

Morgan County Green Print Plan 2003



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Morgan County Green Print Purpose and Process

Early in 2003, the Madison-Morgan Conservancy initiated the Morgan County Green Print process, and in association with the Morgan County Commissioners, the City of Madison and the Trust for Public Land, began to plan for the long-term preservation of open space in Morgan County, Georgia. As Morgan County and the municipalities of Bostwick, Buckhead, Madison and Rutledge were in the process of preparing a major update to the Morgan County Joint Comprehensive Plan, it was decided that the Green Print planning process should be coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan Update process. To facilitate this effort, Morgan County contracted with Robert and Company to coordinate the planning process, prepare technical analysis and provide Green Print recommendations that could be easily incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan update.

The Green Print planning process has included significant public and stakeholder involvement. For coordination and oversight, the Joint Comprehensive Plan Core Group (staff or elected representatives from Morgan County and municipalities) and Steering Committee (appointed citizens) have provided ongoing input. On Saturday, February 22, 2003 a Green Print Open House Workshop was held for the purpose of eliciting specific input from citizens. Resulting from the Open House Workshop was identification and mapping of 54 specific opportunities and threats pertaining to resources, features or other factors in Morgan County (see Map 11). Following completion of a preliminary Green Print Concept map and description, a subcommittee of the Steering Committee held several meetings during the month of June, 2003 to carefully review preliminary recommendations and provide comments which have been reviewed and incorporated into this report.

The Morgan County Green Print Plan will serve as a long-term strategy for the preservation of features that are valuable to Morgan County residents and landowners: the rural landscape, open spaces, agriculture lands, forests, environmentally sensitive resources, historic properties and structures, and a general quality of life. The plan recognizes the inevitability and desirability of growth and economic expansion, seeking to balance allowance for growth with strategies to achieve significant preservation goals. Implementation of the Green Print will involve actions from government leaders as well as private entities and citizens, beginning with the inclusion of Green Print concepts in the Morgan County Joint Comprehensive Plan. Ultimately, the success of preservation efforts in Morgan County will be greatest if Green Print planning continues as an ongoing process of collaboration among all members of the Morgan County community.

Analysis of Morgan County Existing Conditions

The starting point for greenspace preservation planning is the establishment of an understanding of existing conditions. With the assistance of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, mapping of features and analysis can be conducted with greater precision than in the past. The process for analysis of existing conditions in Morgan County has involved the mapping of significant features and conditions followed by a multi-layered overlay analysis that reveals the relationships among various features and conditions.

The following descriptive text, tables and maps present data and analysis prepared for the Morgan County Green Print Plan. The analytical maps depict important environmental features identified for preservation through a variety of data sources as well as public input.

Existing Land Use

Map 1 indicates the existing patterns of land use in Morgan County and the cities of Bostwick, Buckhead, Madison and Rutledge. Existing land use analysis and mapping has been completed at the land parcel level with the assistance of the Morgan County GIS system that is maintained by the Morgan County Tax Assessor's office and aerial photography dating from 2002. Existing land use analysis reveals that development in Morgan County is lightly dispersed in the County's unincorporated areas with concentrations of residential and commercial development near major corridors and town limits. The vast majority of land in Morgan County, approximately 89 percent of the unincorporated area, is used for agriculture, forestry, parks/recreation or is undeveloped and vacant.

Unincorporated Morgan County Existing Land Use			
Land Use	Acres	Parcels	% of County Acreage
Agriculture	145,476.7	1,614	67.0%
Commercial	219.3	45	0.1%
Commercial Forestry	27,484.5	148	12.7%
Industrial	479.2	6	0.2%
Public/Institutional	454.9	113	0.2%
Parks/Recreational/Conservation	6,280.5	16	2.9%
Residential	17,276.9	3,316	8.0%
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	5,610.9	89	2.6%
Vacant/Undeveloped *	13,739.5	1,494	6.3%
Total	217,022.4	6,841	100.0%

Source: Morgan County Tax Assessor, 2000; Aerial Photos 2002; *Includes Lake Oconee

Parcel Size

Map 2 shows parcel sizes throughout Morgan County. Parcel level land use information is based on Morgan County Tax Assessor data from 2000. In identifying areas for

conservation, it is useful to locate large or contiguous parcels. In general, small, subdivided parcels are less viable as areas for wildlife habitat, agricultural use, and greenspace preservation.

Morgan County Parcels by Size				
Parcel Size	Number of Parcels	Total Acres	% of Total Parcels	% of Total Area
Less than 1 Acre	2,399	1,265	25.2%	0.6%
1 to 5 Acres	3,405	7,805	35.8%	3.4%
5 to 20 Acres	1,868	18,204	19.6%	8.0%
20 to 50 Acres	765	25,074	8.0%	11.0%
50 to 100 Acres	499	35,901	5.2%	15.8%
100 to 250 Acres	442	66,799	4.6%	29.4%
250 to 500 Acres	100	34,384	1.1%	15.1%
500 to 1,000 Acres	35	23,356	0.4%	10.3%
1,000 Acres or Larger	8	14,453	0.1%	6.4%
Total	9,521	227,240	100.0%	100.0%

Groundwater Favorability

Map 3 depicts groundwater favorability based on geologic conditions and their ability to accommodate increased drilling for wells. Classifications are based upon the Georgia Geologic Survey Report. The factors involved in this analysis include topography, saprolite thickness, well depth, and degree of fracturing. Brittle rock has also been identified in Morgan County along the Towaliga-Middleton-Loundesville fault zone, indicating enhanced permeability. Areas are designated most favorable, moderately favorable, and least favorable, based on the study results. The map does not imply the success or failure of a particular well. It simply takes each factor into consideration and attaches a weighted value to it. Hydrogeologic investigation is recommended even in the case of most favorable areas. (Morgan County Long Range Water Study, p. 55)

Areas with poor groundwater favorability may be badly suited for development if they lie outside water and sewer service areas. Approximately 10% of the total area of Morgan County lies in areas of unfavorable groundwater capacity. Probably the greatest area of concern for groundwater favorability is the band of unfavorable soil stretching east-west across the county which encompasses the major communities of Rutledge, Madison, and Buckhead. Residential development patterns appear to be following this zone along road corridors between the major communities. As consistent with the recommendations of the 2003 Morgan County Long Range Water Study, groundwater ordinances and setbacks may be implemented to coordinate building permits within the least favorable groundwater areas (Morgan County Long Range Water Study, p. 55). Such regulations may serve as an additional means of buffering residential growth from agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.

Groundwater Recharge Areas

Another environmental factor involving water issues is the zones of significant groundwater recharge shown in Map 4. These areas represent locations where it is most

likely that groundwater can seep into and replenish an underground aquifer. The significant groundwater recharge areas shown were identified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS). While the Georgia Department of Natural Resources estimates 90% of Georgia's land area serves groundwater recharge in some capacity, the most significant areas have been identified for special consideration. The Morgan County Long Range Water Supply Study recommends the implementation of significant measures to prevent contamination and runoff loss in these areas. Regulations requiring sewer service and limiting impervious surfaces may be enacted within these zones as a means of controlling development and protecting water supplies. A major challenge of such a plan would be coordinating growth in the large groundwater recharge area in the western corner of Morgan County. This groundwater recharge area encompasses the site slated for development as the Stanton Springs four-county industrial park.

Agricultural Land Use

As the surrounding counties have experienced rapid growth in residential populations, Morgan County has become increasingly integrated into the metropolitan Atlanta economy. Loss of agricultural land presents a major challenge to greenspace preservation efforts in Morgan County. There has been a steady decline in the economic importance of agricultural activity in Morgan County in the past two decades. In 1980, agricultural jobs represented 23.1% of Morgan County's total employment. By 2000, agricultural employment had fallen by 50%, and represented only 7.3% of total county employment. This trend is due in part to an increase in mechanization of agriculture. Indeed, as agricultural employment declined, there has been a steady increase in agricultural services (Up from .6% of total employment in 1980 to 5.4% of total employment in 2000). As development pressures and property valuations increase, more land will be pushed out of agricultural use. In the past decade, Morgan County's population increased by 20%, with several surrounding counties growing at even greater rates.

Map 5 depicts Morgan County land parcels in agricultural use according to Morgan County Tax Assessor data from 2000. This analysis reveals that currently 57.9% of the total land area in Morgan County is classified as being in agricultural use. Another 8.3% of the total land in Morgan is classified as commercial forestry.

Morgan County Agriculture and Forestry		
	Acres	%
Morgan County Total Area	227,240	100.0%
Farm and Commercial Forestry	150,530	66.2%
Farm	131,597	57.9%
Commercial Forestry	18,933	8.3%

Morgan County Agricultural Land Parcels		
Parcel Size	Number of Parcels	%
1-9 Acres	71	5.4%
10 - 49 Acres	429	32.8%
50 - 149 Acres	566	43.3%
150 - 499 Acres	218	16.7%
500 - 999 Acres	23	1.8%
1,000 or More Acres	1	0.1%
Total	1,308	100.0%

Morgan County Commercial Forestry Land Parcels		
Parcel Size	Number of Parcels	%
1-9 Acres	3	3.8%
10 - 49 Acres	12	15.4%
50 - 149 Acres	30	38.5%
150 - 499 Acres	23	29.5%
500 - 999 Acres	6	7.7%
1,000 or More Acres	4	5.1%
Total	78	100.0%

Prime Agricultural Soils

Map 6 depicts prime agricultural soils in Morgan County as identified by US soil survey reports. According to these surveys 31,335 acres, or 13.8% of Morgan County, is classified as having prime agricultural soils. At a glance, the distribution of prime agricultural soils is fairly dispersed throughout the county with a few bands of concentration. The greatest concentration of prime agricultural soils in Morgan County lies south of I-20. This relatively low proportion of quality agricultural soil presents a challenge for the continued viability of farming in Morgan County. Greenspace conservation efforts aimed at farmland preservation should be targeted toward those areas most viable for continued agricultural use. Often farming economies require a certain critical mass in order to retain agricultural services. Dispersed residential development can threaten the viability of agricultural economies by reducing farm services and encroaching on necessary farm functions. In addition, agricultural land is often easily suited for development because of its relatively flat topography and cleared land area.

Treecover

Map 7 depicts treecover in Morgan County. Approximately 132,531 acres or 58% of the county is forested. This map serves as an inventory device to show the present amount and location of undisturbed forest areas. In evaluating priorities for conservation efforts, it is useful to identify large or contiguous forested parcels. Large or adjoining greenspace corridors are especially important if wildlife habitat conservation is a primary goal. Many of the large parcels along the northeast border of the county are currently in commercial forestry use, but are being converted to residential developments.

Water Resources

Map 8 depicts Morgan County floodplains and wetlands. Floodplains, wetlands, and river networks represent important resources for conservation efforts. Riparian corridors and wetlands are critical ecological habitats and serve as systems of natural filtration for stormwater runoff. Wetlands may be important for natural habitat preservation efforts because of their high biodiversity and their functions as feeding and spawning areas for numerous species. Natural vegetation along stream banks helps to filter sediment and harmful runoff before it reaches rivers and lakes. By targeting wetlands and riparian areas for greenspace preservation, the integrity of water supplies and ecologically sensitive habitats can be protected. In addition, limiting development within floodplains can serve as an important disaster management tool. Finally, conservation of water resources and wetlands can enhance recreational opportunities within the county. Approximately 13% of Morgan County's land area lies within floodplains, along with 6% of total area as wetlands. Most areas designated as wetlands lie within floodplains.

Environmental Factors Overlay

Map 9 depicts an overlay of various important environmental factors for the purpose of comparison. By combining several elements of environmental significance, priorities for conservation can be set and linkages between factors can be explored.

The first elements on the map legend depict groundwater favorability factors. In this portion of analysis, soil types are classified on the basis of their ability to accommodate increased groundwater drilling for wells. For the purposes of this overlay grouping, only soils with poor groundwater favorability have been displayed. Areas with poor groundwater favorability may be badly suited for development if they lie outside water and sewer service areas. Probably the greatest area of concern for groundwater favorability is the band of unfavorable soil stretching east-west across the county which encompasses the major communities of Rutledge, Madison, and Buckhead. Residential development patterns appear to be following this zone along roads connecting the major communities. As consistent with the recommendations of the 2003 Morgan County Long Range Water Study, groundwater ordinances and setbacks may be implemented to coordinate building permits within the least favorable groundwater areas (Morgan County Long Range Water Study, p. 55). Such regulations may serve as an additional means of buffering residential growth from agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.

Another environmental factor involving groundwater issues is the zones of significant groundwater recharge outlined in red on the map. The 2003 Morgan County Long Range Water Supply Study recommends the implementation of significant measures to prevent contamination in these areas. Regulations requiring sewer service and limiting impervious surfaces within these zones may provide a means of controlling development and protecting water supplies. A major apparent challenge would be coordinating planned growth in the large groundwater recharge area in the western corner of the county. This groundwater recharge area encompasses the site slated for development of the Stanton Springs four-county industrial park.

