

**North Central Cobb Study
Quality of Life Assessment**



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Introduction

An area's quality of life is a description of the numerous dynamics that make a place a desirable place to live. It includes a variety of social, economic, and environmental concerns that help build community pride. The various dimensions included in a quality of life analysis are tangible assets that can be studied; however, there are also numerous intangible features that are valuable within a community. Those immeasurable features include the strength of the social fabric made prominent through networks and trust within the community, resulting in a means to facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation and coordination.

In January of 2007 Cobb County created the Quality of Life Task Force to foster cooperation between Code Enforcement Officers and Police Officers with the goal of identifying code violations and crimes before they evolved into more serious situations. Since the creation of the Quality Of Life Task Force, there has been a growing demand for quality of life assessments throughout Cobb County. The first quality of life analysis involved the Church Road area in South Cobb and focused on housing developments built in the late 50's and 60's. While the assessment did not offer recommendations, it did inform local elected officials and other stakeholders on how to address quality of life issues, specifically code enforcement and property crimes.

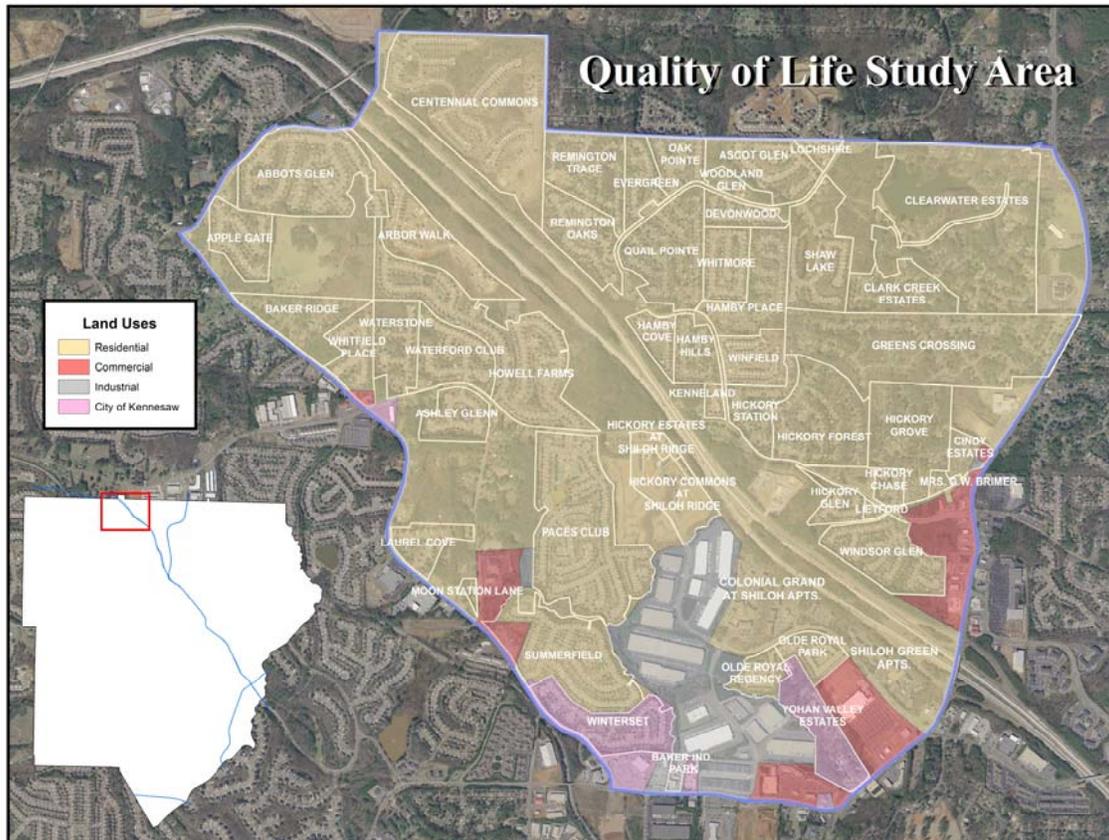
The area of focus for this assessment is in north central Cobb County and concentrates primarily on single family dwellings built in the 80's and 90's. Although these neighborhoods are relatively new, it is important that the county direct its attention to these 20 and 30 year old homes in an effort to eliminate minor disorders, such as accumulated trash, broken windows and deteriorated building exteriors, all of which if left unattended could impact property values and more importantly could increase criminal activity. While the area being analyzed is far from a state of critical community disorder, it is vital that we take a look at the quality of life as to find ways to prevent and to protect against neighborhood deterioration, ultimately improving the quality of life of the residents.

This quality of life evaluation will serve to inform and monitor all attributes and amenities that combine to make an area a great place to live and provide recommendations to enhance the quality of life in the community.

Scope

In an effort to balance competing demands and provide the highest livability for residents, District 1 Commissioner, Helen Goreham and District 3 Commissioner, Tim Lee requested the Planning Division to develop a quality of life assessment for a particular area in north central Cobb County. This request was one of the Commissioner's goals from the 2008 Board of Commissioners retreat.

Data gathering and analysis was concentrated on 2,512 acres in north central Cobb. The study area is traversed by Interstate 75 and consists of 46 single family subdivisions, 3 town home developments and 2 apartment complexes. Commercial and Industrial lands make up a 11% of the study area and are predominantly located in the southern area of the study area near the intersection of Jiles Road, Wade Green Road and Interstate 75. The following map depicts the study boundary, subdivisions and land uses associated with the development of the north central Cobb quality of life assessment.



Map 1

The North Central Cobb Quality Of Life Assessment will assist in identifying neighborhood trends and factors that either are consistent or imply the overall well-being of the community. It is the intent of this assessment to gather, organize, synthesize, and analyze information related to quality of life and recommend ways for improvement.

The scope of this assessment includes an analysis section that looks at five and three year trend patterns that can possibly expose any quality of life issues that affect the area. Code enforcement, housing data and property values were all evaluated over the past 5 years and criminal activity was evaluated over a 3 year span with hopes of unmasking any community problems that need to be addressed. Along with the 5 and 3 year trend analysis, the assessment also takes a look at the adequacy of public/private community

facilities. Public facilities are the hallmarks of a viable residential community. Those facilities play a large role in providing service delivery through fire and police, creating a sense-of place, providing community gathering spaces, and offering a wide range of programs and services, specifically through the libraries and schools. The private facilities are the amenity packages, the clubhouses, pools and tennis courts, which are associated with the different subdivisions throughout the study area. While they are not public facilities, they do provide for areas of gathering, leisure and recreation, thus contributing to the overall well being of the community.

The analysis section of the report ends with a photo exhibit of residential structures throughout the study area. The intent of this section is to show structures that are in poor condition or good condition and in the process of improving.

Based on the results of the evaluation analysis, the assessment concludes with a findings section that summarizes the desirability's and concerns of the area.

Methodology

For the purpose of this assessment the methodology is a description of the process or tasks that were utilized or conducted to breakdown the different components of data used to potentially reveal any diminished quality of life aspects of the neighborhood.

Once the Planning Division was aware of the project, field research was conducted by staff members. Field research involved windshield surveys of each subdivision within the study area and identifying and photographing residential structures that appeared to be in a deteriorating, improving or in a stable state. Following field research, data gathering commenced and included assembling 5 years worth of code enforcement data, criminal activity, housing data and property values.

Code enforcement information was obtained through the Cobb County Community Development Code Enforcement Division. The data includes valuable information pertaining to the livability of the subdivisions.

Criminal data information was collected through the Public Safety Office of Cobb County and utilized to build a foundation of criminal activity that could potentially be the precursor to other more serious crimes.

Three different dimensions of housing data was generated and analyzed. They comprise of foreclosure data from Cobb Superior Court, Housing activity reports generated by Metro Study a housing market research firm through Cobb's Tax Assessors Office and property values within the north central Cobb study area.

Community facilities were recorded and mapped for the study area based on Cobb County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data. In particular facilities involving Parks, Recreation, Fire, Police, Community Centers, Senior Service Centers, Schools,



Libraries and other public/private community gathering spaces were identified to help quantitatively measure the livability of the area.

Analysis and Results

Code Enforcement

In an effort to improve the quality of life for Cobb County residence and ensure safe, healthy and attractive neighborhoods the Code Enforcement division has committed to ongoing enforcement of code violations through complaints, inquiries received, and through pro-active enforcement. For the purpose of this study, staff reviewed both current and past enforcement trends in north central Cobb over the past five years. Data was provided by the Code Enforcement division and compared with the overall County data to determine the neighborhoods stability.

There are two categories of investigating violations. They are complaint driven and pro-active investigations. A Complaint Driven investigation derives from reported violations, in which case a site visit is conducted. Pro-Active investigations are purely by field inspector observation. The figure below shows the total average investigations and citations issued reported from 2003 through 2007.

Total Investigations and citations issued

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Complaint Driven	16	15	14	16	18
Pro-Active	18	17	13	17	16
Citation Issued	3	2	2	3	4

Figure 1

The enforcement process involves placing property owners on notice of violation, establishing a time frame for compliance, and issuance of citations to appear in Magistrate Court if the violation is not brought into compliance. As the division receives complaints regarding potential violations, a pro-active approach is taken to resolve the issue.

The study area is located in Code Enforcement Inspection Area 2B. The main violations reported here are parking prohibitions, outside storage, litter and most frequently occurring, high grass and weeds. Grass complaints have significantly increased over the last six months. This is a result of the increased foreclosure and built but vacant properties. The study area’s foreclosure rate has increased 50% in the third quarter of 2008. Homes left unattended for several months may decrease the livability of the area due to the lack of maintenance, care and upkeep occurring on the property and due to the loss of “eyes on the street.”

In response to this high volume of grass complaints, particular attention is being paid to bringing violations into compliance. The Division continues to notify home owners and developers of the violation. If no action is taken by the compliance date, a contractor assumes the responsibility by removing the nuisance and the owner is billed. If the bill is

not paid a lien is placed on the property. This positive approach helps the area to maintain order and reduces the threat to surrounding properties if left unmanaged.

Based on complaints reported from the period 2003 through 2007, Code Enforcement violations in the subject area are low when compared to the overall County. By these numbers we can determine that the study area is stable and has maintained normal to good conditions.

