



PLAN HAMILTON

OUR COMMUNITIES. OUR GROWTH.



7

WALDEN PLATEAU AREA PLAN

Fairmount
Falling Water
Montlake
Mountain Creek

Mowbray Mountain
Town of Signal Mountain
Town of Walden



Adopted by the Chattanooga-Hamilton County
Regional Planning Commission, Sept. 8, 2025.

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CHAPTER 1

AREA SUMMARY

- 1.1 PLAN SUMMARY
- 1.2 INTRODUCTION
- 1.3 WALDEN PLATEAU STUDY AREA
- 1.4 HISTORY OF THE WALDEN PLATEAU
- 1.5 PAST PLANS

1.1 PLAN SUMMARY

The Hamilton County Area Plans represent a comprehensive approach to managing growth and change in our diverse communities, recognizing both the distinct identities of each Area and the interconnectedness of our County. With a focus on the specific challenges and opportunities within Hamilton County's unincorporated Areas, each plan addresses critical factors that shape community life—land use, infrastructure, environmental preservation, housing, and economic resilience. Throughout the planning process, we engaged with community members to create a vision that reflects local priorities and builds on the character and strengths of each Area.

From the rural expanse and scenic beauty of Sale Creek and Birchwood to the residential communities of Georgetown and Apison, to the vibrant mountain villages and outdoor offerings of the Walden Plateau, or the waterfront community of Lakesite, all places where many families have multi-generation histories attached to the landscape, the plans recognize the local topographic, geologic, and infrastructure constraints found in these unique areas. This approach allows for tailored strategies that honor local heritage, rural qualities, and natural landscapes while accommodating sustainable growth.

The planning process began with in-depth research and analysis to understand the existing conditions, demographic trends, and economic drivers across Hamilton County. By examining land use, transportation networks, environmental features, and community facilities, we identified both opportunities and constraints in each area. This research also shed light on trends such as housing demands, population shifts, and economic patterns, allowing us to anticipate future needs and create a foundation for adaptable, forward-looking plans.

The visions articulated in these Plans emerged from collaborative dialogue with residents, local stakeholders, and County officials. Community workshops, surveys, and public meetings provided residents the opportunity to voice their aspirations, concerns, and ideas for the future of their neighborhoods. The resulting goals

and policies emphasize maintaining rural character, supporting local businesses, enhancing outdoor recreation, and fostering a sense of place in each community. Across the County, residents expressed a desire to balance growth with preservation—ensuring that new developments are thoughtfully integrated and contribute positively to the character of their communities.

To bring these visions to life, the Area Plans detail policies and actions centered on Community Character and Land Use, Natural Resources, Economic Health and Community, and Funding Mechanisms. These categories have been refined to address the County's evolving needs and offer the most impactful steps forward. These plans use tools like a Conceptual Land Use map that is illustrative and Place Types maps that define development patterns and set policies for future growth.

The implementation strategies focus on practical, collaborative actions that turn these plans into reality. Partnerships with local and regional organizations, support for small businesses, and investments in community facilities are vital to advancing these initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation will be critical to ensure the plans stay flexible, allowing policies to adapt as new challenges and opportunities emerge. Each Area Plan is intended as a living document, responsive to ongoing community input and changing needs over time.

As we move from planning to action, the success of this Plan relies on commitment, collaboration, and community engagement. Hamilton County is dedicated to working closely with residents, businesses, and local leaders to implement these policies in a way that fosters a resilient and inclusive future. By advancing these Plans with a shared sense of purpose, we can create communities that are not only livable and economically vibrant but also reflective of the unique character and heritage that residents value. Through strategic growth, environmental stewardship, and respect for community identity, the Comprehensive Plan will encourage each Area to thrive for generations to come.



1.2 INTRODUCTION

As Hamilton County's population grows, thoughtful planning is crucial to managing the upcoming changes while efficiently using limited resources. The goal is to create resilient communities where neighborhoods, commercial centers, parks, and natural spaces flourish, striking a balance between development and conservation.

To guide this growth, Comprehensive Plans are presented to local legislative bodies for adoption. These Plans become essential in shaping zoning, guiding private development, and influencing public infrastructure investments. They serve as a blueprint for determining where growth, redevelopment, and conservation should occur.

Once adopted, Plans equip Hamilton County leadership with the tools necessary to make strategic community investments in infrastructure, staff, and services, ensuring a livable community with sustained economic opportunities.

Community input is essential to shaping Hamilton County's long-term planning efforts, ensuring that residents and business owners help define the County's future. The 2016 Comprehensive Plan established a responsible land-use framework that prioritizes environmental preservation and community character. Complementing this, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) forecasts transportation needs and guides infrastructure investment.

Area Plans provide more specific localized guidance on development, zoning, infrastructure, and conservation. These plans use tools like Conceptual Recommendations Maps and Place Types maps to outline development patterns and set policies for future growth. They are shaped by prior planning, community feedback, and professional analysis. Key goals include creating vibrant, well-defined spaces and balancing growth while preserving each area's character and meeting future demands.

Although Area Plans do not regulate development or change zoning directly, they guide policy and decisions related to infrastructure, housing diversity, and commercial centers. They emphasize efficient investment in public services, transportation, and natural resource preservation, especially in rural areas. Constraints like limited sewer capacity, emergency services, and infrastructure demands shape policies to ensure sustainable growth while maintaining residents' quality of life.

The Walden Plateau / Area 7 Plan features five chapters which cover the following:



1.3 STUDY AREA: WALDEN PLATEAU / AREA 7

The entirety of Walden's Ridge is just over 70 miles long and marks the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau. The ridge is also an escarpment, and its dramatic and sudden change of elevation is highly visible from the Tennessee River valley near Chattanooga. The southern end of Walden's Ridge is known as Signal Mountain due to its use by Cherokee and Creek native American tribes, and later Civil War troops, to signal messages between it and Lookout Mountain to the south.

Several communities emerged on Walden's Ridge, from Fairmount to Summertown. The Town of Signal Mountain was incorporated in 1919 and grew around the Signal Mountain Inn—a resort established in 1913. The Area's only other town, Walden, grew out of the Summertown community and was incorporated in 1975. The rest of Walden's Ridge remains unincorporated.

The southern portion of the Walden's Ridge Plateau Area Plan (Area 7) is the focus of this plan and sits almost entirely atop Signal Mountain / Cumberland Plateau with Sequatchie County to the west and Soddy-Daisy to the east and TN SR 111 bordering to the north. The Plateau is bisected by the newly named North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park, preventing vehicular travel in the north south direction. **The towns of Walden and Signal Mountain are incorporated and therefore, not governed by this plan.** However, the only concentration of infrastructure, schools, emergency services, and commercial businesses are in these communities. These community hubs are the logical centers for growth over time as infrastructure allows and are important to the surrounding community. Limited points of access up and down the mountain, access to hospitals and acute care, limited utility capacity, potential for flooding of stormwater infrastructure, and limited availability of suitable soils and depth for on-site septic systems are all growth limiting factors for Area 7. A rural residential development pattern with generous setbacks from roads and greenspaces is desired by residents and most consistent with infrastructure limitations.

This Area Plan is intended to guide the sustainable growth of the community and inform decisions on future development and supporting infrastructure. An emphasis on “placemaking” is paramount to this plan because Walden's Ridge is a unique and beautiful place in Hamilton County and development sensitive to its environment will aid in preserving its unique sense of place. Walden Plateau in particular is focused on preserving its rural character and maintaining its unique identity while also improving the characteristics that make it special such as their trail systems, large-lot single-family homes, and rural character.

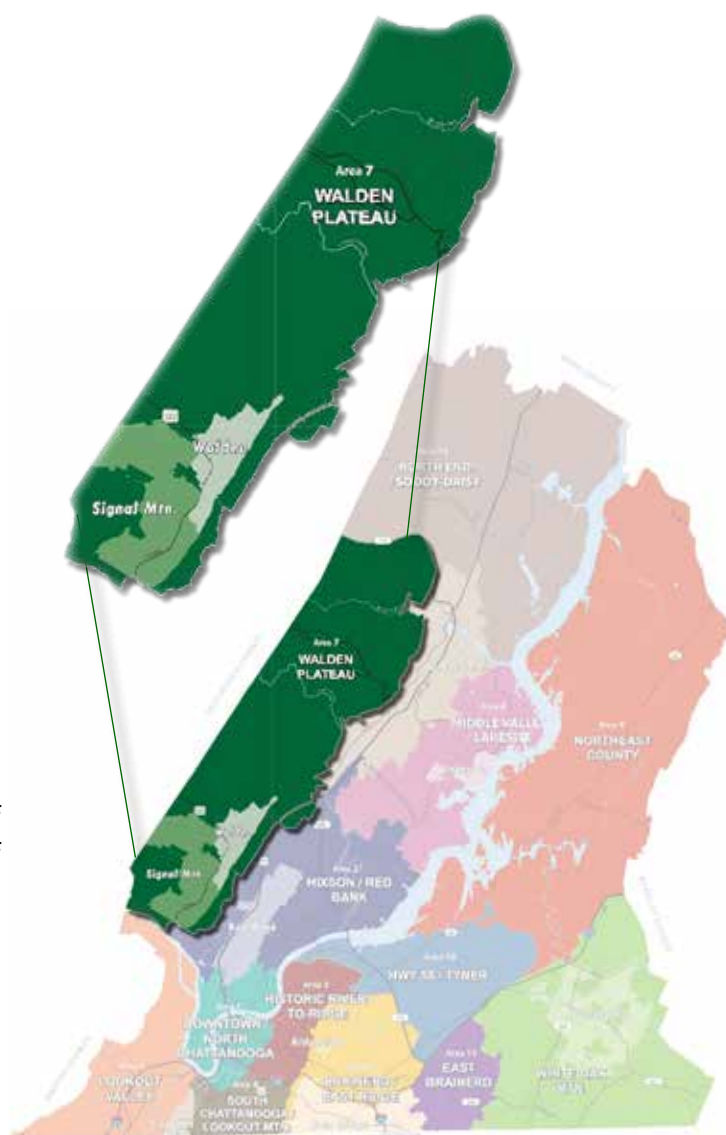


Figure 1.1: Walden Plateau Area 7 as a part of Hamilton County study Area



Walden Plateau (Area 7) Map

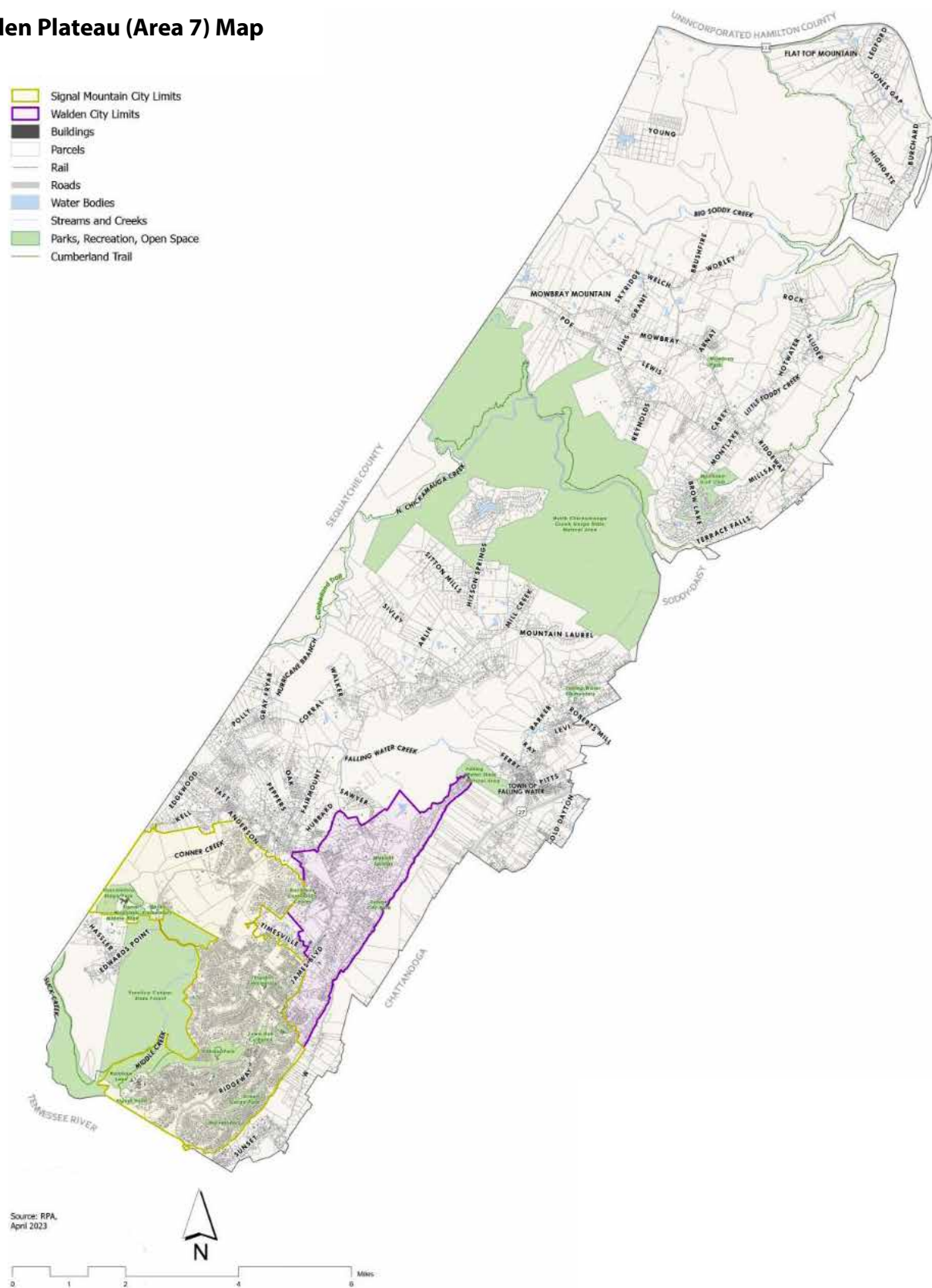


Figure 1.2: Walden Plateau (Area 7) Map



1.4 HISTORY OF THE WALDEN PLATEAU

The Walden Plateau, boasts a rich history intertwined with the cultural and natural heritage of the region with a prominent geographical feature. Located on the Cumberland Plateau, it offers stunning vistas, rugged terrain, and a unique ecosystem. Historically, this plateau has been a home to indigenous peoples, early settlers, and pioneers who traversed its landscape, seeking refuge and resources. The Area is also noted for its role in the development of local industries, such as coal mining and timber, which have shaped the economic and social fabric of the region. The Walden Plateau is also bisected from north to south travel by the North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Natural Area. Area 7 is also home to two of the smaller municipalities in Hamilton County including the Towns of Signal Mountain and Walden. The brief history discussed in this plan is focused on how the unique access to the plateau shaped the development pattern seen today.

THE TURNPIKE (US-127)

Early development on the Walden Plateau can be attributed to two different Tennessee legislations. The first in 1840 was approved but not fully constructed leading to a second legislation in 1848 that authorized a second turnpike over the same route (US-127 / Anderson Pike) from Sequatchie Valley over Walden Plateau into the north bank of the City of Chattanooga. Four years later, the road was operational and by 1854 the ownership rights of land adjacent to the turnpike were sold to James Conner, Hamilton County Sheriff who built a toll house and home at the intersection of Fairmount Road and Anderson Pike (pictured to the right).



The Toll House
Source: Waymark

THE W ROAD

From Chattanooga, there a few ways to access Walden's Ridge, US-127 (Signal Mountain Road) as mentioned above or another, narrower road known as the "W Road". Before the forced removal of the Cherokee from the Chattanooga Area, Native Americans created a general path up the ridge for hunting. Even after white settlers began to colonize this Area, few roads existed and conditions were unfavorable for travelers. This road which was previously known as Rogers Gap Road and had a V shape at the top with a steeper slope than what exists today. A July 19, 1892 *Chattanooga Times* article announced that "A new road up Walden's Ridge has been surveyed, the County stockade has been built, and it is thought work will commence on it within a fortnight". This road was created in order to provide quicker access than the main highway down into the valley and allowed for the rural lifestyle to remain in spite of the development occurring around the main highway.



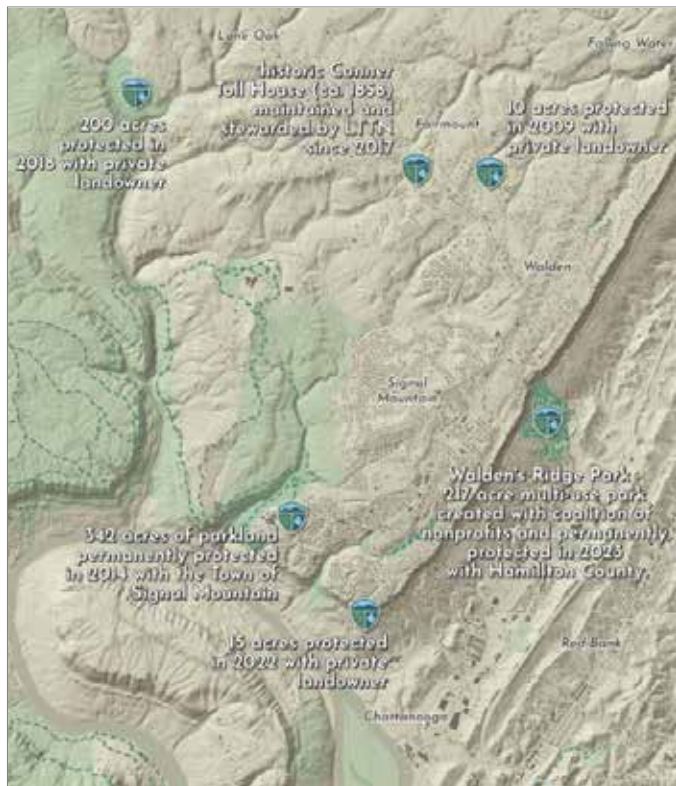
The W Road Before Cars (1907)
Source: Chattanooga History





Town of Walden

Source: Town of Walden, TN



Conservation Areas on Signal Mountain

Source: TN Land Trust

INCORPORATION OF WALDEN & SIGNAL MOUNTAIN

Incorporated in 1919, the town of Signal Mountain, Tennessee offers panoramic view of the Tennessee Valley below. This picturesque community was named after the Signal Point from which Native Americans once signaled warnings. It was also used by Union troops during the Civil War as a relay station and observation Area, and was the only location in Chattanooga where the Union had high ground prior to the siege of the city in 1863. Nearby, the Town of Walden was incorporated in 1975, adding its own unique charm to the plateau. Named after the influential Walden family, this quaint town blends historic roots with modern-day serenity, where forests and rolling landscapes create a retreat from the bustle of city life. This Town first saw white settlers when disease spread through the city of Chattanooga and people sought higher elevations. Both towns, while distinct in their histories, share a commitment to preserving the natural beauty and close-knit community spirit that define the Cumberland Plateau region. These unique towns, while incorporated, largely influence the unincorporated Areas of the Walden Plateau.

CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC LAND

The Walden Plateau has nearly 2,000 acres of protected land in conservation. The Land Trust for Tennessee (LTTN) has protected over 800 acres including public parks, private properties protected in coordination with their landowners, to properties owned and maintained by the Land Trust for Tennessee (Rainbow Lake, Walden's Ridge Park, Conner Toll House). Each of the projects is under the obligation of perpetual stewardship by the LTTN. The LTTN is also serving on the Cumberland Trail task force to assist in completing the 300-mile long trail that passes through this Area. Additionally, the North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park was officially named a state park in September of 2024 which bisects the plateau preventing north south vehicular travel taking up over 1,000 additional acres of land Area on the Ridge.



1.5 PAST PLANS

WALDEN'S RIDGE PLATEAU AREA PLAN (1997)

Led by the RPA, the Walden's Ridge Plateau Area Plan represented a collaborative effort among local elected officials of Hamilton County, the Town of Signal Mountain, and the Town of Walden to address growth and other related issues that faced the plateau. The plan was aimed at guiding the location of new development by identifying the most appropriate locations for residential and commercial developments and addresses the impact on the natural landscape with sections for Development Policy, Development Standards, Services/Capital Improvements Policy, and Capital Expenditures. The plan addressed 3 main concerns:

1. Orderly and Cohesive Development Pattern

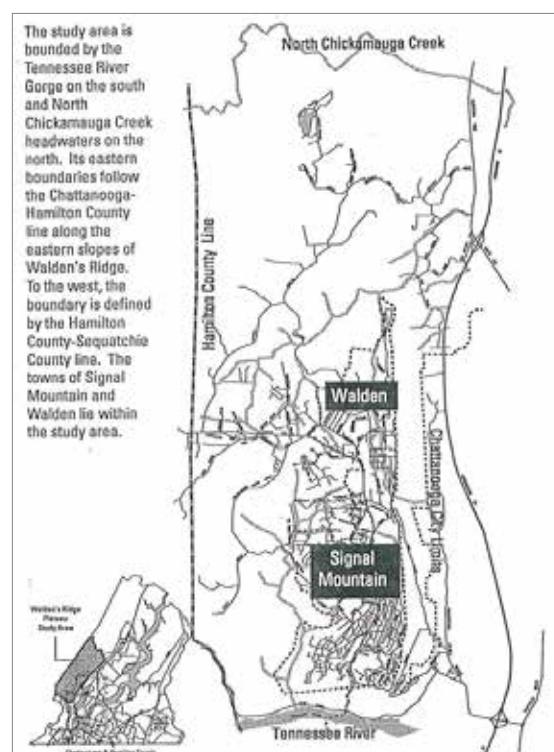
"Recent growth trends are producing development trends that are contrary to the overall vision for the Area. These trends include strip commercial development, inconsistent quality of development (lack of landscaping, integrity of design, etc.), and sporadic apartment development."

2. Natural Landscapes/Open Spaces

"Single-family subdivisions are being developed in a manner that is insensitive to natural landscape features, leaving little to no remaining open space for the enjoyment of residents."

3. Services

"Without planned improvements to services such as road improvements, fire services, and commercial facilities, growth can cause an overall reduction in the accessibility and quality of these resources."



Original Walden Plateau Study Area

Source: RPA

AREA 7 PLANNING EFFORTS (2021-2022)

The Area 7 Plan began as an independent effort spearheaded by the RPA's consultant, Common Ground Design, with a focus on addressing the unique needs and characteristics of the Walden Plateau region. Initially, the intent was to craft a tailored plan for this Area, however, planning for the entire unincorporated portions of Hamilton County gained momentum. Integrating the Area 7 Plan into the larger Countywide Unincorporated Plan Hamilton effort became part of the cohesive and strategic approach.

The consultant's work, combined with extensive community involvement, generated a wealth of information specific to the Walden Plateau. Rather than letting these insights remain isolated, they were embedded into the broader framework of Plan Hamilton. This approach ensures that the unique identity and challenges of the Walden Plateau are fully addressed, creating a well-rounded and inclusive plan.





CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

- 2.1 COMMUNITY SUMMARY
- 2.2 COMMUNITY PROFILE
- 2.3 DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMIC TRENDS
- 2.4 COMMUNITY THEMES
- 2.5 PLAN ANALYSIS

2.1 COMMUNITY SUMMARY

Area 7 sits almost entirely atop Signal Mountain on the Walden / Cumberland Plateau bordering Marion and Sequatchie Counties to the west and Soddy Daisy to the east. While the towns of Walden and Signal Mountain are not governed by this plan, the only concentration of infrastructure, schools, emergency services, and commercial businesses are in these communities. These community hubs are the logical centers for growth over time as infrastructure allows. Limited points of access up and down the mountain, the North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park bisecting the plateau, access to hospitals and acute care, limited utility capacity, stormwater runoff, and limited availability of suitable soils and depth for on-site septic systems are all factors that limit growth for Area 7. A rural residential development pattern with generous setbacks from roads and green spaces is desired by residents and most consistent with infrastructure limitations.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- » Community emphasis on the environment and mountain lifestyle.
- » High quality of life with an abundance of active and passive recreational opportunities.
- » High performing schools with well supported extracurricular activities make this community a popular Area to live.
- » Strong sense of community with emphasis on religious and philanthropic organizations, families, and social interaction.

REGIONAL FACILITIES AND ASSETS

Parks:

The Area features large park holdings including those with historical significance such as Signal Point, managed by the National Park Service, as well as the McCoy House/Althaus Park. Other parks include:

- » Cumberland Trail State Park
- » Falling Water State Park
- » North Chickamauga Gorge State Park
- » Prentice Cooper State Park
- » Shackleford Ridge Park
- » Walden's Ridge State Park



Walden's Ridge Park
Source: Travel Southeast TN



PRIMARY CONSTRAINTS

Topography:

- » Mountain terrain results in limited points of access. Due to topography, roads from the plateau to the valley are steep and curvy.
- » Terrain results in limited road network capabilities and creates greater service distance for first responders during extreme weather events and fire emergencies.
 - The shallow rocky soil structure common in this Area is not suitable for septic systems.
 - Soil conditions result in rapid run-off with low infiltration and high potential for flooding after severe storms.
- » Steep slopes from the plateau to the valley floor.
- » North Chickamauga Creek bisects the plateau preventing north/south vehicle connectivity.



The W Road

Source: Chattanooga Times Free Press

Land Availability:

- » Many of the largest tracts of land are in public domain/conservation.

Utility Capacity:

- » Limited availability and capacity for centralized sewage infrastructure.



