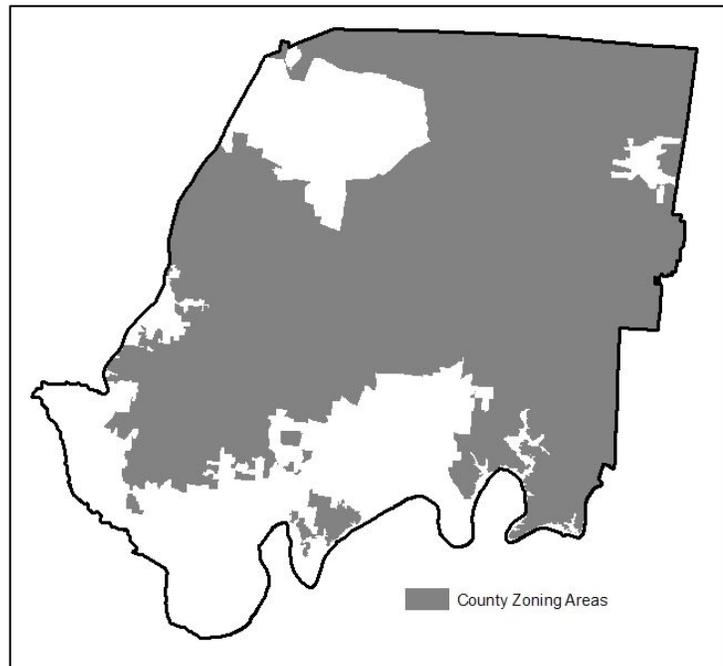


# 1.0 Introduction

The *2035 Comprehensive Plan: Sumner County's Blueprint to the Future* outlines an overall vision, goals, and objectives of Sumner County's desired settlement patterns, community design, transportation systems, and natural resources. Sumner County has experienced rapid growth since the 1960s. This growth primarily has been experienced in Sumner County's municipalities, but significant growth has also taken place in unincorporated county. One only needs a reminder that many of these areas that have seen rapid growth were once unincorporated county in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The comprehensive plan outlines historical and projected growth trends, challenges attributed to this growth, and steps for Sumner County to address this growth in a smarter fashion through appropriate policies, plans, and programs.



**Figure 1-1 - Sumner County's Planning & Zoning Jurisdiction**

A county-wide comprehensive plan is defined as a parcel-based, detailed vision for portions of unincorporated Sumner County that the Sumner County Construction & Development Department is responsible for enforcing the County's Zoning Resolution and Subdivision Regulations. These areas are not within municipal city limits and are not within municipal planning regions; therefore these parcels are in the unincorporated county and may be within municipal urban growth boundaries. Because of the overlapping of responsibilities between Sumner County and municipalities, coordination among entities while implementing the plan is essential. Figure 1-1 depicts a general overview of the area involved in a county-wide comprehensive plan.

## 1.1 Purpose of Planning

Planning is finding out where you are, where you want to go, and how you want to get there. <sup>1</sup> Planning tries to further the welfare of people and their communities by creating convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive environments for present and future generations. It is a collaborative process that defines a community's vision for itself. Planners consider the physical, social, and economic aspects of communities and examine the connections between them. Planners analyze existing trends and future projections and analyze issues such as transportation, land use, housing, recreation and open space, natural and

### ***What is planning?***

Planning is finding out where you are, where you want to go, and how you want to get there.

cultural resources, population, and economic development. Strategic alternatives for solving problems in a coordinated and comprehensive manner are developed, and these alternatives guide future development and preservation based upon the established goals and vision.

Comprehensive planning tries to establish a long-term vision with supporting goals and objectives. A comprehensive plan involves extensive public and decision maker input and can include a variety of issues already mentioned. The comprehensive plan becomes a formal document for community officials, who review, revise, and adopt it for local action.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 What is a Comprehensive Plan?

**A comprehensive plan is the most common approach to planning.** It brings diverse and sometimes competing viewpoints together to determine what a community wants to look like in the future. Numerous comprehensive plans have been developed across the state and nation. In Middle Tennessee, Metro-Nashville has a comprehensive plan that is updated by subareas because of the vast area it covers and the differing communities that make up Davidson County. Williamson County has a comprehensive plan that covers unincorporated areas of the county while cities such as Franklin and Brentwood maintain their own plans. Maury County is collaborating with their cities to develop a comprehensive plan for the entire county. Sumner County developed the *2035 Comprehensive Plan* for unincorporated portions of the county including the City of Millersville and Town of Mitchellville while also being informed and linking to other local municipal comprehensive plans.