Development and Infrastructure

Map 10 depicts current development and infrastructure in Morgan County. It also depicts areas currently planned for growth and development. One of the principal factors, which may be a growth-limiting factor, is the availability of water and sewer service. Currently the city of Madison provides water service for several areas outside its boundaries. Likewise the availability of sewer service can also serve as a limitation to growth. One of the principal factors, which can encourage growth, is access to transportation corridors such as roads and highways.

Public Input: Preservation Opportunities

Map 11 depicts areas identified through public input as preservation threats or opportunities. An open house workshop was conducted on February 22, 2003 and a follow-up workshop in Atlanta on May 16, 2003 to gather input on priorities for preservation efforts. Participants were provided with basemaps of Morgan County along with maps describing known environmental and historic features in the county. Participants were encouraged to identify important environmental features, which could provide opportunities for conservation such as scenic views, sensitive habitats, and historic features. These opportunities for preservation were marked on basemaps with green stickers as well as with hand written notes. Likewise, participants were asked to identify sensitive environmental areas or development trends that pose a threat to preservation efforts. These perceived threats were marked on maps with orange stickers and hand written notes. These notes and public comments were compiled and coded onto a map of Morgan County as marked by participants. Following is a list of public input points as numbered on Map 11. In addition, verbal comments were compiled and taken into account. (For locations of national register historic properties, see section 3.13 of Morgan County Comprehensive Plan)

Public Input for Green Print Concept: Opportunities (Map 11, Public input points are referenced on Map 11 by the numbers listed below.)

1. Scenic Perimeter Greenway around Morgan County.
 - Old Seven Islands Roadbed (Buckhead to Godfrey)
 - Little River Road to Highway 83
 - Broughton Road., continue on Newborn Road to Rutledge
 - Fairplay Road to Bostwick
 - Apalachee Road through Apalachee to Briar Creek Road to Buckhead Road through Buckhead to Seven Islands Road
2. Hardee's site - 2nd major park for City of Madison.
3. Scenic Highway - 83 from Jasper County I-20.
4. Scenic Gateway to Madison - Highway 83 from I-20 to downtown Madison.

5. Scenic Corridor surrounding Hard Labor Creek State Park.
6. Baldwin Pecan Grove in Downtown Madison.
7. Bike/Pedestrian trail from high school to Hill Park and other city parks, Madison.
8. Potential Rails-to-Trails passive use trail - Madison to Apalachee abandoned railroad bed.
9. Scenic Highway - Old Dixie Highway from Madison to Rutledge.
10. Preservation of Apalachee, Fairplay, Godfrey and Pennington communities.
11. Scenic Highway from Madison to Buckhead - Buckhead Road.
12. Scenic Roads - Godfrey Figure 8 - Highway 83, Little River Road, Walton Mill Road, Godfrey Road.
13. Potential scenic corridors 83, 441, 278, I-20, Old Dixie.
14. Proposed path following creek corridors.
15. Proposed path along abandoned rail line on Lower Apalachee Road.
16. Hightower trail along railroad right-of-way from Fambrough Road East is unpaved and should remain so.
17. Potential viewshed along Bethany Church Road.
18. Scenic Road - Pierce Dairy Road.
19. Scenic view along Davis Academy Road between the county line and Old Mill Road.
20. Jack's Creek scenic area.
21. Jack's Creek shoals area.
22. High, scenic view.
23. Tree island threatened by DOT
24. I-20 scenic corridor threatened by development.
25. Wetlands credit being developed in southwestern corner of Morgan County.

26. Markham's Hill "Blueberry Hill."
27. Symmes House [already on national register of historic places] has a possibility of a scenic cedar lane, old cemetery.
28. Scenic view.
29. Plantation plain house - originally granted to Asa Cox circa 1805.
30. Cemetery with several historic graves; 1 tombstone Salatha Osteen, wife of Captain Isaac Osteen 1799-1829. Currently owned by Wachovia. Planted in pine trees; recently timbered - loggers ran skidders through cemetery.
31. Cemetery on Bostwick Road by Mallory Road threatened.
32. Old Durden homestead threatened by development.
33. Old Pierce Dairy Barn, recently restored, represents an opportunity as a historic site.
34. Scenic Pennington Church.
35. Nolan home, historic home and farm.
36. Old Walton Mill home, Indian mound.
37. Newton farm home.
38. Stone smoke house.
39. Old cemetery.
40. Old farmstead, Old Crew Place.
41. Willow Oak Farm.
42. Old hardwood forest, beech trees, "Robin's Nest."
43. New wooden bridge at Jack's Creek.
44. Bonar Hal.
45. Historic home, Mathis.
46. Historic home.

47. Historic home, circa 1820.
48. Historic home circa 1850's.
49. Historic house, old oak and pecan groves, 3930 Dixie Highway.
50. Antebellum home.
51. Historic home.

Analysis of Greenspace Preservation Programs and Tools

As part of the Green Print planning process, Robert and Company has researched the status of land conservation efforts in Georgia. This research includes a look at current programs available, legal and political factors, and implementation tools. The following is a summary of programs and tools for consideration in developing a conservation effort. Additional detail regarding these programs and tools is included in appendices to this report.

Georgia Greenspace Program

The Georgia Greenspace Program was created during the 2000 Georgia legislative session under Senate Bill 399. The program is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and headed by a five-member Georgia Greenspace Commission. Under the program, "greenspace" is defined as permanently protected land and water that is in its undeveloped natural state, or is restored consistent with natural resource protection and informal recreation goals. The Georgia Greenspace Trust Fund requires annual funding allocation by the Georgia State Legislature to support the Greenspace Program. At the inception of the program, the Barnes administration pledged \$30 million dollars annually to back the program with the stated goal of eventually preserving 20 percent of Georgia's land for permanent protection. However, due to financial constraints, the program's annual budget has been cut by the Purdue administration. Funding is distributed to local governments who have an approved Community Greenspace Program and Community Greenspace Trust Fund as required by the statute.

Currently, the Georgia Greenspace Program is geared towards counties with already large and/or rapidly expanding populations where development pressure is very strong. For a county to be eligible to qualify, it must have a population of at least 60,000 or an annual growth rate of 800 people. Under current population forecasts, Morgan County will not meet either of these conditions within the next 20 years. However, the adjacent counties of Walton and Newton have submitted revised or new programs and Oconee County has submitted a progress report on its program.

Georgia Conservation Use Program

The Conservation Use program in Georgia offers preferential assessment (also known as use-value assessment) for land that is committed to use for agriculture, forestry, or environmental preservation. Property owners participating in this program have their eligible properties (land only) assessed based on current use (farm, forestry, etc.) rather than on a highest and best use basis. By enrolling in this program, property owners can realize significant property tax savings. In return for the preferential assessment, a property owner must covenant to maintain the conservation use of the property for a ten year period of time. Within this ten year period, a deviation from the conservation agreement (such as subdivision and development of land) would require reimbursement of all tax savings with interest and a penalty payment. At the end of the ten year time period, a property owner may opt out of the program and use land differently or the property may be reinstated into the program. Many Morgan County landowners have benefited from the Georgia Conservation Use program.

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary, legally binding agreement restricting the development of a tract of land. Under a conservation easement ownership remains in private hands, allowing for some continued use of the land. Development rights to the land are sold or traded to a qualified easement holder, which is usually a government entity or land trust. Conservation easements are flexible and may be fashioned in a variety of ways to suit preservation needs and the purposes of the landowner. While agreeing to give up certain rights, the landowner can retain others as long as they do not interfere with the conservation purposes of the agreement. For example, a landowner might agree to prohibit subdivision of a parcel and the construction of roads, while retaining the right to construct an extra family dwelling on a specified site.

In most instances, conservation easements allow for certain property tax benefits, given the reduced development potential of the tract of land. If a conservation easement is permanent rather than valid for only a set period of time, it also allows a landowner to qualify for certain income and estate tax benefits. In order to receive such tax benefits, the easement must serve a legitimate conservation purpose. The IRS defines such valid conservation purposes as follows: (Section 170 (h)(4)(A))

- Outdoor recreation by, or the education of, the general public;
- The protection of a relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, or plants, or similar ecosystems;
- The preservation of open space (including farmland and forest land) yielding significant public benefit for scenic enjoyment of the general public, or pursuant to a clearly delineated federal, state or local governmental conservation policy;
- The preservation of historically important land area or buildings.

Purchase of Development Rights

A Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, typically administered by a county or state government, makes it possible for landowners to sell the development rights that are associated with a property under certain circumstances. Thus, in addition to resulting in a reduction of the property's value for tax assessment purposes due to a voluntary limitation on development potential, the landowner participating in a PDR agreement receives a cash payment for restricting development rights as well.

Funding for a PDR program typically comes from a public source, though private foundation funding could be involved as well. A local government sponsoring a PDR program could support it through a SPLOST initiative, through increases in property taxes, through increases in other local taxes (e.g. hotel/motel tax), or through a government backed bond issue. The Georgia Greenspace Program was also designed to make funding available to local governments for PDR programs. Because of the public nature of the funding, PDR programs require oversight from a duly appointed committee and decisions to purchase development rights must be consistent with established program goals regarding prioritization for acquisitions.

Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs provide a legal apparatus for land conservation and targeted growth by harnessing market forces. TDR programs may be used as conservation tools whereby development rights in areas threatened by encroachment may be bought and transferred into designated receiving areas. Thereby, growth and development may be steered into specific areas allowing for greater density in those chosen locations. Property owners in the sending site can voluntarily give up the right to develop their land and receive TDR credits in return. These credits can be freely sold or traded to anyone. The sending site is then placed under a conservation easement, which is a legal agreement to restrict development. TDR programs may also be structured as mandatory, whereby development in sending areas is restricted beyond the scope of current zoning and TDR credits are granted as compensation.

In order for a TDR program to operate successfully, the TDR credits must be worth more to the seller than the unused development potential of the land. The system must also be economically beneficial to the buyer, whose profit from the increased development must exceed the cost of the TDR credits. A careful balance of market forces and constraints must be reached in order to make such a program feasible. Sending areas must be carefully targeted so as to preserve those natural areas which are deemed most vital to a conservation effort. If sending areas are too large, the market will be flooded with TDR credits for which there is no demand. Government funded TDR banks may be used as a means of controlling the ebb and flow of demand for development rights.

In 1998, the Georgia Legislature passed a bill allowing for transfer of development rights programs. The bill was amended in 2002 to eliminate the requirement to holding a public hearing on each and every development rights transfer. However, in the political process,

the amendment was changed to apply only to “consolidated” governments only (Athens, Columbus, and Augusta). Most recently, in the 2003 legislative session, this requirement regarding consolidated governments was eliminated from the law to open the way for TDR activity in Georgia.

To meet the requirements of the state TDR enabling law and ensure due process, a local government must pass an ordinance outlining the process for the establishment and use of TDRs. The ordinance should specify the public purposes of the program, such as preservation of agricultural lands or urban renewal. Multiple public purposes should be specified in order to allow for greater flexibility in defining sending areas. Purposes should be consistent with local governments’ “police power” mandate to conserve and promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. To further ensure legal validity of a TDR program, designation of sending and receiving areas should be consistent with comprehensive planning. Currently, the most prominent TDR program in Georgia is being implemented in South Fulton County under the auspices of the Chattahoochee Hill Country Alliance. Under this system, two levels of receiving areas have been established (Village and Hamlet) to steer growth into designated compact areas.

Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation Subdivisions are residential or mixed-use developments in which a significant portion of the lot is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space while houses are clustered on the remainder of the property. A familiar example similar to a conservation subdivision is a golf course community, the difference being that in a conservation subdivision a natural forest, meadow, wetland, community garden, or farmland serves as the central public space. Administrative enforcement of the conservation area is usually implemented through conservation easements, dedication of common space, or permanently restrictive covenants. Under a conservation easement, development rights are purchased or traded to a government entity or land trust. Rather than sell development rights, a development may opt to donate land outright to a third party as a dedication of open space. This approach allows for some deferral of maintenance costs, since ownership of the land is not retained. However, the developer and homeowners lose all direct control of the land once it has been dedicated to another owner. Restrictive covenants can provide another means of protecting sections of a subdivision in perpetuity. However, given a lack of case law in Georgia, it is currently unclear if restrictive covenants designed for the purpose of water quality or wildlife protection while not specifically providing public access would meet the binding criteria that restrictive covenants must be “for use of the public.” Therefore, in order to enforce restrictive covenants in perpetuity, local governments should use the technique only when it is assured that the covenant will meet the “use of the public” test.