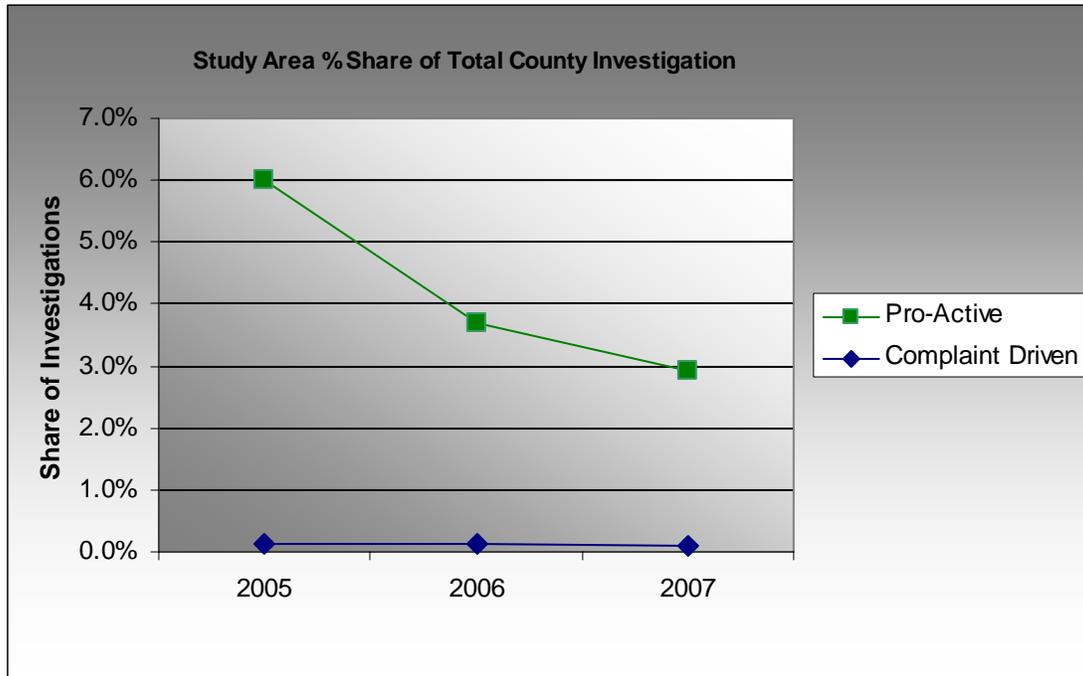


Figure 2

As a percentage share of the County total investigations for the period 2005 through 2007, the above graph reveals that while complaint driven investigations remain constant at 0.1 % yearly, the pro-active investigations have decreased from 5.9 % to 2.8 %. These numbers suggests a trend that the area has remained stable and continues to improve per Code Enforcement standards.

I Crime

Crime plays an essential part in the overall quality of life of an area and is consistently listed as a major concern of residents. Quality of life crimes are for the most part considered minor, non-violent, illegal behavior that collectively undermine the well being and public safety in an area. These “quality of life” infractions can be the beginnings of more serious crimes according to a widely practiced policing strategy based on a the Broken Windows article written by George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson in the March 1982 edition of “*The Atlantic*” magazine. For the purpose of this report, staff has

reviewed several different types of offenses within the study area, which will be referred to as “Quality of life (QOL) crimes”.

The Quality of life crimes can be separated into two different types of misdeeds; Property Crimes and Public Nuisance Crimes.

Property Crimes for this report deal with offenses related to Burglary, Larceny and Vandalism. These broad quality of life infractions are further broken down into detail offenses along with the number of cases by year and a percent change from 2005 to 2007, as shown in *Figure 3*.

Public Nuisance Crimes are typically offenses against, or interfering with the overall quality of life of an area. The general violations and percent changes from 2005 to 2007 are listed in *Figure 3*.

Please note that there is no uniform crime reporting code for Graffiti, therefore Graffiti might be reported as Damage to Property, Burglary, Criminal Trespass or Vandalism.

Maps for each QOL crime were generated to indicate “hot spots” or concentrated areas of the specified offense. Data within maps represent densities based on crimes per acre, resulting in figures much less than 1. The maps do not show exact parcel locations of where the crime occurred but generalizes the location.

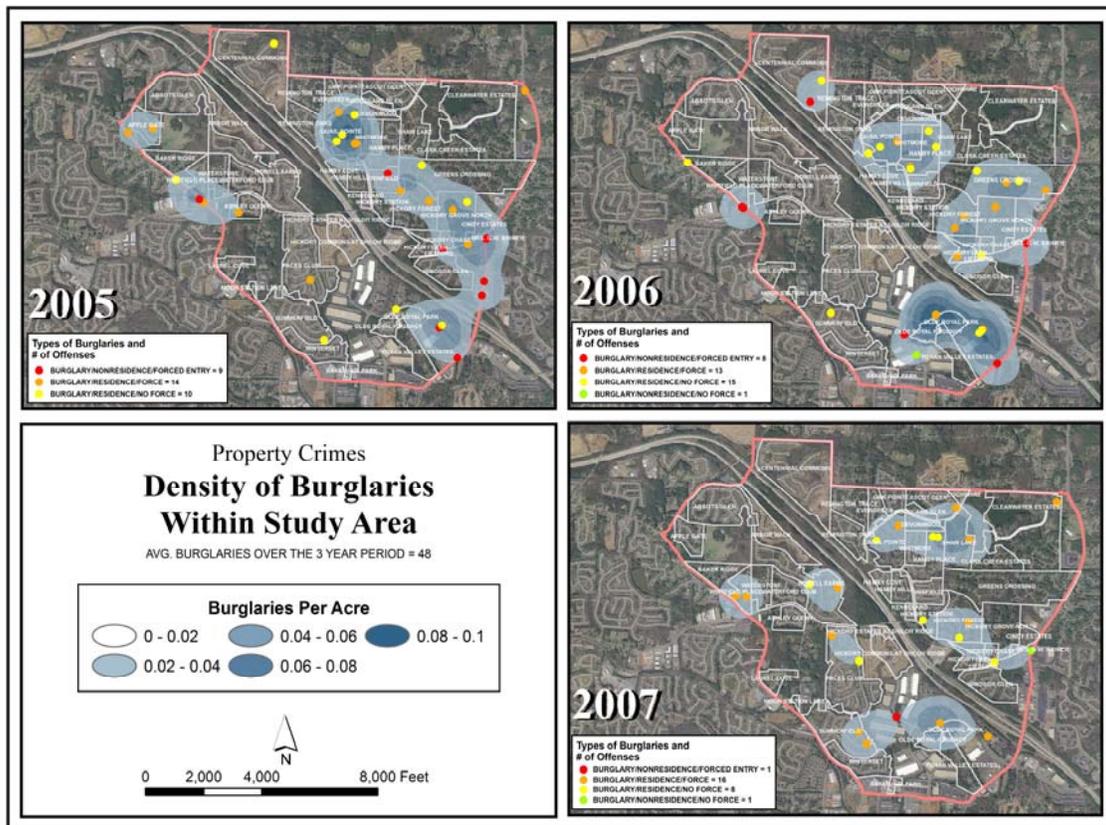
Quality of Life Crimes from 2005 to 2007

	Quality of Life Crimes	Offenses	2005	2006	2007	Total	% Change
Property Crimes	Burglary	BURGLARY NONRESIDENCE	9	9	2	96	-21%
		BURGLARY RESIDENCE	24	28	24		
		Total	33	37	26		
	Larceny	THEFT OF BICYCLE	1	1	1	362	-16%
		THEFT OF VEHICLE/AUTOMOBILE	12	7	12		
		THEFT OF BUS OR TRUCK	6	6	5		
		THEFT OF OTHER VEHICLE	9	3	0		
		THEFT BY TAKING	56	45	50		
		THEFT OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY	0	0	0		
		THEFT/GAS DRIVE OFF	4	4	5		
		THEFT FROM RESIDENTIAL MAILBOX	0	1	0		
		THEFT FROM YARDS	0	1	1		
		SHOPLIFTNG	2	2	4		
		THEFT FROM VEHICLE	46	36	34		
		THEFT FROM BUILDING	0	3	2		
		THEFT FROM COIN OPERATED MACHINE	0	1	0		
	THEFT OF VEHICLE PARTS	1	0	1			
	Total	137	110	115			
	Vandalism	DAMAGE TO PROPERTY	9	5	5	80	7%
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY/BUSINESS		3	2	4			
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY/PRIVATE PROPERTY		15	15	21			
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY/PUBLIC		1	0	0			
Total		28	22	30			
Public Nuisance Crimes	NOISE ORDINANCE VIOLATION	3	1	1	480	21%	
	ABANDONED VEHICLE	0	0	0			
	SUSPICIOUS PERSON/AUTO	26	31	42			
	ZONING VIOLATION	0	0	3			
	TRUANCY	1	2	0			
	CRIMINAL TRESPASS	61	65	65			
	CURFEW VIOLATION	5	0	5			
	LOITERING	3	1	5			
	DISORDERLY CONDUCT	9	5	11			
	DISTURBING THE PEACE	2	1	3			
	HARASSING COMMUNICATION	30	30	39			
	PUBLIC PEACE OFFENSES	9	14	7			
Total	149	150	181				

Figure 3

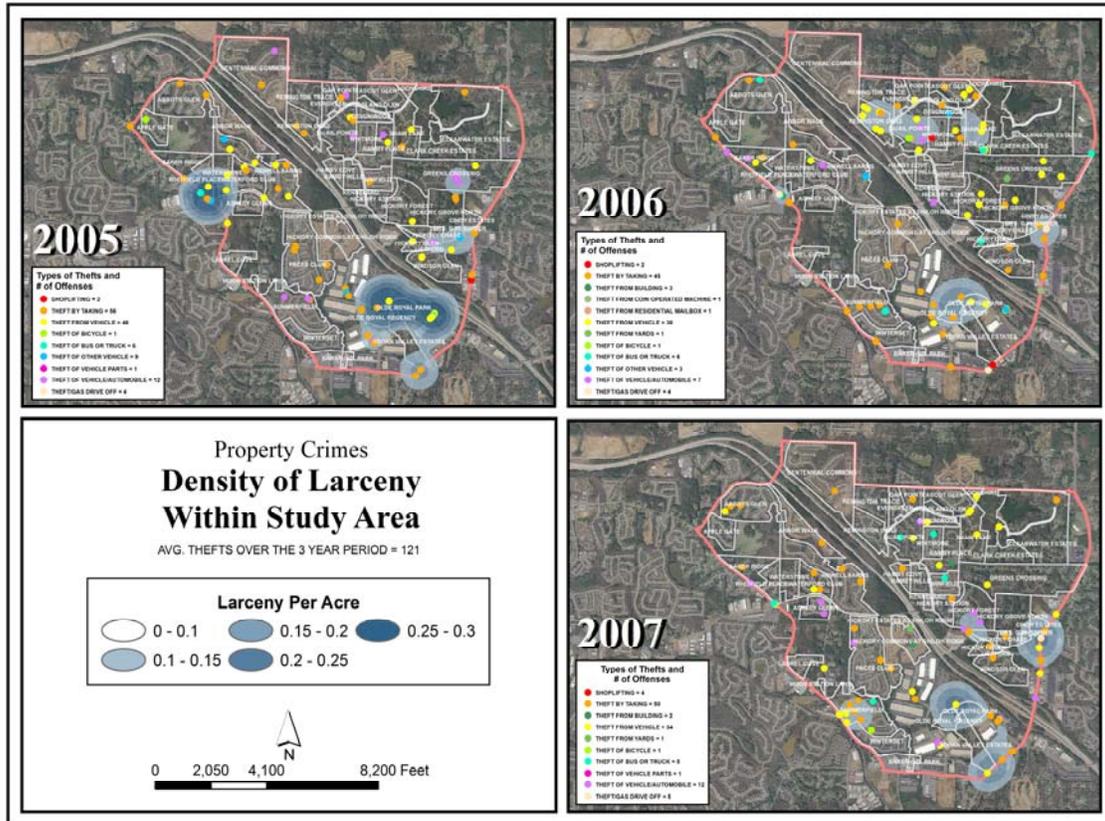
Property Crimes

Burglaries make up 9% of the total QOL crimes for the study area. Of the 96 total reports from 2005 to 2007, 76 or 80% of offenses are related to residential burglaries, which is consistent with the overall county statistics. While this may appear to be significant, residential property makes up 89% of the study area. Overall from 2005 to 2007 the study area has seen a 21% decrease in burglary related offenses mostly related to less nonresidential burglaries. *Map 2* shows where burglary hot spots were located.



