

CHAPTER 2 POPULATION, HOUSING, AND ECONOMY

This chapter provides a summary of past and present trends in population, housing, labor force, and employment and provides projections of population, housing units, and employment. Population trends include total population and growth rates, racial and ethnic composition, age, education, and income. Important considerations with regard to housing include household size, occupancy, tenure, age, condition, quantity, type, and affordability. The countywide Community Assessment¹ provides detailed statistics on such characteristics, which are not reiterated (or only briefly mentioned) here.

The issues and opportunities raised by this analysis, and those identified during the planning process as they relate to these functional topics, and implementation measures for these functional topics are identified in Chapter 7 of this Community Agenda.

POPULATION

Total population includes household population and group quarters population. A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit. The “group quarters” population refers to people who live in such arrangements as nursing homes, college dormitories, and correctional institutes. Grayson had no group quarters population in 2000 according to the decennial census.

Population Change

At the most fundamental level, population changes can be explained in terms of two components: natural increase (the number of births minus the number of deaths), and net migration (the number of persons moving into the area minus the number of persons moving out of the area). In addition, municipalities can add to their total populations through a third mechanism, adding to the city’s land area through annexation (the incorporation of additional land containing population). To explain in more detail, population increases, whether short-term or long-term, can be influenced by at least six factors: (1) natural increase (births minus deaths); (2) net in-migration as result of increases in the number of housing units; (3) expansion of the city limits (annexation); (4) increases, if any, in household sizes; (5) additions to the group quarters population (including major additions to institutional or group quarters populations); and (6) land availability and capacity, and zoning for future residential development.

**Table 1
Historic Population Trends
City of Grayson and Gwinnett County
1980-2000**

Jurisdiction	1980	1990	% Change 1980-1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
City of Grayson	464	529	14.0%	765	44.6%
Gwinnett County	166,903	352,910	111.4%	588,448	66.7%

Source: Gwinnett County Community Assessment, Technical Addendum, p. 1-7.

¹ The Gwinnett Unified Plan, Draft Joint Community Assessment Technical Addendum for Gwinnett County and Participating Municipalities (10/25/06). Summary Report and Technical Addendum.

Age Characteristics of the Population

Age is among the most important dimensions of the population when planning for the future. There can be vast differences in the needs of children versus the elderly. Age has a relationship to the labor force – workers include the population ages 16 years and over through retirement age and sometimes beyond. Age has important relationships to housing and can help predict likely first-time homebuyers, renters, owners of second homes, etc. The relationship of the age of population to the needs for community facilities and services is also very important. For instance, a high elderly population often translates into a need for health care, nursing and personal care homes, possible demand for continuing care retirement communities, and increased demand for senior centers. On the other hand, a city or county with a projected increase in children signals a need for schools, day care centers, and playgrounds.

The Community Assessment Technical Addendum (Figure 1.4a) indicates that Grayson is one of the few municipalities in Gwinnett County that will increase its percentage of school age population through the year 2030 (ages 5 to 13 in that study). By 2030 approximately 18 percent of the total population in 2030 is projected to be in that age category, increasing about one percent from year 2000 trends. The Community Assessment also indicates that Grayson's college-age population (Figure 1.4b) is uncharacteristically low in comparison with all other municipalities in Gwinnett County except for Berkeley Lake. It indicates a significant decline in the college-age population (ages 21-24 according to the study), from approximately 2.5 percent to less than 1 percent of the total population in 2030 in Grayson. As a basis of comparison, countywide the figure for college-age population is projected to be about 5 percent in 2030. Grayson's senior population (ages 65 and over) was among the highest in 2000 among all the cities in Gwinnett County in 2000, and the senior population is projected to remain steady through the year 2030 at approximately 9 percent of the total population (Figure 1.4c). As a basis of comparison, countywide, the senior population is expected to remain at approximately 5 percent of the total population throughout the planning horizon to 2030.²

These predictions about the future age composition of Grayson's population, if they hold true, have important implications depending on how they are interpreted. These predictions appear to be logical in many respects – Grayson is in the center of a suburbanizing area of Gwinnett County with new county public schools being constructed in and around the city -- school construction and capacity tends to attract more families with school children, and indeed the development trends in Grayson at present are predominantly toward building new subdivisions of detached, single-family homes (which are likely to include school-age children). This means that to serve school-age populations Grayson should focus on safe routes to schools, sidewalks, playgrounds, park amenities, and youth programs.