North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park

Source: TN State Parks

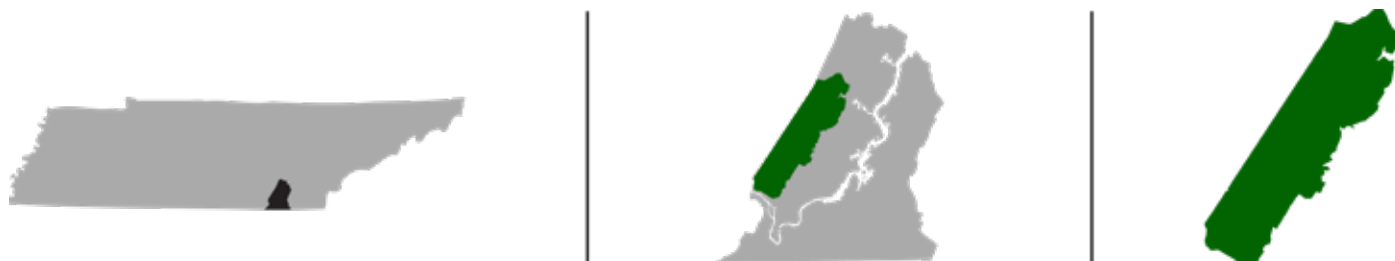


Figure 2.1: Walden Plateau Area Context



2.2 COMMUNITY PROFILE



70%

of residents are influenced by access to Parks, Greenways, and Open Space when choosing Walden Plateau to live.



42%

Master's Degree +

40%

Bachelor's Degree

12%

Some College

Source: ACS



70%

Believe that large-lot single-family homes should be encouraged in Area 7.

76%



Believe that preservation of farmland, rural character, wooded & riparian Areas should be priorities.



53%

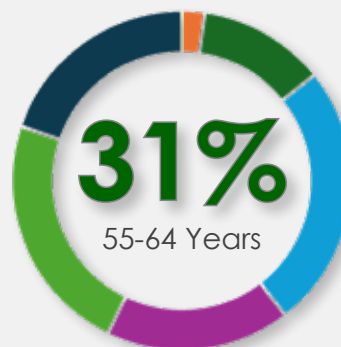
Lived in Hamilton County for 20+ Years

18%

Lived in Hamilton County for 5-19 Years

29%

Lived in Hamilton County for 0-4 Years



■ <15 Years ■ 15-24 Years ■ 25-34 Years ■ 35-44 Years
■ 45-54 Years ■ 55-64 Years ■ 65 or Over

20%

65 or Over

18%

35-44 Years

Source: ACS



2.3 DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMIC TRENDS

DEMOGRAPHICS OVERVIEW

Hamilton County Census data reveals a balanced distribution across age groups, with a notable presence of young families (30-34 Years), working professionals (25-29 Years), and retirees (60-69 Years). The County upholds a high level of educational attainment and a skilled workforce, reflecting the Area’s commitment to quality education and lifelong learning. In comparison to the state of Tennessee as a whole, Hamilton County has a higher median income, advanced education background, higher employment rate, lower poverty rates, and lower commute times. These factors continue to contribute to growth in Hamilton County in both the incorporated and unincorporated Areas.

GROWTH TRENDS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Walden Plateau has experienced steady population growth and economic development over the past decade, driven by strategic investments in infrastructure, education, and residential development. Future prospects remain positive, with planned developments emphasizing smart growth principles that enhance connectivity, sustainability, and quality of life for residents. By prioritizing the preservation of the region’s distinctive character and promoting responsible development, ongoing efforts aim to attract new businesses and support entrepreneurial ventures that align with the community’s vision, further diversifying the economic base and creating new growth opportunities. To anticipate these needs, the RPA engaged RCLCO to complete a detailed market analysis to assess market opportunities for housing needs over the next 20 years.

HAMILTON COUNTY CENSUS DATA

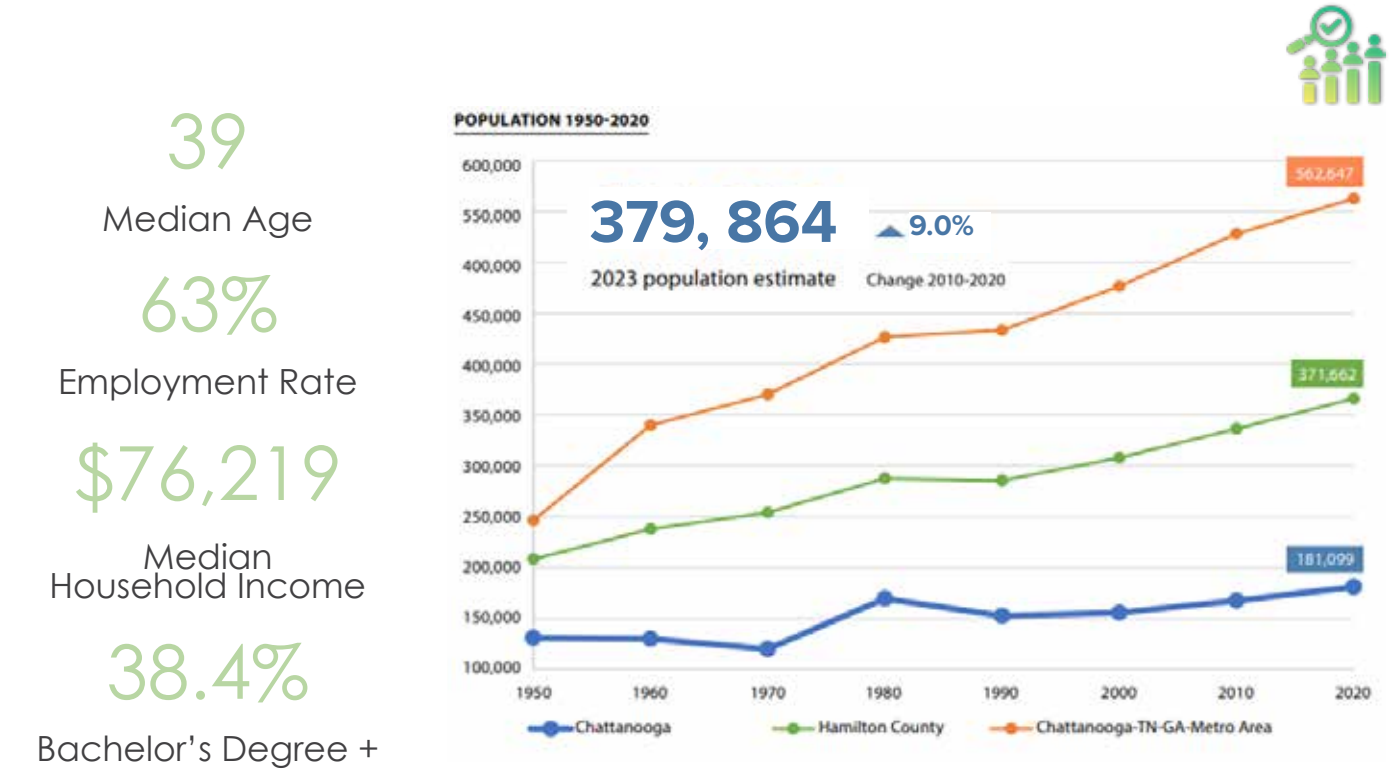


Figure 2.2: Hamilton County Census Data



ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

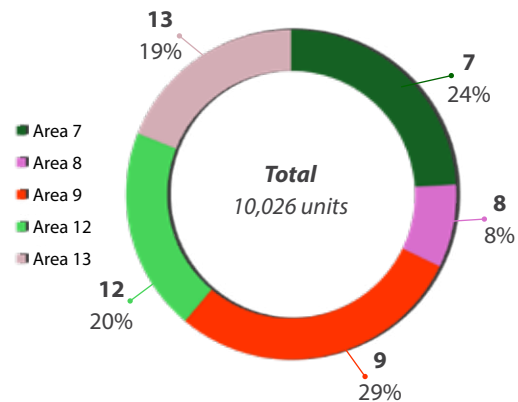
The economy of Walden Plateau is supported by a mix of traditional industries and emerging sectors. Key economic drivers include agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing. Tourism thrives on the region's natural beauty, historical sites, and recreational opportunities, attracting visitors year-round and supporting numerous local businesses. Efforts to maintain the Area's unique character are integral to economic strategies, ensuring that growth aligns with the community's values and environmental stewardship. The southern-most portion of Area 7 have among the most affluent suburban communities in Tennessee, including Signal Mountain, where the average household income has approached \$200,000. Signal Mountain and Walden Plateau are fairly well-developed with the central portion of Area 7 is seeing extensive new housing development, enhancing market opportunities for commercial businesses in the central portion of the Area. Utilizing the findings in the RCLCO market analysis, a forward-looking demand was projected across residential and non-residential product types so that we can understand how these patterns will impact growth in unincorporated Hamilton County.

The following growth is anticipated in Area 7 over the next 20 years which is predominantly focused on residential growth and supporting commercial services. This Area is projected to have approximately 24% of the detached single-family growth in the unincorporated County.

Drivers of future single-family residential growth:

- » High quality of schools with capacity for growth
- » High median income and quality of services
- » Desirable natural setting and recreational opportunities
- » Low crime
- » Moderate summer temperatures

Chart 1: Single- Family (Detached) Projections



2.4 COMMUNITY THEMES

The Plan Analysis section provides a detailed examination of the current conditions, opportunities, and challenges within each Area, offering insights that will guide strategic decision-making and inform the implementation of targeted initiatives. Grounded in the four Community Themes - Land Use and Development Character, Resiliency, Transportation and Mobility, and Community Facilities, this analysis establishes a comprehensive framework that evaluates each Area's unique characteristics. This section includes the following categories:

2.4.1 Land Use and Development Character

Zoning:

Examination of land use patterns, existing zoning district designations to ensure that development harmonizes with the Area's unique geological features.

Land Use:

Examination of existing land use patterns and street patterns in combination with existing zoning.

Building Permits:

Evaluates the current state and number of permits being issued within the Area and its impact on the surrounding community.

Development on Walden Plateau:

Overall analysis of how development in general is impacting or influencing the community and how it's changed its character.

2.4.2 Resiliency

Natural Resources:

Evaluation of natural assets including parks, recreation, open spaces, slopes, waterways, aiming to balance preservation with development.

Infrastructure:

Evaluation of the existing adequacy of public utilities, including sanitary sewer, and water.

2.4.3 Transportation & Mobility

Transportation:

This section evaluates the existing transportation infrastructure, including roadways, pedestrian and cycling paths. It also considers future development needs and the potential impacts of anticipated growth.

2.4.4 Community Facilities

Schools and Major Institutions:

Examination of the role of these institutions in fostering learning and innovation while assessing their current state and future needs in the context of regional growth and development.

City, County, State/Land or Property:

Examination of ownership patterns and its impact on land management and development potential.

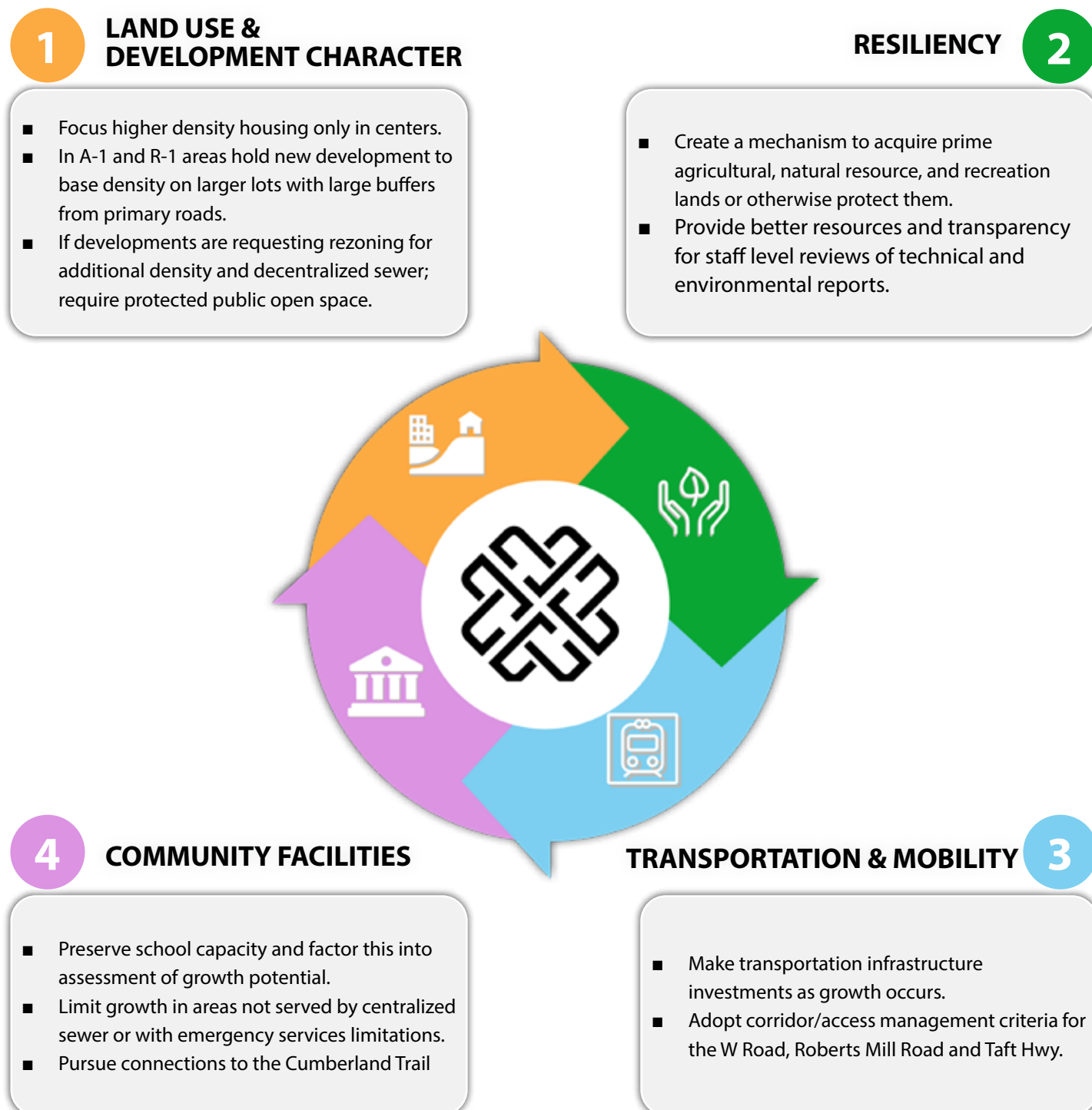
Emergency Services:

Examination of emergency response capabilities, encompassing fire, police, medical, and evacuation plans.



2.5 PLAN ANALYSIS

In general, the community feedback phase was focused on identifying metrics for success based on critical outcomes. The desired outcomes have been organized into a framework of Community Themes or Drivers to provide structure to the plan analysis, recommendations, and implementation solutions. Identifying these themes and utilizing them as a framework for organizing each Area Plan will provide community leaders with a set of filters for future strategic, policy, and project based decisions. The following graphic identifies the 4 Community Themes and the public consensus that framed the analysis, goals, and policies within Area 7.



2.5.1 CURRENT LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

The Land Use and Development Character analysis examines zoning regulations, land use, permitting history, and development patterns and how these factors influence both conservation efforts and the scope for future growth. The plateau's steep terrain, forested Areas, and ecological sensitivity create distinct land management challenges that have shaped current land use decisions. The analysis provides a detailed assessment of how the plateau's physical characteristics impact development, offering insights into the strategies needed to balance environmental preservation with strategic growth.

LAND USE

Area 7 is primarily categorized as residential, with 35.24% (refer to Figure 2.3) of the land used for some type of residential purpose. Land devoted to commercial or industrial uses is under 3%, and institutional uses (such as schools or religious facilities) are under 1%, indicating very little non-residential activity in comparison. Of the 52,074 acres in the Area, approximately 36% is vacant which may be undeveloped property, wooded land, empty lots or otherwise unimproved tracts of land with an additional 8,844.06 acres categorized as natural resource use, including agriculture.

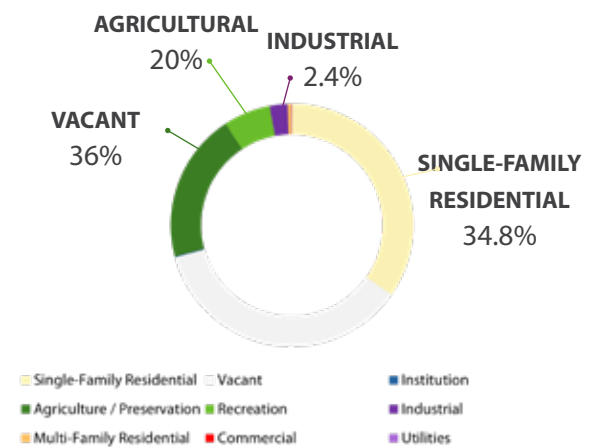
The primary land use in the unincorporated Areas of Walden's Ridge is single-family residential which exists in a variety of contexts, from large farms to conventional subdivisions, the latter becoming the predominant pattern of development. Commercial uses are primarily concentrated along Taft Highway in several clusters near intersections with Hollister Road and Corral Road, however, there are some sporadic non-residential uses between these clusters such as Montlake and Jones Gap, ensuring that commercial activity supports rather than dominates the landscape. These commercial nodes provide essential services to residents while maintaining the overall rural and residential character of the region.

This land use pattern highlights the plateau communities' commitment to preserving its rural pattern while accommodating gradual growth and development. By maintaining a clear distinction between residential, commercial, and natural resource Areas, Walden's Ridge balances the needs of its residents with the desire to protect its unique environmental and cultural assets.



Source: RPA

Chart 3: Percentages of Existing Land Use



Existing Land Use Map

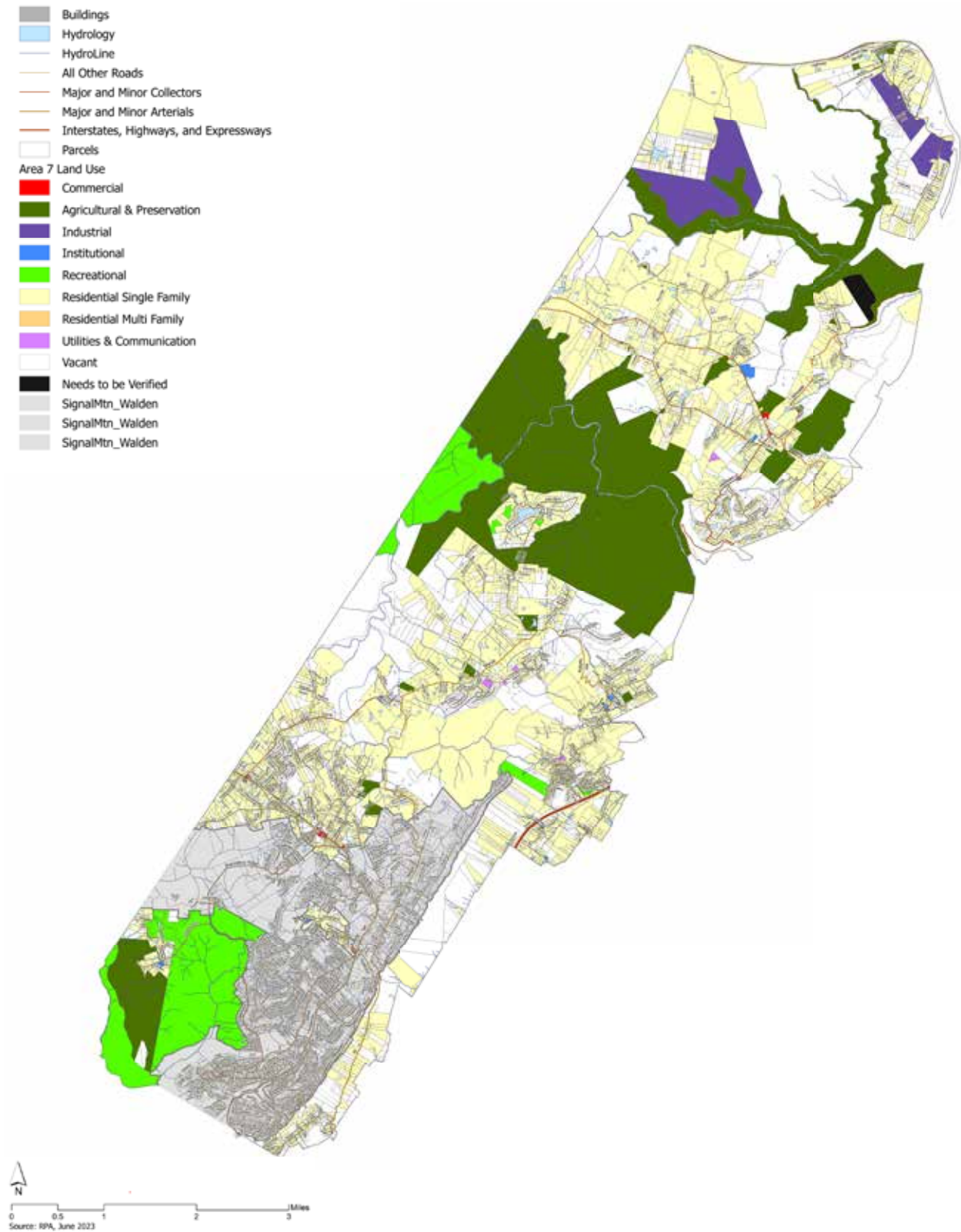


Figure 2.3: Existing Land Use Map (2023)



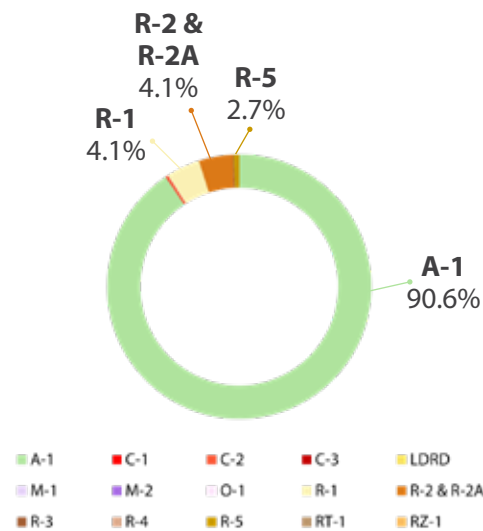
ZONING

Most properties in the unincorporated Areas are zoned A-1 (refer to Figure 2.4), which permits agricultural uses and single-family residential development with a maximum density of two dwelling units per acre. This zoning classification preserves the rural character and open spaces that define much of the region, ensuring that agricultural activities and low-density housing remain predominant. The second most common zoning is R-1, which permits single-family residential development at a base density of two dwelling units per acre for traditional septic systems.

North of Walden’s town limits, in an Area known as Fairmount and a few other sporadic locations, properties are zoned R-2 and R-2A. This designation permits single-family and two-family dwellings, including manufactured homes. The R-2A zoning accommodates a variety of housing needs and promotes a more diverse community structure, providing options for different family sizes and economic levels.

Commercial activity is primarily concentrated in Areas with C-2 zoning, which is limited to portions of Taft Highway, Fairmount Road, and Sawyer Road. The C-2 commercial zoning supports a wide variety of commercial and non-residential uses, contributing to the economic vitality of the region. These Areas are not just hubs for businesses but also permit single-family dwellings, including manufactured homes.

Chart 2: Percentages of Existing Zoning



Existing Zoning Map

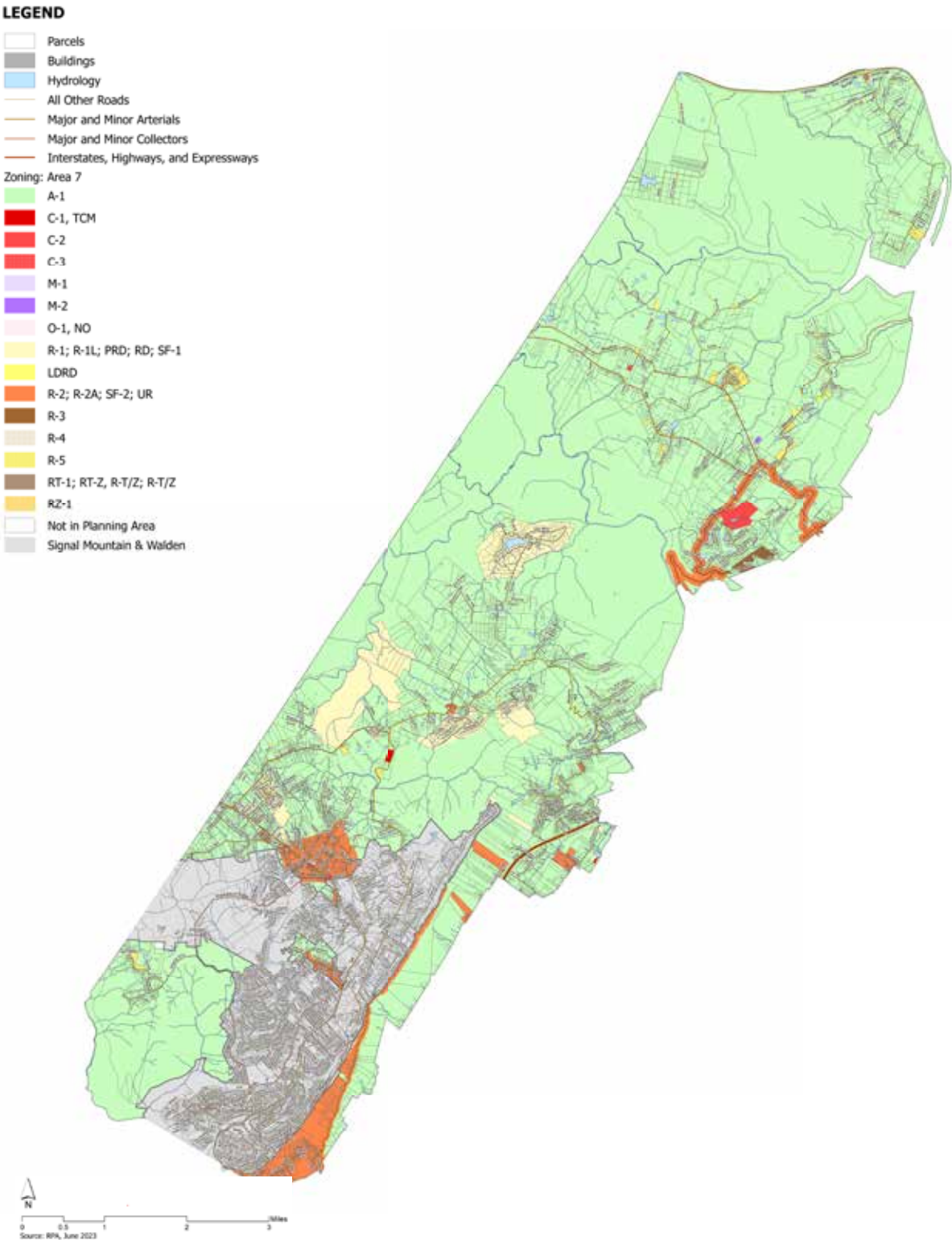


Figure 2.4: Existing Zoning Map (2023)



BUILDING PERMITS & DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Over the past decade, Walden’s Plateau has witnessed fluctuations influenced by economic conditions, population growth, and shifting residential and commercial demands. As urbanization extends its reach, the plateau has experienced increased activity in both new construction and renovation projects. Analyzing these trends offers valuable insights into the growth patterns, regulatory impacts, and future development prospects, highlighting the dynamic nature of Walden’s Plateau’s built environment.

