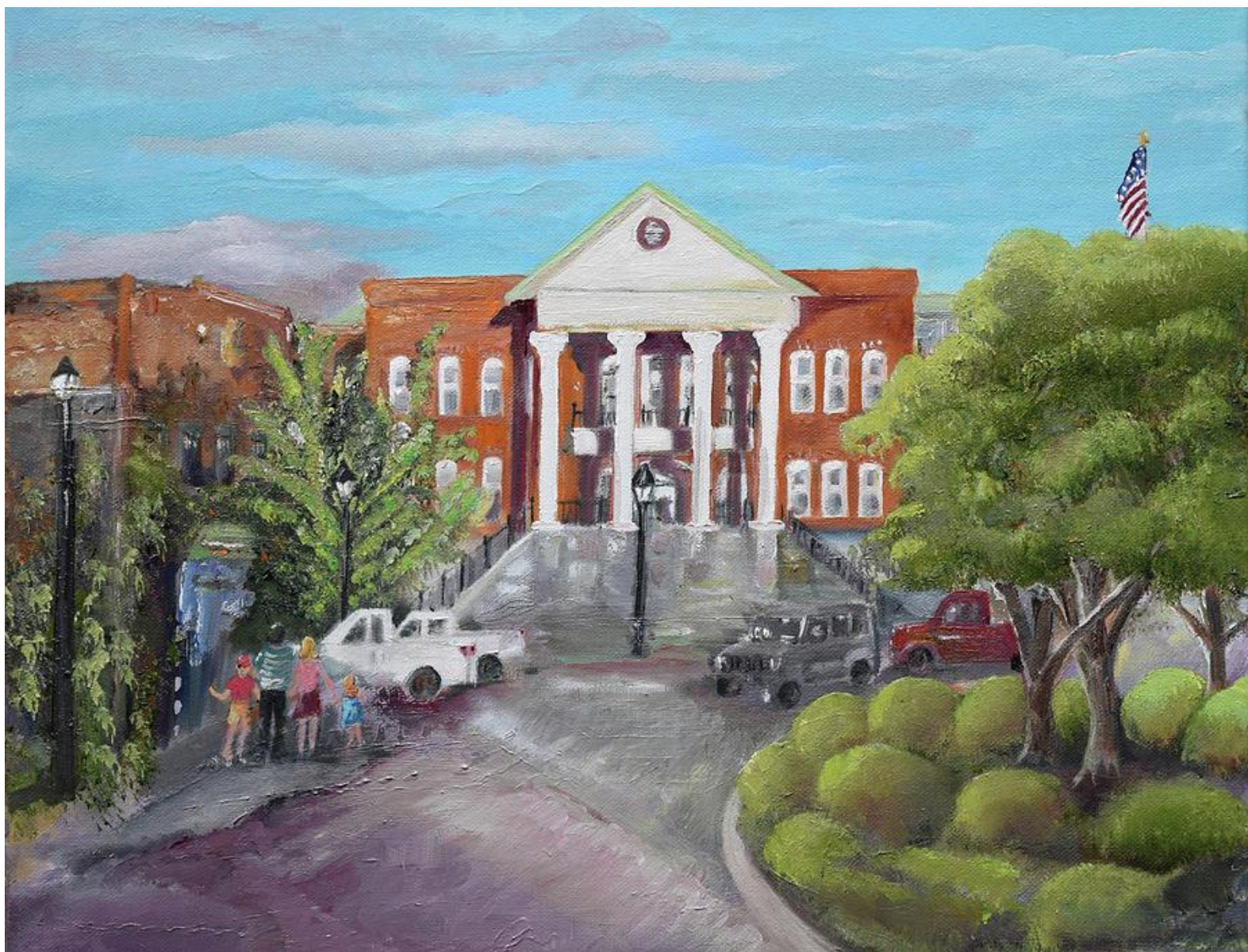
**City of Ellijay**

**City of East Ellijay**

By:



Northwest Georgia Regional Commission  
1 Jackson Hill Drive  
Rome, GA 30162  
(706) 295-6485





## GILMER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

---

*Charlie Paris, Chairman  
Hubert Parker, Post 1 Commissioner  
John Marshall, Post 2 Commissioner*

*Edwina Daman, County Clerk  
David Clark, County Attorney  
Sandi Holden, Finance Officer*

24-181

A RESOLUTION

TO ADOPT THE

**Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay**

Whereas, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan to retain their Qualified Local Government status and eligibility for State permits, grants, and loans; and

Whereas, the *Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay* is now complete; and

Whereas, such **Joint Comprehensive Plan Update** is approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as meeting Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures (effective October 1, 2018); and

Whereas, the second and final public hearing on the draft plan was held on Thursday, September 5, 2024 at the Gilmer County Jury Assembly Room, 1 Broad Street, Ellijay, GA 30540 at 6:00 pm.

**Now Therefore Be It Resolved**, that the Board of Commissioners of Gilmer County, Georgia hereby officially adopts the *Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay*.

Resolved, this 28th day of October, 2024.

BY:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charlie Paris", written over a horizontal line.

Charlie Paris, Chairman – Gilmer County

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Edwina Daman", written over a horizontal line.

Edwina Daman, County Clerk – Gilmer County

Al Hoyle, Mayor  
Lori Pierce, City Clerk



COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Claudia Penland  
Tom Crawford, Al Fuller  
Kevin Pritchett  
Thomas Griffith

**A RESOLUTION  
TO ADOPT THE**

**Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay**

**Whereas**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan to retain their Qualified Local Government status and eligibility for State permits, grants, and loans; and

**Whereas**, the *Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay* is now complete; and

**Whereas**, such **Joint Comprehensive Plan Update** is approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as meeting Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures (effective October 1, 2018); and

**Whereas**, the second and final public hearing on the draft plan was held on Thursday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the **Gilmer County Jury Assembly Room at 6:00 pm.**

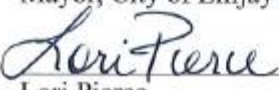
**Now Therefore Be It Resolved**, that the City Council of The City of Ellijay, Georgia hereby officially adopts the *Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay*.

**Resolved**, this 21<sup>st</sup> day of October 2024.

BY:

  
Al Hoyle  
Mayor, City of Ellijay

ATTEST:

  
Lori Pierce  
City Clerk

**RESOLUTION 2024-12**

**A RESOLUTION  
TO ADOPT THE**

**Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay**

**Whereas**, the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan to retain their Qualified Local Government status and eligibility for State permits, grants, and loans; and

**Whereas**, the *Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay* is now complete; and

**Whereas**, such **Joint Comprehensive Plan Update** is approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as meeting Georgia's Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures (effective October 1, 2018); and

**Whereas**, the second and final public hearing on the draft plan was held on Thursday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the **Gilmer County Jury Assembly Room at 6:00 pm.**

**Now Therefore Be It Resolved**, that the City Council of the City of East Ellijay, Georgia hereby officially adopts the *Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2025-2029) including the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay*.

**Resolved**, this 16<sup>th</sup> day of October 2024.

BY:

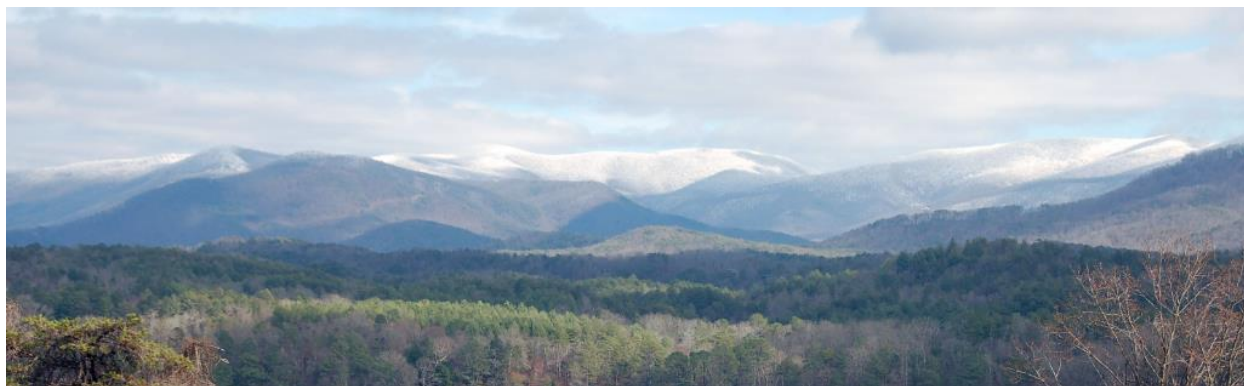


Don Callihan  
Mayor, City of East Ellijay

ATTEST:



Petrina Pritchett  
City Clerk



## Table of Contents

|                                                    |     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....                              | 1   |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                 | 3   |
| HOW TO USE THIS PLAN .....                         | 8   |
| JOINT LAND USE ELEMENT .....                       | 11  |
| FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP: GILMER COUNTY .....        | 45  |
| FUTURE LAND USE MAP: ELLIJAY .....                 | 58  |
| FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP: EAST ELLIJAY .....         | 59  |
| RURAL BROADBAND .....                              | 60  |
| IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS .....                      | 66  |
| GILMER COUNTY: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM .....        | 66  |
| CITY OF ELLIJAY: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM .....      | 78  |
| CITY OF EAST ELLIJAY: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM ..... | 85  |
| APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY VISION SURVEY .....          | 93  |
| APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE MEETINGS .....   | 106 |
| APPENDIX C: PUBLIC HEARING DOCUMENTATION .....     | 115 |
| APPENDIX D: POPULATION AND ECONOMIC DATA .....     | 120 |

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### GILMER COUNTY

**Charlie Paris**

*Chairman, Board of Commissioners*

**Hubert Parker**

*Board of Commissioners Post 1*

**John Marshall**

*Board of Commissioners Post 2*

**Edwina Daman**

*County Clerk*

### CITY OF ELLIJAY

**Al Hoyle**

*Mayor and Chairman of City Council*

**Thomas Griffith**

*Councilman*

**Claudia Penland**

*Councilwoman*

**Al Fuller**

*Councilman*

**Tom Crawford**

*Councilman*

**Kevin Pritchett**

*Councilman*

**Lori Pierce**

*City Clerk*

### CITY OF EAST ELLIJAY

**Chris Callihan**

*Council Member*

**Don Callihan**

*Mayor*

**James Waters**

*Council Member*

**Ed Forrester**

*Council Member*

**Linda G. Smith**

*Council Member*

**Petrina Pritchett**

*City Clerk*

## STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE

|                                                                       |                                                                   |                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mark Holden</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                          | <b>Laurel Johnson</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                   | <b>Betsy Sheppard</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                                   |
| <b>Patrick Burnett</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                      | <b>Jim Dupont</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                       | <b>Terry Palmeri</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                                    |
| <b>Jennifer Grimmer</b><br>President & CEO<br>Gilmer Chamber          | <b>Bobby McNeill</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                    | <b>Scott Stephens</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                                   |
| <b>Debbie Osborne</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                       | <b>Jim Smith</b><br>Gilmer County Planning and<br>Zoning Director | <b>Gary McVey</b><br>Director; Ellijay/Gilmer County<br>Water and Sewer Authority |
| <b>Thomas Morgan</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                        | <b>Kent Sanford</b><br>Executive Director<br>Greater Gilmer JDA   | <b>Tom Whatley</b><br>Gilmer County Resident                                      |
| <b>Dr. Brian Ridley</b><br>Superintendent Gilmer County<br>Schools    | <b>Edward Lacey</b><br>City of Ellijay Police Chief               | <b>Tommy Vandiver</b><br>City of Ellijay Resident                                 |
| <b>Jaxon West</b><br>City of East Ellijay Code<br>Enforcement Officer |                                                                   | <b>Larry Callihan</b><br>City of East Ellijay Public Safety<br>Director           |
|                                                                       |                                                                   |                                                                                   |

## NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

|                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Boyd Austin</b><br>Executive Director<br><br><b>Julianne Meadows</b><br>Director of Regional Planning<br><br><b>Ethan Calhoun</b><br>Assistant Director of Regional Planning |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction to the Community Agenda for Gilmer County and the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay

Located in North Central Georgia, Gilmer County covers approximately 694 square miles of land. The 2441<sup>st</sup> largest county, equivalent in area, in the United States. Gilmer County is a gem in the North Georgia Mountains; it includes thousands of acres of protected state and federal lands, including a portion of the Chattahoochee National Forest, Rich Mountain Wildlife Management Area, and Carters Lake.

### Outdoor Recreation Destinations

Lying at the heart of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, Gilmer County is a prime destination for outdoor recreation of all types. The southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail (as well as that of the Benton MacKaye Trail) sits in Gilmer County. With easy access to Amicalola Falls State Park and the beautiful Three Forks Valley, Gilmer County is a destination for outdoor enthusiasts and adventurers alike. Gilmer County is home to an extensive mountain bike trail network. With over 100 miles of single track and no real off-season, the county has also been featured as a biking destination in national publications and has been declared "Georgia's Mountain Biking Capital." The Cartecay river is well known for the paddling and fishing opportunities it provides, as well as the tranquil settings for day hikes or picnics. The area lakes are premium destinations for those seeking quality watersports without the maddening crowds of other reservoirs in the region.

### Agriculture and Agritourism

Along with the incredible outdoor recreation opportunities, Visitors to Gilmer County will also find vineyards, pick-your-own orchards, farmers' markets, and mountain roads with stunning vistas. The annual *Georgia Apple Festival*, held on two weekends in October, entices visitors from all over with craft vendors, artists, antique cars, a parade, and all things apple. Alongside Gilmer's tourism-based agriculture is an active and significant proportion of conventional agricultural farms that collectively contribute hundreds of millions to the local economy. Many visitors to Gilmer County return time and again in search of ways to make it their home.

### Gilmer County and the Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is the longest hiking-only footpath in the world, measuring roughly 2,190 miles in length (Figure 2). The Trail traverses fourteen states along the crests and valleys of the Appalachian Mountain Range, from its southern terminus at Springer Mountain, Gilmer County Georgia, to the northern terminus at Katahdin, Maine. Known as the "A.T.", more than 3 million people visit the Trail every year. More than 3,000 people attempt to "thru-hike" the entire footpath in a single year.



Figure 1: Aerial view of downtown Ellijay



People from across the globe are drawn to the A.T. for a variety of reasons, such as reconnecting with nature, escaping the stress of city life, meeting new people or deepening old friendships or experiencing a simpler life. Completed in 1937, the A.T. is a unit of the National Park System. It is managed under a unique partnership between the public and private sectors led by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Gilmer County has been designated as an “Appalachian Trail Community™” by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. There are only 40 communities along the Appalachian Trail's corridor that have been recognized as such. These towns and cities are considered assets by all users of the A.T., and many of these towns act as good friends and neighbors to the Trail.

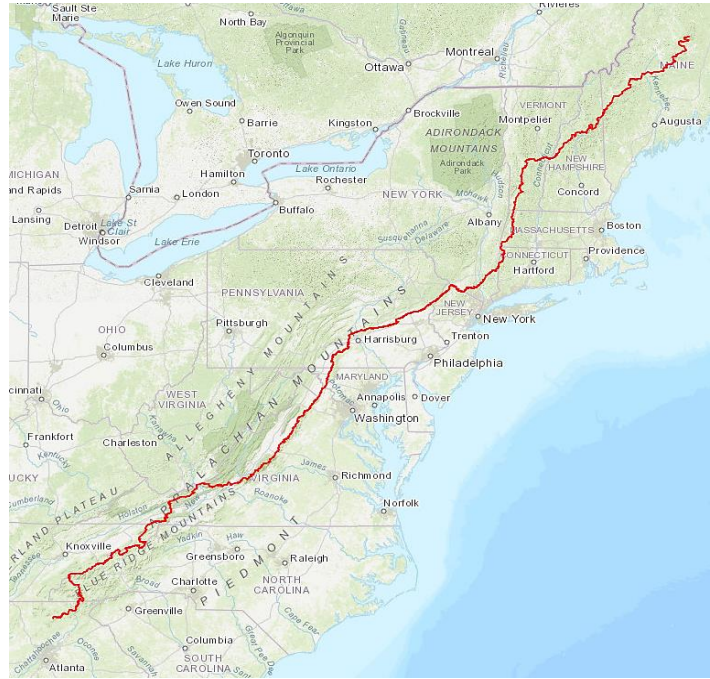


Figure 2: Map of the Appalachian Trail

## Planning for the Future

Gilmer County and the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay have joined together to address the challenges that lie ahead. The elected officials, professional staff, residents, business leaders, property owners, and major employers collaborate to prepare the *Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2025-2029*.

## Why We Plan

Comprehensive planning is an important management tool for promoting a strong, healthy community. A Comprehensive Plan provides a clearly stated, shared vision describing the future of the community. It protects private property rights while encouraging and supporting economic development. The plan promote orderly and rational development so that Gilmer County and the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay can remain physically attractive and economically viable while preserving important natural and historical resources.

The comprehensive plan is the tool to provide certainty about where development will occur, what it will be like, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met. It is the blueprint for the community to achieve the development patterns it desires; Among those are traditional neighborhoods, infill development creating a sense of place, transportation alternatives, encouraging mixed-use development, protection of natural resources, and promoting economic growth.

Planning also helps the local governments, invest their money wisely in infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer, schools, parks and green space, and other facilities to maintain and improve the quality of life for the residents of Gilmer County.

### Why We Plan

- Set a new standard for protecting natural and cultural resources
- Promote desired patterns of development
- Facilitate economic development
- Accommodate a range of housing and transportation options
- Prioritize capital expenditures
- Enhance quality of life

## PURPOSE

The Joint Comprehensive Plan states the vision, goals, policies, key needs, and opportunities that the community intends to address, as well as an action plan highlighting the necessary tools for its implementation. Additionally, it outlines desired development patterns and supporting land uses with a future development map for each entity.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accordance with, and serves the purpose of meeting the intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Comprehensive Planning (effective March 1, 2014, updated October 2018). This Joint Comprehensive Plan consists of three core elements (Community Goals, Needs and Opportunities, and Community Work Program) and an additional three elements (Capital Improvements, Land Use, and Rural Broadband).

The DCA's Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning emphasize the preparation of plans that help local governments address their immediate needs and opportunities while moving toward the realization of their long-term goals. To maintain Qualified Local Government Status and eligibility for selected state funding and permitting programs, every local government must prepare, adopt, maintain, and implement a comprehensive plan as specified in these standards and procedures.

The comprehensive plan is not a binding regulatory document, but it is a guide for local decision-making by the elected officials and citizens of Gilmer County.

## SCOPE

The Joint Comprehensive Plan provides a fine-tuned list of needs and opportunities, future development maps with character areas, and narratives on housing and transportation of each character area. The plan also contains an implementation program listing strategic capital projects aimed at addressing the community's needs and opportunities. For the future development maps, the Land Use narrative presents strategies for implementation.



Figure 3: Annual Apple Festival. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.



Figure 4: Ribbon Cutting for the Downtown Ellijay Visitors' Center. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.



Figure 5: Historic Tabor House in downtown Ellijay



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Creating a functional Joint Comprehensive Plan begins with defining a common vision for the communities' future development. A Community Vision is the overall image of what the community wants to be, and how it wants to look, in the future. It is the starting point for creating a plan and its implementation actions. A successful visioning process requires meaningful participation from a wide range of community stakeholders. Gilmer County residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders contributed to the production of the Joint Comprehensive Plan. Due to the participation involved in its development, the Joint Comprehensive Plan should generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of Gilmer County; citizens should be encouraged to remain engaged in the development process and ensure that the plan is implemented.

### Stakeholder Committee

Every five years, the Joint Comprehensive Plan for Ellijay, East Ellijay, and Gilmer County must be updated. That provides a discussion of future growth and how local government agencies can plan for it. Joint meetings held with the steering and stakeholder committees provide feedback from members representing each local government.

A diverse group of elected officials, appointed officials, and staff, representatives of private sector organizations formed a collaborative committee to lay the foundation and build the framework of this plan. The stakeholder committee held five joint meetings facilitated by the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (sign-in sheets found in Appendix G). Over the course of those meetings, committee members discussed and assessed the needs and opportunities of Gilmer County; they also considered



Figure 6: Stakeholder's conducting a SWOT analysis, April 2024

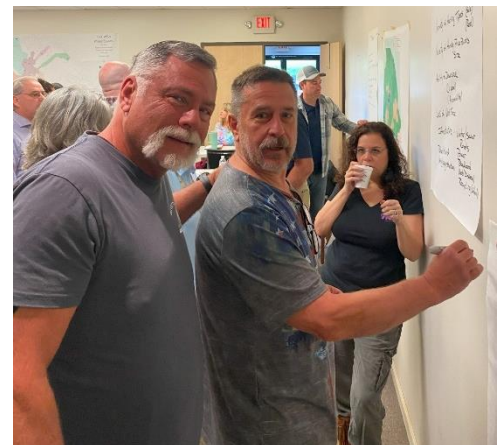


Figure 7: Stakeholder's reviewing the SWOT analysis, April 2024

ways to engage the community to provide the general public's perspective. After four Stakeholder meetings, the needs and opportunities highlighted by the stakeholders were presented to the leaders of each local government. Each local government created its respective Community Work Program, and a final Stakeholder meeting was held to review the final plan draft.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

The initial public hearing was held at the Ellijay City Hall on January 22, 2024. Notice was published in the local newspaper to ensure public awareness of the plan, the process, and the understanding that public input is vital to the creation of an effective plan.

The final public hearing was also held at the Gilmer County Jury Assembly Room in Ellijay on September 5, 2024. The hearing was well-attended, and notices were published in the *Times-Courier* newspaper informing Gilmer County citizens about the comprehensive plan and how to be involved in the process.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH SURVEY

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Survey, entitled "Planning Gilmer County," was uploaded on June 12, 2024, and ran until July 12, 2024. The total number of responses was 1,671; the completion rate was 100% all surveys were completed with no unanswered questions. Alchemer Survey was utilized as the software provider, and the NWGRC website served as the host. A direct URL, ([www.nwgrc.org/gilmersurvey](http://www.nwgrc.org/gilmersurvey)), made the online survey easily accessible for individuals who discovered the survey via flyer or newspaper articles.

The surveys were disbursed in several mediums which included online, email blasts to the members of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce, Gilmer County Public Schools, the Gilmer branch of Dalton State College, local government staff as well as various civic groups. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and the Gilmer Chamber's social media were also used to further the digital outreach as a grassroots approach by much of the stakeholder committee. More than 25 paper copies were completed; those were uploaded by volunteer steering committee members so that the final data would reflect the paper responses along with the digital responses.



Figure 8: Stakeholders reviewing Future Development Maps and discussing future land use.

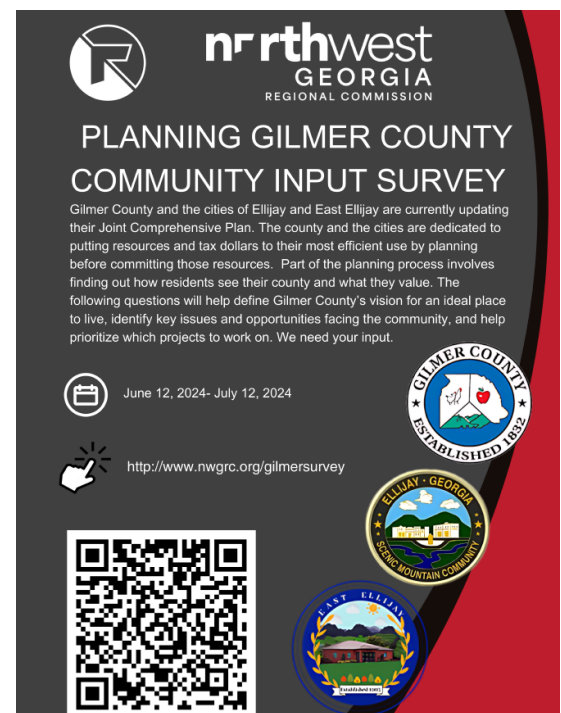


Figure 9: Flyer used to inform the public of the Joint Comprehensive Plan Community Vision Survey



## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

### JOINT NARRATIVES

The plan's purpose is to establish a vision for growth and development by guiding and implementing land use and development policy for Gilmer County and the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay. Each jurisdiction addresses each of the elements following in joint sections that focus on their relation to the county as a whole.

- The Capital Improvements Element** is required for communities that charge development impact fees. The Capital Improvements Element annual update for SFY 2025 has been prepared separately and is based on the Development Impact Fee Act (DIFA), the Development Impact Fee Compliance Requirements (DCA Rules 110-12-2), and the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (DCA Rules 110-12-1). These documents dictate the essential components of an annual update: (1) an impact fee financial report, and (2) a five-year schedule of capital improvements.
- The Land Use Element** is a joint section that includes copies of the Future Land Use Maps, showing; these show standard land use categories and explain how the Future Land Use Map is to be interpreted in terms of those categories. These categories will play an important role in determining the direction of the future growth of each entity.
- The Rural Broadband Element** requirement is an action plan for the deployment of broadband services into unserved areas within a provider's jurisdiction. The action plan must describe steps for the promotion of reasonable and cost-effective access to broadband in under-served areas as designated by DCA. The local action plan may include, but shall not be limited to, any assessments, studies, ordinances, and/or goals to achieve certification as a "Broadband Ready Community" or designation of facilities and developments as "Georgia Broadband Ready Community" Sites. Each local comprehensive plan should contemplate and seek implementation in a manner that stresses the importance of broadband deployment across the state and considers broadband as important as other necessary utilities.



## INDEPENDENT NARRATIVES

These portions are specific to each jurisdiction and, therefore, require more individualized organization than the joint narratives. Gilmer County and the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay each have independent narratives for the following plan elements:

**Policies** are adopted to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local officials. They provide a basis for making decisions to implement the comprehensive plan, including achieving the vision for future development and appropriately addressing community needs and opportunities. Policy statements are identified for each planning element. Due to the inter-jurisdictional similarity of the policies in the previous Comprehensive Plan, they will be incorporated into a single joint section to reduce repetition



*Figure 10: Stakeholders observing a presentation on environmental planning criteria and the Regionally Important Resource Plan.*

**Report of Accomplishments** The first step of plan implementation is to conduct a report of accomplishments specific to Gilmer County and the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay. The report of accomplishments shows the results of past planning efforts, and the status of each work program item is listed here. Since work programs are updated every five years, the items under consideration here are from the period from 2020-2024. The local government officials reviewed the previous work programs for their respective governments and noted which projects had been completed. If projects were started but not completed, the “Underway” column was marked and the estimated year of completion was noted. There is no penalty for postponing or dropping a project since this is a planning document and not a binding legal agreement. However, an explanation is required for postponed or dropped projects. For example, a project may not have been accomplished because voters rejected a ballot measure to fund it. Sometimes an item is dropped because it may have been a new initiative or new mandate at the time, but it has become a routine or function of government. Items marked as “underway” or “postponed” are carried forward to the work programs in the Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2025-2029. However, projects noted as “Ongoing,” annual tasks, or policy statements will not be carried forward.

**Community Vision/Goals** The purpose of this element is to create a road map for the community’s future, developed through a public process involving community leaders and stakeholders in making key decisions about the community’s future. The community goals are the most important part of the plan, identifying the community’s future direction; these are intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm for the future and encourage citizens and leadership to take action to ensure plan implementation.

This element includes a list of goals Gilmer County seeks to achieve, and policies providing ongoing guidance to local government officials for making decisions to achieve them.



**Needs and Opportunities** The list of needs and opportunities was generated via SWOT ( Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. This is a brainstorming exercise designed for stakeholders to reflect on their community's needs and opportunities. The exercise was carried out by addressing the entire group of stakeholders rather than separating the group by jurisdiction. Stakeholders were shown a presentation illustrating current population and economic trends to provide each stakeholder with an informed basis for discussion during their initial meeting. The SWOT analyses were carried out during the first and second stakeholder committee meetings and the community outreach survey was largely based on the information obtained during those meetings. This discussion was broken down into seven categories, (Economic Development, Housing, Community Facilities and Services, Transportation, Natural/Cultural Resources, Land Use, and Intergovernmental Coordination). Each category was given a station where stakeholders could gather and write their comments. Once the initial responses were complete, stakeholders were each given five stickers to place on the issues they viewed as critical. The SWOT analysis was transcribed to show all responses with the most critical issues illustrated in order of priority.



**Community Work Program** The Community Work Program lays out the specific activities to be undertaken during the next five years to address the priority Needs and Opportunities. It is a list of specific tasks that the governments are willing to attempt to accomplish. Developing the work program from needs and opportunities lists helps lead residents and leaders from a general idea about an issue to creating specific tasks to address it. It is not a contract or binding document, since many of the items on the list are dependent on funding that has not yet been awarded or obtained. Using the possible strategies from the Needs and Opportunities, planners created work program tables. The stakeholders, leaders, and other government officials reviewed these tables prior to the second public hearing.

- Brief description of the activity;
- Timeframe for its initiation and completion;
- Responsible party for implementation;
- Estimated the cost (if any) to implement;
- Funding source(s), if applicable; and
- Need or Opportunity addressed, if applicable.

# JOINT LAND USE ELEMENT

*A comprehensive guide for future development and redevelopment within Gilmer County and its two Cities.*



## Geography

Gilmer County includes the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay. It also includes smaller unincorporated communities that are recognized places within the county. The information below is addressed by geographic area:

## GILMER COUNTY

Gilmer County is one of North Georgia's great mountain counties. Located in the north-central portion of the state, Gilmer County was created on December 3, 1832. It has become well-known for its mountains and annual Apple Festival. Gilmer's population grew from a total of 13,368 in 1990 to a total of 33,180 in 2024; Gilmer's population will exceed 36,234 by 2040, according to U.S. Census projections.

## CITIES

### Ellijay

The City of Ellijay is the county seat of Gilmer County and was incorporated on December 20, 1834. Located on approximately 2,304 acres of land in the center of Gilmer County, Ellijay had a population of 1,750 in 2022, according to the U.S. Census. The city is served by a principal arterial highway (GA SR 515), as well as other state highways that provide great mobility through the area.

### East Ellijay

The City of East Ellijay was established in 1903. East Ellijay is located in central Gilmer County, adjacent to the eastern boundary of the City of Ellijay. The U.S. Census estimated a population of 530 in 2022. The City of East Ellijay is served by GA SR 515, as well as other local roads offering great mobility through the area.

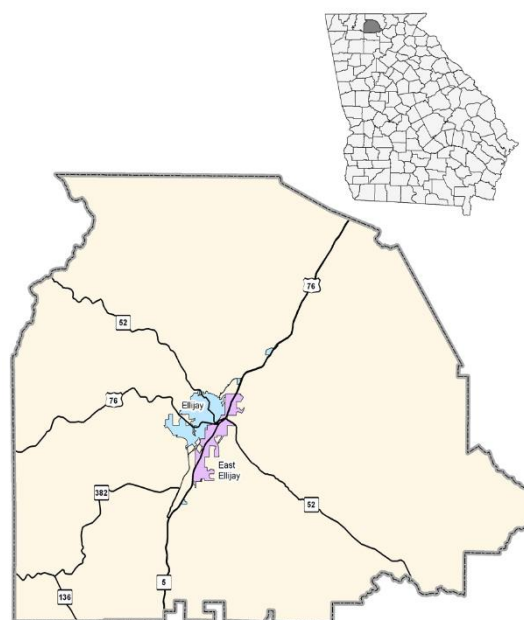
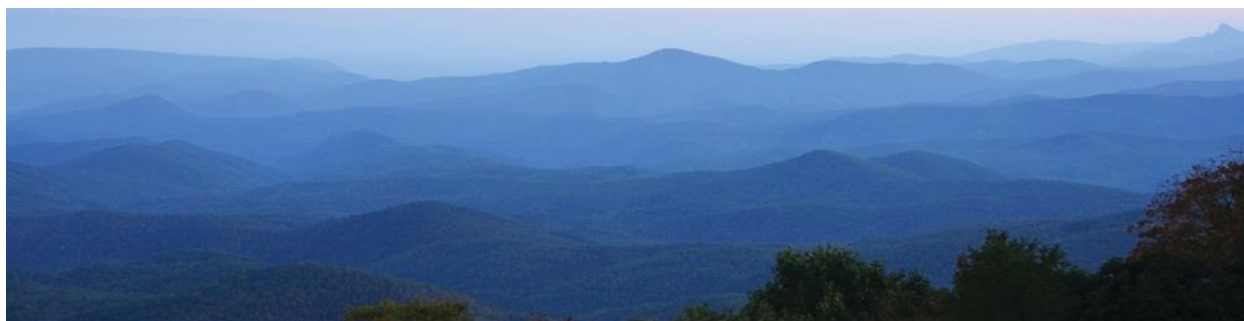


Figure 11: Nearly 6% of Gilmer's land area (15,629 acres) is utilized for agriculture or forestry.



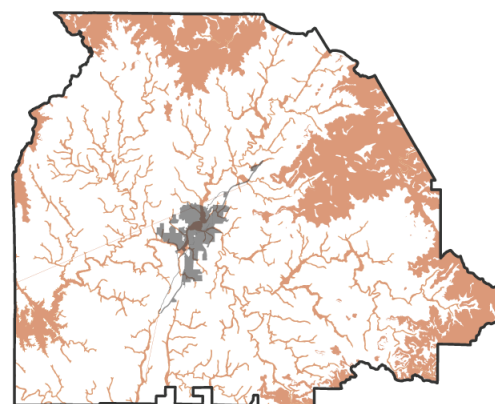
## OVERVIEW OF LAND USE IN GILMER COUNTY

### Mountains

Gilmer County, along with the Cities of Ellijay, and East Ellijay are some of North Georgia's great mountain communities. The Blue Ridge Mountain range is an environmental corridor with natural beauty and provides several recreational opportunities in the form of hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, camping, and more. Gilmer County receives much of its ambience from its environmental characteristics and the panoramic vistas of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Mountainous terrain, while attractive to the observer, often creates challenges for modern community development. Land use patterns in Gilmer County have been largely determined by the Cohutta Mountains, a sub-group of the Blue Ridge Mountains of the Appalachian Mountain range. The steep slopes can expose water bodies to degradation if best management practices are not followed when conducting earth-moving activities such as grading and timbering. Because of its obvious attraction to developers and destination homebuilders, Gilmer County has adopted a Mountain Protection Ordinance to ensure that new development respects the environmentally-sensitive areas that make it unique. The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission NWGRC identified slopes of 25% grade or greater through a topographical GIS analysis. These steep zones account for almost 69,000 acres in the county, though more than 43,000 are in the protected mountainous areas. Steep slopes in hilly and mountainous environments are challenging, but not impossible, to develop. Developers typically prefer to seek out flat or minimally sloped land for development projects to save on costs associated with regrading and land preparation.

While there is not a threshold of slope that is "undevelopable," developing sloped areas of around 25% of greater incline would come at a significant additional cost.

**Steep Slopes (>25%)**



*Figure 13 Source(s): Northwest Georgia Regional Commission GIS*



*Figure 12: Gilmer's stunning mountain vistas draw visitors year-round*

## Waterways

Cold water mountain streams provide Gilmer County with a good source of drinking water, as well as, making it a destination for trout fishing. The cool waters of the local streams help support trout populations in eight primary trout streams: the Cartecay River, the Ellijay River, the Consauga River, Harris Creek, Johnson Creek, Mountain Creek, Tails Creek, and the Toccoa River. Because of Gilmer's abundance of waterways, paddle sports such as kayaking and tubing are also popular recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Although Gilmer County has many tributaries and minor waterways, the county's most significant waterways are the Cartecay, Ellijay, and Coosawattee Rivers. The Cartecay River headwaters are in the Chattahoochee National Forest, and flow from east to west through the county and both cities of. The Ellijay River flows from the northern portion of the county southward to the City of Ellijay. These two rivers are part of the Coosa Watershed. The confluence of the Cartecay and Ellijay River in the City of Ellijay to form the Coosawattee River. Though the Coosawattee River is a larger waterbody than the Ellijay and Cartecay Rivers, it only supports trout throughout certain periods of the year and there is no sustainable reproduction. The Coosawattee River flows into the Army Corps of Engineers' Carters Lake. This Lake provides many recreational opportunities and contains no private docks or developments. Another mentionable waterway is the Toccoa River, which is part of the Tennessee River watershed and is in the northern portion of the county on National Forest Service lands. Because of the natural, recreational, and economic significance of Gilmer's waterways, the entire community recognizes the importance of protecting these assets for future generations. All of Gilmer's rivers, and many of its streams, are protected by local and state ordinances to ensure that future development does not compromise their integrity as the community continues to grow. One of the most consistent responses from the steering committee and community survey was the understanding that there is a need for more public access points to existing trails and waterways. Multiple projects aimed at improving access to Gilmer's waterways may be found in Gilmer County's Community Work Program. A list of impaired waters may be found in Appendix F.



*Figure 14: Ellijay River photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.*



*Figure 15: Whitewater kayaking on the Cartecay River. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.*



*Figure 16: Kayakers and canoers on Carters Lake. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.*

## Preserved Lands

Gilmer County is ranked third among Georgia counties for National Forest acreage, totaling 55,501 acres. It is the predominant land use within the county. These lands can be found north of Ellijay, adjacent to Gilmer County's boundary with Murray County, and the forest continues east to southeast along the county's boundary with Fannin County. The cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay contain no National Forest lands. The future land use categories characterize National Forest lands as Parks/Recreational/Conservation. While the abundance of protected lands confines development, it preserves much of Gilmer County's most significant and beloved natural resources. Gilmer's access to this abundance of preserved land greatly contributes to its character as an outdoor recreation destination community; many of the preserved lands offer hiking, mountain biking, fishing, and camping opportunities. The preserved natural vistas have created a sense of equity for the residents of Gilmer County. Knowing that these great natural assets will forever remain protected, even as the community grows.

## Transportation

Transportation in Gilmer County was once limited due to the geographic constraints of the mountains. The local economy and population in Gilmer grew, as time advanced, largely due to the improvements of the roadways that connected it to other communities. Although there is no access to the U.S. Interstate Highway system, there are several arterial state highways that connect Gilmer to other areas of the state. Historically, State Route 5 and U.S. Highway 76 were the primary north/south arterial corridors for travelers in this area of Northwest Georgia. With the sustained growth and traffic, typical ongoing improvements to the primary roadways were made. The most significant transportation improvement was the creation of Georgia State Route 515 (SR 515). It is a 76.2-mile-long four-lane divided highway in the north-central part of the state. Beginning slightly west of the City of Nelson, it curves to the northeast to Lake Chatuge and travels northward to the North Carolina state line. This highway was built to give motorists in the North Georgia mountains better access to Atlanta and its outlying suburbs by replacing the old SR 5 and U.S. Route 76 (US 76). SR 515 is officially known as the Zell Miller Mountain Parkway, honoring the Young Harris native who served as Governor and U.S. Senator. Over the fifteen years following SR 515's completion, Gilmer County witnessed its most significant growth period, in terms of population and economic development. Much of Gilmer's modern commercial growth is concentrated along, or near, SR 515 to take advantage of the heavy volumes of daily traffic. The portion of SR 515 within Gilmer County sustains between 14,000-20,000 average annual daily trips, based on data

## Protected Lands

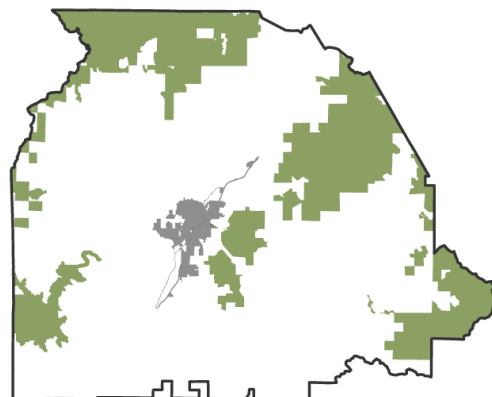


Figure 17 Source(s): Northwest Georgia Regional Commission GIS

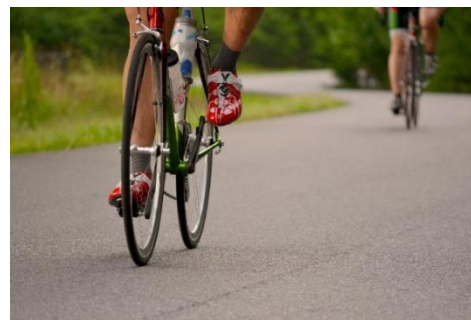


Figure 19: Cyclists in Gilmer County. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.



Figure 18: Aerial view of SR 515. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.

collected in 2018 by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Other significant arterial corridors in Gilmer include SR 52, SR 136, SR 282, and SR 382. Gilmer County is also accessed by a north/south short-line railway operated by Georgia Northeastern Railroad. While the railway is not sufficient enough to extend the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway to Gilmer County, collaborative projects such as rails with trails may offer opportunities for more trail connections and a long-anticipated riverwalk. Gilmer County also owns and operates the only public airport in the county. The airport contains a 3,500 ft. x 75 ft. asphalt runway, leases hangar space, and sells aviation fuel. Air traffic at the Gilmer County Airport averages 58 aircraft operations per week and over thirty percent of aircraft operations are from transient aircraft. Gilmer County's transportation network, like all infrastructure, requires ongoing strategic planning and improvement, and several transportation-related projects can be found in the implementation programs of Ellijay, East Ellijay, and Gilmer County.



*Figure 20: Hangar space may be leased at the Gilmer County Airport by private aircraft owners.*

## Public Water and Wastewater Utilities

### History

While no official history records the establishment of the County's first water utility, the City of Ellijay had water service as early as 1929, confirmed by a surviving date-marked water tank. The City of Ellijay was the first community in Gilmer County to have public water, and it remains the center of operations for the water and sewer utilities. While Gilmer County and the City of East Ellijay developed their own water systems, both systems relied upon Ellijay for water supply and wastewater treatment. In 1987, Ellijay, East Ellijay, and Gilmer County legislatively combined their water and wastewater systems into a single entity known as the Ellijay-Gilmer Water and Sewer Authority (EGWSA). The EGWSA is governed by a five-member board of directors which meets monthly. Three members of the board are appointed by the Gilmer County Board of Commissioners, one member is appointed by the City of East Ellijay, and one member is appointed by the City of Ellijay.