**A comprehensive plan contains multiple elements.** Because a comprehensive plan brings diverse perspectives together, it will usually contain multiple elements. These can include land use, transportation, open space preservation, recreation, cultural and historical assets, natural resources, schools, economic development, utilities, public health, intergovernmental coordination, and other topics important to a particular community. The City of Hendersonville recently updated their comprehensive plan which primarily focuses on land use and transportation, but it also considers other public infrastructure needs. Sumner County's *2035 Comprehensive Plan* addresses land use and transportation with a special emphasis on natural resource protection. The focus on natural resources was developed because of extensive public input supporting natural resource protection as an objective of the comprehensive plan.

**A comprehensive plan establishes a long-term vision (20-30 years out).** Once a development is on the ground there are very few future opportunities to redo a development 75 or 100 years later. A comprehensive plan prompts residents and decision makers to think long-term. What does a community want to look like in 20 to 30 years? What is important to preserve and maintain for one's children and grandchildren? What needs to be changed? It asks these questions to bring all the diverse perspectives together to focus on common aspects. Ultimately, a vision for the community is developed that has buy-in from those participating. Sumner County's *2035 Comprehensive Plan* contains a vision in which the County will continue to maintain its high quality of life for those that live, work, and play in unincorporated Sumner County.

A comprehensive plan:

- is the most common approach to planning;
- contains multiple elements;
- establishes a long-term vision (20-30 years out);
- directs future development consistent with that vision;
- provides a framework to coordinate planning activities;
- provides context for local officials making decisions; and
- informs decisions of any group or individual concerned with growth and development.<sup>2</sup>

***A comprehensive plan directs future development consistent with that vision.*** A vision is established in the comprehensive plan, so development decisions are based upon this consensus. For example, a new residential subdivision of 250 lots is proposed as a medium density planned unit development for rezoning to the Sumner County Regional Planning Commission, but the comprehensive plan shows that this area may be best utilized as a mixed use center providing neighborhood retail and various housing options. The Planning Commission has more knowledge of what citizens envisioned for the community and can request informed changes to the proposal, so the community can collectively attain the vision set in the comprehensive plan. The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* is not intended to be a stumbling block for development, but a guiding document that will create development that is appropriate for the community.

***A comprehensive plan provides a framework to coordinate planning activities.*** The government is composed of various entities charged with carrying out activities for residents. A comprehensive plan is an opportunity to discuss these activities and coordinate functions across departments dealing with growth and development. The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* has received input from professionals involved with the Sumner County School System, economic development and retention, emergency response, municipal public works, utility districts, and other governmental entities. Some objectives are outlined that address coordination and intergovernmental collaboration within Sumner County and the Middle Tennessee region.

***A comprehensive plan provides context for local officials making decisions.*** Because a vision is established, local officials will look to a comprehensive plan to help determine decisions concerning growth and development. The Sumner County Commission, Sumner County Regional Planning Commission, and other decision-making bodies should utilize the *2035 Comprehensive Plan* to inform their decision-making processes.

***A comprehensive plan informs decisions of any group or individual concerned with growth and development.*** Any developer, entity, or individual will be able to obtain a copy of a comprehensive plan and determine what the community desires in a particular area in the future. The development and preservation efforts in the community will be influenced by the comprehensive plan. In Sumner County, the development of a comprehensive plan will be an open process and the final product will be available at anytime for review. The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* will also be flexible and may require updating depending upon changes in a community.

A comprehensive plan usually involves a significant amount of local decision maker and citizen input through a variety of techniques including open house style meetings, one-on-one interviews, technical interviews, soliciting of public comments, and others. It is important that citizen opinions are heard throughout the process because it will be these individuals that will raise families and live in the community in the future. A number of techniques were undertaken during the *2035 Comprehensive Plan* development. These public input techniques are outlined in Appendix B.