Figure 2.3 reveals that the majority of permits issued have been for single-family homes, which aligns with the existing and desired character of the community. The preference for single-family homes is anticipated to continue, as detailed in Chapter 2.3. The emphasis on low-density housing, ample green spaces, and community-centered amenities reflects a deliberate effort to sustain the Area’s unique charm.

Following single-family residential permits, the “Other” classification represents the second-highest category for permit issuance as identified in Table 2. This activity reflects the Area’s evolving economic condition as well as its desire to be primarily residential. There

were no new commercial permits issued in the 10 year period (2013-2023).

The analysis of building permit trends also highlights how economic and demographic shifts have shaped development. Population growth, driven by the Area’s desirability and quality of life, has further fueled demand for housing and services, prompting a balanced approach to development that meets diverse needs.

Development on Walden Plateau is significantly shaped by its rural character, the local regulations, and community input which ensures that new development align with the community’s values. The Area’s appeal lies in its natural beauty, expansive landscapes, and slower pace of life, attracting residents who prioritize tranquility and a strong sense of community.

Chart 4: Permits by Area in Unincorporated vs. Incorporated Hamilton County.



Table 1: Permit Classification Comparison					
Permit Classification	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	Area 12	Area 13
Commercial / Office	-	6	19	49	1
Commercial Solar	-	1	2	1	-
Hotel, Motel, Tourist Cabin	-	-	1	1	-
Industrial	-	1	-	3	1
Multi-Family/ Mixed Residential	-	10	-	29	3
Other Permits*	592	1,005	1,898	1,983	516
Public Works / Utilities	-	-	-	1	2
Single Family Residential	879	1,063	2,883	2,339	876
Total (Per Area)	1,471	2,086	4,803	4,406	1,399
Total (Unincorporated County)	14,165				
■ The “Other” Permit Classification Category Includes: Demolition permits, Residential Additions & Alterations, Religious Institutions, Parking Garages, Hospitals, and Non-Residential Additions & Alterations.					
■ Permit Classifications shown are reflective of the anticipated growth pattern in Hamilton County and the categories selected in the Economic Analysis projections in the RCLCO study.					



Building Permits Map (2013-2023)

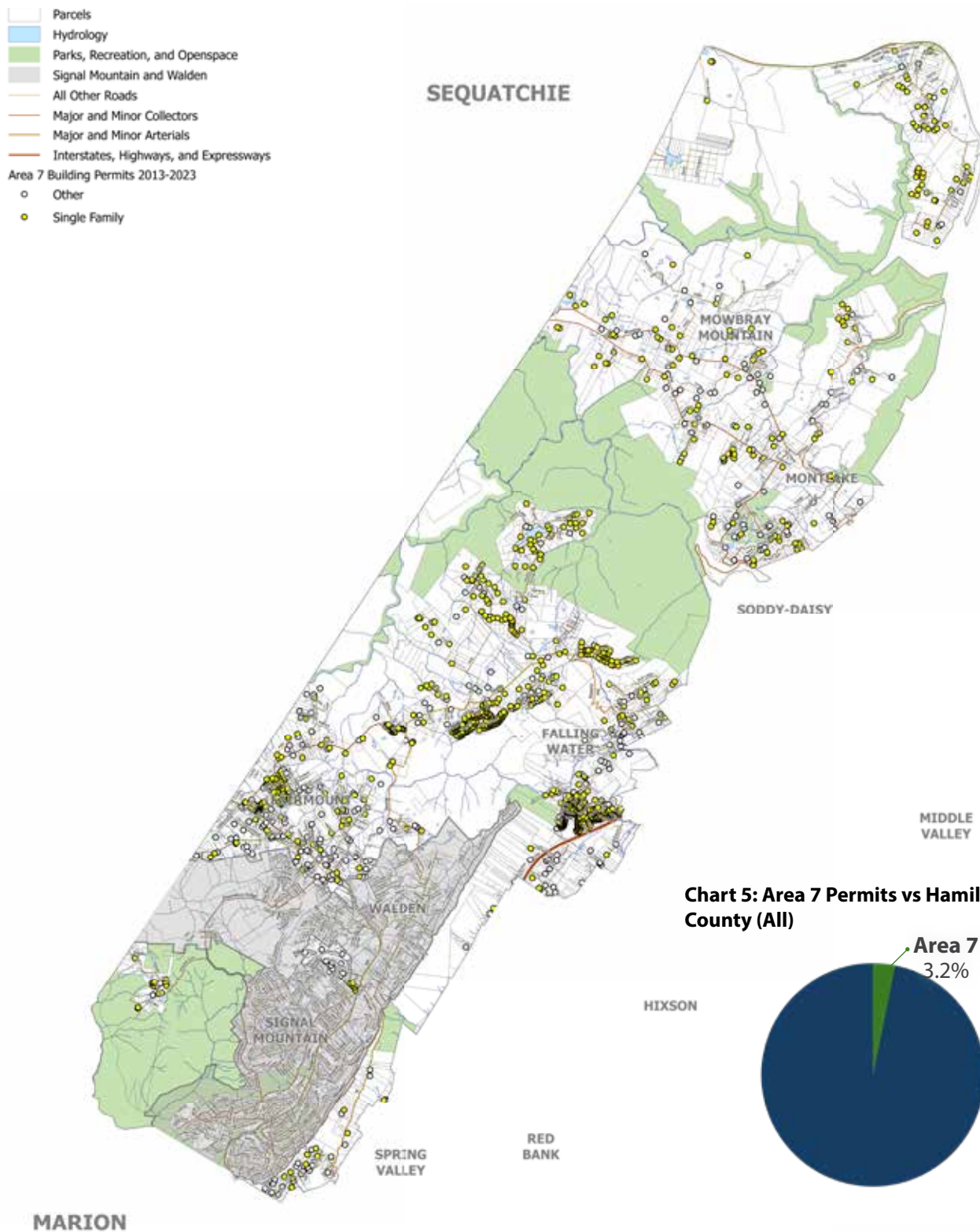


Figure 2.5: Building Permits Map (2013-2023)

The map (Figure 2.5) identifies the building permits that were approved over the last 10 years including single-family residential permits and other permits.



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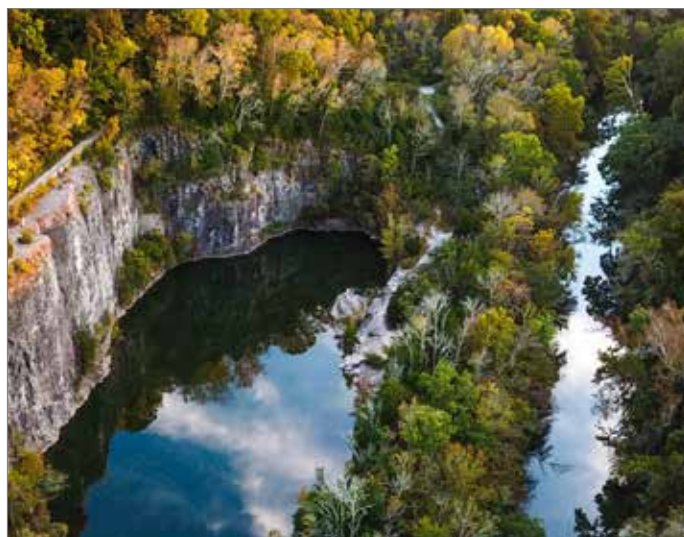
2.5.2 RESILIENCY

The Resiliency Community Theme for the Walden Plateau reveals a strategic intersection underscoring the importance of harmonizing built environments with the natural landscape. A key focus is on developing resilient infrastructure while preserving and enhancing the Area's rich natural resources. The analysis highlights water management systems, renewable energy solutions, conservation efforts, and sustainable land use practices. These elements are crucial in maintaining a balance between development and environmental stewardship, ensuring that the community not only thrives but also respects and protects the Walden Plateau's natural heritage.

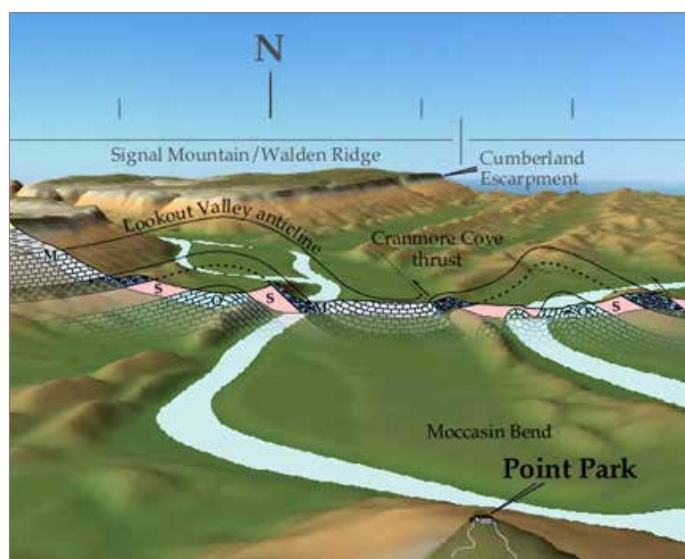
NATURAL RESOURCES

The Walden Plateau is rich in natural resources, featuring diverse water sources, parks, and landscapes. These resources support local ecosystems and offer opportunities for recreation and sustainable development. Proper management of these natural assets is crucial for maintaining the region's beauty and ecological health. The map (Figure 2.4) indicates points within the study Area that feature natural resources deemed sensitive in terms of water function, steep slopes or habitat as identified in the adopted 2016 Comprehensive Plan for Hamilton County. In the Walden Plateau Area, 27.6% of the land is 25% or greater slope and 0.4% is in the 100-year Floodplain. Waterways are shown to indicate the Floodway and 100-year and 500-year floodplains along with Impaired Waterways (303D) which indicate water quality status based on monitoring of sediment, pollution (metals, pesticides/fertilizer run-off, etc.), erosion or changes in flow/volumes. Development in the floodway is prohibited.

The escarpment of the Walden's Ridge creates a unique system of slopes, waterways, and infrastructure considerations for Hamilton County.



North Chickamauga Creek - the headwaters of the creek are in The Horseshoe, a part of Walden Ridge in southeastern Sequatchie County, Tennessee. The creek runs through the study area. Source: Creek Conservancy



Geologic Cross Section
Source: East TN Geological Society



Wastewater

The Chattanooga Department of Wastewater and Hamilton County Water and Wastewater Treatment Authority (WWTA) are tasked with planning and administration of sewer services under state and federal laws. Chattanooga Department of Wastewater manages the Moccasin Bend Wastewater Treatment Plant which is the primary treatment facility for both the City of Chattanooga and unincorporated Hamilton County.

RPA staff has coordinated closely with the City of Chattanooga Wastewater Department staff during the development of the Comprehensive Plans to ensure adequate sewer capacity is available to accommodate the anticipated residential, commercial, and industrial development growth. This coordination is a technical evaluation with ongoing coordination of local agencies to ensure long term capacity.

WWTA staff has provided information to RPA that existing capacity and available financial support substantially limits new sewer availability in the unincorporated county in the short and mid-term. Chattanooga Department of Wastewater has provided guidance that adequate sewer capacity is available for anticipated development during the next 5 years.

RPA staff working with both WWTA and County staff to support new development and achieve the best outcomes possible regarding managing growth in the unincorporated area.

Septic Systems

Due to sewer capacity and availability, septic is the most common wastewater treatment option in Unincorporated Hamilton County. Generally, the minimum lot size required for septic systems is 25,000 square feet. Residential development in rural areas without sewer service must therefore be built with these larger lots.

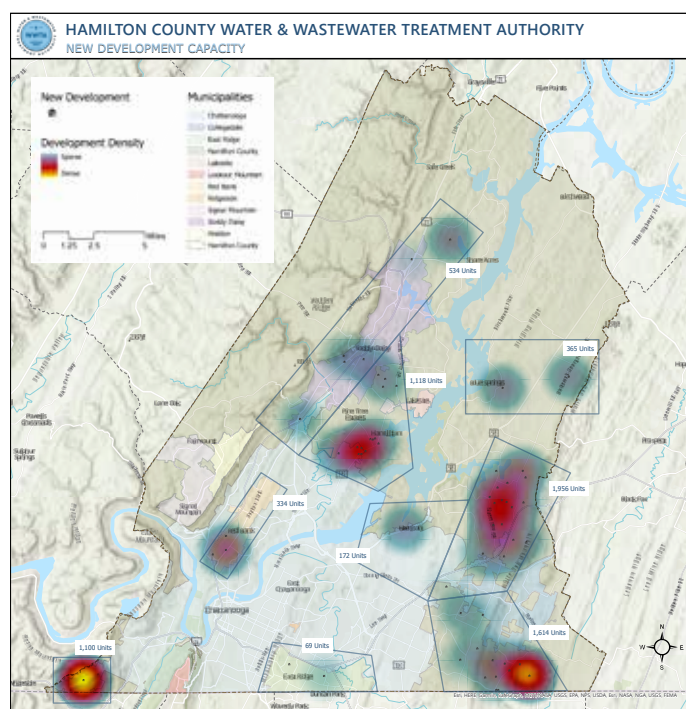
Information Highlight

Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems

A decentralized wastewater treatment system is like a combination of traditional septic and sewer. In a decentralized system, buildings or groups of buildings have a septic tank on-site as an initial treatment. Wastewater is then piped to a central location for additional treatment and disposal. Currently, Hamilton County only has a few examples of existing systems but anticipates them to become more common.

One key advantage in these systems is off-site disposal, which provides flexibility in housing types and helps preserve valuable open spaces. Additionally, centralizing the final stages of treatment and disposal reduces the risk of individual system failures, positively impacting the environment. WWTA provides oversight on these systems.

Note: If approved, these systems allow development to be approved at a density/intensity as if it were on sewer.



New Development Capacity (June 2023)

Source: WWTA



Sewer Infrastructure Map

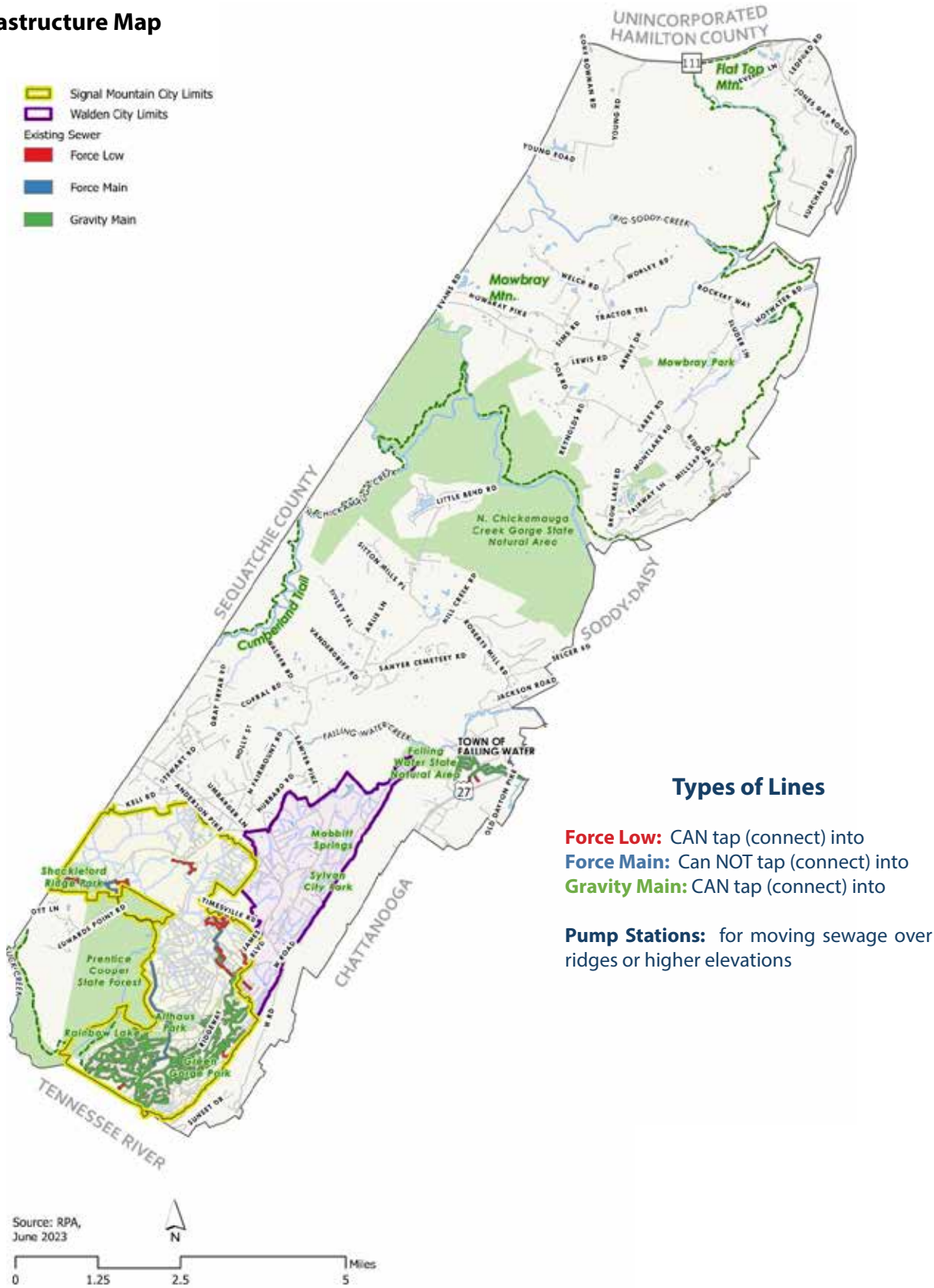


Figure 2.5: Sewer Infrastructure Map

Types of Lines

- Force Low:** CAN tap (connect) into
- Force Main:** Can NOT tap (connect) into
- Gravity Main:** CAN tap (connect) into

Pump Stations: for moving sewage over ridges or higher elevations



PARKS, RECREATION & GREENWAYS

The Walden Plateau is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, boasting an extensive network of parks and recreation areas. Area 7 includes Falling Water State Natural Area, North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park, Prentice Cooper State Forest, Rainbow Lake, and others. These spaces offer residents and visitors a variety of activities, from hiking and biking to picnicking, wildlife observation, etc. The parks and greenways are designed to highlight the natural beauty of the Area, providing both accessible and adventurous options for recreation and relaxation. These spaces not only enhance the quality of life but also play a crucial role in preserving the region's natural landscapes and promoting environmental stewardship.

These green spaces serve a purpose beyond recreation. They are critical for environmental preservation, offering habitats for diverse wildlife and contributing to the overall health of the region's ecosystems. This preservation nurtures a sense of environmental stewardship, as the community becomes more connected to the land they enjoy. With a total of 4,271 acres of public recreation space and 280 acres of private recreation space in Area 7, as noted in Tables 2 and 3, these green spaces play a crucial role in safeguarding the environmental integrity of the region. A separate analysis was conducted to measure the total approximate acreage for all aspects of parks, recreation, and open space which is approximately 27% of the total land area.

By prioritizing the protection of these landscapes, we ensure the continued survival of Walden Plateau's biodiversity while also securing a legacy of natural beauty for future generations. Whether through careful planning or the community's growing engagement with these outdoor spaces, this Area stands as a testament to the balance between progress and preservation, reminding us all of the importance of maintaining the delicate ecosystems that define Hamilton County's identity.

Chart 6: Percentage of Parks, Recreation & Open Space in Area 7

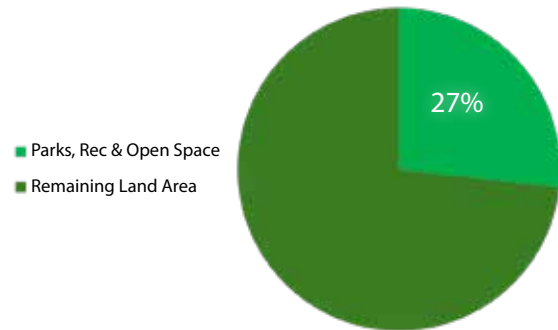
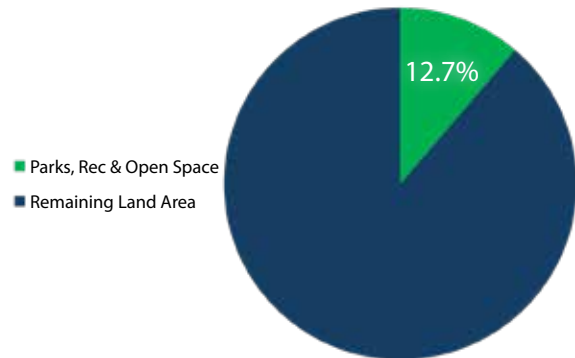


Chart 7: Percentage of Parks, Recreation & Open Space in all 5 Plan Hamilton Areas



Falling Water State Natural Area

Source: Timber Root



Table 2: Public Parks, Recreation, and Greenways

Name	Type of Recreation Area	Size (Acres)
Falling Water Community Park	Church Community Park	1.2
Falling Water State Natural Area	Natural Area	129
Mowbray Park	Municipal Recreation Area	21
North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park	State Park	1,781
Pretice Cooper State Forest	State Recreation Area	1,862.6
Rainbow Lake	Municipal Community Park	177.8
Shackleford Ridge County Park	County Recreation Area	86
Walden's Ridge Park	County Park	212
Total		4,271

Table 3: Private Parks, Recreation, and Greenways

Name	Type of Recreation Area	Size (Acres)
Montlake Golf Course	Daily Fee Golf Course	142.2
Signal Mountain Golf & Country Club	Membership Required Golf Course	137.9
Total		280.1