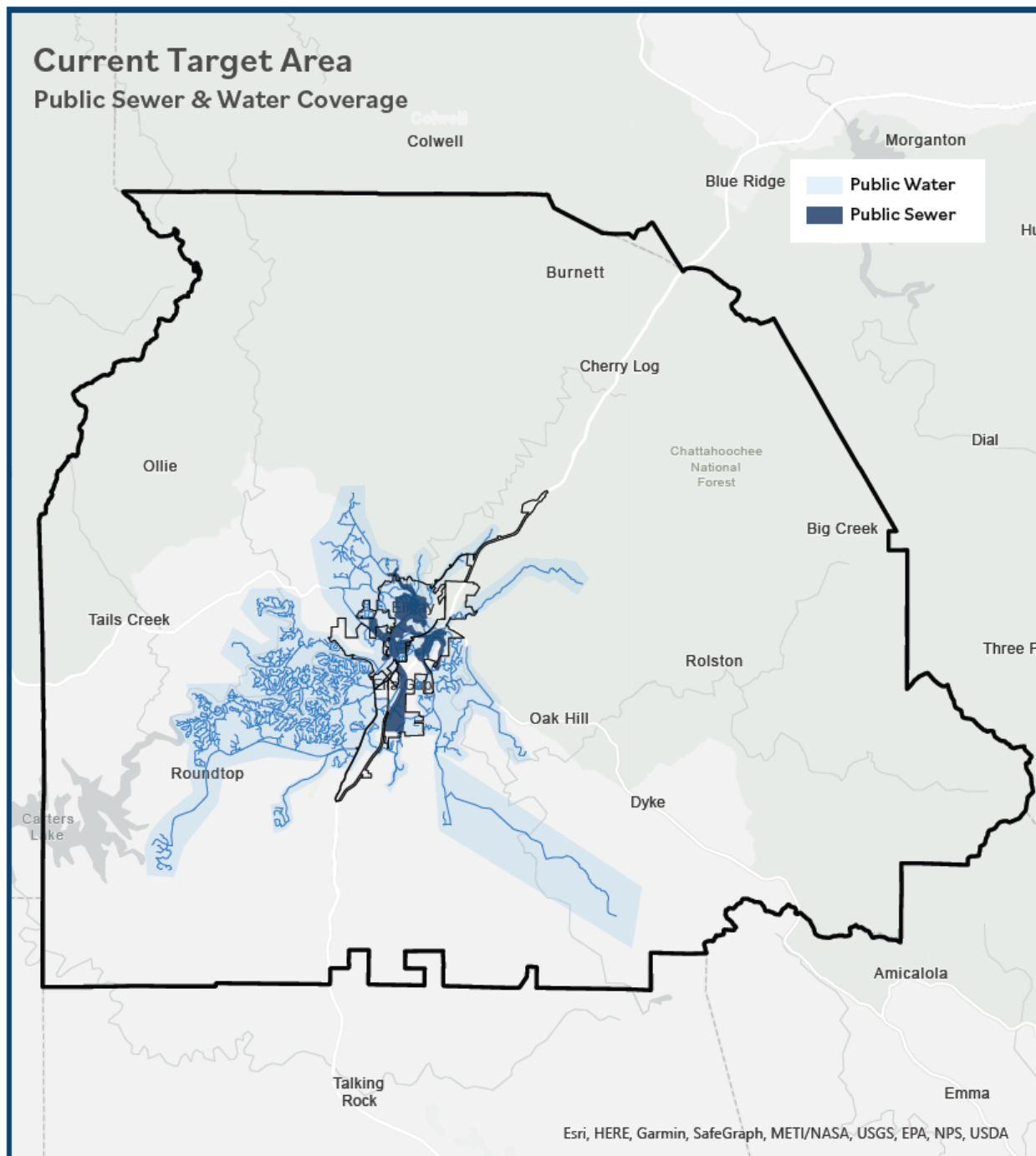


Figure 21 Source(s): Northwest Georgia Regional Commission GIS

### Public Water Infrastructure

The EGWSA has three raw water intakes: the Cartecay and Ellijay Rivers, and Joyce Spring. Raw water from these sources is collected and treated chemically before being distributed into the system. The Ellijay Gilmer County Water and Sewerage Authority operates a conventional water plant that is rated at 5.5 MGD (million gallons per day). The plant primarily withdraws water from the Cartecay River under a permit from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) and can use up to 4.0 MGD. Another 0.45 MGD can be withdrawn from the Ellijay River when river flow is above minimum levels. The plant was constructed in 1971 as a 0.5 MGD plant and has been expanded several times to keep pace with water usage. The plant is designed for the expansion of up to 8.0 MGD to meet the future requirements of the community. The plant has received Gold and Platinum Awards for operational excellence and was named "Georgia Plant of the Year" in 2013, for plants between 3.0 and 8.99 MGD in size. The EGWSA has eleven tanks with a total storage capacity of 1,815,000 gallons. Its distribution system contains eight booster pumping stations and approximately 344 miles of water lines (See Appendix D. Public Water Service Area map). The EGWSA recently received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), on behalf of Gilmer County, in order to expand their public water service area to serve 125 residences in the unincorporated Roundtop community. The Roundtop expansion will have a second phase funded by the EGWSA. The grant was awarded primarily due to the poor quality of the well water in this area and the public need for an alternative source of drinking water. Currently, the EGWSA is underway with its most significant public water system expansion in recent history with the ambition of serving approximately 2,800 new users along Yukon Road. This expansion will create a connection between the EGWSA and Pickens County Water System to provide redundancy for both water systems. Because parts of the EGWSA's infrastructure are of advanced age, standard practice dictates repair and replacement to reduce system failures and water loss. The EGWSA estimates a daily water loss of 13-18%, based on the total volume of daily water supply; and the amount of daily water loss should continue to lessen as the scheduled replacement plans are completed.



*Figure 22: Historic Pont du Gard aqueducts in southern France illustrate that public drinking water infrastructure has been an important part of community design since the ancient Roman Empire.*

### Wastewater Infrastructure

The Ellijay-Gilmer County Water and Sewerage Authority operates an activated-sludge, extended-air wastewater treatment plant permitted by GEPD to treat up to 2.5 MGD. The plant also removes phosphorus down to a level of 1.0 part per million. The reclaimed water is discharged to the Coosawattee River, which is one of the many trout streams found in Gilmer County, GA. The plant received a Gold Award in 2013 for operational excellence. It was constructed in 1970 and has been expanded several times to provide wastewater capacity that supports community growth. It currently operates at approximately 50% capacity, and can be further expanded to handle up to 5.0 MGD. A septage receiving station is available for local haulers that pump septic tanks. Recreational vehicles may dump at the station at no charge, which is a great service for the many visitors traveling to Gilmer County to camp in their recreational vehicle. The existing sewer service area is much more limited than the public water service area (see appendix E). The available capacity of the water plant means that a



*Figure 23: Sanitary Sewer infrastructure is often the costliest investment regarding local utilities, which explains why Gilmer's sewer service area is lesser than that of the public water service area.*

significant increase in service area can be accommodated. The primary limitations of the sewer service area involve steep slopes and the distance to the existing treatment plant. For example, the Clear Creek Middle School campus is located in a different drainage basin from the existing plant. For this reason, a pump system was needed, substantially increasing the cost of providing sewer service to this project. While topography can create a challenge for certain areas, there are areas in the drainage basin of the treatment plant that can be served in a cost-efficient manner. The EGWSA is eager to work with developers and residents to increase the current sewer service area, but expansions require an adequate density of new users for the utility to recuperate construction costs.

Less than 1% (approximately 0.5%) of Gilmer is within the public sewer service area. While this figure seems small, there is still available sewer capacity in the coverage area. Thoughtful infill and new development in the urbanized, incorporated parts of the county within the sewer service area have the potential to add residential units without having to spread development outwards. Conventional greenfield development, on the other hand, which must meet larger minimum lot requirements per zoning codes will consume more land and have a greater impact on the county's rural character.

## Agriculture

Agriculture is another significant land use contributing to Gilmer County's character. Not only does agriculture provide Gilmer with cultural heritage, but it is an important economic resource, particularly in the production of apples, wine, and poultry. Gilmer County is reported as seventeenth in Farm Gate Value (\$244,072,580) among Georgia's 159 counties. Gilmer's farm gate values increased by \$54,894,345 since 2017, due in large part to growth in the poultry sector.

As of 2022, Gilmer County is the number one producer of apples in Georgia. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports the total market value of apples, minus the production cost (Farm Gate Value) to be at \$4,995,000. The apple industry also contributes to the strong agritourism industry in the county, bringing visitors to the county during apple harvesting season.

Farm wineries have also gained momentum in North Georgia, and Gilmer County is quickly becoming a destination for wine connoisseurs. In 2022, Gilmer County was ranked number one in the state for grape production totaling \$6,480,000 in Farm Gate Value. Farm wineries also greatly contribute to Gilmer's growing agritourism base by hosting various special events and retreats on-site.

Agritourism has created opportunities for farms of all types to augment their income beyond conventional crop or livestock production. In this environment, farmers may host weddings, give farm tours, create corn mazes, and many other creative activities that visitors may partake in. Having such a robust agritourism economy helps to illustrate the agriculture community as well as secure it as an important and profitable industry. Gilmer County ranks second for agritourism in



Figure 24: Dairy Cattle in Gilmer County. photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.



Figure 25: Visitors touring a local apple orchard in Gilmer County. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.

Georgia with \$7,595,079 in reported Farm Gate Value.

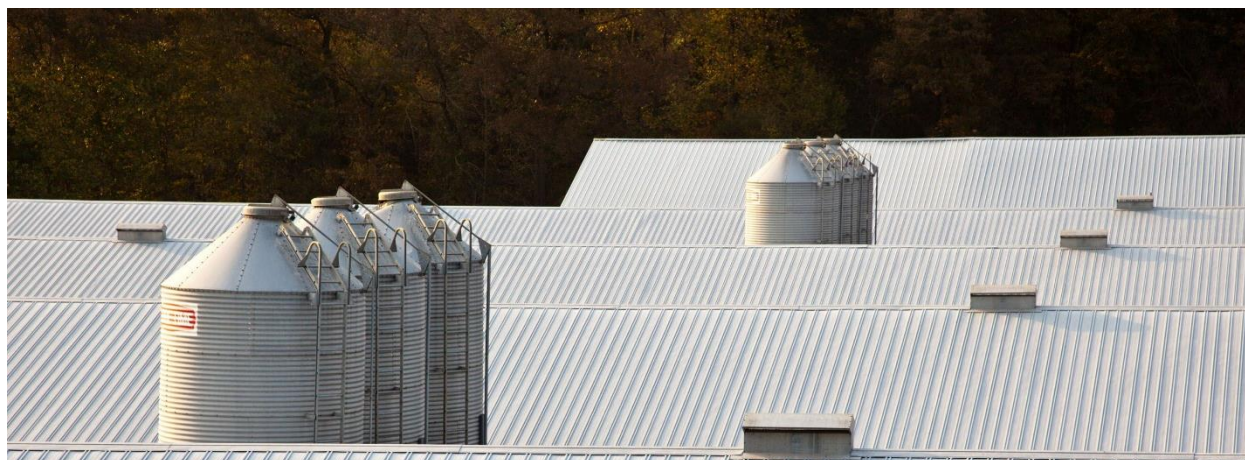
Although it is not an agritourism generator, the most economically significant agricultural commodity within the county is poultry. The University of Georgia ranks Gilmer County 10<sup>th</sup> out of the 159 Georgia counties for poultry production with a Farm Gate Value totaling \$210,636,700. With the poultry processing facility in Ellijay, Gilmer generates revenue from both the production and processing of poultry. Row crops and cattle production occur in Gilmer to a lesser degree than the previously mentioned commodities primarily because of Gilmer's varying topography making fencing and row cropping difficult.

All of these agricultural commodities contribute to Gilmer's economy and overall character. In the 2024 Community Vision Survey, 873 respondents selected the strong agricultural community as something they liked about Gilmer County. Additionally, 1,006 respondents selected agriculture and forest conservation when asked, "Which kinds of local government management actions would you support?" Similar results were observed in the 2019 version of the survey illustrating the high qualitative value associated with Gilmer's agriculture community.

Agriculture is an important aspect of Gilmer's character and economic output. When development becomes profitable and attractive in an area, agricultural properties are often prime targets for new construction. However, there are strong reasons why these areas should not be developed. In addition to the multitude of benefits they provide, farmland is often spatially distant from infrastructural services and amenities. This usually leads to less dense, more land consumptive development that relies on septic tanks and has limited access to public water. More than 93,000 acres in Gilmer are zoned for agriculture.



*Figure 26: Gilmer County is home to several certified Georgia Grown producers. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.*



*Figure 27: Aerial view from one of Gilmer's modern poultry farms*

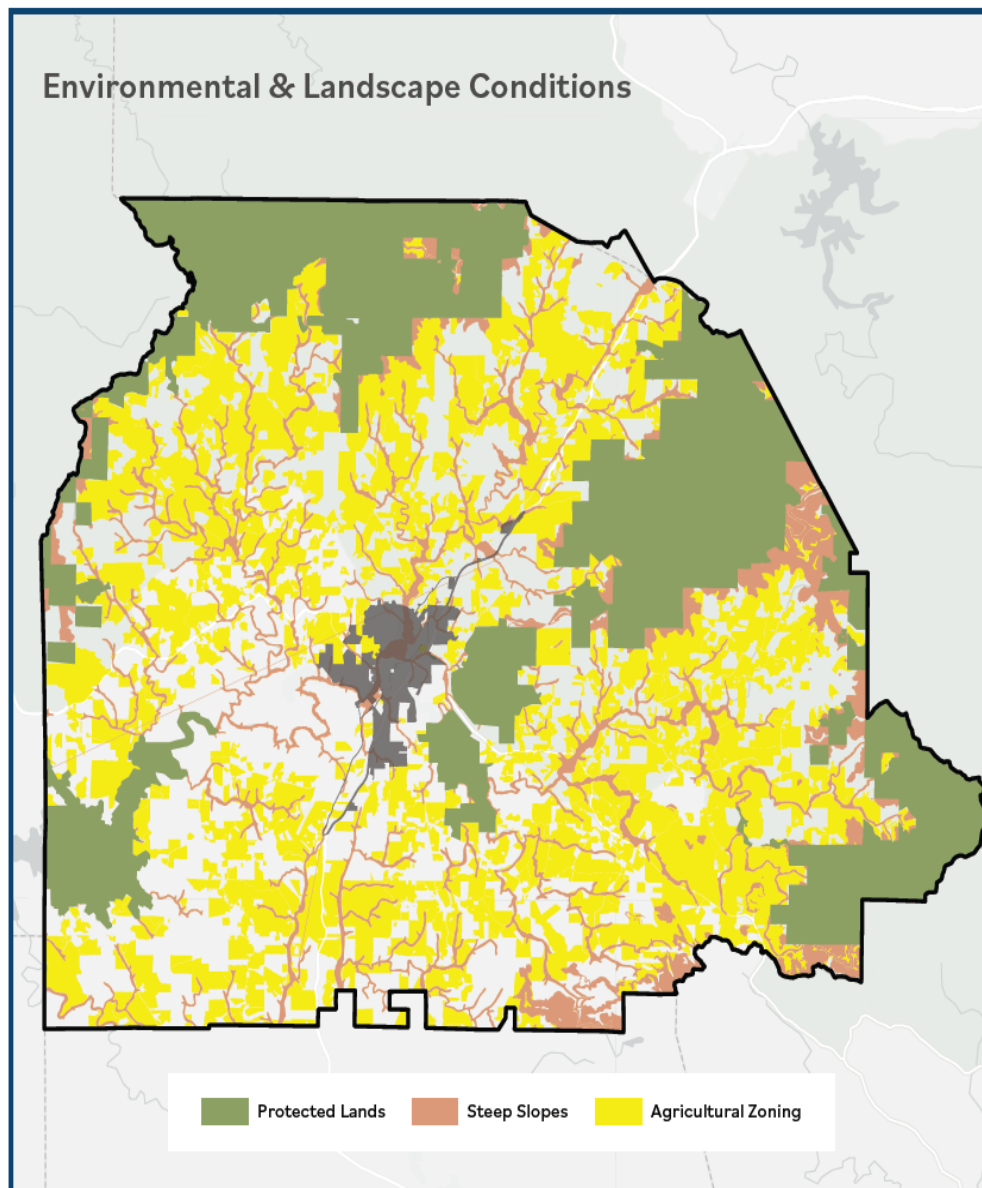


Figure 28 Source(s): Northwest Georgia Regional Commission GIS, Gilmer County Tax Assessor's Office GIS

## Summary

Together, these special landscapes cover about 63% of the county's total land area. The continued protection of agricultural lands and natural areas should be prioritized, by channeling growth (particularly infill development) near or within its cities.

## Tourism

### Introduction

With so many natural and community assets, it is no surprise that Gilmer County has become an attractive community for visitors from near and far. While it has been known as the *Apple Capital of Georgia* for some time, Gilmer County has more recently been named the *Mountain Bike Capital of Georgia*. Gilmer's breathtaking views, picturesque historic downtown Ellijay, thriving agricultural community, and numerous outdoor recreation opportunities make it an attractive destination for many. The focus of this session is the impacts of tourism in Gilmer County.

With a booming tourism industry, it has been no surprise that Gilmer County has seen a growing interest in lodging development. As opposed to conventional hospitality lodging (hotels and motels), most vacation lodging in Gilmer County consists of short-term rental units (STR's). These rental units are often mountainside cabins that are disbursed sporadically throughout the county. Data from both the Gilmer County Tourism Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis (2019) and the Housing Study and Action Toolkit (2023) illustrate consistent growth in STR lodging from 2008 to the present. The most significant growth of STR listings to date occurred from 2021 to 2023. The impacts of STR's on Gilmer County have had a positive impact on tourism and sales tax revenues. However, the ever-growing STR industry has raised concerns regarding the impacts to established single-family detached neighborhoods, as well as Gilmer's available housing stock for the workforce and residents. A more thorough analysis of STR's can be found in the Housing Section.

Every year, the U.S. Travel Association (USTA) prepares a tourism report for the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). The report estimates of the economic impact of travel for the state, regions, and counties. Those figures include travel expenditures, travel-related employment and income, and tax revenues for state and local governments.

Upon review of the 2017 USTA study, the Gilmer County Chamber of Commerce (GCCC) felt that the report underestimated the impact of travel/tourism in the county. For example, the USTA study estimates that total visitor spending in Gilmer in 2017 was \$34.9 million. Based on local hotel/motel tax revenues, that year, visitors spent \$11.5 million on lodging alone in Gilmer County – representing 34.5 percent of the USTA total spending. However, by their own estimate, the USTA study shows that lodging should be only 11.2 percent of



Figure 29: Appalachian Trail marker in Gilmer County. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.

### Visitor Spending by Category in 2022

Actual, share & % change YOY



**\$154.4M**

Total Visitor Spending  
YOY: ▲ 11.2%



**7.9%** is the share of jobs  
directly sustained by visitor  
spending in county



Visitors generated **\$9.4M** in  
state and local taxes  
which is equivalent to **\$747** in  
tax savings for every household

visitor spending in that particular region.

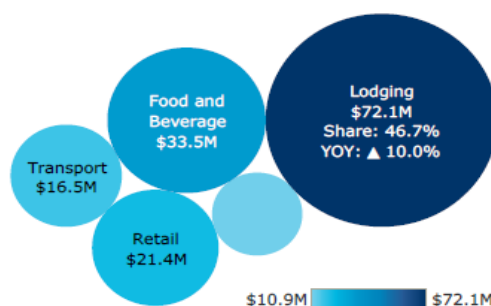
GCCC approached the Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR) at Georgia Tech to review the findings and determine their validity. The hoped to avoid an expensive survey-based analysis of visitors to Gilmer County. The expectation was that a very basic review of existing data, combined with some reasonable assumptions, would demonstrate that the USTA study understated the significance of tourism in Gilmer.

The results show that rather than \$34.9 million, visitor spending is closer to \$50 million. It further shows that visitor spending supports more than 850 direct jobs in Gilmer County, more than three times the USTA total of 268. Finally, state and local tax revenues generated by visitor spending exceeds \$4.5 million annually, as opposed to the \$2.4 million reported by the USTA.

GCCC also wanted to better understand the local economic impact of agritourism. Gilmer County is home to many apple orchards, vineyards, wineries, and local food markets and farms that offer various experiences and events that draw tourists. Many of these visitors are “day trippers,” and as such, their spending would not be included in the previous estimate since it is based on overnight stays. The results show that agritourism spending in Gilmer County is estimated to be \$15.7 million, supporting nearly 100 jobs, and generating \$4.6 million in local income.

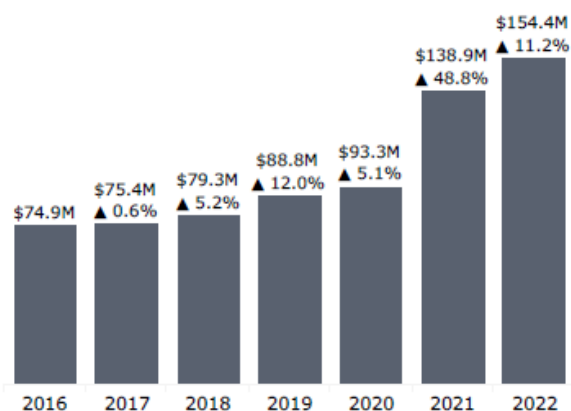


Figure 30: Thousands attend the annual Georgia Apple Festival held in Gilmer County



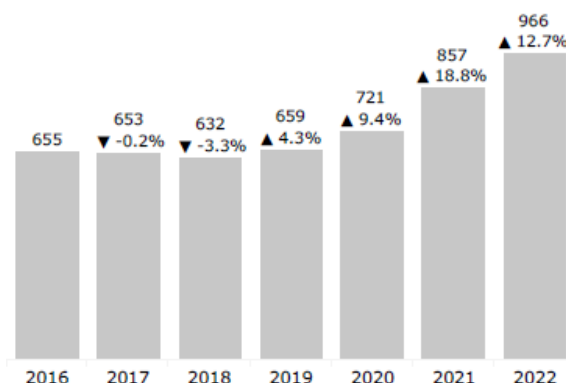
### Visitor Spending

Actual & % change YOY



### Tourism Supported Direct Employment

Actual & % change YOY



| <b>Economic Impact, 2022</b> |                |                     |                   |                       |               |                           |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
|                              | Total Spending | Direct Labor Income | Direct Employment | State and Local Taxes | Federal Taxes | State & Local Tax Savings |
| Fannin County                | \$293.1M       | \$67.2M             | 1,750             | \$29,113K             | \$14,283K     | \$2,602                   |
| Bartow County                | \$273.6M       | \$90.5M             | 2,844             | \$26,753K             | \$19,048K     | \$703                     |
| Whitfield County             | \$162.7M       | \$40.3M             | 1,438             | \$13,901K             | \$8,674K      | \$394                     |
| Gilmer County                | \$154.4M       | \$30.6M             | 966               | \$9,448K              | \$6,624K      | \$747                     |
| Floyd County                 | \$145.6M       | \$39.7M             | 1,552             | \$12,002K             | \$8,604K      | \$335                     |
| Gordon County                | \$99.4M        | \$21.6M             | 891               | \$7,405K              | \$4,761K      | \$367                     |
| Paulding County              | \$80.0M        | \$17.2M             | 795               | \$5,788K              | \$3,852K      | \$105                     |
| Catoosa County               | \$78.5M        | \$17.0M             | 711               | \$5,942K              | \$3,731K      | \$233                     |
| Pickens County               | \$46.0M        | \$7.9M              | 293               | \$3,093K              | \$1,772K      | \$245                     |
| Walker County                | \$42.9M        | \$10.8M             | 392               | \$3,004K              | \$2,319K      | \$117                     |
| Polk County                  | \$28.7M        | \$6.6M              | 273               | \$1,941K              | \$1,475K      | \$125                     |
| Murray County                | \$26.1M        | \$6.4M              | 290               | \$1,923K              | \$1,409K      | \$133                     |
| Haralson County              | \$22.9M        | \$4.9M              | 209               | \$2,044K              | \$1,104K      | \$182                     |
| Dade County                  | \$20.3M        | \$3.3M              | 124               | \$1,190K              | \$719K        | \$194                     |
| Chattooga County             | \$12.9M        | \$2.7M              | 129               | \$821K                | \$611K        | \$89                      |

The table illustrates the impact of tourism on the local economy from total dollars spent, to the amount of state/local tax savings per household as a result of tourist spending. This table shows Gilmer County as compared to the other 14 counties in northwest Georgia.

## Conclusion

Tourism and agritourism continue to play a significant role in Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay's local economy. The notable growth in this sector is likely to continue in the coming years, based on trends over previous years. While tourism growth brings many economic benefits, it also increases pressures on traffic congestion, available workforce, and attainable workforce housing. The issues surrounding transportation infrastructure and workforce housing have been significant topics of discussion throughout the planning process including the Community Vision Survey. Needs, opportunities, policies, and projects addressing these issues can be found in the implementation programs for each local government.



*Figure 31: Short-term vacation rental cabins provide visitors with alternatives to conventional hotel/motel lodging. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.*

# Housing

## Introduction

Below is a summary of the Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay 2023 Housing Study and Action Toolkit prepared for the Greater Gilmer Joint Development Authority

From coast to coast, the United States is facing a housing crisis. Two main trends are currently defining the housing landscape across the country: a shortage of housing stock, and rapidly rising housing prices. The roots of these issues have been growing over time, though their impacts and resulting difficulties have been felt with increasing severity in recent years. Coupled with additional challenges of shifting demographic and economic patterns, many communities throughout the nation are struggling to understand and respond to this increasingly severe housing landscape. Gilmer County is no exception to this phenomenon. The housing crisis is not just one that affects a single segment of the community. It is a core component, directly or indirectly, to the quality of life for all.

In early 2022, Georgia Conservancy partnered with the Greater Gilmer Joint Development Authority (GGJDA) and the Gilmer Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) to investigate regional housing issues. GICH sought an independent third party to conduct a study based on the available qualitative and quantitative data. A brief summary of this study can be found in this section.

## Project Origin and Goals

In early 2022, Georgia Conservancy partnered with the Greater Gilmer Joint Development Authority and the Gilmer Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) to investigate regional housing issues. GICH sought an independent third party to conduct a study based on qualitative and quantitative data available. This study could then be used as a springboard to educate community members and leaders on the topic and inform future housing-related policy.

## Demographic Drivers

### Population & Growth

Whether the local population grows or declines, population change is a major factor that affects shifts in housing need, both in how much supply is needed and/or utilized and how the population is distributed across a geography.

Gilmer County's population grew by 11% from 2010-2021. The US Census data shows that the growth from the previous decade (2000-2010) was even more acute at 20%.

The populations of Ellijay and East Ellijay fluctuated over the same period. Ellijay's population grew by 9% between 2010 and 2021, though this growth was not stable year over year. East Ellijay, the smaller of the two, has a permanent residential population that has been declining over the last decade. The modest changes in the two cities' populations, compared to the significant increase in Gilmer, indicate that there may be more residential opportunities in the unincorporated area. Alternatively, this may reflect a general preference by new residents to live outside the cities.

The Gilmer County population is projected to continue to grow. By 2028, ESRI forecasts that the population will exceed 33,000. Continued growth will create additional housing demand.

As a popular tourist destination, the total number of people in the county may swell during different times of the year. Pressure caused by visitor demand for temporary accommodations, especially short-term rentals, also factors into the housing situation.

Population Growth 2010 - 2021

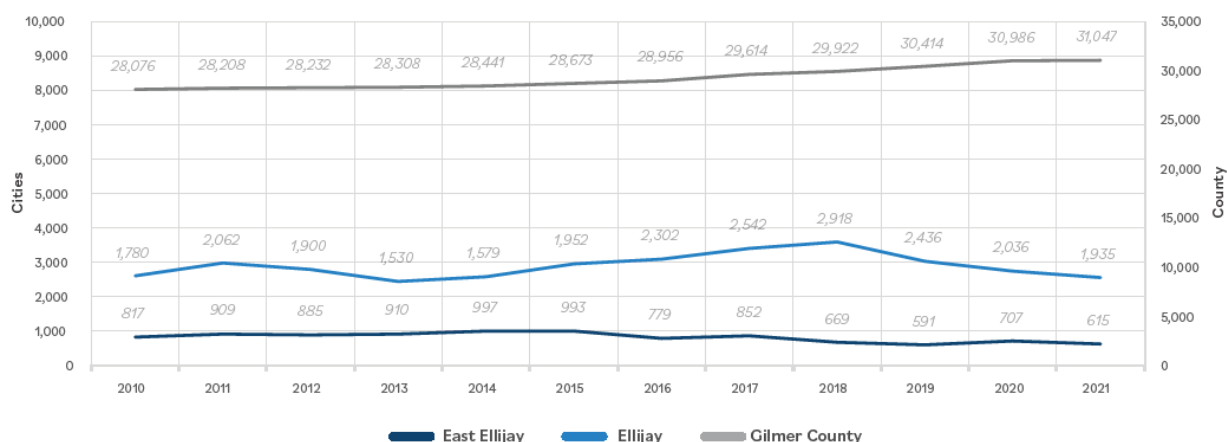
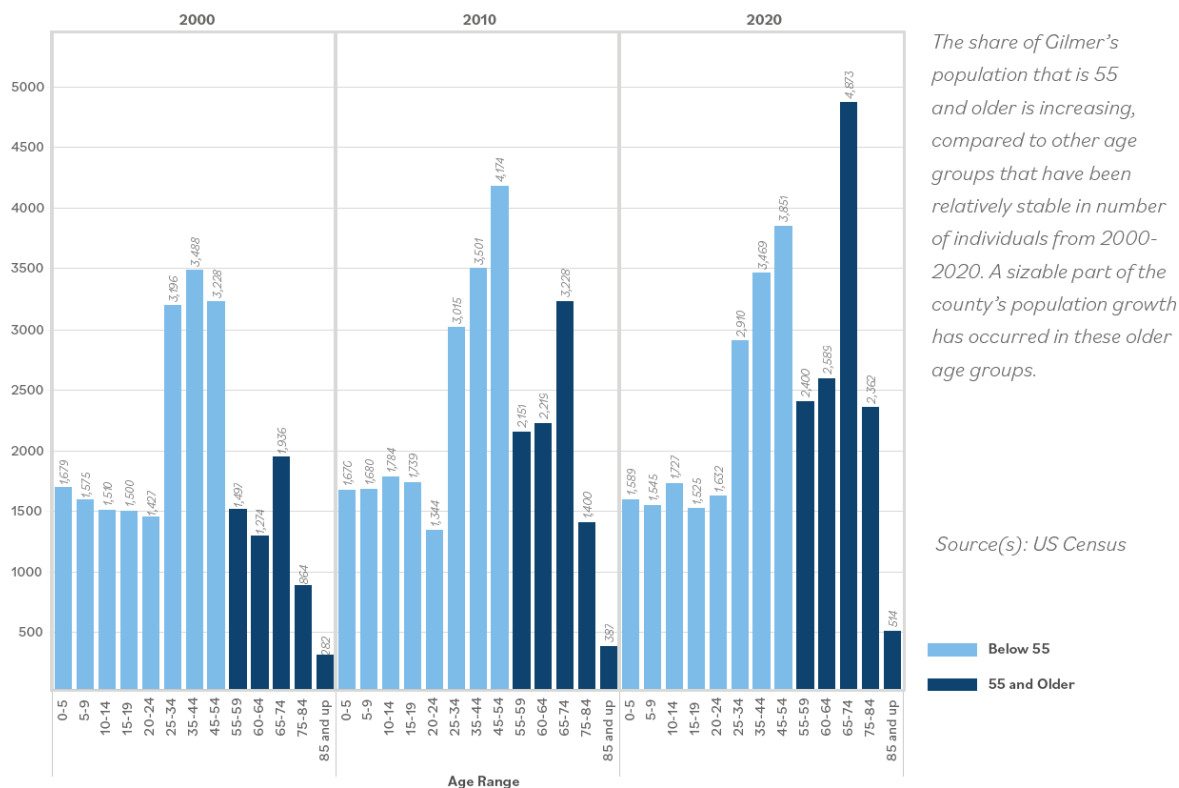


Figure 32 Source(s): American Community Survey (ACS), US Census

## Age Distribution

Gilmer's population has been steadily rising in age over time, with the median age increasing from 37.5 in 2000, to 49.2 in 2021. This is due to the increase in the share of the population 55 years and older during that time. People 55-64 years of age increased from 11.8% of the population in 2000 to 16% in 2020; those 65-84 rose from 12% to 23.3%, and those 85 and older grew from 1.2% to 1.7%. The 65-74 age group has seen the most dramatic increase.

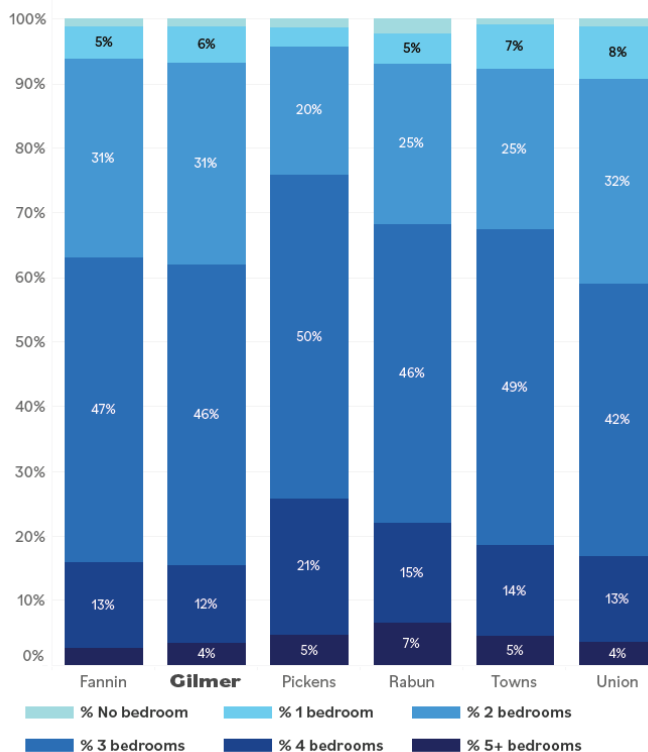
An increasingly older population presents unique housing challenges for the county, such as an increased need for senior housing or ability to downsize. It will also be essential for the county to balance the needs of older demographics with those of workforce members actively maintaining local amenities and services.



## Housing Size by Bedroom (2021)

Gilmer's housing size by bedroom closely compares with its peer counties; the bulk of units have 3 bedrooms. The county has slightly more units with 1 bedroom, and fewer than 4 or 5 bedroom units than its peers. This suggests that the variety of housing size, measured via bedrooms, is less restrictive in Gilmer than it might be in other jurisdictions. This measurement is important in the context of fitting the composition of household size and distribution in the county.

Source(s): ACS 5-Year Summary 2017-2021



## Age of Housing Stock

### Housing Age

Gilmer's housing is much newer in comparison to peer counties. The construction boom in the late 1990s and early 2000s was more distinct in Gilmer than in the other counties listed. However, the county has been slow to recoup following the recession. Other counties, such as Fannin and Union, have a modest increase in housing stock built after

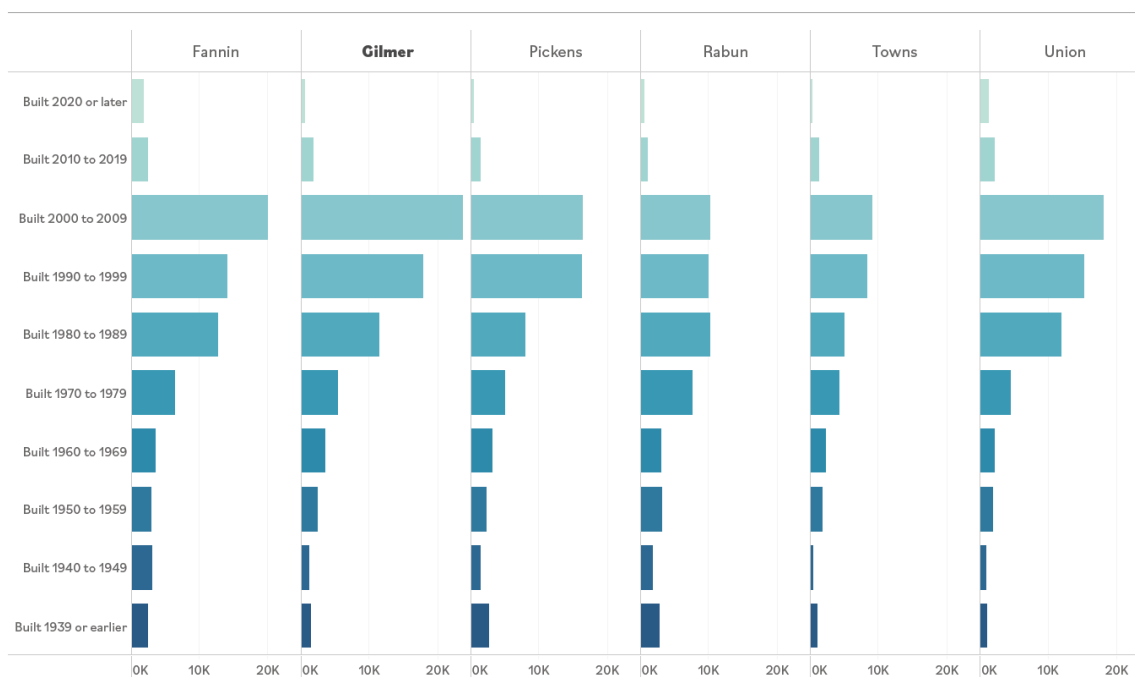


Figure 33: Source(s): ACS 5-Year Summary 2017-2021

2010 in comparison to Gilmer.

### Housing Tenure (2021)

Gilmer's renter-owner split is generally on par with peer counties. Notably, it does have the highest rate of rentership (25%) amongst the peer group. This figure reflects only long-term rentals and excludes short-term rental data.

### Relating Household Size and House Size

In Gilmer County, 62% of housing units are estimated to have 3 or more bedrooms, and 93% of all housing units have 2 or more bedrooms. Only about 7% of housing units are estimated to be 1-bedroom units or studios. Between 2000 and 2020, the average household size has decreased; only 30% of households in Gilmer are 3-person households or larger.

If households continue to shrink while house sizes increase or remain the same, there will be a widening gap between the types of housing units available and household preference. If smaller households sought smaller, right-sized homes that may be more price-appropriate, the options would be very limited.

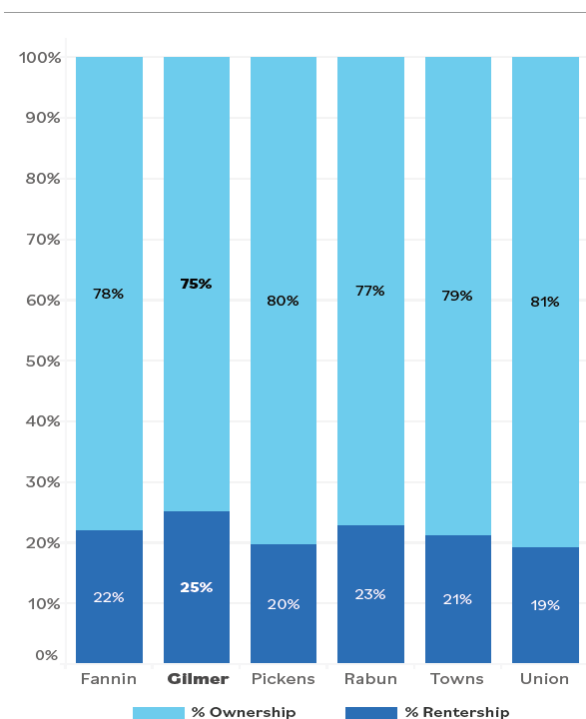


Figure 34 Source(s): ACS 5-Year Summary 2017-2021

### Number of Units

As of 2021, there were 17,593 total housing units in Gilmer County. Housing supply in the county increased dramatically by 36% 2000-2010, with moderate growth of 7% in the following decade.

### Total Housing Units (Gilmer)

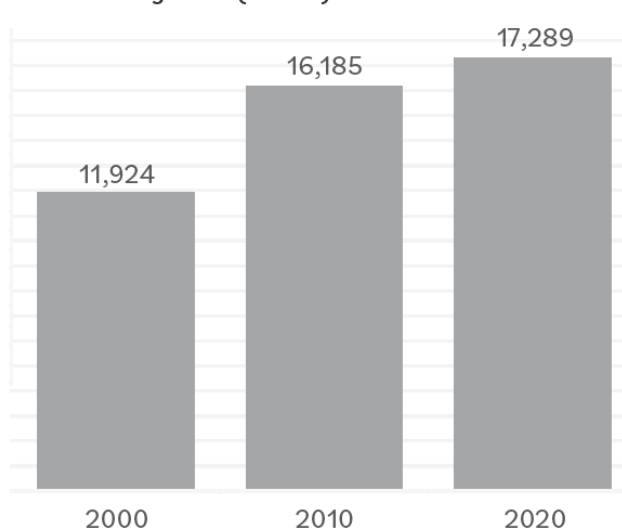


Figure 35 Source(s): US Census

### Housing Type

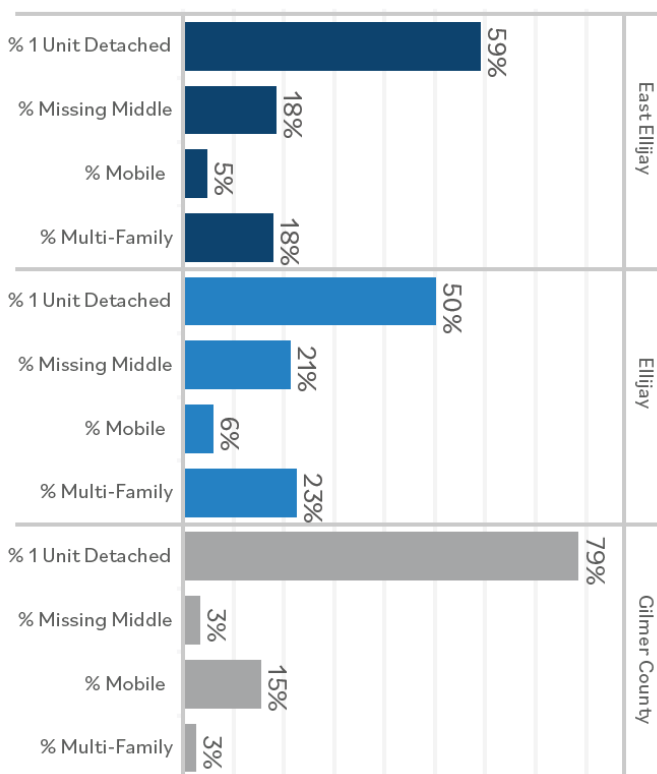
The vast majority of housing stock in Gilmer County consists of detached, single-family structures. This is particularly true for the unincorporated areas. In the city centers, however, there is a higher percentage of both missing middle and multi-family housing stock.