In Sumner County, the county's decision making bodies should consider the *2035 Comprehensive Plan* while making land use and transportation decisions; otherwise these decisions will not consider the vision contained in the plan. Future decisions will be mindful of residents' input and the consensus achieved about Sumner County's future while developing the plan.

***What has been done to address development until now?***

The Existing & Future Conditions Element (2.0) discusses the existing and projected growth trends Sumner County is likely to see in the future, but it is necessary to place the *2035 Comprehensive Plan* in

the context of historical and existing planning, zoning, and building activities in Sumner County and examine its interrelatedness with planning at the municipal and regional levels. Additionally, State Law dictates much of what a local government can perform regarding these functions.

### **1.3.1 County Planning Efforts**

County planning and land use regulations in Tennessee rest on powers granted to counties by the State Constitution. These powers are not mandated, but counties which choose to exercise planning, subdivision regulation, and zoning must comply with the grant of power.

Sumner County has examples of this power contained in the county's Zoning Resolution and Subdivision Regulations. Additionally, Sumner County developed these guiding plans:

- *Sumner County Major Road Plan in 1996;*
- *Sumner County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan in 2000 in cooperation with the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO);*
- *Station Camp Creek Area Land Use Plan in 2001 in cooperation with the City of Gallatin;*
- *Long Hollow Pike Corridor Land Use Plan in 2003 in cooperation with the Cities of Gallatin, Goodlettsville, and Hendersonville; and*
- *2025 Land Use Plan for Hendersonville Urban Growth Boundary in 2008 in cooperation with the City of Hendersonville.*

Two older planning documents were developed for Sumner County in the 1960s and 70s when Federal funds were available through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Urban Renewal Administration's Urban Planning Assistance Program, which was authorized by Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954. The first plan developed in 1968 called the *Land Use and Transportation Plan: Sumner County, Tennessee* established goals and objectives through 1990. It examined land use and thoroughfares with implementation strategies for Sumner County, excluding the Hendersonville Urban Area. Within the plan was another part that analyzed land use and thoroughfares with implementation strategies for the Hendersonville Urban Area. At the time, portions of the City of Hendersonville were being incorporated and less than two percent (273 persons) of the population of the urban area were within the city limits.

The second plan developed in 1977 was entitled *Land Use Plan: Sumner County, Tennessee*. It established goals and objectives through 2000 and outlined existing development features among growth trends and the natural environment. It analyzed different land use patterns and documented a list of policy goals for various land uses. It can only be assumed by current staff that the previous two land use plans developed in the 1960s and 1970s were not used to inform decisions of the Sumner County Regional Planning Commission on a regular basis. It is the intent of current Sumner County staff and elected officials that the *2035 Comprehensive Plan* will inform the decisions of the Sumner County Regional Planning Commission and other county elected or appointed bodies. The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* builds upon the previous planning activities described.

In May of 1998 the Tennessee General Assembly enacted Public Chapter 1101 which had ramifications for a county wide growth policy, municipal boundary changes through annexation, and incorporations of new municipalities. It mandated the establishment of a comprehensive growth plan for the county and its eight municipalities, changes the manner in which land may be annexed into an existing municipality, and changes the manner in which new areas may incorporate to form new municipalities.

The law required at a minimum the establishment of an urban growth boundary around each of the existing municipalities where high intensity development will be expected, the establishment of planned growth areas outside of the urban growth boundaries where high intensity development will be permitted, and the establishment of rural areas where agricultural uses will be expected. The law permits high intensity development in both the planned growth areas and urban growth boundary areas. The primary difference is that a municipality can annex property within its urban growth boundary provided the annexation conforms to the requirements of Public Chapter 1101, but it will not be permitted to annex into a planned growth area. Nothing in the law forbids development of property in rural areas. However, rural areas are intended to be remote and somewhat inaccessible, should be developed with low intensity development, and should be preserved for agricultural purposes.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1-2 depicts the Growth Plan for Sumner County. Current city limits are in light gray; urban growth boundaries are in the dark gray; planned growth areas are in peach; and rural areas are in green. At the time of adoption of the boundaries for Sumner County, Walnut Grove had established city limits and an urban growth boundary. Those areas are depicted but would now be part of the county's planned growth area. This area was never included in amendments to update White House's urban growth boundary. These boundaries have now been established for over 10 years. Significant areas in Hendersonville and Gallatin were annexed since this was developed. Unfortunately, these boundaries have had little influence on growth and development decisions in unincorporated Sumner County. These boundaries have mostly impacted annexation.