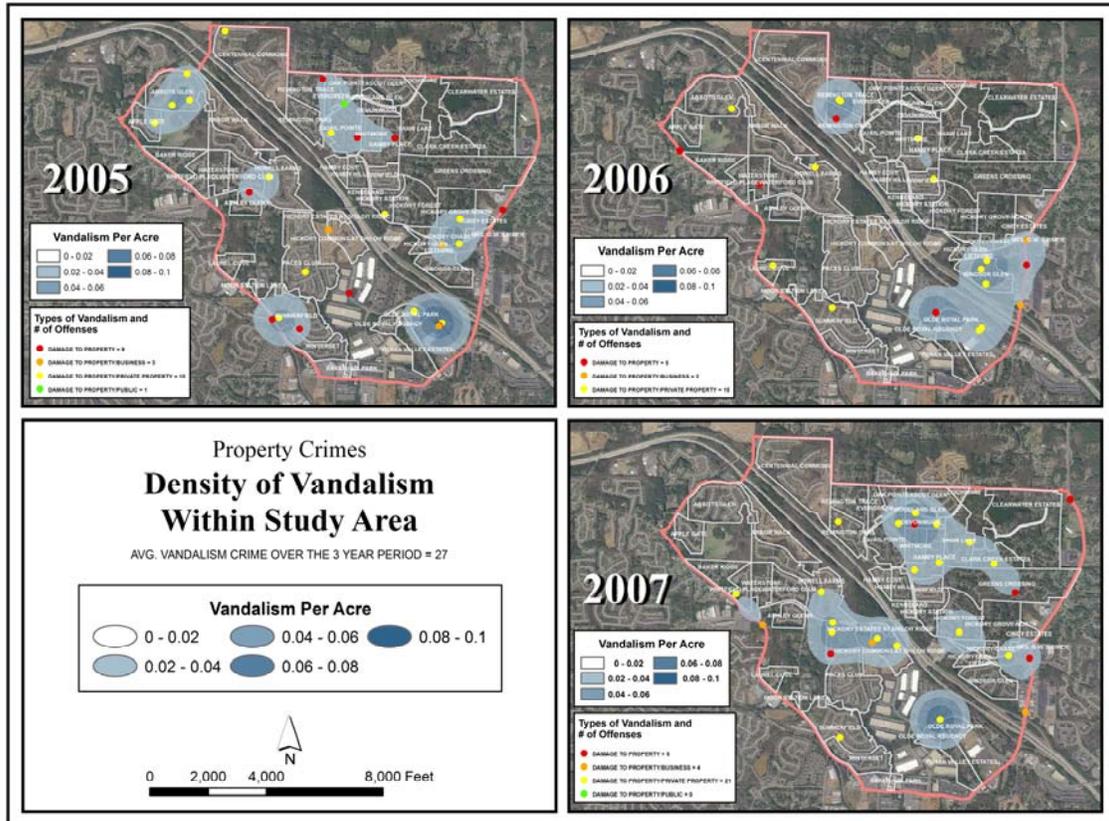
Map 2

The majority of QOL crimes for the study consist of Larceny infractions. 35% or 362 of the offenses reported from 2005 to 2007 for the study area dealt with some form of theft. 74% of the theft offenses were Theft by Taking and Theft from Vehicle. As was the case with burglary, thefts have shown a 16% decrease over the past 3 years. *Map 3* shows where the theft hot spots were located.



Map 3

Vandalism reports for the QOL study area show a 7% increase over the 3 year time span. Damage to properties, which may include graffiti/tagging, has slightly increased. Overall the vandalism makes up only 8% of the total QOL crimes for the study area. Most of the offenses involve damage to private property. *Map 4* shows where the vandalism hot spots were located.



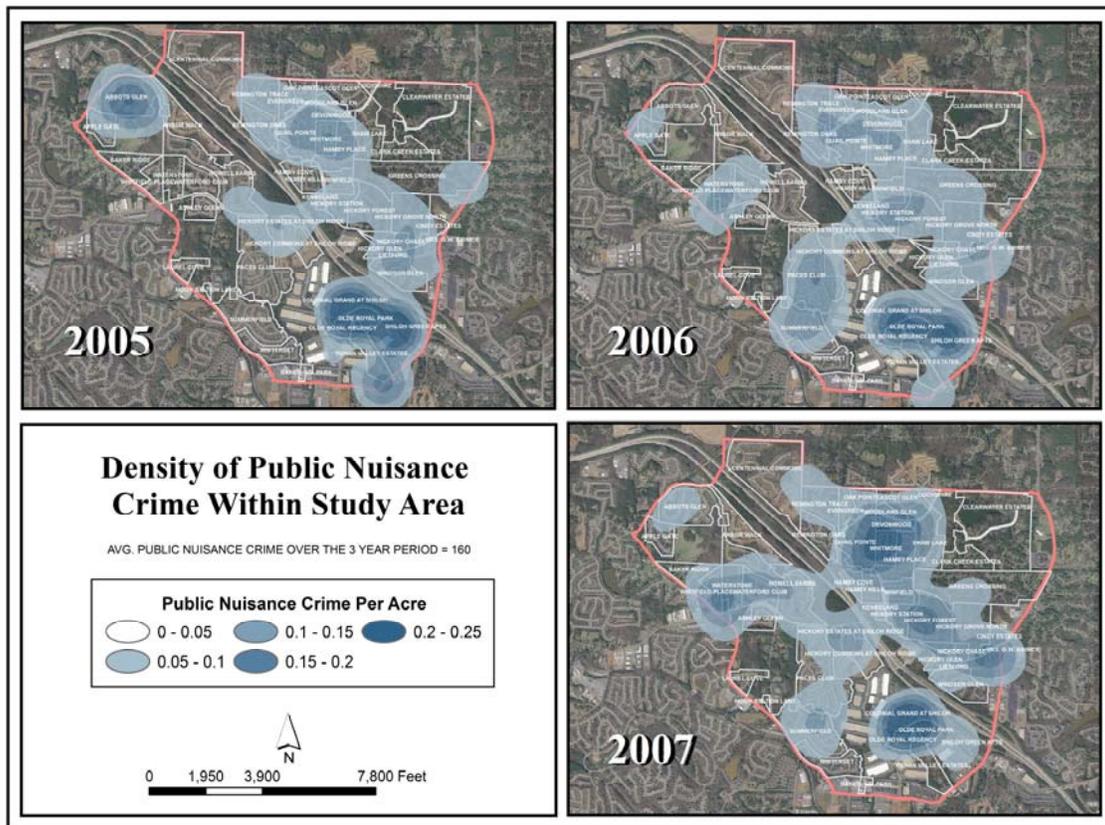
Map 4

Public Nuisance Crime

A public nuisance is such an inconvenience or troublesome offence, as annoys the whole community rather than one particular individual. When considering offensive acts, it is when the offensive act renders the enjoyment of life and property uncomfortable, that the act becomes a public nuisance. To assist the Property Crime element of the QOL assessment, 12 different public nuisance offenses (*Figure 3*) were analyzed from 2005 to 2007.

Overall there were a total of 480 Public Nuisance cases from 2005 through 2007. Over the three year span there was an overall 21% increase, with a significant increase in Suspicious Person/Auto, which are generally police initiated calls and might reflect aggressive patrolling in the area.

Map 5 reveals the majority of public nuisance crimes are located in the southern portion of the study area. However, in 2007 an increase in nuisance crimes can be seen in the northern portion of the study area east of I-75.



Map 5

Overall QOL Crime

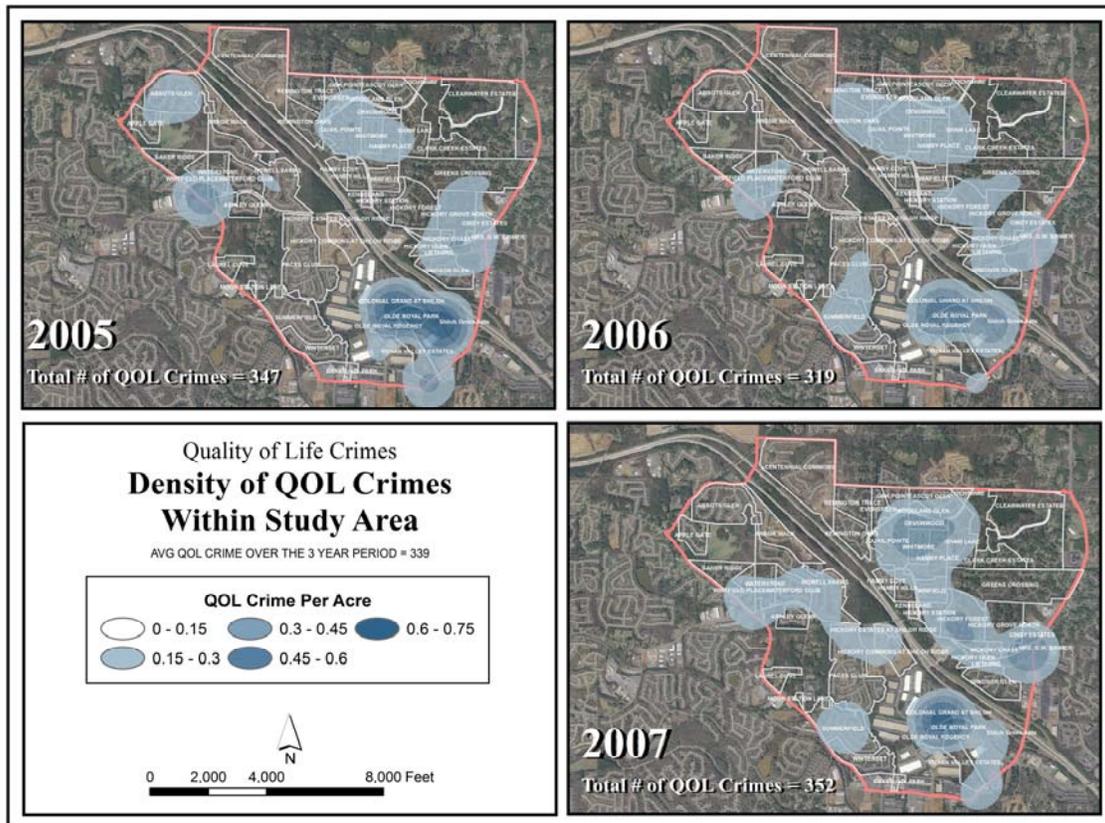
From 2005 to 2007 Property Crimes and Public Nuisance Crimes are almost split in half as a percentage of overall QOL crimes for the study area. However, the study area has seen an overall 14% decrease in property crimes and a 21% increase in public nuisance crimes. Combining all crimes analyzed for this report the study area has seen approximately a 1% increase in QOL crime, which is consistent with the overall county.

Overall Quality of Life Crimes from 2005 to 2007

	2005	2006	2007	Total	% of Total	% Change
Property Crimes	198	169	171	538	53%	-14%
Public Nuisance Crimes	149	150	181	480	47%	21%
Total	347	319	352	1018	100%	1%

Figure 4

A density map showing where the QOL crimes “hot spots” have occurred from 2005 to 2007 is shown below.