**Missing middle** is a category that consists of moderate density housing typologies – attached single family, duplexes, multiplexes, and small apartment buildings. It is called “missing middle” because it applies to developments between single-family homes and mid-rise apartments, or developments with 2-9 units. They are typically more difficult to build today due to various regulatory challenges and construction trends, despite being common in historic development.

For this analysis, missing middle was defined as the range of housing spanning from attached single-family structures to 9 units per structure. In Gilmer County, there is a modest amount of missing middle housing; only 5% of the total housing stock falls in this category. However, both Ellijay and East Ellijay’s housing stock is 24% missing middle.

Multifamily, defined as structures with 10 or more units, is less prominent in the county. The highest concentration of multifamily is in Ellijay at 20% of the total housing stock. The concentration of denser housing typologies in the city cores aligns with availability of utility services, such as public water and sewer, as well as concentration of amenities.

### Housing Mix (2021)



Source(s): ACS 5-Year Summary 2017-2021

## Housing Age & Development

### Housing Age Distribution

Starting in the 1980's Gilmer County saw a steady increase in residential improvements (construction/additions), with the majority of the county's housing stock constructed in the 1990's or 2000's. The average year of residential improvements for Gilmer's housing is 1993, with the median year being 1998. Seventy-five percent of housing stock roughly 40 years old or newer, which is much younger than the state average.

Gilmer's housing development peaked in 2006-2007, and then fell dramatically in the years following. Pre-recession improvement rates have not yet been matched, though rates continue to trend upwards. The table below illustrates Residential & Agricultural tax digest properties, 1940 and on, excluding manufactured homes. The gray bars highlight relative peaks in housing construction in the county.

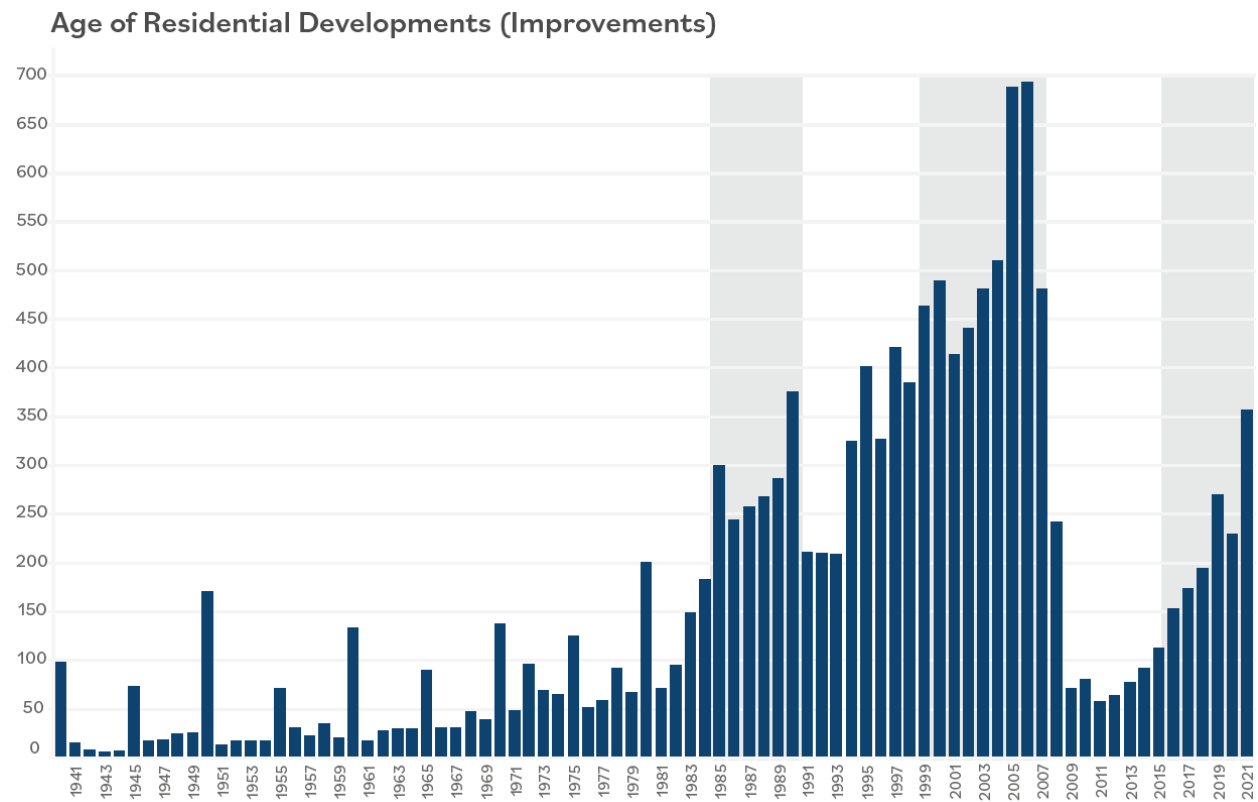


Figure 36 Source(s): Gilmer County Tax Assessor's Office

### Housing Supply Development Trends

The heat map illustrates construction occurring from 2000 and on, by year of residential improvement. New construction has tended to occur near Hwy 515 in the unincorporated area. The most significant development areas are the Coosawatee River Resort and communities in the northern part of the county.

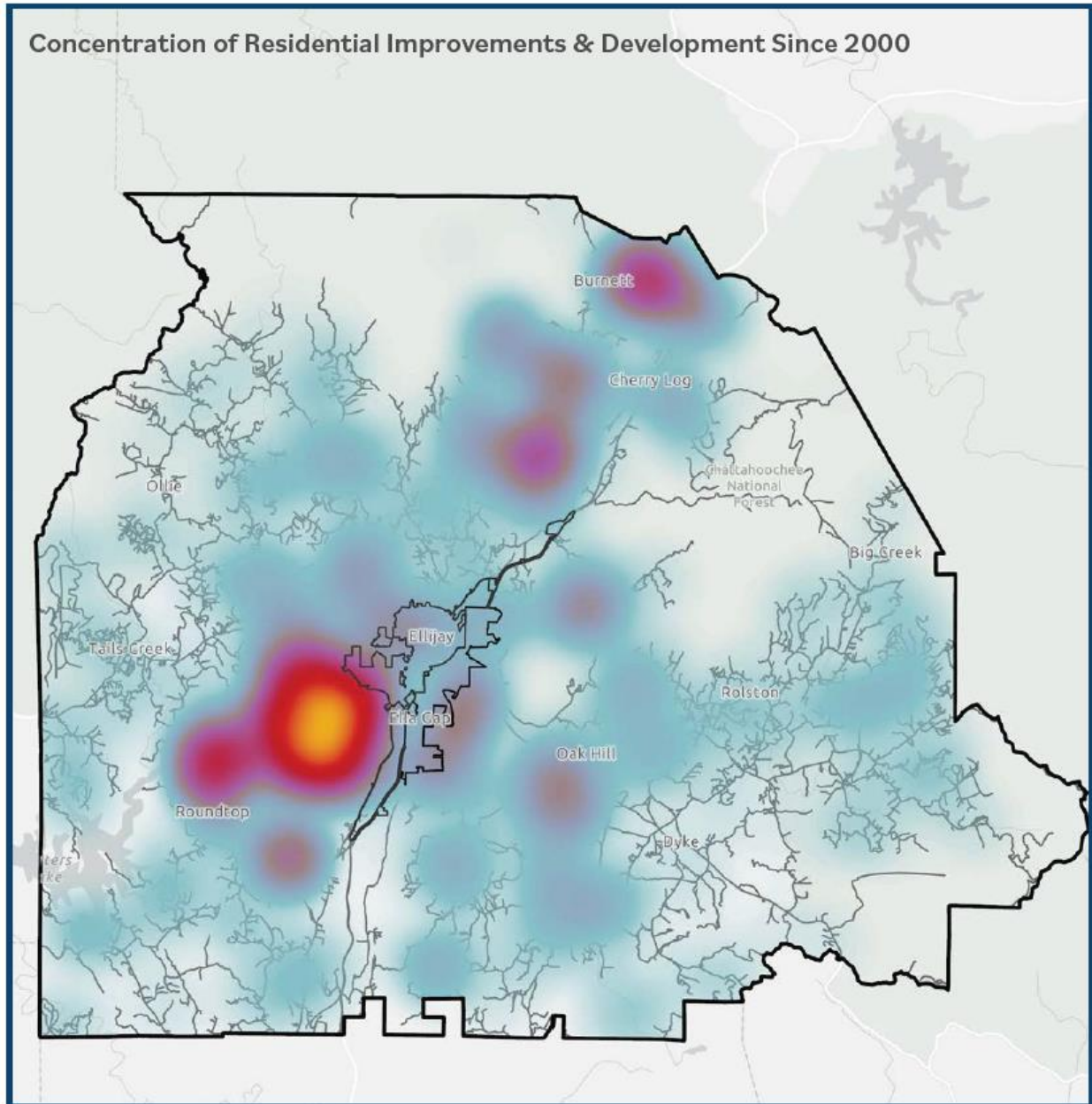


Figure 37 Source(s): Gilmer County Tax Assessor's Office GIS

## Manufactured Homes

According to the Assessor, there are approximately 3,144 manufactured homes (15%-18% of housing stock) in Gilmer County. Most manufactured homes are a single home on a lot, with a few parcels containing multiple homes.

Manufactured homes offer a cheaper and quicker housing alternative to stick-built construction. Contrary to popular belief, they may appreciate in value when maintained appropriately. However, manufactured homes are older in comparison to the rest of the housing stock in the county. The age may signify that these homes have greater, and more costly, maintenance or rehabilitation needs.

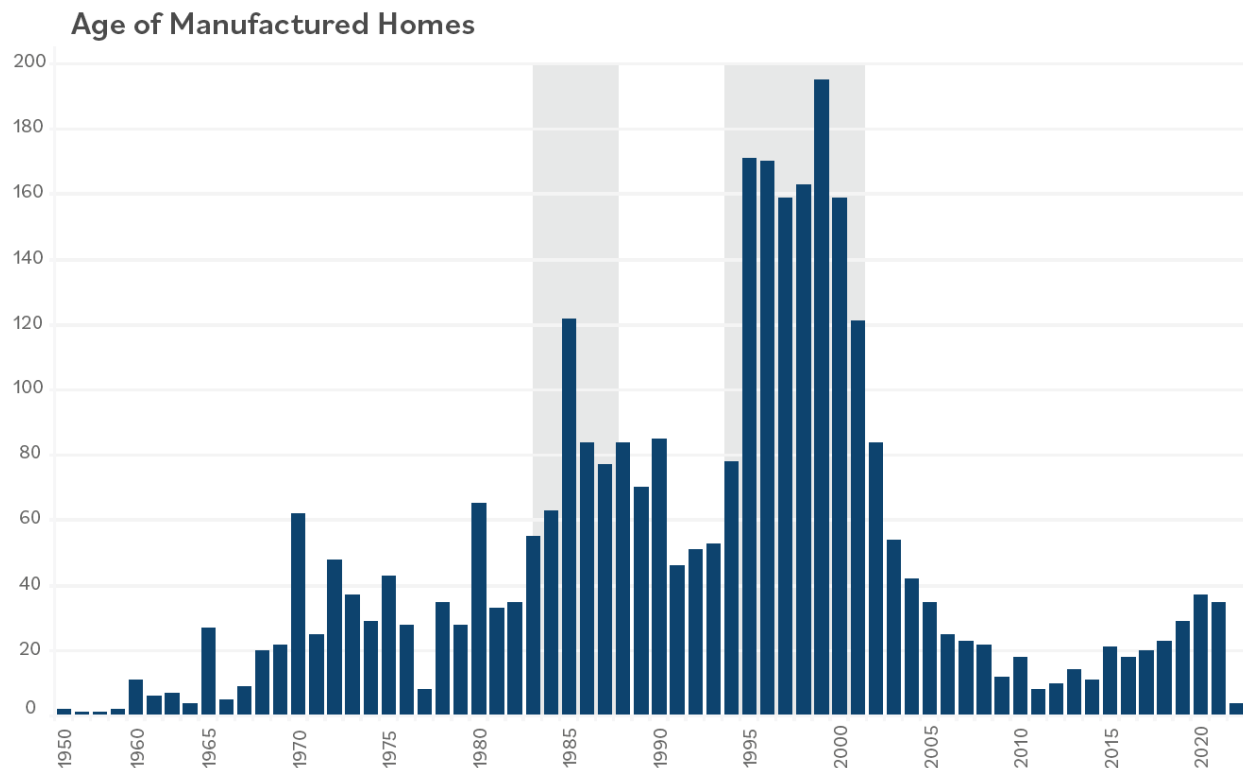


Figure 38 Source(s): Gilmer County Tax Assessor's Office GIS

## Housing Price & Sales

In recent years, housing prices have increased nationwide. Counties and metropolitan areas across Georgia have followed the same trajectory; increased housing prices that have put income-aligned housing

out of reach for many households. While higher housing values are a good sign for homeowner equity, they make it harder for first time buyers to enter the market.

Housing prices have been on an upwards trajectory for the last five years (this study did not examine housing price trends before 2018). Sales prices rose more dramatically during the years that overlapped with the COVID pandemic, which may have exacerbated prices and in-migration trends in Gilmer. The number of sales also increased in the same period, as property owners had potentially more to gain by selling as home values rose.

According to sales data tracking from the Gilmer Board of Tax Assessors, the average and median home sales price almost doubled between 2018 and 2022 (increasing by 86%). Average sales price increased in one year by as much as 26% (2020 to 2021). The average and median sales prices for fair market sales in the residential and agricultural digest in 2018 were \$227, 739 and \$215,000, respectively. In 2022, the average sale price was \$422,526 and the median sale price was \$399,950.

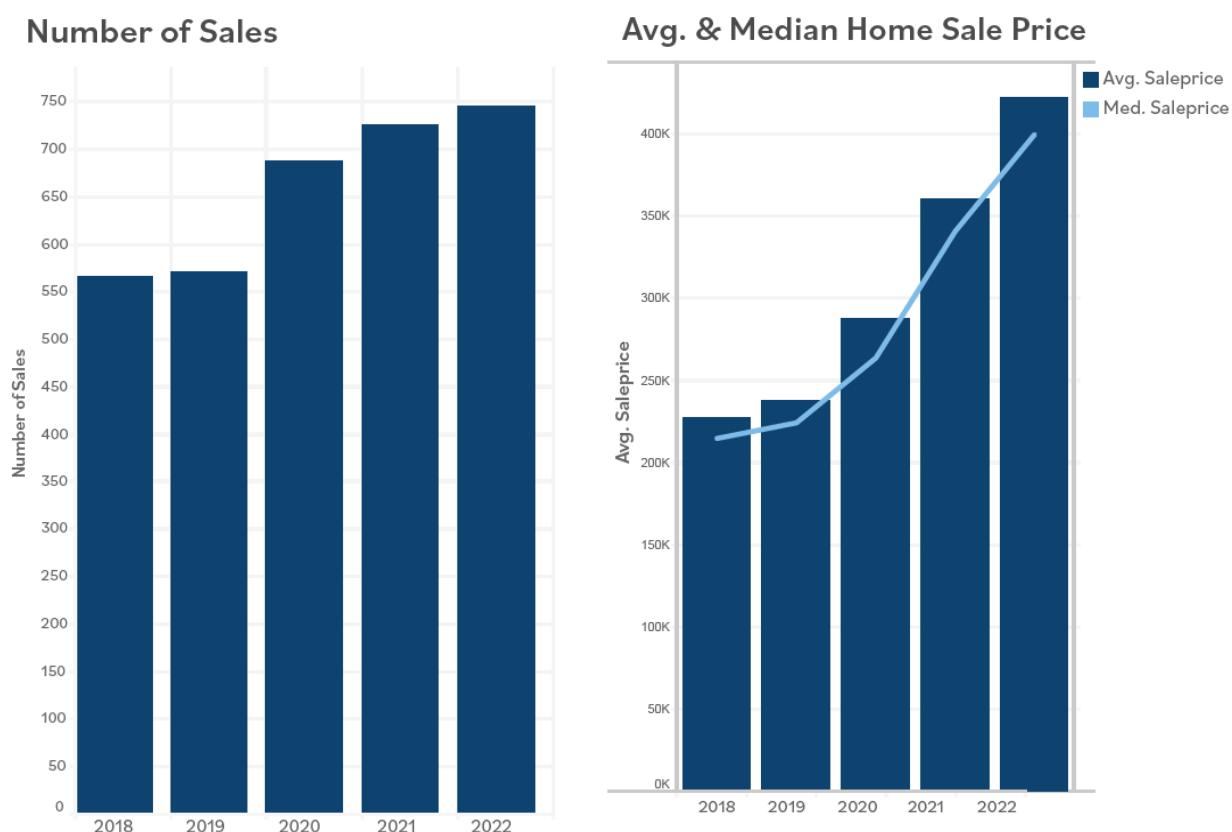


Figure 39 Source(s): Gilmer County Tax Assessor's Office

### Income-Aligned Housing

In general, households are considered to be paying an affordable rate if their housing cost is no more than 30% of their income. Households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs are considered

“housing cost-burdened”. The table and chart below show the relationship between Gilmer’s top industries and their average salaries, and the corresponding affordable monthly housing payment for a typical worker making the average salary.

| NAICS Industry                                   | % of workforce in Gilmer County | Annual Average Weekly Wage | Average annual wage | Max aff. payment/month |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Retail trade                                     | 24%                             | 593                        | \$30,836            | \$712                  |
| Manufacturing                                    | 22%                             | 810                        | \$42,120            | \$972                  |
| Accommodation and food services                  | 18%                             | 474                        | \$24,648            | \$569                  |
| Health care and social assistance                | 8%                              | 854                        | \$44,408            | \$1,025                |
| Construction                                     | 6%                              | 1115                       | \$57,980            | \$1,338                |
| Other services (except public administration)    | 4%                              | 631                        | \$32,812            | \$757                  |
| Professional, scientific, and technical services | 3%                              | 938                        | \$48,776            | \$1,126                |
| Information                                      | 3%                              | 1414                       | \$73,528            | \$1,697                |

| NAICS Industry                                | % of workforce in Gilmer County | Annual Average Weekly Wage | Average annual wage | Max aff. payment/month |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Wholesale trade                               | 3%                              | 1213                       | \$63,076            | \$1,456                |
| Finance and insurance                         | 2%                              | 1055                       | \$54,860            | \$1,266                |
| Real estate and rental and leasing            | 2%                              | 1024                       | \$53,248            | \$1,229                |
| Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction | 1%                              | 1330                       | \$69,160            | \$1,596                |
| Unclassified                                  | 1%                              | 953                        | \$49,556            | \$1,144                |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation           | 1%                              | 406                        | \$21,112            | \$487                  |
| Educational services                          | 1%                              | 612                        | \$31,824            | \$734                  |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting    | 1%                              | 485                        | \$25,220            | \$582                  |

The majority of workers in Gilmer County are in the retail trade or manufacturing industries. Retail trade includes Food and Beverage Retailers, as well as other general storefronts. Accommodation and food services- which include businesses serving food and drinks – is a significant third category of employers. Together, these three categories constitute 64% of businesses employing the labor force in Gilmer County.

## Short-Term Rental Trends

### Short-Term Rental Impact

Short-term rentals (STR's) are a substantial economic driver in the local economy, especially part of the tourism segment. In Georgia, STRs are required to pay sales and hotel-motel taxes, which augment local funds that provide community services. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Gilmer's hotel-motel tax revenue increased by more than \$1.2 million (from \$783,000 to \$2,054,000) from 2019 to 2021.

However, some STR's may take units off the market for permanent residential use. This can have a negative impact on residents' and workers' ability to find long-term housing in the community. The STR market in Gilmer County grew dramatically during the early years of the COVID pandemic and remains strong. The following chart tracks active monthly listings but is limited to listings for two of the five zip codes that overlap within the county (thereby excluding some STR's). It also only records listings on websites like AirBnB and VRBO, omitting private listings and listings booked through other third-party services. For example, listings across the county numbered 1,650 on August 3, 2023, yet, total listings are estimated to have reached approximately 2,000 at times.



Figure 40: Mountainside cabin in Gilmer County. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.

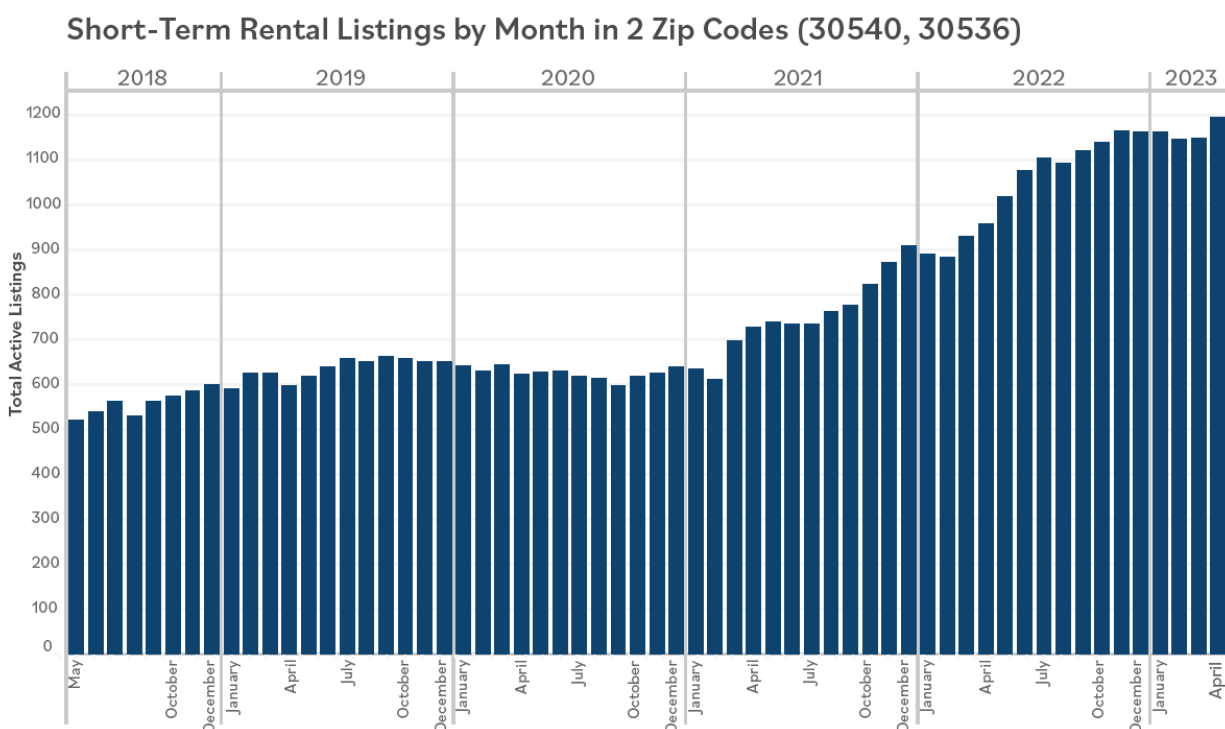


Figure 41 Short-term rental listings by month from May 2018 to April 2023 in two of Gilmer's five zip codes. Though this is a partial representation of all listings at any time, it shows the dramatic increase in listings as a trend since 2021. Source(s): Gilmer Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Department of Community Affairs

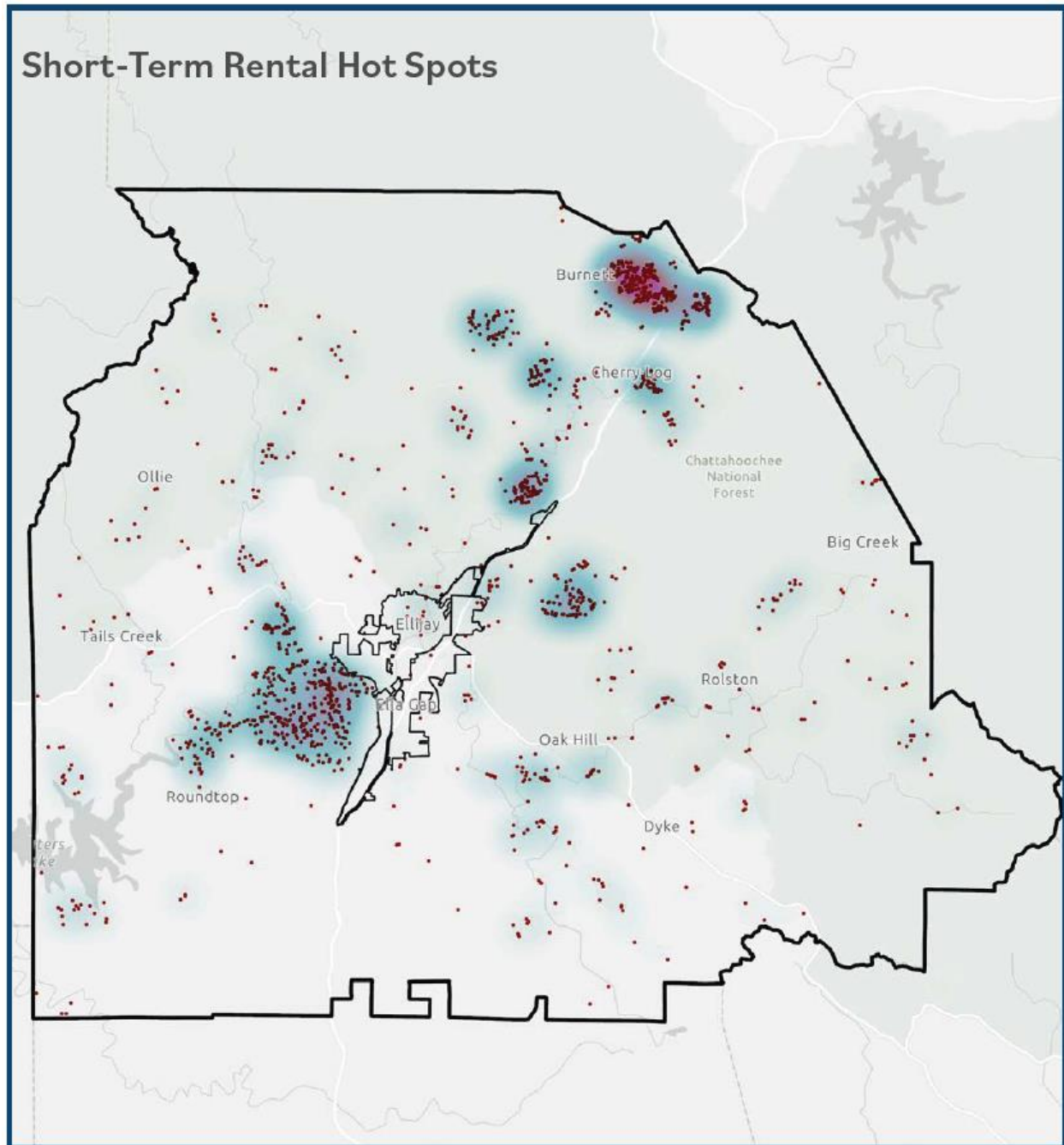


Figure 42 Heat map of short-term rentals listed in 2022 according to the Office of the Tax Assessor, where STRs are also tracked. This map depicts major clusters of STRs, which clearly have a higher prevalence in some areas of the county over others.

Source(s): Gilmer County Tax Assessor's Office

### Land Use Zoning

Zoning regulations are the chief land use control mechanism available to communities. Regulating land use through zoning allows counties and municipalities to decide which uses—industrial, commercial, or residential, for instance—will go where. There are also finer land use controls within each zoning category, like what specific types of units and dwellings are allowed where. If used as intended, zoning and land use become the underlying blueprint over which a community changes and grows over time.

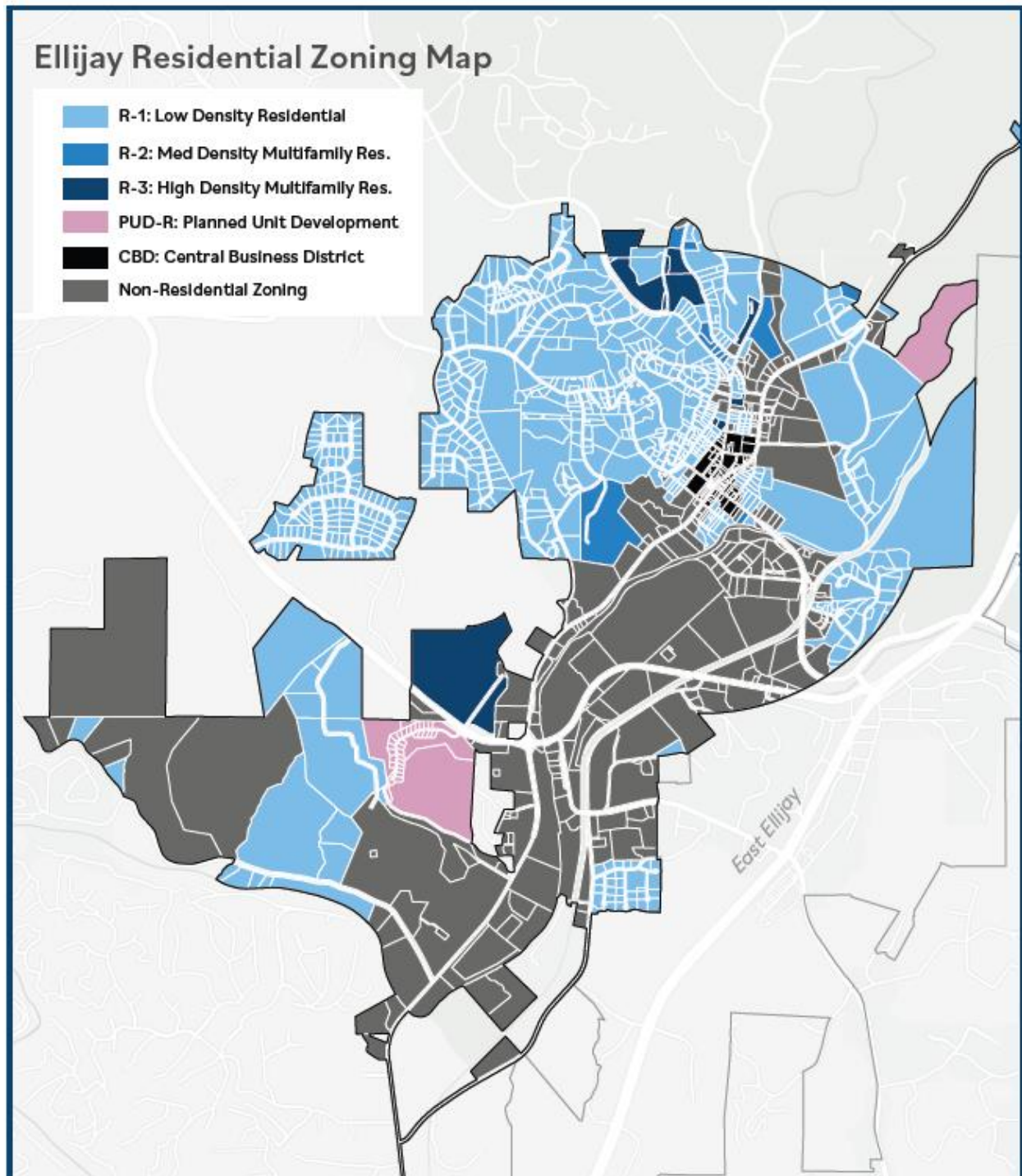


Figure 43 Ellijay Residential Zoning Map

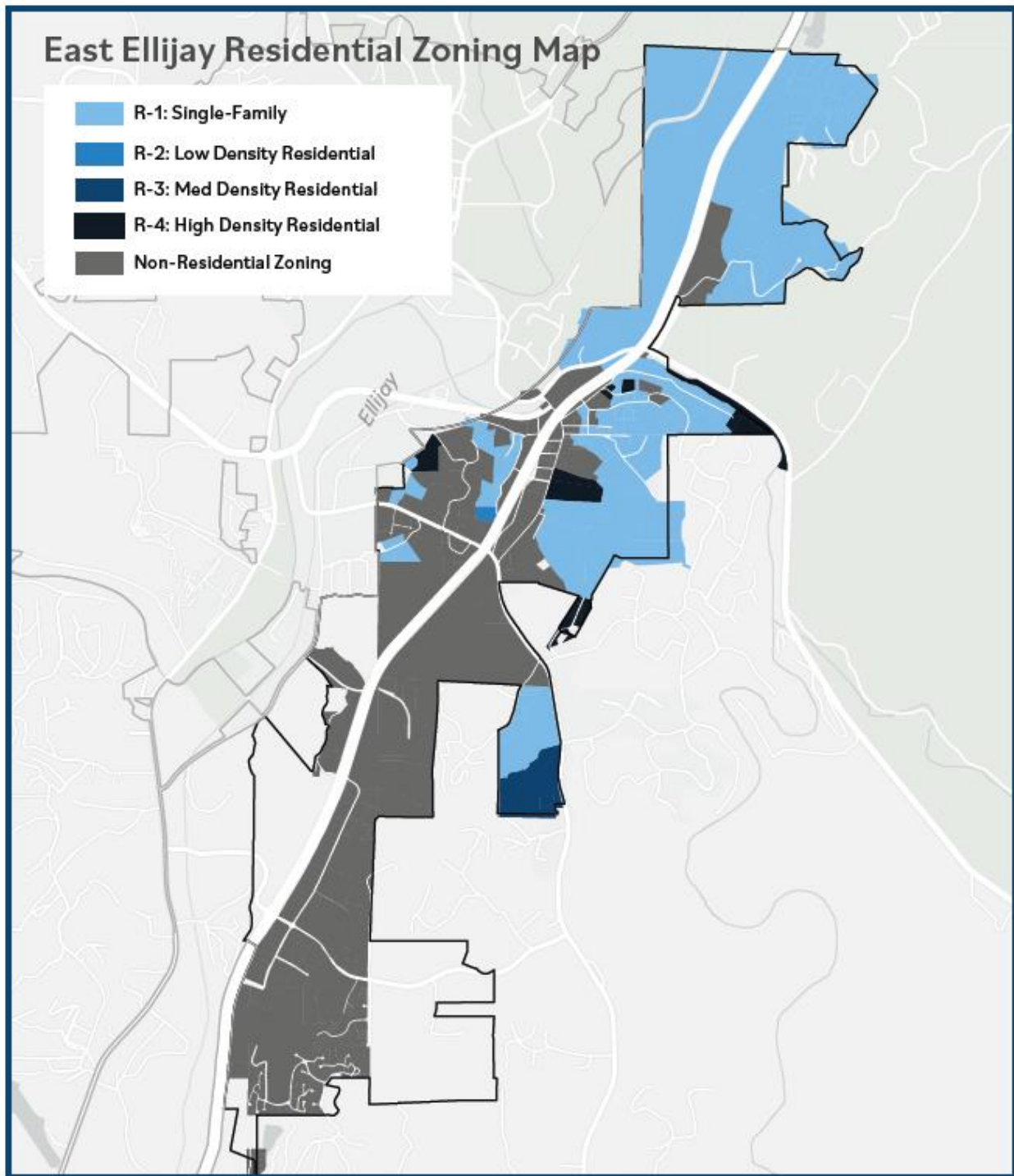


Figure 44 East Ellijay Residential Zoning Map

The East Ellijay zoning map illustrates the limited amount of residential area within the city as well as a majority of single-family restricted zoning.

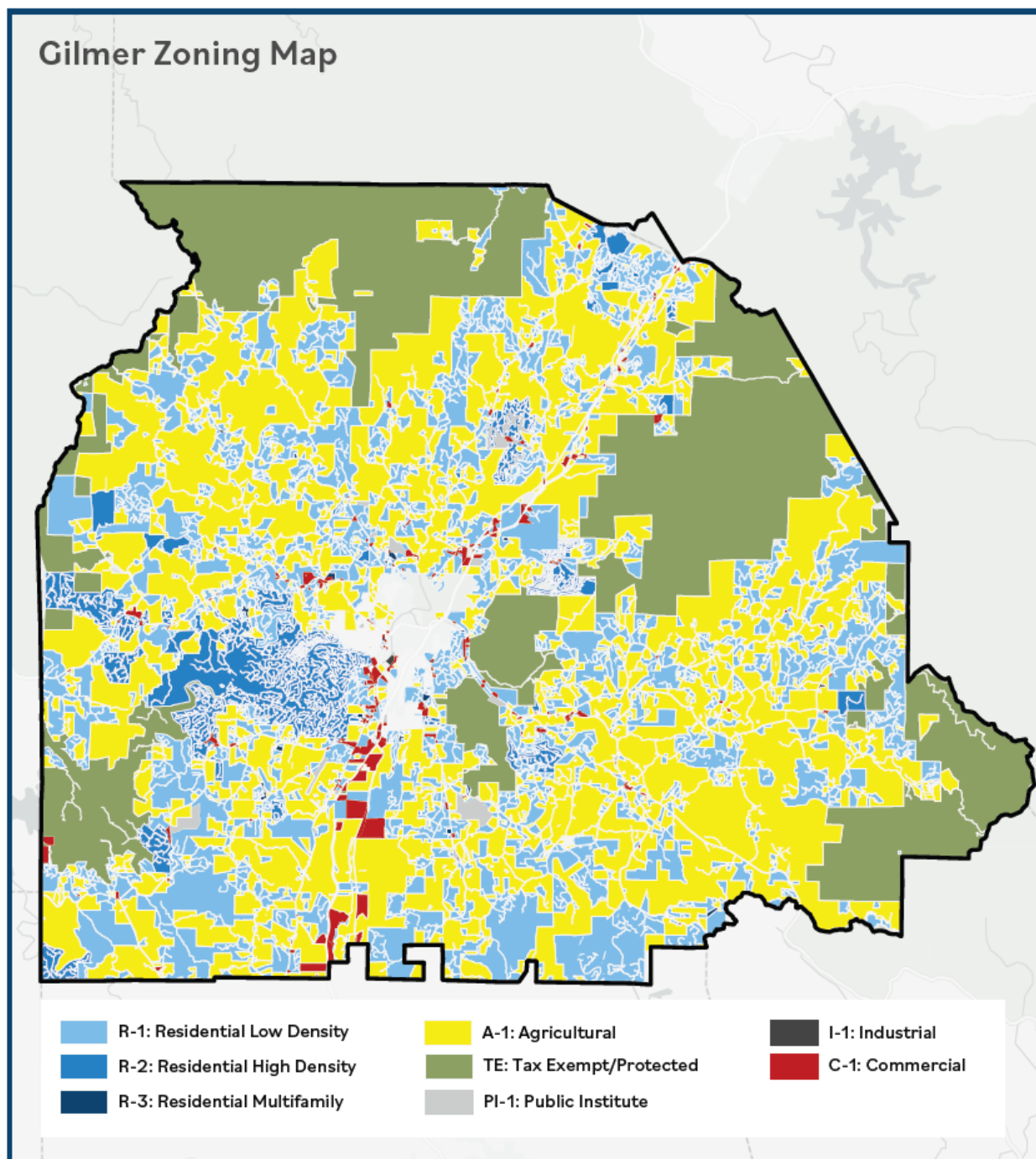


Figure 45 Gilmer County Zoning Map

Single-family residential (R-1) is the predominant residential classification in all three jurisdictions. It constitutes more than a quarter of all land in Gilmer County and more than a third in Ellijay and East Ellijay. Zones that accept other housing types and higher densities are limited and could be increased in cities to channel growth close to downtowns. However, unit maximums are relatively low, even in the cities' highest-density categories.

Agricultural zones require minimum lot sizes that discourage standard subdivision development in an effort to promote conservation and protect the rural character. However, this is not a certainty. The likelihood that agricultural areas remain undeveloped increases if other areas can be designated to accept growth demand. Conservation and growth goals work in concert with one another, not in opposition. Besides agricultural zones, the quarter of unincorporated Gilmer that is designated as protected for conservation is unlikely to change.

Residential lot sizes in Gilmer County are largely determined by their proximity to water and sewer services. By referencing the water/wastewater service areas (Figure 21), one can determine that residential density will continue to be limited outside these service areas. For example, the minimum lot size for the areas outside the water and sewer service area in Gilmer County is 1.5 acres. Any development seeking less than one-acre tracts will require access to both public water and wastewater. While capacity for expansion of both water and wastewater services is possible, future utility expansions will rely on the development of a certain density threshold in order to create a sustainable return on investment for the Ellijay-Gilmer Water and Sewer Authority (EGWSA). Even with development limitations, there are opportunities for new residential development throughout Gilmer County. While the number of people and housing units is expected to grow, new residential development should be respectful of the area's natural and rural character. All three local governments have developed guiding policies to sustain the characteristics that contribute to the quality of life for residents and visitors, now and into the future. Those policies may be found in each entity's implementation program.

## USING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

A significant component of the comprehensive planning process is the creation of the Future Land Use Map. It shows the standard land use categories and explains how they should interpret the future land use map. These categories play a significant role in determining the future growth of the county and its cities.

A large portion of land use has been historically determined by the county's topography. The presence of National Forest Lands, the highway system, (especially Georgia Highway 515), resort development potential, the locations of the two cities and various settlements, and other variables.

Gilmer County is correspondingly categorized by sensitive areas, particularly the Blue Ridge Environmental Corridor; it has high value in its natural state, shielding wildlife habitat, significant watersheds, and other ecologically noteworthy features. The high elevation and panoramic landscapes also contribute to the local economy, by drawing tourists, part-time residents, and retirees.