To encourage the preservation of the most critical natural areas, the conservation subdivision ordinance should include a list of “Primary Conservation Areas.” Primary conservation areas should include critical areas such as floodplains, wetlands, riparian buffers, steep slopes, and habitat for threatened or endangered species. A list of “Secondary Conservation Areas” may also be included to protect features such as open

space, large stands of forests, individual trees, viewsheds, prime farmland, or existing trails. While the exact layout of preserved space will be determined on a site-by-site basis, it is generally preferable to have greenspace as a contiguous tract. Ideally, conservation subdivisions should work in coordination with comprehensive planning to identify areas of priority and preserve contiguous natural resources. Thus individual conservation subdivisions can be linked up into greater wildlife corridors and greenways. Comprehensive planning should identify areas where growth is targeted as well as areas slated for preservation.

While the Georgia Greenspace program and the DCA recommend conservation subdivisions, many localities lack the flexibility in their zoning and subdivision ordinances to accommodate the technique. Performance Zoning provides a flexible alternative to conventional zoning practices and allows greater ease in implementing conservation subdivisions. Under this system, instead of prescribing set lot sizes, minimum lot widths, minimum setbacks, etc; performance zoning sets broad goals, allowing developers flexibility to achieve those objectives by whatever means are cost-effective and meet market demands. For example, instead of mandating a one-acre minimum lot size, governments could specify a maximum tract density. Thereby, houses could be built on half-acre lots with 50% of the total development held in a conservation easement.

Urban Growth Boundaries

In practical terms, an urban growth boundary is a line drawn on planning and zoning maps that indicates the allowable limit of expansion of urban (and/or suburban) land uses and development. Typically, an urban growth boundary surrounds a city or metropolitan area, delineating the distinction between the internal area that is to be developed as urban/suburban and the external area that is to remain rural and very low density. In a strict application of urban growth boundary, the extension of infrastructure (sewer and/or water) and the subdivision of land into small lots will not be allowed outside of the boundary.

While used effectively in certain areas of the nation, notably in Portland, Oregon, urban growth boundaries have not yet been effectively employed in Georgia. This is due in part to the nature of the State's Planning Enabling Legislation which does not emphasize growth boundaries (as does that of Oregon) and the fact that growth boundaries such as the one established for Portland require a level of regional governance that does not currently exist in Georgia. Regardless of these factors, growth boundaries can be established at the local level through the comprehensive planning process. By limiting the expansion of infrastructure to a certain defined area and establishing different land use and zoning criteria, a local growth boundary can effectively achieve local planning goals.

Riparian Buffers

Riparian Buffers are strips of naturally vegetated land along a stream or river which is protected to maintain healthy aquatic ecosystems and to provide a range of other environmental, economic, and social benefits. Examples of effective local riparian buffer ordinances in Georgia include those passed in Alpharetta, Douglas County, and Fulton County. As with other conservation tools, coordination with comprehensive land use planning is helpful in identifying critical riparian areas. Buffers should be at a minimum 50-100 feet in order to be effective in protecting stream habitats. Effective riparian buffer ordinances should provide for flexibility and variance procedures. The needs of specific landowners can often be accommodated with variance procedures for “minor exceptions” and “buffer averaging.” Exceptions generally allow for existing land uses, agriculture, and structures such as boat ramps. The ordinance should also include provisions for buffer crossings and buffer restoration when necessary. In order to avoid legal challenges to buffer ordinances, laws should never mandate public access to private property, nor restrict activities on a property to such an extent that the owner cannot make use of it.

There are several regulatory tools which may be implemented to protect riparian buffers. First, overlay zoning ordinances may be employed to add additional restrictions to a portion of a property already under one zoning classification. Overlay zoning ordinances do not require changes to the current zoning map. In counties without existing zoning ordinances, a separate freestanding stream corridor protection ordinance may be necessary. Ordinances prohibiting development within floodplains may also provide a means of protecting riparian buffers. However, floodplain ordinances have been primarily aimed at minimizing property damage. Erosion and sedimentation control ordinances are another tool which may be applied as a means of protecting riparian buffers. However, because the EPD retains sole authority for issuing variances under such ordinances, it may be necessary to explicitly specify that buffers be protected for multiple purposes beyond erosion and sedimentation control. It is often advantageous to include impervious surface limits as a complimentary ordinance in protecting streams and rivers. Without such limits, riparian buffers alone may be inadequate to prevent channel erosion. Ideally, impervious surface should be limited to less than 30% of land within a stream’s watershed.

Farmland Protection Measures

In general, tools such as conservation easements, purchase of development rights and transfer of development rights may be employed as farmland protection measures in addition to their function as environmental protection tools. Conservation easements, through outright purchase or transfer of development rights, may be crafted to allow the landowner to continue agricultural activity. These tools may reduce a farmer’s property tax burden by limiting the possible conversion opportunities of land. Incentives to keep land in agricultural production may also be put in place such as property tax relief for farmers. Legal measures such as “Right to Farm” laws may be implemented to shield farmers from nuisance claims by encroaching residential and commercial land use.

Finally, agricultural zoning may be employed as a means of segregating activities and preventing infringement of conflicting land uses. Typically, agricultural zoning creates a very large minimum lot size to discourage activities other than farming.

One issue with conservation easements and agricultural zoning may be the reduction in land value due to diminished development potential. Because farmers often borrow against the value of their land for seasonal supplies, diminished land value may limit the amount a farmer can borrow. However, from a public finance standpoint, preservation of farmland has proven to be an economically sound activity based on the fact that, unlike suburban residential development, agriculture land typically requires less public expenditure for infrastructure and services than in contributes in property taxes.

Green Print Goals, Objectives and Policies

In coordination with the Morgan County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update, extensive discussions have been held regarding appropriate goals, objectives and policies for local governments to espouse concerning issues such as greenspace preservation. The process of writing specific goals, objectives and policies has included public Town Hall meetings and Issue Group meetings in the summer and fall of 2002 as well as numerous steering committee meetings and the Green Print Open House Workshop in the first half of 2003. Resulting from this public and committee input are the following goals, objectives and policies that pertain specifically to greenspace preservation. Goals, objectives and policies pertaining specifically to Lake Oconee and Hard Labor Creek State Park have also been included due to their significance. These goals, objectives and policies are directly consistent with the draft Natural and Cultural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan Update and they are restated in this report to emphasize their importance.

Green/Open Space Goals, Objectives and Policies:

Goal

Permanently protect sufficient green/open space in order to maintain a sense of rural character, provide passive recreational opportunities, and preserve environmental quality.

Objectives and Policies

Objective 1.0 Meet or exceed State of Georgia Greenspace goals by permanently protecting more than 20% of the county's land area in farmland, forests, natural areas or parks. As fiscally feasible, greenspaces should be publicly owned or have public access.

Policy 1.1 Utilize the completed Green Print Plan as a guide for a county-wide environmental protection program, in the development of the county's land use plan, and as a factor in environmental impact analysis.

Policy 1.2 Provide Incentives for the use of innovative tools such as Conservation Subdivisions, Conservation Easements, Purchasable Development Rights and Transferable Development Rights (TDRs), to the extent possible under State law.

Policy 1.3 Explore the potential for establishing wetlands or other land conservation banks for sending developments in other counties.

Policy 1.4 Limit the extension of water and sewer lines to only those areas that are incorporated cities or have been designated for increased development in the land use plan. Discourage negative effects on corridors that can result from the extension of water and sewer infrastructure, i.e. strip commercial development.

Policy 1.5 Require all new development to contribute to the permanent protection of greenspace in an appropriate manner.

Policy 1.6 Establish conservation subdivisions as the required development model for Morgan County and, when appropriate, its municipalities.

Policy 1.7 Ensure that suitable public and/or private entities exist that can receive, manage, and/or monitor development rights and easement programs in the county.

Policy 1.8 Implement a zero wetlands loss policy except for essential public projects with no alternative site and for grandfathered building lots. When wetlands must be disturbed, they should be replaced within the Morgan County area at an appropriate ratio and in an environmentally appropriate manner.

Policy 1.9 Develop a system of passive recreation parks throughout the county and within each city that may be part of or separate from active recreational facilities. The system should provide opportunities for hiking, biking, and equestrian trails, and may include nature preserves including bird sanctuaries.

1.9.1 Strive for no city resident to be further than a 5 minute walk and no county resident further than a 5 minute drive of a park or trail of some type.

1.9.2 Encourage the development of joint park facilities with adjacent counties where significant natural resources may be present. Possible locations include the Apalachee River, county gateways, and scenic areas.

1.9.3 Study the potential for redevelopment of the old county landfill site for open space or recreational purposes.

1.9.4 Study the potential for a joint Madison-Morgan County regional park, possibly in conjunction with the landfill site or the current or future bypasses around Madison

1.9.5 Explore the adoption of volunteer community garden programs and stream protection programs in cities and neighborhoods throughout the county.

Objective 2.0 Protect important visual corridors and gateways of and to the county and its cities.

Policy 2.1 Identify and appropriately designate important corridors and gateways. (I-20 should be considered a corridor and its exits as gateways.)

Policy 2.2 Use water or sewer line extensions as an opportunity to preserve viewsapes whenever possible.

Policy 2.3 Provide incentives to encourage landowners to permanently designate land as a viewscape.

Policy 2.4 Acquire fee simple title or development rights to key gateways into the county and its cities.

Policy 2.5 Develop and adopt appropriate corridor/gateway regulations and guidelines for setbacks, landscaping, tree removal, curb cuts, etc.

Policy 2.6 Utilize innovative tools (See policy 1.2 above) to help protect designated viewscales.

Policy 2.7 Review and improve as necessary the local requirements for setbacks and vegetative buffers for timber harvesting and new land intensive agriculture, e.g., poultry houses, feedlots, greenhouses, dairy facilities.

Policy 2.8 Ensure that widened roads remain along their existing routes to the degree possible and preserve existing trees and medians where safety is not compromised.

Policy 2.9 Encourage and facilitate tree planting/replacement programs along appropriate designated streets, corridors, and gateways in the county.

Objective 3.0 Link important greenspaces in the county.

Policy 3.1 Identify those habitats that should be linked in order to ensure their environmental health and the survival of the species that reside therein.

Policy 3.2 Explore development of a county/cities-wide system of greenways that meets environmental objectives and provides opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and biking. (The land included may be a blend of public, private, and private with public access similar to that which occurs with the Appalachian and other long distance trails.)

Policy 3.3 Continually monitor if and when the railroads may abandon routes in Morgan County and, if such occurs, be prepared to act to convert these “rails to trails” if possible.

Policy 3.4 Ensure, whenever reasonably possible, that conservation subdivisions link their conservation lands to those protected green or open spaces adjacent to the subdivision.

Policy 3.5 Explore the potential for using Hightower Road (the route of Sherman’s troops that runs on the north side of Dixie Highway and the railroad) as a key link in a cross country greenway/trail originating at Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Policy 3.6 Explore the feasibility of the incorporation of the power line easements into a countywide trail and greenway linkage system.

Objective 4.0 Support the continued existence of a viable agricultural and forestry sector in the county.

Policy 4.1 Support “right-to-farm” laws that ensure that existing farms are not forced out of operation because of conflicts with residential and commercial development.

Policy 4.2 Develop functional, realistic options whereby owners of undeveloped land can gain adequate value from their property without having to develop intensively, e.g., land banking, conservation easements, development rights programs, sale of water.

Policy 4.3 Support cost sharing arrangements with farmers at the federal, state, and local levels for projects that contribute to the attainment of the county’s natural resource objectives.

Policy 4.4 Work to revise those state and local regulations, or the interpretation of those regulations, that may inhibit or prevent certain acceptable on-farm sales and commercial activities which can enhance the economic viability of the farm.

Policy 4.5 Encourage agricultural land preservation by ensuring that property tax policy is favorable to conservation efforts.

Objective 5.0 Support efforts and adopt regulations that help to retain and attract low intensity, land extensive activities, e.g., commercial hunting operations, horseback-riding resorts, and other agri-tourism, heritage tourism, and eco-tourism.

Objective 6.0 Educate and coordinate citizen boards and authorities to plan for and advise on the protection of open space, corridors, and gateways.

Objective 7.0 Identify and pursue funding sources for the protection of green and open space, viewscapes, and gateways.

Policy 7.1 Explore the adoption of dedicated public funding sources, e.g., a special option sales tax or portion thereof.

Policy 7.2 Advocate for the creation of a permanent fund for greenspace protection at the state level to which Morgan County and its municipalities could apply for assistance.

Policy 7.3 Work to interest the Trust for Public Land and other similar organizations in undertaking programs and initiatives in Morgan County.

Objective 8.0 Work to protect and, as appropriate, increase the level of tree cover in Morgan County.

Policy 8.1 Continue or initiate tree planting programs in all municipalities.

Policy 8.2 Establish county and municipal ordinances which prevent clear-cutting prior to development, retain certain types and/or quantities of existing trees, and specify appropriate canopy levels of either existing or planted trees. Such ordinances should not discourage normal and proper forestry practices.