Map 6

In 2005 the total number of QOL crimes was 347 and was concentrated in the southern portion of the study area around Colonial Grand at Shiloh and Shiloh Green Apartments. Other areas of the study area show very sporadic densities of QOL crime.

In 2006 the total number of QOL crimes decreased to 319. However, it appears the density coverage throughout the study area increased with a bit less emphasis on the southern portion of the study area indicating the QOL crimes spreading throughout the area and not just concentrated in a small area.

In 2007 the total number of QOL crimes increased again to 352. While the density map continues to show higher concentrations of QOL crime surrounding Colonial Grand and Shiloh Green Apartments, the area of concentration continues to shrink. The single-family residential section of the study area in 2007 is beginning to see higher densities of QOL crime through out the area, more so east of I-75 than west.

Foreclosures

Figure 5 represents foreclosure data for Cobb County and the study area between 2005 and 2007. Figure 6 represents foreclosure data for Cobb County and the study area for the first three quarters of 2007 and 2008.

Foreclosures from 2005 to 2007

	2005	2006	2007	Total	% Increase
Cobb County	1399	1635	2239	5273	60%
Study Area	25	42	40	107	60%

Figure 5

Foreclosures from 3rd Qtr. 2007 to 3rd Qtr. 2008

	2007 Through 3rd Qtr	2008 Through 3rd Qtr	% Increase From 3rd Qtr 2007
Cobb County	1568	2594	65%
Study Area	30	45	50%

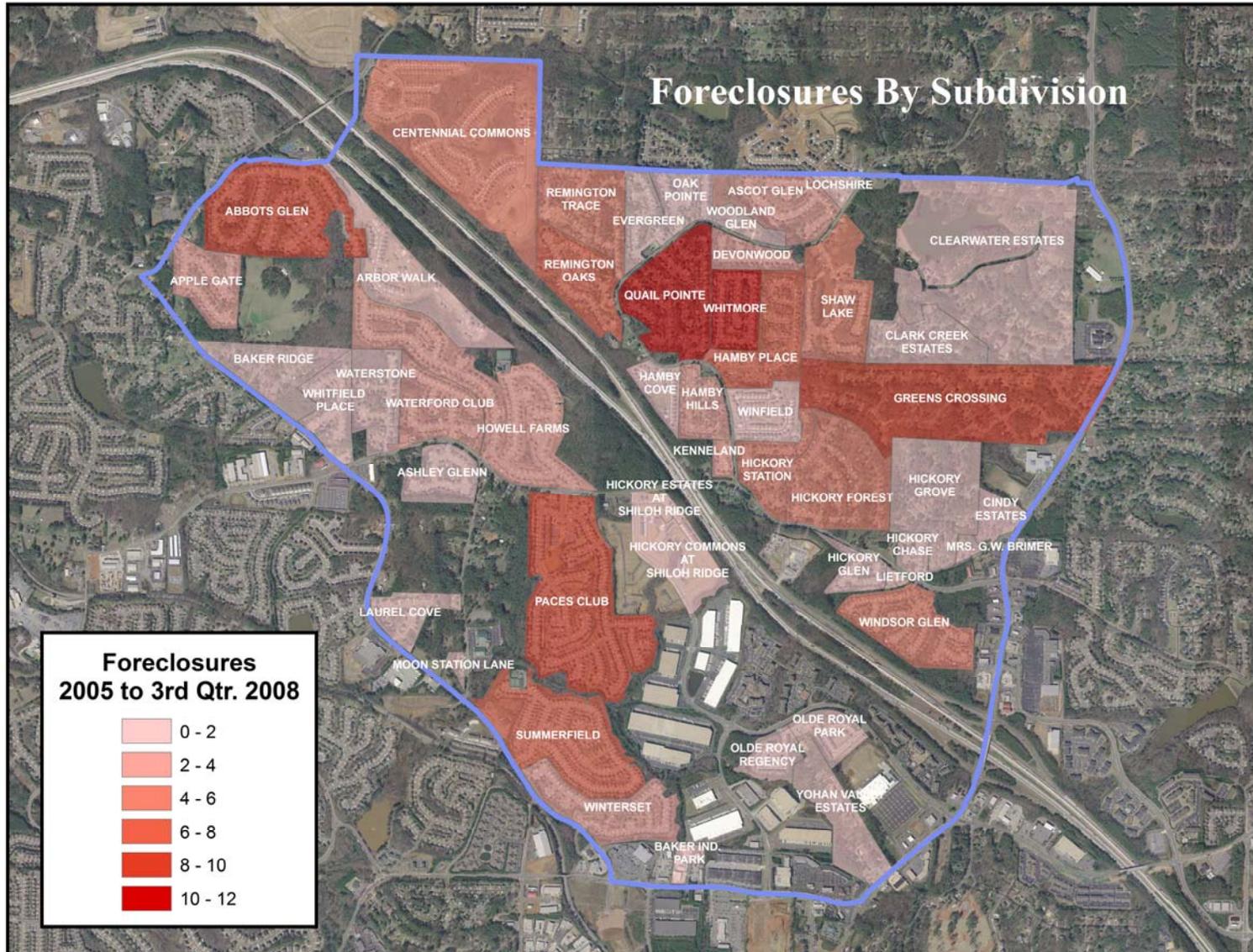
Figure 6

Cobb County and the study area experienced a 60% increase in foreclosures when comparing 2005 to 2007, according to the data from Cobb Superior Court. The trend has worsened into 2008 as the number of foreclosure filings has jumped 65% for the county and 50% for the study area through 3rd quarter when compared to the same period in 2007. The rise in foreclosures is not exclusive to Cobb or the study area. In fact, the entire metro Atlanta area and the country over the past 4 years have experienced even higher rates of foreclosures.

Foreclosures can be problematic for neighborhoods like the north central Cobb study area. Any home that has been vacated for any reason can become unsettling for neighborhoods and communities. Unlike other empty homes, which are cared for by owners and/or real estate agents, foreclosed homes are often left unattended and vacant for months. Because lenders and banks are not equipped to maintain foreclosed properties, especially when foreclosure rates are at record levels, abandoned homes can undergo a physical disorder involving negligence and unchecked decay. Transformations include the deterioration of the structure due to weathering and lack of maintenance, and the out-of-control growth of grass and weeds. Trash, newspapers, notices, and mail can pile up. Deserted homes can become havens for rats and other stray animals as well as squatters. As the physical disorder process continues crime may infiltrate the neighborhood, and property values decline.

On a larger scale, the economic and societal impacts of foreclosures can affect more than the families and individuals directly involved. Defaulted mortgages can affect surrounding neighborhoods and even their larger communities due to loss of property, school and sales tax revenue. Vacated homes can result in fewer residents translating into smaller markets. Without the consumer density attractive to retailers and financial institutions, the problems could be exacerbated and a community's recovery could be prolonged.

The north central Cobb study area appears to be in slightly better shape regarding foreclosures compared to the county and the region. However, because foreclosures have significantly increased, certain areas may need to be closely watched over the next few months. With the help of geographical information systems (GIS), foreclosure data from 2005 through the 3rd quarter 2008 was geographical referenced to indicate where foreclosure "hot spots" might exist. The map below shows the majority of foreclosures are east of I-75 within subdivisions located off of Hamby Road with few scattered through out the study area with relatively high foreclosure numbers.



Map 7



Housing Activity

Housing activity reports were generated by Metro Study, a housing market research firm through the Tax Assessors. The data garnered through Metrostudy for this report includes total housing inventory information (new homes only) broken down by finished but vacant and under construction and from 2nd quarter 2004 to 2nd quarter 2008 for both the study area and Cobb County for comparison purposes. Staff also recorded the finished inventory supply by quarter over the same period, with related comparisons at the market (Mkt., i.e. Cobb County) and target market area (TMA, i.e. Study Area).

Figure 7 below summarize the housing inventory by finished vacant units and under construction units for the study area and Cobb County from 2nd Qtr. 2004 to 2nd Qtr. 2008. The Cobb numbers reflect all residential types, while the study area only reflects the residential type that is within the area boundary, which are single family and townhouses.

Housing Inventory by Finished Vacant Units and Under Construction

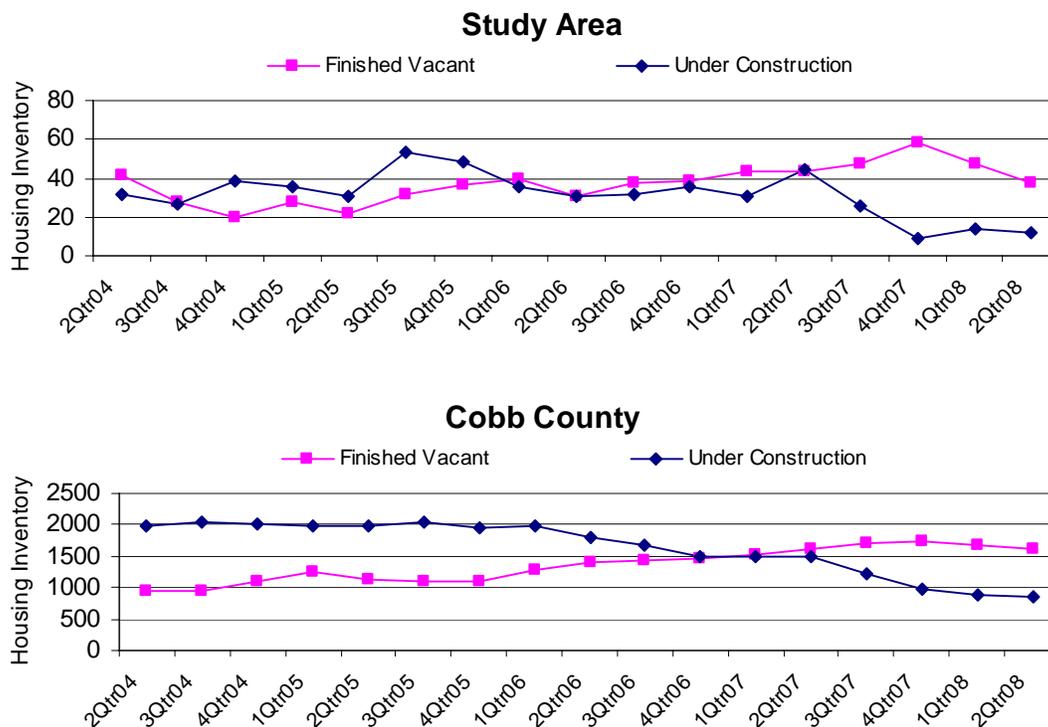


Figure 7
Source: Metrostudy

Through the 4 year period the finished vacant lots for the study area varied with a peak in late 2007. The 4 year trend for Cobb was a steady increase in finished vacant lots also topping off in late 2007. However, overall the study area had a 7% decline in finished vacant lots, while the county experienced a 72% increase in finished vacant lots. The huge disparity, which is in favor of the study area, is likely the result of the study areas ability to keep finished vacant and under



construction numbers in close proximity to each other. Under construction units for the study area and the county

are more similar. The county saw a 57% decline in construction of residential properties while the study area declined 62%.

The figure below shows where the study area stands in regards to finished inventory supply (Months) when compared to the county.