Pretice Cooper State Forest
Source: Travel Southeast Tennessee



Natural Resources Map

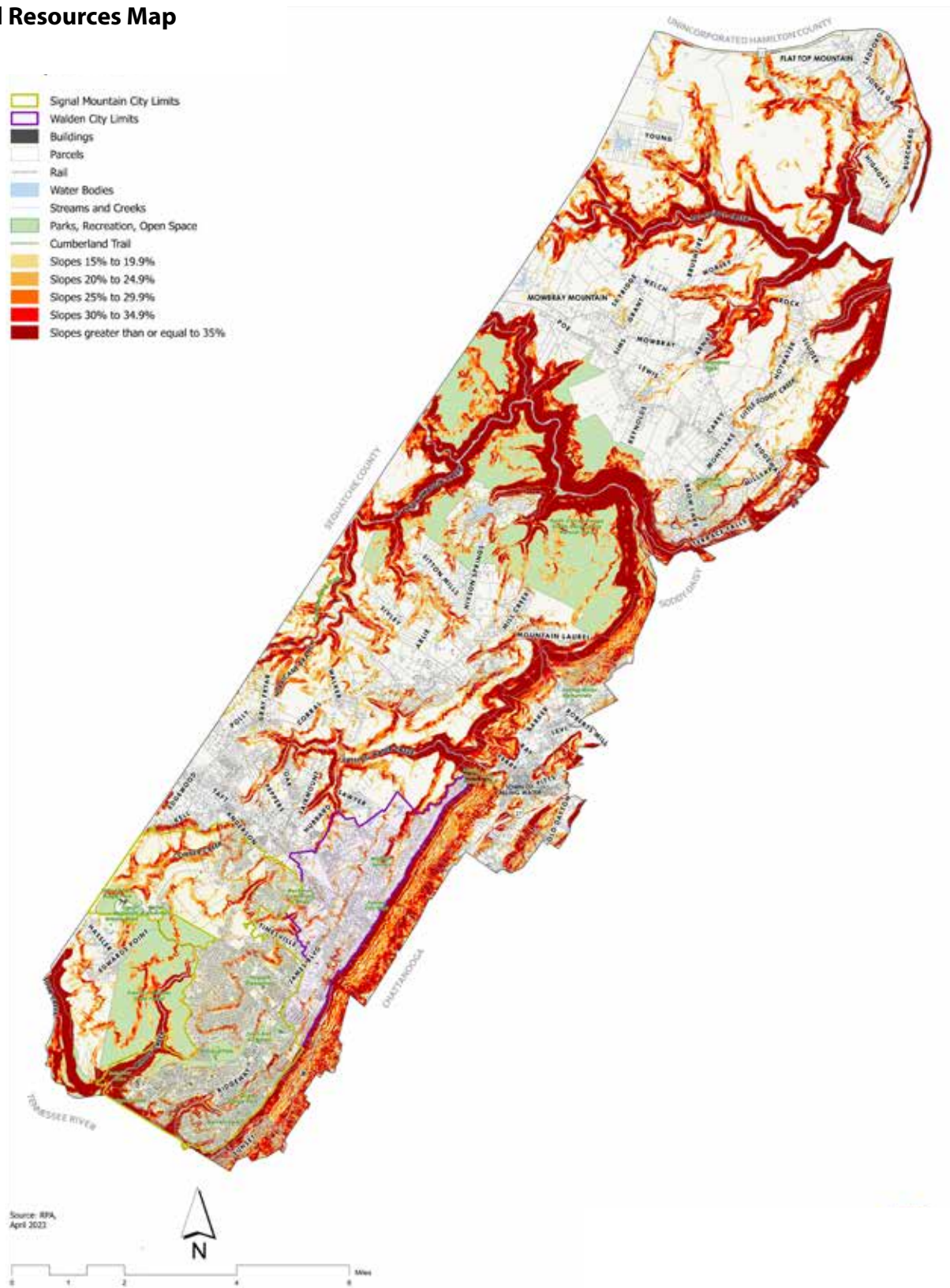


Figure 2.4: Natural Resources Map

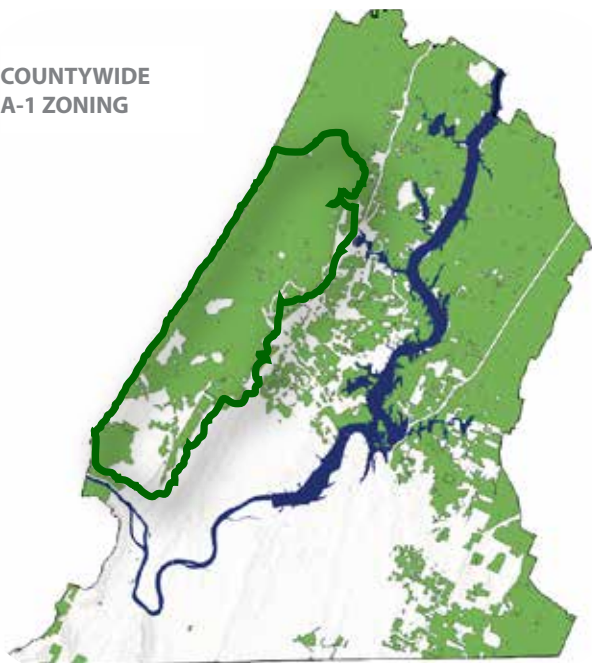


AGRICULTURE

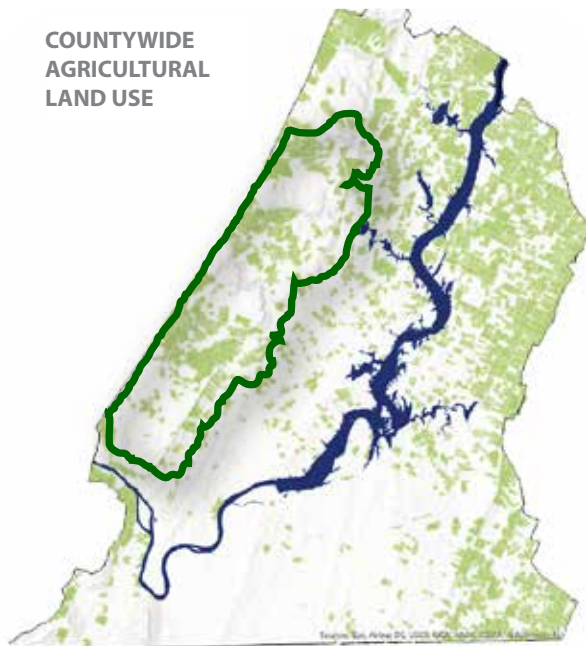
Hamilton County has a long history of agricultural activity in areas like Apison, Sale Creek, Flat Top Mountain, Georgetown and the Hwy 58/Birchwood area. A portion of Area 9 consists of agricultural uses related to the production of crops, livestock, forestry uses and agricultural service businesses and may also include open fields, woodlands, and streams or lakes. Usually zoned as an A-1 district, they often include single-family homes on large lots as well as accessory buildings such as barns and greenhouses. Properties given the “Greenbelt” status (15 acres or more) usually feature a farm or single-family home with surrounding open space, pastures or forests retained and with tax benefits available. Development centered around farming is typically on septic systems. Agricultural uses in Hamilton County range from commercial businesses or large production facilities, such as a dairy or orchards, to horse stables, to roadside vegetable stands or feed & seed stores.

Not only do these agricultural uses add to the rural character of the area, but they also provide many benefits to the local community such as healthy food sources, educational programs, agritourism opportunities and improved environmental function for clean air and water quality - when significant vegetated areas are preserved and low impact farming practices (limited pesticide use or organic farming) are put in place. Programs that promote local agriculture and conserve open space and natural resources are readily available. Conservation practices may also include the use of clustered residential homes with farm amenities or scenic views and open space set aside. Another tool used to help preserve agricultural places and provide income includes special event facilities such as barns or pavilions, guesthouses or wedding chapels for instance.

COUNTYWIDE
A-1 ZONING



COUNTYWIDE
AGRICULTURAL
LAND USE



AREA 7

90.6% A-1 Zoning
34.7% Single-Family Parcels
3.2% of Permits issued in the County
28% of Area in Steep Slopes & Floodway
27% of Area in Parks, Recreation & Open Space

HAMILTON COUNTY

56% of the County in A-1 Zoning
30% of the County has Agricultural Land Use



2.5.3 MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION

While the single-occupancy vehicle remains the predominant mode of transportation and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future, it is crucial not to overlook multi-modal transportation options. This analysis will focus on the network of pathways that underpin the Area's mobility and accessibility. The Area's road network forms the backbone of its transportation system, connecting neighborhoods, commercial centers, and outlying regions. The existing network of sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and trails is assessed for connectivity, safety, and accessibility. These modes are equally important in these Areas as they are in urban settings, serving purposes such as recreation, exercise, and social interaction.

Functional Classification organizes roads by their traffic volume, connectivity, purpose, and ownership, drawing distinctions between local, state, and federal roadways. This classification shapes road functions across arterials, collectors, and local roads. For instance, within Area 7, Taft Highway functions as a primary arterial, Montlake Road serves as a collector, and Fairmount Road W is a local street. This classification directly impacts roadway improvements, influencing available funding and determining the agency responsible for the project.

Walden's Ridge currently has four primary access points: Highway 127 (Taft Highway/Signal Mountain Boulevard), the W Road, and Roberts Mill Road, and Hwy 111. Despite discussions about creating a new access road connecting to Suck Creek Road, these three thoroughfares are likely to remain the main access

routes in the foreseeable future. Therefore, improving these key roads and developing systems to ensure multiple means of access when one or more of these roads are impassable should be a priority.

Neighborhood connectivity is vital for several reasons. Connected developments allow for traffic dispersion, enabling streets to be designed narrower, which naturally calms traffic. Additionally, connectivity ensures that emergency services such as police, fire, and ambulance can quickly and easily reach residents in case of emergencies.

The transportation analysis provides a detailed and dynamic overview of the current and future state of the Area's transportation network. By addressing the diverse needs of all users—drivers, transit riders, pedestrians, cyclists, and freight operators—the Area Plans aim to create a balanced, efficient, and forward-thinking transportation system that supports the region's growth and enhances the quality of life for its residents.



Montlake Road
Source: PJAMM Cycling



FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) uses functional classification to “define the role each element in the roadway network plays in serving travel needs.” Roads are categorized by location (urban or rural), capacity, and alignment with future development plans. This classification system also differentiates between locally-owned, state-owned, and federally-owned roads, which can influence the funding sources and oversight agencies involved in roadway improvements. For example, improvements to state routes are generally proposed by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and the FHWA, with additional input from the Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). This coordinated approach ensures that infrastructure upgrades align with both state and local priorities.

The functional classification categories at the local level in Area 7 are as follows:

- » Arterial
 - Principal Arterial
 - Minor Arterial
- » Collector
 - Major Collector
 - Minor Collector
- » Local Roads

Arterials

Arterials are classified based on their high level of mobility. Arterial routes are typically the longest and have higher capacity compared to the other roads in the transportation network. They have few access points and only connect to other Arterials within the network. Most travel that occurs on an Arterial is

over long distances, such as inter-state travel. Arterial routes typically account for the highest traffic volumes within the transportation network, but less than 15% of the physical transportation network. For example, Interstates consist of 3% of the vehicle miles traveled and between 17% and 38% of the vehicle miles traveled in a transportation network. Arterials are further classified as principal or minor arterials. Examples of Principal Arterials include interstates, freeways, and expressways. Minor arterials serve trips of shorter lengths than principal arterials connect smaller geographic areas to the transportation network.

Collectors

Collectors connect local roads to the arterial routes within a transportation network. They are shorter routes than arterials and have lower speed limits with more access points. Collector routes are typically used for intra-county travel rather than statewide travel like the Arterial routes. Collector routes make up approximately a third of the transportation network. Collector routes are further classified into major and minor collectors. Major collectors usually allow for higher levels of mobility within an area and minor collectors often have more access points. The distinction between major and minor collectors is often determined by speed limits, driveway spacing, and annual average traffic volumes.

Local Roads

Typically local roads account for less than 25% of the vehicle miles traveled but make up between 62% and 74% of the transportation network. They are usually characterized as having a low number of lanes, low speed limits, and low traffic volumes. Local roads are classified after the arterials and collectors have been identified within the network.



Crash Data Map

The transportation analysis of Area 7 reviewed functional classifications, traffic operations, and safety. Potential improvements were identified by analyzing historic and projected traffic volumes, crash data, and delay levels, with roads ranked by priority. No capacity improvements were needed based on projected volumes, but Roberts Mill Road, W Road, and Montlake Road were flagged for safety concerns due to recent crash data, detailed in Figure 2.6.

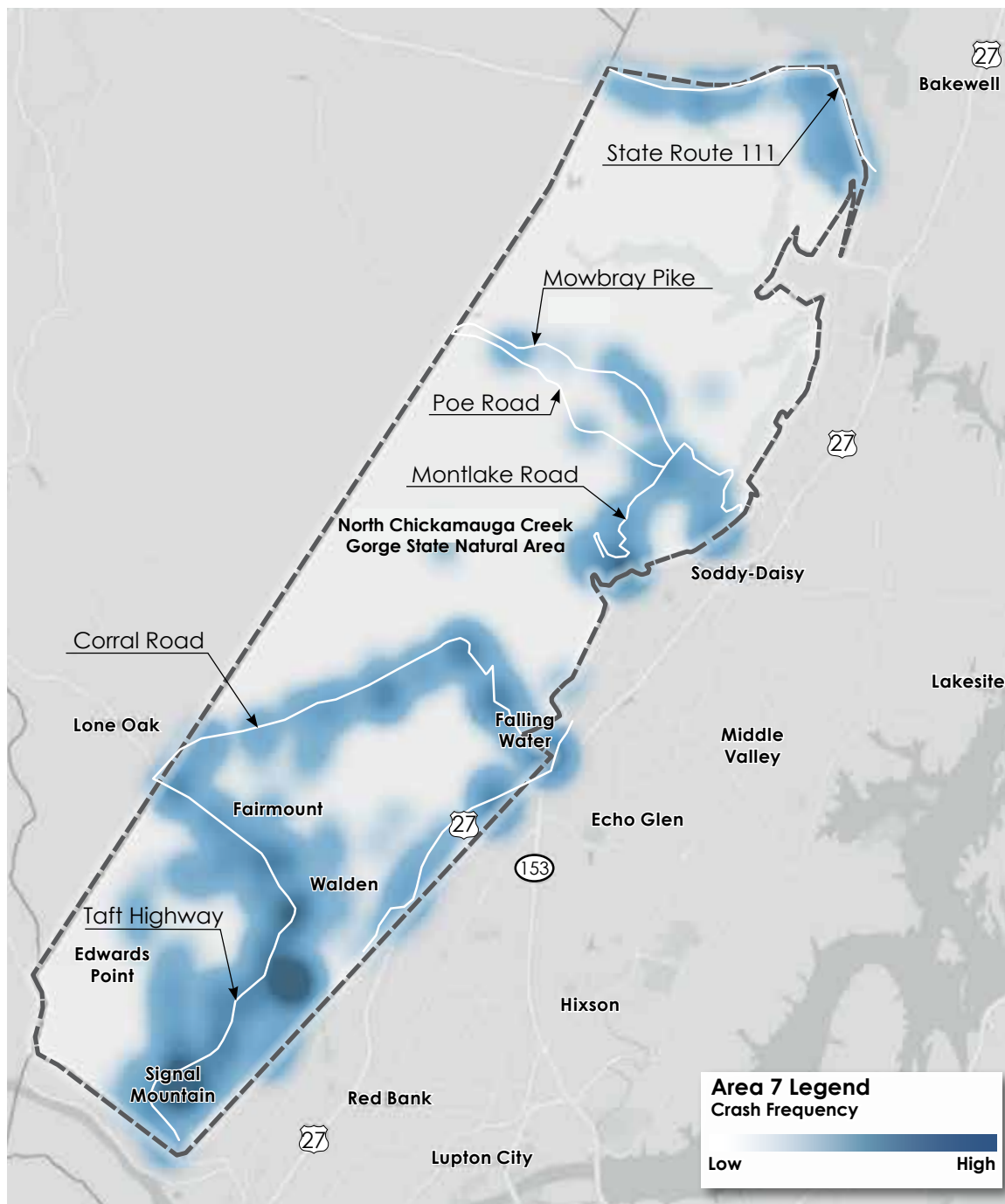


Figure 2.6: Area 7 Crash Data Map (08/24/2020-08/24/2023)



PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Roadway improvement considerations began with a thorough inventory and analysis of Hamilton County's existing roadway network. This initial assessment included a detailed review of traffic operations and crash patterns to identify potential safety enhancements. From this analysis, a list of roadway improvements was developed and organized by priority, focusing on areas that would benefit most from strategic upgrades.

To assess traffic operations, we used a combination of historical traffic count data collected annually, future traffic forecasts from the RPA's 2050 Regional Transportation Plan, and general Level of Service (LOS) criteria. This approach allowed us to pinpoint current capacity constraints and anticipate areas likely to face similar issues as the County grows. Roadway segments already at or nearing capacity were flagged for inclusion in the improvement list to address these pressing needs.

The safety review analyzed three years of crash data across Hamilton County roadways to calculate crash rates on key segments. We then compared these rates to statewide averages to identify roads that might benefit from targeted safety studies or projects.

Table 4: Proposed Roadway Improvements (All Areas)

Priority Group	Roadway	Project Location	Area	Type of Improvement
Short-term	Hunter Road	at Lebron Sterchi Drive	9	Intersection
Short-term	Hunter Road	at curve near Crooked Creek Drive	9	Safety
Short-term	Hilltop Drive	between Hunter Road and Volkswagen Drive	9	Extension
Short-term	Hunter Road	from Hwy 58 to Lee Highway	9	Safety
Short-term	Standifer Gap Road	from Banks road to Camp Road	12	Safety
Short-term	Daisy Dallas Road	from Harrison Lane to Hixson Pike	8	Safety
Short-term	Middle Valley Road	from Hixson Pike to Daisy Dallas Road	8	Safety
Medium-term	Middle Valley Road	at Daisy Dallas Road	8	Intersection
Medium-term	Middle Valley Road	at Walnut Road	8	Intersection
Medium-term	Middle Valley Road	at Gann Road	8	Intersection
Medium-term	Hunter Road	at Garfield Road	9	Intersection
Medium-term	Roberts Mill Road	from Dayton Pike to Mountain Laurel Trail	7	Safety
Medium-term	Snow Hill Road	from Mountain View Drive to Mahan Gap Road	9	Safety
Medium-term	Snow Hill Road	from Mountain View Drive to Amos Road	9	Capacity
Medium-term	E Brainerd Road	at London Lane	12	Intersection
Long-term	Hunter Road	from Hwy 58 to Lee Highway	9	Capacity
Long-term	Standifer Gap Road	at Bill Reed Road	12	Intersection
Long-term	Armstrong Road	from Hixson Pike to Lee Pike	13	Safety
Long-term	Harrison Bay Road	from Hwy 58 to Birchwood Pike	9	Safety
Long-term	McCallie Ferry Road	from US 27 to Spradling Road	13	Safety
Long-term	Gann Road	from Middle Valley Road to Daisy Dallas Road	8	Safety
Long-term	Montlake Road	from Dayton Pike to Mowbray Pike	7	Safety
Long-term	W Road	from Mountain Creek Road to Anderson Pike	7	Safety



Planned Transportation Projects Map

The average crash rates for Tennessee were used as a benchmark to identify roadways that could benefit from targeted safety studies or projects to better understand crash patterns and to implement strategies to reduce crash frequency or severity. Within Area 7, W Road, Montlake Road, and Roberts Mill Road were recognized as candidates for safety improvements, particularly given that Montlake Road had two fatalities recorded in its recent crash history.

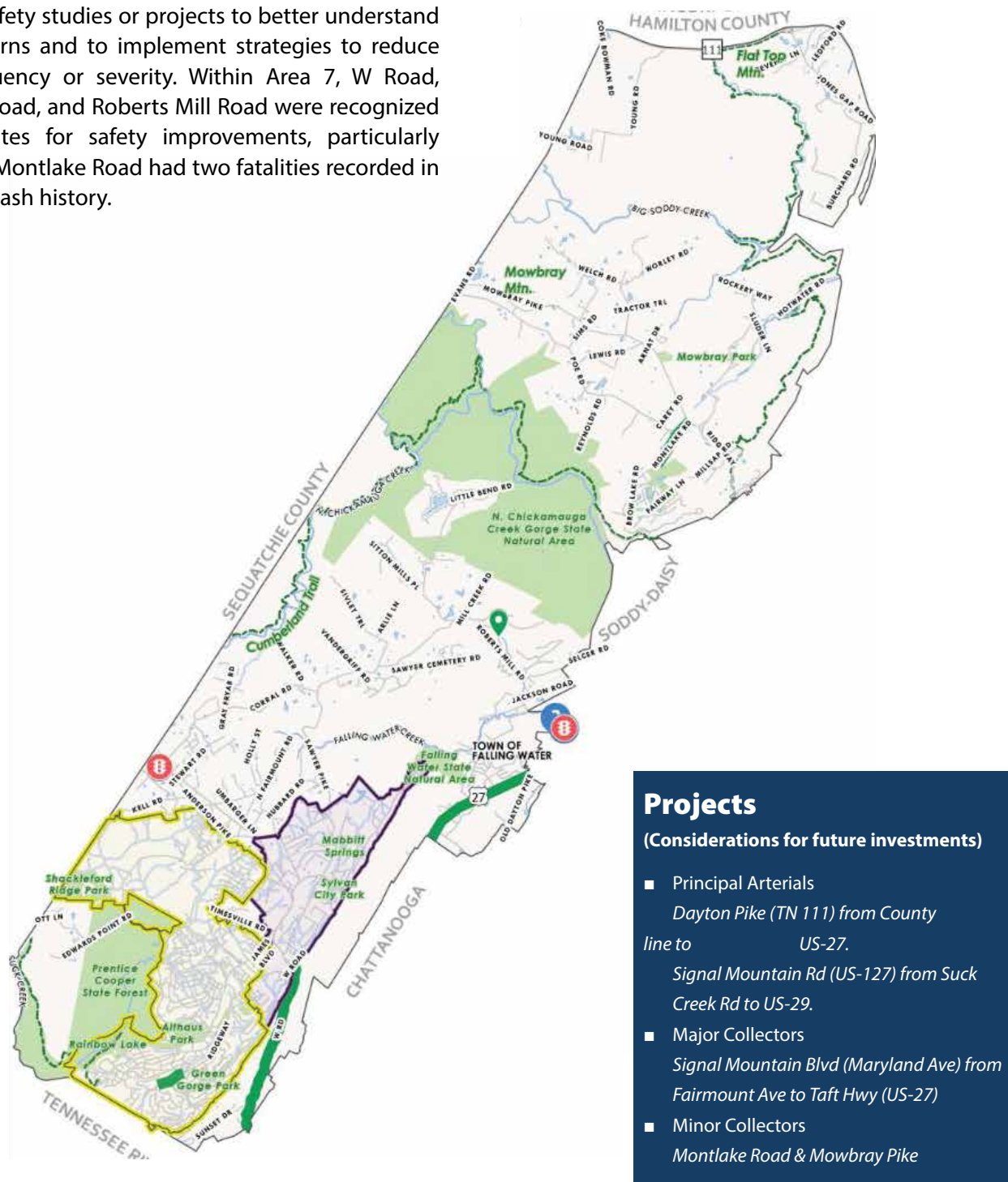


Figure 2.7: Area 7 TPO Planned Transportation Projects Map



2.5.4 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Walden Plateau offers a comprehensive array of community facilities designed to enhance the quality of life for its residents. These facilities include educational institutions, healthcare centers, libraries, and recreational amenities, and emergency services. Each facility is integrated into the community to ensure accessibility and to meet the diverse needs of the population and support sustainable growth. While some of these facilities are within the incorporated limits of Walden and Signal Mountain they are included due to the use of the residents of the unincorporated residents of Hamilton County.

SCHOOLS AND MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

It is imperative that Hamilton County Schools be part of the conversation when it comes to growth in the Walden Plateau Area. New schools tend to attract new growth in the form of residential development. As the area continues to grow, schools may approach, or exceed, capacity due to increasing student enrollment. Factors such as transportation, access, and space needed for buildings, parking, and recreation must be considered as new schools are planned.

Hamilton County Opportunity 2030 Strategic Plan

Hamilton County Schools introduced a 7 Year Strategic Plan "[Opportunity 2030](#)" to engage stakeholders and align strategies to directly respond to the needs of the students, staff, and the community.

The HCDE mission is:

To equip students with the knowledge, skills, and supports to thrive in life.

The HCDE vision is:

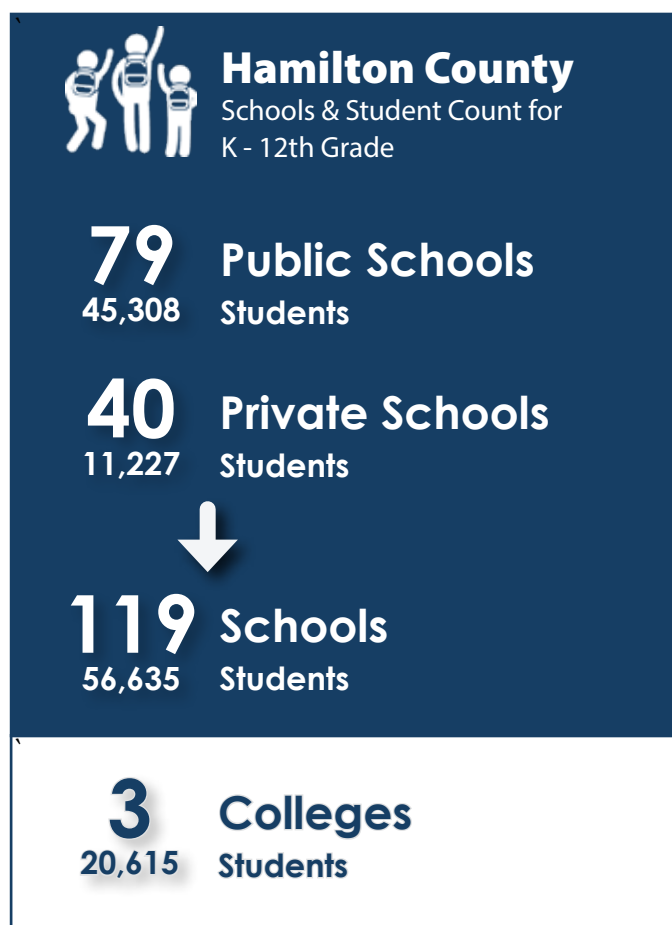
By 2030, Hamilton County Schools will be a leader in developing our diverse graduates to be connected, competitive, and life ready.

The HCDE 2030 plan has made 5 commitments:

1. Every Student Learns
2. Every Student Belongs
3. Every School Equipped
4. Every Employee Valued
5. Every Community Served

In 2024, the County established 250 million in bonds in anticipation of upcoming school needs.