Another significant feature is the Chattahoochee National Forest. Of the nine counties in Northwest Georgia where the forest is located, Gilmer County has the largest acreage. These forested areas support hunting, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, mountain biking, swimming, camping, and many more activities that contribute to the economy.

Two significant publicly-owned wildlife management areas are located in Gilmer County. The Cohutta and Rich Mountain Wildlife Management Areas provide public access to lands suited for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities.



Figure 46: Hikers in Gilmer County. Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.



Figure 47: Cohutta Wildlife Management Area in Gilmer County.



Figure 48: Rich Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Gilmer County.

## LAND USE CATEGORIES

A great extent of the commercial development in the county is centered on Georgia Highway 515, particularly within the corporate limits of East Ellijay. The historic core of Ellijay is also home to a significant concentration of commercial activity, and outside of the cities, Highways 282 and 52 East also support considerable commercial activity, including convenience stores and iconic apple houses.

The categories and descriptions below are based on the Department of Community Affairs' Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning that were effective on March 1, 2014.

**Residential:** can be detailed into three categories: this category includes land used for single-family and multi-family residential uses.

**Low-Density Residential** – this category includes Residential land use consisting of single-family detached dwellings at a maximum density of one dwelling unit per acre.



Figure 49: Low-density residential land use in Gilmer County

**Medium-Density Residential** – this category includes residential land use consisting of single-family detached dwellings at a maximum density of one dwelling unit per 0.5 acres.



Figure 50: Medium-density residential development in Ellijay

**High-Density Residential** – this category includes Residential land use consisting of multi-family dwellings such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhouses, condominiums, and apartments at a maximum density of 10 dwelling units per acre.



Figure 51: Example of high-density residential development

**Commercial** – this category includes land used for non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service, and entertainment facilities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building.



Figure 52: Commercial development in East Ellijay

**Industrial** – this classification includes land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehouses, wholesale trade facilities, mining, mineral extraction activities, or similar uses.



Figure 53: Industrial development in Ellijay

**Public/Institutional** – this grouping includes certain state, federal or local governmental and institutional land uses. Its public uses include city halls, governmental building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, and more. Some examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, and hospitals.



Figure 54: Government buildings in Ellijay and East Ellijay

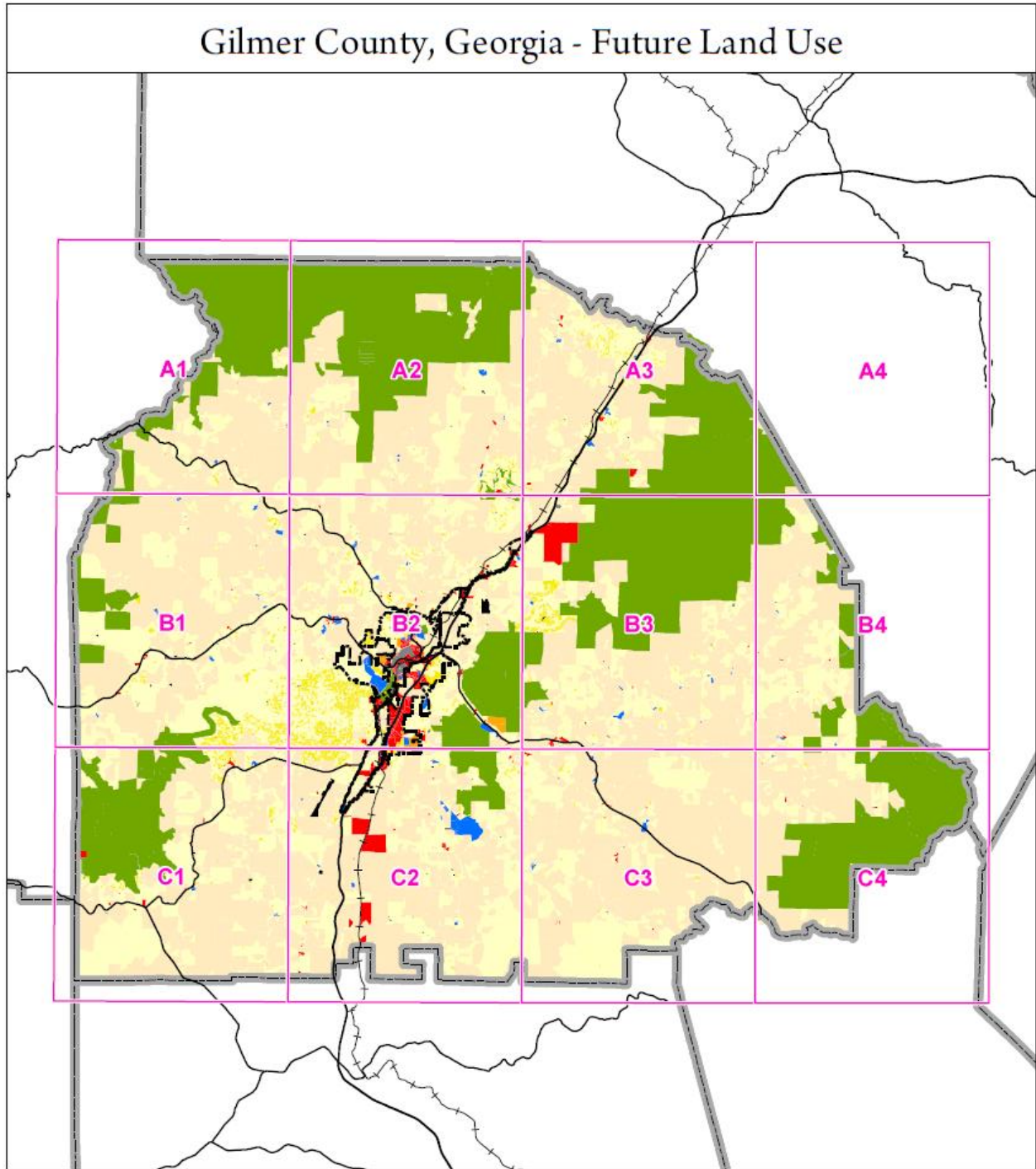
**Transportation/Communication/Utilities** – this category includes such uses as roads, public transit stations, railway, telecommunication towers, telephone switching stations, airports, or other similar uses.



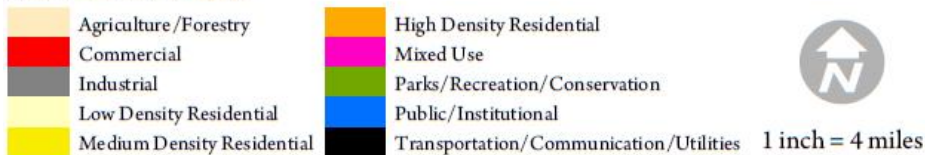
Figure 55: Illustration of utility infrastructure



## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP: GILMER COUNTY



### Future Land Use Category

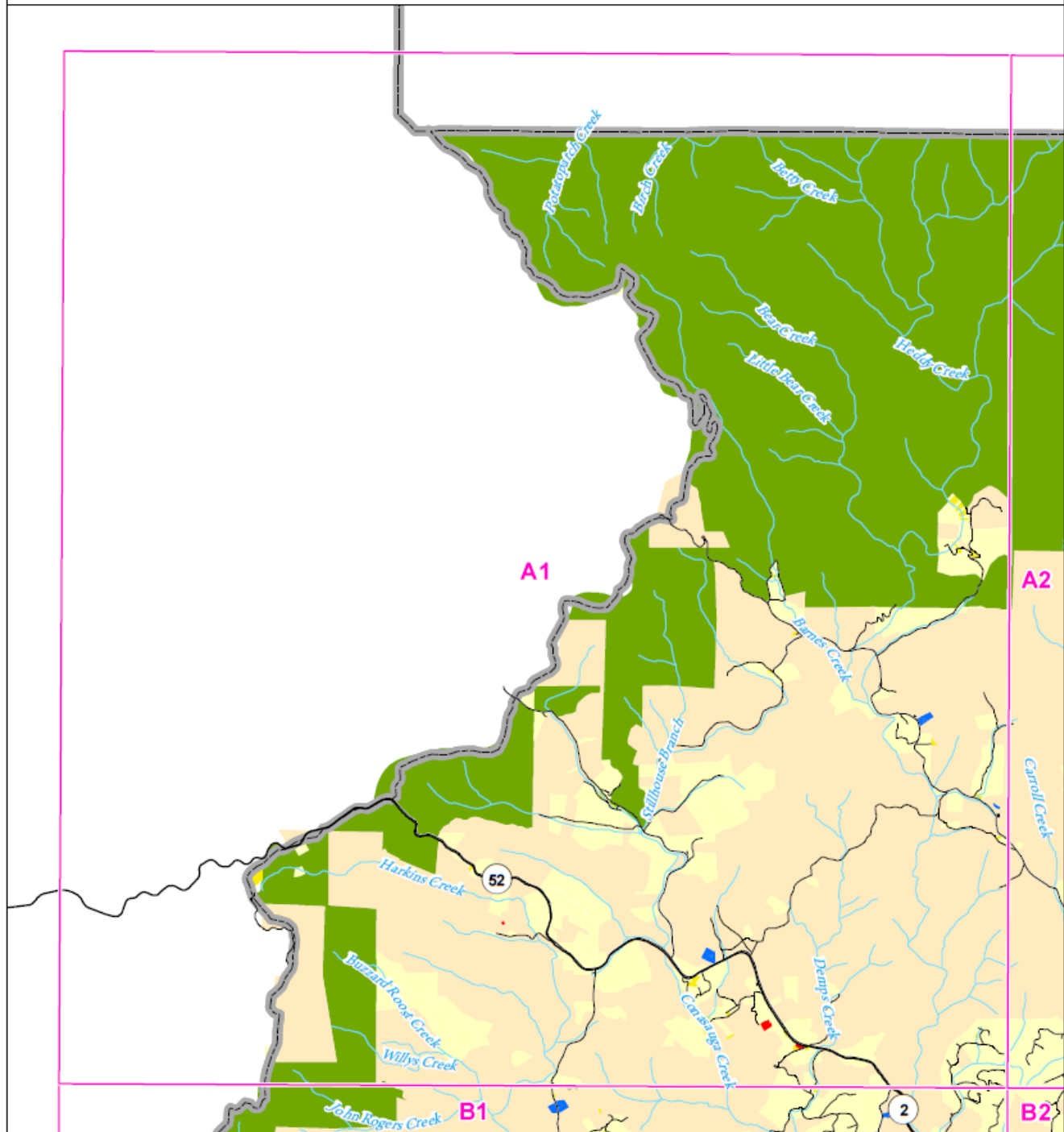


**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Section, 503 West Wagh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgc.org](http://www.nwgc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category

|  |                            |  |                                        |
|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |



1 inch = 1 mile

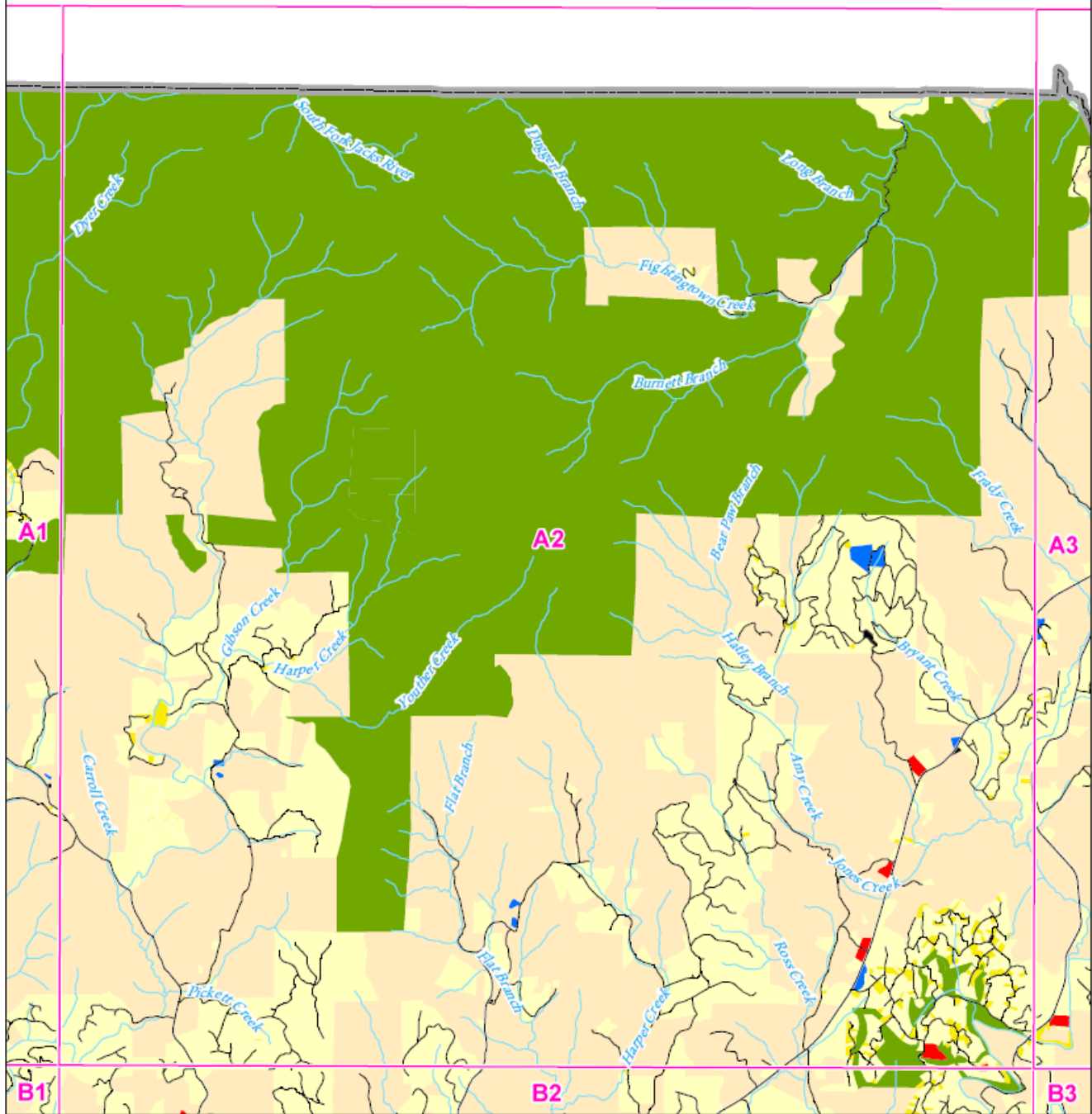
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid A1

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone's future. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category

|  |                            |  |                                        |
|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |



**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

1 inch = 1 miles

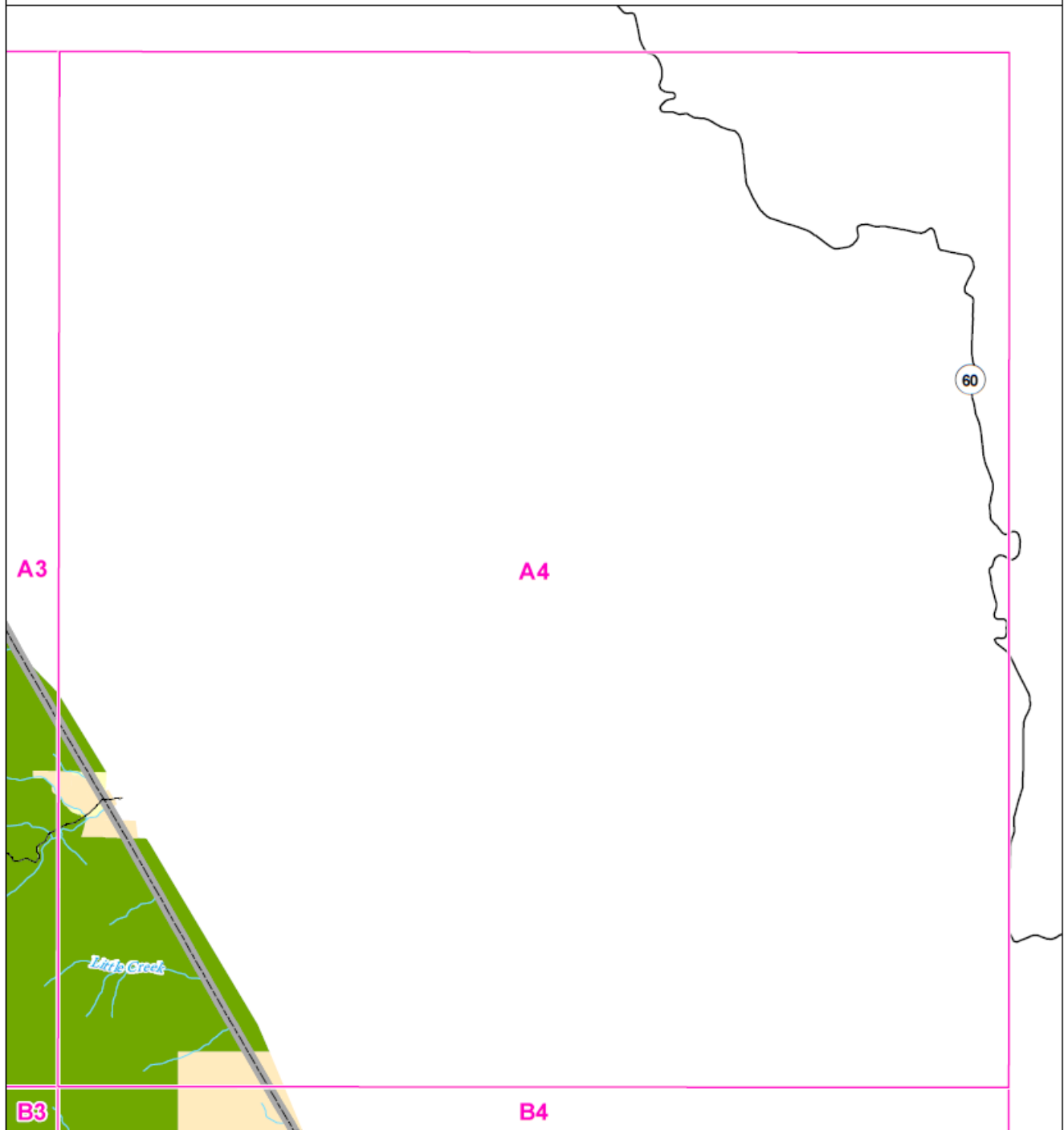
© August 2024

Grid A2

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 303 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of future land use and does not constitute a legal representation of any person or entity. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.



# Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



## Future Land Use Category

|                                                                                     |                            |                                                                                     |                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |

1 inch = 1 miles



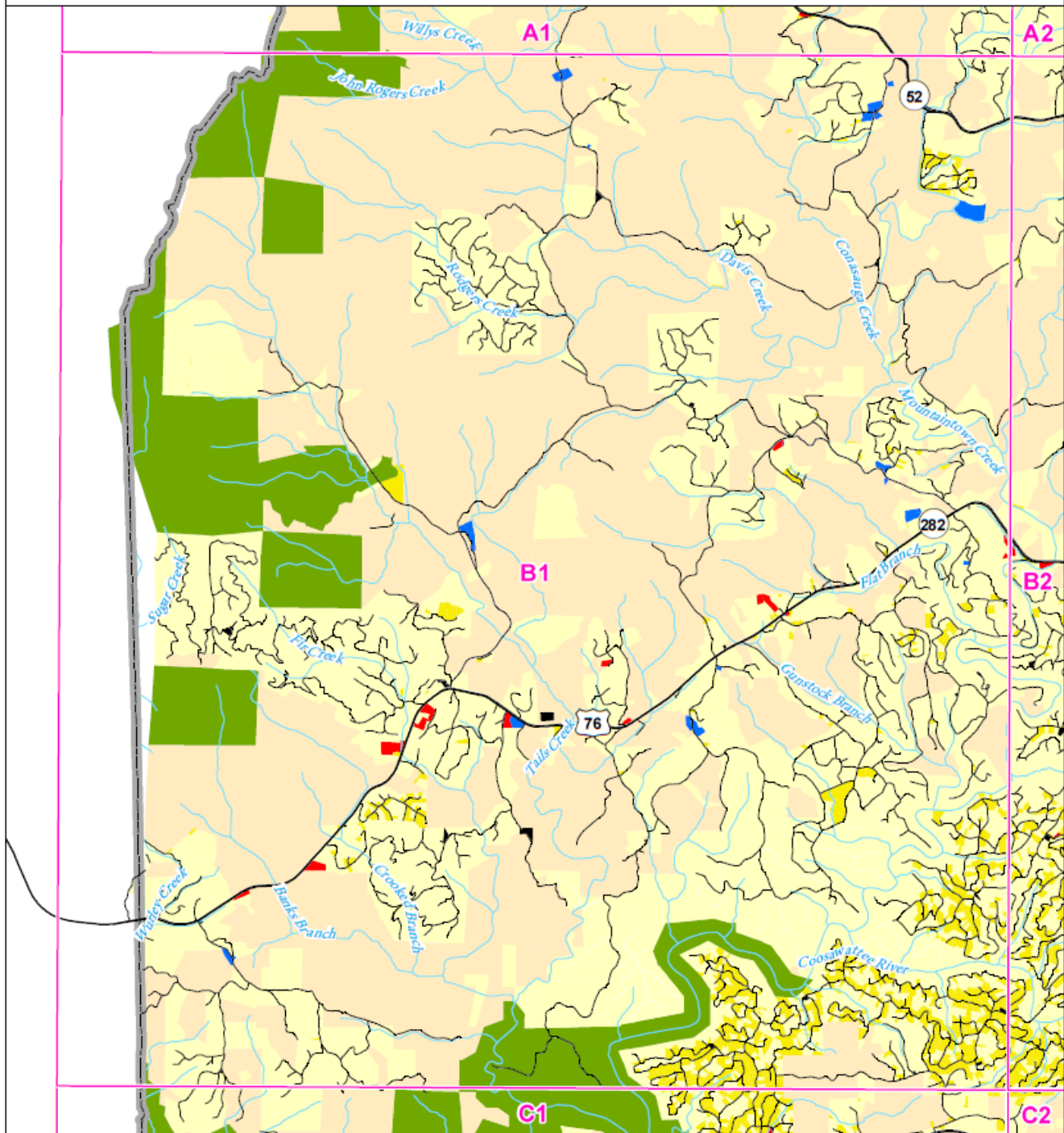
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid A4

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, www.nwgrc.org. This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone's status. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category

|  |                            |  |                                        |
|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |



1 inch = 1 miles

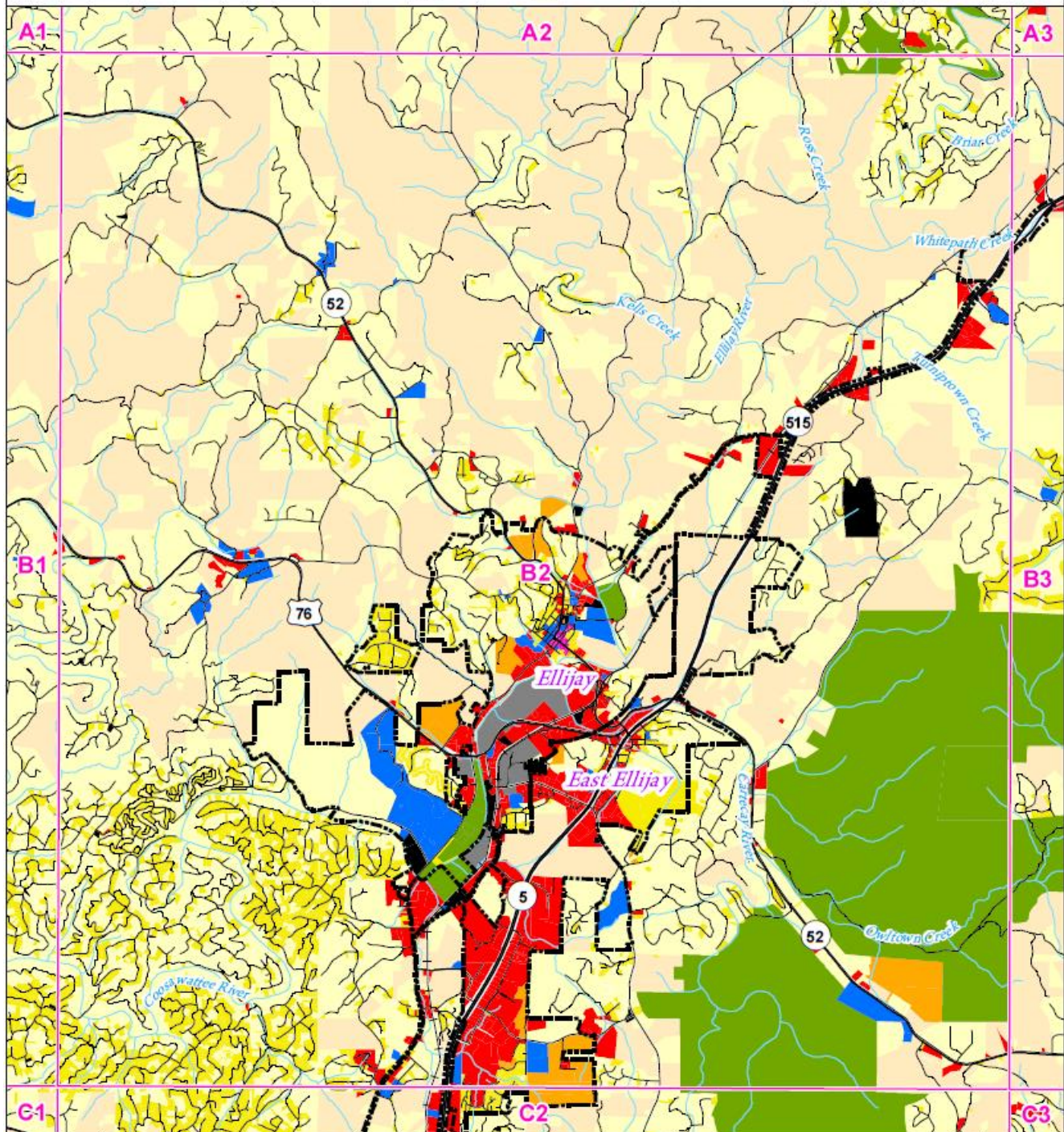
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid B1

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 303 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone's location. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category



1 inch = 1 mile



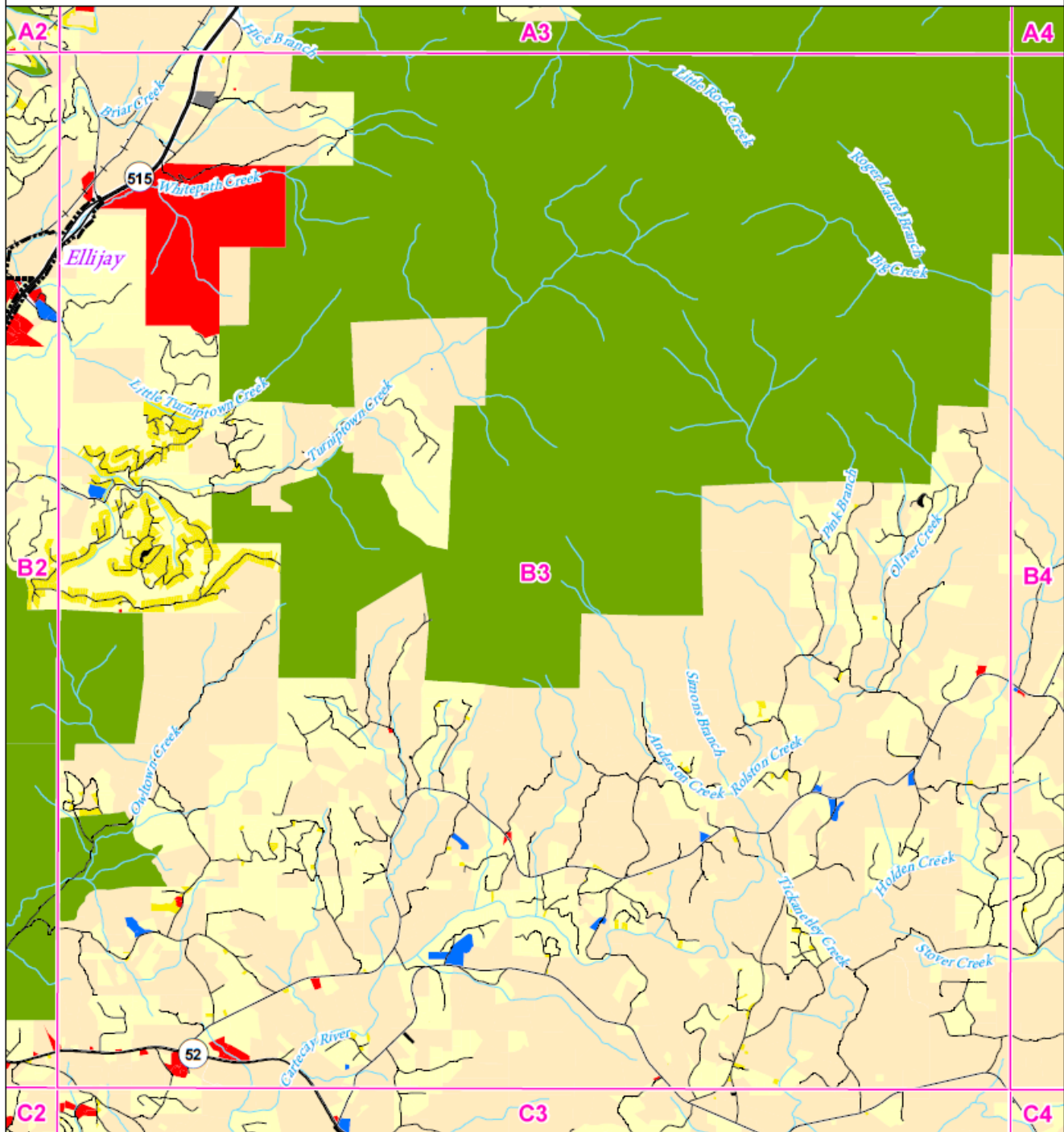
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid B2

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 303 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of future land use and does not constitute a legal representation of any future action. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



Future Land Use Category

 Agriculture/Forestry  
 Commercial  
 Industrial  
 Low Density Residential  
 Medium Density Residential

High Density Residential  
Mixed Use  
Parks/Recreation/Conservation  
Public/Institutional  
Transportation/Communication/Utilities

$1 \text{ inch} = 1 \text{ miles}$



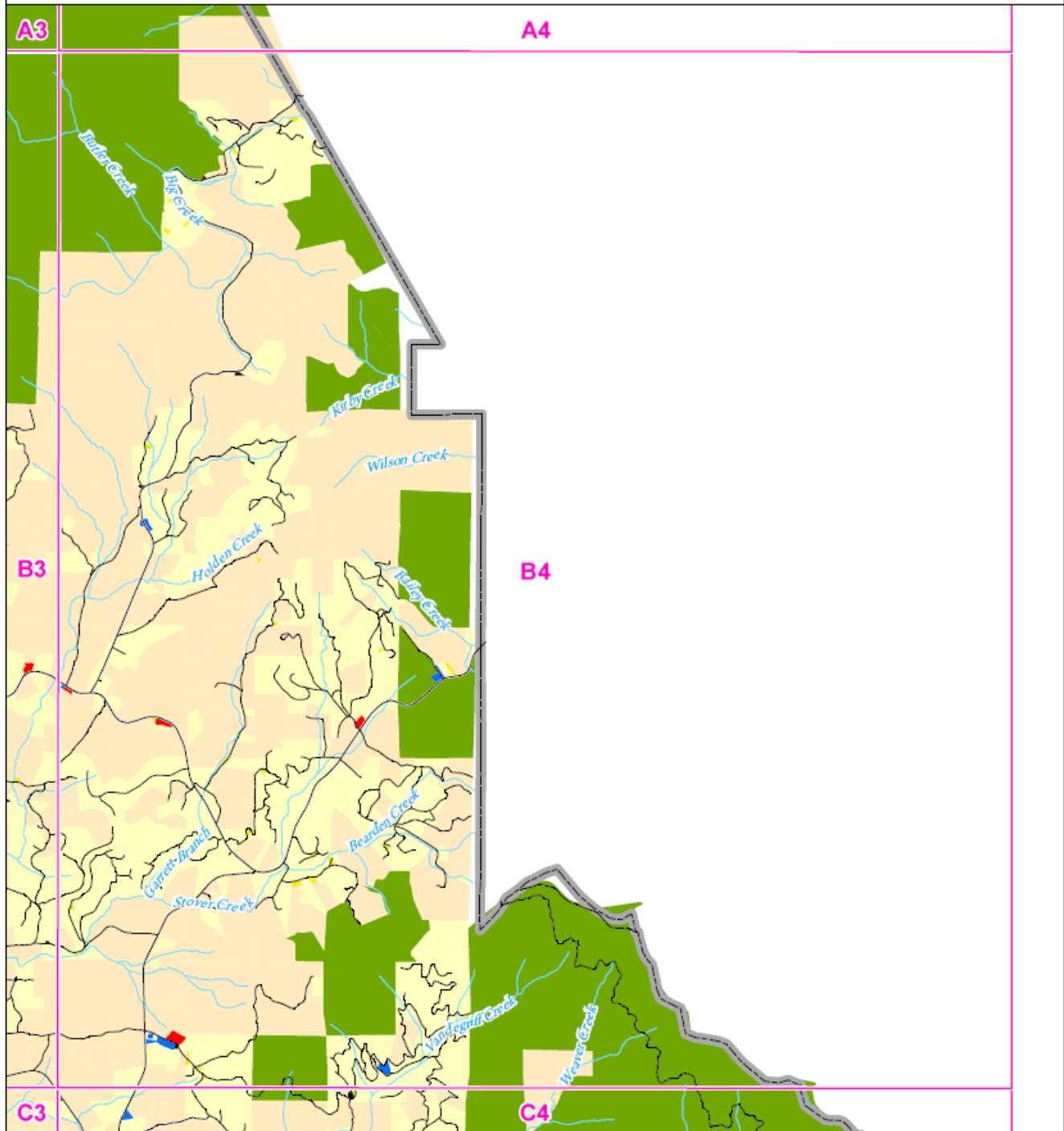
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid B3

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-1300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone's claim. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category



1 inch = 1 mile

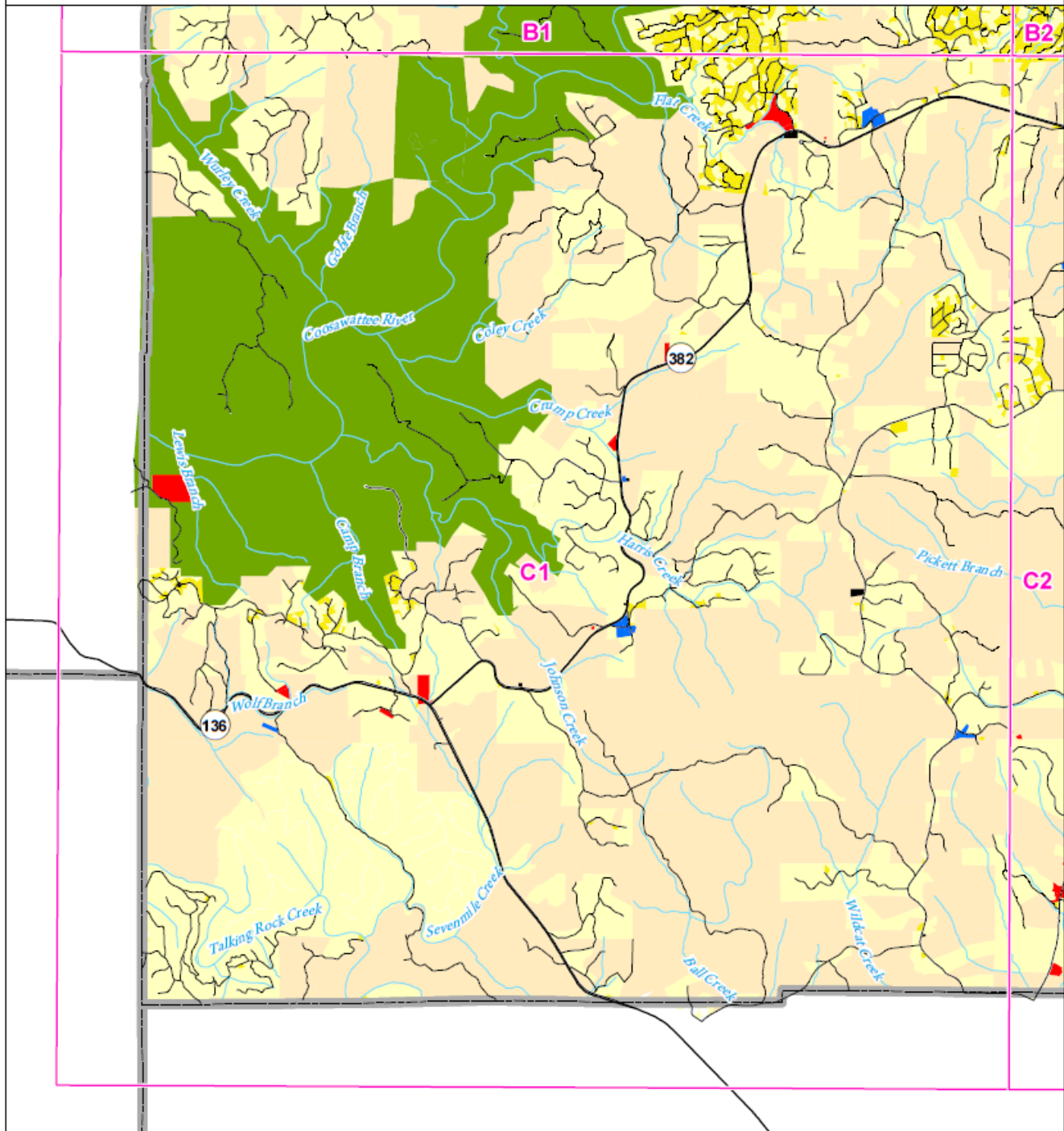
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid B4

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 303 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category

|  |                            |  |                                        |
|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |



1 inch = 1 miles

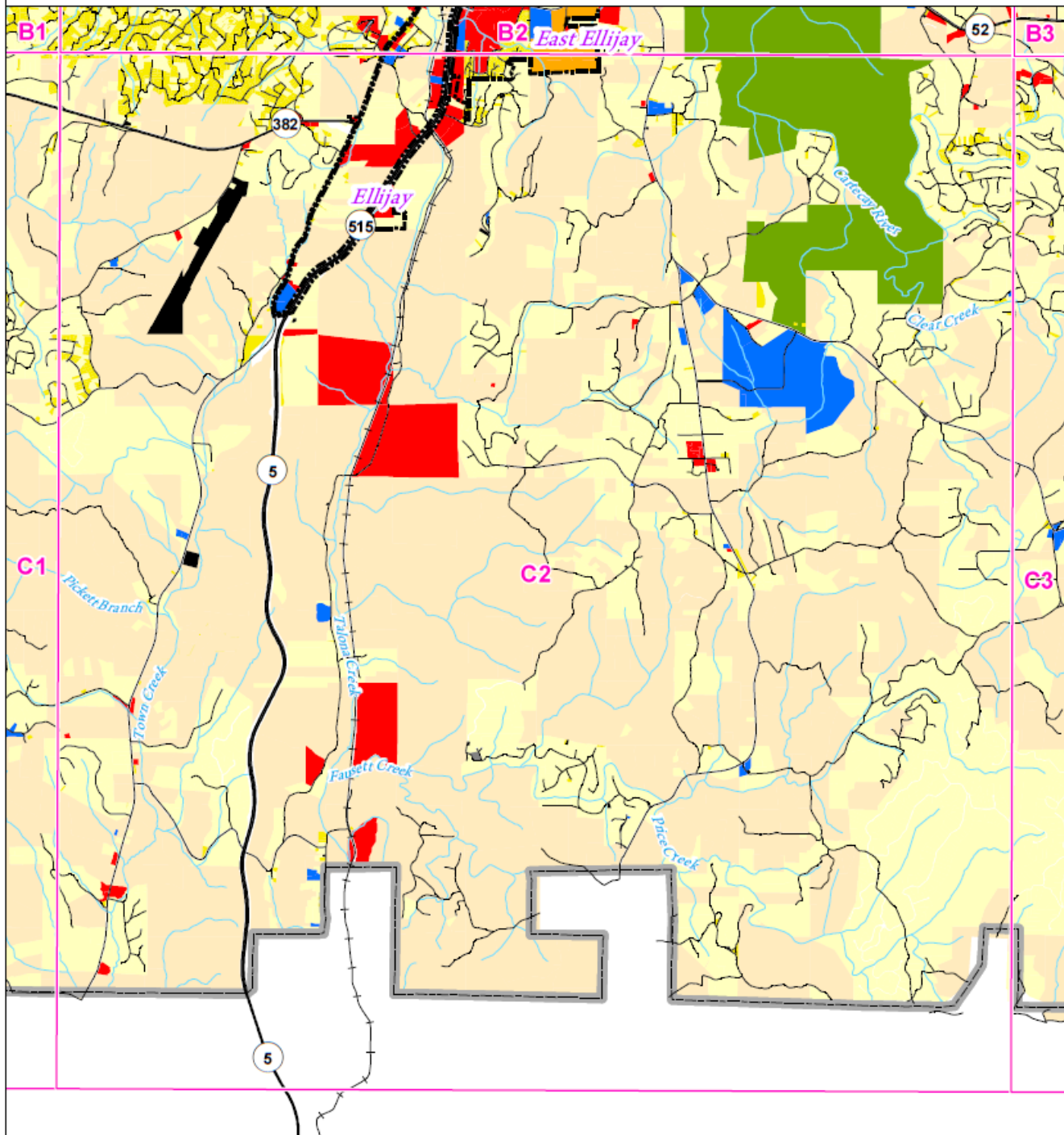
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

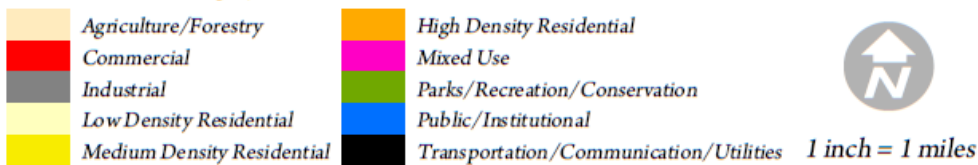
Grid C1

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 303 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone's feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category