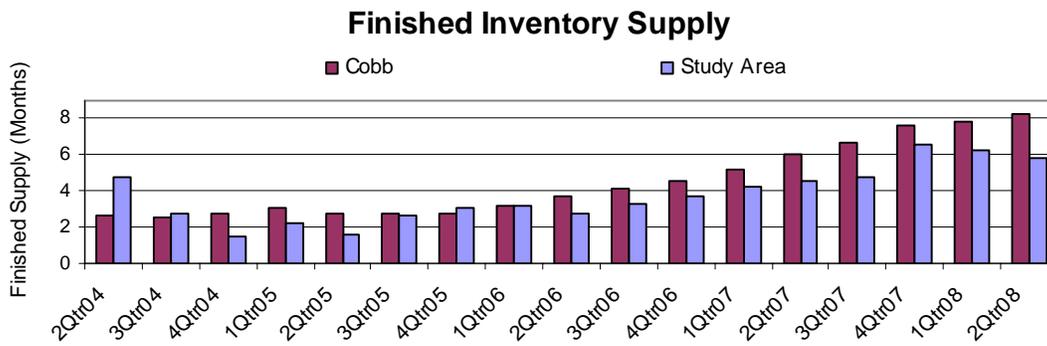


Figure 8
Source: Metrostudy

Four years ago the finished inventory supply within the study area almost doubled that of the county. Through 2004 and the first half of 2005 the study areas supply declined, while the counties supply remained stable. Beginning in 2006 the study area and the county saw an increase in new housing supply. The county’s inventory supply inflated to just above 8 months in the 2nd qtr. of 2008, where as the study area jumped above 6 months briefly in late 2007, only to see the month supply decrease to just under 6 months in the 2nd qtr. of 2008. The general rule of thumb for a normal inventory equates to about a 6 month supply. Anything above 8 months puts pressure on downward prices. Conversely anything less than 4 months puts upward pressure on prices. According to the Census Bureau, as of October 2008 the “months of supply” for the nation is 11.1 months.

Derelict vacant developed lots (VDL), which are developed lots where home construction, has not commenced, can become areas of criminal activity, illegal trash dumping and loitering if not cared for by owners. Figure 9 shows the change in VDL over the last 4 years. VDLs for both the county and the study area increased significantly with the study area out pacing the county with 164% increase in VDL.

	2nd Qt. 2004	2nd Qt. 2008	% Change
Cobb	4057	8878	119%
Study Area	105	277	164%

Figure 9
Source: Metrostudy



Supply of VDL is reflected in the total number of lots. *Figure 10* draws a comparison between the study area and the county. Both the county and study area have seen significant increases in the VDL months supply. The study area had an 8.3 month supply in early 2004, while the county showed a 9.7 month supply. Moving forward to 2008, during the 2nd Qtr. the study area reported a 77.3 month supply or 6 years worth of vacant lots ready to be built on, while the county was a little less at 60.8 month supply or 5 years worth of vacant lots. The study area through most of the period was in line or just behind the county in supply until 2008 when the VDL data recorded an 80% increase from the 1st Qtr. of 2008 to the 2nd Qtr. of 2008. VDL supply of 2 years or 24 months is considered ideal for market equilibrium.

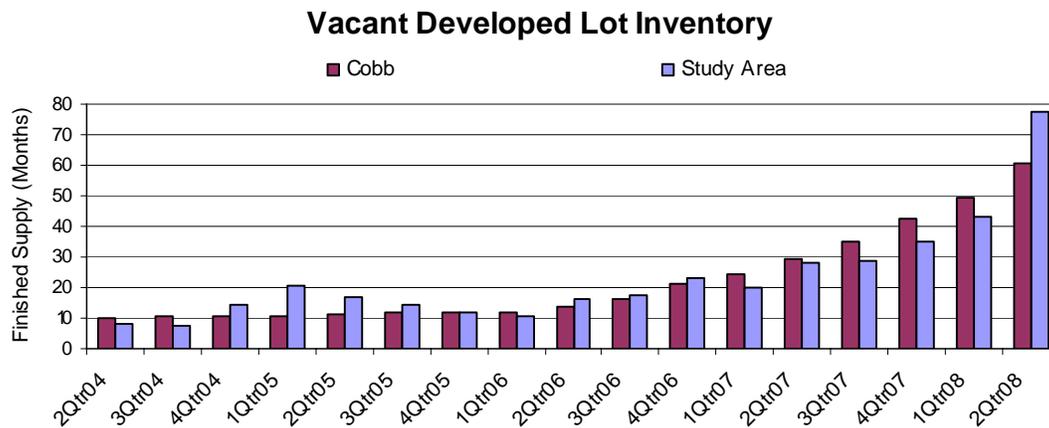


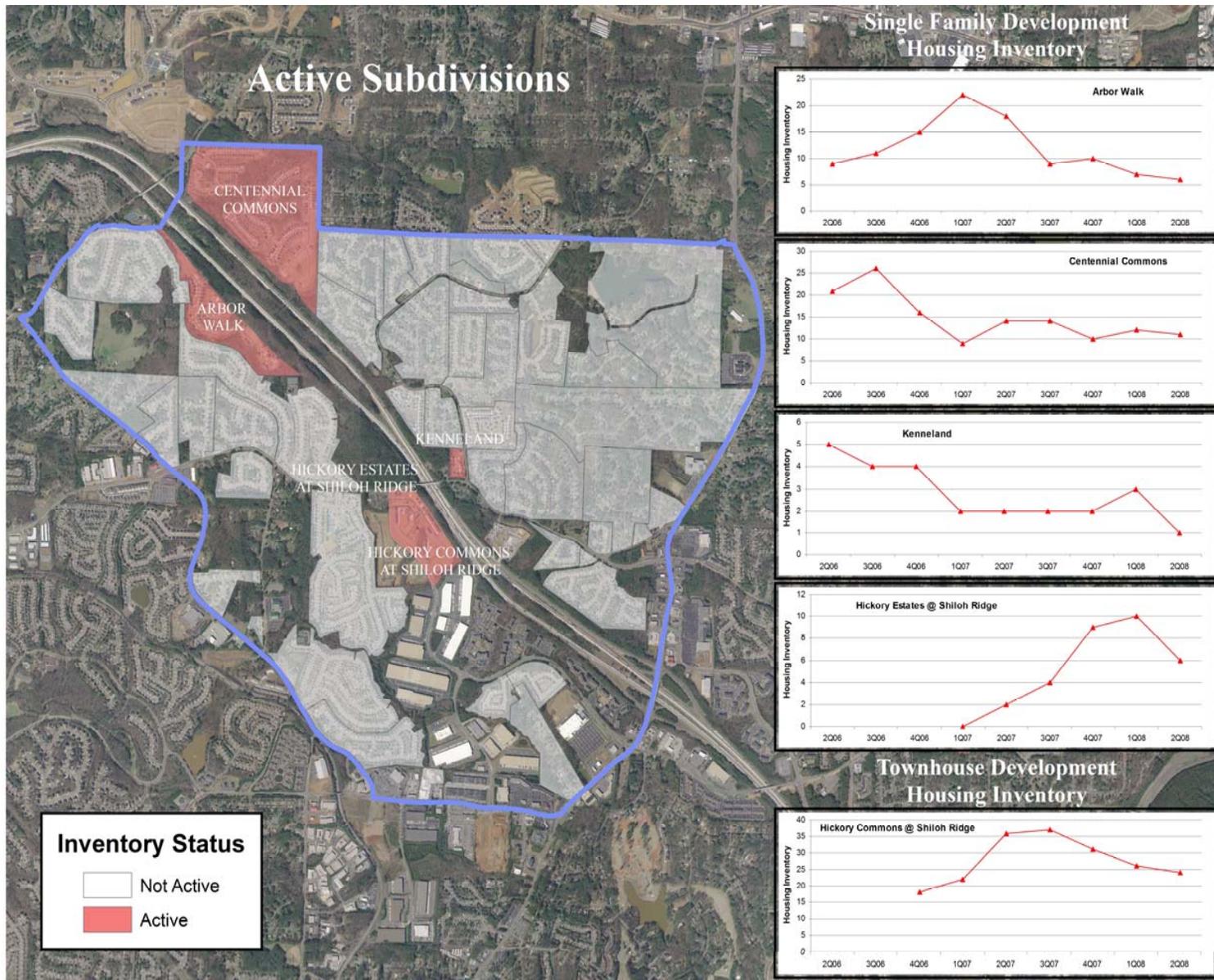
Figure 10
Source: Metrostudy

The study area was looked at closer to determine which subdivisions were still active in finished vacant units and under construction. There were 5 subdivisions with new homes either vacant or under construction, see *Map 12*. Arbor Walk, Centennial Commons, Hickory Estates @ Shiloh Ridge and Keeneland are all active single family subdivisions and Hickory Commons @ Shiloh Ridge is the lone active townhouse subdivision within the study area. The three oldest neighborhoods, Arbor Walk, Centennial Commons, and Kenneland have decreased their inventory over the 2 year span an average of 53%. The trend for the two newest subdivisions, Hickory Estates at Shiloh Ridge (Single Family) and Hickory Commons at Shiloh Ridge (Townhomes) started increasing during the initial stages of development. Since late 2007 and early 2008 that trend has started downward as housing starts declined. Still though from when housing starts commenced around the beginning of 2007 to the 2nd quarter of 2008 the overall inventory is a few units higher.

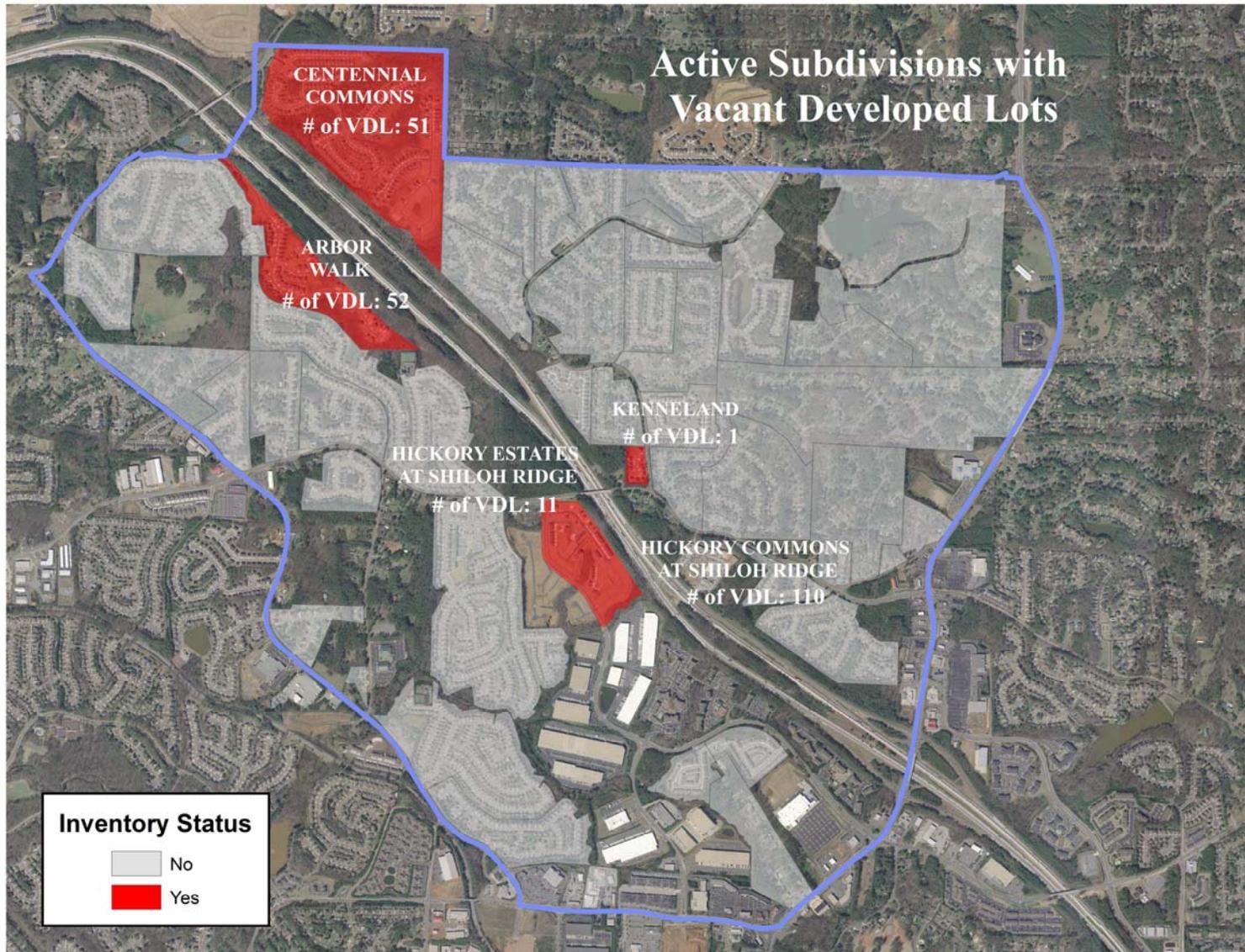
Map 13 shows where concentrations of VDLs are located within the study area as well. The majority of lots ready for single family residential construction are located in Arbor Walk and Centennial Commons, both are located in the northern portions of the study area. Hickory Commons at Shiloh Ridge, a townhouse development, has the most VDL's for any single development.