Hamilton County is home to many private and public K-12th Grade institutions and colleges, the following is a countywide total of all schools and students:



Schools Map

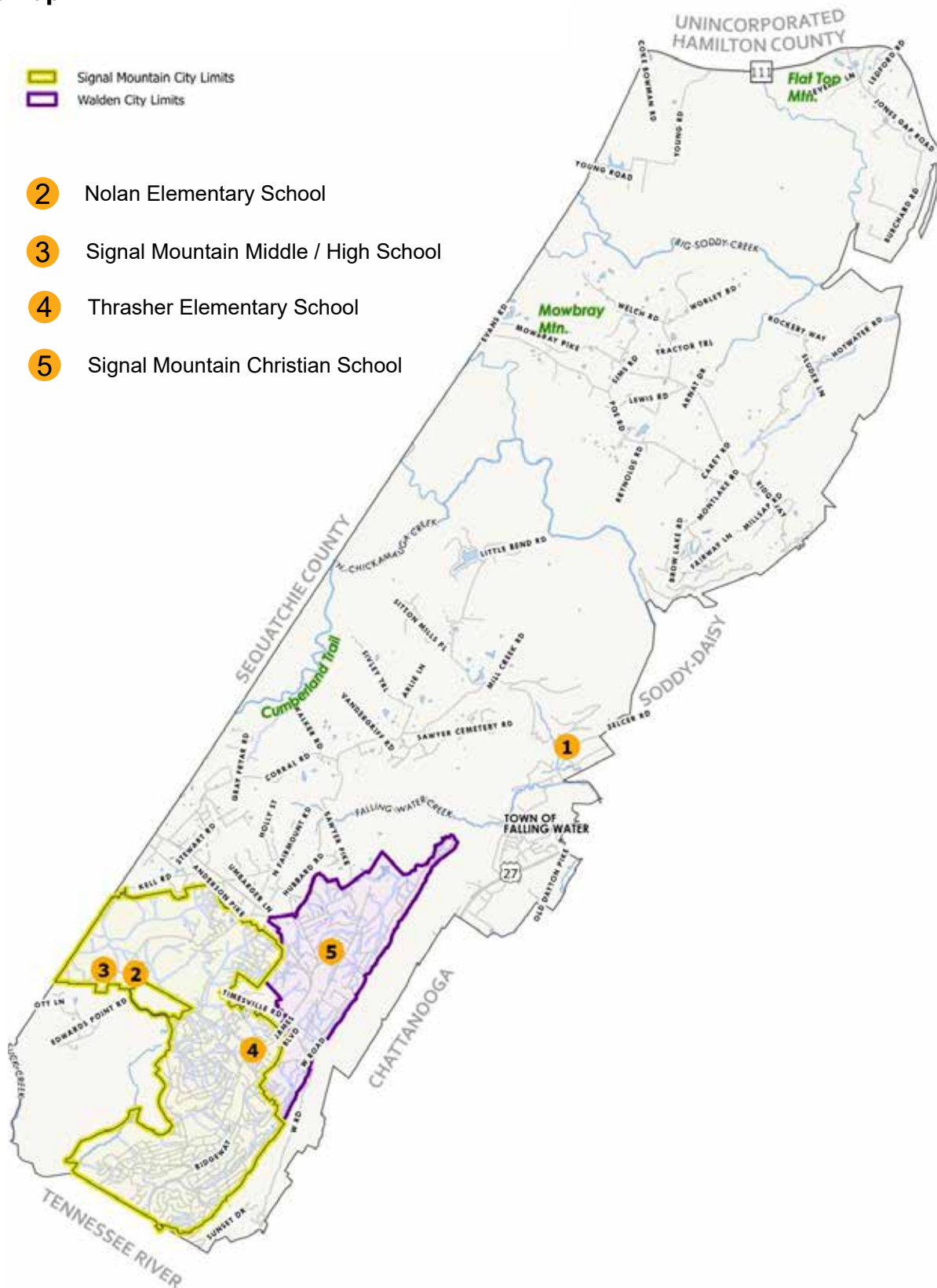
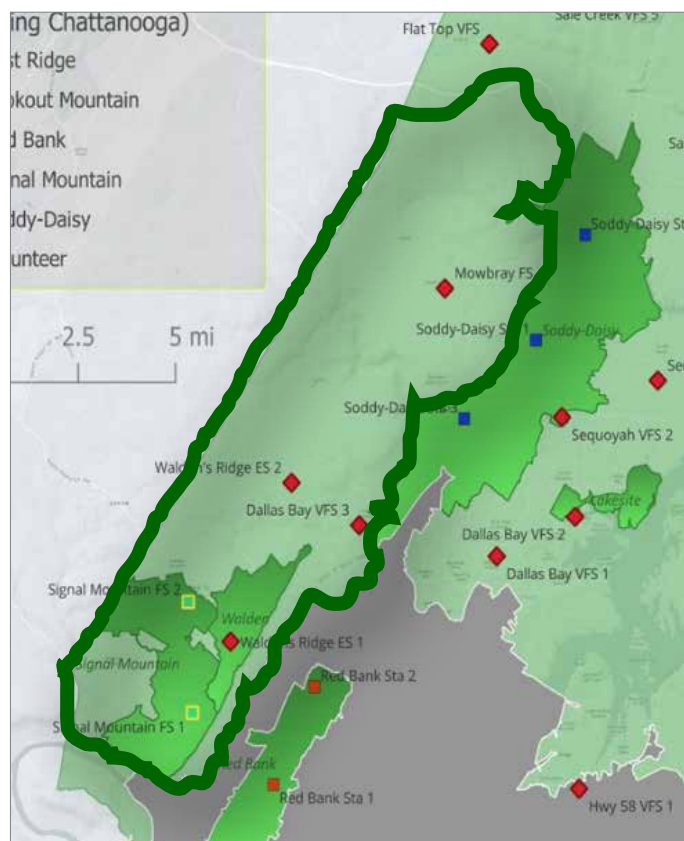


Figure 2.8: Schools Map (2023)





Fire Station Locations

Source: 2024 Fire and Rescue Services Evaluation Report (Tri-Star)

PARKS & GOVERNMENT OWNED LAND

There are a number of open spaces, parks, and state forests on the Walden Plateau. In addition to preserving sensitive environmental assets, these Areas are a recreational assets that draw hikers, bikers, horse riders, and campers from all over. As noted in chapter 4, the Cumberland Trail, eventually a 300 mile long state trail, traverses the North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park and will ultimately connect to Signal Point. Publicly used parks in Area 7 when combined total approximately 2,057.80 acres. Privately used parks in Area 7 when combined total approximately 280.14 acres.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

In 2024, Tri Star conducted a [Fire and Emergency Response Evaluation](#) of the unincorporated areas to identify current levels of fire protection service, geographic coverage, response time, areas of need, etc. There is one station (Station 2) in the unincorporated Area of this plan and it is located on Sawyer Road near its intersection with Tuckahoe. The newest WRES station is located in the Town of Walden and there are also stations in the Town of Signal Mountain. Hamilton County Emergency Services (HCEMS) has one station (Medic 8) located on Taft Highway in the heart of the Town of Signal Mountain. WRES is a volunteer fire department, but there is anticipation that it will eventually transition to a full-time fire department. An addition to Station 2 in the unincorporated Area is in the planning stages. As growth on the mountain continues, there is some benefit to considering a relocating Medic 8 to a more central location to improve response times. WRES has confirmed that while they cannot transport patients, their apparatus has the same medical equipment as HCEMS and there are many locations where Lifeforce can land. This should provide peace of mind to residents in the unincorporated Areas. Nevertheless, as growth continues, it will be important to review emergency service and response and improve accordingly.

Hamilton County Emergency Management owns and constantly updates evacuation routes and plans for natural disasters.





CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY VISION & GOALS

- 3.1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- 3.2 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
- 3.3 GOALS
- 3.4 VISION STATEMENT

3.1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Shaping a vision for the future of the Walden Plateau involves exploring its potential and engaging with residents and business owners to understand their aspirations for the next decade. What qualities do people value? What elements make this Area unique or special? To identify these community values, two surveys were distributed during the planning process. During public meetings, participants were invited to identify issues and prioritize potential solutions. While some concerns were specific to particular sub-Areas, many were relevant to the entire region. Advisory Committee members played a key role in drafting the original vision statement for the future of the Walden Plateau in 1997.

The initial feedback produced four key [Community Themes](#) which ultimately outlined the analysis portion of this plan. Those key themes helped shaped the remainder of this plan and are identified in Chapter 2 of this plan.

Survey responses, input from community meetings, feedback from the Advisory Committee, and professional guidance from staff and technical advisors, were used to draft goals, a vision statement, and recommendations to reflect the shared values of the Northeast County community to establish a direction for the future.

A community's **GOALS** form the foundation of its identity and guide its actions and decisions. They identify the driving forces of the community, by adhering to these core goals, the community fosters a sense of unity and purpose, enabling all members to work together towards a common vision of a prosperous and harmonious future.

A **VISION STATEMENT** outlines the collective aspirations and core values of the community. It serves as a guide, highlighting the community's desired future and setting a clear direction for growth and development. Crafted through collaborative input, the vision statement emphasizes key principles such as preservation, recreation, infrastructure, housing, and overall quality of life.



Public Meeting
Source: RPA



3.2 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Community feedback is crucial in creating an Area Plan because it ensures that the voices of those who live, work, and play there are heard and valued. The residents have an intimate understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within their community, providing insights that outside experts might overlook. Engaging the community fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration, making the planning process more inclusive and transparent. By incorporating diverse perspectives, we can create a more comprehensive and effective plan that reflects the true needs and aspirations of the people it serves.

Public input is vital to the success of any planning process and in the Area Planning process for Hamilton County. Understanding the perspectives of those who live and work in a community every day provides invaluable insights to experts developing concepts and recommendations. Several opportunities were offered for the public to share their thoughts and feedback in various formats with the goal of developing a shared vision. This section outlines the engagement efforts of each event



Plan Hamilton Landing Page
Source: RPA Website, <https://planhamilton.org/>



Area 7 Website
Source: RPA Website, <https://planhamilton.org/walden-plateau/>



COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The following outlines the public meetings held to provide a platform for the community to express concerns, share priorities, and offer feedback on the proposed strategies within the Area Plan. Through an analysis of the themes and perspectives that emerged, this section highlights the key issues raised by participants. Input from these meetings plays a crucial role in shaping the recommendations, ensuring the Area Plan aligns with the community's needs and values.

Kick-Off

In October 2023, a kick-off meeting took place at the Bachman Community Center. The goal of the first meeting was to introduce to the purpose of Area planning as well as the process as a whole and gather initial feedback from the community. A summary of the input received at the kick-off meeting is included in [Appendix D](#).

Public Meeting #2

In November 2023, the second public meeting was held at Walden Ride Emergency Services. The goal of this meeting was to not only update the community on the process but to understand the community vision so that was the forefront of the Area planning process before the documents were created.

Public Opinion Survey

In addition to in-person engagement, we conducted a comprehensive public opinion survey from August 2023 through October 2023. This survey covered a wide range of topics, including recent and current development, future development, environmental issues, and mobility. The valuable insights gained from the survey are included in [Appendix C](#).

Online Informational Meetings

Two countywide informational meetings were held online by the RPA in January of 2024 to discuss 4 topics with the public including: Traffic & Transportation, Commercial Centers & Corridors, Housing, and Parks & Greenways.

Draft Plan Meeting

In September 2024, a draft Area Plan meeting was held at Walden Ridge Emergency Services. The goal of this meeting was to present the 75% draft version of the Area 7 plan to the community and for the RPA to provide an update of the overall process, how the plan addresses community concerns, and how this plan will guide growth moving forward.



Area 7 Plan Draft Meeting
Source: RPA



Table 5: Community Outreach Timeline for Plan Hamilton

OUTREACH TECHNIQUE	DATE	LOCATION	AREA REACHED
Survey (Online)	08/25 - 10-07/2023	Online	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
1st Round Public Meetings	10/03/2023	Bachman Community Center	7
	09/07/2023	Chester Frost Park Pavilion	8
	08/24/2023	Ooltewah High School	9
	08/29/2023	East Hamilton High School	12
	08/21/2023	Sale Creek Fire and Rescue	13
2nd Round Public Meetings	11/28/2023	Walden's Ridge Emergency Services	7
	12/05/2023	Soddy Daisy High School	8
	11/16/2023	Ooltewah High School	9 & 12
	09/14/2023	Soddy Daisy High School	13
	12/05/2023	Soddy Daisy High School	13
Online Informational Meeting 1	01/18/2024	Virtual	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
Online Informational Meeting 2	01/25/2024	Virtual	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
Community Meetings	04/19/2023	Collegedale City Hall	12
	06/14/2023	East Hamilton High School	12
	06/15/2023	Veteran's Building, Sequoyah Road	8
	08/16/2023	Lakesite City Hall	8
	09/21/2023	Tri-Star Beverage	13
	9/30/2023	Soddy Lake Park (Booth)	13
	11/09-11/11/2023	Hamilton County Fair	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
	1/23/2024	Sale Creek Fire and Rescue	13
	05/16/2024	Tri-Star Beverage	13
	06/20/2024	East Hamilton High School	12
	06/25/2024	The Commons	12
	08/01/2024	Century Club Banquet Hall	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
	10/24/2024	Century Club	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
Draft Plan Review Meeting	09/19/2024	East Hamilton High School	12
	09/25/2024	Walden's Ridge Emergency Services	7
	09/26/2024	Hwy 58 Volunteer Fire Department	9
	10/01/2024	Sale Creek Middle/High School	13
	10/16/2024	Clear Creek Church of Christ	8
Public Hearings	3/28/2023	County Courthouse	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
	03/06/2023	County Commission	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
	12/09/2024	Planning Commission	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
	----	County Commission	7, 8, 9, 12, & 13
Mass Emails & Social Media	Additional outreach was conducted through regular email announcements and Facebook updates as well as media releases to local news outlets. The mailing list on average numbered over 2,000 contacts who had registered via the website or at meetings		



COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS



Commercial uses and services most needed:

1. Food & Beverage
2. Grocery
3. Leisure / Entertainment



47%

Experience mild congestion during peak rush hours



The top 3 infrastructure investments needed:

1. Roads
2. Parks, Greenways & Open Space
3. Schools



Civic uses and services most needed:

1. Trails, Greenways & Sidewalks
2. Parks & Open Space
3. Emergency Services



Type of Commercial Development the community would support:

72%

Neighborhood Commercial

51%

Mixed-Use Commercial

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

"Use existing commercial space before building new"

"Connect to North Chickamauga Creek and Cumberland Trail"

"More Conservation easements"

"Architectural design and setbacks, limit visual impact on ridgeways (escarpment)"

"Consider traffic issues created by new development"

"Single-Family development"



3.3 AREA PLAN GOALS

These seven general Area Plan goals apply to all five unincorporated Areas and create a blueprint for balanced and sustainable growth in Hamilton County, enhancing its unique character and natural beauty. These goals are based on the four Community Themes established in Chapter 2 including Land Use and Development Character, Resiliency, Transportation and Mobility, and Community Facilities.

By focusing on strategic growth management, we aim to harmonize new development with existing community values and landscapes, fostering economic vitality while preserving the charm of our neighborhoods. Our commitment to conserving natural resources ensures

they are protected and enhanced for future generations, promoting sustainable practices. Providing diverse and affordable housing options is essential for an inclusive and thriving community. Ensuring housing meets the needs of all residents supports a diverse population and fosters socioeconomic stability.

By addressing these interconnected goals, Hamilton County is committed to creating a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable future that enhances the quality of life for all residents. Each goal is paired with specific policy recommendations and strategies to ensure successful implementation and long-term benefits for our community.



3.4 VISION STATEMENT

As we look toward the future of the unincorporated Areas of Hamilton County, we aim to craft a vision statement that captures our shared aspirations and values. This statement isn't just a list of goals; it's a reflection of our dedication to honoring our rich heritage while embracing sustainable growth. We are committed to enhancing the quality of life for all residents through thoughtful development, preserving our natural re-

sources, and fostering economic opportunities. By engaging in collaborative and transparent planning, we will build resilient, connected, and thriving neighborhoods where everyone can live, work, and prosper together for generations. This vision statement will serve as our guide, illuminating the path toward a vibrant and inclusive future for Hamilton County's unincorporated Areas.

To create vibrant and SUSTAINABLE communities that honor our heritage while embracing growth. We aim to ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE by promoting THOUGHTFUL DEVELOPMENT, preserving NATURAL RESOURCES, and fostering ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES. Through collaborative and transparent planning, we will build RESILIENT, CONNECTED, and THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS where everyone can live, work, and prosper together for generations.





CHAPTER 4

PLANS, POLICIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 PLANNING OVERVIEW
- 4.2 PLACE TYPES
- 4.3 POLICIES

4.1 PLANNING OVERVIEW

A wide range of resources are used to determine the most suitable land uses within Hamilton County. While standard practices such as zoning often guide these decisions, it's crucial to recognize that the rich history of our neighborhoods and the specific desires and needs of the community extend beyond these conventional frameworks.

This chapter outlines the three key steps in the planning process used as part of the Comprehensive Planning effort. The primary aim of these steps is to prioritize community character, ensuring that each area's unique identity and needs are at the forefront of decision-making. While these steps prioritize the preservation of each area's identity, it's important to note that they operate alongside public input and community programming integrated throughout the process. The process begins with a thorough assessment

of each area's unique characteristics and needs. By using planning models to understand the impacts of factors such as population and job growth on land use, the RPA developed Place Types that address the specific conditions of each of the unincorporated areas within Hamilton County. These Place Types serve as a foundation for developing customized conditions and recommendations. The final step involves formulating specific Policies, which provide best practices for implementing the earlier planning stages.

This planning approach is multi-layered, incorporating best management practices tailored to the needs of each individual Area. This method ensures that land use decisions are not only guided by standard practices but also by a deep understanding of local context, resulting in a planning process that is responsive to the diverse needs of Hamilton County's communities.

#1

PLANNING MODELS

The RPA and their consultants have developed Countywide Growth Capacity Modeling to show current trends. This influenced the Centers and Corridors approach to planning which is graphically displayed in the Conceptual Land Use Map. These maps identify Centers, Corridors, and general land use determinations in advance of Place Type mapping that were informed by community feedback, existing policy, existing code, proposed policy and Place Types, as well as general community character.

#2

PLACE TYPES

The RPA has created a palette of 23 Place Types to describe the various uses, forms, and character that development can take throughout the County, and its jurisdictions. The section identifies how they are used and which ones exist in Area 7. The RPA's Place Types Matrix addresses a range of contexts from most urban to most rural based on the transect model. Each Place Type policy includes a general description, real-world examples, recommended land uses, guidance on intensity and form, mobility, and infrastructure.

#3

POLICIES

The policy recommendations are inspired from the 4 Community Themes which created the 7 Goals for Unincorporated Area Plans. Each Area Plan will have customized Policy Recommendations based on the community's character, needs, land use, zoning, Place Types, planning models, etc. The policy recommendations are intended to be a guide for implementation at the regulatory level and create a standard by which this document is regulated.



CENTERS AND CORRIDOR APPROACH

The Centers and Corridors Approach is a land development strategy that the RPA has developed to address growth and redevelopment throughout Chattanooga and Hamilton County and which will influence this plan's recommendations. It has three essential concepts:

- » Walkable, clustered Centers where retail uses are concentrated.
- » Corridors comprised of a mix of uses when in suburban areas or with deep setbacks to preserve rural character.
- » Medium and higher density housing near Centers and Corridors to support their economic vitality and local transit viability, where feasible.

This approach addresses plan's Goals and community's preferences:

1. Complete Communities

A mix of housing types in close proximity to centers and corridors gives residents convenient access to daily needs, employment, recreation, and transportation options.

2. Connected Communities

Connected communities enable walking, biking, and transit options, all of which depend on a mix of uses in close proximity. Concentrating businesses in Centers and at key locations along transit Corridors makes these alternate transportation modes more feasible, helping to reduce congestion.

3. Healthy Communities

Communities, where active transportation options and public greenways and parks are available, tend to be healthier: Proximity to these amenities allows people to recreate and get around by providing the built environment to do so.

4. Safe Communities

The Centers and Corridors Approach promotes more eyes on the street, by locating buildings up to the sidewalk, animating the street edge with doors and windows, and more frequent pedestrian activity. Corridors with sidewalks, street trees, and bike lanes promote safe and efficient movement for all users of the street, including motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

5. Unique and Attractive Communities

Place Types emphasize form and character which helps preserve and foster distinctive and memorable places. Due to changes in commercial corridors throughout the County having vacancies, new opportunities are presented for multi-family housing providing redevelopment opportunities for more compact site planning, smaller tenant spaces suited to local businesses, and integrated attached single-family and multi-family. This can increase profits for businesses, reduce traffic and congestion related impacts, and help to preserve the character of existing single-family neighborhoods consistent with input from local residents.

6. Economically Vibrant Communities

Given finite government resources, the Centers and Corridors approach helps prioritize where City resources are invested. Walkable, compact Centers have significant economic impacts for the County. Centers require a certain number of households within a given proximity (depending on their size) in order to sustain businesses. Businesses also tend to be more successful in Centers where retail, services, and housing are all clustered in a compact, walkable environment. Also, compact development yields more tax revenue per acre than dispersed development, thus contributing to the overall wealth and economic vitality of the area.



4.1.2 CONCEPTUAL LAND USE MAP

The Conceptual Land Use map is intended to identify the high-level areas for initial recommendations to inform the place type mapping. The Conceptual Land Use Map is illustrative, whereas the Place Types Map defines development patterns and sets policies for future growth. These Concept maps were created early in the process to identify potential major Centers and Corridors, Resort/Recreation, Special Districts and Residential. The purpose of these maps is to provide guidance to residents, development interests, utility providers, planners, and County leadership on what areas should be primarily preserved in their current form with incremental growth and where new growth should be planned for to support economic opportunity and a balance of services across the County. The conceptual land use maps also identify areas with challenging topographic or hydrologic constraints, existing agricultural use, locations of regional facilities, and recreational assets. While parcel size and density was considered this map is generalized to highlight projected trends and opportunities and to provide guidance on where public and private sector investments are most warranted.

Centers & Corridors

Centers and Corridors are planned considering a variety of factors including utility infrastructure capacity, transportation factors, proximity to schools and emergency services, environmental conditions, recreational access, housing opportunities, and access to commercial services. Centers provide the opportunity to integrate commercial services into our communities in a predictable manner with accompanying infrastructure investments and site considerations.

Corridor designations have been applied in rural areas to indicate opportunities to preserve rural landscape, views, and development patterns, consolidate points of access to primary roadways, limit congestion, and to support rural lifestyles. In suburban settings, corridors are utilized to demonstrate primary transportation corridors that will experience continued development pressure and warrant access management improvements.

Residential

Residential Place Types are the places (outside of centers and corridors) that make up the places we call home. They can be urban or rural, vertical and dense, or secluded retreats and are the building blocks of most traditional neighborhoods and modern suburbs.



Center Example
Source: Continuum



Rural Corridor
Source: RPA



Residential Cont.

When a community wants to incorporate space for a school, a corner restaurant or coffee shop, a convenience store, an accountant's office or even a care facility for elderly family members; the residential Place Types may not accommodate these uses. This is the reason for the variety of scale and intensity of Centers which may be used to complement residential areas to provide for daily needs services and a place mixed residential units. This approach protects single-family residential areas and provides for a more complete community.



Residential Example
Source: Marco Homes

Resort/Recreation

Resort Recreation Centers are introduced in this plan as a specialty district Place Type. Hamilton County has a wealth of recreational assets from highly programmed parks, to blended park-preserves such as Enterprise South Nature Park, to traditional passive use natural areas and preserves. These special use areas have all found a place in the hearts of recreation enthusiasts as varied as league sports athletes, paddlers, fitness walkers, bird watchers, runners, cyclists, nature photographers, and neighborhood residents looking for a safe quiet walk. Not as easily identified is the economic potential of these assets and the user groups who love them. Working from community and stakeholder input, locations have been identified where commerce can be sustainably integrated with recreation to provide jobs, tax base, and income while enhancing and preserving our community recreational resources.



Resort Recreation Example
Source: City of Rockwood, TN

Specialty Districts

Specialty Districts are used to designate the places that form the fabric of our community. They may not be where we live or shop but they house many of the other essential resources we require to thrive in modern society. These include the campuses where our children attend school, the land and facilities that produce our food, power our utility grids, clean our water, house our medical and emergency response facilities, build our communities, and manufacture the products we utilize every day. In many cases, this means they are also our places of employment.