Policy 8.3 Develop a program to protect significant hardwood forests and specimen trees still remaining in the county.

Policy 8.4 Investigate the possibility of participation in the Tree City program for all municipalities in the county.

Lake Oconee/Hard Labor Creek State Park Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal

Capitalize on and effectively protect and manage the resources of Lake Oconee and Hard Labor Creek State Park to the benefit of Morgan County and its citizens.

Objectives and Policies

Objective 1.0 Adopt appropriate laws and regulations that effectively protect the natural resource and experiential values of Lake Oconee and Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Objective 2.0 Explore the potential for festivals, competitions, and other activities in, on, or based from Lake Oconee and Hard Labor Creek State Park that benefit residents of the county economically and recreationally while protecting the resources and avoiding undue inconvenience to those who live nearby.

Objective 3.0 Better educate Morgan County residents as to the opportunities available at Lake Oconee and Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Objective 4.0 Encourage volunteerism of interested citizens through the creation of “Friends of the Lake” or “Friends of Hard Labor” type organizations and through programs of such groups and agencies as Adopt-A-Stream, Georgia Wildlife Federation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Madison-Morgan Conservancy.

Objective 5.0 Undertake regular public-private cleanup initiatives along the Apalachee River, other rivers and streams and the shores of Lake Oconee in Morgan County.

Objective 6.0 Continue participation in tri-county initiatives (Morgan, Greene, Putnam) for Lake Oconee.

Objective 7.0 Coordinate with the three Lake Oconee property owners associations when developing plans for the protection and utilization of this resource.

Objective 8.0 Explore the potential for developing a trail along portions of the Georgia power setback which borders the lake.

Objective 9.0 Work to develop a trail system (foot, bike, equestrian) from Rutledge to Hard Labor Creek.

Objective 10.0 Heighten the awareness of our legislative delegation and other elected local leaders of both Morgan and Walton Counties as to the value and needs of Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Objective 11.0 Adopt land use regulations that limit development density and type along the borders of Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Objective 12.0 Heighten awareness of the historic value of various structures and sites within Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Objective 13.0 Encourage the preservation of the botanical diversity in Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Morgan County Green Print Concept

General Concept Description

The General Concept for the Morgan County Green Print Plan is depicted in Map 12. Essential elements of a multi-layered analysis have been translated into conceptual format in order to facilitate understanding. The Concept includes the Concept Map and general recommendations that are coordinated with the map. The following is a description of the elements of the Green Print Concept Map and a summary of recommendations.

Green Print Concept Map

The Concept Map includes identification of key features and resources as well as three categories of land use elements: Regions, Districts and Nodes. Regions are at the broadest level, addressing the majority of the County's land and emphasizing open space preservation. The terms Districts and Nodes describe areas that are conceptually identified as developed and/or appropriate for development. Features and Resources include specific identification of environmentally, historically, and culturally important lands that are emphasized for preservation.

Regions:

Watershed Protection

Approximately the northern half of Morgan County is comprised of watershed areas that drain to the two raw surface water intake points that supply the Madison water system. Thus, this "region" of the county is identified as a local Water Supply Watershed Protection area due to the relationship between the land and the drinking water supply for a large portion of residents. In this region, the preservation of agriculture, forest and open lands, and in particular the maintenance of riparian buffers along rivers and tributaries, will have a benefit to the long term health of the entire community.

Farmland Preservation

The southern half of Morgan County includes numerous farms and forested areas, and identified prime agricultural soils are more prevalent in this southern portion of the county. This region is identified as the Farmland Preservation Region as a recognition of the importance of preserving active farms and other land with high potential for farming, forestry and natural resource preservation.

Districts and Nodes:

Town Center Nodes

Bostwick, Buckhead, Madison and Rutledge are the existing incorporated town centers in Morgan County. Each of these towns includes a mixture of land uses and infrastructure that is able to support a higher intensity of development than is appropriate for rural county areas.

Community Nodes: Historic and Developing

Identified Community Nodes within the unincorporated areas of Morgan County include those that have historically been recognized as communities (such as Apalachee) as well as new or potential developing communities (Madison Lakes).

Historic unincorporated communities in Morgan County include Apalachee, Godfrey, Pennington, Fairplay, Springfield and Swords. These communities do not have infrastructure and services to the level of the incorporated towns, but they do generally have some level of community organization. Depending on the interests of landowners and residents in each Historic Community, there may be potential for infill development of a village or “hamlet” type, though the primary emphasis in Historic Communities should be placed on preservation of community character and resources.

Developing Communities in Morgan County include Flat Rock and Madison Lakes, among others. In these areas, there is developable land, a basis of (or potential for) infrastructure to support development, and an apparent intent or opportunity to promote development that is consistent with a village or “hamlet” type. Though incorporation as towns is not anticipated, these Developing Community Nodes are envisioned as accommodating a higher density of development, a mixture of land uses, and infrastructure that is similar to that of a town.

Lake Oconee District

Lake Oconee is a unique resource for Morgan County and adjacent Greene and Putnam counties. Lake Oconee was created by the Georgia Power Company and covers 19,050 acres with 374 miles of shoreline. Fifty-five miles of shoreline are in Morgan County. In recent years, Lake Oconee has become an increasingly desirable location for primary or secondary residences, and property values have increased dramatically. The development of Reynolds Plantation and the Ritz Carlton resort in Greene County is an example of the level to which development has advanced near Lake Oconee.

Lake Oconee is also an important environmental resource. The Oconee River Basin was established as an RIR in 1993. The Georgia Power Company maintains a 25-foot vegetative buffer around the lake, which is larger in some areas for aesthetic screening. No boathouses are allowed and Georgia Power must permit all marina developments. While Morgan County does not have direct jurisdiction over Lake Oconee or its immediate buffers, the County does have jurisdiction over adjacent areas that are identified as the Lake Oconee District. Due to the desirability of development in this area, special regulations and guidelines should be established to ensure quality development and environmental sensitivity.

Features and Resources:*Rivers, Streams, Lakes, Ponds, Wetlands, Floodplains*

These environmental features associated with hydrology are crucial to animal and plant habitat as well as human development (water source). They should be protected from negative impacts of development.

Groundwater Recharge Areas

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Geologic Survey, has identified at the statewide level the areas that are considered to be most significant for recharge of groundwater (aquifers). In Morgan County, the water source for many residents and businesses is groundwater wells, either as a source for public water systems or individual private wells. In Morgan County, “probable areas of thick soils” which may be significant recharge areas have been identified and mapped. These areas should be protected from potentially polluting uses or developments.

Public Owned Properties

Hard Labor Creek State Park is the major public owned property in Morgan County, but there are others. These parks and refuges offer opportunities for overall greenspace coordination.

Historic/Culturally Significant Properties

Morgan County has many historically and culturally significant properties. These have been identified through the Green Print workshop and other data sources.

Scenic Views and Corridors

Numerous scenic areas were identified in the Green Print workshop, in addition to corridors that had been previously identified in Morgan County planning efforts.

Gateways

Entrances to the Morgan County community present specific opportunities to identify Morgan County as a special place. The primary and secondary community gateways have been identified.

Multi-level Greenspace Preservation Recommendations

Based on existing conditions analysis and the Green Print Concept Map, the following implementation recommendations are outlined for greenspace preservation in Morgan County. Recommendations and strategies are categorized under two headings: A) Acquisition and Permanent Protection and B) Land Use Planning and Regulation.

A. Strategic Planning: Acquisition and Permanent Protection
Short and Long Range Opportunities

1. Preserve Historical and Cultural Resources
 - Historic Properties
 - Scenic Viewsheds

Opportunity/Strategy: Combine Greenspace and Historic/Cultural Preservation Efforts

Potential Tools: Land Acquisition, Conservation Easements, Viewshed Easements, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, Gateway and Historic Signage, Transfer of Development Rights

Highest priority for preservation based acquisition should be placed on sensitive historic and cultural properties in Morgan County. Many such properties were identified by Morgan County residents during the Green Print Open House Workshop. Historic and scenic properties are of primary concern because they are easily threatened by development.

2. Preserve Environmentally Sensitive Lands

- River and Tributary Corridors
- Wetlands and Floodplains

Opportunity/Strategy: Greenway Corridor Preservation

Potential Tools: Land Acquisition, Conservation Easements, Riparian Buffers, Transfer of Development Rights

High priority should be given to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in Morgan County. While regulatory tools can substantially forward preservation of environmentally sensitive lands, acquisition or purchase of development rights to sensitive properties provides the most secure permanent protection. Acquisition of properties and easements should be conducted in conformity with a master plan for greenway trails in Morgan County to add the benefit of public access and recreation.

3. Preserve Rural and Agricultural Lands

- Working and Hobby Farms
- Forest Tracts

Opportunity/Strategy: Reduce Financial Burden on Landowners

Potential Tools: Land Acquisition, Conservation Easements, Purchasable and Transferable Development Rights, Conservation Use Tax Program.

Farmers in Morgan County and similar communities are encountering increasing economic difficulty as land values and, consequently, property taxes continue to rise. The Georgia Conservation Use Program has benefited many Morgan County landowners who have placed properties under conservation use agreements for ten year time periods. While this program can continue to assist the agriculture and forestry communities, there is a need to provide additional options to landowners wishing to permanently protect land from development and receive a benefit from doing so. Programs such as Purchasable Development Rights should be established in Morgan County and potential sources of funding such programs should be evaluated by local government and conservation organizations.

B. Strategic Planning: Land Use Planning and Regulation Short and Long Range opportunities

1. Preserve Environmentally Sensitive Lands

- River and Tributary Corridors
- Wetlands and Floodplains
- Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Water Supply Watersheds

Opportunity/Strategy: Development Limitations

Potential Tools: Riparian Buffers, Land Use/Zoning, Floodplain Protection Ordinance, River Corridor Protection Ordinance, Groundwater Recharge Protection Ordinance, Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance.

Comprehensive planning and land use regulations can significantly protect environmentally sensitive lands from negative impacts of development. Many such regulations are already enacted in Morgan County. These existing regulations must be strictly enforced in order to be effective, and additional regulations should be considered. In particular, Morgan County should establish Conservation Subdivisions as the required method of subdivision design (see model Conservation Subdivision Ordinance in Appendix E). Also, Morgan County should consider a Riparian Buffer ordinance to further protect water resources (see model Riparian Buffer Ordinance in Appendix F).

2. Preserve Historical and Cultural Resources

- Historic Properties
- Scenic Viewsheds

Opportunity/Strategy: Protect Historic/Cultural Resources by Policy

Potential Tools: Viewshed Protection Policy, Scenic Corridor Designation, Corridor Overlay Districts, Historic Preservation Tax Credits.

The City of Madison has enacted excellent regulations to protect the aesthetics and historic character of the community's historic districts as well as major corridors. Morgan County should coordinate with Madison to craft Corridor Overlay regulations that will help to preserve the aesthetic quality of the County's scenic roads and viewsheds. Additionally, the County should actively promote historic preservation and the various tools available to help property owners preserve historic properties such as Historic Preservation Tax Credits.

3. Preserve Rural and Agricultural Lands

- Working and Hobby Farms
- Forest Tracts

Opportunity/Strategy: Plan for Rural Preservation

Potential Tools: Transferable Development Rights, Conservation Use Tax Program, Conservation Subdivisions, Agriculture District Low Density Zoning, Urban Infrastructure Extension Limits, Right-to-Farm Laws.

Local government regulations can play a role in the preservation of rural and agricultural lands. Given the proven public financial benefit of maintaining agricultural and forestry land use (contributes more in taxes than it demands in

services), it would be wise for Morgan County to actively promote such preservation. Tools to be considered include conservation subdivision ordinances, urban growth boundaries and farm/estate density zoning (10 to 25 or more acres per parcel). In particular, Morgan County should consider establishing farm/estate density zoning in conjunction with the establishment of PDR/TDR programs as was the approach adopted by Montgomery County, Maryland (see Appendix G – to establish TDR, Montgomery County established the “Rural Density Transfer Zone” by downzoning land from one per five acre to one per twenty-five acre density and assigning development rights to landowners based on the original five acre zoning).

The most immediate and direct measure that Morgan County will take to integrate strategies for greenspace preservation into official County policy will be the incorporation of Green Print recommendations into the Morgan County Joint Comprehensive Plan. Future regulatory changes to support greenspace preservation should be consistent with Green Print and Comprehensive Plan goals, objectives and policies.