Overall the study area remains in good shape when compared to the county. Finished vacant homes and vacant developed lots, if left without attention for a prolonged period of time could attract undesirable attention such as trash dumping, loitering and other unsightly conditions, not to mention the possibility of lower property values. Not only are older vacant homes in lower-income communities prone to unsafe conditions but newly developed vacant homes in middle-class neighborhoods can also attract vagrants and drug activity resulting in a diminished quality of life.



Map 8



Map 9



Property Values

The economic vitality and character of a subdivision are among the most commonly cited quality of life indicators. To gain a sense of the economic characteristics this report focuses on two measures of economic status; percent changes in total property values and percent changes building values.

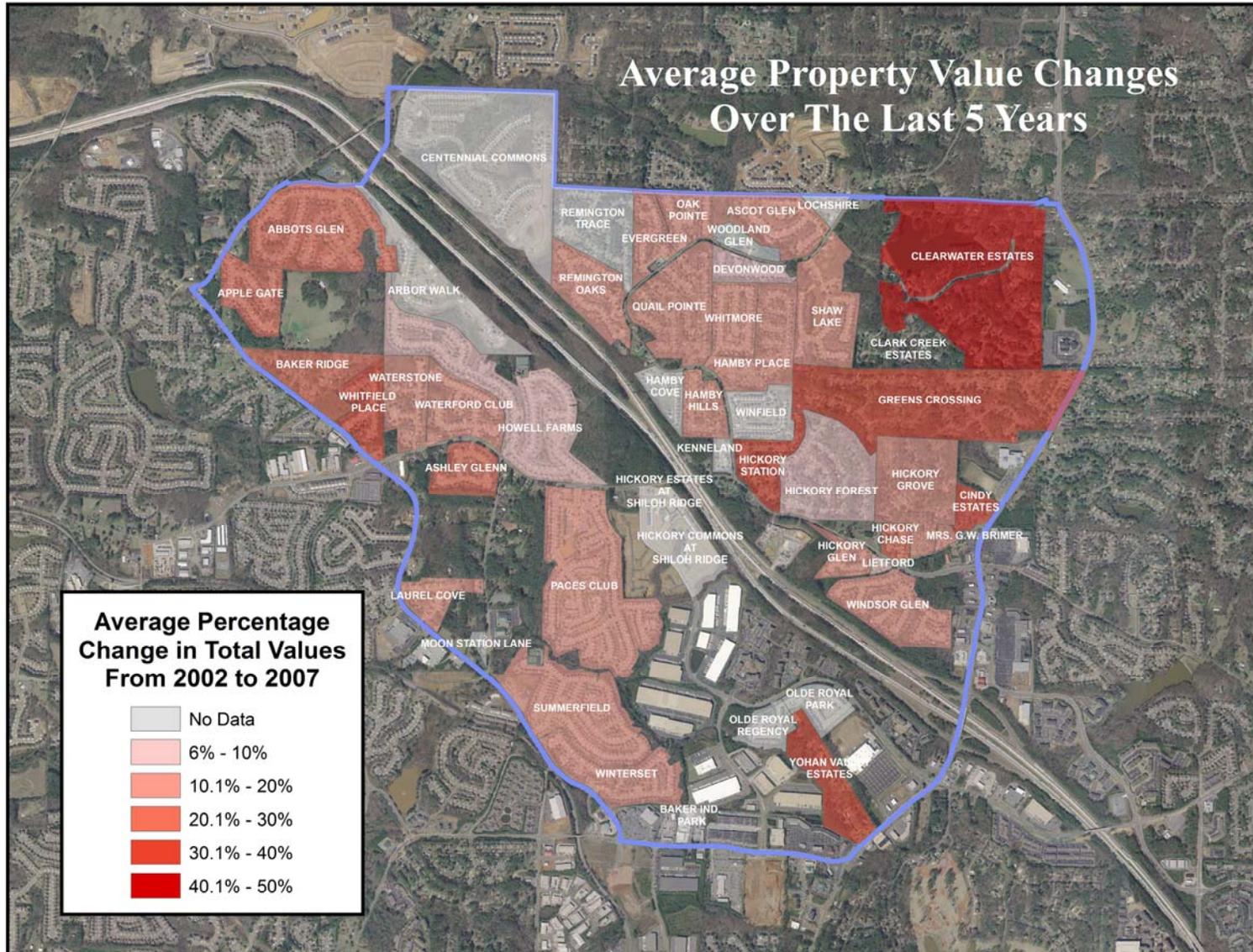
For the purpose of this study, the property and building valuation data was compiled over a period of years from 2002 to 2007. Due to the large number of properties within the study area staff choose to sample property values based on a 20% evaluation scheme. Each subdivision is represented in the sample and properties of varying values are portrayed in the data. As a disclaimer, it is important to note that the valuations do not indicate a true market value which tends to be higher due to competitive forces in the free market system.

Overall the entire study area saw a 20% increase in property values. Clark Creek Estates, which are 1 acre lots, had the largest increase in property values through the period at 52%. Adjacent subdivision Clearwater Estates showed 42% increase. Conversely, Devonwood, Lietford and Howell Farms all had property value increases below 10%. 23 subdivisions analyzed were below the average percentage change value, while only 12 were above the average. *Map 14* breaks down the values to show where the highest and lowest percentage changes are located by subdivision within the study area.

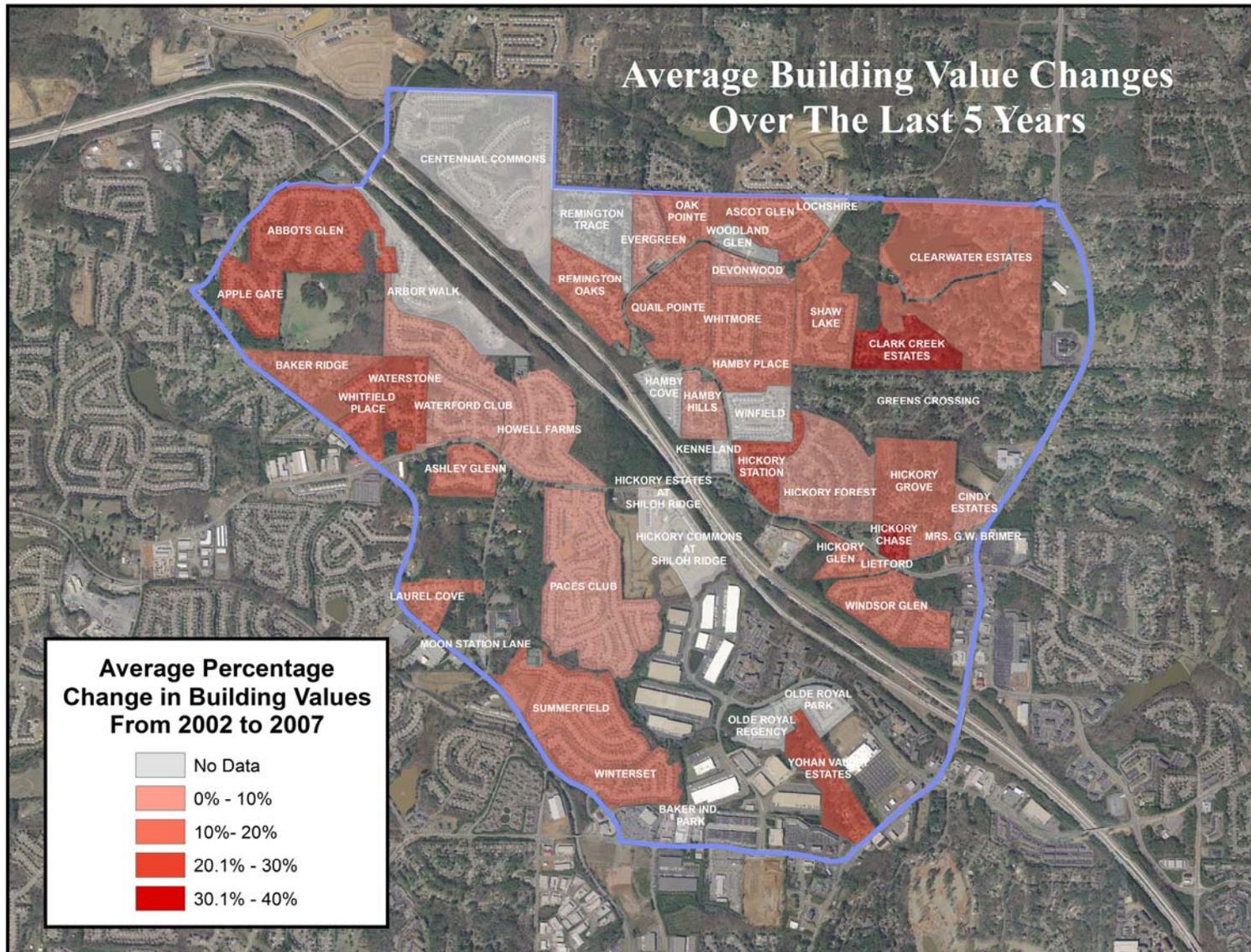
Overall building values for the study area rose 18% from 2004 to 2007. Greens Crossing saw the biggest increase in improvement values with a 43% increase. Most of the neighborhoods were between 10% and 20% with 6 subdivisions below 10%. 22 subdivisions were at or below the average value, while 14 were above the average percentage change value. *Map 15* breaks down the percentage change in building values by subdivision.