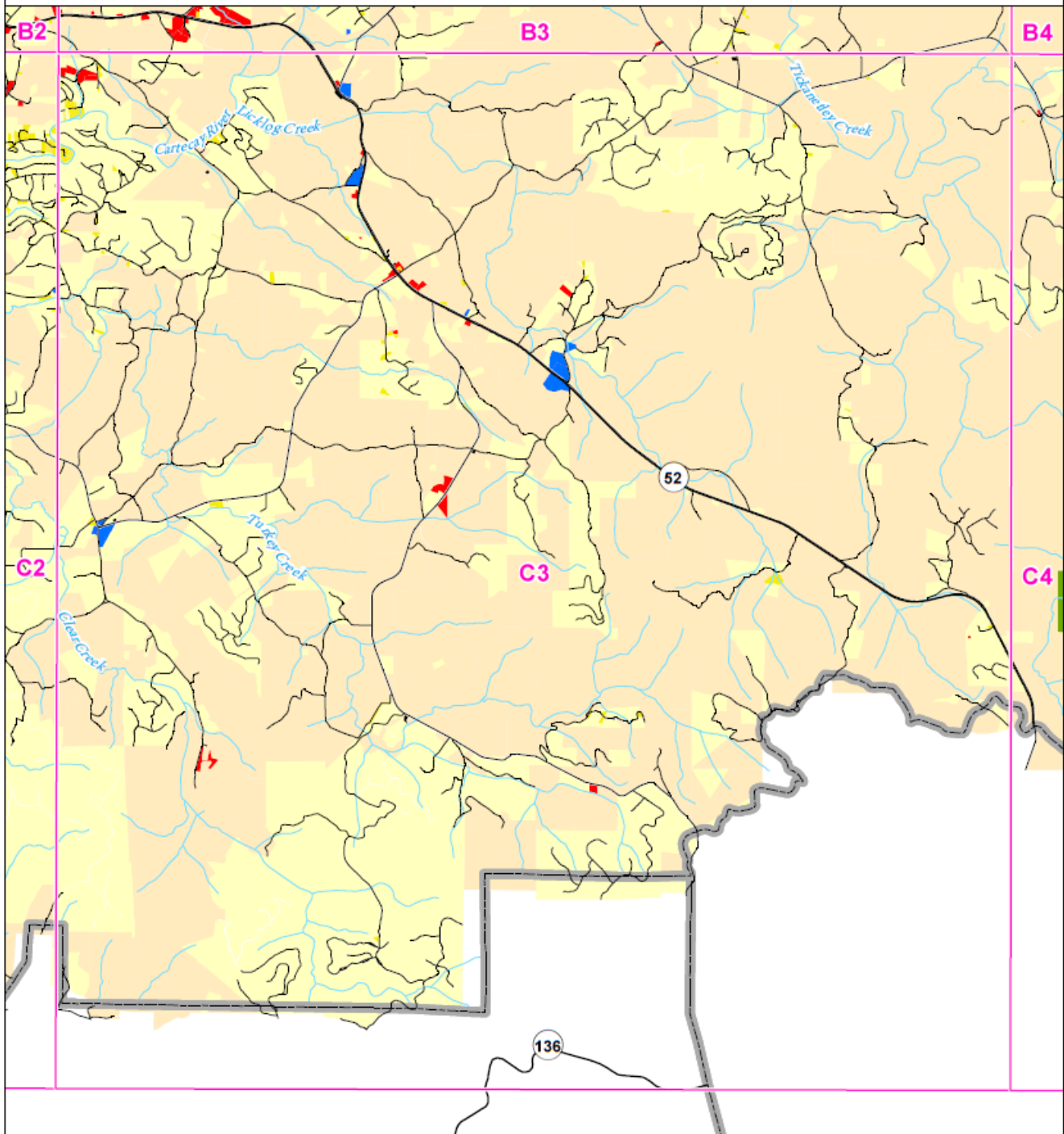
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid C2

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category

|  |                            |  |                                        |
|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |



1 inch = 1 miles

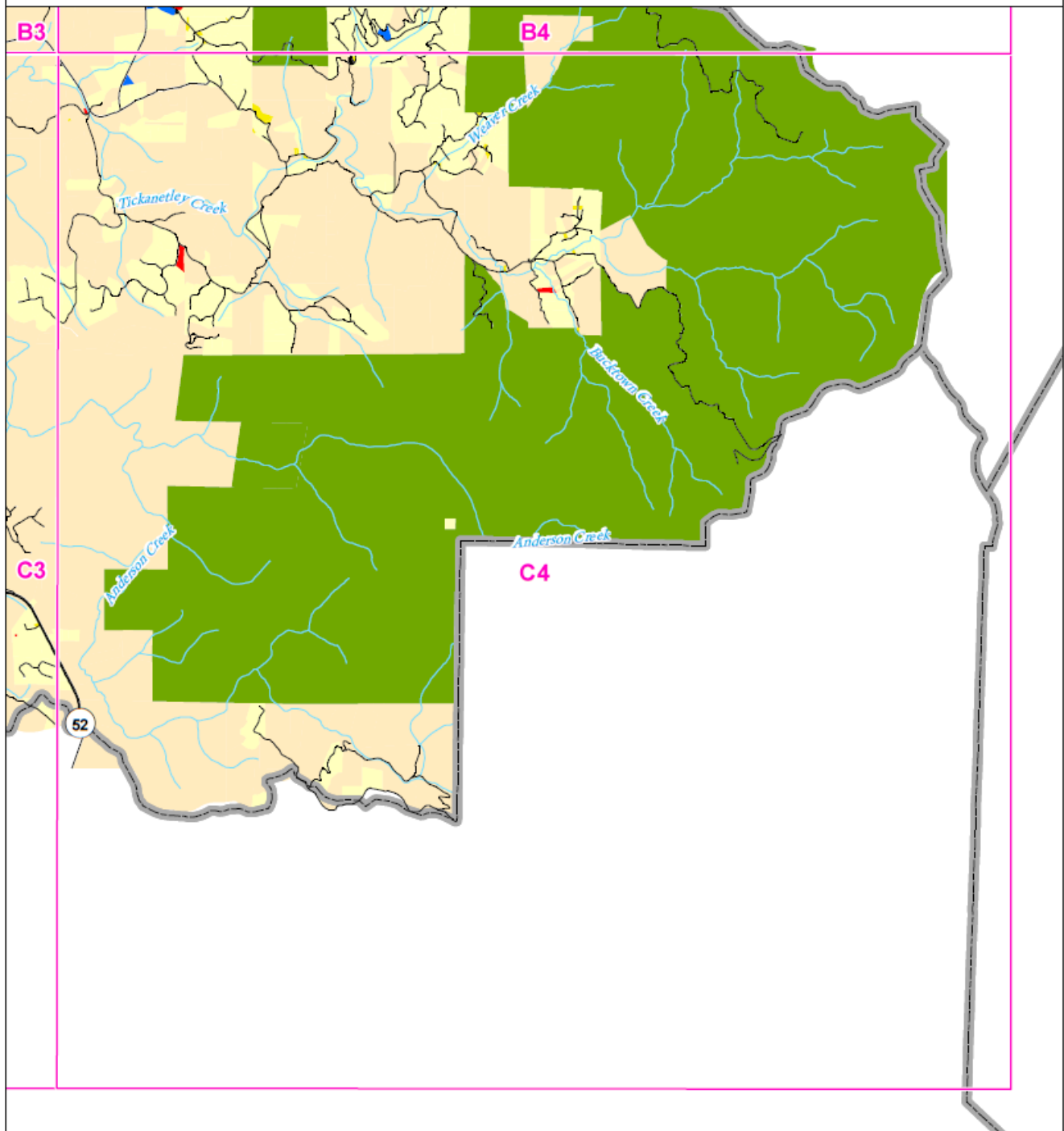
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid C3

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

## Gilmer County, Georgia - Future Land Use



### Future Land Use Category

|  |                            |  |                                        |
|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |

1 inch = 1 miles



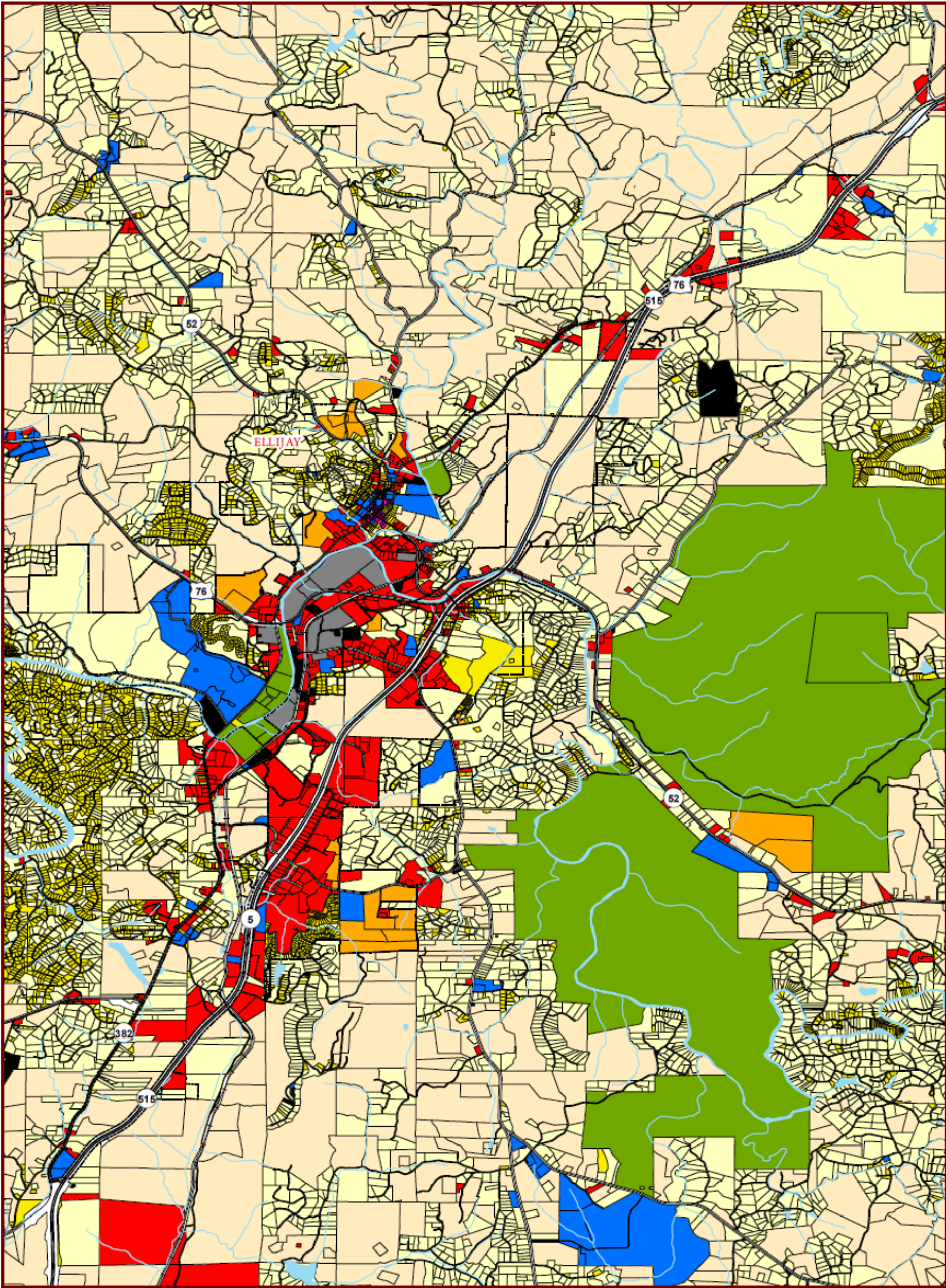
**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

Grid C4











This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of anyone's status. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP: ELLIJAY



Future Land Use

City of Ellijay, Georgia

|                                                                                     |                            |                                                                                     |                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
|  | Agriculture/Forestry       |  | High Density Residential               |
|  | Commercial                 |  | Mixed Use                              |
|  | Industrial                 |  | Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  | Low Density Residential    |  | Public/Institutional                   |
|  | Medium Density Residential |  | Transportation/Communication/Utilities |



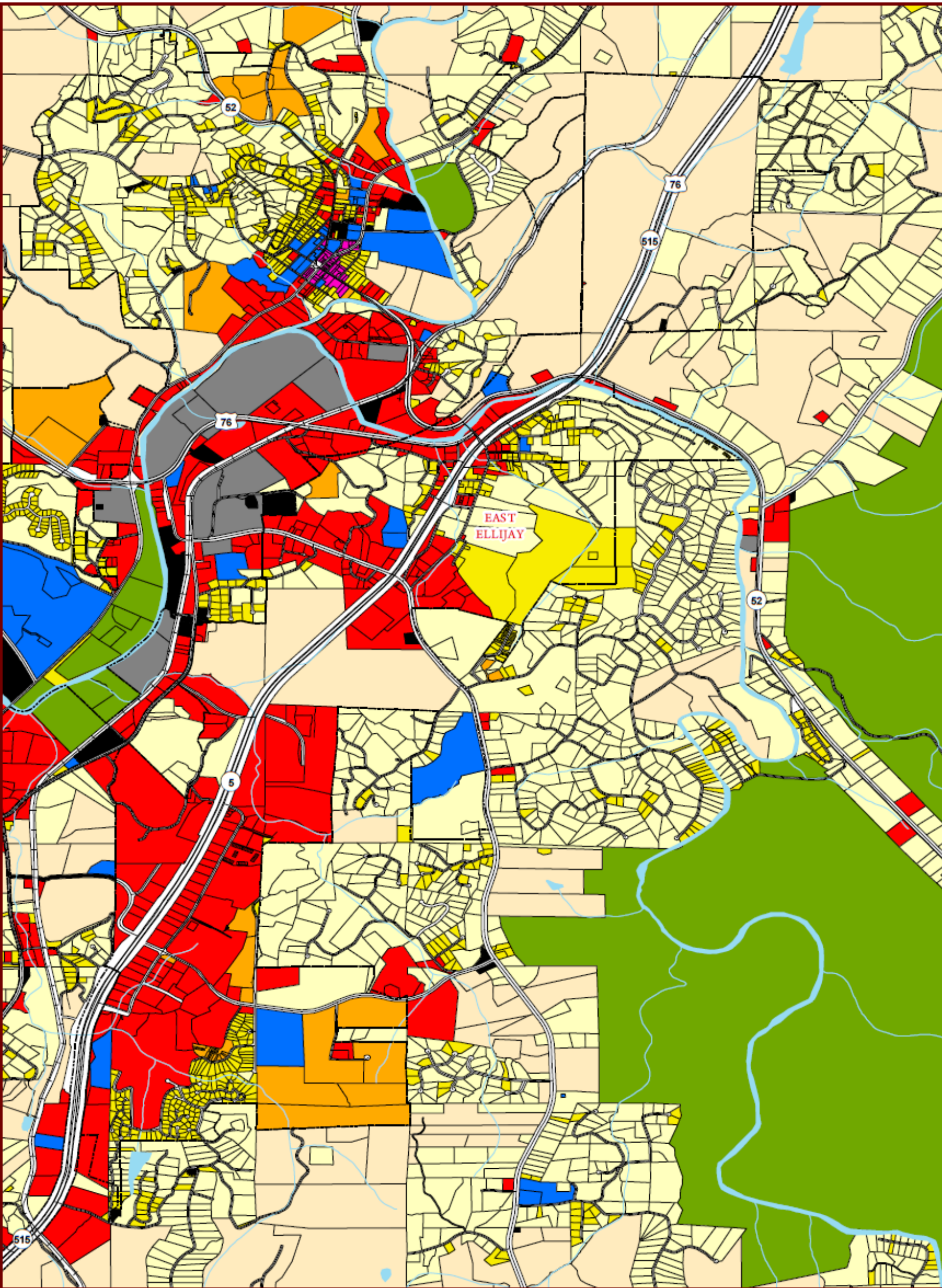
1 in = 0.7 miles













© August 2024

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP: EAST ELLIJAY



Future Land Use  
City of East Ellijay, Georgia

- |                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Agriculture/Forestry       |  High Density Residential               |
|  Commercial                 |  Mixed Use                              |
|  Industrial                 |  Parks/Recreation/Conservation          |
|  Low Density Residential    |  Public/Institutional                   |
|  Medium Density Residential |  Transportation/Communication/Utilities |



1 in = 0.4 miles

**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

© August 2024

This is a product of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Geographic Information System Services, 503 West Waugh Street, Dalton, Georgia 30720, (706) 272-2300, [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). This map is a representation of features displayed and does not constitute a legal representation of any one feature. This product may not be used or reproduced without the NWGRC logo, name and disclaimer being displayed.



## RURAL BROADBAND

### Introduction

Access to high-speed internet has become a necessity for business and greatly improves the quality of life for residents. In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission established the definition of high-speed internet, or broadband, at 25 megabits per second for download, (downstream) and 3 megabits per second for upload (upstream). The State of Georgia used this definition as a benchmark for high-speed internet service in the “Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE)” Act in Spring 2018. The ACE

Act promulgated the “Broadband Ready Program Designation” to help communities bring high-speed internet service even to the most rural areas. Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay would like to be designated as “Broadband Ready” because they recognize the need to facilitate better internet connectivity for all residents. Therefore, this broadband element is being added to the Joint Comprehensive Plan, as well as three work program items for each government



*Figure 59: Broadband infrastructure is largely reliant upon fiberoptic cable buried underground.*

- The first item is a commitment to pass an ordinance covering the process of providing broadband to all residents.
- The second item states that all will participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program with its adopted ordinance.
- The third item is a commitment to apply for funding under the Broadband Ready program. The Northwest Georgia Regional Council formed a Broadband Committee in response to the Broadband Ready Program; Chairman Paris has participated in that committee to find solutions to the issue of rural areas without good internet connection.

## GILMER COUNTY BROADBAND OVERVIEW

Broadband continues to be an essential element that is vital to our county's success. COVID-19's impact in our area provided a new perspective on how broadband was being used, who was using it and the growing disparity between served and unserved areas. Virtual education, telemedicine, and remote working skyrocketed. Thankfully, many things from that period have subsided, but the demand for robust broadband has not. Our agricultural communities continue to see technological advancements that require broadband as well. The days when one retired to a rural area to be disconnected, to "get away from it all," have changed dramatically. Broadband is a necessity for all age groups.



*Figure 60: ETC technician servicing aerial communications infrastructure*

Careful planning and preparation have led Ellijay Telephone Company (ETC) to become one of the leading independent companies in the nation. ETC is constantly upgrading its existing HFC (Hybrid Fiber-Coax) network as well as expanding Fiber to the premier service in Gilmer County. By leveraging its own capital with state and federal grants, ETC has been able to upgrade 17,005 Gilmer County locations to at least 1000Mb/50Mb broadband as of August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Another 1,210 locations are funded and will be completed by mid-2026.

## Funding Sources

### **Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment-BEAD**

The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) is assisting the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) to expand broadband across the state, supporting every Georgian's access to high speed, reliable internet.

GTA is currently in the planning phase for more than \$1.3 billion in grant funds from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. These dollars will be used to provide broadband grants to serve remaining unserved and underserved locations in Georgia.

According to the Georgia Broadband Office, only 322 locations in Gilmer County will remain unserved. These 322 locations should be eligible for BEAD grant applications with the awardee providing service to those locations by the end of 2029. Of the total 2,699 locations noted, have been or are in the process of being upgraded via a partnership between ETC and the Gilmer-Pickens Joint Development Authority (JDA). While ETC owns the network and provided all the matching funds, the community support put this project ahead of other potential projects around the state.

### **Capital Projects Fund Grant Program (CPF)**

Governor Brian P. Kemp announced a \$240,000,000 investment to support the continued expansion of high-speed internet services to Georgians. These funds will be made available through the Capital Projects Fund Grant Program (CPF). CPF funding will be administered and deployed by the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) through a competitive grant program. CPF will provide support to build comprehensive broadband networks in many communities struggling with the lack of broadband access. Approved projects will use leading technologies to offer reliable, high-speed internet access to support a household with multiple users, along with businesses and their 21st-century operations.

The CPF program comes on the heels of the largest state investment in high-speed internet infrastructure in Georgia's history. In February of 2022, Governor Kemp announced more than \$400 million in grant awards to support broadband expansion efforts. The awarded projects aim to serve approximately 180,000 locations - representing both homes and businesses - with faster and more reliable broadband. Public funds for expansion of broadband access during the Kemp Administration will approach \$1 billion. This projection does not include the hundreds of millions in private investments for that purpose.

### **United States Department of Agriculture-(USDA) ReConnect**

The ReConnect Program offers loans, grants, or combinations thereof, to facilitate broadband deployment in rural areas that currently do not have sufficient access. Through expansion of broadband services and infrastructure, ReConnect will fuel long-term economic development and opportunities in rural America.

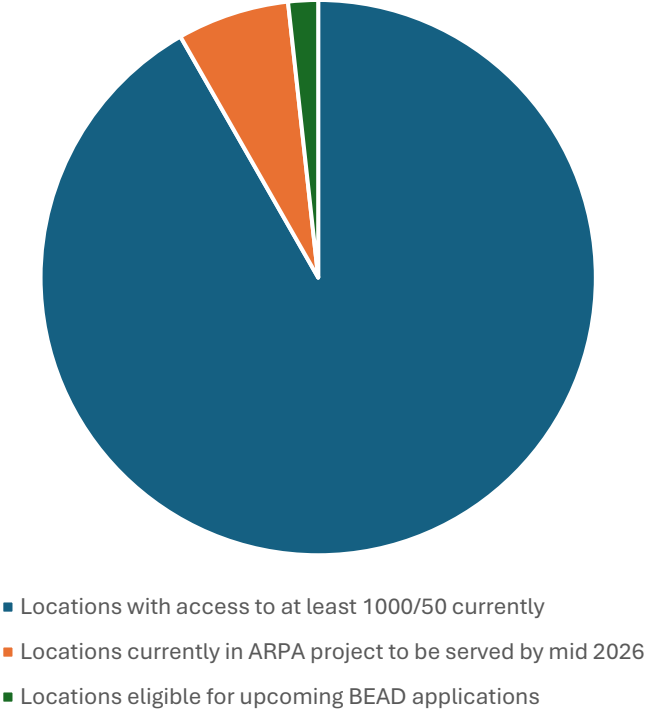
In the ReConnect's first funding round, the Ellijay Telephone Company received a \$4.4 million grant to provide high-speed services to 2,159 households, 25 pre-subscribed businesses, two critical community facilities, an educational facility and 24 pre-subscribed farms in unserved regions of Gilmer County, the total project cost was \$5.8 million.

### **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

In June 2021, Governor Brian Kemp announced that Georgia would use State Fiscal Recovery Funds under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address the lack of broadband service in the state. To deploy these funds within federal guidelines, Kemp appointed an 18-member Broadband Infrastructure Committee; The legislation and state agency leaders appointed to the committee were tasked with scoring eligible projects and making funding recommendations. Projects were scored on metrics including, but not limited to last-mile infrastructure, public-private partnerships, fiber optic usage, and the percentage of unserved locations. In addition to the Broadband Infrastructure Committee, he directed the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and the Georgia Technology Authority to provide staff support and administrative assistance.

| <b>Gilmer Broadband Status as of 8-1-2024</b>                    | <b>Qty</b> | <b>%</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Gilmer County Total Locations Per NTIA/Ga Broadband Office       | 18,537     |          |
| Locations with access to at least 1000/50 currently              | 17,005     | 91.7%    |
| Locations currently in the ARPA project to be served by mid-2026 | 1,210      | 6.5%     |
| Locations eligible for upcoming BEAD applications                | 322        | 1.7%     |

**Gilmer County Serviceable Locations as of 8-1-24**



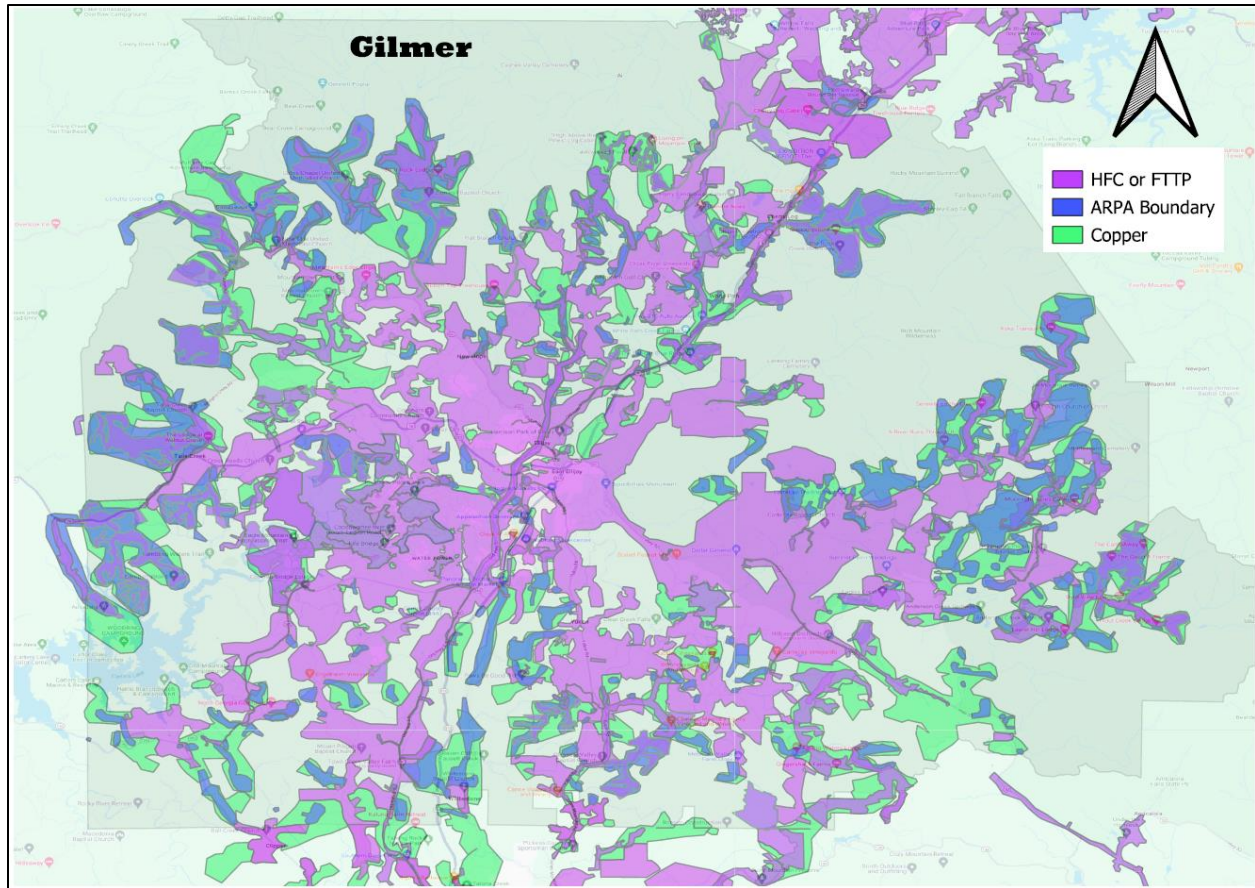


Figure 61: Map of ETC's network throughout Gilmer County

Internet service in Gilmer County exists where providers can achieve a reasonable return on their investment. The significant footprint of internet service area in Gilmer County was greatly attested by the results of the community outreach survey. Of the 1,671 survey responses, 29.4 percent of respondents declared that poor access to high-speed internet was an issue in Gilmer County; 39.6% of respondents voiced support for local government action to improve high-speed internet throughout the county. While sufficiency of internet speed is subject to individual needs, the demand remains for increased high-speed internet throughout Gilmer County.

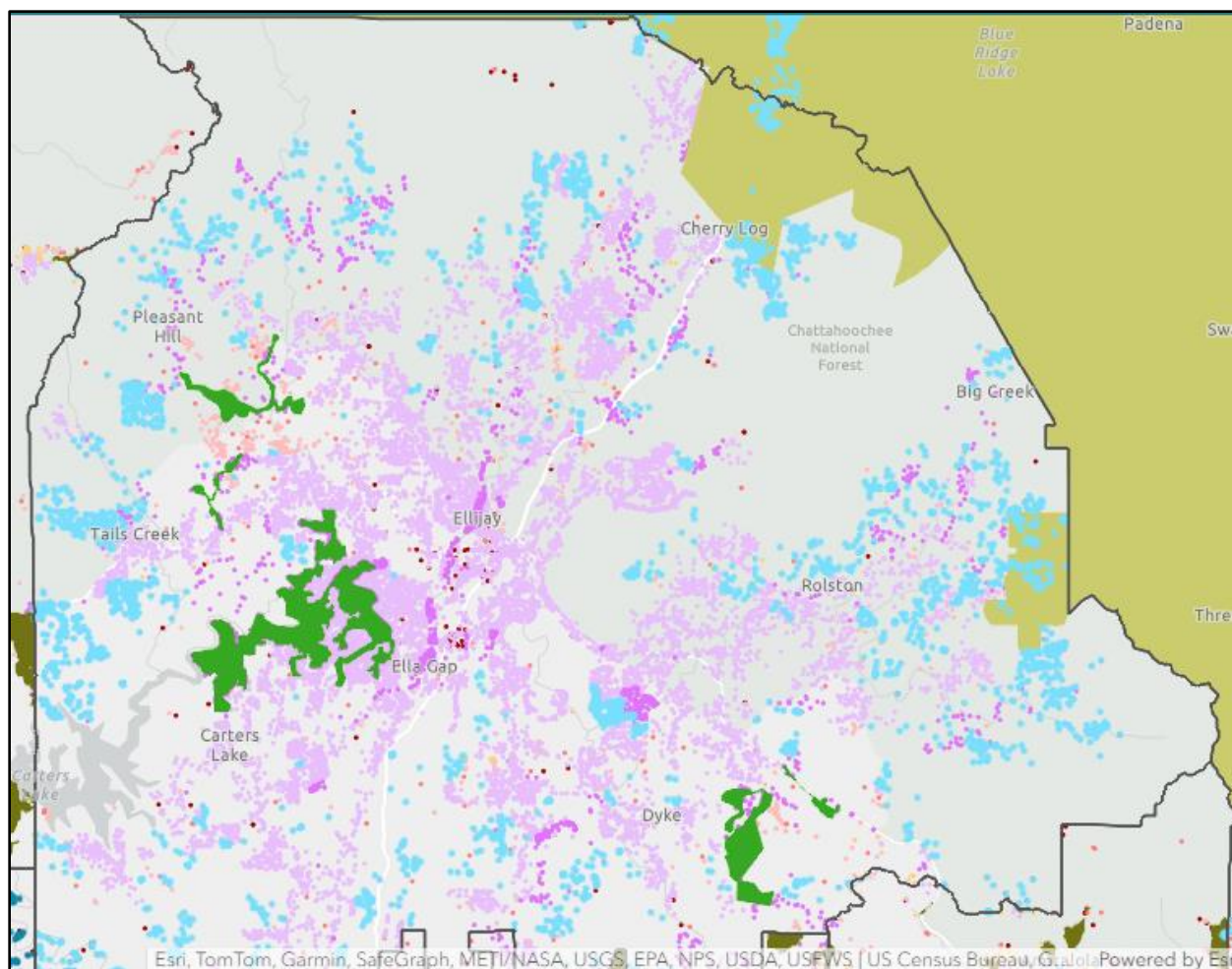
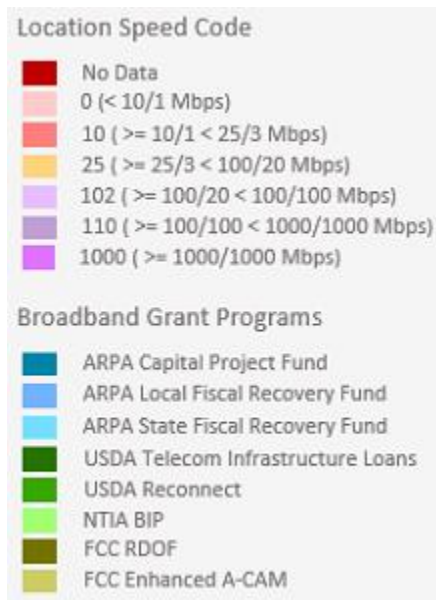


Figure 62: Location data are from the FCC National Broadband Fabric (December 2023)

### 2024 Georgia Broadband Availability Map

This map portrays the maximum available broadband speed for locations in the State of Georgia. These categories are denoted as 'Speed Codes', and defined in the legend. The map depicts access to broadband, not subscriptions.

The map shows locations where various federal, state, or local grants have been awarded, as described in the included legend. The grant layer visibility can be controlled via the Map Layers widget (see the Tools section). Once visible, clicking on a grant will select the full grant boundary and return detailed information in a popup on the map. Broadband data is provided by the various Internet Service Providers of the State of Georgia. The data is sourced from the FCC Broadband Data Collection program (December 2023, released June 2024).





## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

Henceforth, the plan will focus on the individual needs of each community as previously stated in the “HOW TO USE THIS PLAN” section. Each community will provide a community statement and/or a list of goals, policies, a report of accomplishments from the 2020 -2024 planning period, a list of current Needs and Opportunities, and a new Community Work Program for the 2025-2029 planning period.

### GILMER COUNTY: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

#### Vision Statement

Gilmer County and its cities are proud and vibrant communities that work to promote livability, sustainability, self-sufficiency, and a healthy economy. We embrace and protect our historical, cultural, and natural resources while coming together as a community to promote positive, cooperative, and effective relationships, and economic development; we want to ensure a successful future for our residents that includes the following goals:

- A healthy diverse economy based on the industrial, commercial, agriculture, and tourism sectors; one that enhances the quality of life for all citizens and carefully manages the community resources.
- Having the ability to guide future growth and conservation; informed land use strategies will fortify and wisely manage our natural, environmental, and cultural resources.
- Promote adequate and attainable housing for all citizens.
- Achieve broadband connectivity throughout the county.



Figure 63: CORE Collaboration On Rivers Edge business incubator est. 2019 in Ellijay

- Provide public facilities that support and attract growth, and development, as well as maintain and enhance the quality of life for all residents in the community.
- Create and maintain positive, effective, and cooperative relationships between all local governments, as well as other public agencies and organizations.
- Establish a modern, well-funded multi-modal transportation network that is efficient, safe, and protects the environment while enhancing the area's economic development potential.
- Allocate land resources for uses that will accommodate and enhance economic development, natural and cultural resources, community facilities, and housing that protect and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.



*Figure 64: The Cartecay River in Gilmer County.  
Photo courtesy of the Ellijay-Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.*

## POLICY STATEMENTS

### Economic Development

- Support the Joint Development Authority Economic Development sales team.
- Continue to support the CORE business incubator as a local and regional asset to entrepreneurs.
- Continue to work with public and private partners to improve broadband connectivity and to ensure that Gilmer's internet speeds are competitive from an economic development standpoint.
- Encourage the Gilmer County Schools to continue a provision of vocational pathways.
- Continue to support the Partners in Education Program.
- Identify, support, and promote workforce training resources related to local needs.
- Support the Gilmer County Chamber of Commerce's tourism marketing team to maximize the promotion of agritourism and outdoor activity/recreation.
- Work with the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission to achieve the goals within the Northwest Georgia Regional Plan, as well as the Northwest Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

## **Housing**

- Support diverse attainable housing development.
- Limit short-term vacation rental use to ensure the availability of housing for the local workforce and citizens.
- Strive to ensure that Gilmer’s aging population can age in place, even when they are no longer fully independent.
- Consider increasing the housing density within areas where public utilities and services, transportation infrastructure, and public health regulations could support growth.
- Support housing development that meets workforce needs.
- Consider alternative single-family housing types such as accessory dwelling units and lower minimum square footage requirements for single-family detached dwellings.
- Consider coordinating residential density via zoning with Ellijay and East Ellijay to create greater inter-jurisdictional continuity.
- Collaborate with Ellijay and East Ellijay on infrastructure improvements consistent with the coordinated land use patterns.
- Consider the adoption of impact fees for residential development to fund the necessary public infrastructure improvements that result from growth.

## **Natural and Cultural Resources**

- Continue to improve public access to the Coosawattee, Cartecay, and Ellijay Rivers.
- Support the Georgia Trail of Tears Association’s preservation of sites of cultural and archaeological significance.
- Protect Gilmer County’s water resources (i.e., its rivers, groundwater recharge area, and water supply watershed) through the following practices:
  - Work with the County Health Department to ensure that new developments requiring on-site septic systems are limited to a safe density for the soil quality.
  - Discourage any hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) activity in Gilmer County.
  - Promote and enforce public and private stormwater management, including long-term maintenance of stormwater infrastructure.
  - Encourage existing and future residents to utilize sanitary sewer, rather than on-site septic systems.
- Continue to improve trail access, connectivity, and the creation of new trails for hiking, biking, and canoeing. Showcase Gilmer County’s tremendous natural resources for its

citizens, while also promoting outdoor tourism. Take advantage of programs like “Rails to Trails” and “Rails with Trails,” as well as the Recreational Trails Program and Land and Water Conservation Fund.

- Use zoning and subdivision regulations to limit density and development potential to protect the county’s rural charm.
- Set goals to preserve key agricultural areas for posterity.

### **Community Facilities and Services**

- Continue partnership with the Northwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging to ensure that the county’s aging population have resources they need to “age in place” such as:
  - Transportation
  - Material aid and homemaker services and
  - Access to home healthcare
- Expand public water and wastewater infrastructure to better serve Gilmer County citizens and businesses while continuing to ensure that all new expansions are sustainable through the continued administration of impact fees.
- Promote the County’s highly competitive water and sewer tap fees to commercial and residential developers as a means of encouraging investment in Gilmer County.
- Improve transportation planning and invest in infrastructure to accommodate increasing traffic concerns, especially intersections and bottlenecks.
- Purchase properties and create facilities that meet the recreational needs of the community.
- Adopt and implement the 2024 Gilmer County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### **Land Use**

- Enforce policies and codes discouraging residential sprawl into low-density areas that are predominantly agricultural or undeveloped.
- Encourage new development in areas where supporting infrastructure is available or nearby.
- Enforce Gilmer County ordinances protecting the Coosawattee River, watersheds, and mountains. Ensure that the impact of new land disturbance does not compromise these sensitive environmental assets.

- Implement, and amend as necessary, the Gilmer County Short-Term Vacation Rental Ordinance to promote tourism while protecting single-family neighborhoods.

### **Transportation**

- *Create and implement a countywide transportation master plan focused on strategically improving county roads and bridges to address the increasing traffic pressures of a growing population and tourism industry.*
- *Implement the Gilmer County Airport Master Plan.*

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

- Continue to work with the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay, the Board of Education, local authorities, and other agencies to improve communication, and coordinate development to best serve all of Gilmer County.
- Partner with state and federal agencies to apply for project funding in order to reduce the strain on local budgets while continuing to achieve goals.
- Collaborate with Ellijay and East Ellijay on planning efforts to address the community's housing needs through zoning regulations and development codes.
- Continue with the Gilmer County Public School System's long-term planning efforts.
- Collaborate with Keep Gilmer Beautiful to promote recycling efforts and other community beautification initiatives.