When a municipality annexes land the municipality must prepare a plan of services which details the services that will be provided to the area annexed and must provide a reasonable time frame for the implementation of the plan. Public Chapter 1101 requires that the municipality be held accountable for implementing the plan and the failure of a municipality to implement the plan will prohibit it from annexing additional land until it has met its obligations.

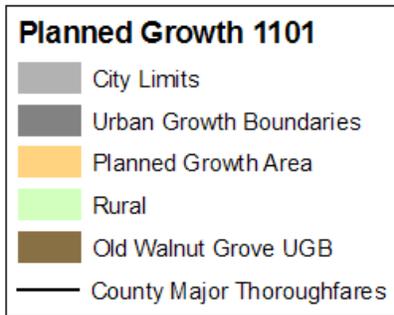
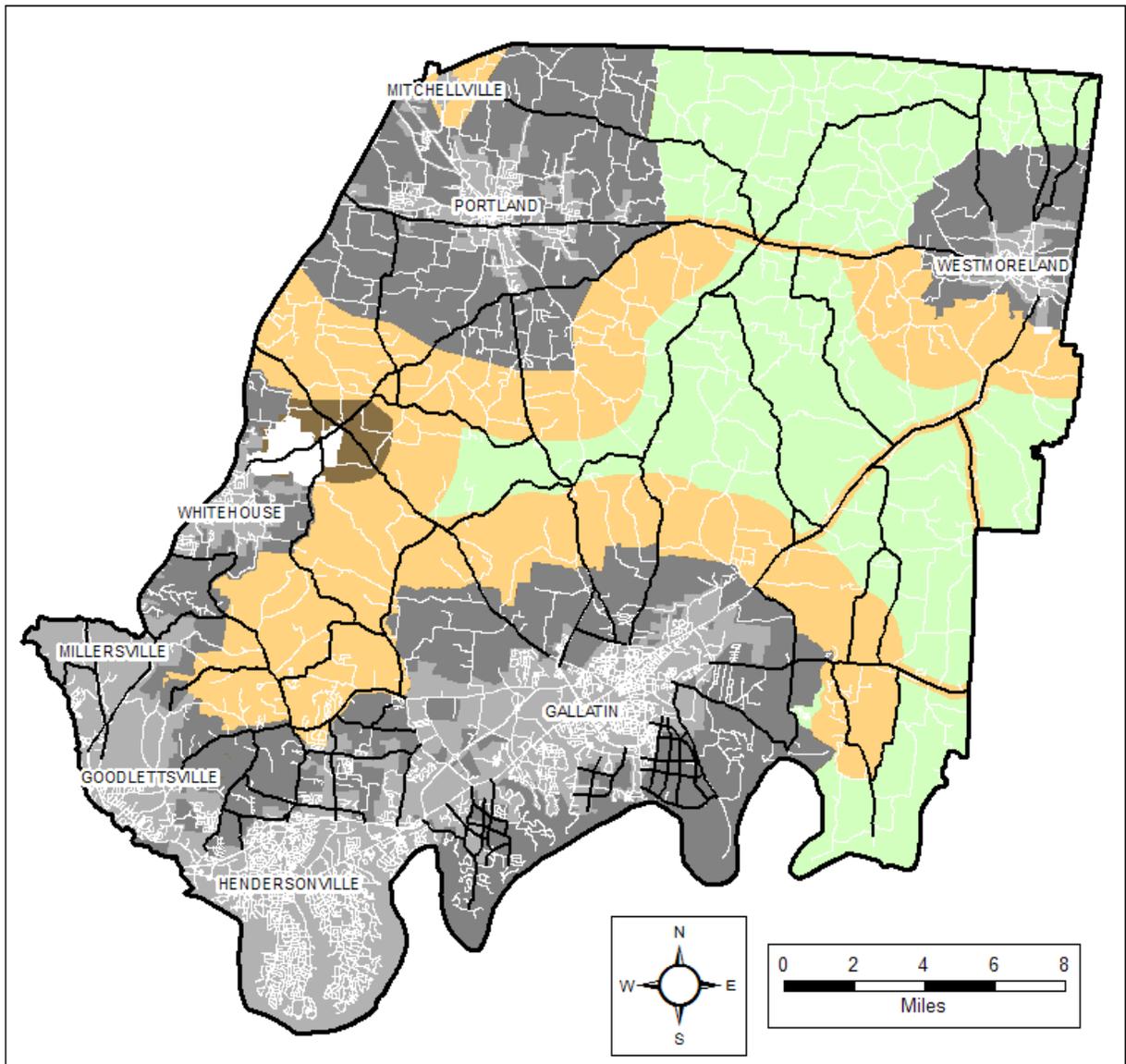