An indication of sustained prosperity and quality of life for residents within the study area are growing property values. According to the analysis of the sampled dataset, all property and building values increase. Early detection of potential economic instability can help appropriate officials work together to strengthen neighborhoods. This allows a proactive approach to creating and maintaining economically vital neighborhoods in all parts of the county.

A complete list of average property and building FMV's for 2002 and 2007 for each subdivision can be found in the Appendix, including percentage changes.



Map 10



Map 11

Community Facilities

As part of this study, staff reviewed the availability and adequacy of public/private community facilities in the North Cobb area. These facilities promote a greater sense of ‘pride of place’ in the community, which generally have a significant impact on the quality of life of local residents. They provide a wide range of programs and services that benefits everyone. Some examples of public facilities looked at included police and fire protection, emergency medical response, hospitals, schools, libraries and parks. The private facilities are the club houses, pools tennis court, day care centers and common spaces.

Existing Community Facilities

Police

This area is serviced by Cobb County Police, Precinct 1. Precinct 1 is located in Northwest Cobb and serves the Town Center Mall and Acworth areas. The study area boundaries are with this general area. In addition to providing protection and policing the community, the Police department offer the Police Email Notification System (PENS). This system is maintained by Cobb Police to enhance communication between our five police precincts and the communities they serve. The program establishes e-mail contact with official representatives of Cobb’s homeowners associations (HOA’s) and business leaders on safety and security matters. Residents can access and receive email alerts, report issues online, view warning and lookouts and review property crime reports and trends. This is a good tool in keeping the community connected and readily available to help monitor crime and potentially reduce illegal activity.

Fire

Fire Station 26 is located at the south boundary of the study area. Cobb County provides its residents with educational tools to expand their understanding and knowledge of fire protection. For example, Cobb County firefighters teach fire prevention to Kindergarten, 2nd and 4th grade classes as part of the fire prevention program, which has proven to be successful. In addition to Fire, there is also Emergency Management. Emergency Management is responsible for coordinating all activities to protect Cobb’s residents from natural, technological and manmade disasters including other emergencies that threaten the County. Home land Security also plays a large role in emergency preparedness. Currently, the Atlanta Regional Commission is developing an Evacuation Plan for the Metro Atlanta area and requesting input. All these vital service update are available to the residents in the study area.

Medical Response/Hospitals

The Acworth Community Health Center is situated approximately two miles west of the study area in the City of Acworth. The center is a County owned public health center and provides personal health services for children, adolescents, and adults. Approximately 8 miles south is the Well Star Kennestone Hospital. This is a not-for-profit community

based hospital, part of the Well Star area clinics, and is the largest hospitals in Cobb County. One of there mission is to provide programs and events to help improve the health and well-being of families in the area.

Schools

The School District operates 2 elementary schools within the study area. However, there are primary through tertiary level schools within a 4 mile radius of the community. Cobb County School District is the second largest school system in Georgia, and they are responsible for educating more than 106,000 students in a diverse, constantly changing suburban environment.

The district’s main purpose is to ensure that Cobb students maximize their individual learning potential. To challenge its students Cobb boasts six magnet programs. These programs provide opportunities for committed students to pursue an advanced course of study in a specific focus area while earning a college preparatory diploma. North Cobb High and Kennesaw Mountain High are home to such programs and are two of the three schools that provide service to the study area. North Cobb High also participates in the Advanced Placement Certified Schools Program (APCS). APCS schools review and improve enrollment practices, promote academic challenge, develop effective support strategies, especially for underrepresented groups of students.

The following is a directory of Schools within the Cobb County School District that services the North Central Cobb area.

- High Schools- North Cobb High, Kell High and Kennesaw Mountain.
- Middle Schools- Palmer, Barber and Awtery.
- Elementary Schools- Pinter and Baker

Each school maintains its own website which can be accessed by parents and residents. In addition to these schools, there is the community advantage of an upper level private university campus located just 1 mile south. This is Kennesaw State University which is a comprehensive university with expanding undergraduate and graduate programs.

In addition to the inventory of schools available in the area staff also focused on the student population forecast in terms of capacity. See Chart below.

2011-2012 Estimated School capacity

School	Capacity-Operating Level	Students	Distance - Study area
North Cobb High	Estimated Overcapacity	+811	2.3 miles
Kell High	Estimated Under capacity	-102	4 miles
Palmer Middle	Estimated Overcapacity	+149	1.5 miles
Barber Middle	Estimated Under capacity	-144	1.5 miles
Pitner Elementary	Estimated Overcapacity	+198	0 miles
Baker Elementary	Estimated Under capacity	-137	0 miles

Figure 11

The chart above demonstrates the estimated capacity of each study area school in years 2011-2012. The data was provided by a Cobb County School District forecast study. The Estimates provided in the analysis were derived prior to the increase in the foreclosure rate and the housing correction that has taken place over the past two years. This may have provided estimates that are skewed higher than reality because most analysts did not anticipate a slump in the housing market as we are currently experiencing. Due to this inconsistency in the data the schools showing as operating under capacity in reality may well be further under capacity in reality and the schools operating over capacity may not be as bad off as predicted in the analysis.

Libraries

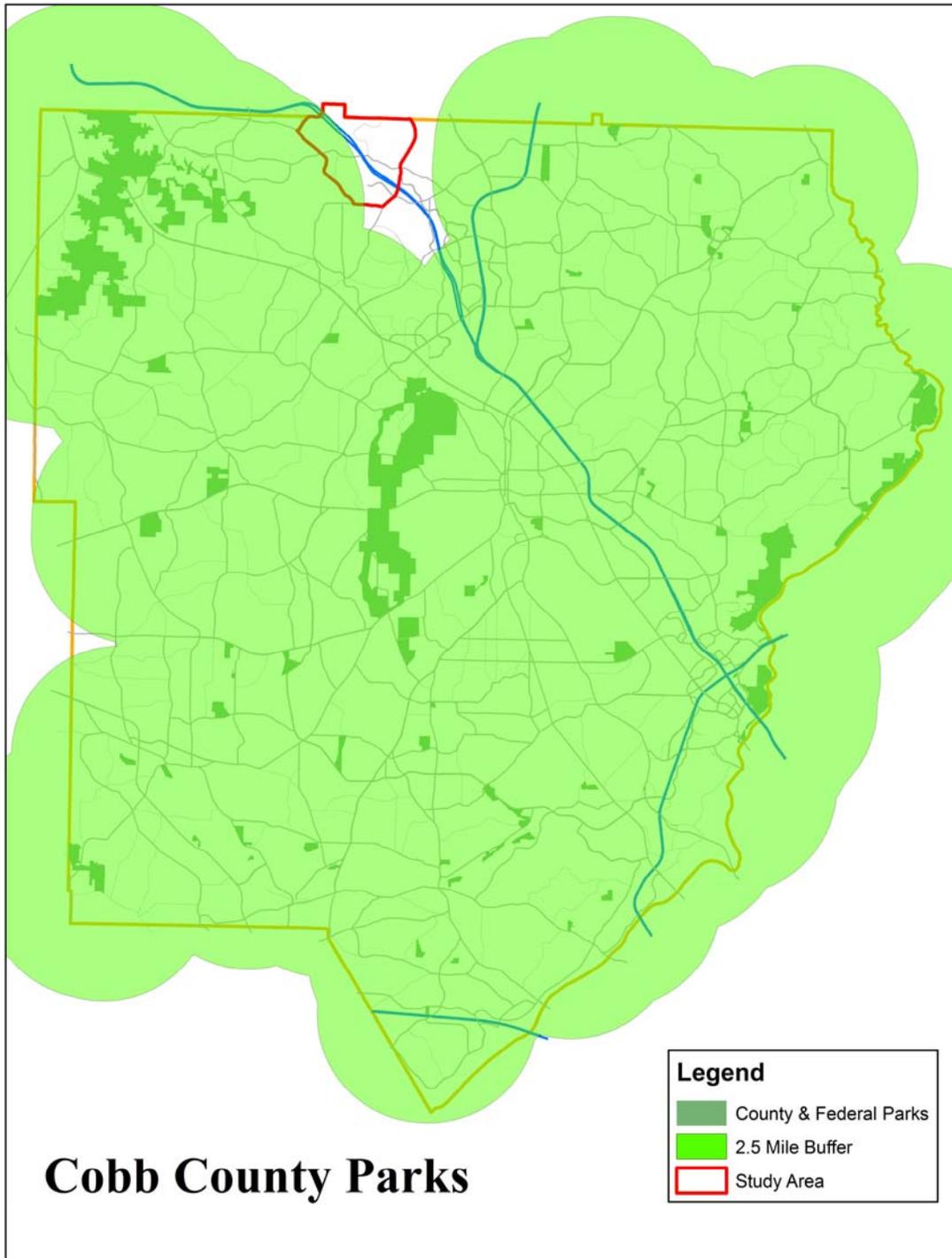
There are no public libraries within the study area however, there are two public libraries located less than three miles of the study area. They are Acworth and Kennesaw Branch libraries. They are approximately 2,916 square feet and 5,099 square feet respectively. Both provide internet access computer to the public and operate Monday thru Saturday.

Parks

Passive and active parks can play a vital role in the social well-being of an area. Not only can they provide areas of recreation and leisure but also help in framing a social network of residence through different programs and activities that can create a positive "snowball" effect that ultimately builds to a thriving, desirable, well liked and cohesive community.

Unfortunately, the study area does not contain any public parks within the identified boundaries. The nearest park is Kennworth Park within the City of Acworth. According to *Map 16*, which shows a 2.5 mile buffer around city, county, and federally owned parks, the only significant area not serviced by a public park is the QOL area.

While public parks are scarce, privately own neighborhood amenities do exist in some subdivisions throughout the QOL area. These community parks are owned and operated by Homeowners Associations. They usually include swimming pools and tennis courts with a club house as a gathering spot for the neighbors. Some may even include basketball courts and small walking trails. While these particular recreational areas do not reach the broad range of citizens in the area they do provide some sort of leisure escape that is important in maintaining a livable, active area.



Map 12

A community is defined by the characteristics of the individuals who live, work, and play together. The mesh of different personalities helps create the fabric of that community. Without adequate services in the form of health, education, public safety, and recreation the quintessential existence and growth of a community will not occur.

Fortunately, the study area does show sufficient services from public safety to libraries. This allows residents of the study area to partake in the different programs offered whether it is a neighborhood watch program from public safety or book discussion groups at the library. World-class health facilities and services are 5 miles away at Kennestone Hospital and higher level education is about 3 miles away at the third largest university in Georgia, Kennesaw State University. These different facilities make this area a highly desirable place to live, work and play. The only disadvantage of the area is accessible Park land. While it is important to adequate facilities and services, they are one element of the infrastructure that an area can provide to play a key role in contributing to a socially sustainable community.

Field Research

The North Central Cobb Neighborhood Quality of Life report is built around a comprehensive assessment of subdivision level quality of life factors, such as property values, code enforcement violations, criminal activity, foreclosures, new home inventory and community facilities. To assist in communicating the quality of life at a small, more localized scale, field research and photographing of structures was conducted through each neighborhood to build a three part categorization model for the condition of housing stock within each subdivision. The categories Stable, Improving, and Needs Improving reflect the overall conditions of the housing stock within each subdivision relative to other subdivisions within the study area. The basis for these terms is translated into the following standards.