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2020-2024

### Gilmer County

| WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY                                                                                               | YEAR      |          | STATUS                              |           |         | Explanation if postponed or dropped                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                     |           | Complete | Underway; Projected Completion Date | Postponed | Dropped |                                                                       |
| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT                                                                                                |           |          |                                     |           |         |                                                                       |
| Expand the airport to accommodate larger aircraft and add additional hanger space                                   | 2023-2024 |          |                                     |           | X       | Funding is not available over the next five years.                    |
| Pass a broadband ordinance                                                                                          | 2020-2021 | X        |                                     |           |         |                                                                       |
| Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program with its adopted ordinance                                     | 2020-2022 | X        |                                     |           |         |                                                                       |
| Commitment to complete the application for funding under the Broadband Ready program                                | 2022-2023 |          |                                     |           | X       | The state grant program has not been funded                           |
| TRANSPORTATION                                                                                                      |           |          |                                     |           |         |                                                                       |
| Digital Gateway Billboard along Hwy. 515                                                                            | 2020-2022 |          |                                     |           | X       | Placed a moratorium on digital billboards                             |
| Extend SR 382 from CR 239 to SR 5/SR 515 (Inc utility work)                                                         | 2020-2023 | X        |                                     |           |         |                                                                       |
| Improve the functionality of the intersection of SR 515, 1 <sup>st</sup> Avenue, Industrial Blvd., and River Street | 2020      |          |                                     |           | X       | GDOT is working on a plan and ultimately responsible for this project |
| NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES                                                                                      |           |          |                                     |           |         |                                                                       |
| Hold first annual Trail Festival                                                                                    | 2020      | X        |                                     |           |         | Held in 2021, 2022, 2023 & 2024                                       |

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2020-2024

### Gilmer County

| WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY                                                                                                                                                                         | YEAR      | STATUS   |                                              |           |         | Explanation if postponed or dropped                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                               |           | Complete | Underway;<br>Projected<br>Completion<br>Date | Postponed | Dropped |                                                                                                                                          |
| Re-establish connection with Ga. Water Trails network after 12-year absence                                                                                                                   | 2020      |          |                                              | 2030      |         | Working with Chamber of Commerce to include this as part of their tourism effort                                                         |
| Post Trail of Tears signage                                                                                                                                                                   | 2020-2022 | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                                                          |
| Partner with Railroad to create new Rails with Trails connection from Cartecay River Park to Downtown Ellijay as a river walk trail with potential to connect to other existing trails nearby | 2020-2023 |          |                                              | 2030      |         | Critical infrastructure improvements are being given priority for the next five-year planning period, but this project remains long-term |
| Clear Creek satellite park                                                                                                                                                                    | 2021-2022 | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                                                          |
| Acquire 138-acre riverfront property for new river access, trails and other county park amenities                                                                                             | 2020-2022 |          |                                              |           | X       | No satisfactory tracts available for sale                                                                                                |
| Cooperatively lease all the lake access and campground locations from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers surrounding Carters Lake <u>within Gilmer County only</u>                              | 2020-2021 |          |                                              |           | X       | Complications with Corps requirements made lease unfeasible                                                                              |
| <b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>                                                                                                                                                      |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                                                          |
| Move Baseball Fields to Clear Creek campus                                                                                                                                                    | 2022-2023 | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                                                          |
| Build three new tennis courts                                                                                                                                                                 | 2020      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                                                          |
| Build four pickle ball courts                                                                                                                                                                 | 2020      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                                                          |
| Build dirt bike pump tract on old pool                                                                                                                                                        | 2020      |          |                                              |           | X       | Interested sponsor withdrew                                                                                                              |

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2020-2024

### Gilmer County

| WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY                                                    | YEAR      | Complete | STATUS                                       |           |         | Explanation if postponed or dropped                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                          |           |          | Underway;<br>Projected<br>Completion<br>Date | Postponed | Dropped |                                                             |
| Build River Park Amphitheatre                                            | 2020      |          |                                              | 2027      |         | Original funding shifted to other Park projects temporarily |
| Complete Scada added for chemical use efficiency                         | 2020      | 2021     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| SC2 8" sewer – Gartrell Street to Westwood Drive                         | 2021-2022 |          |                                              |           | X       | Not financially feasible                                    |
| SC2A 4" sewer – Vista Drive to Lucille                                   | 2021-2022 |          |                                              |           | X       | Not financially feasible                                    |
| SC5 8" – Hancock Drive to Visa Drive                                     | 2021-2022 |          |                                              |           | X       | Not financially feasible                                    |
| SC5A 4" sewer – to Westwood Subdivision                                  | 2020      |          |                                              |           | X       | Not financially feasible                                    |
| WD 38A New 8" main on River Street Phase 2                               | 2020      | 2020     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| WD 38B New 8" main on Roundtop                                           | 2020      | 2022     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| WD 38C New 12" main Hwy. 382 to sunlight                                 | 2020      | 2023     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| WD 49 Water Tank New Hope 300,000                                        | 2020      | 2021     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| WD 51 Water Tank Clear Creek                                             | 2020-2022 | 2021     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| WD 52 Yukon Road Expansion                                               | 2020      | 2021     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| WD 53 New 8" water main – Hwy. 515 to Talona                             | 2020      | 2021     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| WD 54 New 12" pipe Simmonds Roads to 382                                 | 2020      | 2024     |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| New Mountain Bike trails at Carter's Lake                                | 2020      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                             |
| Acquire access easement from railroad to access new River Park expansion | 2020      |          |                                              |           | X       | New site selected for expansion due to flood zone           |

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2020-2024

### Gilmer County

| WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY                                                                                       | YEAR      | STATUS   |                                              |           |         | Explanation if postponed or dropped                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                             |           | Complete | Underway;<br>Projected<br>Completion<br>Date | Postponed | Dropped |                                                                                  |
| Replace swimming pool at new location                                                                       | 2021-2022 | X        |                                              |           |         | Replaced at the same location                                                    |
| Move Emergency Operation Center to Airport Property and construct new building                              | 2023-2024 |          | 2029                                         |           |         | Move to the airport is complete, but land acquisition is needed for new building |
| Purchase new pump truck for Fire Department                                                                 | 2021      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                  |
| Leachate pumps for County landfill                                                                          | 2022      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                  |
| Add event building at White Path Golf Course                                                                | 2020      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                  |
| <b>LAND USE</b>                                                                                             |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                                  |
| Update all land use, zoning maps, and utility maps to provide hard copies to Planning and Zoning Department | 2020      |          | 2025                                         |           |         | Will be completed after new Joint Comprehensive Plan is approved.                |
| <b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>                                                                       |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                                  |
| Partner with Ellijay and East Ellijay to create a multi-purpose indoor recreation facility                  | 2020-2024 |          | 2027                                         |           |         | Renamed Build Community Center etc. in 2025-2029 CWP                             |
| Complete the service delivery strategy                                                                      | 2024      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                  |

## **GILMER COUNTY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Economic Development**

- ED-1** Ensure the cost of infrastructure to serve new development is financed appropriately

### **Transportation**

- T-1** Improve safety and traffic flow on local roads

### **Natural and Cultural Resources**

- NR-1** Upgrade County parks and recreation facilities to support increased usage
- NR-2** Expand recreational offerings to support changing needs, demands
- NR-3** Improve public access to the (Ellijay, Coosawattee, and Cartecay) rivers through partnerships with river organizations
- NR-4** Improve and expand the County's recreational, community, and cultural assets

### **Community Facilities and Services**

- CF-1** Expand and improve public water and sewer facilities
- CF-2** Provide needed space and facilities for County operations, including court system and emergency response/EMA
- CF-3** Provide needed emergency response ambulance service

### **Land Use**

- LU-1** Provide land use, zoning, and utility information in one location for planning use

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

- IC-1** Maintain intergovernmental communication and coordination to pursue projects that meet county-wide needs

# COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM 2025-2029

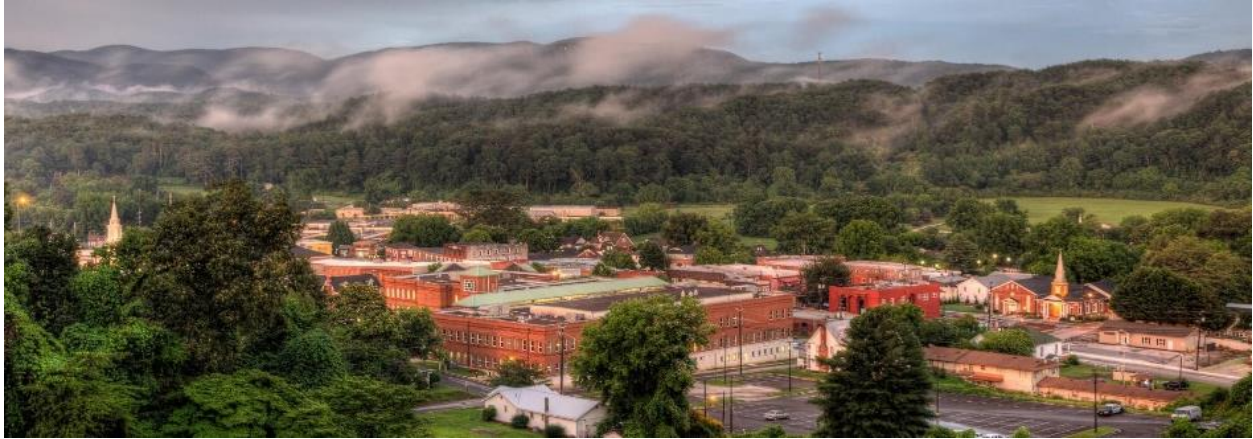
## GILMER COUNTY

| Need/<br>opportunity<br>Code               | Activity Description                                                                    | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | Cost<br>Estimate | Funding<br>Source | Responsible<br>Party |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>                |                                                                                         |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                   |                      |
| <b>ED-1</b>                                | Implement Impact Fees to ensure proper infrastructure is in place to accommodate growth | X    |      |      |      |      | \$75,000         | BOC               | BOC                  |
| <b>TRANSPORTATION</b>                      |                                                                                         |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                   |                      |
| <b>T-1</b>                                 | Improve safety of sharp curve on Clear Creek Road at the church                         | X    |      |      |      |      | \$100,000        | GDOT and BOC      | BOC                  |
| <b>T-1</b>                                 | Create a county-wide transportation master plan                                         | X    | X    |      |      |      | \$50,000         | BOC, Grants       | BOC, NWGRC           |
| <b>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>      |                                                                                         |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                   |                      |
| <b>NR-1</b>                                | Build Pickleball Courts at Clear Creek Park, suitable for tournaments                   | X    | X    |      |      |      | \$170,000        | BOC               | BOC                  |
| <b>NR-1, NR-4</b>                          | Build River Park Amphitheatre                                                           |      |      | X    |      |      | \$100,000        | BOC, LWCF Grant   | BOC                  |
| <b>NR-1, NR-4</b>                          | Build Community Center with Basketball Courts, Walking area, meeting rooms, etc.        |      |      | X    |      |      | \$7,500,000      | BOC, Grants       | BOC                  |
| <b>NR-3</b>                                | Re-establish connection with Ga. Water Trails network after 12-year absence             | X    | X    | X    | X    | X    | \$5,000          | Staff Time        | BOC, Chamber         |
| <b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b> |                                                                                         |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                   |                      |
| <b>CF-1</b>                                | Upgrade of Booster Pump at Victory Drive                                                | X    |      |      |      |      | \$225,000        | Impact Fees       | EGCWSA               |
| <b>CF-1</b>                                | Hwy 5 Pump Station Rehab                                                                | X    |      |      |      |      | \$250,000        | Impact Fees       | EGCWSA               |
|                                            | Improve/expand animal shelter                                                           | X    | X    |      |      |      | \$1,200,000      | Private donor     | BOC                  |

# COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM 2025-2029

## GILMER COUNTY

| Need/<br>opportunity<br>Code | Activity Description                                                                                        | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | Cost<br>Estimate  | Funding<br>Source          | Responsible<br>Party         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>CF-1</b>                  | New Line Weeks Road/ Flat Branch                                                                            |      | X    |      |      |      | \$800,000         | Impact<br>Fees &<br>Gen Op | EGCWSA                       |
| <b>CF-1</b>                  | Rebuild of Basin #1                                                                                         | X    |      |      |      |      | \$1,500,000       | Impact<br>Fee &<br>Gen Op  | EGCWSA                       |
| <b>CF-2</b>                  | Purchase additional space for courthouse annex                                                              | X    |      |      |      |      | \$4,250,000       | BOC                        | BOC                          |
| <b>CF-3</b>                  | Purchase New Ambulances                                                                                     | X    | X    | X    |      |      | \$320,000<br>Each | BOC                        | BOC                          |
| <b>CF-2</b>                  | Construct new Emergency Operations building                                                                 |      |      |      | X    | X    | \$300,000         | BOC                        | BOC                          |
|                              | <b>LAND USE</b>                                                                                             |      |      |      |      |      |                   |                            |                              |
| <b>LU-1</b>                  | Update all land use, zoning maps, and utility maps to provide hard copies to Planning and Zoning Department | X    |      |      |      |      | \$1,000           | Staff<br>Time              | Planning and Zoning<br>Dept. |



## CITY OF ELLIJAY: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

### Vision Statement

The City of Ellijay, in parallel with the Gilmer County community, shares a vision for the area while also maintaining some of its own individuality. Within the collective vision, The City of Ellijay has defined its future vision that contains the following goals:

- Growth management strategies that deliver effective, sprawl-preventing growth patterns, and promote cooperation, coordination, efficient use, and expansion of the city's public facilities and services
- Provides a variety of neighborhood connections such as sidewalks, greenway trails, and bike lanes
- Protect and promote the downtown's historic resources and its traditional role as the business/civic center of the community
- Conserve the character of established neighborhoods and supporting revitalization efforts to increase housing opportunities and long-term neighborhood stability
- Foster and maintain improved intergovernmental coordination
- Maintain Ellijay's long-standing sense of place through the protection of historic and cultural assets.
- Promote and enable investment in tourism and economic development while maintaining the small-town atmosphere.



*Figure 65: Aerial view of the downtown Ellijay square*

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **Economic Development**

- Support Joint Development Authority Economic Development sales team
- Protect existing business/industry program by addressing the needs and concerns of commercial enterprises with the intent of improving the environment for business retention and expansion and workforce development
- Encourage the Gilmer County School System to continue offering vocational pathways
- Continue to support the CORE business incubator as a local and regional asset to entrepreneurs
- Implement the Northwest Georgia Digital economy plan
- Implement the Ellijay Urban Redevelopment Plan adopted in 2019

### **Housing**

- Support diverse attainable housing development at all price points
- Encourage appropriate mixed-use residential and light commercial development, in and near downtown

### **Natural and Cultural Resources**

- Ensure that Historic Preservation Commission members receive state-mandated training, to maintain the City's Certified Local Government status; this governs eligibility for federal grants, as well as tax incentives
- Promote state and federal rehabilitation tax credits for eligible buildings in the local historic district
- Cooperate with the Georgia Chapter of the Trail of Tears in research and public education
- Improve and promote Harrison Park for its historical significance and its passive recreation importance

### **Land Use**

- Protect the three rivers through enforcement of buffer areas for land disturbance near a waterway

- Continue to support the City of Ellijay's Planning Commission and encourage members to attend training opportunities

### **Transportation**

- Continue to improve pedestrian infrastructure to encourage walking and biking, with a focus on connecting existing residential areas to the downtown
- Coordinate with the Georgia Department of Transportation to continue the implementation of the State Transportation Improvement Program as it relates to projects in Ellijay

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

- Promote all-around intergovernmental cooperation by holding planning meetings of the local governments, authorities, boards, and agencies, as needed, to improve communication and coordination
- Collaborate with water, sewer, and other utilities to encourage interdepartmental coordination when replacing utilities and resurfacing city streets in order to mitigate potential damage to infrastructure

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2020-2024

### City of Ellijay

| WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY                                                                                    | YEAR      |          | STATUS                              |           |         | Explanation if postponed or dropped                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                          |           | Complete | Underway; Projected Completion Date | Postponed | Dropped |                                                                 |
| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT                                                                                     |           |          |                                     |           |         |                                                                 |
| Pass a broadband ordinance                                                                               | 2020-2021 |          | 2026                                |           |         |                                                                 |
| Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program with its adopted ordinance                          | 2021-2022 |          | 2026                                |           |         |                                                                 |
| Commitment to complete the application for funding under the Broadband Ready program                     | 2022-2023 |          |                                     |           | X       | No state funding available for grants under this program        |
| TRANSPORTATION                                                                                           |           |          |                                     |           |         |                                                                 |
| Improve the functionality of the intersection of SR 515, 1st Avenue, Industrial Blvd., and River Street. | 2020      |          |                                     |           | X       | Project in East Ellijay city limits                             |
| Extend SR 382 from CR 239 to SR 5/SR 515 (Inc utility work).                                             | 2020-2023 | X        |                                     |           |         |                                                                 |
| NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES                                                                           |           |          |                                     |           |         |                                                                 |
| Repair Harrison Park barn; new roof, exterior paint and other minor repairs                              | 2020-2023 |          | 2028                                |           |         | Some repairs have been made, but the roof has not been replaced |
| Complete Harrison Park 10-year master plan                                                               | 2020      | X        |                                     |           |         |                                                                 |
| Build public restrooms for Harrison Park                                                                 | 2020-2022 | X        |                                     |           |         |                                                                 |

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2020-2024

### City of Ellijay

| WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY                                                                           | YEAR      | Complete | STATUS                                       |           |         | Explanation if postponed or dropped                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                 |           |          | Underway;<br>Projected<br>Completion<br>Date | Postponed | Dropped |                                                                     |
| Update and digitize Downtown Ellijay Historic District map                                      | 2020-2021 |          | 2025                                         |           |         |                                                                     |
| <b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>                                                        |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                     |
| Complete a bicycle and pedestrian study                                                         | 2022      |          | 2026                                         |           |         |                                                                     |
| <b>LAND USE</b>                                                                                 |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                     |
| Amend the Ellijay Zoning Ordinance to include a Mixed -Use zone district                        | 2020      |          |                                              |           | X       | Lack of demand                                                      |
| Re-digitize the current Ellijay zoning map to create current hard copies for City Hall          | 2020      |          | 2025                                         |           |         |                                                                     |
| <b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>                                                           |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                     |
| Complete Service Delivery Strategy                                                              | 2024      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                     |
| Partner with Gilmer County and East Ellijay to create a multipurpose indoor recreation facility | 2023      |          |                                              |           | X       | City is in support of the project, but no funds have been committed |

## ELLIJAY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### **Economic Development**

- ED-1** Improve broadband service to businesses and citizens
- ED-2** Have ready, reliable, and affordable access to broadband internet

### **Transportation**

- T-1** Promote greater mobility, safety, and functionality for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists throughout the City of Ellijay

### **Natural and Cultural Resources**

- NR-1** Continue improvements within Ellijay's historic district
- NR-2** Upgrade City parks to support increased usage

### **Community Facilities and Services**

- CF-1** Provide infrastructure to ensure greater pedestrian and cyclist mobility and safety

### **Land Use**

- LU-1** Update the zoning map and make it digitally accessible

| COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM 2025-2029           |                                                                                 |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                                 |                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| CITY OF ELLIJAY                            |                                                                                 |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                                 |                                                    |
| Need/<br>opportunity<br>Code               | Activity Description                                                            | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | Cost<br>Estimate | Funding<br>Source               | Responsible<br>Party                               |
| <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>                |                                                                                 |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                                 |                                                    |
| <b>ED-1</b>                                | Pass a broadband ordinance                                                      |      | X    |      |      |      | \$5,000          | Staff time<br>and legal<br>fees | Mayor and Council                                  |
| <b>ED-2</b>                                | Participate in the Broadband Ready Community Program with its adopted ordinance |      | X    |      |      |      | \$5,000          | Staff Time                      | Mayor and Council<br>and private sector            |
| <b>TRANSPORTATION</b>                      |                                                                                 |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                                 |                                                    |
| <b>T-1</b>                                 | Complete a bicycle and pedestrian study                                         | X    | X    |      |      |      | \$25,000         | City and<br>grant funds         | Mayor and Council,<br>and NWGRC                    |
| <b>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>      |                                                                                 |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                                 |                                                    |
| <b>NR-1</b>                                | Repair Harrison Park barn; new roof                                             | X    | X    | X    | X    |      | \$30,000         | City and<br>private<br>funds    | Friends of Harrison<br>Park & Mayor and<br>Council |
| <b>NR-2</b>                                | Update and digitize the Downtown Ellijay Historic District map                  | X    |      |      |      |      | \$5,000          | Staff time                      | Zoning Dept. and<br>NWGRC                          |
| <b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b> |                                                                                 |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                                 |                                                    |
| <b>CF-1</b>                                | River Street streetscape enhancements                                           |      |      | X    | X    |      | \$250,000        | TSPLOST,<br>City funds          | Mayor and Council,<br>Public Works                 |
| <b>LAND USE</b>                            |                                                                                 |      |      |      |      |      |                  |                                 |                                                    |
| <b>LU-1</b>                                | Re-digitize the current zoning map to provide hard copies for City Hall         | X    |      |      |      |      | \$5,000          | Staff time                      | Zoning<br>Administrator and<br>NWGRC               |



## CITY OF EAST ELLIJAY: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

### Vision Statement

The City of East Ellijay shares the community's vision for the area yet seeks to maintain its individuality. The City of East Ellijay's future vision includes:

- Offering a variety of opportunities to live and work in East Ellijay;
- Preserving industrial professions while creating new commercial opportunities;
- Using connections such as sidewalks, greenway trails, and bike lanes to connect neighborhoods;
- Promoting policies that encourage efficient, sprawl-preventing growth patterns, and promote cooperation, coordination, and efficient use and expansion of the City's public facilities and services;
- Supporting and preserving the City's rural and natural charm while providing for traditional neighborhood development



Figure 66: Highlands Shopping Center in East Ellijay.

## POLICY STATEMENTS

### Economic Development

- Support the Joint Development Authority Economic Development sales team

- Continue to support the Collaboration On Rivers Edge (CORE) business incubator.
- Encourage high school administrators to train students for local jobs through the continued support of Partners in Education.
- Promote the development of available/vacant commercial and industrial buildings/land.
- Encourage investment in East Ellijay by promoting the absence of an assessed city property tax.



*Figure 67: Artist rendition of East Ellijay circa 1920's.*

## **Housing**

- Stimulate diverse and attainable housing development at all price points
- Encourage the construction of senior housing development and assisted living facilities in East Ellijay

## **Natural and Cultural Resources**

- Support improved public access to the county's three rivers
- Partner with the Georgia Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association to increase educational signage in the city where it is applicable

## **Transportation**

- Continue to support the implementation of the adopted Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Work with state transportation officials to reduce traffic congestion and increase public safety

## **Land Use**

- Ensure the City's ordinances are cohesive and streamlined to promote future development while protecting existing development.

### Community Facilities and Services

- Continue to support the implementation of the Airport Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan and Airport Layout Plan
- Base budget decisions for improvements to meet the goals of keeping the cost of living low, while maintaining a high quality of life for East Ellijay's residents and businesses.

### Intergovernmental Coordination

- Promote intergovernmental cooperation by holding planning meetings of the local governments, authorities, boards, and agencies, as needed, to improve communication and coordination

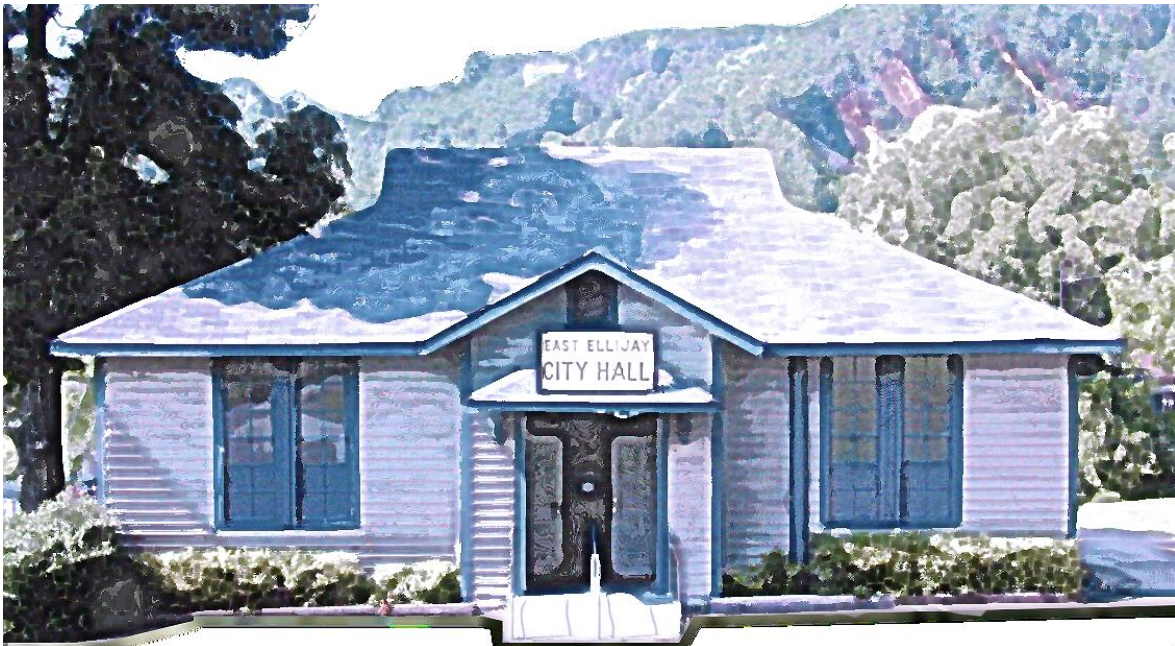


Figure 68: Historic East Ellijay City Hall



## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2020-2024

### City of East Ellijay

| WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITY                                                                                              | YEAR      |          | STATUS                                       |           |         | Explanation if postponed or dropped                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                    |           | Complete | Underway;<br>Projected<br>Completion<br>Date | Postponed | Dropped |                                                                                                             |
| Build an indoor, multi-use recreational facility. East Ellijay will purchase and donate property for the facility. | 2020      |          |                                              | 2027      |         | This project is duplicated here and will be added to the 2025-2029 CWP under Intergovernmental Coordination |
| <b>LAND USE</b>                                                                                                    |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                             |
| Amend East Ellijay zoning ordinance to include a Planned Unit Development (PUD) zone district                      | 2020      |          | X                                            |           |         | Reworded in the current CWP                                                                                 |
| <b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>                                                                              |           |          |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                             |
| Re-Adopt Service Delivery Strategy with Ellijay and Gilmer County                                                  | 2024      | X        |                                              |           |         |                                                                                                             |
| Partner with Gilmer County and Ellijay to create multipurpose indoor recreation facility                           | 2020-2024 |          |                                              | 2027      |         | The pool has been renovated at its historical location. A rec facility is being discussed in the county.    |

## EAST ELLIJAY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### **Economic Development**

- ED-1** Improve infrastructure and utility services, including broadband, to businesses and citizens
- ED-2** Have ready, reliable, and affordable access to broadband internet
- ED-3** Ensure a supply of available housing solutions

### **Transportation**

- T-1** Improve the functionality of traffic and decrease congestion
- T-2** Promote greater mobility and transportation functionality throughout the City of East Ellijay

### **Natural Resources**

- NR-1** Work with state and federal partners to protect water resources
- NR-2** Work with Gilmer County and the City of Ellijay to provide greater recreational opportunities

### **Land Use**

- LU-1** Ensure that the zoning ordinance is up-to-date and does not conflict with the needs and goals of the City.

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

- IC-1** Maintain intergovernmental communication and coordination to pursue projects that meet county-wide needs



# COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM 2025-2029

## CITY OF EAST ELLIJAY

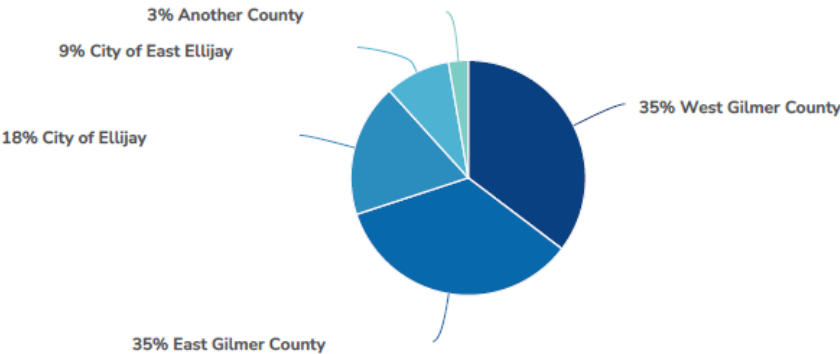
| Need/<br>opportunity<br>Code | Activity Description                                                                          | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | Cost<br>Estimate | Funding<br>Source | Responsible<br>Party                    |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>IC-1</b>                  | Partner with Ellijay and Gilmer County to Create a multipurpose indoor recreational facility. | X    | X    | X    |      |      | \$150,000        | City              | Ellijay, East Ellijay,<br>Gilmer County |

# APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY VISION SURVEY

## Report for Gilmer County Community Vision Survey

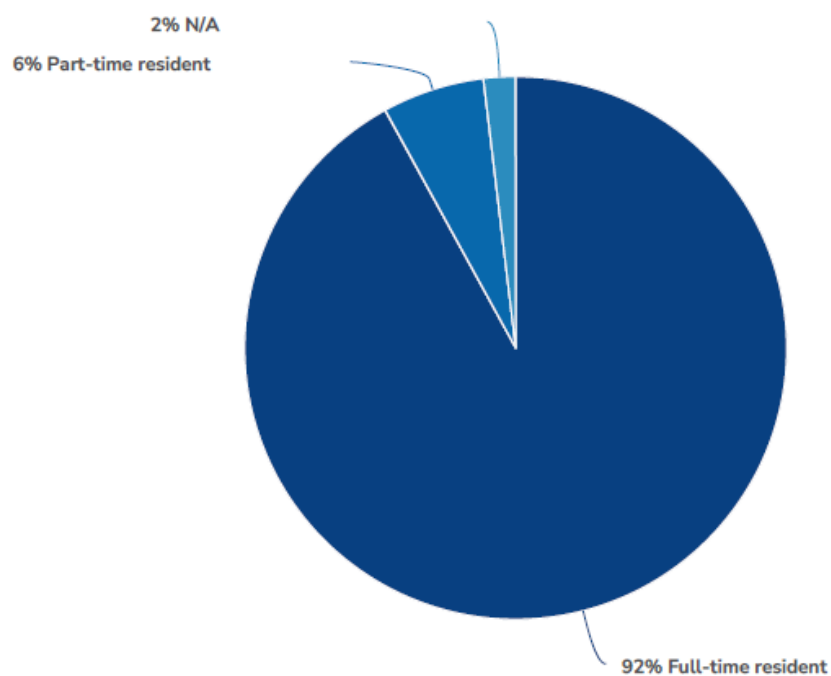


1. Which community best describes where you live? (Check only one)



| Value                | Percent                      | Responses |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| West Gilmer County   | 35.3% <div><div></div></div> | 578       |
| East Gilmer County   | 34.6% <div><div></div></div> | 566       |
| City of Ellijay      | 18.3% <div><div></div></div> | 300       |
| City of East Ellijay | 9.0% <div><div></div></div>  | 148       |
| Another County       | 2.7% <div><div></div></div>  | 45        |
| Totals: 1,637        |                              |           |

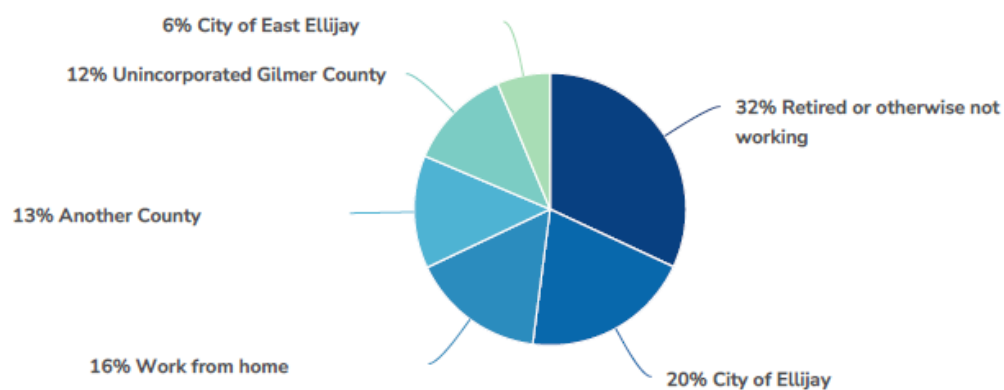
2. Which best describes your residency in Gilmer County? (Check only one)



| Value              | Percent                         | Responses |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Full-time resident | 92.0%<br><div><div></div></div> | 1,511     |
| Part-time resident | 6.1%<br><div><div></div></div>  | 100       |
| N/A                | 1.9%<br><div><div></div></div>  | 31        |

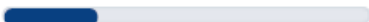
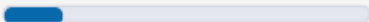
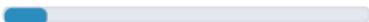
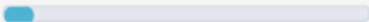
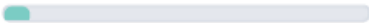
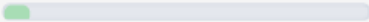
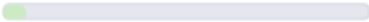
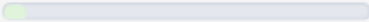
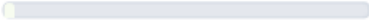
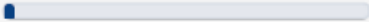
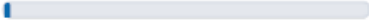
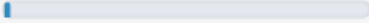
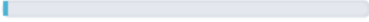
Totals: 1,642

### 3. In what community do you work? (Check only one)

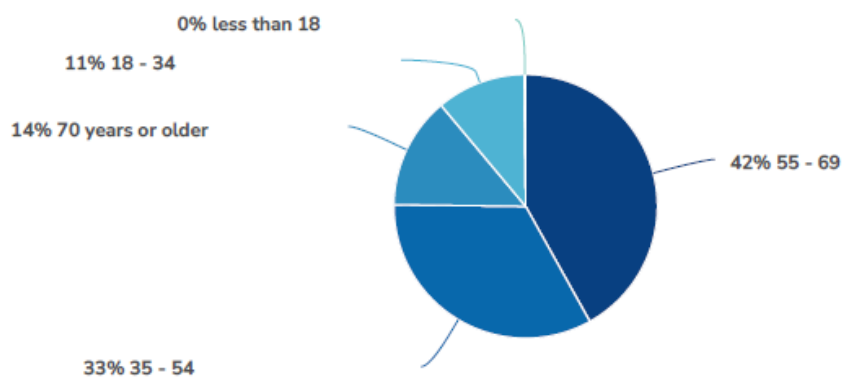


| Value                            | Percent                         | Responses |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Retired or otherwise not working | 31.9%<br><div><div></div></div> | 523       |
| City of Ellijay                  | 20.1%<br><div><div></div></div> | 329       |
| Work from home                   | 15.9%<br><div><div></div></div> | 260       |
| Another County                   | 13.4%<br><div><div></div></div> | 220       |
| Unincorporated Gilmer County     | 12.3%<br><div><div></div></div> | 202       |
| City of East Ellijay             | 6.3%<br><div><div></div></div>  | 104       |
| Totals: 1,638                    |                                 |           |

#### 4. What best describes your employment? (Check only one)

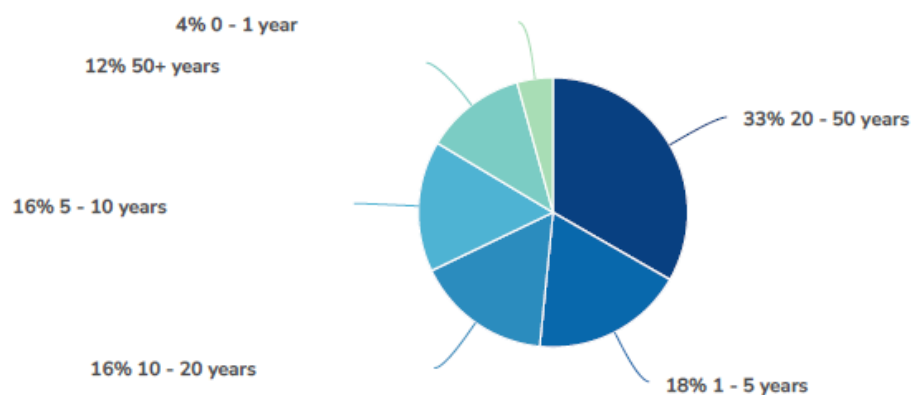
| Value                                                | Percent                                                                                      | Responses |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Retired                                              | 26.3%<br>  | 430       |
| Other                                                | 16.0%<br>  | 262       |
| Professional Services such as legal, financial, etc. | 12.0%<br>  | 196       |
| Education                                            | 7.6%<br>   | 125       |
| Medical                                              | 7.2%<br>   | 117       |
| Government                                           | 7.0%<br>   | 114       |
| Construction                                         | 6.1%<br> | 100       |
| Retail                                               | 6.1%<br> | 99        |
| Hospitality                                          | 3.4%<br> | 55        |
| Manufacturing/Industrial                             | 2.9%<br> | 47        |
| Food Service/Restaurant                              | 2.1%<br> | 35        |
| Agriculture                                          | 2.0%<br> | 32        |
| Automotive                                           | 1.3%<br> | 22        |
| Totals: 1,634                                        |                                                                                              |           |

## 5. What is your age? (Check only one)



| Value             | Percent                         | Responses |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 55 - 69           | 41.9%<br><div><div></div></div> | 687       |
| 35 - 54           | 33.3%<br><div><div></div></div> | 546       |
| 70 years or older | 13.7%<br><div><div></div></div> | 225       |
| 18 - 34           | 10.9%<br><div><div></div></div> | 178       |
| less than 18      | 0.2%<br><div><div></div></div>  | 3         |
| Totals: 1,639     |                                 |           |






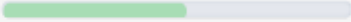
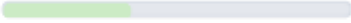
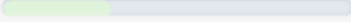
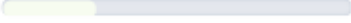
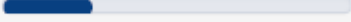
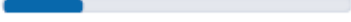
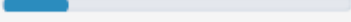
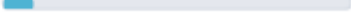
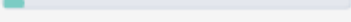
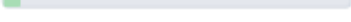
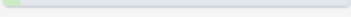
## 6. How long have you lived in Gilmer County? (Check only one)










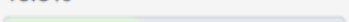
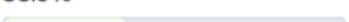
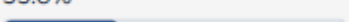
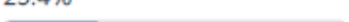
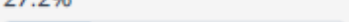

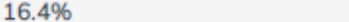

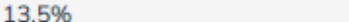

| Value         | Percent                         | Responses |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 20 - 50 years | 33.3%<br><div><div></div></div> | 546       |
| 1 - 5 years   | 18.3%<br><div><div></div></div> | 301       |
| 10 - 20 years | 16.3%<br><div><div></div></div> | 267       |
| 5 - 10 years  | 15.7%<br><div><div></div></div> | 258       |
| 50+ years     | 12.1%<br><div><div></div></div> | 199       |
| 0 - 1 year    | 4.3%<br><div><div></div></div>  | 70        |

**Totals: 1,641**






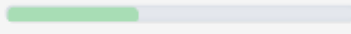
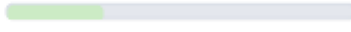
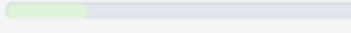
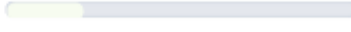
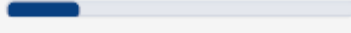
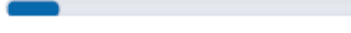
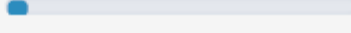
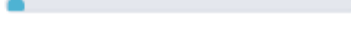
## 7. What do you like about Gilmer County (including the cities)? (Check all that apply)

| Value                                                | Percent                                                                                       | Responses |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Small town atmosphere                                | 83.1%<br>   | 1,358     |
| Scenic views and natural wildlife assets             | 81.6%<br>   | 1,334     |
| Friendly and helpful neighbors                       | 71.1%<br>   | 1,162     |
| Outdoor activities (fishing, hiking, paddling, etc.) | 67.4%<br>   | 1,102     |
| Local businesses and restaurants                     | 65.9%<br>   | 1,076     |
| Strong agriculture community                         | 53.4%<br>   | 873       |
| Good neighborhood churches                           | 37.2%<br> | 608       |
| Good EMS, fire and police protection                 | 30.5%<br> | 499       |
| Accessible public buildings and parks                | 27.3%<br> | 446       |
| Public schools and libraries                         | 26.3%<br> | 430       |
| Strong tourism economy                               | 22.8%<br> | 373       |
| Lots of active recreation (sports-related)           | 19.2%<br> | 313       |
| Cultural diversity                                   | 8.5%<br>  | 139       |
| Educational opportunities (post-high school)         | 5.9%<br>  | 97        |
| Variety of housing choices                           | 5.1%<br>  | 83        |
| Career opportunities for residents                   | 4.7%<br>  | 76        |


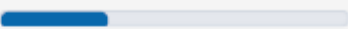
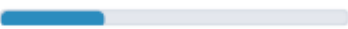
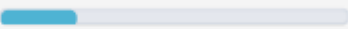


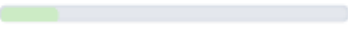
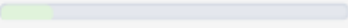

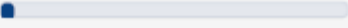
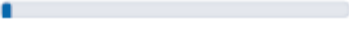
8. What don't you like about Gilmer County (including the cities)? (Check all that apply)

| Value                                                    | Percent                                                                                       | Responses |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| No hospital                                              | 61.8%<br>   | 1,008     |
| Short-term vacation rentals burdening neighborhoods      | 53.6%<br>   | 874       |
| Lack of sufficient road maintenance                      | 49.2%<br>   | 802       |
| Not enough housing options                               | 47.1%<br>   | 769       |
| Loss of scenic views and natural areas to growth         | 45.3%<br>   | 739       |
| Crowds resulting from tourism                            | 43.5%<br>   | 710       |
| Too much traffic                                         | 43.2%<br>   | 705       |
| Not enough career opportunities for residents            | 40.0%<br> | 652       |
| Blight and unkept properties                             | 35.9%<br> | 586       |
| Young professionals leaving                              | 33.8%<br> | 552       |
| Poor access to high-speed internet                       | 29.4%<br> | 479       |
| Limited emergency services such as fire, EMS, and Police | 27.2%<br> | 444       |
| Lack of sidewalks/bike lanes                             | 17.0%<br> | 278       |
| Lack of public water and sewer in the county             | 16.4%<br> | 268       |
| Limited public transportation                            | 16.1%<br> | 262       |
| Not enough local stores and restaurants                  | 13.5%<br> | 220       |
| Lack of public engagement                                | 12.4%<br> | 202       |






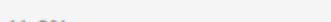

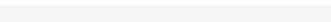
9. What types of local government management actions would you support for future development? (Check all that apply)


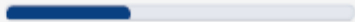
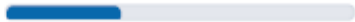
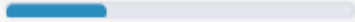
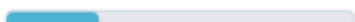
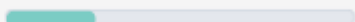






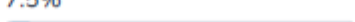
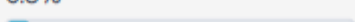
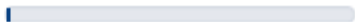
| Value                                            | Percent                                                                                       | Responses |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Agricultural and forest conservation             | 62.6%<br>   | 1,006     |
| Growth limitation boundaries                     | 52.7%<br>   | 848       |
| More regulations for short-term vacation rentals | 52.2%<br>   | 840       |
| Limiting mountain slope development              | 47.4%<br>   | 762       |
| Stronger land use regulations/zoning             | 42.4%<br>   | 681       |
| Lower density in planned rural areas             | 38.2%<br>   | 615       |
| Limiting development in flood zones              | 27.7%<br> | 445       |
| Requiring wider stream buffers                   | 23.0%<br> | 370       |
| Acquisition of land for public uses              | 21.6%<br> | 347       |
| Provide sidewalks/bike lanes                     | 20.6%<br> | 331       |
| Higher density in planned city areas             | 14.5%<br> | 233       |
| None                                             | 5.7%<br>  | 92        |
| Higher density in planned rural areas            | 5.3%<br>  | 86        |

10. What type of housing are you interested in seeing developed in your community? (Check all that apply)

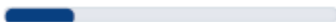
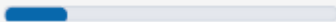
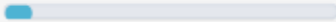
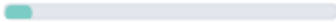
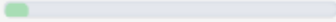
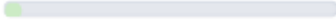
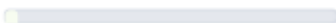
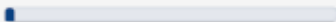
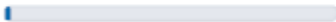
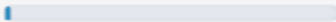
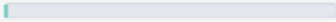
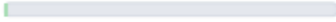
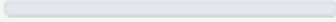
| Value                                     | Percent                                                                                       | Responses |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Workforce housing for all income levels   | 54.5%<br>   | 880       |
| Owner-occupied homes with large lots      | 31.2%<br>   | 503       |
| More rental housing options               | 30.4%<br>   | 490       |
| More housing for retirees and/or seniors  | 21.7%<br>   | 351       |
| More apartments                           | 20.9%<br>   | 337       |
| None                                      | 20.7%<br>   | 334       |
| Townhouses/Condos                         | 17.2%<br>  | 277       |
| Assisted living/long-term care facilities | 15.2%<br> | 245       |
| Planned subdivisions                      | 8.4%<br>  | 136       |
| Luxury housing developments               | 4.3%<br>  | 69        |
| More short-term vacation rentals          | 2.9%<br>  | 47        |