Figure 1-2: Public Chapter 1101 Growth Plan for Sumner County

#### 1.4 Municipal Planning Efforts

The Sumner County Regional Planning Commission does not exercise planning, subdivision regulation, or zoning in any of the municipal limits. It also does not exercise these powers in most municipal planning regions, including Gallatin, Hendersonville, and Portland. There are two exceptions involving the Cities of Goodlettsville and White House. The history and the intricacies behind these various boundaries and jurisdictional powers are complex and often confusing to citizens, developers, and city/county staff. Cooperation and coordination on major municipal plans and county plans are essential for consistent development and preservation visions and objectives between the municipalities and Sumner County.

Figure 1-3 illustrates the planning regions of the municipalities:

- Millersville, Mitchellville, and Westmoreland do not have planning regions.
- Gallatin, Hendersonville, and Portland have planning regions in which their municipalities handle all planning and zoning matters. Although these areas are unincorporated, these municipalities apply their zoning standards.
- Goodlettsville and White House have planning regions in which the county's zoning applies. Sumner County does not implement planning in these areas despite being unincorporated.

Most of the planning region areas are now within city limits particularly around Goodlettsville, Hendersonville, and Gallatin. This concept of planning regions dates back to the mid-1980s in Sumner County.

Several of the county's municipalities have recently adopted plans and subarea plans for their respective jurisdictions:

- *Gallatin's on the Move 2020: General Development and Transportation Plan*;
- *Hendersonville's Comprehensive Land Use & Transportation Plan*;
- Portland's Highway 52 Corridor Plan; and
- White House's update to their Comprehensive Plan.