Grayson is also an attractive area for seniors, in that it is less congested and contains lower intensity development than other parts of Gwinnett County. However, one should consider that the absolute increase of senior population projected in the Community Assessment through 2030 was very small (despite a large percentage), and if Grayson is to maintain its share of the senior population given the higher total population projections in this Community Agenda, significant changes in housing stock might be needed to accommodate preferences of seniors.

² The Community Assessment provides age-specific population projections for Grayson in Table 1.5. However, since the total population projected in the Community Assessment for Grayson, at 2,327 persons, is substantially lower than the population projection provided here in this Community Agenda, the actual numbers for population by age are not reported here.

If the senior population in Grayson in future years maintains its current proportion of the total population, more senior-friendly homes are likely to be needed, and assisted care homes, personal care homes, nursing homes, and retirement communities may be needed in the area. Also, Grayson’s senior center may be taxed over the long-term and need expansion.

The findings of the Community Assessment with regard to the college-age population (ages 21 to 24) also deserve brief interpretation here. Since there is not a college or university campus or branch in the Grayson area, and given what we know about the future land uses projected in the city, it appears logical to assume that Grayson will not maintain a significant share of its total population in that age group. One implication of having a low percentage of college-age population in Grayson is with respect to the labor force – Grayson is likely to have fewer people available to take employment positions at the lower end of the wage scale (e.g., retail cashiers and workers in fast food restaurants). This could mean an importation of labor from other parts of the county, and more traffic congestion due to commuting into the area for work given that transit is not currently available in Grayson.

Race and Ethnicity Characteristics of the Population

With regard to race and Hispanic origin, in 2000 Grayson’s population was characterized by homogeneity. Hispanic origin is not a race, and thus it is noted separately in Census statistics Year-2000 statistics indicate only 27 black or African-American persons and only 7 people of Hispanic origin lived in Grayson.

The Community Assessment predicts that there will be declines in the majority (White) population in all cities in Gwinnett County, especially in Norcross. Indeed, there is likely to be greater diversity in the city’s population as it continues to increase during the planning horizon. However, Grayson has exhibited significant trends toward maintaining its homogeneity, and given the trend toward construction of detached, single-family homes as the predominant housing type in the city, such changes in the racial or ethnic composition of Grayson’s population are likely to be negligible, if they occur at all, at least when compared with other parts of Gwinnett County.

HOUSING

Grayson’s housing stock has grown substantially in the last seven years, with the addition of approximately 460 housing units between the U.S. Census Count in 2000 and the ARC’s estimates for 2006 (see Table 2).

Table 2
Housing Units by Type, 1990-2006
City of Grayson

Type of Unit	1990	%	2000	%	2006	%
Single-family, detached	196	86.0	252	83.7	726	95.4
Multi-family	27	11.8	25	8.3	11	1.4
Mobile Home	5	2.2	24	8.0	24	3.2
Total Housing Units	228	100.0	301	100.0	761	100.0

Sources: Gwinnett County Community Assessment, Figure 3.1d, p. 3-39. Atlanta Regional Commission (2006 estimates).

The housing stock has trended very heavily toward detached, single-family homes, which is also characteristic of unincorporated parts of the county in recent years. This translates also to a comparatively small percentage of renter households. Indeed, in the year 2000 in Grayson, the percentage of renter-occupied housing was only about 25 percent of all households, considerably lower than unincorporated Gwinnett County at approximately 30 percent (Figure 3.3a, Community Assessment Technical Appendix).