### 11. What types of public projects would you support to make your community a better place? (Check all that apply)

| Value                                                                                                 | Percent                                                                                       | Responses |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Preserve more farms & agricultural land                                                               | 62.6%<br>   | 1,022     |
| Protect more scenic open spaces and woodlands                                                         | 60.1%<br>   | 981       |
| Improvements to transportation infrastructure such as: roads, intersections, street lighting, etc.    | 52.5%<br>   | 858       |
| More strict land use ordinances to control future growth                                              | 50.2%<br>   | 819       |
| Invest into the downtowns to preserve historic landmarks, improve walkability, increase parking, etc. | 49.1%<br>   | 802       |
| Improvements in public parks such as: parking, trails, signs, and other amenities                     | 41.6%<br>   | 680       |
| Improve high-speed internet broadband access throughout the county.                                   | 39.6%<br>   | 647       |
| Increase and improve public water and sewer infrastructure                                            | 37.2%<br> | 607       |

| Value                                                | Percent                                                                                       | Responses |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Invest in and improve public safety                  | 36.3%<br>   | 592       |
| Increase outdoor recreation                          | 35.7%<br>   | 583       |
| Projects aimed at improving education                | 32.9%<br>   | 538       |
| Removal of blighted buildings for new development    | 29.1%<br>   | 475       |
| Recruit more local businesses                        | 26.8%<br>   | 438       |
| Better access to behavioral health treatment         | 25.5%<br>   | 417       |
| More sidewalks and bike lanes                        | 17.3%<br>  | 282       |
| Recruit more industrial and manufacturing companies  | 15.7%<br> | 257       |
| Incentives for new housing development               | 14.7%<br> | 240       |
| Increase the number of free public Wifi locations    | 13.2%<br> | 215       |
| Enhanced public transportation program               | 12.2%<br> | 200       |
| Recruit more commercial retail and dining businesses | 11.8%<br> | 193       |
| Increase efforts to promote tourism                  | 7.5%<br>  | 122       |
| More community-owned industrial parks                | 6.8%<br>  | 111       |
| None of the above                                    |           | 1.4% 23   |

12. In your opinion, what is the most significant issue to your community?  
(Check only one)

| Value                                                    | Percent                                                                                      | Responses |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Not enough career opportunities for residents            | 20.7%<br>  | 335       |
| Not enough housing options                               | 18.8%<br>  | 305       |
| Short-term vacation rentals burdening neighborhoods      | 13.1%<br>  | 212       |
| Too much traffic                                         | 8.1%<br>   | 132       |
| Loss of scenic views and natural areas to growth         | 8.0%<br>   | 130       |
| Blight and unkept properties                             | 6.7%<br>   | 109       |
| Crowds resulting from tourism                            | 5.1%<br>   | 83        |
| Limited emergency services such as fire, EMS, and Police | 4.8%<br> | 78        |
| Young professionals leaving                              | 4.3%<br> | 69        |
| Lack of sufficient road maintenance                      | 3.1%<br> | 51        |
| Lack of public water and sewer in the county             | 2.0%<br> | 32        |
| Poor access to high-speed internet                       | 1.6%<br> | 26        |
| Lack of public engagement                                | 1.2%<br> | 19        |
| Lack of sidewalks/bike lanes                             | 1.2%<br> | 19        |
| Not enough local stores and restaurants                  | 0.8%<br> | 13        |
| Limited public transportation                            | 0.4%<br> | 7         |

Totals: 1,620

## APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE MEETINGS



### Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan: Stakeholder's Meeting #1

Location: Ellijay Gilmer Water & Sewer Authority

Date: April 11, 2024

Time: 10:00 am

|    | Please Print Name | Title                  |
|----|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1  | Scott Stephens    | Stakeholder            |
| 2  | Andy Fitch        | Stakeholder            |
| 3  | Thomas Morgan     | Stakeholder            |
| 4  | Donna Brady       |                        |
| 5  | Larry Callahan    | Stakeholder            |
| 6  | Norman Pope       | Observer               |
| 7  | CHARLIE PARIS     | Board of Commissioners |
| 8  | Bobby McNEIL      | on committee           |
| 9  | Debbie Osborne    | - Stakeholder          |
| 10 | Debbie Ellis      |                        |
| 11 | Betsy Sheppard    | Stakeholder            |

|    | Please Print Name          | Title                         |
|----|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 12 | Edwina Daman               | County Clerk                  |
| 13 | Laurel Johnson             | State holder                  |
| 14 | Kimberly Reckles           | Citizen +<br>community member |
| 15 | Jaxon West                 | City of East Ellijah          |
| 16 | DAN GILMETTI               | OBSERVER                      |
| 17 | TERRY PALMERI              |                               |
| 18 | Ryan Johnson               | Observer                      |
| 19 | Pamela & Johnny<br>Johnson | II                            |
| 20 | Tom Whately                | JCP Committee member          |
| 21 | Andy Aburst                | Times-Courier                 |
| 22 | MARK Holden                | Stake Holder                  |
| 23 | Betsy Sheppard             | Stakeholder                   |
| 24 | Andy McKey                 | State holder                  |
| 25 | Jim Dupont                 | Stakeholder                   |
| 26 | Ethan Calhoun              | NWGR                          |
| 27 | Samantha Bishop            | NWGR                          |
| 28 |                            |                               |
| 29 |                            |                               |



**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

### Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan: Stakeholder's Meeting #2

**Location:** Piedmont Community Center

**Date:** May 23, 2024

**Time:** 10:00 am

|    | Please Print Name                  | Stakeholder or General Public |
|----|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Larry Callahan                     | City of East Ellijay (SH)     |
| 2  | Debbie Osborn                      | Stakeholder                   |
| 3  | Jane Smith                         | Gilmer P&Z                    |
| 4  | Mark Holden                        | Gilmer County citizen         |
| 5  | Jim Dupont                         | Gilmer Citizen                |
| 6  | John Marshall                      | Gilmer Co. Boc                |
| 7  | Kayleen Ferguson                   | General Public                |
| 8  | Gy. Greifken-Lugthart              | NWGRC                         |
| 9  | Samantha Bishop                    | NWGRC                         |
| 10 | <del>Tyler White</del> Tyler White | NWGRC                         |
| 11 | Gary McKey                         | EBC WSA                       |

|    | Please Print Name | Stakeholder or General Public            |
|----|-------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 30 | Hulbert Parker    | BOC                                      |
| 31 | PATRICK BURNETT   | Stakeholder                              |
| 32 | Dixon West        | Stakeholder                              |
| 33 | Edward Lacey      | Ellijay                                  |
| 34 | Daniel Kauffman   | GCFR                                     |
| 35 | Jason Bryant      | Gilmer Fire                              |
| 36 | THOMAS Morgan     | Stakeholder                              |
| 37 | Jennifer Grimmer  | Stakeholder Ex-officio<br>Gilmer Chamber |
| 38 | Ellen Grant       | "                                        |
| 39 | Mackenzie Banker  | "                                        |
| 40 | Betsy Sheppard    | Community Resident                       |
| 41 |                   |                                          |
| 42 |                   |                                          |
| 43 |                   |                                          |
| 44 |                   |                                          |
| 45 |                   |                                          |
| 46 |                   |                                          |
| 47 |                   |                                          |

\*Only 22 attended this meeting. Attendees skipped a page on the printed sign-in sheet.



**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

### Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan: Stakeholder's Meeting #3

**Location:** Piedmont Community Center

**Date:** June 27, 2024

**Time:** 9:00 am

|    | Please Print Name | Stakeholder or General Public |
|----|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Betsy Sheppard    | Stakeholder                   |
| 2  | Kisha Morris      | NWGR                          |
| 3  | Tom Whitley       | Stakeholder                   |
| 4  | Tyler White       | NWGR                          |
| 5  | Gretchen LUGTHART | NWGR                          |
| 6  | Jim Sositzke      | Stakeholder                   |
| 7  | Scott Stephens    | Stakeholder                   |
| 8  | Kent Sanford      | Stakeholder Ex-officio        |
| 9  | Hubert PARKER     | —                             |
| 10 | Melinda Hedder    | PDAL/GICH                     |
| 11 | MARY ABERNATHY    | CONCERNED CITIZEN, GILMER Co. |

|    | Please Print Name   | Stakeholder or General Public  |
|----|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 12 | Edward Lacey        | Stakeholder<br>CITY OF ELLIJAY |
| 13 | GARY McVey          | EGCWSA                         |
| 14 | PATRICK BURNETT     | HCLi - Stakeholder             |
| 15 | Karlann Ferguson    | COMMISSIONER                   |
| 16 | John Marshall       | BOC                            |
| 17 | Jaxon West          | Fast Ellijay                   |
| 18 | Brian Ridley        | Gilmer Co. Schools             |
| 19 | Mackenzie Banker    | Chamber                        |
| 20 | Dennis Denson       | SH                             |
| 21 | Kimberly Reckles    | Keep Gilmer Rural              |
| 22 | Thomas Morgan       | Stakeholder OCC                |
| 23 | Mary Ellen Cates    | CITIZEN MCATESATTY@ATT.NET     |
| 24 | JAMES L. CATES      | CITIZEN — 11 —                 |
| 25 | Bobby McNEIL        | Stakeholder                    |
| 26 | Autumn Genton-Payne | Piedmont/Lift leaders          |
| 27 | MARK Hdder          | AG                             |
| 28 |                     |                                |
| 29 |                     |                                |



**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

### Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan: Stakeholder's Meeting #4

**Location:** Piedmont Community Center

**Date:** August 15, 2024

**Time:** 9:00 am

|    | Please Print Name | Stakeholder or General Public |
|----|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Jim Smith         | stakeholder                   |
| 2  | Tom Whetley       | Stakeholder                   |
| 3  | Kisha Morris      | NWGR                          |
| 4  | Laurel Johnson    | Stakeholder                   |
| 5  | Larry Callahan    | Stakeholder                   |
| 6  | Hubert PARKER     | Citizen                       |
| 7  | John Marshall     | Citizen                       |
| 8  | Jaxon West        | Stakeholder                   |
| 9  | Gary McVey        | stakeholder                   |
| 10 | Betsy Sheppard    | Stakeholder                   |
| 11 | Karteen Ferguson  | Commissioner Ed               |

|    | Please Print Name | Stakeholder or General Public |
|----|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 12 | Toby McNeil       | Stakeholder                   |
| 13 | MARY ABERNATHY    | CONCERNED CITIZEN             |
| 14 | Doug Rink         | concerned Resident            |
| 15 | Mackenzie Banks   | Chamber                       |
| 16 | PATRICK BURNETT   | member                        |
| 17 | Kimberly Reckles  | Concerned citizen             |
| 18 | Thomas Morgan     | Stake Holder                  |
| 19 |                   |                               |
| 20 |                   |                               |
| 21 |                   |                               |
| 22 |                   |                               |
| 23 |                   |                               |
| 24 |                   |                               |
| 25 |                   |                               |
| 26 |                   |                               |
| 27 |                   |                               |
| 28 |                   |                               |
| 29 |                   |                               |



**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

**Gilmer County Joint Comprehensive Plan: Stakeholder's Meeting #5**

**Location:** Piedmont Community Center

**Date:** August 28, 2024

**Time:** 9:00 am

| Please Print Name | Title                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Laurel Johnson    | Stakeholder                           |
| Brian Ridley      | spokest Gilmer B. Schools             |
| Tom Wynn          | Stakeholder                           |
| Betsy Sheppard    | Stakeholder                           |
| Jim Smith         | Stakeholder                           |
| Gary McVey        | Stakeholder                           |
| Thomas Morgan     | Stakeholder                           |
| Jaxin West        | Stakeholder                           |
| Whitney Barber    | Citizen                               |
| Karleen Freeman   | Commissioner Elect                    |
| Thomas Griffin    | Gilmer Schools/City of Ellijay        |
| Doug Rink         | Resident                              |
| Debbie Osborne    | Stakeholder                           |
| Jason Smith       | Stakeholder                           |
| Kimberly Reckles  | Gilmer Grassroots / Keep Gilmer Rural |

# APPENDIX C: PUBLIC HEARING DOCUMENTATION

## INITIAL PUBLIC HEARING AD

6A WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023

OBITUARIES

TIMES-COURIER • ELLIJAY, GEORGIA

### Dixie Lee Tyler



Mrs. Dixie Lee Tyler, 83, of Ellijay, died at Hamilton Medical Center in Dalton Monday, Dec. 4, 2023.

She was born in Atlanta Aug. 6, 1940, to the late Fred Feagin and the late Martha O'Barr Crighton.

She is preceded in death by husband, Gaines A. Tyler; mother, Martha (Dave) Crighton; father, Fred (Maggie) Feagin; stepfather, Ken Bates; sister, Bea Henry; daughter, Kim Blankenship; and brother-in-law, Thomas Tyler.

She is survived by daughters, Tammy (Terry) Craft of Dalton, Susan (Larry) Keener, and Jessie (Ken) Ellington, both of Ellijay; sons, Michael Tyler of Ellijay, and Jon Tyler of Georgia; son-in-law, Ed Hade, of Dalton; sisters, Patty

(Bill) Capstick, of Ellijay, and Cassandra Long, of Douglasville; brother-in-law, Larry Henry, of Randolph, Kan.; sister-in-law, Gail Tyler, of Mystic, Conn.; 15 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; and multiple nieces and nephews.

She grew up in Web City, Mo., and moved to Ellijay in 1968 to raise her family. Later in life she sold real estate and then retired from the Gilmer County Road Department in 2021

where she was employed for nearly 20 years. She loved her road department family and helping her customers. She loved her family and family gatherings with her children and grandchildren, spending time reading, relaxing by the pool and taking road trips. She had an unconditional love for her animals, they were her babies.

A celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 22, in the chapel of Bernhardt Funeral Home.

The family will receive friends Friday, Dec. 22, from noon until 2 p.m. at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to your local animal shelter. Bernhardt Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



### James 'Jim' Dietz



Mr. James (Jim) Dietz passed away unexpectedly Monday, Dec. 4, 2023.

He was the much-beloved patriarch of the Dietz family.

He is survived by loving wife of 55 years, (Daria); children, Dana (Paul), Alycia (Tim), Aaron (Jen), Matt (Amie); 11 grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; and one step-great-grandchild.

He is preceded in death by son, Jimmy.

He served as a 1st Lt. in the U.S. Army in Vietnam and worked for Cintas Corporation as group vice president of the east coast until his retirement.

After retirement, he continued his life of service and joined both his strong Catholic faith and his commitment to education to co-found All Saints Catholic Academy in Morrisville, Vt.

He loved reading, movies, fishing, the holidays, eating sweets and most of all, his family. There wasn't anyone he did not love. He just loved life!

A funeral mass will be held at 1 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15, 2023, at Good Samaritan Catholic Church.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to All Saints Catholic Academy in Morrisville, Vt., at [AllSaintsvt.org](http://AllSaintsvt.org) or 680 Laport Rd., Morrisville, 05661, in memory of Mr. Dietz.

Bernhardt Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

### Minute with the Bible

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

— Isaiah 26:3

## State Rep. Chastain works to clarify fishing bill

By GLENN HARRISON  
NEWS-OBSERVER

State Representative Johnny Chastain, R-Blue Ridge, is confident the state legislature can fix the problems created by last year's passage of Senate Bill 115.

Chastain called a just-released state House committee's report on Fishing Access to Freshwater Resources "a big win" for north Georgia.

Soon after the 2023 legislative passage of SB 115, a statewide outcry arose from landowners along Georgia's waterways that the bill infringed on their property rights.

Those landowners feared the bill would result in the state taking their lands where deeds

specified property was owned to the center of a waterway. This would also open those areas up to public fishing. Many north Georgia landowners worried public fishing would be devastating to the trout population.

The study committee, which was formed by House Resolution 519 in response to the public outcry, has issued seven recommendations to fix the bill's problems.

Chastain, who voted against SB 115, said important among the recommendations are to remove references to the public trust doctrine, preserve the definition of waterway navigability as it is already established by Georgia law, strengthen trespassing penalties and

recognize the importance of Georgia's trout industry.

Concerns over these topics were among those voiced at several study committee hearings, including one at Old Tobacco Farm in mid-October.

The expansion of the public trust doctrine, as outlined in SB 115, was the source of fears of inviting litigation against private property owners as they would continue to battle trespassing. Keeping their property free of trespassers was voiced numerous times by the public.

In the hearing at Old Tobacco Farm, Justin Turner told the study committee, "We do not have navigable water in our

## State Sen. Gooch aims to protect property rights

By GLENN HARRISON  
NEWS-OBSERVER

State Senator Steve Gooch, R-Dahlonega, says he has always fought for the rights of private property owners and will continue to do so.

Gooch, who is the Senate majority leader, spoke last week about concerns raised over Senate Bill (SB) 115. Those concerns came from landowners afraid the state would be taking their property where it extended to the center of Georgia waterways, in turn opening the areas up to public fishing. A state House study committee has just recommended changes aimed at remedying the fears. (See related story).

Gooch said SB 115 originated because the governor and attorney general were trying to get ahead of a potential landslide of lawsuits

likely to stem from a south Georgia court case. He pointed out that waterways in north and south Georgia present different challenges to state lawmakers.

But Gooch stood firm on property rights. "I've always fought for private property rights... people pay a lot of money for this land," he said, referring to taxes paid and improvements made to property extending the center of state waterways, or across the full width of waterways where property is owned on both sides. That ownership and the rights to that land should be protected, Gooch said.

He also said protecting private property rights is not a partisan issue with Republicans and Democrats alike believing in protection.

"We're going to continue to protect north Georgia," Gooch said.

FISHING CONTINUED ON 7A

## HOUSING

CONTINUED FROM 1A

velopers, noted Raytchev.

"You might see some change depending on if landowners sell (their land) to developers. Agriculture is very important to the county's makeup and the county economy, so that might be something you want to continue to protect in the future. There are mechanisms for you to do so, one of them being planning for how you want to grow in the future," he added.

As for how local governments should encourage affordable housing while preserving Gilmer's "community character," the top two responses were allowing either rent-controlled affordable housing for service workers and civil servants or small homes or apartments in East Ellijay.

Not surprisingly, 94 percent of those who responded preferred that local governments focus new residential development in already developed areas where water, sewer and transportation infrastructure are in

place.

"About 63 percent of your county is in areas (where) there are some factors that make them less desirable for development. You're a mountainous county, and it's difficult to develop where there are steep slopes. Finding a suitable plot of land for some developments is hard here," said Raytchev.

The types of housing those who responded prefer to be built included single family homes, apartments, townhomes, accessory (guest home) dwellings and second floor apartments.

"There's all these other options, but we typically think of the two extremes," said Raytchev. "We're used to seeing mostly single family homes or large multi-tenant developments, but there is all this housing in between. We're not limited in our creativity or skills and abilities, but we are limited by our local regulations (and if) the zoning codes prevent us from building these things."

As for the actual housing study, which is still being completed, Raytchev said



MICHAEL ANDREWS/MOUNTAIN LIFE EDITOR

Luben Raytchev, of the Georgia Conservancy, talks about findings from a recent housing study on Gilmer County during a recent town hall-style meeting at the Ellijay Elementary School Auditorium.

the county's average home sale price rose almost 200 percent from 2018-2022. Between 2021 and 2022, the average sale price increased by almost 18 percent, he added.

"The average sale price in 2022 was more than \$400,000. In 2018, it was

closer to \$200,000," Raytchev said.

"Housing is expensive everywhere right now. It's not something that's exclusive to one place, but in Gilmer County it's been especially bad. The issue is also not just is there enough housing, but is

there housing at the right price point and how can we create more of that."

Raytchev said retail, food services and manufacturing account for almost 60 percent of the local employment pool. With "affordable payment" defined by 30 percent of an

average salary being put toward housing, most options in the county are not attainable for that large group of people working here, he noted.

"If you look at what 60 percent of the employment pool is, what is affordable for them on a monthly level is in the \$500-\$700, maybe \$900 (range). (At \$400,000), it would be very hard at those incomes to purchase a home in Gilmer County," he added.

"You're also probably not going to find rent that costs less than \$1,000 a month. If people want to live in the community, they're probably paying more than they can sustainably afford in the long run."

The GICH panel plans to distribute the results of the housing study to the leaders of city and county governments. Having a county housing study performed is also a prerequisite for some grants, which can be used to reduce housing construction costs.

Raytchev said the final version of the study should be finished and delivered by the end of this week.

In Loving Memory of  
**Lawton A. Hice**  
who passed away December 13, 2005.

A heart of gold stopped beating  
Two sweet eyes closed to rest  
God broke our hearts to prove  
He only takes the best.

We miss you so, so very much.  
The Hice Family

### PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE GILMER COUNTY, ELLIJAY AND EAST ELLIJAY UPDATE OF JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Gilmer County and the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay share a Joint Comprehensive Plan. Under planning rules promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs effective since October 2018, it is time to update the Plan document. This initial public hearing is being held to explain the process for the plan preparation and the opportunities for public participation in the development of the updated plan. The affected governments intend to appoint citizens to participate as part of a Stakeholder Committee to work with planners for the plan's preparation. In addition, broad citizen participation at every meeting related to the plan's preparation is desirable and recommended.

The plan document, estimated for completion in draft form by August 2024, will ultimately be submitted for review to the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Plan approval by October 31, 2024 will allow the affected governments to extend their Qualified Local Government status, and each will therefore be eligible for State loans, grants, or permits for another five years.

The public hearing will be held in the Ellijay City Hall, 197 North Main Street, Ellijay, Georgia, on Monday, January 22, 2023; 5:45 p.m.

Honorable Al Hoyle, Mayor  
City of Ellijay

# FINAL PUBLIC HEARING AD

TIMES-COURIER • ELLIJAY, GEORGIA



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2024 7A

## Beekeepers getting new apiary ready to flourish

By MICHAEL ANDREWS  
MICHAEL LAW EDITOR

The Beekeepers of Gilmer County will be using a new apiary at a local vineyard to educate the public about the importance of the honeybee.

Establishing the apiary, located at Buckley Vineyards, was a "community project," said Bill Emery, the club's vice president.

Vineyard owner Kevin Buckley allowed the club to

use the property, while several local businesses contributed materials and supplies so the project could come to fruition, he explained.

"It's because of Mr. Buckley that all this is possible. He was generous enough to provide a location and prepare the site," Emery said. "Eagle Ridge buildings Ellijay donated a 10x16 building for us to use. Lowe's donated the material for our fence. Tractor Supply pro-

vided materials to bear-proof underneath the building that was not protected by the electric fence. Gilmer Printing and OMG Printing provided printing services. North Georgia Co-Op provided the mulch for our apiary and Hawkfield Farms provided employees and additional material and expertise to build our fence."

Jim Harris, bee club president, said Smith Farm Supply and O'Reilly Auto Parts also donated supplies.

"We are very grateful for the Buckleys and for all the businesses (who contributed)," said Harris.

So far, the club has six colonies of bees at the site. Members are currently in the process of settling the bees after moving the colonies and finishing work on the new apiary. An official ribbon cutting was held last week.

"These are fairly new hives, and we are getting them ready for public con-

sumption," said Emery. "We're also still doing some landscaping, and there are still a few more items we have to do to make it physically safe for people. In the next two to three weeks, we should have everything totally complete."

When all of that has been accomplished, the club plans to hold educational seminars for new beekeepers and anyone interested in beekeeping on Saturday mornings beginning at 9 a.m.

"We open the hives and show them how to do inspections and take care of the bees to keep them alive, which is hard to do (especially) if you're just beginning," said Emery.

"There's a lot to beekeeping. The more you get into it, the more you realize you don't know," said Harris. "We try to direct the ed-

ucational seminars accordingly to the season. We talk about (things like) the diseases bees can get and how to prepare through the winter. We (also) provide the bee suits."

Honey production is another topic that's covered. Bee club members harvest honey from their hives, and proceeds from honey sales help support the club and its various activities.

"We have sourwood, and we have wildflower," said Harris.

The Beekeepers of Gilmer County meets the second Monday of each month at the Burger King in East Ellijay. Anyone interested in beekeeping is invited to attend.

"Every bite of food comes from some sort of pollinator, particularly honeybees. Without bees, we'd starve to death," Harris said.



Gilmer County beekeepers Tony Tenille and Lloyd Vautrot work to get honeybee colonies situated at the club's new apiary at Buckley Vineyards, pictured at right.



### COLONEL

CONTINUED FROM 2A

from the current regime in Afghanistan into America, and it ended up being an incredibly rewarding experience.

The following people were booked through the Gilmer County Detention Center by local, state and federal law enforcement officials. Those whose names appear with charges should be presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

**Aug. 12**  
**Steven Eugene Fyeh-**  
**rt, 42,** probation violation  
(when probation terms are altered) for fingerprintable charge, two counts

**Aug. 13**  
**Savanna Rae Boring,**  
**22,** theft by taking, felony  
**Tammy Lynn David-**  
**son, 59,** drug court violation

**Terri Dawn Garner,**  
**40,** probation violation  
(when probation terms are altered) for fingerprintable charge

**Miles Alexander**  
**Grant, 32,** giving false  
name, address or birthdate  
to law enforcement officer,  
parties to crime, willful ob-  
struction of law enforce-  
ment officers (misdemeanor)

**Shari Elaine Cylke,**  
**59,** criminal trespass  
**Kelly Kay Knight, 54,**  
bond violation pre trial

**Shelby Dawn Rodri-**  
**guez, 28,** parties to crime  
**James Elmer Stepp,**  
**52,** driving while license  
suspended or revoked (mis-  
demeanor), duty upon  
striking fixture, hit and  
run; duty of driver to stop  
at or return to scene of ac-  
cident, reckless driving

**Amanda Jacquelin**  
**Webb, 38,** maintaining a  
disorderly house

**Aug. 14**  
**Jesse Dean Lillard,**

bly one of the more im-  
portant things I've done, and in  
a weird way it capped —  
not that I've retired yet —  
a lot of my military experi-  
ence. Because I was at the  
academy during 9/11 (the

41, probation violation  
(when probation terms are  
altered) for fingerprintable  
charge

**Enrique Hernandez,**  
**21,** driving without a valid  
license (misdemeanor),  
speeding

**Jacob Brian Paul Mc-**  
**Clure, 25,** acquiring li-  
cense plate for purpose of  
concealing identification of  
motor vehicle

**Jose Olivo-Garcia, 24,**  
driving without license,  
speeding, violation of win-  
dow tint law

**Aug. 15**  
**Wilmer Sedequias Do-**  
**mingo-Perez, 29,** driv-  
ing without a valid license  
(misdemeanor), speeding

**Toby Lee Adams, 17,**  
DUI alcohol and drugs,  
driving on wrong side of  
the road, failure to drive  
within single lane, failure  
to stop at stop sign, flee-  
ing or attempting to elude  
a police officer, felony, im-  
proper passing in no pass-  
ing zone, reckless driving,  
speeding

**David Duncan Ather-**  
**ton, 53,** DUI alcohol, fail-  
ure to drive within single  
lane, open container in ve-  
hicle, possession of a sched-  
ule II controlled substance,  
drugs not in original con-  
tainer, misdemeanor, mari-  
juana possession less than  
1 ounce, possession and  
use of drug-related objects  
**Michael Patrick Ow-**  
**ens, 23,** failure to have li-  
cense on person, reckless  
driving, speeding

**Aug. 16**  
**Everson Aguilar**  
**Brito, 21,** manufacture,  
sale, distribute, etc., false  
identification document, first  
offense, identity theft

### Travels of an Air Force officer

Russell Gheseling said the "irony" of joining the Air Force and wanting to see the world was that his first assignment was at Moody Air Force Base back in Georgia at Valdosta.

fraud when using/possess-  
ing identity information  
concerning deceased indi-  
vidual, conspiracy to com-  
mit a felony

**Cody James Evans,**  
**35,** hunting without per-  
mission, hunting/fishing  
without a license, misde-  
meanor, hunting/fishing  
without proper stamp, re-  
ceipt, possession or trans-  
port of firearm by convicted  
felon or felony first, theft  
by receiving stolen prop-  
erty, felony

**Samuel Alvarado Me-**  
**jia, 21,** conspiracy to com-  
mit a felony, identity theft  
fraud when using/possess-  
ing identity information  
concerning a person, felony,  
manufacture, sale, distrib-  
ute, etc., false identification  
document, first offense

**Noberto Rodriguez**  
**Pineda, 45,** manufacture,  
sale, distribute, etc., false  
identification document,  
first offense, conspiracy to  
commit a felony, identity  
theft, fraud when using/  
possession identity infor-  
mation concerning de-  
ceased individual

**Juan Bautista Sando-**  
**val, 33,** manufacture, sale,  
distribute, etc., false iden-  
tification document, first of-  
fense, conspiracy to com-  
mit a felony, identity theft  
fraud when using/possess-  
ing identity information  
concerning deceased indi-  
vidual

**Michael Brannon**  
**Smith, 42,** probation viola-  
tion (when probation terms  
are altered) for fingerprint-  
able charge

**Audrey Vance Sud-**  
**dorth, 58,** accountability  
court violation

**Autumn Faith Taylor,**  
**22,** DUI alcohol, failure to  
drive within single lane

**Jose Aguilar Brito, 27,**  
manufacture, sale, distrib-  
ute, etc., false identification  
document, first offense,  
identity theft fraud when  
using/possessing identity  
information concerning de-  
ceased individual, conspir-  
acy to commit a felony

**Aug. 17**  
**Alan Scott Nobels, 65,**  
simple assault, family vi-  
olence, two counts  
**Timothy Cole Stokes,**  
**25,** aggravated assault,  
battery, family violence  
(first offense) misdemeanor,  
false imprisonment  
**Ceferino Espino-**  
**za-Garcia, 23,** driving  
without a valid license

### PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE GILMER COUNTY, ELLIJAY AND EAST ELLIJAY UPDATE OF JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Gilmer County and the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay have prepared a draft Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for 2025-2029 according to the 2018 Minimum Planning Standards set by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. This draft plan was prepared with public participation and with guidance from a Stakeholder Committee of public and private sector individuals, including representatives from local government, economic development, and community leadership.

Accordingly, a joint public hearing is scheduled for the County and Cities to accept comments on the Draft Joint Comprehensive Plan. After the public hearing and receipt of public comment, the draft plan will be submitted for review by the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Plan approval by October 31, 2024 is required to maintain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status for each local government per the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 allowing continued eligibility for State loans, grants, or permits for another five years.

The public hearing will be held in the Gilmer County Jury Assembly Room Ellijay, GA 30540, on Thursday, September 5, 2024; 5:30 p.m.

Charlie Paris, Chairman  
Gilmer County Board of Commissioners



(misdemeanor), DUI alcohol, failure to drive within single lane, open container in vehicle  
**Emalene Nelle Williamson, 47,** DUI alcohol, open container in vehicle  
**Tyler Gene Wilson,** 31, DUI alcohol, open container in vehicle

**Aug. 18**  
**Kurt Wes Sutherland,** 55, DUI alcohol, failure to drive within single lane, obstructing flow of traffic  
**Manuel Antonio Felipe, 25,** driving without a valid license

### The City of East Ellijay is taking sealed bids on a 2002 Ford Sport-Trac.

The vehicle has been taken out of service and is considered surplus. The vehicle may be viewed at East Ellijay City Hall. All bids must be turned in to East Ellijay City Hall no later than close of business September 03, 2024. The City of East Ellijay reserves the right to deny and any all bids.

# NWGRC PRESENTATION TO ONE GILMER



## Joint Comprehensive Plan Presentation: One Gilmer

Location: Piedmont Community Center

Date: March 18, 2024

Time: 8:00 am

|    | Please Print Name | Title               |
|----|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Thomas Griffith   | Gilmer County Shale |
| 2  | Kent Sanford      | Greater Gilmer JDA  |
| 3  | Kamleen Ferguson  |                     |
| 4  | Charlie Piss      | Chairman Boc        |
| 5  | Rebecca Harrell   | Gilmer Chamber      |
| 6  | Ellen Coxart      | Chamber             |
| 7  | Al Hoyle          | City of Ellington   |
| 8  | Alan Davenport    | JDA / ETC           |
| 9  | Tiffany Watson    | Family Connection   |
| 10 | Gary McGeary      | EGCWSA              |
| 11 | Brian Richey      | GLSS                |
| 12 | Dianne Scoggins   | GGCF                |
| 13 | Larry Rainey      | JDA                 |
| 14 | Melinda Hadden    | DDA Ellington       |
| 15 | Ethan Calhoun     | NWGRC               |

# LOCAL NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ON THE PLAN UPDATE



VOL. 149 • No. 27 • 2 SECTIONS, 18 PAGES

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3, 2024

EST. 1875 • CONSOLIDATED 1916 • \$1.50

## Joint comprehensive plan update underway

By MICHAEL ANDREWS  
MOUNTAIN LIFE EDITOR

A five-year update of the Joint Comprehensive Plan for Gilmer County and the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay is taking shape.

The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments in the state to update their comprehensive plans every five years to maintain eligibility for state loans, grants and permits. The plan also provides a platform for the entities to develop future projects and goals.

The plan's stakeholder committee, which gathers community input and makes recommendations to local governments, recently held its third meeting to gather input for the five-year update managed by the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission.

"This is an update of the prior plan, and I think it's

going to be fairly consistent with the prior plan. The first meeting was a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis that basically highlighted what the sense of the community is (with) concerns and strengths for the county. There was a very large community participation at that meeting," said Laurel Johnson, stakeholder committee chair.

"The second meeting was primarily the stakeholder and ex-officio members, although it was open to the public. We went over more of the process involved, as well as some discussion with regard to the results of the SWOT analysis. There was a lot of consensus with that."

Among the issues being discussed are land use, economic development and environmental preservation,

UNDERWAY CONTINUED ON 6A

## Childhood friends recall growing up in Ellijay



After around six decades, old friends Mary Lou Hipp, left, and Brenda Sailors Blanton were reunited during a surprise luncheon at the local Berkshire Hathaway real estate office.

## 'Raised by characters'

By MARK MILLIGAN

When DeAnn Golden drove her mother, Brenda Sailors Blanton, around Ellijay recently, she was surprised at how much her mom remembered about growing up here in the 1940s-50s.

"We drove around about two hours, and she could point out where everybody lived and what used to be there and who owned all the apple orchards," Golden said. "My mother's funniest comment was, 'Goodness gracious, I never thought I'd see this many cars in Ellijay!'"

However, mother and daughter were both surprised when they returned to the local Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties real estate office (where Golden is president

FRIENDS CONTINUED ON 2A

## UNDERWAY

CONTINUED FROM 1A

Johnson noted.

"The (third) meeting focused primarily on land use, planning and zoning, housing and those kinds of issues. It's an update every five years, but the land use planning maps are intended to give direction for the next 25-30 years," she added. "We are going to have growth and development, but how do we preserve the things about Gilmer County that we all love?"

Possible points of interest that were not in the last five-year update include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the boom in short-term rentals across the county.

"COVID was an unanticipated crisis that affected the county and development of the county. The upswelling of short-term rentals has affected the availability and pricing of housing in the county," Johnson said. "Those two things weren't anticipated in the last comprehensive plan, but I anticipate they will be addressed (in this one)."

An objective for the planmakers is for there to be a more coordinated approach between the cities and county when it comes to issues that affect all three entities.

"(That's) so we can kind of prevent the unanticipated negative consequences

of one entity making decisions that have an impact on the other entities. We would really like to see more coordination on those types of issues," Johnson said. "We're (also) looking at what kind of projects do we, as stakeholders, see that the local governments should probably be engaged in over the next five years."

After the stakeholders submit their recommendations to the local governments, the cities and county will review and revise information for the update. The plan is to be finished by December.

Community involvement is always welcome at the stakeholders meetings, Johnson noted.

"The meetings we have are open to the public, who can show up and participate. The next one has not been set yet, but I anticipate it will be later in July," she added.

A community survey offers another chance for the public to have a say in the plan update. The survey can be found online at [Survey.alchamer.com/s2/877324/Gilmer-County-Community-Vision-Survey](http://Survey.alchamer.com/s2/877324/Gilmer-County-Community-Vision-Survey). Completed surveys will be accepted until July 12.

"We're asking people to share that survey widely. We want as much participation as we can get from county residents, part-time county residents and people who work here. We're hoping to get as much input from the community as possible," Johnson said.

1970.

From 1971-1976, George again worked for the Atlanta Police Department, holding many positions, including lottery squad detective and training division detective and sergeant. During his years working for the Atlanta Police Department, he completed several advanced law enforcement training courses and served as an instructor for the Atlanta Police Academy for three years.

After leaving the Atlanta Police Department, he taught social studies at Pickens High School during

In August, 2023, he was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia. After the diagnosis, he was never physically able to return to the practice of law. However, true to his nature, he fought hard until the very end.

He loved the courtroom and trying jury trials. His passion for the law was legendary. He represented his clients to the best of his ability no matter the personal grief it might cause to himself. He believed that the Constitution must be always protected, and that every person was entitled to a fair trial without

held at 2 p.m. Sunday, June 30, 2024, at the First Baptist Church of Jasper with the Rev. Preston Jones and Minister Butch Jones officiating.

Donations can be made to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (online at [lls.org](http://lls.org) or call 1-888-557-7177) or mail to Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, P.O. Box 22324, New York, NY 10087 or to Georgia Mountains Hospice, 70 Caring Way, P.O. Box 580, Jasper, GA 30143 or to First Baptist Church of Jasper.

Reper Funeral Home and Crematory was in charge of arrangements.

## BUDGET

CONTINUED FROM 1A

as at 9.1 percent. This was the result of all teachers receiving a \$2,500 salary increase. The school board also approved a new supplement for pre-K teachers, an increase in the local supplement from 10 to 12 percent and a 3 percent increase to all other classified

salary schedules. School administration expenditures increased from \$3.2 million in FY24.

With estimated total expenditures of \$54.9 million and estimated total revenues at \$51.3 million, the system will experience an excess of expenditures over revenues of \$3.6 million. The estimated July 1 beginning general fund bal-

ance of \$24.8 million has been estimated to decrease to \$21.2 million by the end of the period June 30, 2025.

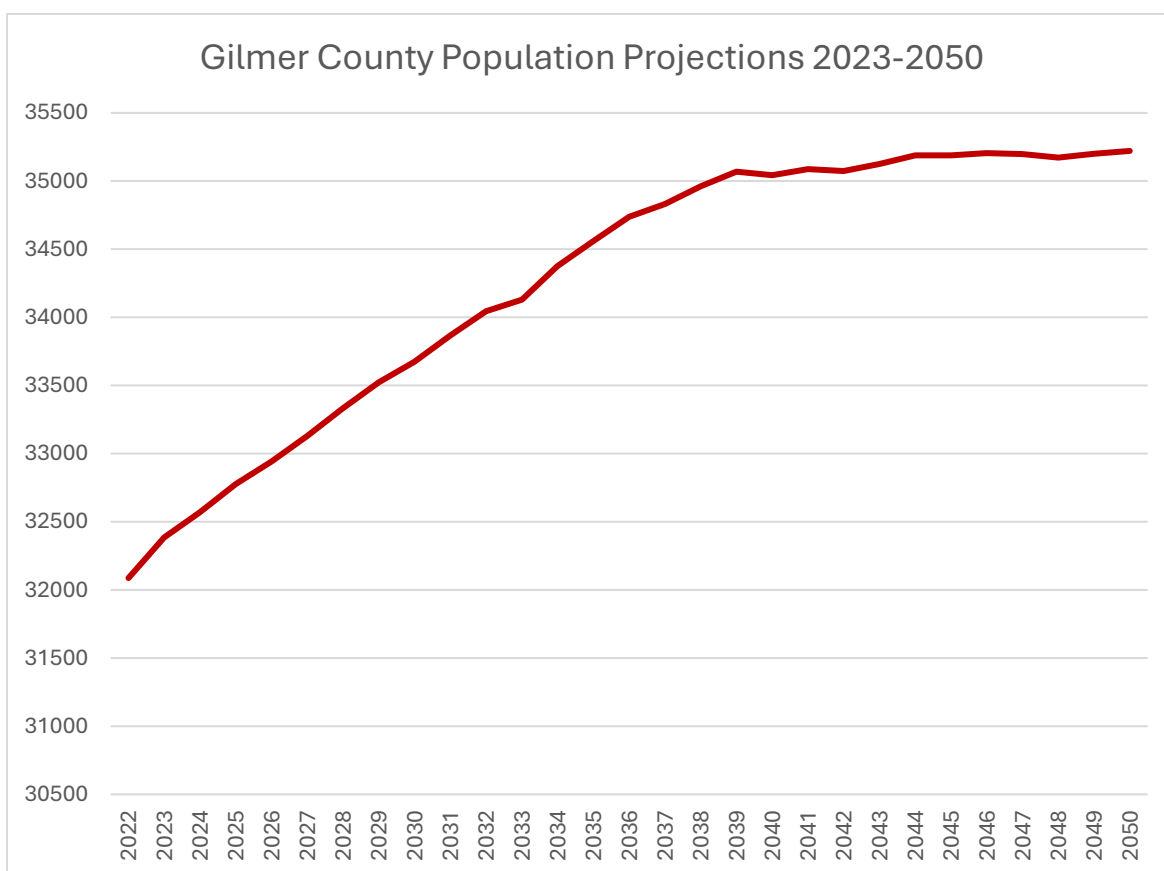
"Our FY25 budget features an intentional budget deficit of \$3.6 million dollars," said Ridley.

"This was done in order to provide a level of tax relief for our citizens by assessing our fund balance and incrementally bring-

## APPENDIX D: POPULATION AND ECONOMIC DATA

### Population

Gilmer County, Georgia is part of the fifteen-county Northwest Georgia Regional Commission planning region. Fannin County is located to the north and the east. Pickens County and Dawson County are located to the south. Murray and Gordon County are located to the west. Gilmer County is 426.2 square miles. This makes it the 50<sup>th</sup> largest county in the state of Georgia. The 2022 population of Gilmer County was estimated to be **32,087**, according to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. Gilmer County is expected to grow in population from now until 2060, although the rate of growth is expected to slow as the years progress.