Maps

Map 1: Morgan County Existing Land Use

Map 2: Morgan County Land Parcels Analysis

Map 3: Morgan County Groundwater Favorability Analysis

Map 4: Morgan County Groundwater Recharge Areas

Map 5: Morgan County Agricultural Land Use

Map 6: Morgan County Prime Agricultural Soils

Map 7: Morgan County Treecover

Map 8: Morgan County Water Resources and Floodplains

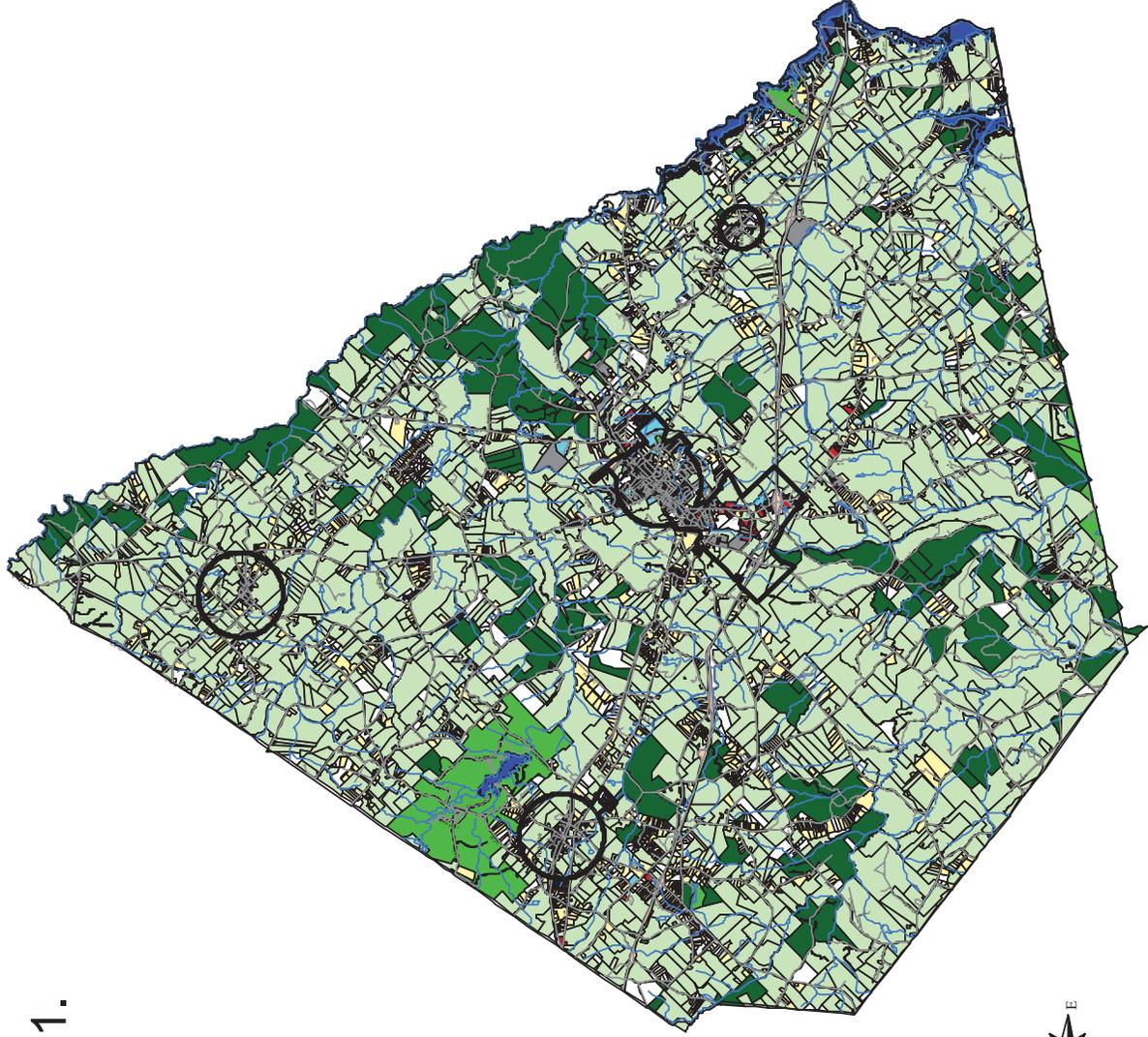
Map 9: Morgan County Environmental Factors Overlay

Map 10: Morgan County Development and Infrastructure

Map 11: Green Print Public Input: Preservation Threats and Opportunities

Map 12: Morgan County Green Print Concept Map

Map 1.



Morgan County GreenPrint Plan

Existing Land Use

Map Legend

- Land Use
- Single-Family Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Commercial
 - Public/Institutional
 - Transportation/Communication/Utilities
 - Industrial
 - Agriculture
 - Commercial Forestry
 - Park/Recreation/Conservation
 - Vacant/Undeveloped
 - County Boundary
 - City Limits
 - Roads
 - Rivers and Streams



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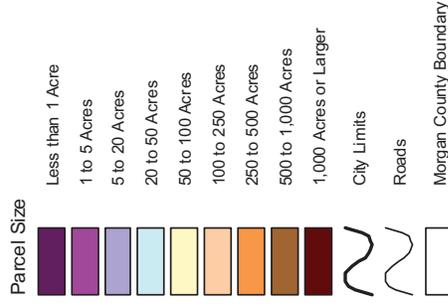
2003
Morgan County Green Print Plan
Morgan County, Georgia

Map 2.

Morgan County Green Print Plan

Size Distribution of Land Parcels

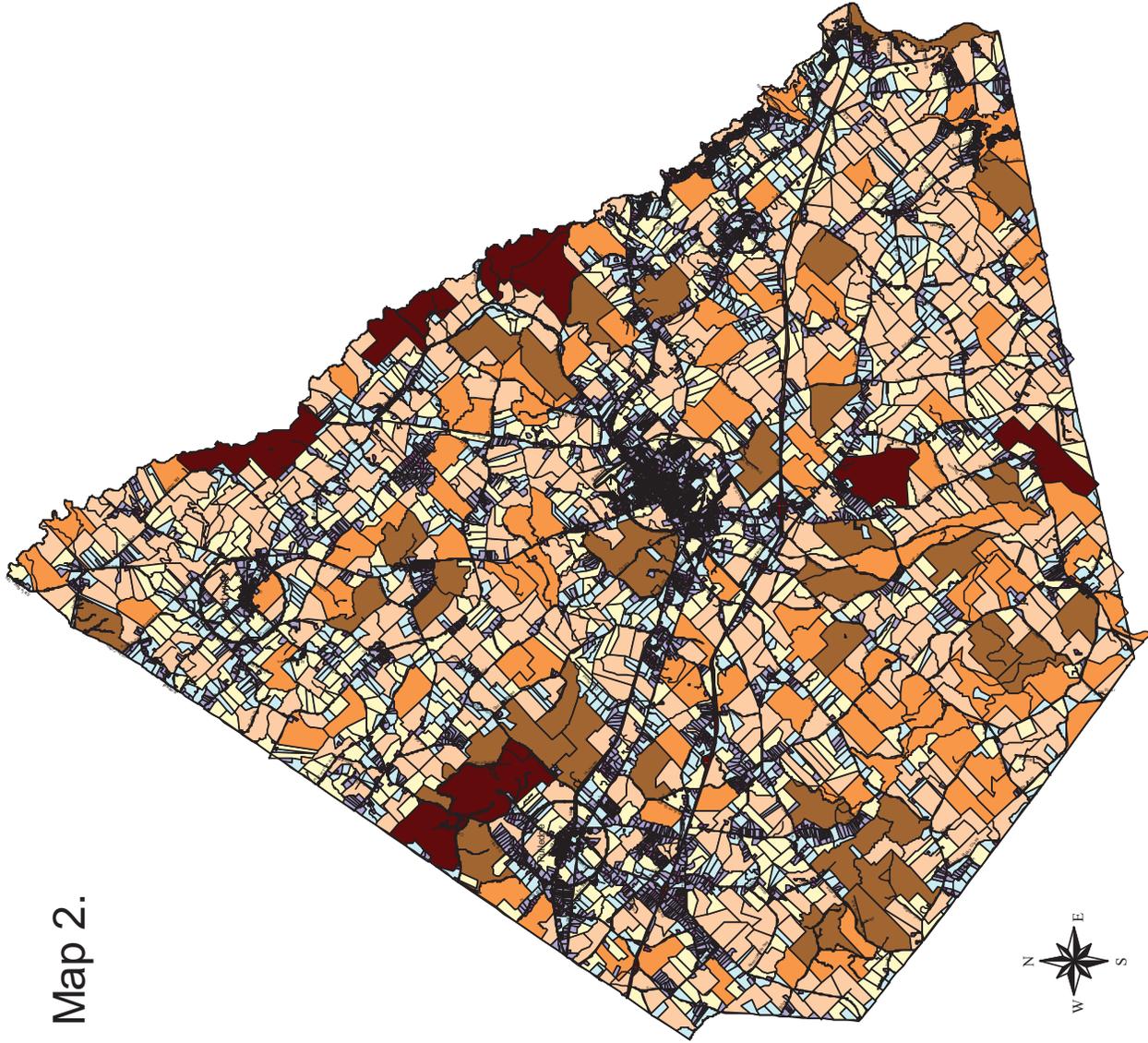
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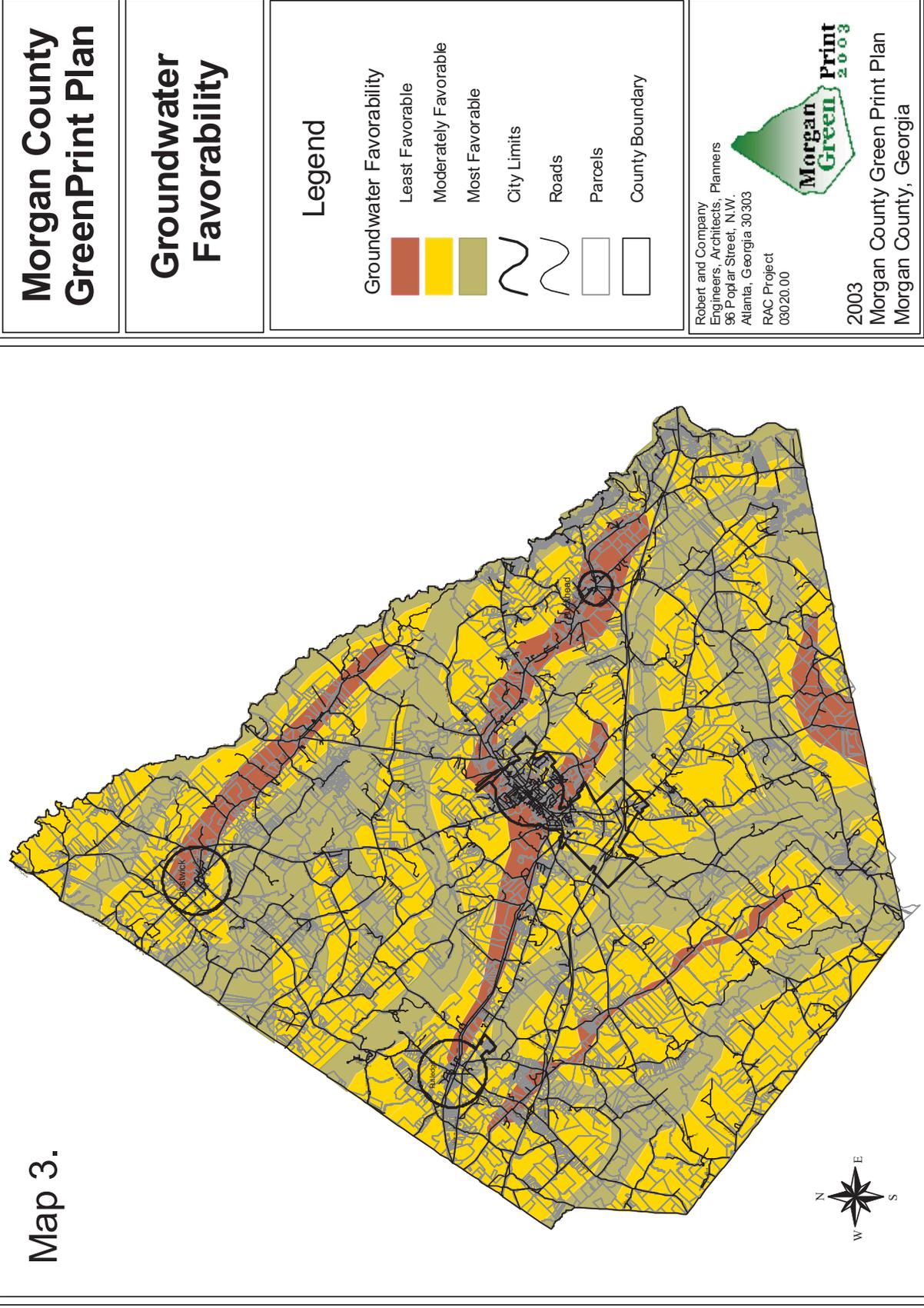
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Map 3.