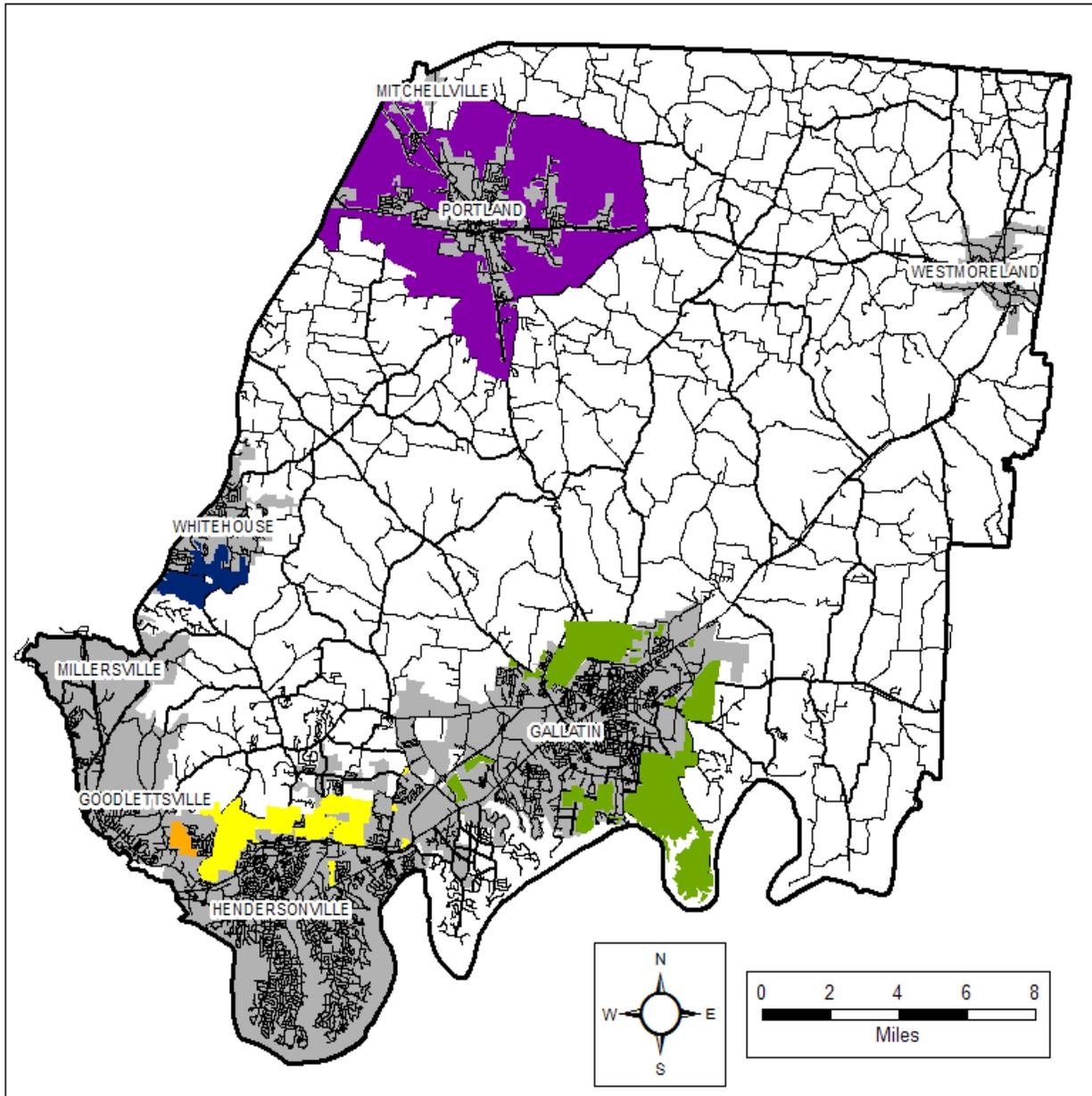


Figure 1-3: Municipal Planning Regions in Sumner County

### 1.5 Regional Planning Efforts

Decision makers are concerned about growth, development, and preservation in Sumner County, but one should also recognize the county's role in the greater Middle Tennessee region. Important planning efforts are underway with partners at the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), Cumberland Region Tomorrow, Cumberland River Compact, Nashville Area MPO, and other regional planning agencies. Several studies are underway or recently adopted by the MPO that examine land use and transportation on a regional level involving Sumner County:

- Regional Long Range Transportation Plan;
- Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan;
- Regional Freight Study;
- Northeast Corridor Mobility Study (corridor generally following US-31E from Downtown Nashville to Gallatin); and
- Tri-County Transportation & Land Use Study (subarea involving Robertson, Sumner, and Wilson Counties).

The Northeast Corridor Mobility Study will ultimately help determine the transportation options appropriate for the current land use and future scenarios in the study area. The study is examining a variety of travel options and appropriate design guidelines.

The Tri-County Transportation & Land Use Study is the foundation for the *2035 Comprehensive Plan*. The study is a process to bring local leaders from Robertson, Sumner, and Wilson Counties to consider the growth plans of neighboring communities while also improving the local communities for regional mobility and prosperity. The study is articulating issues of doing business as usual in Sumner

County, suggesting alternatives, and making recommendations that detail appropriate growth and preservation scenarios supported by decision makers and residents.

#### ***What is the Tri-County Transportation & Land Use Study?***

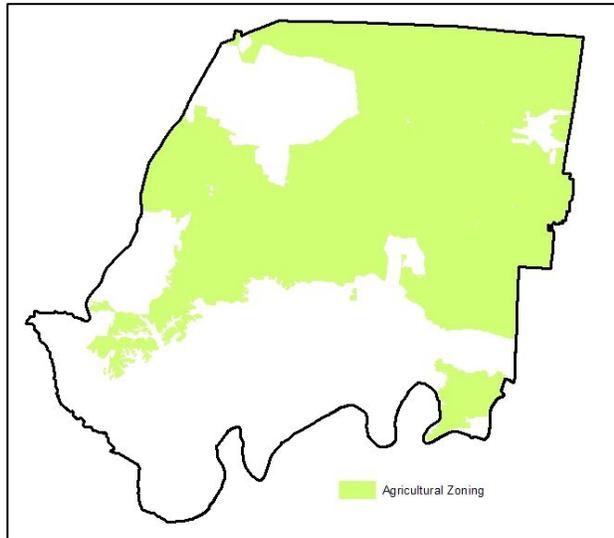
The Tri-County Transportation & Land Use Study conducted by the Nashville Area MPO examined local and regional plans. The following ten objectives are common among plans and policies generated in the tri-county region. These objectives are further explored in the *2035 Comprehensive Plan*.