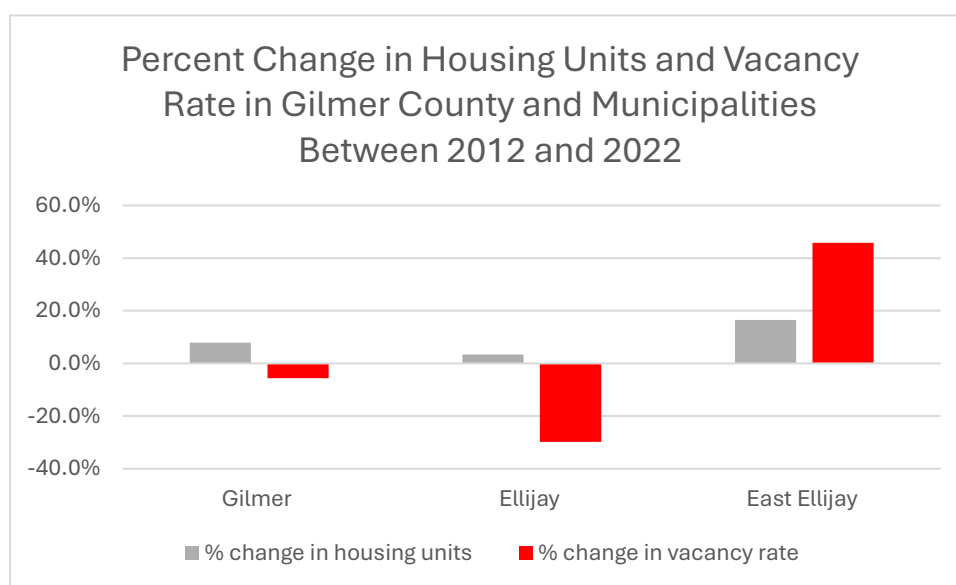


Source: The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget: Population projections from 2022-2060:  
<https://opb.georgia.gov/census-data/population-estimates>

## Housing

According to the United States Census Bureau, there are 17,850 total housing units in Gilmer County, of which 925 are located in Ellijay and 375 are located in East Ellijay.

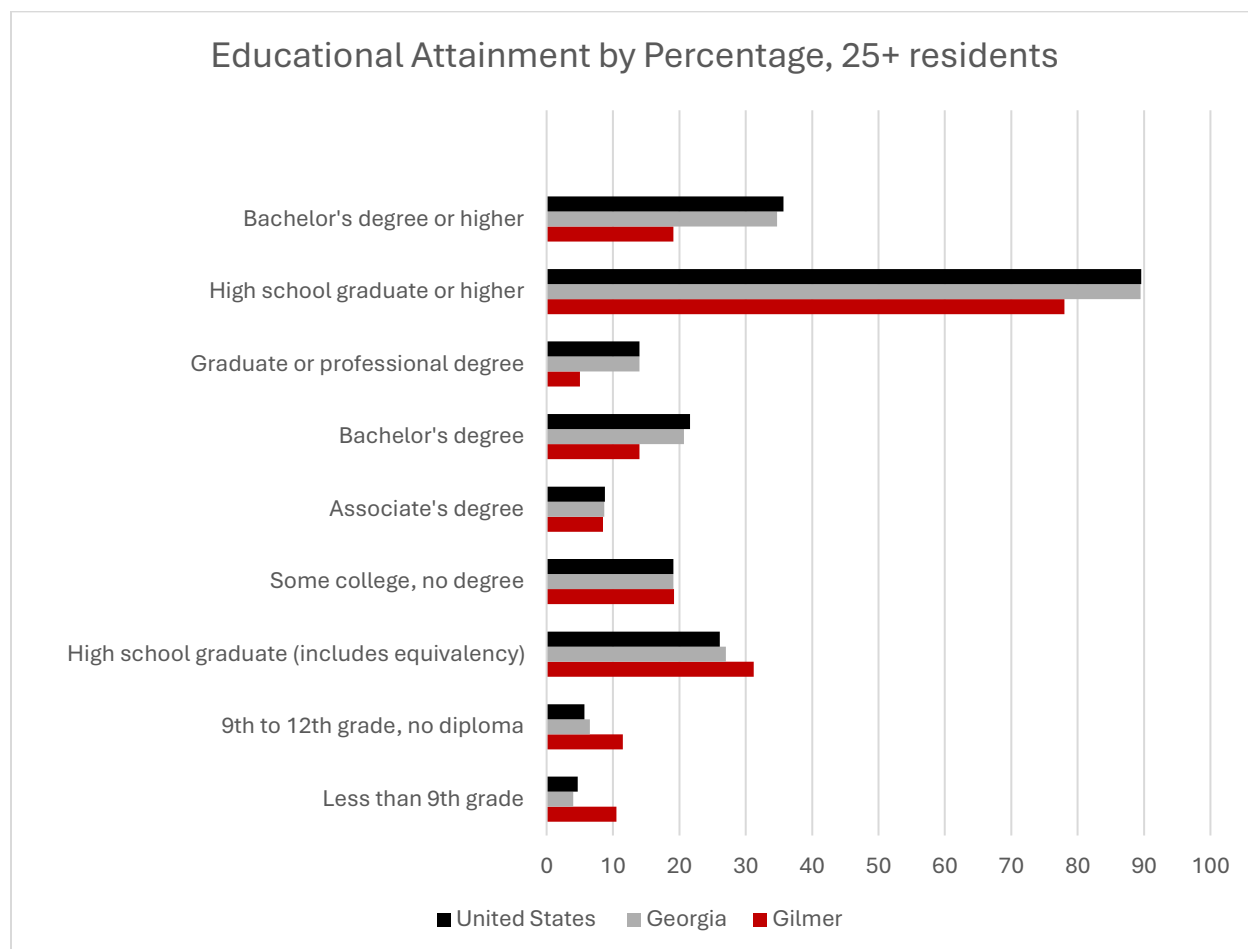
The vacancy rate in Gilmer County is 27.91%. Both municipalities have lower vacancy rates with Ellijay having an 11.46% rate, and East Ellijay having a 22.93% rate. Gilmer County and Ellijay have experienced a decrease in vacancy rate since 2012, while East Ellijay has experienced a drastic increase in vacancy rate.



<https://data.census.gov/table?q=Gilmer%20County%20Ga%20dp04>

Gilmer County and both municipalities experienced growth in the number of housing units available between 2012 and 2022 according to the most recent data available on the United States Census Bureau. East Ellijay saw the largest percentage increase in housing units with a 16.46% change from 2012 to 2022. Ellijay saw a slower rate of change with a 3.41% increase over the same period.

## Education

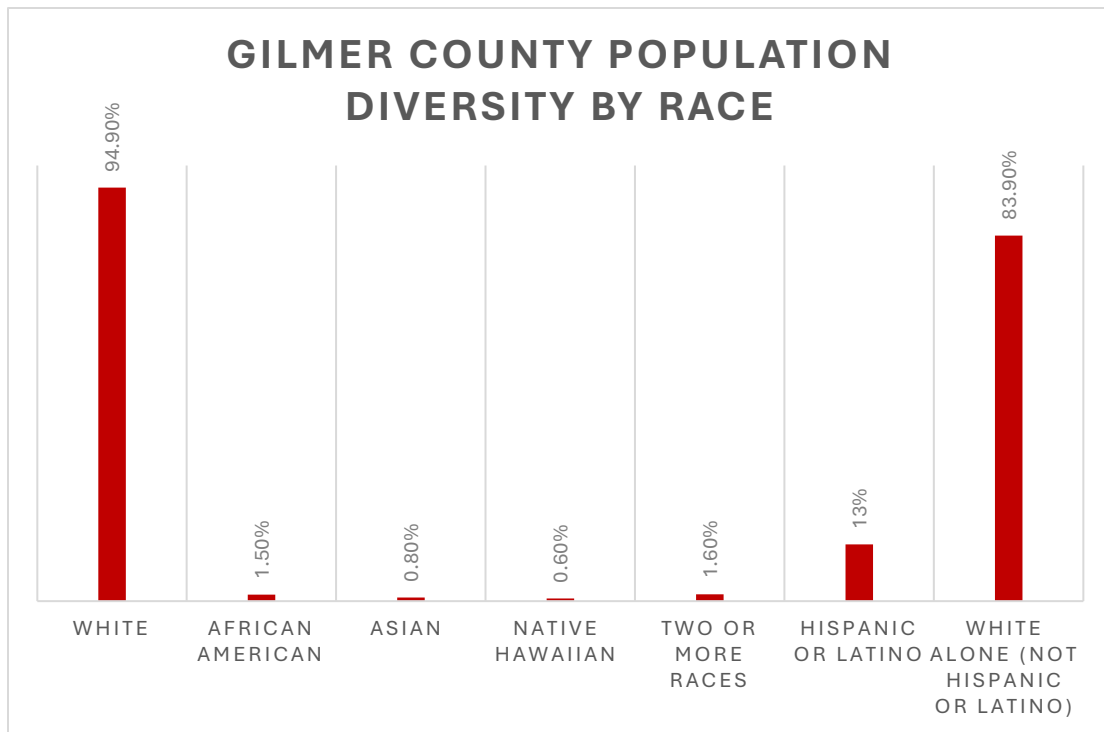


Educational attainment comparisons for Gilmer County, Northwest Georgia, and Georgia levels for those 25 and older. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, "Table DP02. Selected Social Characteristics." <http://data.census.gov>

### **Educational attainment comparisons for Gilmer County, Northwest Georgia, and Georgia levels for those 25 and older**

Educational attainment is vital for each community in the Northwest Georgia region. It is necessary for social mobility and achieving greater employment opportunities. Gilmer County falls slightly behind the State of Georgia and the United States in almost every category of educational attainment.

## Race and Ethnicity

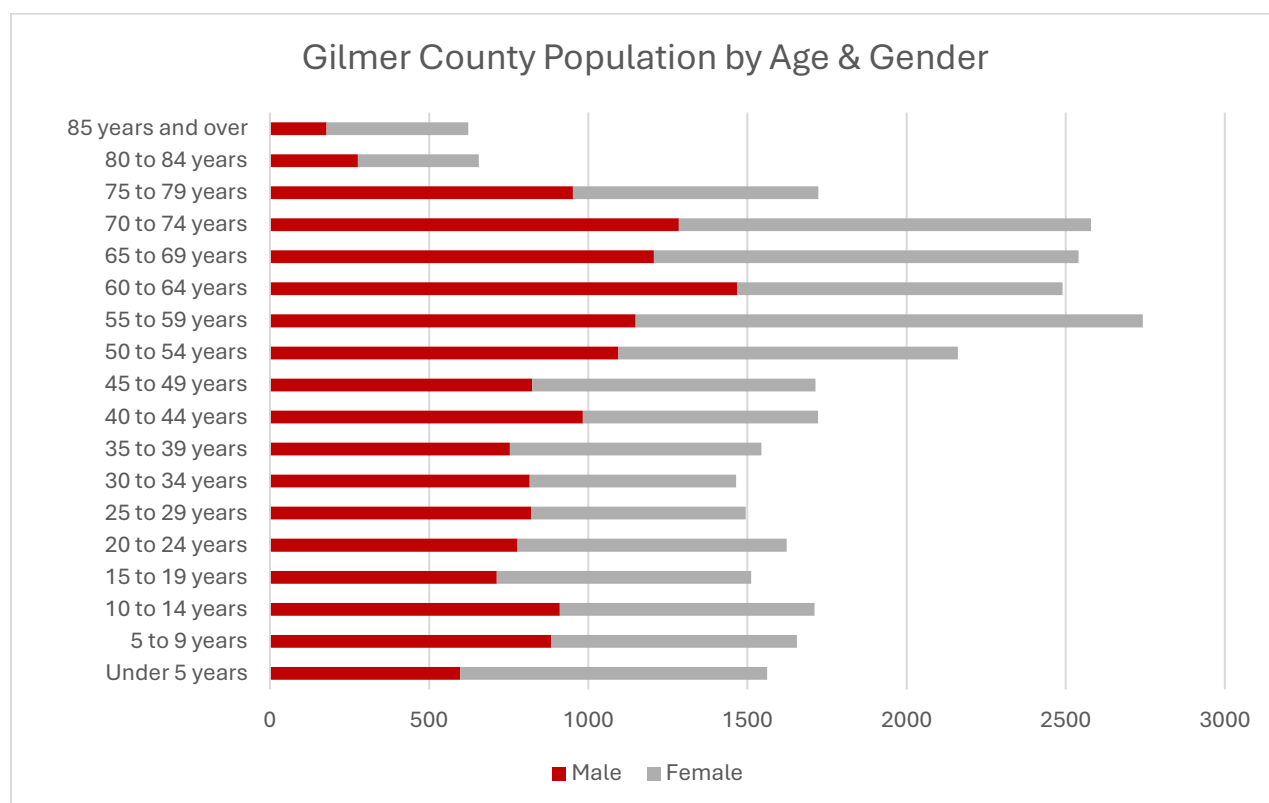


Percentage of Each Race and Ethnicity in Gilmer County and Municipalities by Race or Ethnicity. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, "Table P2: Hispanic or Latino." <https://data.census.gov>

### Percentage of Each Race and Ethnicity in Gilmer County and Municipalities by Race or Ethnicity

Gilmer County's largest population sector is non-Hispanic white (83.9%). The Hispanic or Latino population is the next largest sector (13%). African Americans, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and people of two or more races make up the remainder of (3.1%) of the population of Gilmer County.

## Age and Gender

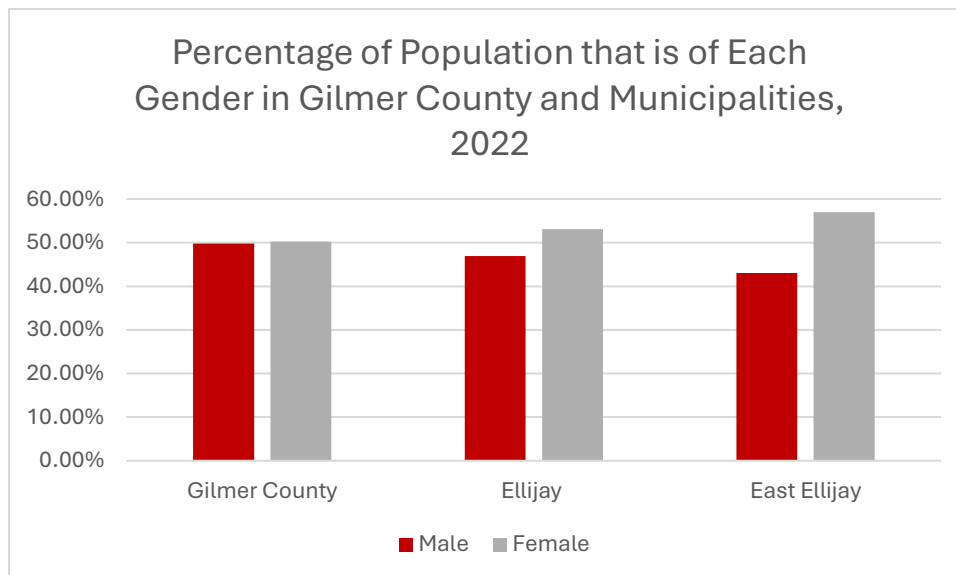


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, "Table S0101: Age and Sex." <https://data.census.gov>

### Age of Population in Gilmer County and Municipalities, 2020

Gilmer County is an aging community. The median age is 49.6 years old. This increased from the 2010 Census when the median age was 41 years old.

The largest share of any one age group is 55–59-year-olds (2742 residents). The chart shows a healthy split between males and females in most age groups. There is not a huge disparity in gender until people reach their elder years (85 years and older) where females greatly outnumber males.



Percentage of the Population of Gilmer County and Municipalities that is of Each Sex, 2020. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table S0101. Age and Sex." <http://data.census.gov>

### **Percentage of the Population of Gilmer County and Municipalities that is of Each Sex, 2020**

The population of Gilmer County is split fairly evenly between men and women, 49.79% are male and 50.21% are female. The municipalities have more pronounced gender differences. Ellijay is made up of 46.91% male and 53.09% female population, and East Ellijay is made up of 43.02% male and 56.98% female population.

In Ellijay, females comprise 53% of its population compared to 47% of males. The difference is even more pronounced in East Ellijay where females exceed males by 57% to 43%.

## Economics

### Income

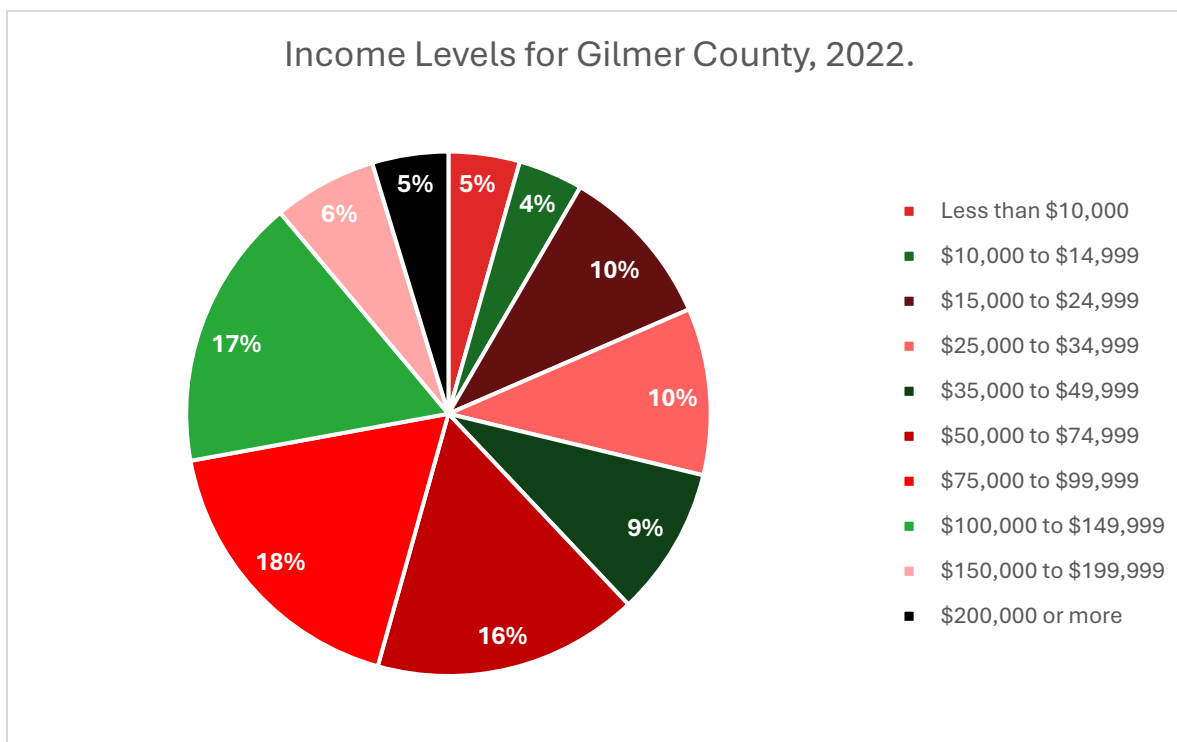
According to the United States Census Bureau for 2022, the median household income for Gilmer County is \$70,334. Below are the median income levels for the surrounding counties, and the municipalities in the county.

| <b>Median Income (2022)</b> |    |        |
|-----------------------------|----|--------|
| Gilmer County               | \$ | 70,334 |
| East Ellijay                | \$ | 26,691 |
| Ellijay                     | \$ | 37,227 |
| Fannin County               | \$ | 54,857 |
| Pickens County              | \$ | 45,339 |
| Dawson County               | \$ | 84,519 |
| Murray County               | \$ | 60,617 |
| Georgia                     | \$ | 72,837 |

Source: "Table B19013: Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)." <http://data.census.gov>

### **Median Household Income in Gilmer County, Surrounding Counties, Georgia, 2016-2020**

Gilmer County's median income places it higher than most of the surrounding counties, but slightly lower than the state level of \$72,837. Although the county level compares well with the surrounding areas, the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay fall quite below the income levels of the surrounding counties and the state.



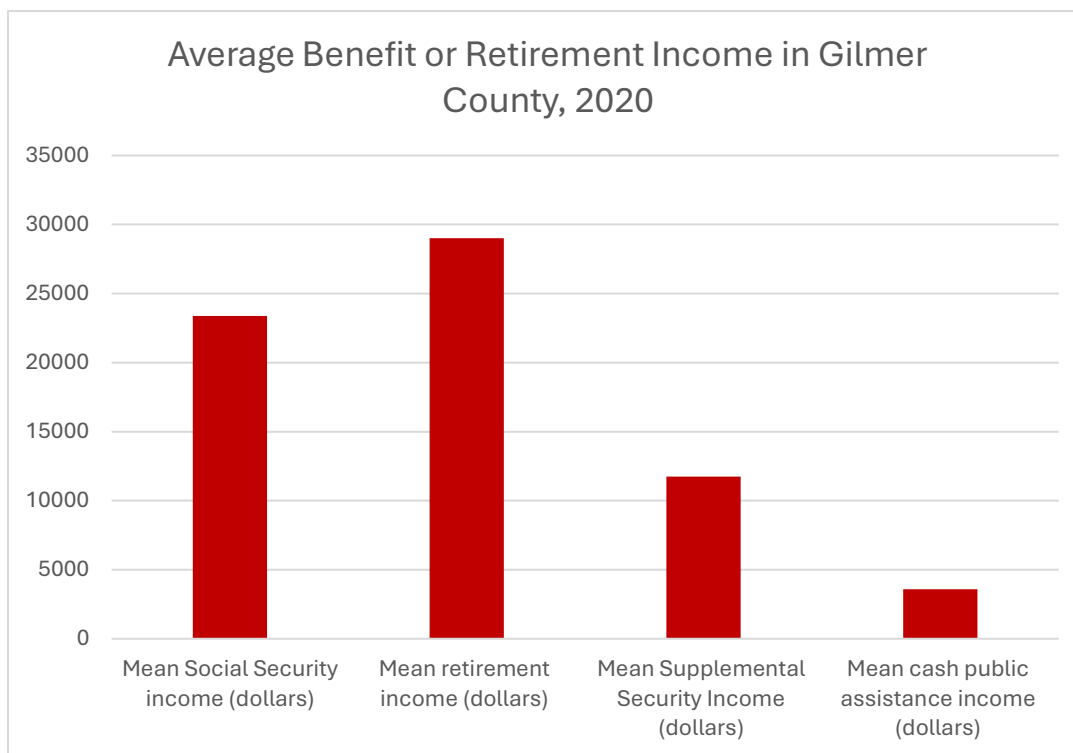
Source: "Table S1901: Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)."  
<http://data.census.gov>

### **Income Levels in Gilmer County, 2016-2020**

The household income level that is most common in Gilmer County is between \$75,000 and \$99,999 with 18% of the population. Other very common income levels are \$100,000 to \$149,999 at 17%, and between \$50,000 to \$74,999 at 16%. The highest (\$200,000+) and lowest (less than \$10,000) income levels each represented 5% of the population.

51% are in the midrange of \$50,000-\$149,000, almost evenly split.

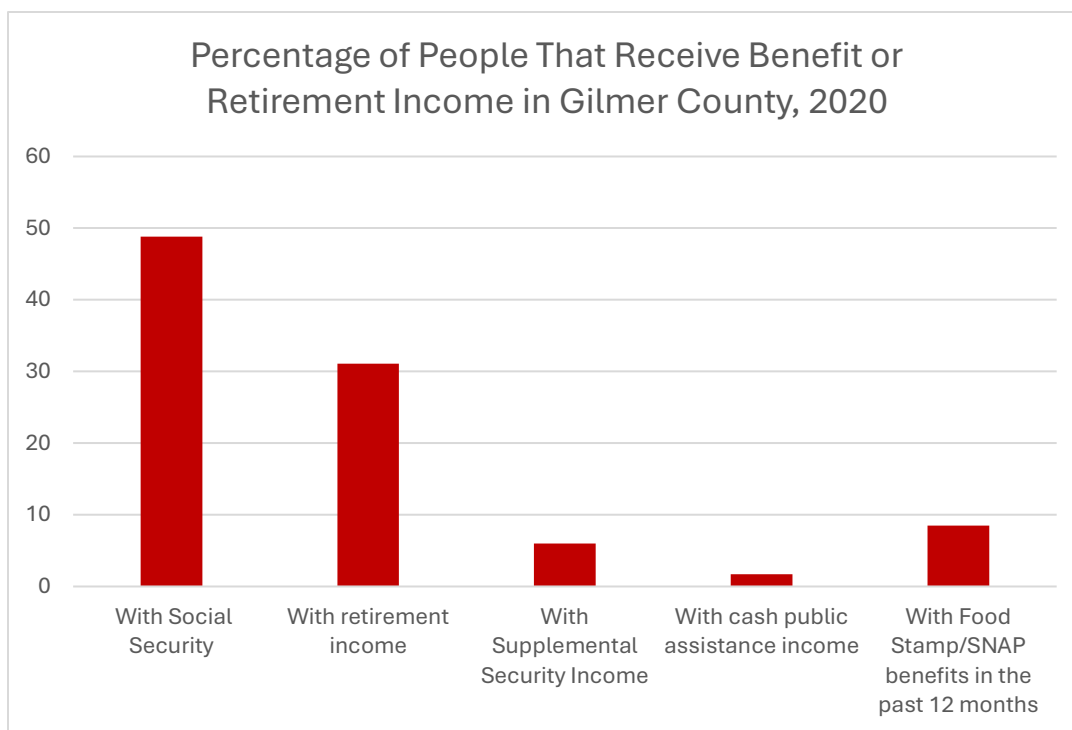
- 50k-74.9k (16%)
- 75k-99.9k (18%)
- 100k-149.9k (17%)



Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics." <http://data.census.gov>

### **Percentage of People That Receive Benefit**

The average social security and retirement incomes for Gilmer County are \$23,374, and \$29,002 respectively. This is much lower than the income for the county. This indicates that many residents rely on other forms of income in their retirement. Also, the average cash public assistance (\$3,588) indicates that it can only be used as a supplement to other forms of income.



Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics." <http://data.census.gov>

### **Percentage of People That Receive Benefit**

The most common form of benefit or retirement income in Gilmer County in 2020 was Social Security at 48.8%. The next most common is retirement income (31.1%). Supplemental Income, cash public assistance income, and food stamp/SNAP benefits were significantly rare at 6%, 1.7%, and 8.5% respectively.

## Poverty Rate

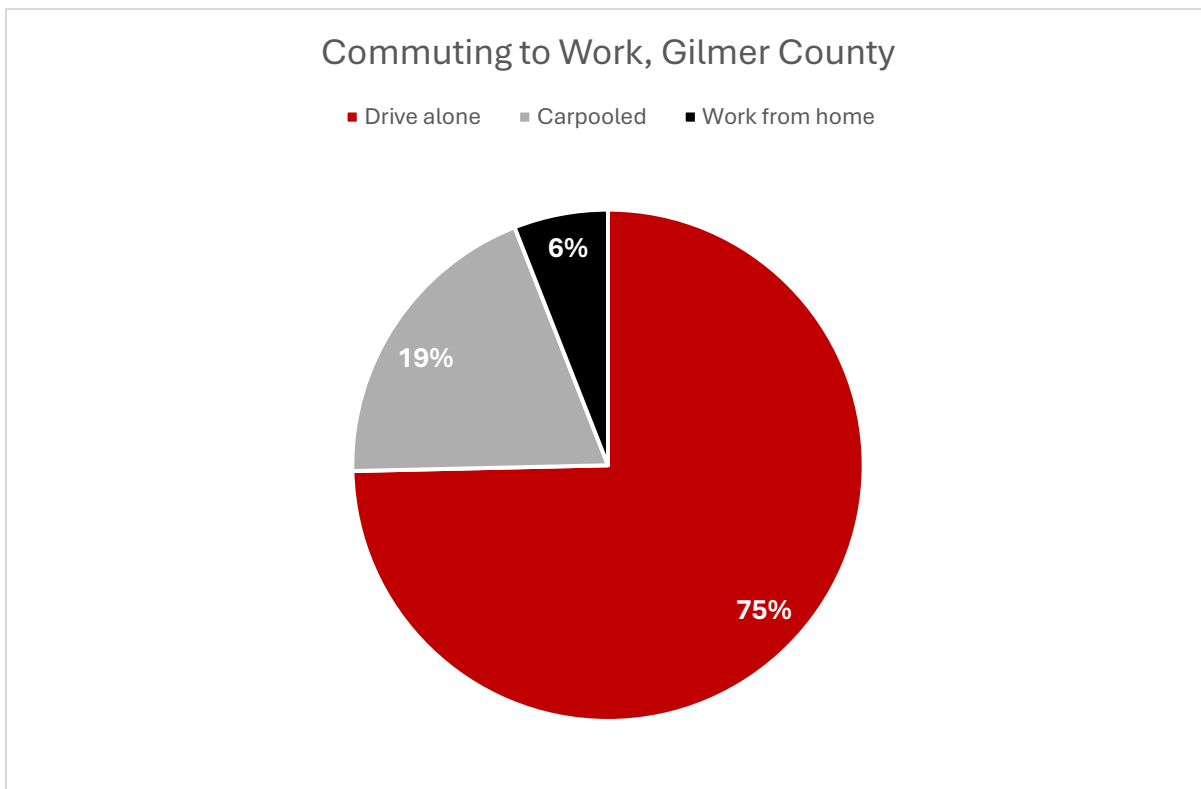
| Poverty Rate   |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Gilmer County  | 14.8% |
| East Ellijay   | 29.2% |
| Ellijay        | 22%   |
| Fannin County  | 11.8% |
| Pickens County | 13.5% |
| Dawson County  | 9.6%  |
| Murray County  | 13.1% |
| Georgia        | 12.7% |

Source: "Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months." <http://data.census.gov>

### Percentage of People Below Poverty Level in Gilmer County, Municipalities, Surrounding Counties, and Georgia, 2016-2020.

Gilmer County's poverty rate is 14.8%, which is higher than surrounding counties, and the State of Georgia. The poverty rates of East Ellijay and Ellijay are much higher than the county, the surrounding counties, and the state. For those under the age of 18, Gilmer County's poverty rate is 22.1%.

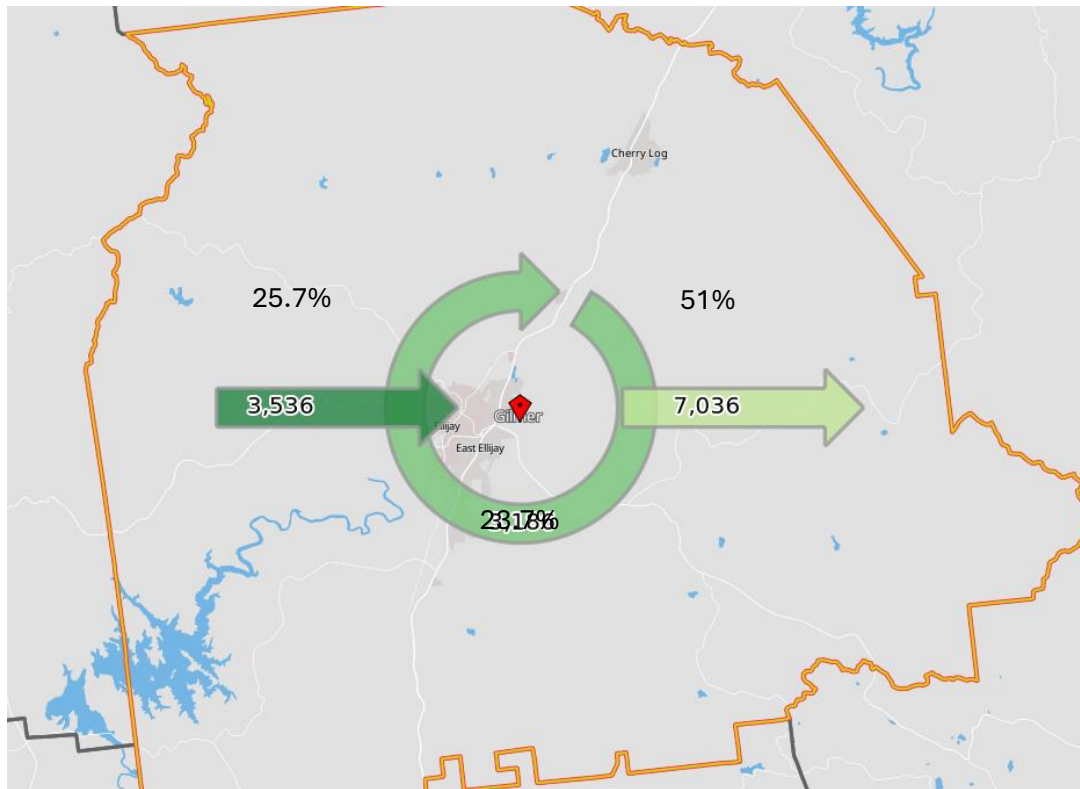
## Workforce Commuting



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. "Table B08006: Sex of Workers by Means of Transportation to Work." <http://data.census.gov>

### Commuting to Work, Gilmer County, 2020

Of Gilmer County's commuters, 75% drive alone, and 19% carpool. Six percent of Gilmer Countians work from home.



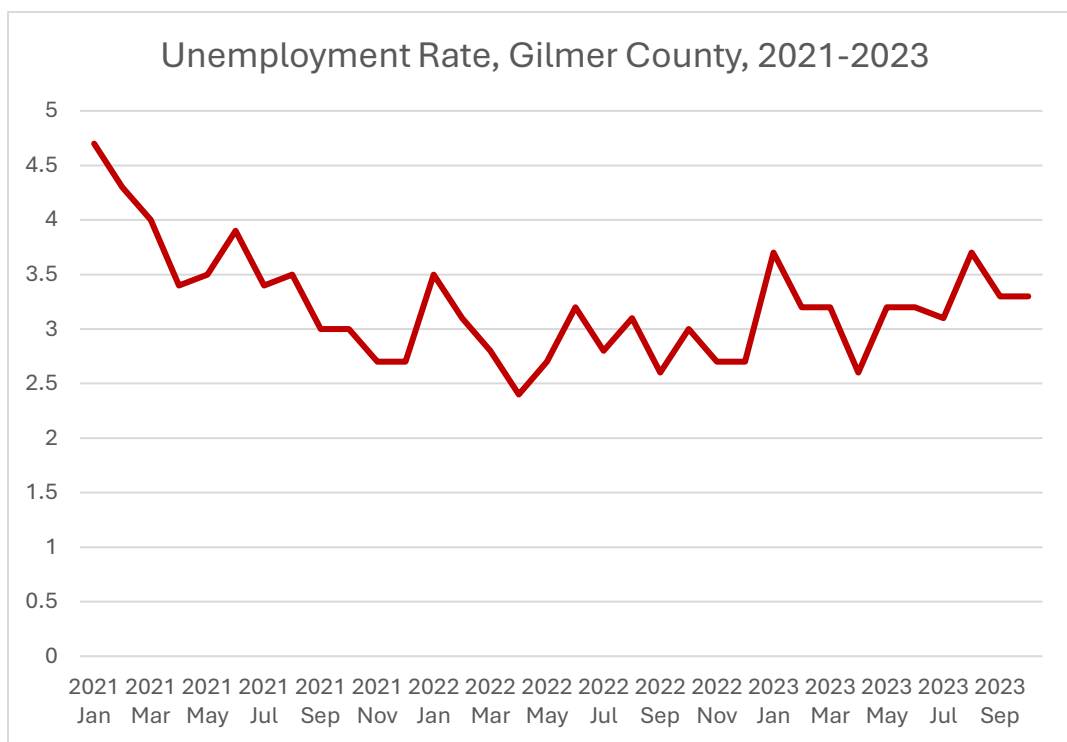
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD, On The Map, Gilmer County 2019.

<https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

### Gilmer County Workforce Inflow/outflow Patterns

- 6,722 workers are employed in Gilmer County.
- 3,186 workers live and work in Gilmer County.
- 3,536 workers live elsewhere and commute to Gilmer County.
- 7,036 workers live in Gilmer County but commute to other counties for work.

## Unemployment

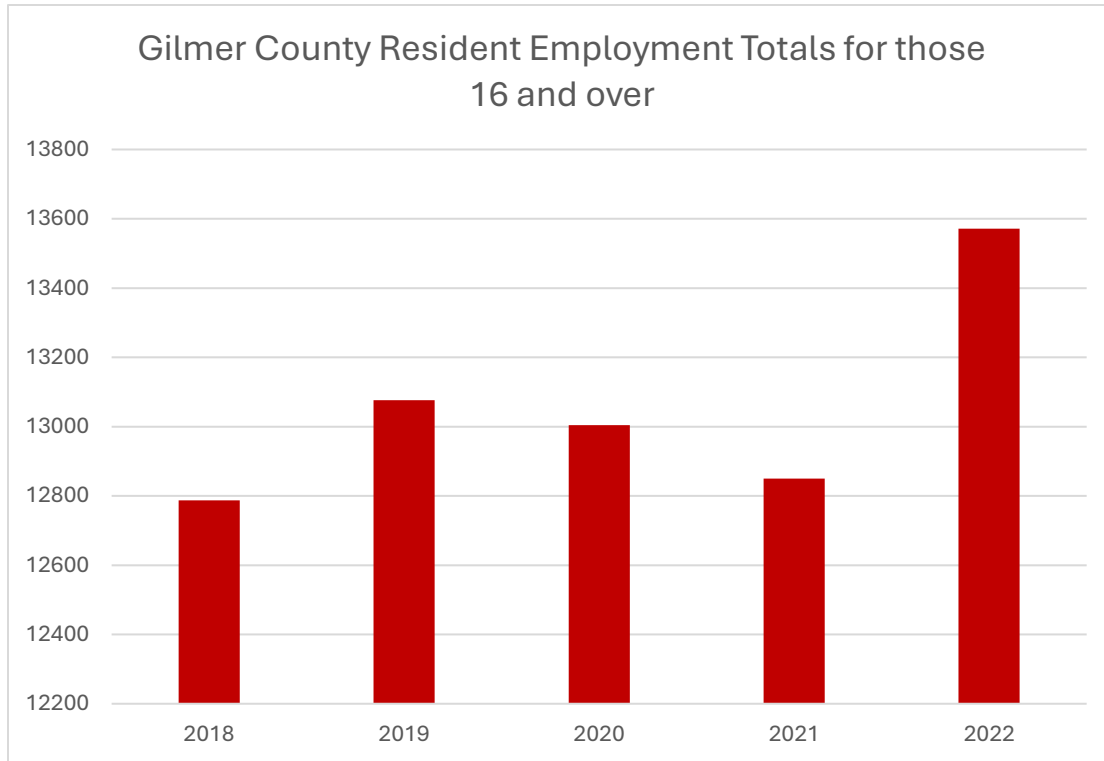


Source: Gilmer County, GA unemployment - U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.  
<https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LAUCN130150000000003>

### Average Yearly Unemployment Rate for Gilmer County, GA, 2012-2021

Gilmer County's unemployment rate has become more stable following the COVID-19 pandemic. Seasonal unemployment is still experienced but it has not reached the heights of 2020.

## Employment

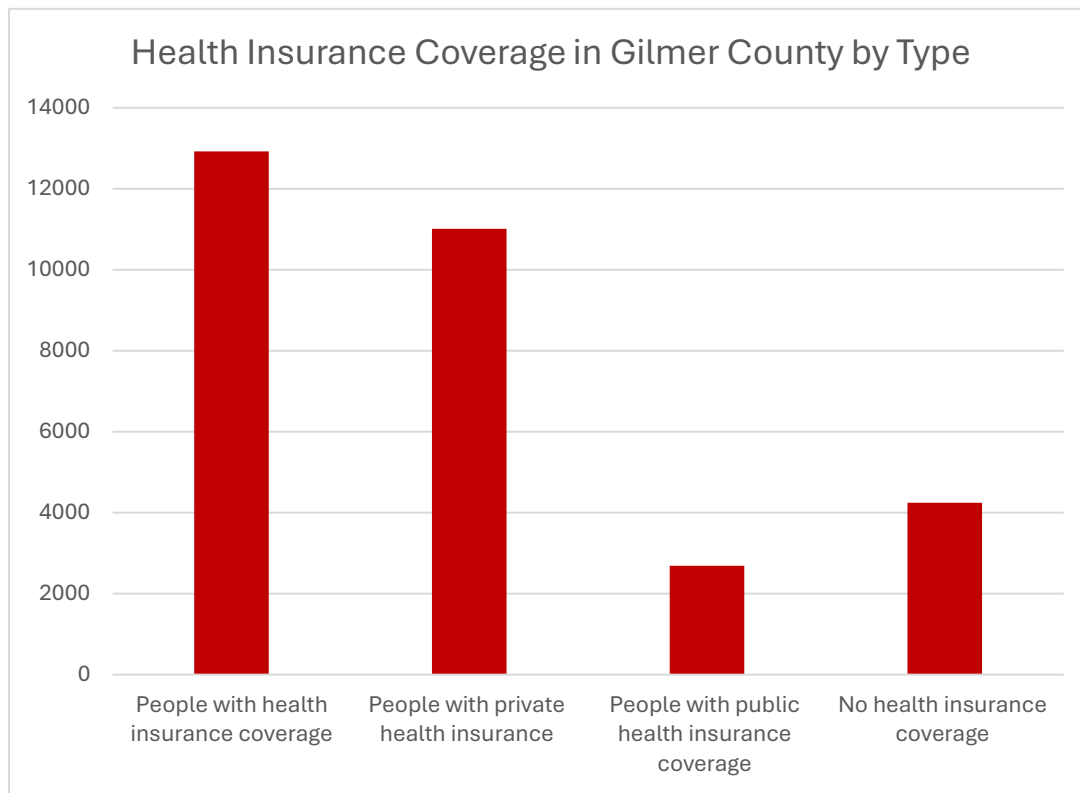


Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates. "Table S2401: Occupation by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over." <http://data.census.gov>

### **Gilmer County Resident Employment Totals**

Gilmer County employment grew from 2018-2019, but when the pandemic began in 2020, employment began to fall. This can be attributed to older individuals leaving the workforce loss of jobs due to the pandemic. That trend continued into 2021 as the pandemic continued, however, there was a large spike in employment in 2022 as the economy began to rebound from the pandemic effects.

## Health Insurance



Source: "Table B27011: Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type by Employment Status."  
<http://data.census.gov>

### Health insurance coverage in Gilmer County

Most Gilmer County residents have some form of health insurance. The most common type is private health insurance, which is typical for the United States.