

**Community Assessment**  
**Quality Community Objectives**  
**Local Assessment**

**July 12, 2006**

## *Quality Community Objectives Local Assessment*

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. The Office of Planning and Quality Growth has created the Quality Community Objectives Local Assessment to assist local governments in evaluating their progress towards sustainable and livable communities.

This assessment is meant to give a community an idea of how it is progressing toward reaching these objectives set by the Department, but no community will be judged on progress. The assessment is a tool for use at the beginning of the comprehensive planning process, much like a demographic analysis or a land use map, showing a community that “you are here.” Each of the fifteen Quality Community Objectives has a set of yes/no statements, with additional space available for comments. The statements focus on local ordinances, policies, and organizational strategies intended to create and expand quality growth principles.

A majority of “yes” answers for an objective may indicate that the community has in place many of the governmental options for managing development patterns. “No” answers may provide guidance in how to focus planning and implementation efforts for those governments seeking to achieve these Quality Community Objectives.

Some assessors may be able to answer these questions without much research, particularly in communities with few or no land use controls. Others may need to review land use ordinances and zoning regulations to find the answers, but this initial assessment is meant to provide an overall view of the community’s policies, not an in-depth analysis. There are no right or wrong answers to this assessment. Its merit lies in completion of the document, and the ensuing discussions regarding future development patterns, as governments undergo the comprehensive planning process.

Should a community decide to pursue a particular objective, it may consider a “yes” to each statement a benchmark toward achievement. Please be aware, however, that this assessment is only an initial step. Local governments striving for excellence in quality growth may consider additional measures to meet local goals. For technical assistance in implementing the policies, ordinances and organizational structures referenced in the assessment, please refer to [OPOG’s Assistance with Planning and Quality Growth](#).

Congratulations on your community and economic development efforts, and thank you for your dedication to Georgia’s citizens and resources.

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<i>Development Patterns</i>			
<p><b>Traditional Neighborhoods</b>  <b>Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.</b></p>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.	X		
2. Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development “by right” so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process.	X		
3. We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.	X		
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.	X		
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.	X		
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.	X		
7. In some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.	X		

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8. Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.	X		
9. Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.	X		
10. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.	X		
<p><b>Infill Development</b>  <b>Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.</b></p>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.	X		
2. Our community is actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.		X	The number of brownfield sites in Clarke County is minimal.
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.		X	The number of greyfield sites in Clarke County is minimal.
4. We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road).	X		
5. Our community allows small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses.	X		

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<b>Sense of Place</b>			
<b>Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.</b>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where he or she was, based on our distinct characteristics.	X		
2. We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage, and have taken steps to protect those areas.	X		
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.	X		
4. We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	X		
5. If applicable, our community has a plan to protect designated farmland.		X	There are only 9,500 acres of farmland in Clarke County – 12% of total land base. There is very little commercial farming to protect; the majority of farmland remains so because of aesthetic considerations.
<b>Transportation Alternatives</b>			
<b>Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.</b>			

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Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have public transportation in our community.	X		
2. We require that new development connect with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.	X		
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.	X		
4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.	X		
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.	X		
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.	X		
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.	X		
<p><b>Regional Identity</b></p> <p><b>Each region should promote and preserve a regional "identity," or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.</b></p>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.	X		
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process	X		

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local agricultural products.			
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal, etc.).	X		
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.	X		The Athens Convention and Visitor's Bureau participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.	X		
6. Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education	X		
<i>Resource Conservation</i>			
<b>Heritage Preservation</b>			
<b>The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.</b>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.	X		
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.	X		
3. We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.	X		

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<p><b>Open Space Preservation</b></p> <p><b>New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.</b></p>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has a greenspace plan.	X		
2. Our community is actively preserving greenspace, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.	X		
3. We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.	X		
4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.	X		Conservation subdivision regulations are found in our Zoning and Development Standards and have been recently amended. Since amendment, Athens-Clarke County has not received a request to develop a Conservation Subdivision.
<p><b>Environmental Protection</b></p> <p><b>Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.</b></p>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.	X		
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.	X		

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3. We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.	X		
4. Our community has passed the necessary "Part V" environmental ordinances, and we enforce them	X		
5. Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.	X		Athens-Clarke County has a Tree Management Ordinance which contains many of the same objectives as a traditional tree preservation ordinance.
6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.	X		
7. We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	X		
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.).	X		

***Social and Economic Development***

**Growth Preparedness**

**Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.**

Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.	X		
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.	X		Athens-Clarke County Unified Government would benefit from a more consistent use of population projections between Departments and Secondary

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			Agencies.
3. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.	X		
4. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	X		
5. We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.	X		
6. We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth, and these areas are based on a natural resources inventory of our community.	X		
7. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.	X		
8. We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.	X		
9. We have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed about land use issues, zoning decisions, and proposed new development.	X		
10. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	X		
<p><b>Appropriate Businesses</b></p> <p><b>The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.</b></p>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our economic development organization has considered our community's strengths, assets and weaknesses, and has created a business development strategy based on them.	X		

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2. Our economic development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit businesses and/or industries that will be compatible.	X		
3. We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.	X		
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.		X	Clarke County is very much dependent upon the University of Georgia as an employer. However, as a state agency, this employment base is very stable.

**Employment Options**

**A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.**

Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.	X		
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.	X		
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	X		
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	X		

**Housing Choices**

**A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.**

Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.		X	The student population in Athens-Clarke County factors into the decision to limit garage apartments or mother-in-law units in our single family zoning districts.
2. People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.	X		

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3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).	X		
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.	X		
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.	X		
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.	X		
7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	X		
8. We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.	X		
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.	X		These programs focus mainly on low income housing.
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.	X		Athens-Clarke County has an RS-5 zoning classification that allows for 5,000 square foot lots, as well as being allowed within RM and Commercial zones.
<b>Educational Opportunities</b>			
<b>Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.</b>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. Our community provides workforce training options for its citizens.	X		
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.	X		
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is	X		

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close to a community that does.			
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.	X		
<b>Governmental Relations</b>			
<b>Regional Solutions</b>			
<b>Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.</b>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. We participate in regional economic development organizations.	X		
2. We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.	X		
3. We work with other local governments to provide or share appropriate services, such as public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency response, E-911, homeland security, etc.	X		
4. Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.	X		
<b>Regional Cooperation</b>			
<b>Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.</b>			
Statement	Yes	No	Comments
1. We plan jointly with our cities and county for comprehensive	X		

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planning purposes.			
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.	X		
3. We initiate contact with other local governments and institutions in our region in order to find solutions to common problems, or to craft regionwide strategies.	X		
4. We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	X		