Specialty District Example
Source: Volkswagen



Conceptual Land Use Map

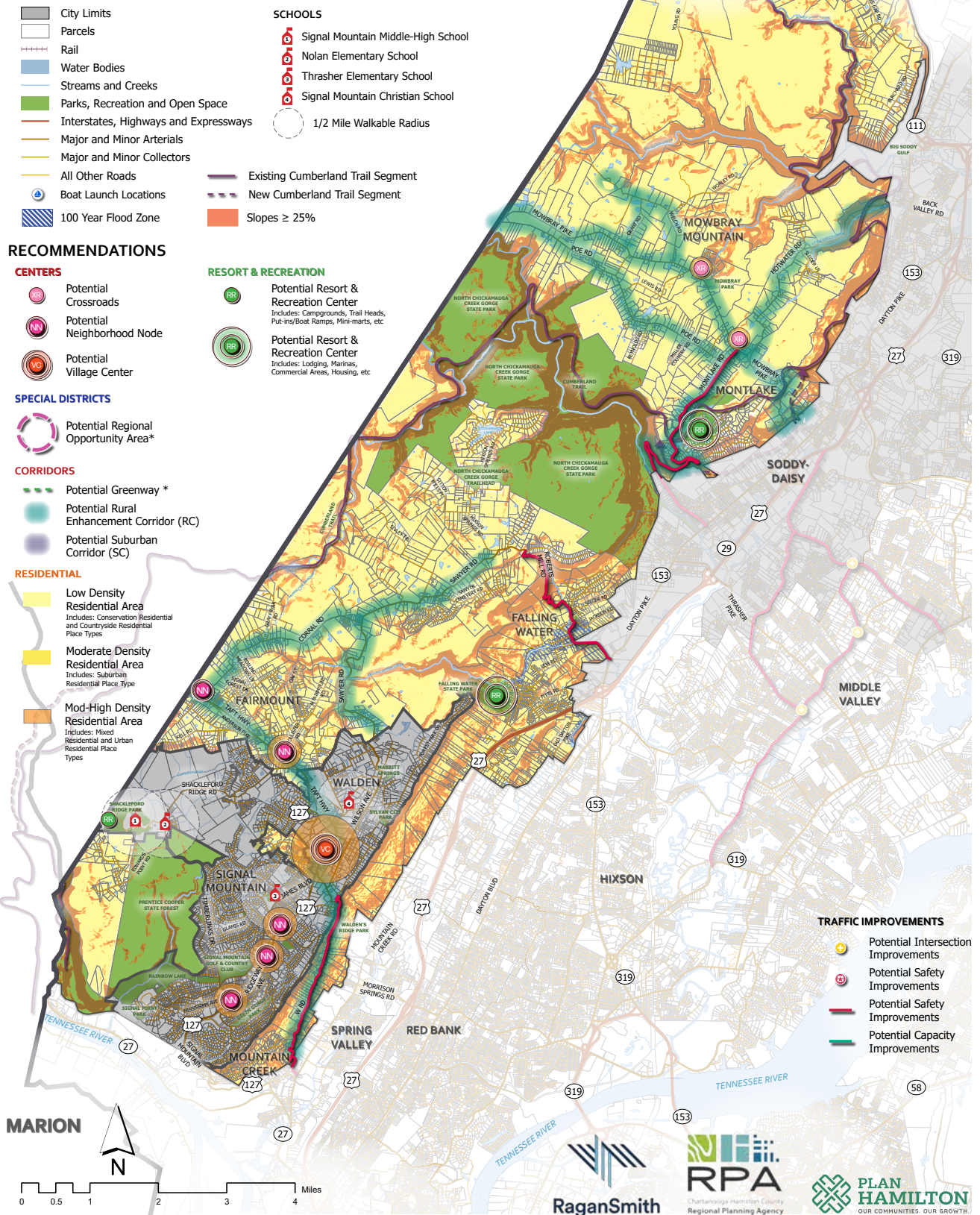


Figure 4.1: Conceptual Land Use Map



4.1.3 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The growth opportunities for Area 7 should be tempered by constraints related to natural features, terrain, and infrastructure. In general, the growth should be primarily rural residential in nature and consistent with the base zoned density. It should provide buffers from primary roads with open space around natural features and to provide neighborhood walking paths and recreation. Service and Commercial development to serve adjacent neighborhoods should be located in Centers and Corridors:

Recreation and Resort Centers:

The opportunity for Recreation and Resort Centers could occur at a variety of scales from small campgrounds with recreational amenities to small lodges or cabin developments with restaurants, outfitters, and services for destination visitors. The potential for recreation-based development is supported by the wealth of high value natural assets and parks in Area 7 including Prentice Cooper State Park, the Rainbow Lake trail complex, Signal Point, Shackleford Ridge Park, Mabbitt Springs, Falling Water State Park, North Chickamauga Gorge State Park, and the potential for the Cumberland Trail to link these assets as a cohesive system. Additionally, these centers are a form of development that could generate a new tax base and financial returns for landowners with lower cumulative impacts on roads, schools, utilities, and environmental assets than suburban residential growth.



Corridors:

Rural Corridors are identified through much of Area 7 and should be utilized to establish criteria for rural development that protects the public right of way, maintains good traffic flows, and preserves the rural character of these Areas. Rural Corridor criteria should create reasonable setbacks for new development and minimize access points to primary roads by promoting internal connections between parcels and carefully planning and aligning development access points.

Centers:

New centers should be of a scale to primarily serve existing local residents and co-located with existing commercial or community services. Small clusters of commercial use should feature connections and be required to provide safe pedestrian crossings where they include development on both sides of a road. A mix housing at higher densities than the surrounding Areas may be appropriate in centers and crossroads and should include internal walking paths with connections to adjacent commercial uses.





Development Examples

Source: RPA and rendering by Dover Kohl

- » The previously completed draft plan for the southern portion of Area 7 near Signal Mountain / Town of Walden provided for a potential new Town Center near the Taft Highway Ace Hardware and the intersection of Taft Highway and Fairmount Pike. Smaller Crossroads Centers were identified on Taft Highway near the Signal Plaza development (Pruett's Market) and in the vicinity of Althaus Park and Signal Mountain Town Hall. This plan makes no changes to those previously identified locations.
- » Potential Crossroads or Neighborhood Nodes for limited convenience retail, commercial or community services, and housing variety are identified near the intersections of Corral and Hollister Roads with Taft Highway (SR127).
- » A potential small Resort Recreation Center is proposed off Mowbray Pike. This center could provide lodging, services, trailhead capacity, and complementary recreational programming to the newly designated state park at North Chickamauga Gorge, additional state owned recreation land around the Cumberland Trail, and a growing segment of climbing, paddling, and outdoor recreation-centered businesses in the vicinity. Crossroads Centers are proposed along Mowbray Pike / Montlake Road with the Mountain General Store as an existing anchor and another further up the mountain near the intersections with Lewis Road and Welch Road centered around Grant's Station and C-Store. A Crossroads at SR 111 and Jones Gap Road anchored by the Eagle Travel Center could expand to a Neighborhood Node in the future to provide housing options and additional services to the north end of Area 7 and the Area 13 neighborhoods along Back Valley Road. Neighborhood commercial services, landscaping, and outdoor products, and sale of agricultural products would all be appropriate. The market for a larger center at this location may take many years to develop.

4.2 PLACE TYPES

Place Types are carefully designated to guide future development and align with the community's vision and adopted plans. These designations indicate whether an area is slated for significant change, gradual transformation, or preservation with minimal alterations. Key considerations include existing zoning, proximity to centers, schools, and parks, as well as the presence of natural resources, necessary infrastructure, and public services. Once Area Plans are adopted, these Place Type designations become essential tools for the Regional Planning Agency (RPA) in making informed zoning decisions. Recommendations for zoning changes are made based on how well the proposed zone aligns with the intended characteristics of the Place Type.

Place Types illustrate a desired character to guide development across a range of community types, from the most urban to suburban, to the most rural places. This distinction is prominently noted in the names of most Place Types, such as Suburban Residential, Urban Residential, and Countryside Residential. Some key elements that contribute to Hamilton County's sense of place include important vistas, the river and its setting within the forested ridges, our diversity of trees, and our historic buildings. This sense of place

can occur at multiple levels - across an entire city, within individual neighborhoods, or in a specific block. The transect graphic below identifies seven general levels of the natural environment to the built environment. The Place Types were partially based on this transect model to ensure that all aspects of Hamilton County's character were considered.

To promote good placemaking, the RPA uses Place Types to influence the form and character of development. This is done alongside the Centers and Corridors approach, as described in Chapter 4.1, to guide different types of development to the most suitable locations. This is based on factors such as Land Use and Development Character, Resiliency, Mobility and Transportation, and Community Facilities.

By designating Place Types, we are not just planning for the present but also safeguarding the unique essence of Hamilton County for future generations. Whether it's the urban vibrancy, suburban charm, or rural tranquility, each Place Type plays a crucial role in maintaining the region's distinct identity and ensuring thoughtful, cohesive development.

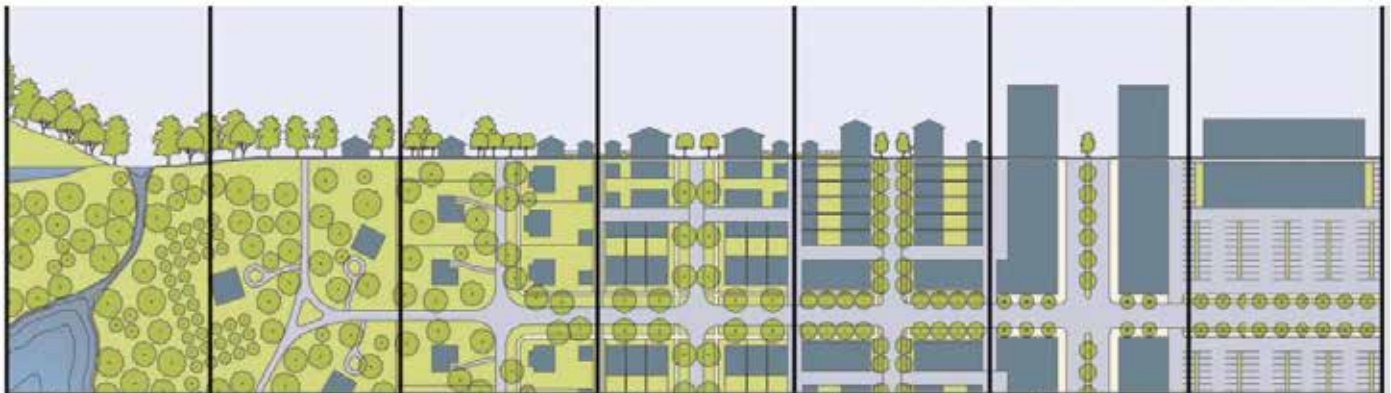


Figure 4.2: Transect Zones from Natural (left) to Special District (right).
Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

4.2.1 HOW ARE THEY USED?

Place Types reflect whether the community vision and adopted plan identifies an area for significant change, gradual transformation, or preservation with little change. Other factors, such as the surrounding or existing zoning, proximity to Centers, schools or parks, the location of natural resources, necessary

infrastructure, and public services are considered. Once Area Plans are adopted, the Place Type designations within those Plans are used by the RPA to inform zoning decisions. A recommendation for a zoning change is based on whether the requested zone will result in the Place Type characteristics described in this chapter. The



following Place Types represent the full palette of Place Types available throughout the County but not all Place Types are used in all areas.

The Area Plan recommendation and Place Types are not intended to limit development during the subdivision platting process for properties zoned R-1 Residential District or other residential zoning district or having a Special Exceptions Permit for a Planned Unit Development prior to plan adoption. Existing zoning density and conditions should not be overridden by Plan Hamilton for platting purposes in residential or commercial zones, but all setback and buffering language should apply to new preliminary plats (those not already accepted by RPA at the time of plan adoption). The subdivision of such land shall follow the Hamilton County Subdivision Regulations standard procedures.

Place Types layout out a vision for future land uses and they are intended to guide development choices, they are not zones. Once a plan and its associated Place Type map is adopted, then a request to study new zoning designations and assess what tools are needed to achieve the adopted vision may occur. A zoning study typically follows within 6 months to a year of plan adoption depending on the level of change desired or other influences.

- » Place Types are not zoning.
- » Place Types are recommended future development patterns.
- » Place Types are policy.
- » Place Types are used to inform zoning decisions.
- » Zoning is a regulation.
- » One or more zoning districts may be used to develop a Place Type.

Predominant Uses, Limited Uses, and Density

Place Types intentionally promote a mix of uses as a means of providing residents with more housing choices and more access to daily needs and jobs. Each Place Type listed in this subchapter provides examples of potential uses, along with other elements that generally define its character and are divided into:

- 1. Predominant Uses** – The most prevalent, most frequently
- 2. Limited Uses** – Less common, but can still be compatible with the predominant use if limited to certain locations, limited in size, buffered from adjacent uses, etc.

“Place Types do not necessarily describe what exists today, but rather the desired vision of what a place may become.”

*Chattanooga - Hamilton County
Regional Planning Agency (RPA)*

While limited uses are less prevalent in a Place Type, they can provide additional services and housing options, while maintaining compatibility with the predominant use. However, a proliferation of limited uses will change the character of an area, and the original intent of the Place Type can be lost. Often, rezoning requests are for these limited uses, and where Limited Uses are listed additional guidance has been provided regarding the appropriateness of integrating the use into the Place Type.

Each of the following Place Types includes:

- » A two or three letter abbreviation, and the color, used to identify each on the Place Types map.
- » A general description of the typical, or ideal, situation.
- » A list of characteristics that are generally needed to support the intended development form of the Place Type.
- » Examples of the predominant uses.
- » Examples of the limited uses.
- » Illustrative photos, presented as examples only.



4.2.2 CATEGORIES & PLACE TYPES IN AREA 7

There are 23 Place Types in total as provided and amended from time to time by the RPA [on their website here](#). The four categories with listing of Place Types are below. On the pages following in this section are the individual Place Types that appear in Walden Plateau as shown on the Place Type Map (Figure 4.6).

RESIDENTIAL

- *Countryside Residential (CR)*
- *Suburban Residential (SR)*
- *Urban Residential (UR)*
- *Mixed Residential (MR)*

SPECIALTY DISTRICTS

- *Preserve (PR)*
- *Agricultural (AG)*
- *Resort & Recreation (RR)*
- *Industrial (IN)*
- *Maker District (MD)*
- *Campus (CA)*
- *Regional Facility (RF)*

CENTERS & CORRIDORS

- *Crossroads (XR)*
- *Neighborhood Node (NN)*
- *Neighborhood Center (NC)*
- *Village Center (VC)*
- *Town Center (TC)*
- *Downtown Core (DC)*
- *Suburban Corridor (SC)*
- *Mixed-use Corridor (MC)*
- *Transit Corridor (TRC)*

OVERLAYS

- *Natural Resources (NR)*
- *Rural Corridor (RC)*

Table 6: Density

PLACE TYPE	MAXIMUM DENSITY	GENERAL INTENSITY
CR Countryside Residential	<i>See Place Type</i>	Low Density
SR Suburban Residential (Principal)	Maximum of 5 dwelling units/acre	Low to Medium Density
SR Suburban Residential (Limited)	Maximum of 5 dwelling units/acre	Medium Density
MD Maker District	Maximum of 12 dwelling units/acre	Medium to High Density
NN Neighborhood Node	Maximum of 12 dwelling units/acre	Medium to High Density
MR Mixed Residential (Principal)	Maximum of 12 dwelling units/acre	Medium to High Density
MR Mixed Residential (Limited)	Maximum of 18 dwelling units/acre	High Density
NC Neighborhood Center	Maximum of 8 dwelling units/acre	Medium to High Density
UR Urban Residential	Maximum of 15 dwelling units/acre	High Density
SC Suburban Corridor	Maximum of 18 dwelling units/acre	High Density
VC Village Center	Maximum of 12 dwelling units/acre	High Density
RR Resort & Recreation	N/A	Varies if Type A or B <i>See Place Type Description</i>



CENTERS

XR

Crossroads

Generally four acres or less, Crossroads are smaller than Village Centers or Town Centers and are most often located in rural Areas. They may serve as gateways to adjacent neighborhoods. Smaller footprint buildings frame a single intersection of two arterial or collector streets, or extend a short distance from the intersection. This small cluster of businesses meets some of the daily needs of the immediate residents with stores, restaurants and other neighborhood-serving commercial uses. Over time when the infrastructure needed to support more intense development is in place, Crossroads may grow into the larger Village Center.

Uses

Retail, restaurants, garden centers, personal services, offices, gas stations, small markets, auto repair, landscape businesses, and small industries/workshops (such as breweries, bakeries and woodworking shops).



NN

Neighborhood Node

Located in urban or suburban Areas, and generally a total of only two acres or less, Neighborhood Nodes are much smaller than Village or Town Centers. Smaller footprint buildings frame a single intersection or extend a short distance from the intersection. This small cluster of businesses provides goods and services, such as laundromats, restaurants, small grocers, and other neighborhood-serving commercial uses, to the immediate surrounding community. Residential uses over retail or office are common.

Uses

Small retail and restaurants, convenience stores, personal services, offices, farmers' markets, small industries/workshops (such as breweries, bakeries and woodworking shops), live/work, short-term vacation rental, and two, three and four-unit dwellings



When a Neighborhood Node is located along a Mixed-use Corridor or Transit Corridor, the building size in the Neighborhood Node should be consistent with its surrounding corridor type (typically larger than described above), but the uses at that location should include ground-floor commercial or services.



NC

Neighborhood Center

Usually found in suburban locations, Neighborhood Centers are shopping centers of 5–15 acres that provide goods and services primarily to the surrounding neighborhoods. They are not part of a continuous “strip” of commercial uses along a corridor, but rather are limited to a single quadrant of an intersection and surrounded by residential development. They usually have large, shared parking lots with a few outparcel buildings that face the street. Some include smaller commercial properties on the other corners of the intersection. Neighborhood Centers often have one large building that houses multiple stores, deeper building setbacks, an emphasis on vehicle access, and limited civic services. Neighborhood Centers may be redeveloped as Village or Town Centers with a more walkable and urban form, over time.

Uses

Grocery stores, retail and restaurants, offices, personal services, small workshop/industries (such as studios, work spaces, bakeries, breweries, woodworking shops or other low impact production) townhomes and minor auto service/repair



VC

Village Center

Larger than Neighborhood Nodes, but smaller than Town Centers, the Village Center (generally 2–10 acres) is a pedestrian-oriented cluster of medium footprint buildings, with a mixture of commercial and residential uses. Multi-story buildings with residential uses over retail or offices are common. Due to their intensity, Village Centers are typically located along transit routes, but primarily serve local residents. Walking, biking and transit are prioritized over auto use in Village Centers, with shared parking lots providing a park-once environment. Pedestrian entrances front directly onto the sidewalks, with window displays at the ground floor to provide interest for pedestrians. Village Centers are often organized around a central public square or park. Village Centers may, over time, grow into Town Centers.

Uses

Civic institutions, public square or park, retail, restaurants, offices, personal services, lodging, live/work, small industries/workshops (such as studios, bakeries, breweries, or woodworking, or other low impact production), townhomes, short-term vacation rentals and two, three and four-unit dwellings.



CORRIDORS

SC

Suburban Corridor

Suburban Corridors have a linear configuration because they are located along major commercial streets, however they differ from Mixed-use and Transit Corridors in that the development along them tends to be more spread out. They are not typically served by frequent transit. Businesses along Suburban Corridors serve a large geographic Area and are primarily accessed by car. Buildings tend to be single-story and house a single use with deep setbacks from the street. Some developments have a horizontal mix of uses within a larger site. The types of businesses found along Suburban Corridors range from stand-alone restaurants and stores, to “strip” shopping centers, to regional malls, medical centers, multi-story office buildings, and hotels. Multi-unit residential is also a growing use along suburban corridors, either as new construction or as retrofits of older retail centers or hotels.

Predominant Uses

Retail, multi-unit housing, offices, restaurants, personal services, medical facilities, lodging, small workshops and artist studios, recreation and entertainment (such as bowling, mini golf, conference centers, theaters) and assisted living facilities.

Limited Uses

Auto-oriented services when located along a major corridor or at the corner of a major intersection.



RESIDENTIAL

CR

Countryside Residential

Countryside Residential Place Types have a very rural character and consist primarily of single-family homes on large lots. Countryside Residential may include open fields, woodlands, and streams or lakes, as well as accessory buildings, such as barns and greenhouses. This Place Type also includes the County's agricultural uses related to the production of crops, livestock, forestry uses and agricultural service businesses ranging from roadside vegetable stands or feed & seed stores to larger production facilities.

Residences and development centered around farming are typically on septic systems. Residences are generally further from key destinations than in other residential Place Types therefore, a personal vehicle is needed to reach daily needs. Fixed-route transit is not feasible, and sidewalks are not likely, due to the low density of these Areas.

Countryside Residential maximum densities are as follows:

- 1.5 dwelling units per acre (development on septic),
- 3 dwelling units per acre (developed on sewer), and
- 2.75 dwelling units per acre (developed on decentralized sewer systems or where new approved technology allows*)

** When new information or technological improvements to the decentralized systems becomes available, staff will present information to the County Commission for direction.*

Development Standards

The following development standards will guide future development and will be codified in the Hamilton County Zoning Regulations and/or inform zoning conditions:

- Buffer and setback from right-of-way:
 - Require a 30' wide planted landscape buffer from existing ROW.
 - For exterior street facing garages, garage doors must be set back 20' from the right-of-way.
- Perimeter buffer:
 - Plant 2 inch caliper trees around entire perimeter of development; minimum of 30' on center. If existing vegetation is equivalent to or greater along the perimeter, the existing vegetation would count towards this requirement.



Predominant Uses

Single-unit detached, farming activities, accessory buildings (barns, greenhouses, etc.), manufactured homes

Limited Uses

Event facilities, golf courses, and campgrounds where appropriate infrastructure exists and development impacts such as noise, traffic, and activity are directed away from existing residential uses.

- Behind said buffer- require a 25' rear setback and a 10' side setback if the side of the house is adjacent to the buffer.
- Floodplains
 - Floodplains may be filled up to three fifths the distance of the length of the floodplain on the property. For instance if a floodplain is 100' in length from a water body – one can fill up to 60 feet in length of that floodplain length.
- Steep Slopes
 - Adopt a steep slope vegetation policy and planting requirements (*Reference: City of Chattanooga Code Sec. 31-324.4*)



SR

Suburban Residential

The Suburban Residential Place Type has a predominantly low intensity, single-family detached, residential development pattern, especially within the same block. Some moderate density residential development, such as small lot houses or attached townhomes, may exist, but are located on a major street or near a transit route or school. When next to lower density residential development, this moderate intensity infill development maintains the existing rhythm and feel of the street. Factors that play into this rhythm and feel include lot width, setbacks, building massing, and height. Open spaces are typically private (back yards), but greenways may provide connectivity. Residences in this Place Type are generally further from key destinations than those in other Place Types therefore, a personal vehicle is needed to reach daily needs.

Predominant Uses

Single-unit detached residences up to 5 dwelling units/acre, accessory dwelling units (ADUs)

Limited Uses

The following uses when located within a 1/4 mile of a public school or park or center where appropriate infrastructure exists: single-unit detached residences up to 5 dwelling units an acre; townhomes (up to 4 massed units per building); and two, three, and four unit housing

**Development Standards**

The following development standards will guide future development and will be codified in the Hamilton County Zoning Regulations and/or inform zoning conditions:

- *Require ADA compliant sidewalks in Suburban Residential Development Standards unless the average lot size is 1 acre or above, in all plans, to ensure pedestrian infrastructure in denser subdivisions.*

MR

Mixed Residential

The Mixed Residential Place Type is intended to provide a wide range of housing options for residents at various stages of life, and walkable destinations in close proximity. Due to their intensity, Mixed Residential developments are located along major streets, or within walking distance (1/4-mile) of a transit route. The Mixed Residential Place Type includes moderate to higher intensity housing. Taller multi-family buildings are located along streets, with shorter buildings on local streets to provide a transition to any less intense residential uses.

Predominant Uses

Two, three and four unit residences, multi-family residential with 5–12 units per building, cottage courts, townhomes, manufactured home parks, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Limited Uses

Multi-family of over 12 units per buildings should be directed towards major streets/corridor or adjacent to a center.



SPECIALTY DISTRICTS

PR

Preserve

Preserves are large expanses of forest, floodplains and other natural resources, as well as public parks and recreation Areas that have been set aside as places where general development is not allowed. They may also include privately-owned land that is permanently protected by conservation easements and remains in a largely undeveloped state. Some may be used for passive recreation, while others are largely off limits to human use due to sensitive natural resources or their remote location. Development within the Preserve is minimized, and is limited to cultural, educational or recreational uses.

Uses

Undisturbed open space, visitors' centers, nature centers, public parks, active and passive recreation, trails, cemeteries, and accessory structures such as concessions, storage and parking.


RR

Resort and Recreation

The Resort and Recreation Place Type supports outdoor activities such as camping, boating, golfing, bouldering, mountain biking, as well as corporate nature retreats, and eco-tourism activities. These places are focused on enjoying nature, exceptional views, or historic landmarks. However, unlike Preserves, which are primarily government-owned properties with very limited development, such as a state or County park, the Resort and Recreation Place Type can include multiple private businesses with more development, such as marinas, hotels, restaurants and even housing. Properties may range in size from a 20-acre campground to 100+ acre resorts with a marina, lodge, restaurant, and individual house lots.

Resort Type A accommodates a more intense outdoor recreation and park experience and could include hotels, conferences centers, large campgrounds/RV parks and related uses or even a full resort. Oftentimes these are located in or adjacent to state or county parks or may develop from a golf course or event facility such as a fairground or agritourism site. The development size and location should be designed so that the impact of this larger-scale format lessens potential negative aspects.

Resort Type B accommodates smaller-scale or less intense recreational activities such as golf courses, ballfields, cultural facilities, marinas, and related accessory use such as parking areas, small campgrounds or cabins, and related retail goods such as camp stores, farm stands, and equipment rental (kayaks/canoes, bicycles, etc.)



Predominant Uses

Campgrounds/RV parks, hotels, cabins, restaurants, marinas, camp stores, golf courses, agriculture-related businesses (e.g. boarding stables, riding academies), farming activities

Limited Uses

Single-unit housing (detached and attached) and reception facilities as a secondary use integrated into a resort.



CA

Campus

Campus Place Types are characterized by one major activity such as educational, office, industrial, medical, or religious. Campuses are typically based on a master plan that incorporates buildings, open spaces, streets, pedestrian networks, and parking in a unified manner. Campuses have clearly defined edges—often delineated with gateway structures and landscape—that distinguish them from adjacent Place Types. Residential buildings and small convenience services often support the predominant use. Campuses function as major employment and activity centers and are often served by public or private transit.