1. Historic Conservation and Enhancement
2. Viable Agriculture
3. Rural Preservation
4. Economic Enrichment while Safeguarding Existing Public and Private Development
5. Preserve Urban Centers
6. Protection of Natural Resources
7. Efficient Transportation System
8. Ensure Availability of Services
9. Provide Housing Options
10. Maintain Sense of Community and Sense of Place

#### **1.3.5 Assessment of County Planning**

Taking into consideration the municipal comprehensive plans adopted or underway, and existing county plans, approximately 75% of the land area in Sumner County is still considered unplanned, meaning not guided by a comprehensive plan or vision, before adopting the *2035 Comprehensive Plan*. An estimated 70% of this unplanned land area is located in the unincorporated portions of the county. The majority of this land is zoned Agricultural. Figure 1-4 shows parcels currently zoned Agricultural.

Agricultural zoning allows the growing of crops and animal husbandry, but it also grants property owners the right to develop single family homes on 0.92 acre (40,000 sq. ft.) parcels. Because this

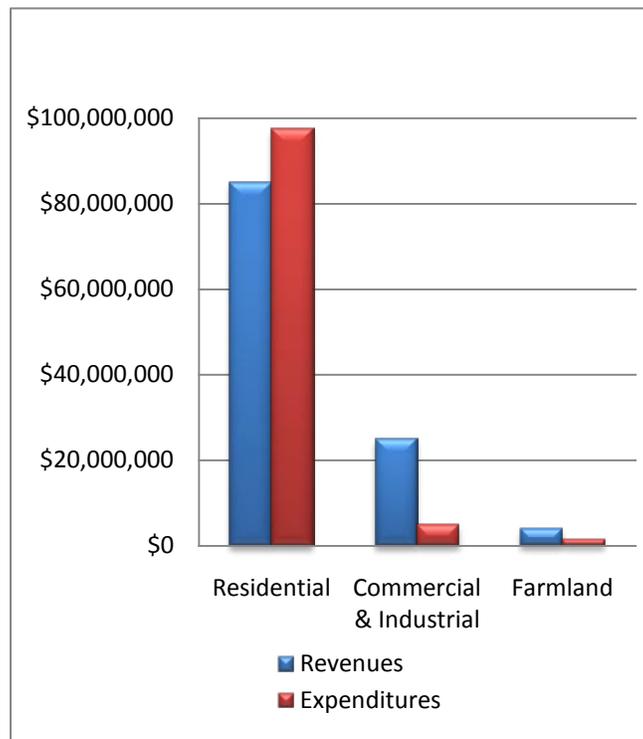


**Figure 1-4: Agricultural Zoned Parcels**

information from the 2008 Cost of Community Services Study concerning revenues and expenditures involving these land uses.

farmland is valuable, it is often subdivided once agricultural activities have concluded on a tract of land. Cost of Community Services Studies conducted in select Tennessee counties including neighboring Robertson County show that the exchanging of agricultural land to residential uses typically cost a community more than preserving the open space or maintaining agricultural activities. Agricultural lands may not seem to pay as much tax, but farm land has very little community service costs. In Robertson County, the revenues did not cover the expenditures involved with residential uses. These uses also significantly impact a county's school system. Commercial and industrial land uses are most often financial assets and in this case in Robertson County, the revenues cover the expenditures. See Figure 1-5 for example

Figure 1-6 depicts the estimated number of acres associated with each Sumner County zoning type. Most acres in the county are zoned residential type uses and only a small number of acres is devoted to commercial, industrial, and mixed uses, which may be more likely to offset expenditures.