Morgan County GreenPrint Plan

Groundwater Favorability

Legend

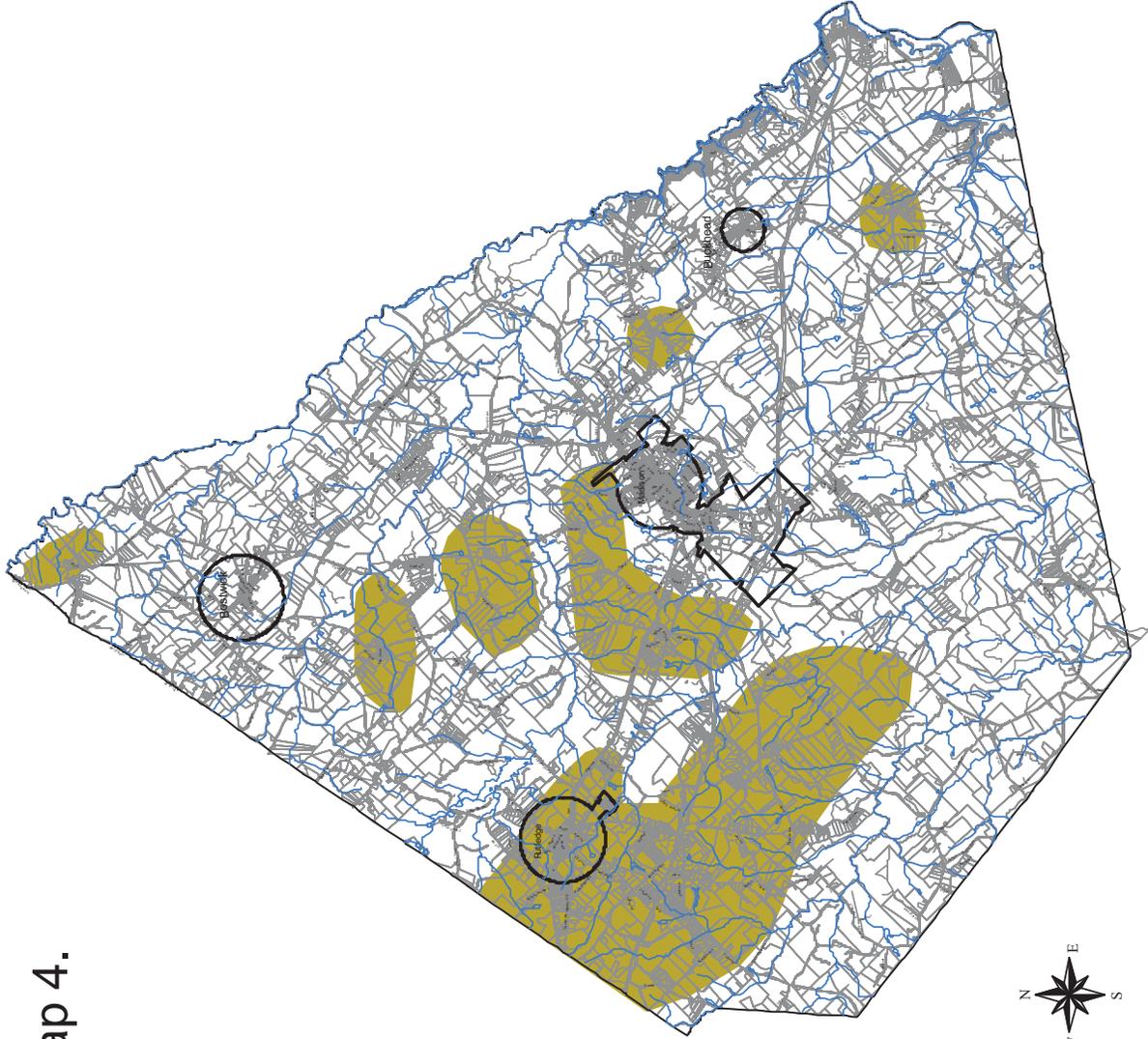
- Groundwater Favorability
- Least Favorable
 - Moderately Favorable
 - Most Favorable
- City Limits
- Roads
- Parcels
- County Boundary

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Map 4.



Morgan County Green Print Plan

Groundwater Recharge Areas

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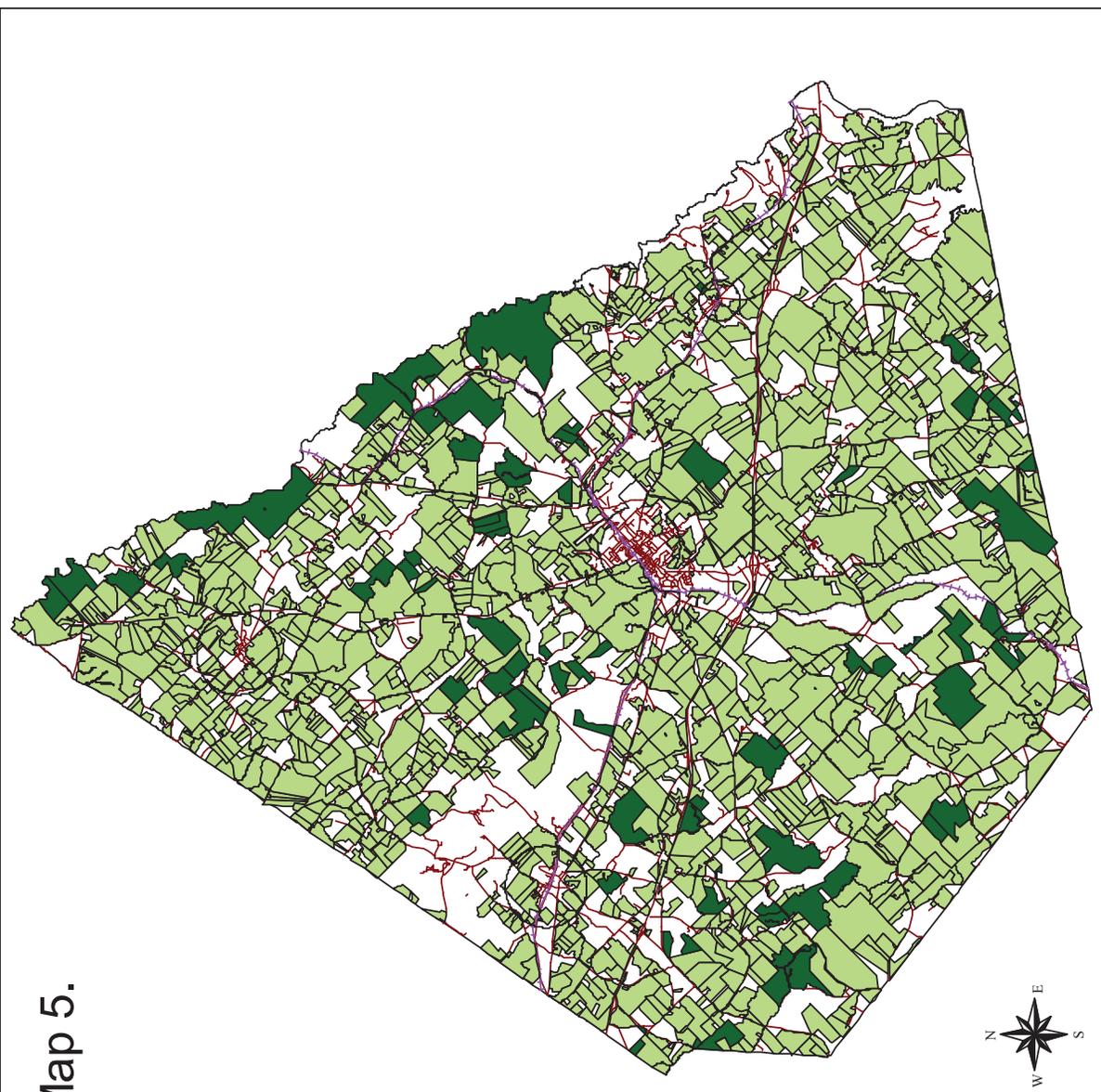
-  Recharge Areas
-  Rivers and Streams
-  City Limits
-  Roads
-  Parcels
-  County Boundary

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Morgan County Green Print Plan
Morgan County, Georgia

Map 5.



Morgan County GreenPrint Plan

Agricultural Land Use

Map Legend

- Farmland
 - Agriculture
 - Commercial Forestry
- Roads
 -
- Railroads
 -
- City Limits
 -
- County Boundary
 -

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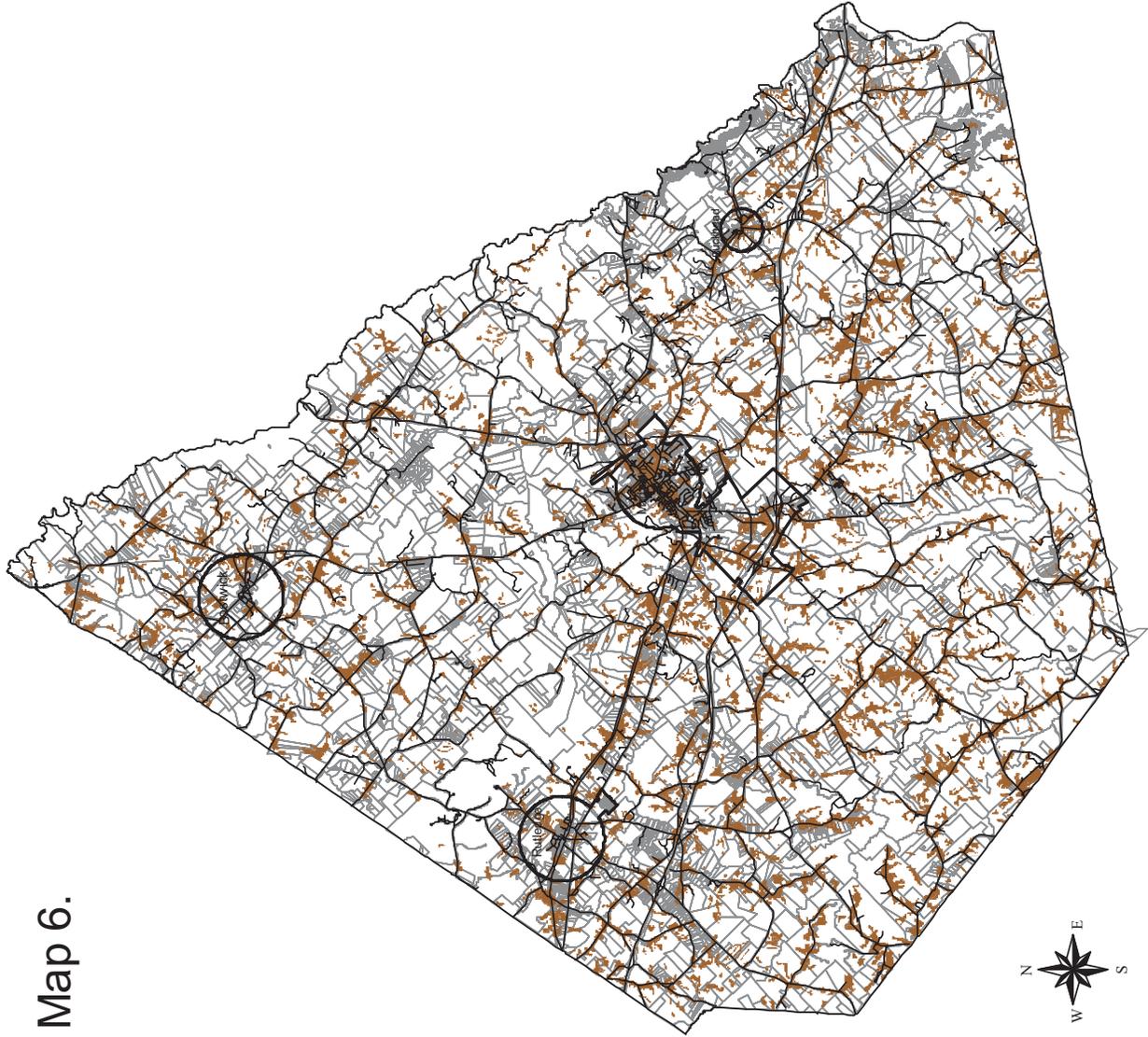


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Map 6.