Uses

Institutions (such as academic, medical, religious or research facilities), offices, clubhouses/ meeting halls, athletic facilities, non-noxious/non-nuisance manufacturing and industrial, open space, multi-family residences (residence halls and dormitories), onsite retail and food services, and staff housing.



Existing schools, large medical and church campuses, government facilities, and corporate headquarters are identified as the Campus Place Type. However, as land use and property owners change over time, the Campus designation may no longer be applicable. In that case, the plan goals, surrounding Place Types, and context should all be considered in identifying future use/ reuse of the former Campus site.

IN

Industrial

The Industrial Place Type supports a variety of manufacturing uses. Unlike the Maker District Place Type, the Industrial Place Type includes both non-noxious operations (no hazardous materials or pollution) and noxious industries (heavy industrial production). The latter are not located adjacent to residential Areas, but are not so far away as to be a commute burden. The size of lots (2+ acres) and buildings are often larger than those in the Maker District Place Type.

Uses

Light manufacturing and industrial facilities, including assembly facilities, offices, distribution, warehousing, wholesaling, retail specifically related to the primary use and self storage facilities.

Limited Uses

Heavy manufacturing should be located along major transportation infrastructure and directed away from existing development.



There are limited areas of industrial uses in the County today. Some smaller scale industrial areas may appropriately transition to Maker Districts supporting a combinations of contractors, skilled trades, repair specialists, artists and artisans, food production, and service centers.



MD

Maker District

Maker District Place Types are live-work districts where housing and workplaces are located in close proximity to each other, providing residents with convenient access to employment. They include a mix of light manufacturing, assembly, and contractor businesses, along with multi-family residential and commercial uses. Older smaller industrial structures that have been adapted for new purposes are frequently found here. Industrial facilities are non-noxious (no hazardous materials or pollution), and non-nuisance (no odors, excessive light, or heavy truck traffic). Due to these smaller buildings, short block lengths, and the mix of other uses, these Areas are generally walkable. Parks, plazas, and neighborhood-serving retail enhance the character and livability of the Area.

Uses

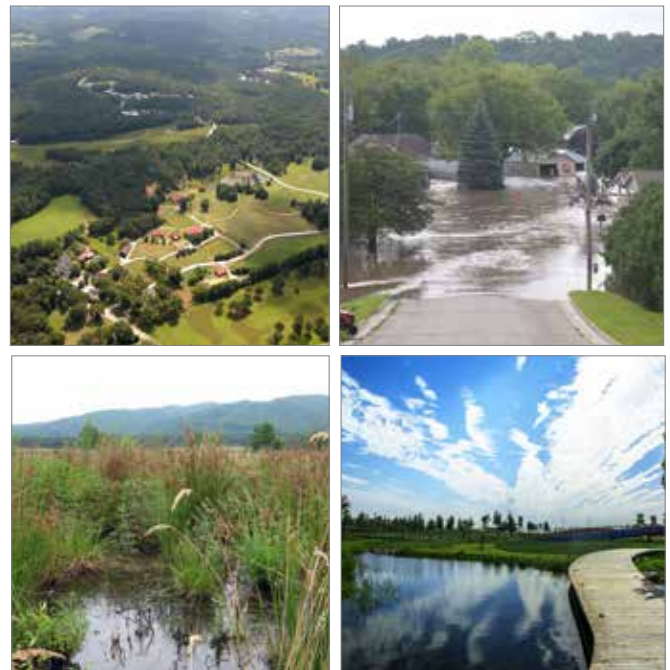
Non-noxious/non-nuisance light manufacturing, assembly, distribution, small workshop/industries (such as woodworking shops, bakeries, or other low impact production), studios, breweries, contractor's offices, live/work, multi-unit residential, retail, offices, restaurants, vehicle repair, gas stations, outdoor storage yard, and self storage facilities

**OVERLAYS****Natural Resources Overlay**

The Natural Resources Overlay is not a Place Type in and of itself. It is an Overlay on top of the underlying Place Type that identifies Areas considered sensitive due to the presence of steep slopes, floodplains or wetlands. Sites within this overlay are not protected by law from development. The purpose, therefore, is to identify these sensitive Areas so that they are given consideration for protection, or incorporated as amenities within new developments. Some sites are already developed and the overlay designation does not mean development cannot expand in these Areas; it merely identifies the location of floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes.

Predominant Uses

Uses are defined by the underlying Place Type.



RC

Rural Corridor

Primarily located in rural parts of the County, and are characterized by lots of open fields and woodlands. Development along Rural Corridors is sparse with farms or single unit homes on large estate lots. A few scattered subdivisions with smaller lots may have entries along these corridors, but the homes are separated from the corridor by distance (50 - 100 feet), and by dense vegetated buffers, in order to preserve the rural character of the corridor. Rural Corridors do not have the more dense, connecting street networks. They are typically two-lane roads. Rural Corridors may however, also take the form of a major thoroughfare, such as a state designated scenic parkway, with mountainside or lakefront views. A few commercial uses, often located at a Crossroads intersection, or as a stand-alone business, may be found along Rural Corridors, but no long stretches of commercial businesses.

The purpose of the rural corridor overlay is primarily to address new subdivision development. A rural corridor setback for a subdivision for the purposes of the plan refers to a required distance that new development must maintain from a designated corridor, as detailed on the Place Type map. The intent of the setback is to protect the character and environmental integrity of the rural landscape. The setback does not apply to individual homes outside a major subdivision.

**Development Standard**

The following development standard will guide future development and will be codified in the Hamilton County Zoning Regulations and/or inform zoning conditions:

- A 50-foot setback from right of way of existing roadway for any structure including water quality features;
- a 30-foot type A landscape buffer is required along the entire frontage;
- adequate right of way as determined by the County Engineer should also be required as a condition to be given to accommodate an additional lane if a rezoning case is requested along the Rural Corridor overlay.

4.2.3 PLACE TYPES MAP

See separate Place Type Map. Not included due to size.



4.2.4 CENTERS & CORRIDORS VISION

The Centers and Corridors Vignettes bring to life a vision for thoughtfully guided growth in key locations across our communities. By focusing on high-potential centers and strategically important corridors, these vignettes illustrate how balanced land use—combining residential, commercial, and recreational spaces—can shape places that are both dynamic and resilient. Each

vignette reveals how carefully aligned planning can elevate connectivity, support walkable neighborhoods, and foster economic growth while preserving Hamilton County’s distinctive character, natural beauty, and cultural heritage. Through these targeted narratives, we explore how well-designed centers and corridors not only strengthen community identity but also

The following depictions are intended to represent one idea of potential future development at these locations. Any future development or redevelopment at these locations would need to be initiated by the private property owner. Where there is a mismatch between a vignette and the Place Type map, the Place Type map reflects the official policy.



enhance access to essential services, encourage diverse transportation options, and bolster the area's long-term sustainability. This vision aligns with the unique needs and values of Hamilton County residents, building a legacy of vibrant, and adaptable communities.



Figure 4.4: Vignette Recommendation, Recreation Center at Mowbray Pike & Hotwater Road



4.3 POLICIES

The goals and policy recommendations outlined in Area Plans represent a comprehensive framework designed to guide sustainable development and enhance community well-being. These initiatives are crafted to ensure that future growth respects and enhances the County's and Area 7 distinct community character while preserving its abundant natural resources.

Emphasizing the importance of balanced growth, the plans prioritize the development of accessible parks and recreation Areas that promote active lifestyles and environmental stewardship. Infrastructure improvements are a cornerstone, aimed at improving the connectivity of transportation networks, enhancing water and wastewater management systems, and integrating sustainable solutions. Additionally, the plans emphasize the need for diverse and affordable housing options to support a growing and inclusive population.

By aligning these goals with thoughtful policy recommendations, Hamilton County seeks to foster a resilient and cohesive community. This approach not only prepares the County for future challenges but also enhances its livability and ensures that development is carried out in a manner that respects and preserves its unique character and natural beauty.

The following section identifies the 7 goals which are consistent amongst all five unincorporated Areas. Following each goal is a policy recommendation to implement that goal.

“Comprehensive Plans offer a strategic approach to where and how we grow. They address areas for change and areas to preserve.”

*Chattanooga - Hamilton County
Regional Planning Agency (RPA)*



4.3.1 GOAL 1 & POLICIES

GOAL 1 BALANCE GROWTH, ECONOMY & COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Policy 1.7.1** Adopt the Walden's Ridge Place Types Map as the RPA's official land use policy and use it to inform municipal decisions on development proposals.
- Policy 1.7.2** Develop Conservation Development standards to implement this option for large parcels zoned A1 and R1. Emphasize larger lots and setbacks at base density and clustering of smaller lots if density is increased. Adopt a separation distance of 100 ft. minimum between major streets
- Policy 1.7.3** identified as Rural Corridors and lots within residential subdivisions with requirements to preserve mature tree canopy or plant an effective, natural buffer for new development.
- Policy 1.7.4** Review the land use policy in the Walden's Ridge Area Plan every five years and adjust it as needed to reflect changes in community preference, market conditions, school capacity, infrastructure, or other factors that could affect the quality of life.
- Policy 1.7.5** Setback and buffering requirements as detailed in Place Types should also apply to residential plats in agricultural zones.
- Policy 1.7.6** Amend the A-1 Agricultural District to change to the Maximum Density to 1.5 dwelling unit per acre on traditional septic.



4.3.2 GOAL 2 & POLICIES

GOAL 2 PROTECT & ENHANCE NATURAL RESOURCES

- Policy 2.7.1** Review current standards for stormwater management, steep slopes, and tree preservation/replacement for potential updates to reflect best management practices.
- Policy 2.7.2** Update stormwater management regulations and provide a manual of best management practices at community-wide, development, and lot scale.
- Policy 2.7.3** Consider the upper limits of property slope for residential construction based on state of the practice in other similar communities. Consider the environmental and life-safety aspects of more hillside or steep slope development.
- Policy 2.7.4** Adopt a tree preservation and replacement ordinance for wooded areas. Require specimen trees to be surveyed and protected during all construction phases. Consider a requirement to replace specimen trees that could not be located outside the footprint of critical infrastructure or were unintentionally damaged during construction.
- Policy 2.7.5** Develop Conservation Subdivision Development criteria that incentivize this option for large parcels zoning for agricultural or residential.
- Policy 2.7.6** Work with National, State, and local conservation organizations to develop a program for purchase and protection of environmentally sensitive lands, prime agricultural parcels, and recreational assets. Provide for public use and access where appropriate.



4.3.3 GOAL 3 & POLICIES

GOAL 3 PRESERVE & ENHANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Policy 3.7.1** Work with Federal, State, and local preservation organizations to initiate mechanism whereby land with high natural resource and recreation value can be purchased, preserved and managed for public benefit.
- Policy 3.7.2** Work with TDEC, Hamilton County Parks, and others to fully develop the Cumberland Trail Route through Hamilton County. Work at the neighborhood scale to connect gaps between existing segment, identify and develop viable trailheads, create wayfinding signage, and establish programming /use guidelines for this asset.
- Policy 3.7.3** Promote public-private partnerships and public sector collaboration to enhance facilities and management of natural resource / recreation assets including: North Chickamauga Creek Gorge SP, Falling Water Falls Natural Area, Prentice Cooper State Forest, the Cumberland Trail, Signal Point Park, Rainbow Falls preserve. Evaluate the potential for these resources to provide long term economic benefits, jobs, and tax base by allowing for resort and recreation-based development on adjacent lands, where appropriate.



4.3.4 GOAL 4 & POLICIES

GOAL 4 PROMOTE CONNECTIVITY & MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

- Policy 4.7.1** Evaluate the potential to require connectivity easements between projects under development and larger undeveloped parcels. Encourage developers to review RPA zoning and subdivision dashboards to identify opportunities to connect to future development.
- Policy 4.7.2** Initiate a study for Highway 127, Robert's Mill Rd, and the W Rd to identify improvements for safety and emergency / natural disaster access strategies.
- Policy 4.7.3** Consider joint development between Hamilton County, Signal Mountain and Walden of a Greenways & Trails Master Plan to identify desired multi-use pathway connectivity between existing trail systems, parks, schools, and other community assets. Trailhead parking, facilities, and signage should also be addressed. This can set the stage to develop funding, ROW acquisition, and potential participation from individual developers in strategic locations.
- Policy 4.7.4** Work with the County Engineer's Office, the Roads Committee, the MPO, the RPA, and TDOT to implement the recommended studies and transportation improvement in Appendix E.

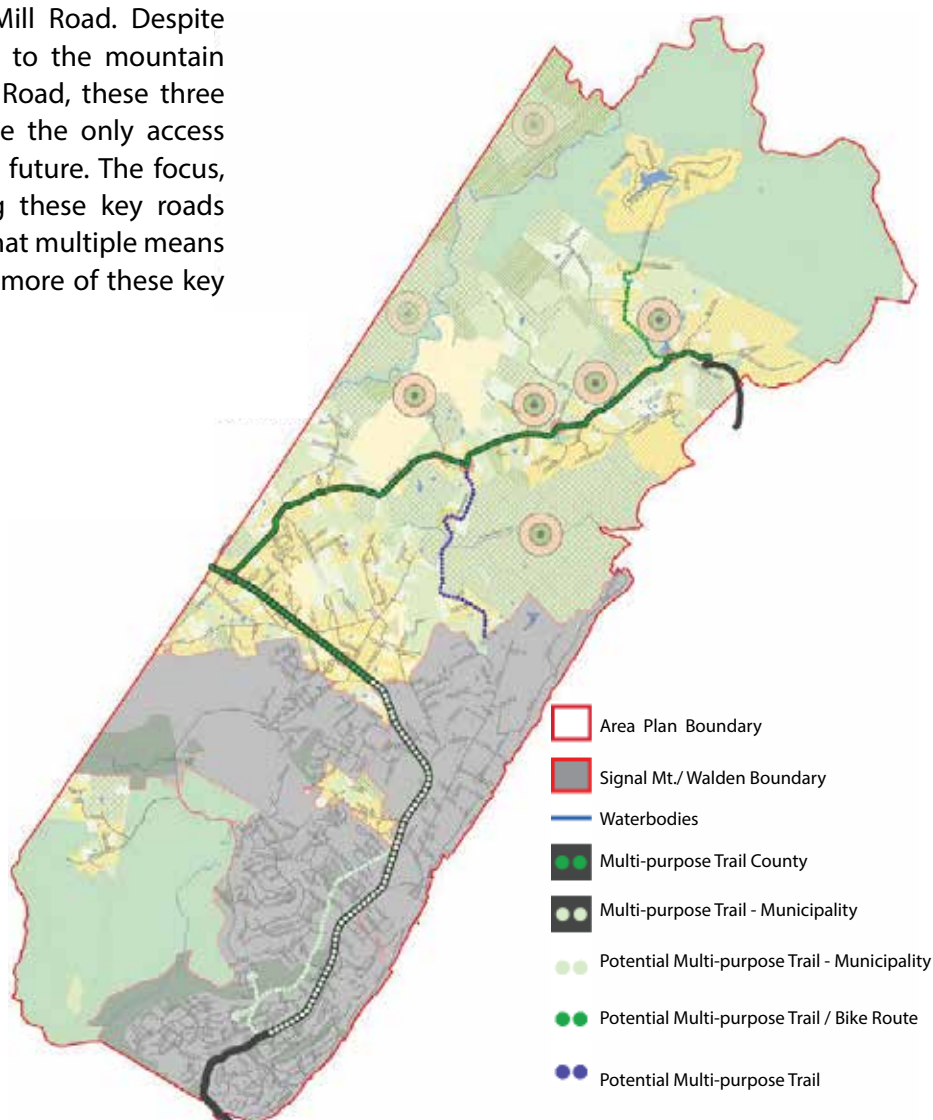


The integration of multi-modal options is essential for creating a dynamic and accessible community. This plan ensures that all residents can travel safely and efficiently, whether by car, bike, or on foot. By providing well-designed roads for vehicles, dedicated bike lanes, and extensive pedestrian pathways, Walden Plateau aims to enhance mobility, reduce traffic congestion, and promote sustainable living. These transportation options not only improve the quality of life by encouraging active lifestyles and reducing environmental impact, but also support local economic development by making it easier for people to reach businesses and services throughout the Area.

Walden's Ridge has three points of access from the valleys below, Highway 127 (Taft Highway/Signal Mt. Blvd.), The W Road, and Roberts Mill Road. Despite ideas to create a new access road to the mountain that would connect to Suck Creek Road, these three existing thoroughfares will likely be the only access to the mountain in the foreseeable future. The focus, therefore, should be on improving these key roads and developing systems to ensure that multiple means of access are possible when one or more of these key roads are impassable.

Connectivity between neighborhoods is crucial for several key reasons. It helps disperse traffic, reducing congestion and allowing for narrower, safer streets. It also ensures that emergency services like police, fire, and ambulances can quickly reach residents. By connecting neighborhoods, we create safer, more efficient, and better-served communities.

Greenway Concept Map



4.3.5 GOAL 5 & POLICIES

GOAL 5 PROVIDE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE

- Policy 5.7.1** Recognize the severe limitations of access to centralized sewer capacity through WWTAs and development of traditional septic tank-leach field systems based on depth to rock and suitable soils.
- Policy 5.7.2** Strengthen County water quality management ordinances and include best management practices. Provide adequate staffing for review and ongoing inspection of engineered designs for Erosion Control Plans, Site Stabilization, and permanent stormwater infrastructure. Add incentives for low-impact development solutions. Consider the possibility of publicly funded centralized stormwater collection in highly sensitive areas.
- Policy 5.7.3** Work with local full time and volunteer fire and EMS districts to address coverage gaps, equipment needs, cross training and funding as recommended by the Rural Hamilton County Fire and Rescue Services Evaluation Report - March 2024, see Appendix G.



4.3.6 GOAL 6 & POLICIES

GOAL 6 PROVIDE SUITABLE COMMERCIAL & MIXED-USE CENTERS

- Policy 6.7.1** Evaluate infrastructure gaps related to the center Place Types indicated on the Conceptual Land Use Map.
- Policy 6.7.2** Support development of a Crossroads over time encompassing existing and future uses at Anderson Pike and SR 127 with connectivity between commercial, public, park, and institutional assets. Evaluate the potential to address gaps in infrastructure design and capacity to support this center should it develop in Walden.
- Policy 6.7.3** Evaluate the potential for the growth in the existing Crossroads at Hollister Road and SR 127 to evolve into a Neighborhood Node incorporating small pockets of multifamily housing interspersed with existing and future commercial use.
- Policy 6.7.4** Explore the ability to serve the proposed Resort Recreation Center off Montlake Road near North Chickamauga Gorge SP to provide potential lodging, food, and commercial amenity support to the diverse range of recreational assets found in this Area.
- Policy 6.7.5** Allow these proposed centers to focus infrastructure investments, development impacts, and economic activity in areas best suited for this growth. Planning for growth in these areas will also help to preserve the natural setting and quiet mountain lifestyle that area residents have expressed a clear desire to maintain.



4.3.7 GOAL 7 & POLICIES

GOAL 7 PROVIDE A RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS

- Policy 7.7.1** Provide an education program county-wide on Agricultural zoning and what legal actions are possible with Commissioner support. These could include changes that could lower density of housing.
- Policy 7.7.2** Utilize identified centers from Crossroads (XR) to Village Centers (VC) to accommodate a range of housing types potentially including small lot single-family, townhomes, cottage courts, live/work and two, three and four unit dwellings.



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AREA 7 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Residents in Area 7 are primarily concerned with managing growth in a way that aligns with the area's unique topographic and infrastructure limitations. Much of Area 7 is located atop Signal Mountain or along its steep slopes transitioning to the valley floor. The mountain roads have challenging geometry and topography, limiting both capacity and reasonable investment. The ability to increase centralized sewage disposal capacity is constrained by the terrain and distance from treatment facilities. While on-site systems are feasible in some locations, they are restricted in others by soil depth and infiltration challenges.

Residents would prefer the Area remain with its rural and low-density suburban character. They've expressed an attachment to the recreational opportunities, quiet lifestyle, excellent schools, and minimal traffic and crime. These qualities not only define the community but will continue to make it attractive to new residents and developers.

Tools & Strategies

Conservation Subdivisions:

- » Residents may support a future decrease in A-1 density in this planning area.
- » A Conservation Subdivision provision should be established providing for modest density increases in exchange for significant provision of protected open space, natural resource areas, and protected public access to trails.
- » Other methods for preservation of agricultural and forested land and public access must be pursued with conservation partners now to offer viable choices for landowners who desire to realize a return on their land without developing their properties.

Centers:

- » Outside of the towns of Walden and Signal Mountain, the only recommended areas for

increased density or commercial use are in small footprint Crossroads Place Types centered around existing commercial or government services.

- » Resort Recreation Place Types are recommended in a limited number of locations as another means of supporting economic returns for landowners and providing local jobs while limiting development impacts and the demand for investments in education, utility, and transportation infrastructure. Where approved, they must come with a commitment to preservation of natural resource areas and provisions for public access to recreational assets on or near the property. Lodging tax and potentially an increment in retail sales taxes should be reinvested in local recreational assets and related infrastructure to localize the benefits. Potential for additional public benefits at: The Cumberland Trail, Falling Water Falls State Natural Area, the newly designated North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park, and the newly completed Walden Ridge County Park.



Corridors:

- » No Suburban Corridors are recommended in Area 7 at this time although this designation could make sense in future plan updates on road segments leading in and out of Center developments to slow traffic, focus attention on safe pedestrian crossings, and limit the length and frequency of curb cuts.
- » The Rural Corridor designation is broadly recommended along the arterial and major collector roads in the Area. This designation will require development setbacks allowing for placement of access improvements, pedestrian and school bus facilities, storm water facilities, and maintain the rural character of the area where new residential subdivisions are developed.

Transportation Infrastructure:

- » Transportation Infrastructure must be improved in the areas identified for priority investments in the [Transportation Project Priorities List](#). The County should immediately create requirements limiting the size/density of developments with a single point of access, providing for safe pedestrian infrastructure within developments, and governing intersection spacing and access design for new subdivisions.

General:

- » The RPA should extend the offer for joint planning efforts with Signal Mountain and the Town of Walden to encourage future growth and economic vitality in municipal areas and coordinate delivery of required infrastructure and services between jurisdictions.





CHAPTER 5

NEXT STEPS & IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 INTRODUCTION
- 5.2 IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX
- 5.3 PLAN SUMMARY



5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the essential bridge between each community's vision and the actions needed to make it a reality, translating broad goals and strategies into specific, actionable steps. By outlining processes for tracking progress, identifying funding opportunities, and fostering ongoing community involvement, this chapter offers a clear roadmap to bring these plans to life—guiding Hamilton County's growth in ways that honor its unique character, address residents' needs, and protect the qualities that define each community.

Hamilton County's growth has varied significantly across the five Areas examined in this plan, reflecting a wide range of factors. Rapid development has shaped East Brainerd, Ooltewah, and incorporated Collegedale in Area 12, along with parts of Harrison in Area 9 and Middle Valley in Area 8. Similarly, steady interest surrounds Signal Mountain and Walden in Area 7. In contrast, most of Area 13 and the northern sections of Area 9 have largely preserved their rural landscapes and agricultural heritage.

Key infrastructure corridors, particularly US-27, have been instrumental in fostering growth over the past two decades, fueling employment hubs, retail centers, and other commercial services. Interstate access and centralized sewer services has created favorable conditions for development and infrastructure investments in these corridors. Major employers like Erlanger Hospital and Kubota, along with their networks of suppliers, have driven demand for nearby housing and led to increased commercial activity. High-performing schools in the Walden Plateau area have contributed to further residential demand.

Infrastructure

The presence of sewer trunk lines and available capacity remains one of the single biggest predictors for residential growth. However, the overall availability of sewer capacity is a significant constraint, presenting Hamilton County planners and leadership with critical decisions on where to allocate resources for sewage treatment and collection expansion. Currently, most funding is dedicated to increasing storage for combined sewer flows, aimed at preserving treatment capacity and avoiding regulatory actions tied to water quality.

An integrated approach is essential to addressing challenges facing the sewer facilities that serve Chattanooga and Hamilton County. This includes an intensified focus on reducing stormwater impacts through both engineered and low-impact development practices. Investing in more comprehensive stormwater infrastructure reviews across both commercial and residential projects could provide significant returns, mitigating maintenance costs tied to sewer capacity. Incentives for low-impact development, as implemented in other communities, could help retain stormwater on-site, reduce flow rates into combined systems, and enhance water quality within critical watersheds. Better mapping of sewer and water infrastructure is also needed to provide planners with the tools they need to identify infrastructure gaps, investment targets, and areas of the county that can be planned as future growth centers.

Transportation

The County's economic and population growth has created challenges such as driving demand for efficient and safe transportation alternatives. This need is especially evident in areas experiencing the most rapid expansion. Keeping pace with these demands through infrastructure maintenance, improvement, and expansion is a significant challenge faced at every level of government, and Hamilton County is no exception. As growth continues in the County and the greater Chattanooga and northwest Georgia region, strategic investments in the transportation system will be essential to support future mobility and enhance residents' quality of life.

Hamilton County's role as a regional transportation hub underscores its significance. Interstates 24, 59, and 75 provide critical connectivity for freight, recreation, and commuter traffic across the Southeast and key corridors to the Northeast, Midwest, Southwest, and Florida. Additionally, the county is served by Class I railroads, CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railway, offering freight movement alternatives nationwide. The Tennessee River further enhances freight transport options as a navigable waterway.