Several factors suggest that Grayson will maintain a low percentage of renter-occupied households. Grayson has very few multi-family units. The vast majority of new homes being constructed or planned are detached, single-family which are predominantly owner occupied. The stock of single-family homes most likely to be rented are those older homes along SR 20 and in transitional areas, and many of those homes are converting to offices and businesses, have been torn down for road widening, or will be demolished in favor of office and commercial developments. Due to the comparatively young age of Grayson's single-family neighborhoods, the "filtering" process which usually comes with an aging housing stock and which causes transitions to renter-occupied housing units does not seem likely (yet) to occur to any significant degree. Grayson's land use plan does not call for higher-density housing that would tend to be majority renter occupied. And, to the extent Grayson's housing stock diversifies in future years with attached housing in Uptown Grayson and traditional neighborhood developments near Uptown Grayson, even those housing types are unlikely to be majority renter occupied.

When housing units age, the possibility is greater that such housing units will have substandard conditions, be inadequately maintained, or be functionally obsolete unless renovation or rehabilitation occurs. Age of housing units is not a concern in Grayson – as of the year 2000 more than 20 percent of Grayson's housing stock had been built since 1990 (Figure 3.2d of the Community Assessment), and brand-new housing units is the trend in Grayson, given substantial recent subdivision activity in the city. More is said about housing trends under the section "Population and Housing Projections" in this Chapter.

POPULATION AND HOUSING PROJECTIONS

Comprehensive plans often project population by looking at past trends and extrapolating them in to the future. Such an approach would not be appropriate for Grayson, as its recent explosion of housing activity would not be captured in such an extrapolation, even if it were exponential in nature. Some population growth occurs due to natural increase, but the vast majority of Grayson's population increase can and will continue to be attributed to new households moving into the city as a result of new housing units being constructed in Grayson. Here, population is projected based on land capacity in the city for residential development and by applying its land use policies with respect to densities and types of housing permitted.

In other words, the city's future population is ultimately influenced the most by land availability and the zoning restrictions for housing densities. The best approach for projecting population in a rapidly suburbanizing environment is to project the housing units that will be constructed in the city, which is determined by looking at vacant land and zoned or planned densities, and adding those numbers to existing numbers of housing units. This approach is often referred to as calculating a "buildout" population. The projections of population and housing units, provided in Table 3, are based on the land use analyses and land use plan in Chapter 4 of this document.

**Table 3
 Population and Housing Projections at Buildout
 City of Grayson**

	Acres	Estimated Units Per Acre	Total Yield of Housing Units	Population @ 2.77 persons per unit
Existing (2008)			800	2,216
Vacant Lots	--	250 lots	250	693
1.5 unit or less	180	1.25	225	623
1.5 to 4.0	70	3.0	210	582
TND	300	4.0	1,200	3,324
Mixed Use	62	2.5	155	430
Total			2,840	7,868

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, June 2008.

Table 3 indicates that as of 2008 Grayson had an estimated 800 housing units and a total population of 2,216 persons. Due to uncertainty with regard to future market conditions for housing development, it is difficult to provide a reliable estimate of the timing of population growth. Nonetheless, good planning suggests that best available projections need to be provided in this Community Agenda so that the city can plan for future community facilities.

As shown in Table 3, based on a general estimate of already platted lots, Grayson has the immediate capacity for another 250 homes and approximately 693 new residents. That population increase can be immediately realized, market conditions permitting.³ This means that population growth, upon economic recovery, will be very swift again in Grayson. Exactly when it will occur is anyone's guess, but again assumptions are made here because of the need to program additional municipal community facilities. It is assumed that the supply of vacant residentially platted lots will be built upon within a five-year period.

Table 3 is informative with regard to how Grayson's housing stock is likely to diversify in the future in terms of housing types. While Grayson does not have a diverse housing stock presently, with the addition of mixed use development within Uptown Grayson, some additional condominiums, apartments, townhouses, and/or lofts will be added to the city's housing stock. Furthermore, traditional neighborhood development is planned for areas near Uptown Grayson, but those units will be detached, single-family dwellings. Table 4 provides projections of housing units by type for various years in the planning horizon, based on the land use/housing information in Tables 2 and 3 and the assumptions described in this section.