Morgan County Green Print Plan

Prime Agricultural Soils



Legend

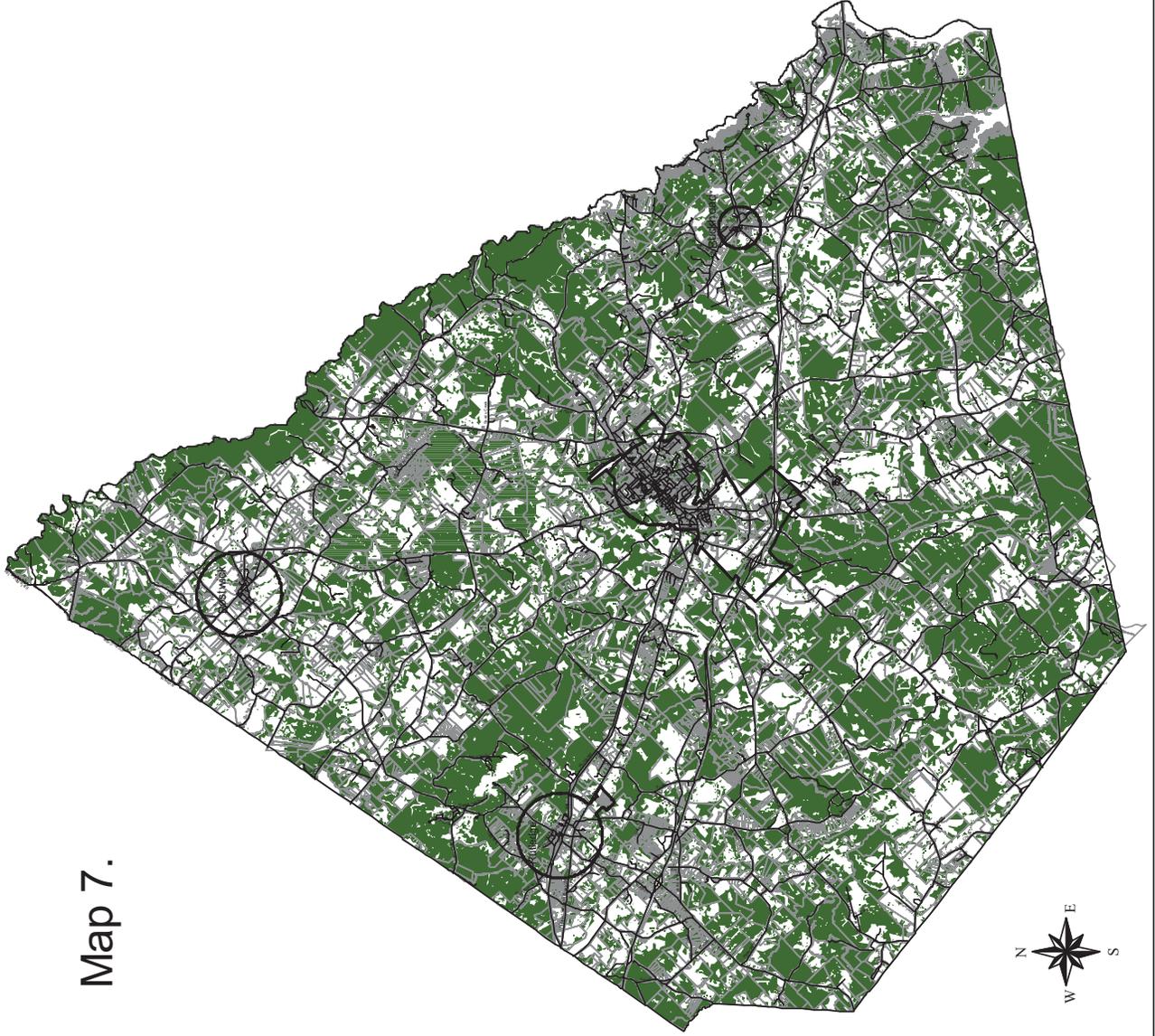
Prime Agricultural Soils	HEB
AIA	HCC
AmB	LdB
AqC2	LdD2
BHD	UjB3
CdB2	UjD3
CdD2	UjE3
CRB3	MBB
CDB3	MKC2
CgB2	MND2
CHA	MPE2
CGB	PdB2
DdB2	PCD
DdB3	PCE3
DdD3	RfB
GdB2	SdB
GdD2	ToA
GdE2	W
GB3	WdB
GD3	WdB
HBB	City Limits
HCC2	Roads
HCC3	Panels
HdB2	County Boundary

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2003
 Morgan County Green Print Plan
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Map 7.



Morgan County Green Print Plan

Morgan County Treecover

Legend

-  Treecover
-  City Limits
-  Roads
-  Parcels
-  County Boundary

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Morgan County Green Print Plan

Water Resources and Floodplains

Legend

-  Floodplains
-  Lakes
-  Rivers and Streams
-  City Limits
-  Roads
-  Parcels
-  County Boundary

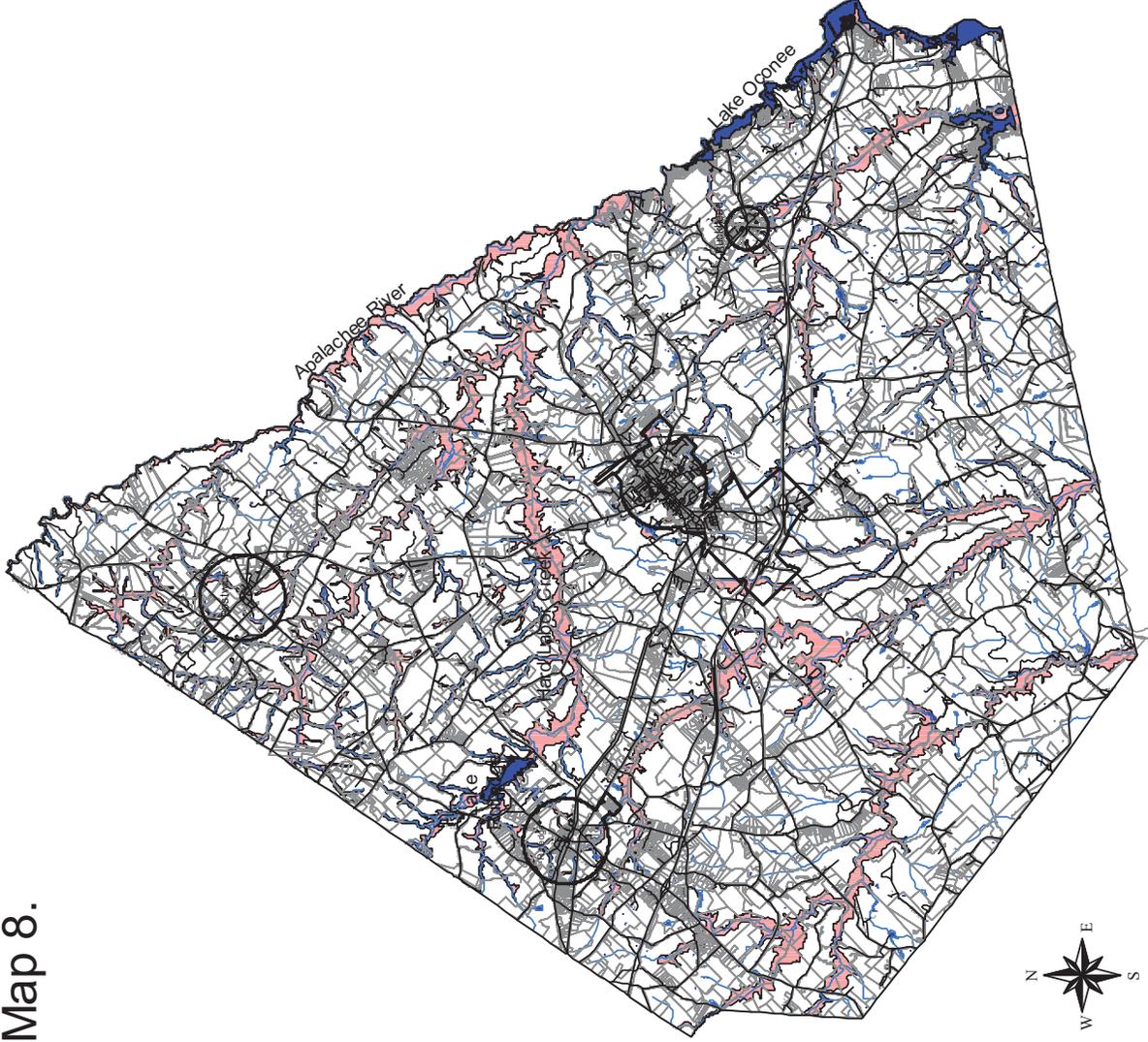
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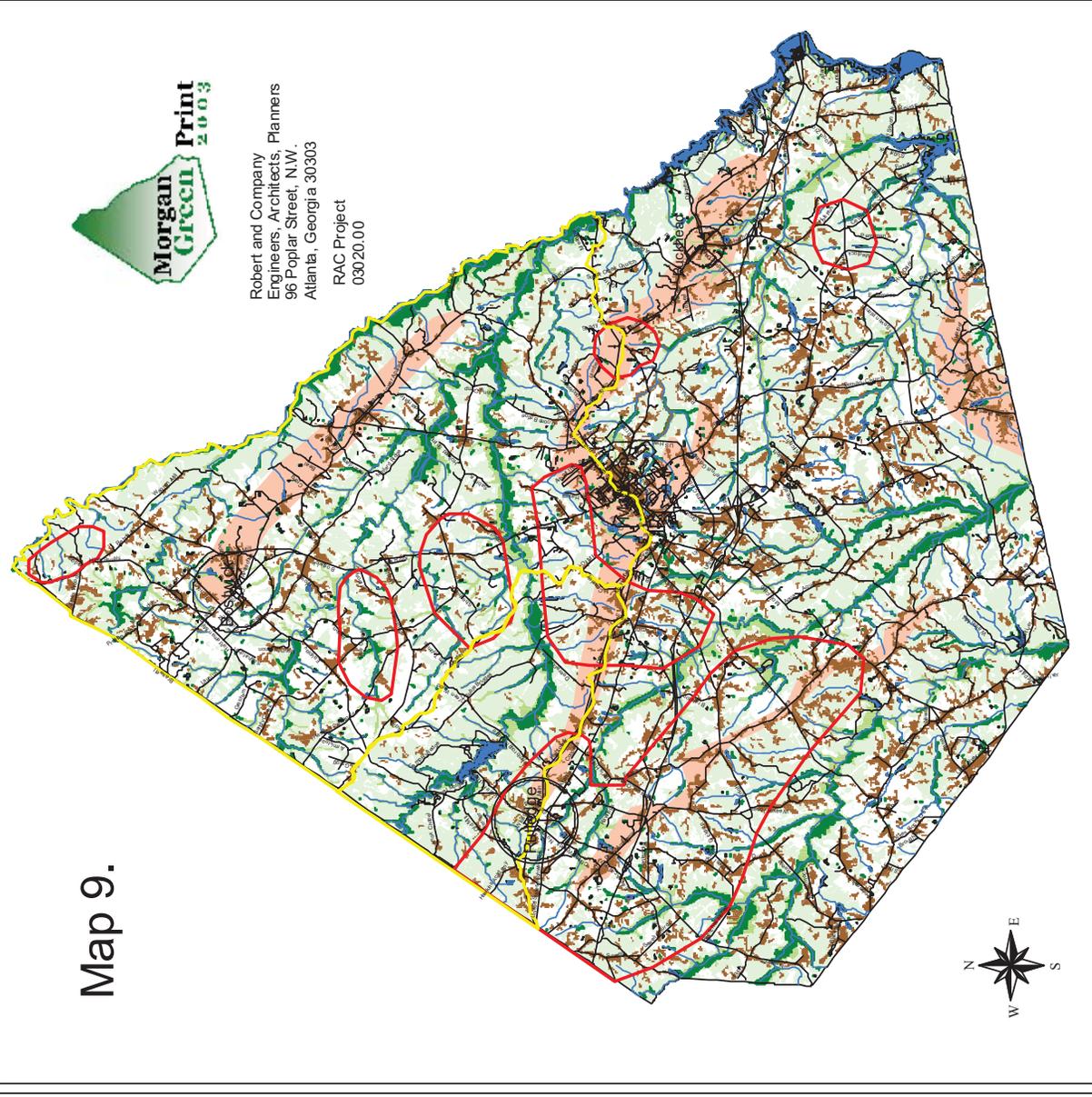


2003
 Morgan County Green Print Plan
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Map 8.



Map 9.



Map 10.