As Hamilton County grows, a more focused approach to transportation planning will be essential. Key strategies include corridor management plans, access management strategies, and road safety audits. Corridor management plans for routes such as Ooltewah Ringgold Road, Highway 58, Hixson Pike, and Middle Valley Road can reduce traffic friction and improve access efficiency for businesses and residential areas. Access management strategies, including regulating driveway placement, optimizing intersection design, and promoting shared access points, offer a more detailed approach to improving traffic flow and safety. Regular road safety audits for high-crash routes will proactively identify and address safety concerns.

Many of Hamilton County's critical routes are under TDOT jurisdiction. Leveraging funding for improvements to those routes would begin with adding the desired route or improvement to the long range transportation plan (RTP) so that state and/or federal funding can be allocated based on the prioritization of needs by the MPO. Ongoing monthly or quarterly coordination meetings are recommended between the Hamilton County Roads Committee, RPA-MPO planners and the staff at TDOT Region 2 to advocate for future projects. This will also allow County leadership to stay informed of changes or opportunities for funding new projects or spot improvements.

To effectively address the unique needs of each Area, strategies must be tailored to specific locations and projects. These approaches should be further refined through detailed, site-specific safety and design studies. Potential tools include:

- » Tax Increment Financing (TIF)– This would be particularly useful in areas where growth is expected to increase traffic demand. The McDonald Farm is a good example of somewhere in Hamilton County that TIF could be applied.
- » Business Improvement Districts (BID)– This would be a similar approach as the TIF but would be more applicable to developed commercial areas to complete smaller road, multimodal, or streetscape projects.

- » Alternative Transportation Funding – Projects involving electric vehicle infrastructure (charging stations) or other solutions such as bike-share or ride-share services often qualify for different funding programs. Given the rural character in part of the County, these types of projects would need to be located in places with the highest probability of success.
- » Public-Private Partnerships – This can be an important tool for funding large infrastructure projects with private companies when the opportunity for an industrial, commercial, or residential projects arise with benefits to the County. The costs, financing, and effort of project delivery can be shared when working with private companies.

The transportation analysis for these Area Plans aimed to identify impactful projects that might otherwise be overlooked in the TIP process but are critical to Hamilton County residents. Potential projects addressing roadway safety and traffic congestion were identified across all five Areas and prioritized based on their impact and cost. [This list](#) serves as a valuable tool for County transportation planners and engineers, helping to advocate for major projects within the MPO–TIP planning process while also providing a strategic roadmap for efficient local investments that can deliver meaningful results in the near term.

The recommended projects include both design and construction initiatives, as well as engineering studies to refine potential solutions and anticipate future transportation needs. These recommendations are designed to address existing traffic and roadway safety challenges and can be seen as deferred investments needed to support growth that has already occurred. If fully funded and implemented, the Transportation Project Priorities List would create synergistic improvements, significantly enhancing the county's transportation network. However, as new growth unfolds, additional evaluations and investments will be essential to meet evolving demands.



Emergency Services

To support the analysis of current conditions, the County and RPA also commissioned a Fire and Rescue Services Evaluation. Unincorporated Hamilton County is primarily served by a patchwork of dedicated and resourceful volunteer fire departments. With findings that reveal life safety implications tied to new growth, the report underscores the need for careful planning on where and how future developments occur, taking into account building types, heights, and roadway connectivity in order to adequately protect residents, business owners, and their structures.

Addressing Future Challenges

The benefit of planning for growth within the centers and corridors framework is that it greatly increases the odds of predicting where future sewer, transportation, emergency services, stormwater, water, communications, education, and recreational infrastructure investments will be required. However, realizing these goals will require significant financial and human resources. Outside projections estimate the combined need for infrastructure investments across Hamilton County at around \$3.8 billion—a figure that poses challenges for per capita affordability.

Individual views of elected leaders on where and how much infrastructure investment is needed will undoubtedly vary, but it is clear that higher levels of funding and planning are essential to address existing backlogs across various infrastructure categories. Without an approved Comprehensive Plan, County leadership and staff have had difficulty focusing growth and predicting where infrastructure improvements will be needed next.

While certain areas have already developed strong market dynamics due to key employers, shopping centers, and transportation infrastructure, balanced investments in both traditional and social infrastructure could promote more equitable growth across Hamilton County. However, without adequate sewer capacity, education facilities, and emergency services, further growth-oriented policies may have limited impact.

Hamilton County stands at a critical crossroads where leaders are grappling with past deficiencies in infrastructure investments driven by sustained growth associated with national and regional migration and natural or endemic growth. The county continues to attract residents drawn by job opportunities, climate, quality of life, and comparatively affordable living. Meanwhile, existing residents often express a strong desire to preserve the rural character, safety, and quality education opportunities for their families.

The implementation strategies within this plan aim to directly address these priorities and lay the groundwork for a sustainable future:

1. A multifaceted approach to increasing the quality and capacity of existing infrastructure.
2. Seeking synergies between land use and infrastructure planning and improved standards for new development that maximize the efficiency, capacity, and return on investment for both private and public infrastructure construction and spending.
3. Planning and design strategies that reduce development impacts and maximize existing education, transportation, recreation, and natural resource assets.
4. Initiate new strategies to preserve rural lifestyles, agricultural production, and associated land.
5. To identify new potential revenue streams, financial vehicles, and public-private partnerships for addressing the needs identified by Hamilton County residents.



5.2 IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The implementation process for the Area plans is built on strong partnerships, strategic tools, and targeted funding, all aimed at bringing each community's vision to life (see Community Themes). Collaboration between local governments, stakeholders, and residents is at the heart of this process, ensuring that efforts are aligned and resources are effectively utilized. Key projects are prioritized, with clear timelines and responsibilities, while a range of tools and funding mechanisms are deployed to support these initiatives. This comprehensive approach ensures that the plans are not only actionable but also adaptable, allowing for continued progress as community needs and opportunities evolve.

POLICY SUBCATEGORY (TOOLS & STRATEGIES)

The Implementation Matrix organizes recommendations into specific focus areas, providing a clear structure, by breaking down broader policy goals into targeted subcategories. This section enables a more detailed approach to land use, infrastructure, environmental conservation, and community services allowing Hamilton County to meet the unique needs of each planning area while advancing cohesive, Countywide objectives. These categories were tailored based on the overall policy objectives in the introduction chapter and the input received throughout the community feedback process. Within the matrix, here are 5 topics with each covering various community aspects of Plan Implementation:

1. **Community Character & Land Use Patterns**
2. **Natural Resources**
3. **Infrastructure & Transportation Network**
4. **Economic Health & Community Opportunity**
5. **Funding Mechanisms**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations outline targeted actions to support Hamilton County's vision for balanced, sustainable growth. Each recommendation offers guidance for decision-makers, addressing key areas such as land use, infrastructure, resiliency, and community development. These recommendations are crafted to reflect the unique needs of each planning area, ensuring that policies not only guide growth but also strengthen community character, enhance infrastructure, protect natural resources, and improve residents' quality of life.

APPLICABILITY

Identifies where each recommended action is most relevant across Hamilton County's planning Areas. By specifying how and where the policies can be applied, this category ensures that recommendations are tailored to the unique conditions, needs, and priorities of each community. This targeted approach allows for flexible, area-specific strategies that respect local character while addressing shared Countywide goals.

This helps guide effective implementation, making sure that resources and efforts are directed where they will have the greatest impact.

Case Study/ Example Ordinance

Provides practical insights and proven strategies from other communities that have successfully addressed similar challenges. By examining these real-world examples and ordinances, Hamilton County can draw valuable lessons to inform its own policies and practices. This section highlights adaptable approaches for land use, infrastructure planning, environmental conservation, incentives, economic development, and impact fees offering a foundation for local initiatives that align with the unique needs and goals of each Area.

Timing

Establishes a strategic timeline for each recommended action, guiding when and how these initiatives should be undertaken. By setting immediate (0-1 Years), medium (1-5 Years), and long-term priorities (5+ Years), this category helps coordinate efforts, align resources, and build momentum toward the community's goals and policy implementation.



Area Specific Recommendations

As outlined in Chapter 4, The Area Specific Recommendations highlighted tailored actions designed to address the overarching recommendations within each Area. By focusing on area-specific solutions, this category provides a roadmap for targeted investments and initiatives that support sustainable growth, protect local assets, and enhance quality of life in each community.

PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS and UPDATES

In order to ensure that Plan Hamilton best reflects the existing conditions and future vision of Hamilton County, the Plan Hamilton update cycle shall be as follows:

- » Full plan review - every five years
- » Annual review of policy and map changes - annual review by staff
- » Applicant Requested Plan Amendments - as necessary and when requested by rezoning applicant
 - Zoning decisions are based primarily on area plans, which are components of the adopted general plan, in this case Plan Hamilton. The County's five different Area Plans were developed to include Place Type (land use) and capital improvement recommendations to inform rezoning requests.
 - Requested plan changes will alternate for one side of the Tennessee River every other month to the other side to permit changes six times per year, per side of the river.
 - An Area Plan amendment and its companion rezoning case may be heard on the same agenda.



Table 7: Implementation Matrix

Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.1 Community Character & Land Use Patterns			
5.1.1 Access Management	Utilize TDOT's Highway System Access Manual for driveway spacing, median openings, and separation distances from signalized intersections.	Start with all State Routes where the existing TDOT Highway System Access Manual has standing. Expand to other principal arterials, minor arterials, and major collectors. Create manual, access management requirements, and corridor management plans before new development impacts are felt. Work with land owners to voluntarily contribute in-kind contributions (ROW, Design, Etc) or require development fees for a proportionate fair share of improvement costs as development applications are approved.	0-1 Years
	Target segments of suburban corridor with high rates of traffic congestion, safety incident history, or new development permit approvals. Improve traffic safety, congestion, pedestrian infrastructure and aesthetics by creating corridor management plans and agreements with state and local partners for high priority suburban corridors		1-5 Years
5.1.2 Rural Corridors	Develop policy to maintain rural corridor character including setbacks and vegetative buffers for new subdivisions.	All mapped Rural Corridor segments in the Conceptual Land Use and Place Type Maps and those designated in future map updates.	0-1 Years
5.1.3 Centers	Work with land owners at Center locations to facilitate development, including district/center specific plan, according to center principles and preferred uses.	All designated center Place Types designated on current and future place type maps.	0-1 Years
	Once approved, partner with developers to install and construct streets and streetscape elements in the form of direct participation or financing vehicles like business improvement districts.	Focus joint development efforts on Village and Town Center areas with regional impacts. Expand to smaller centers where local governance and residents request implementation help and have previously participated in a small area plan.	5 + Years



Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.1.4 Conservation Subdivisions	Create a Conservation Subdivision option to cluster housing that features at least half of its potentially buildable land area devoted to undivided, permanently protected open space.	Conservation Subdivisions should be an opt in tool available to land owners who want to balance financial returns with conservation legacy. Creation of Conservation subdivision provision in the county subdivision regulations will provide a tool to augment land purchase, and voluntary conservation efforts.	1-5 Years
	The use of an Overlay District , P.U.D., or Zone is recommended for implementation of more specific development criteria associated with each of the above Place Types.		1-5 Years
	Establish Conservation Subdivision provisions and evaluation criteria in the subdivision ordinance.	All of these tools are necessary to preserve the continuity of productive agricultural land, riparian corridors, and recreational assets at a regional or landscape scale. This tool should be selectively applied in A-1 zoned areas adjacent to existing public land or with high conservation value.	1-5 Years
5.1.5 Medium Density Residential	Co-locate future Medium Density Residential adjacent to Suburban Corridor and Center Place Types. Where future Medium Density Residential abuts a Suburban Corridor or Center allow zero lot line single-family and townhomes on a percentage of the overall property. Consider allowing small-scale multifamily in these same areas (6-12 units 3 story maximum).		5 + Years



Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.2 Natural Resources			
5.2.1 Farmland and Riparian Corridor Protection	Build a stakeholder coalition including: NRCS, Trust for Public Land, Land Trust for Tennessee, North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy, Chattanooga Audubon Society, Land Conservation Assistance Network, Soil & Water Conservation District, Thrive Regional Partnership, Tennessee State and others to coordinate farmland and open space preservation efforts in Hamilton County.	Resident input from Areas 7, 9, 12, and 13 all emphasized a strong preference to preserve agricultural land uses, property, and rural character. All five planning areas include riparian corridors that if preserved would help to mitigate flood risks, provide opportunities for contiguous recreational and alternative transportation corridors, storm water quality, and habitat benefits. Development pressures are increasing across the county and in some areas the window for conservation efforts is limited. The time to begin building a coalition of landowners, conservation entities, and funding sources is now.	0-1 Years
	Identify riparian corridors for preservation that have the potential to contribute multiple community benefits including farmland preservation, stormwater filtration, flood resilience, recreation, and habitat. Pursue strategies at landscape scale and on a property by property basis as development is proposed.	Prioritize: North Chickamauga Creek - (Area 8), Wolftever Creek, Johnson Branch - (Area 12), Long Savannah Creek - (Area 9) Falling Water Creek - (Area 7), Possum Creek, and Sale Creek - (Area 13).	0-1 Years

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Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.2.1 Farmland and Riparian Corridor Protection <i>Continued</i>	Undertake a comprehensive assessment of active farms and prime agricultural land.	Farmland preservation is often a unifying place to begin conservation efforts. The first step is identifying the soils and parcels that characterize productive agricultural land. Local Soil and Water Conservation Office personnel and academic partners should be engaged in this process. Making tangible progress on the ground requires partnership between federal programs such as NRCS and local conservation groups who can bridge funding gaps and provide stewardship and monitoring support. Developing relationships with Agricultural land owners and the farming community in Area 13, the northern half of Area 9, and the eastern portions of Area 12 is a critical first step.	0-1 Years
5.2.2 Recreation, Economy and Conservation Synergies	Engage UTC - School of Outdoor Recreation & Tourism Management in a study of potential economic impacts from resort recreation centers, greenway/recreational infrastructure investments, and corresponding riparian corridor preservation.		1-5 Years
	Build on existing successes like South Chickamauga Creek and Wolftever Creek. Invest or seek funding for agricultural demonstration projects, educational, and recreation assets.		1-5 Years
	Pursue partnerships to preserve forested land with an emphasis on areas that further regional trail connections, enhance access to unique recreational, historical, or cultural assets.	Cumberland Plateau in Area 7 and Area 13, Big Ridge Area 9, and White Oak Mountain Area 12.	0-1 Years



Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.2.2 Recreation, Economy and Conservation Synergies <i>Continued</i>	Pursue multiple creative mechanisms and funding for preserving critical recreation and natural resource assets. Look for opportunities to create value in these areas through recreational tourism, wetland or stream bank creation, and consider the value of reduced flood risks and other socio-environmental factors in assessing return on investments.		
5.2.3 Resiliency, Natural Resource Protections, and Development Impact Mitigation	Establish natural resources protection standards for wooded areas, drainages, steep slopes, as well as currently regulated wetlands and streams.	Countywide	1-5 Years
5.3 Infrastructure & Transportation Network			
5.3.1 Connectivity & Congestion Management	Review fire code regarding the number of lots allowed in new subdivision triggering a secondary point of access.	County Wide	0-1 Years
	Require walking path or sidewalk for new residential subdivisions with connections to a safe harbor school bus waiting area.		0-1 Years
	In support of improved traffic safety and congestion management implement spacing requirements for both full and partial (restricted turn movement) intersections on arterial and major collector roadways. (1/4 mile for full access)	Countywide on Arterials and Major Collectors	0-1 Years



Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.3.1 Connectivity & Congestion Management <i>Continued</i>	In support of improved traffic safety and congestion management consider modifications to the subdivision ordinance implementing internal connectivity index standards for developments of more than 500 lots.		1-5 Years
5.3.2 Improvements to Local Roads, Intersections, and Safety Design Features	Follow the Hamilton County Transportation Project Priorities List in this document. Continue to invest County funds and leverage with State and Federal funds to make continuous progress on deferred transportation improvements.	Countywide	0-1 Years On - going
	Explore the use of alternative financing vehicles such as Tennessee's State Infrastructure Bank to amplify County investments.		0-1 Years
5.3.3 Sewage Treatment Capacity and Collection System	Continue to build system storage capacity, resilience for storm events, and greater predictability / flexibility to plan collection system expansion or new treatment capacity. Continue to pursue WIFIA and other capital funding specific to water and wastewater.		On - Going
	Target financing solutions and infrastructure investment to areas that have been identified as suitable for future growth. Proactively plan to shore up capacity or extend collection systems to these areas as necessary to better balance growth impacts.	See Funding Mechanisms	On - Going
	Add further specificity and criteria for utilization of decentralized sewage treatment systems.		0-1 Years
	Evaluate whether tap fees are keeping pace with infrastructure		0-1 Years



Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.3.3 Sewage Treatment Capacity and Collection System <i>Continued</i>	Evaluate decentralized systems and track projects using the systems to determine rules for use.		1-5 Years
	Evaluate the use of trilateral agreements to add flexibility, predictability, and fairness for developers who choose to collaborate with WWTa in design and construction modifications for future capacity to recoup costs of infrastructure developed beyond project needs.		1-5 Years
5.3.4 Stormwater Infrastructure, LID Features, and Resiliency	Provide resources for complete and expeditious review of stormwater plans including pre-construction site review and post construction inspections.		0-1 Years
	Begin codifying more of Hamilton Co Stormwater quality BMP's.		1-5 Years
	Phase in additional resources for review and enforcement.		1-5 Years
	Develop a more comprehensive approach to stormwater site assessment, design, incentives, and regulations.		1-5 Years
	Implement stormwater fee structures that incentivize BMP's.		1-5 Years
	Evaluate establishing a program for neighborhood or watershed based storm water infrastructure to capture storm water closer to where it falls and reduce combined sewer flows.		0-1 Years
	Develop policy with WWTa on decentralized sewer systems with robust criteria and design standards.	Countywide	0-1 Years



Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.3.5 Fire & EMS	Consider the findings of the Fire and Rescue Services Evaluation March 2024 to identify future service improvements.		0-1 Years
	Evaluate sources of funding to increase full-time personnel and standardize equipment purchases and training to simplify inter-local agreements.		
5.4 Economic Health & Community Opportunity			
5.4.1 Resort Recreation Centers	Engage land owners where resort recreation centers have been identified to participate in small area plans or joint planning sessions. Work to provide examples that would establish the scale and scope of future projects. Help landowners or potential developers understand infrastructure requirements, neighborhood concerns, and connect them with resources to create plans compatible with goals for this place type.	Prioritize land near designated Resort Recreation Centers and with close proximity to existing state and regional recreational facilities and natural areas.	0-1 Years
	Require that resort recreational development on lands adjacent to public land or waterways be a catalyst for securing and enhancing public access to recreational assets in addition to creating private recreational development.	Countywide in designated centers	0-1 Years
	Look for partners to start a recreation and tourism based business incubator/accelerator program.		1-5 Years



Policy Subcategory	Recommendation	Applicability	Timing
5.4.1 Resort Recreation Centers <i>Continued</i>	Engage UTC School of Sport, Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management in a study of potential economic impacts from resort recreation centers, greenway/recreational infrastructure investments, and corresponding riparian corridor preservation.		1-5 Years
	Engage Tennessee Department of Tourism, Chattanooga Tourism Co, SETDD, and SETTA in creating a small recreational resort promotional plan and programming assistance.		0-1 Years
	Explore potential for agriculture based resort or event centers to contribute to agricultural revenue streams. Consider McDonald Farm as a potential case study for synergies between rural resort economic development, traditional agriculture, and recreation.	Sale Creek - McDonald Farm; Birchwood	0-1 Years
	Evaluate outcomes from existing case studies - including preservation goals, impacts on existing farms, housing costs, property taxes, etc.		
	Study Industrial opportunities - both as larger industrial/corporate scaler and smaller Maker District		
5.4.2 Growing the job Base	Pursue development study of future employment centers including emerging industries and manufacturing districts		



Policy Subcategory	Recommendations	Applicability	Timing
5.5 Funding Mechanisms			
5.5.1	Consider use of RIDA as an incentive for developers who voluntarily meet specific infrastructure standards such as: improved street and pedestrian connectivity, LID stormwater improvements, provide easements for regional greenways, trails, or watershed protection.		0-1 Years
	Explore use of alternate funding mechanisms such as TDOT's State Industrial Access (SIA) Program	Hilltop Drive Extension; matching funds for other prioritized projects	0-1 Years
	Consider strategic utilization of Business Improvement Districts, Tax Increment Financing, Trilateral Agreements, or Infrastructure Trust Funds to set the table for desired development patterns (sidewalks/ connectivity, roads and utility infrastructure, landscape buffers, LID enhancements) in identified current and future centers. (Village Centers, Neighborhood Centers, Neighborhood Nodes, Maker Districts, etc.) i.e. Joint Development		1-5 Years
	Use the Capital Funding for Mid-Sized Cities & Counties study as a guide to identifying innovative funding and financing approaches for capital improvements.		

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APPENDIX

Scrivener's Note: with the exception of the Chamber Memo, all other Appendices were removed per the Regional Planning Commission's vote on September 8, 2025 for the adoption of Resolution 825-18

A. CHATTANOOGA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMO

Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce Memo

The Urgent Need for New Manufacturing Locations in Hamilton County, Tennessee

Hamilton County has been known as a manufacturing magnet for much of its history and its county seat, Chattanooga was called the “Dynamo of Dixie” in the late 19th century. This legacy continues to ring true today due to the County’s logistic assets including three interstate highways, two class-1 rail lines and the navigable Tennessee River. However, the county now faces an imperative challenge: identifying new locations for manufacturing operations. The necessity for this strategic move stems from several factors, including economic growth, technological advancements, environmental considerations, and community development. This summary explores the multifaceted reasons behind this need and the potential benefits it could bring to the county. The current Plan Hamilton growth plan has not identified additional areas for manufacturing uses however, the County should be working to identify areas for this use in order to continue to create new jobs and drive economic prosperity and diversification.

Economic Growth and Diversification

In recent years, Hamilton County has experienced significant economic growth. As industries expand and new businesses emerge, the demand for manufacturing space has increased but the number of acres zoned for manufacturing has declined. From 2014 to 2024 acreage with M-1 zoning designation in Hamilton County declined by 1,684 acres. During this timeframe, the county’s Centre South Industrial park reached full capacity and all available parcels in Enterprise South have been sold or have been optioned by companies for future expansion. Furthermore, current facilities for several existing businesses across the county are at capacity and cannot accommodate additional growth, putting continued investment by those companies at risk. Without new locations, the county risks stifling its economic potential. Diversifying the manufacturing base is essential to sustain growth, attract investment, and create job opportunities, thereby ensuring long-term economic stability for the county and its residents.

Demographic Alignment

The manufacturing sector is one of the few industries that provides high-wage, full-time jobs for individuals with various education attainment levels. Approximately 30% of manufacturing jobs are white collar jobs requiring mostly 4-year college degrees. The remaining 70% of jobs in manufacturing require less than a four-year degree and, in some instances, do not require a high school degree. This aligns well

with Hamilton County's demographics where just over 30% of Hamilton County citizens over the age of 25 have a high school diploma or less and only 37% of Hamilton County citizens over the age of 25 have a 4-year degree. Jobs in the manufacturing sector are typically high-wage and include benefits as demonstrated by Hamilton County's average manufacturing wage of \$74,256.

Technological Advancements

The manufacturing industry is evolving rapidly, driven by technological advancements such as automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence. These innovations require modern facilities equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure. As technological advances in the manufacturing sector continue to grow, manufacturing wages will increase as well, assuring living wage jobs for county residents in advanced manufacturing sectors. Hamilton County is home to dozens of established companies that produce pharmaceuticals, heavy equipment and automobiles and the county has a growing cadre of tech-based manufacturing startups that have been supported by Hamilton County's Business Development Center. These early stage companies leverage 3-D printing, provide research and development services in the battery space and produce sensor and robotic equipment. Making sure that Hamilton County has shovel-ready sites, zoned for manufacturing will help the county both legacy companies as well as early-stage high tech manufacturers as they continue to grow.

Multiplier Effect of Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector is considered a "traded industry sector" which means it produces goods that are sold outside of the local region. Traded industry sectors are critical because they bring in revenue from outside of the local economy, increasing the county's gross domestic product (GDP). This new revenue then circulates in the economy, creating additional jobs. Research by firms such as EMSI shows that manufacturing jobs have a significant multiplier effect with one manufacturing job creating an additional nine jobs in the community. With more than 29,000 people working in manufacturing in Hamilton County, the sector drives significantly economic activity and job creation in the community across retail, healthcare, construction and several other industries.

Site considerations and conclusions

The need for Hamilton County to identify new locations for manufacturing will require future amendments to the Plan Hamilton growth plan. Due to increasing land prices inside Chattanooga city

limits, it is likely that any new locations for manufacturing uses will be in unincorporated Hamilton County. Proximity to infrastructure will also be critical with consideration given to properties that have 4-lane highway access, rail infrastructure and proximity to sewer infrastructure. The county's recent utilization of tax increment financing (TIF) should serve as a model for financing infrastructure improvements for sites with limited infrastructure.

The manufacturing sector has been a critical economic driver for Hamilton County. Much of the recent job growth the county has experienced can be tied to the development of Enterprise South Industrial Park by the City and County and the location of Volkswagen in the park. With the county's industrial parks now at capacity and multiple manufacturers reaching full build out on their sites, it is critical that Hamilton County identify new locations for the county's second largest industry sector.