Also, it is noted here that the mixed use development and traditional neighborhood development will most likely not occur within the short-term time frame. During the planning process, it was determined that there is strong market support for traditional neighborhood development, which could begin within the next five years. However, given the current supply of platted lots in Grayson and current economic conditions, traditional neighborhood development is more likely

³ At the time of this writing (2008), the housing market was virtually lifeless due to worsening economic conditions and the mortgage crisis. Predictions at the time of this writing were that the housing market would not recover until at earliest the second half of calendar year 2009.

to occur in years 5-20 of this plan’s horizon. Similarly, the addition of new housing in Uptown Grayson, while modest in number and therefore believed to be feasible from a market perspective, will not be constructed in the short term and may be more realistically expected to occur within years 10-20 of the planning horizon. Consistent with Table 3, the projections in Table 4 do not separately estimate population by housing unit type; rather, a total of 2.77 persons per unit is utilized. For that reason, population by housing type is not shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Projections of Housing Units and Population by Type of Housing Unit
City of Grayson, 2008 – 2028

Unit Type	2008		2013		2018		2023		2028	
	Units	Persons	Units	Persons	Units	Persons	Units	Persons	Units	Persons
Detached Single Family	775		1,135		1,645		2,155		2,660	
Attached Multi-Family	25		25		75		125		180	
Total	800	2,216	1,160	3,213	1,720	4,764	2,280	6,316	2,840	7,868

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc. September 2008.

LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT

Grayson's labor force in 2000 consisted of 413 persons. In 2000, 25.8 percent of the city's resident labor force was employed in educational and health services. The second largest category of employment was retail trade (15.2 percent), followed by manufacturing (13.6 percent). Generally, the occupational profile of Grayson’s residents as of 2000 appeared to be relatively balanced between white-collar and blue-collar type jobs.

Top employers in Gwinnett County are Gwinnett County Public Schools (18,226 employees), Gwinnett County Government (4,586 employees), and Gwinnett Health Care System (4,229 employees). Two other governmental entities, the U.S. Postal Service (2,760 employees) and the State of Georgia (2,159), are also major employers. Others in the top 15 list of major employers include grocery stores (Publix and Kroger), Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Waffle House. Gwinnett County had 295,738 jobs in 2000, according to the Community Assessment.

Detailed employment data or even estimates of employment are not available for cities. However, Table 5 shows the number of establishments and total employment for establishments with payroll from 2001 through 2005 for the City of Grayson’s zip code. The figures in Table 5 do not represent city estimates, since the zip code boundary is not the same as the city limits of Grayson. Employment has increased substantially in Zip Code 30017 for the years shown, nearly doubling in just five years. Also, the number of establishments has increased by more than 50 percent in just five years. It is also important to note that the employment and establishment figures do not take into account government employment, nor do they include self-employed persons.

Table 5
Employment in Grayson Zip Code, 2001-2005
(Establishments With Payroll Only)

Zip Code 30017	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Employment	1,336	1,346	1,468	2,176	2,418
Establishments	204	239	259	287	316

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Zip Code Business Patterns, 2001-2005.

As with housing units and population, it is important to estimate the current employment in the city and project future employment, in order to evaluate future needs for community facilities and assess the relationship of new employment opportunities to the needs of the local labor force. Table 6 provides a current estimate of employment in Grayson (2008). The estimates are based on land use data supplied in Chapter 4 of this Community Agenda and are calculated based on likely building yield per acre of developed land and multipliers of average employment per square feet (or square feet per employee). The figures, while based on more national trends and available technical sources,⁴ reflect relatively low intensity of nonresidential land use that is evident in Grayson. Employment currently in Grayson is estimated to be 1,828 persons. While the employment estimate is considered reasonable for planning purposes, the estimates of building space should be used with considerable caution.