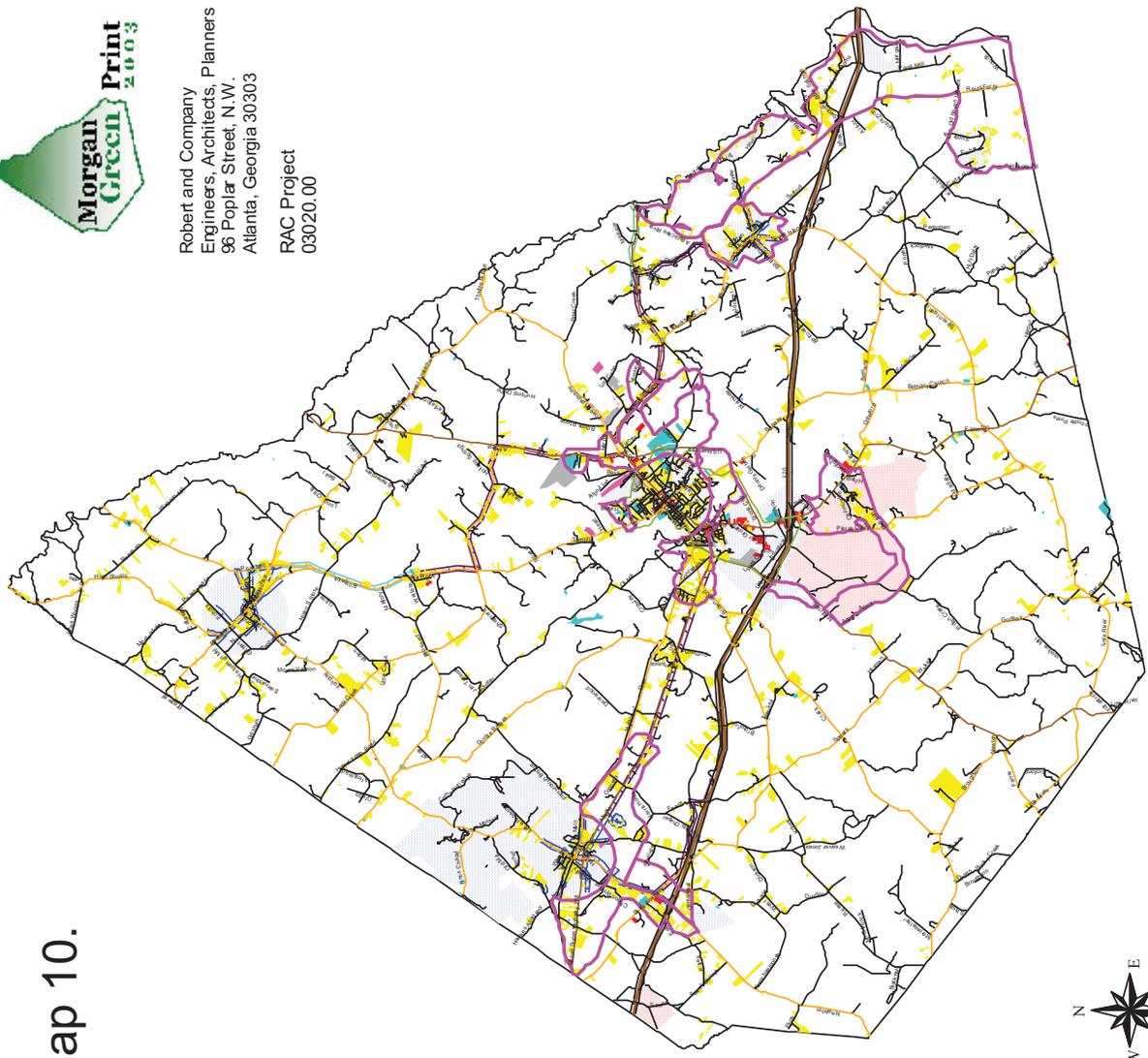
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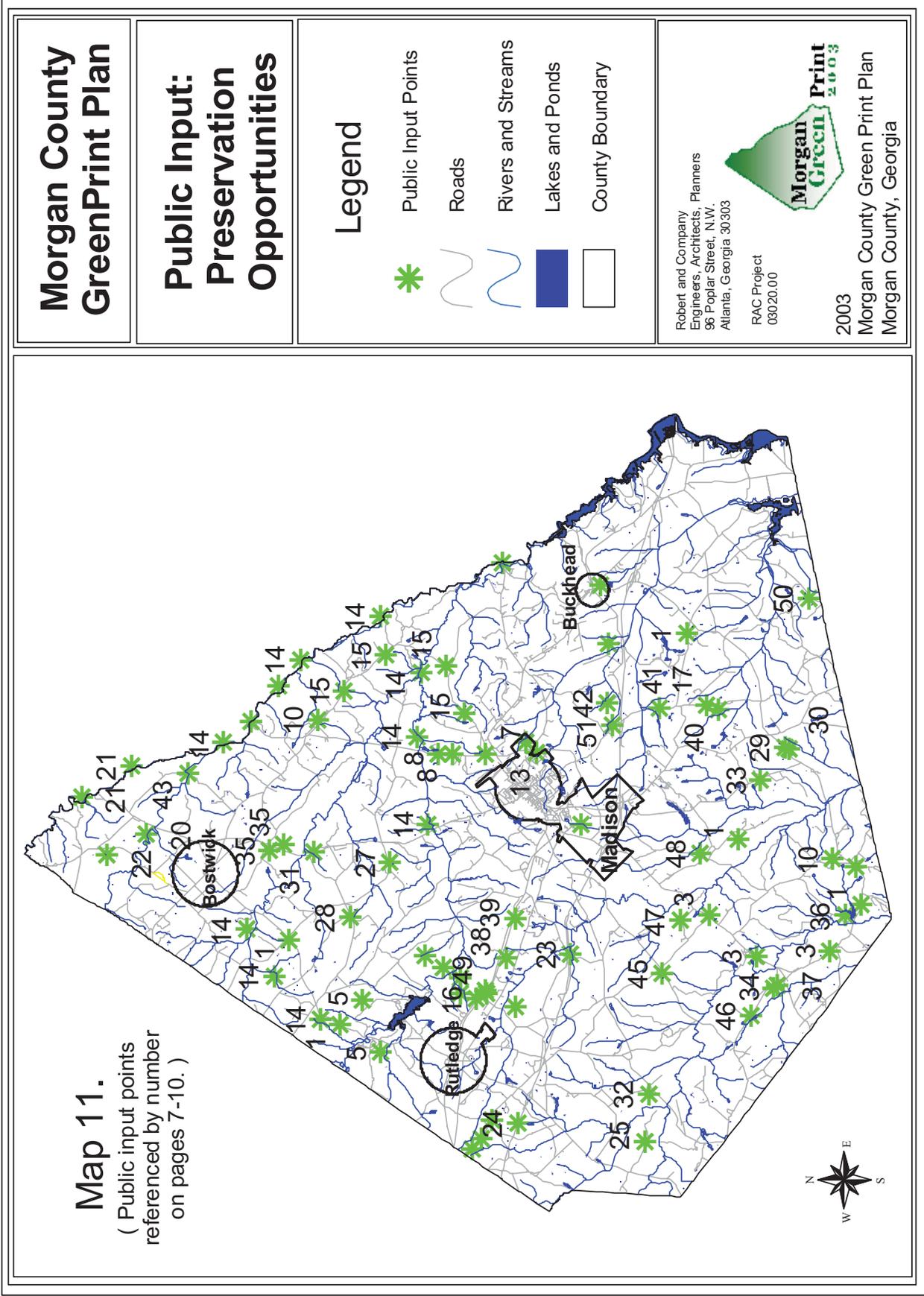
Morgan County GreenPrint Plan

Development and Infrastructure

Map Legend

- Developed Land
 - Commercial
 - Industrial
 - Manufacturing
 - Public/Institutional
 - Residential
 - Transportation/Communication/Utilities
 - Potential/Planned Developments
- Water Lines
 - New Service
 - Proposed Service
 - Raw Water Service
 - Water Service Areas
 - Madison Sewer Service
- Roads
 - Interstate Principal Arterial
 - Principal Arterial
 - Minor Arterial
 - Major Collector
 - Minor Collector
 - Local Road





GreenPrint Concept

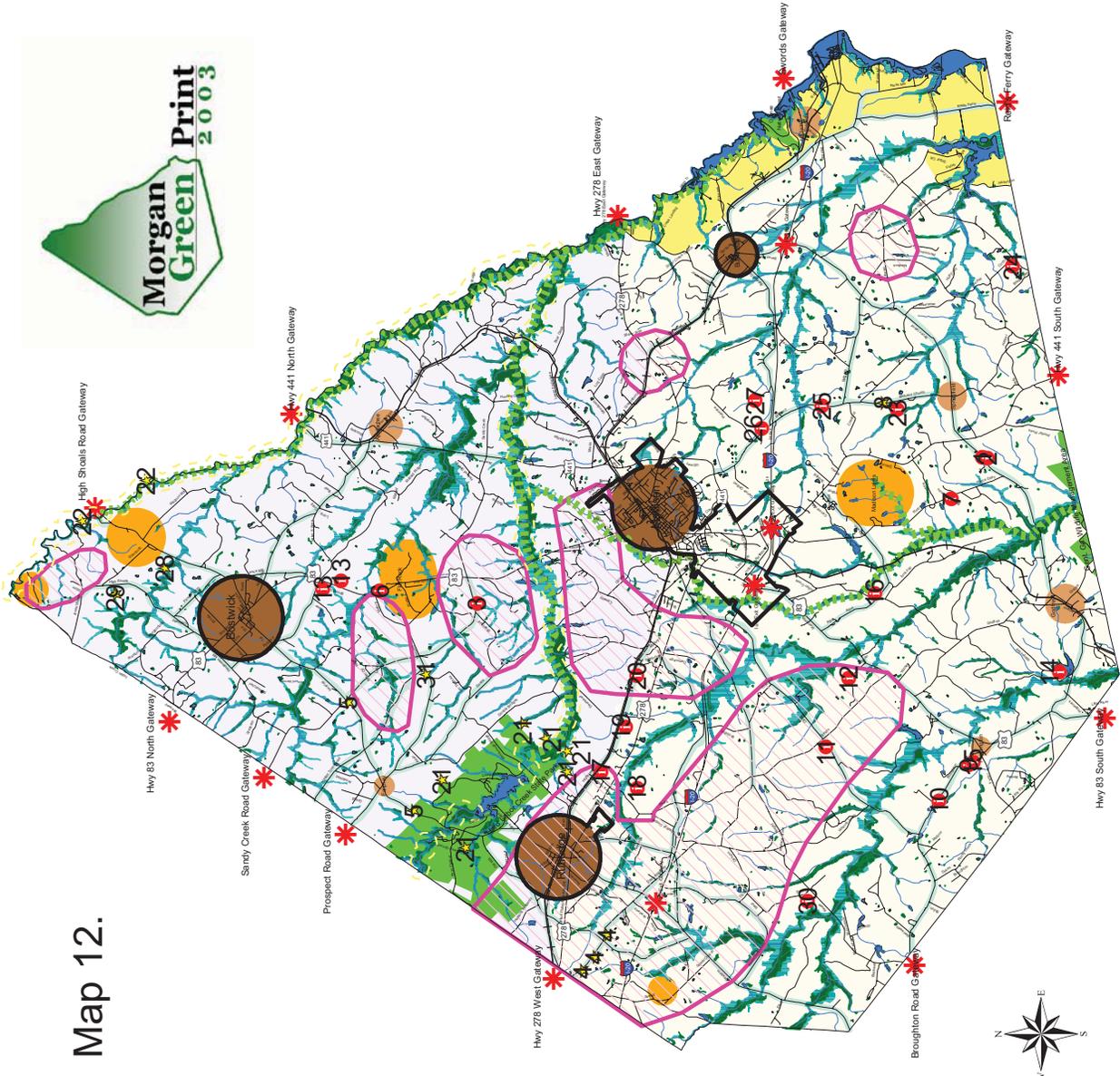
Map Legend

Watershed Region	Light blue shaded area
Farmland Region	Light yellow shaded area
Lake Oconee District	Yellow shaded area
Town Centers	Brown shaded area
City Limits	Black outline
Historic Community Nodes	Orange shaded area
Developing Community Nodes	Light orange shaded area
Parks	Green shaded area
Lakes and Ponds	Blue shaded area
Wetlands	Dark green shaded area
Floodplains	Light blue shaded area
Rivers and Streams	Blue lines
Stream Buffer	Yellow dashed line
Groundwater Recharge Areas	Pink hatched area
Historic or Cultural Resource	Red circle with 'i'
Scenic View	Yellow star
Gateways	Red asterisk
Potential Scenic Roads	Light green dashed line
Potential Trails/Greenways	Green dashed line
Roads	Black line
Railroads	Black line with cross-ticks

Morgan County
GreenPrint Plan
May 12, 2004

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Map 12.



Appendices

For reference and further information regarding tools and programs that can potentially be used in Morgan County, the following resource documents are included as appendices to the Morgan County Green Print Plan.

Appendix A: Georgia Greenspace Program Legislation

Appendix B: Sample Agricultural Conservation Easement (Habersham County, GA)

Appendix C: Georgia Uniform Conservation Easement Act

Appendix D: Georgia Transfer of Development Rights Legislation

Appendix E: Conservation Subdivision Model Ordinance

Appendix F: Model Riparian Buffer Ordinance

Appendix G: Protecting Farmland in Developing Communities: A Case Study of the Tax Implications of Agricultural Conservation Easements (The University of Georgia Institute of Ecology, Office of Public Service and Outreach)

Appendix H: Meeting Notes, Attendance Registers, etc.