**Figure 1-5: Revenues & Expenditures by Land Use, Robertson County, Tennessee**

Source: Cost of Community Services Study (2008)

	Estimated Number of Acres	% of County	% of Sumner County's Planning Jurisdiction
<b>Sumner County</b>	<b>347,880</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Municipal Limits &amp; Planning Regions</b>	<b>106,154</b>	<b>30.51%</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Sumner County's Planning Jurisdiction</b>	<b>241,726</b>	<b>69.49%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Residential Zoning Types</b>	<b>240,979</b>	<b>69.27%</b>	<b>99.69%</b>
A	188,119	54.08%	77.82%
R1A	25,025	7.19%	10.35%
RA	18,194	5.23%	7.53%
RB	114	0.03%	0.05%
Estate A	5,504	1.58%	2.28%
Estate B	1,417	0.41%	0.59%
LDRPUD	729	0.21%	0.30%
MDRPUD	41	0.01%	0.02%
Mixed Density RPUD	137	0.04%	0.06%
GoPR	290	0.08%	0.12%
WhPR	1,409	0.41%	0.58%
<b>Commercial Zoning Types</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>0.04%</b>	<b>0.06%</b>
C1	6	0.00%	0.00%
C2	5	0.00%	0.00%
C2 PUD	12	0.00%	0.00%
C3 PUD	45	0.01%	0.02%
CA	60	0.02%	0.02%
CB	13	0.00%	0.01%
CC	7	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Industrial Zoning Types</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0.02%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>
I	71	0.02%	0.03%
<b>Mixed Use Zoning Types</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>0.15%</b>	<b>0.22%</b>
Mixed Density R/C PUD	528	0.15%	0.22%

**Figure 1-6: Estimated Acreage by Zoning Type, October 2008**

*Disclaimer: These numbers are estimates only at a particular point in time and were calculated utilizing the measure function in ArcGIS.*

## 1.6 Developing Property in Sumner County

When a property owner proposes to rezone and/or subdivide their property of five acres or less in unincorporated Sumner County, the request for rezoning and/or plat is reviewed by the Sumner County Regional Planning Commission. Before adoption of the *2035 Comprehensive Plan*, this process was responsive to these requests because an assessment of the proposal and final decision were based upon the current Zoning Resolution and Subdivision Regulations. A long range plan that described a vision and objectives was not taken into consideration unless the property was located within the Station Camp area, Long Hollow Pike corridor, or Hendersonville UGB. Despite being responsive, these decisions did not bring to fruition a vision of the county in 20 to 30 years desired by residents. Common goals that many decision makers advocate involving economic development, rural preservation, water quality, and others can be hindered by processes that are only responsive and not proactive in achieving the long term vision. Because a long term vision and goals has not been documented in a county-wide comprehensive plan until now, it was difficult for the Sumner County Regional Planning Commission and Sumner County Board of County Commissioners to make proactive recommendations involving rezoning and platting of land to fit the desires of its citizens and decision makers. The costs associated with only making responsive decisions is almost impossible to calculate, but the burden upon the county is apparent with increased road congestion, limited travel and housing options, threatened rural preservation and natural resources, and other suburban problems that face rapidly growing counties around the country, including Sumner County. The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* moves Sumner County forward in its long range thinking and decision making by outlining a growth and development vision, so decision makers have more information about how a potential development might impact services and aligns with the community's values.

### ***What is the difference between responsive planning and proactive planning?***

Responsive planning takes plans for potential development and considers immediate needs typically four to five years into the future. It usually considers current conditions, adopted zoning resolution, and adopted subdivision regulations, but does not consider a comprehensive set of long term impacts.

Proactive planning takes plans for potential development and considers long term needs typically 20 to 30 years or more into the future. It usually considers current conditions and projects those trends into the future to reflect an updated zoning resolution and subdivision regulations that strive to achieve a vision for the future.

Costs associated with not making proactive decisions include:

- increased road congestion;
- limited travel and housing options;
- decreased agricultural farming;
- threatened preservation of natural resources; and
- other issues facing rapidly growing communities.

## **Introduction Element Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development Local Planning Assistance Office, *Tennessee Planning Commissioner Handbook* (2003).

<sup>2</sup>Cumberland Region Tomorrow, *Quality Growth Toolbox* (2006).

<sup>3</sup>City of Murfreesboro Planning Department, *Growth Policy, Annexation, and Incorporation Public Chapter 1101 of 1998* (1999).

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