Table 6
Existing Employment Estimate
City of Grayson, 2008

Use Type	Acres	Multiplier of Building Yield (sq. ft. per acre)	Building Yield	Multiplier (Employee per sq. ft.)	Total Employment
Retail/Commercial	105	6,000	630,000	700	900
Office	24	6,000	144,000	400	360
Industrial	16	8,000	128,000	1,000	128
Institutional	162 (80 w/ buildings est.)	5,000	400,000	1,000	400
Residential	5% of housing units	--			40
All Uses	--				1,828

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., May 2008.

Table 7 provides a future employment estimate for Grayson. The employment projection is based on “buildout” of the vacant, non-residentially zoned land in Grayson. The land use plan for the City provides extensive acreage along SR 20 to grow the office and retail/commercial

⁴ Square feet per acre figures are based on Tables 4-1 and 4-2 of *Planner’s Estimating Guide: Projecting Land-Use and Facility Needs*, by Arthur C. Nelson. (Chicago: Planners Press, 2004).

economic base of the city, and there are ample opportunities for the expansion of institutional uses such as churches and schools which also generate employment.

**Table 7
 Future Employment Estimate by Employment Type
 City of Grayson, 2028**

Use Type	Acres	Multiplier of Building Yield (sq. ft. per acre)	Building Yield	Multiplier (Employee per sq. ft.)	Total Employment
Retail/Commercial	163	6,000	978,000	700	1,397
Office	200	6,000	1,200,000	400	3,000
Industrial	8	8,000	64,000	1,000	64
Institutional	--	5,000	--	1,000	--
Residential	5% of housing units	--	2,040		102
All Uses	--				4,563

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., May 2008.

It is estimated that there is capacity for an additional 4,563 jobs in Grayson. As noted in Table 7, the largest capacity for employment is office workers (3,000). Capacity for retail employment is less than half the amount of office, and there is very little additional capacity for industrial and manufacturing employment, given limited land availability in the city's only industrial park and no other lands planned and zoned for industry. There are also contributions to the employment base by institutional uses (schools, churches, etc.) and a small addition from home occupations in neighborhoods.

Table 8 puts together the figures in Tables 6 and 7 to show the total employment at buildout. According to these figures, Grayson if developed (built out) according to the land use plan will have an employment of 6,391 in the year 2028. This plan does not project employment here at five year intervals (but see Chapter 5), but it seems reasonable to assume that employment growth will be spread relatively evenly or uniformly during the 20-year planning horizon.

**Table 8
 Existing and Future Employment by Employment Sector at Buildout
 City of Grayson**

	Retail/Comm.	Office	Industrial	Institutional	Residential	Total
Existing	900	360	128	400	40	1,828
Future	1,397	3,000	64	--	102	4,563
Total	2,297	3,360	192	400	142	6,391

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., May 2008.

MARKET ECONOMY OUTLOOK

As a part of the comprehensive planning process, Grayson's planning consulting team conducted a limited evaluation of the potential future market shares of selected land uses that

could be captured in the Grayson area.⁵ In particular, the city's market consultant (Robert Charles Lesser & Co.) focused its analysis on the market outlook for retail, office, and higher density residential growth. The consultant considered such questions as the following: What is the capacity for Grayson to develop a town center, and how does that compare with prospects for Town Center development in other cities in the Atlanta Region? What is the office market likely to be in Grayson in the future? Is there likely going to be a market for higher density housing? One of the primary purposes of the market analysis, however, was to help "right size" the city's land use plan. By investigating future potential to capture market shares for these residential uses, the land use plan could be adjusted in terms of how much available land made available for each type of use. Indeed, some adjustments were made based on these data.

Commercial/Retail

According to the market analysis, the Grayson area appears to be currently under-supplied with commercial retail, but more detailed analysis is required to determine if secondary sources are missing recent development activity. The estimated current unmet demand is strongest for restaurants (both limited and full-service). Other retail sectors currently under-supplied include clothing, accessories, gifts, specialty food, and wine. It was also found that Grayson may not meet site criteria for "comparison good stores" such as furniture, home furnishings, electronics and appliances. Overall unmet demand for retail is estimated to be 150,000 to 200,000 square feet of retail space. Based on year 2030 forecasts for the Grayson area, the market consultants suggested that the area had potential for an additional 350,000 to 400,000 square feet of retail building space with all of the following types possible: grocery-anchored; big box; town center; and "unanchored."

Prospects for Town Center Development

Town Centers have been constructed in Woodstock, Duluth, Smyrna, and Norcross, among other cities in the metropolitan Atlanta region. When compared with those other town centers listed here, Grayson is distinct in that it has a smaller number of households and population, a larger number of households with children, vastly higher homeownership rates, and a substantially higher median household income. These findings suggest that Grayson's town center building efforts should be smaller, and more family oriented than efforts in the other comparison cities. General observations of the consultant were that Grayson should keep its town center aspirations relative small and reasonable, build upon current assets such as historic architecture, and focus on attracting families with a food or other destination niche. A full service restaurant was suggested as a potential anchor for the town center. The steering committee in discussing the market outlook tended to agree that a focus on restaurants and building a family-friendly atmosphere in Uptown Grayson would be a desirable focus for future town center planning efforts.

Office Development

With regard to office development, demand for services (medical services, real estate services, child care, etc.) is likely to be generated from household growth in the Grayson area. Demand will be generated from executives and small practitioners who want their offices closer to their

⁵ "Market Considerations for Land Use Plan." Presentation by Robert Charles Lesser & Co. February 28, 2008, to the Grayson Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Stakeholders.

homes. There will also be “naturally occurring” demand for business park and/or flex space. However, overall demand for office space generally by 2030 was considered to be negligible; if Grayson could capture its fair share of future office development within a three-mile radius, that share is estimated to be 350,000 to 400,000 square feet of office space and 225,000 to 250,000 square feet of business park space. This, incidentally, is much less than the capacity in Grayson as provided on the future land use plan map, even after adjustment/revision.

Traditional Neighborhood Development

The market analysts also explored the future market potential for traditional neighborhood development. The analysis indicated there is an increasing desire to live near work and services. It is probably safe to assume based on prior research that 30 to 40 percent of future households will likely prefer residing in traditional neighborhoods. That assumption translates into a demand by 2030 for 1,100 to 2,700 homes in the Grayson area, with a likely case of 1,600 to 1,700 homes.

Jobs-Housing Balance Analysis

It is an accepted practice to strive for a jobs-housing unit ratio of between 1.3 and 1.7, with 1.5 considered to be a relative balance.⁶ The estimated job-housing unit ratio (employment divided by housing units) in the year 2028 for the City of Grayson could be 2.25 jobs per housing unit. This means the forecasted job-housing unit ratio of 2.25 is considered unbalanced with regard to the optimum range of 1.3 to 1.7 jobs per each housing unit. It means that Grayson would become a job-rich community in 20 years. That figure (job to housing unit ratio) is quite surprising, given the preponderance of single-family units and an as-of-yet underdeveloped economy. It reflects a general estimate of employment for office and retail uses that is possible from a land use capacity standpoint but probably high from a market feasibility perspective. As noted above, a limited, preliminary market analysis by Robert Charles Lesser and Co. indicated Grayson may not be able to capture as large a share of future office space and employment reflected in the city’s land use plan, even though it was adjusted to some extent in response to that market outlook. Nonetheless, the figures reflect the future land use plan and reasonable estimates of possible yield per acre of nonresidential development and the resulting employment. It is encouraging also to note that, even if Grayson’s land use plan is not accomplished with all of the nonresidential development shown, it is likely to attain a reasonably balanced job-housing unit ratio. Finally, it is necessary to point out that a balance in terms of quantifiable jobs-housing unit ratios does not necessarily imply there is a “qualitative” balance in the city, such that the jobs available are filled by the resident labor force.

⁶ Weitz, Jerry. 2003. *Jobs-Housing Balance*. Planning Advisory Report No. 516. Chicago: American Planning Association Research Department. The reason why a jobs-housing unit ratio of 1.5 is considered balanced is because there are generally 1.5 workers per housing unit.