Stable: Subdivisions that exhibit few problems. These are subdivisions with an overall housing stock that are maintained with kept yards.

Improving: Subdivisions that exhibit few problems and indicate some housing stock being remodeled with additions or under repair

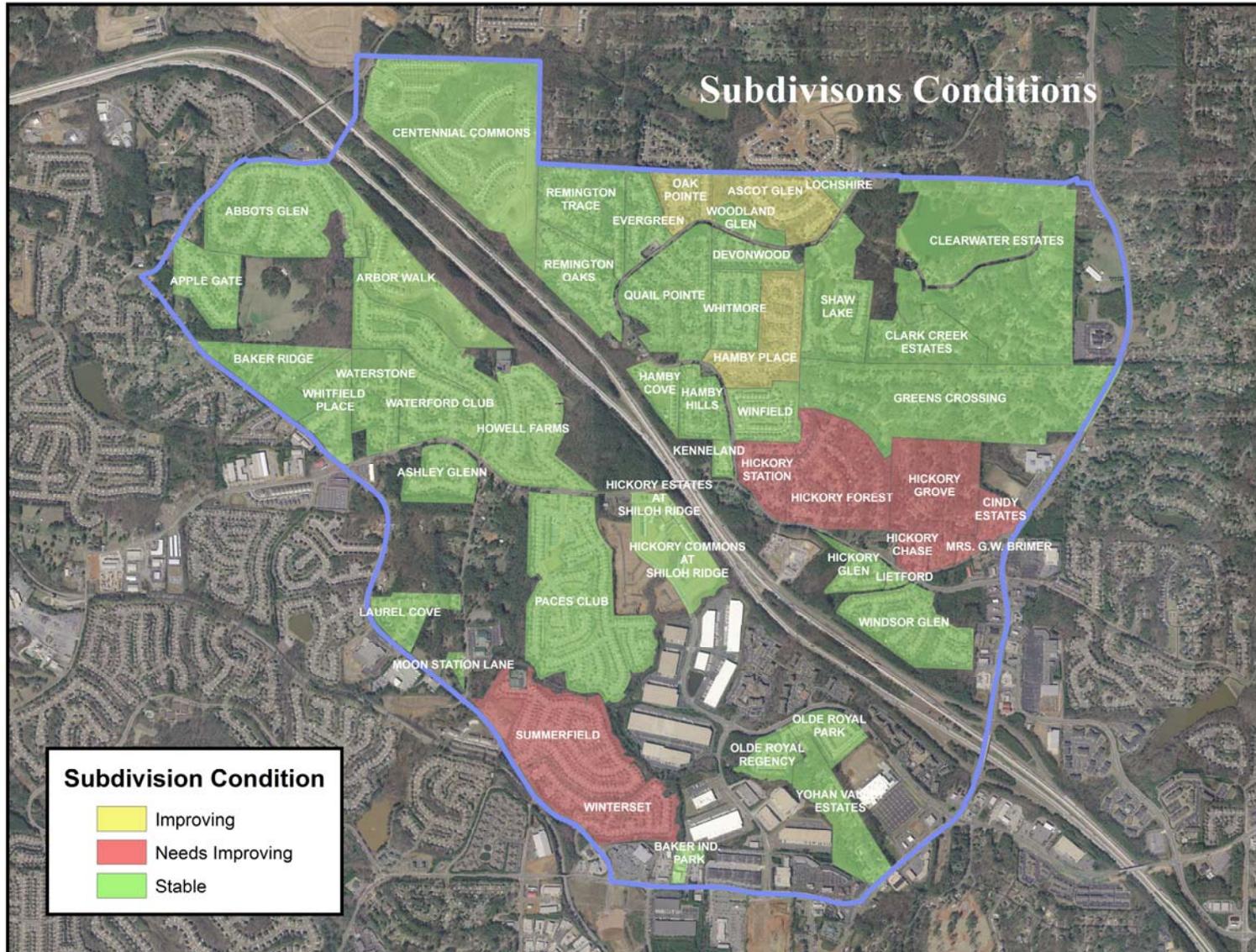
Needs Improving: Subdivisions that exhibit problems with no indications of cleaning-up or repair

The windshield survey of the study area revealed most neighborhoods were in stable condition. Overall the study area is in better shape than expected. Exterior conditions of most homes are stable and have little to no peeling paint, unpainted surfaces, missing shingles or missing siding. Broken windows are not a concern for the study area. Staff did not report one instance of broken or missing windows. Parked or an excessive number of automobiles were not reported nor did there appear to be any commercial

signage on vehicles while field crews analyzed the area. Yards were well maintained, no seasonal lights on structures and the only construction equipment visible was being used at the time of survey.

In most cases the entire study area could be defined as stable neighborhoods, but for comparative purposes staff did assign certain subdivisions either improving or needs improving based on a few housing units within the subdivisions. These areas are displayed in the map below. The “improving” subdivisions were for the most part stable and even showed signs of some units either being remodeled with additions or under repair. The “needs improving” subdivisions showed units with decaying conditions mostly deteriorating garage doors, fading paint and weeds growing out of gutters.

An image library of homes is listed in the Appendix.



Map 13

Findings

Desirability

Overall, the livability, desirability and the will to preserve an attractive community is present within the study area. Field research reveals an overwhelming majority of the homes are stable, well maintained, and in good condition with a few units of negligible concerns including, decaying garage doors, fading paint and unkempt yards. Code enforcement violations are low over the reported 5 year span and quality of life crime rates are consistent with the overall county. Housing information shows the area is a desirable place to live based on new home inventory. Finished housing inventory supply is significantly lower for the study area and property and building values over the last 5 years have increase on average 20% and 17%, respectively. Foreclosures and vacant developed lots are probably the biggest issues for the study area. Foreclosures are currently comparable to the county during this time of high foreclosure rates. It is worthy to note that this is not an inclusive problem of the study area or Cobb County but for all Metro Atlanta, the state and the entire country. Community facilities such as, community gathering places, libraries, schools, and fire coverage appear to be adequate considering the number of neighborhoods within the study area.

Concerns

Most indicators chosen for the study area showed positive quality of life components. However, there are a few concerns for the study area that need to be addressed. The few housing units with deteriorating exteriors are minor at the moment, however without proper care and maintenance these insignificant issues could evolve into structural violations and safety concerns along with the potential of increased crime related to the “Broken Windows” theory mindset.

Fortunately, the supply of housing inventory by month is lower for the study area than the county. However, the vacant developed lot (VDL) month supply, which is the supply of lots that are ready for building, is 21% more than the county. The concern for VDL’s, relate to the illegal deposition of waste materials which can lead to an unattractive visual quality of a neighborhood, and more importantly breed diseases and crime.

Foreclosed homes are a concern for the study area. While there does not appear be a significant foreclosure rate for the study area compared to the county, it is an issue that needs to be addressed to keep properties from becoming unsafe, visually unattractive and ultimately to keep property values in check.

APPENDIX

Image Library

Windsor Glen Subdivision



4407 Dickens Ct.



1508 Pickens Pl.



4409 Dickens Ct.



4344 Windmore Dr.

Hickory Chase Subdivision



4412 Dickens Ct.



4450 Hickory Chase Dr.



4461 Hickory Chase Dr.



4496 Hickory Grove Dr.



1612 Hickory Cove Ct.



4501 Hickory Grove Dr.

Hickory Grove Subdivision



4495 Hickory Grove Dr.



1702 Hickory Grove Trl.

Greens Crossing Subdivision



1725 Hickory Grove Way



4792 Mandina Ct.

Clark Creek Estates



4515 Hickory Grove Dr.



1624 Clark Lake Dr.

Hickory Glen



1516 Hickory Grove Place



4507 Sawnee Trl.

Hickory Forest/Hickory Station



1778 May Glen Dr.



4527 High Grove Ct.



4532 High Grove Ct.



1809 Crescent Hill Dr.



4529 High Grove Ct.



4587 Hickory Run Ct.

Hamby Place



1928 Hamby Place Dr.



2105 November Glen

Ascot Subdivision



4891 Wilkie Way



1772 Ascot Run

Quail Pointe Subdivision



4810 Morning Chase

Oak Pointe Subdivision



Cherokee County

Remington Trace Subdivision



2416 Doubletree Dr.



2404 Carina Terrace



2451 Doubletree Dr.

Waterford Club Subdivision



2410 Carina Trace

Property Values

Property Values (Land & Building FMV) By Subdivision

Subdivision	Average per Subdivision Property Values 2002	Average Per Subdivision Property Values 2007	% Change from 2002 to 2007
ABBOTS GLEN	\$145,558	\$179,135	23
APPLE GATE	\$143,063	\$185,455	30
ARBOR WALK			No Data
ASCOT GLEN	\$172,747	\$191,851	11
ASHLEY GLENN	\$138,671	\$172,859	25
BAKER IND. PARK			No Data
BAKER RIDGE	\$123,865	\$160,617	30
CENTENNIAL COMMONS			No Data
CINDY ESTATES	\$202,335	\$264,260	31
CLARK CREEK ESTATES	\$151,847	\$230,218	52
CLEARWATER ESTATES	\$202,825	\$287,410	42
DEVONWOOD	\$164,925	\$174,890	6
EVERGREEN	\$223,164	\$254,972	14
GREENS CROSSING	\$141,559	\$196,260	39
HAMBY COVE			No Data
HAMBY HILLS	\$125,132	\$138,781	11
HAMBY PLACE	\$133,175	\$153,830	16
HICKORY CHASE	\$139,166	\$173,678	25
HICKORY COMMONS AT SHILOH RIDGE			No Data
HICKORY ESTATES AT SHILOH RIDGE			No Data
HICKORY FOREST	\$119,944	\$131,602	10
HICKORY GLEN	\$145,454	\$168,461	16
HICKORY GROVE NORTH	\$126,867	\$146,333	15
HICKORY STATION	\$114,837	\$160,291	40
HOWELL FARMS	\$191,975	\$209,055	9
KENNELAND			No Data
LAUREL COVE	\$175,663	\$205,748	17
LIETFORD	\$148,745	\$159,208	7
LOCHSHIRE			No Data
MOON STATION LANE			No Data
MRS. G.W. BRIMER	\$118,060	\$132,896	13
OAK POINTE	\$180,899	\$211,285	17
OLDE ROYAL PARK			No Data
OLDE ROYAL REGENCY			No Data
PACES CLUB	\$140,590	\$166,625	19
QUAIL POINTE	\$142,931	\$167,963	18
REMINGTON OAKS	\$175,296	\$200,637	14
REMINGTON TRACE			No Data
SHAW LAKE	\$200,373	\$226,800	13
SUMMERFIELD	\$124,198	\$142,316	15
WATERFORD CLUB	\$179,078	\$204,470	14
WATERSTONE	\$209,863	\$250,156	19
WHITFIELD PLACE	\$151,916	\$187,197	36
WHITMORE	\$153,026	\$168,464	10
WINDSOR GLEN	\$144,472	\$166,762	15
WINFIELD			No Data
WINTERSET	\$140,506	\$162,349	16
WOODLAND GLEN			No Data
YOHAN VALLEY ESTATES	\$116,543	\$155,345	33
Overall Avg Property Values	\$154,551	\$185,377	20%

Building Values

Building/Improvement Values (Building FMV) By Subdivision

Subdivision	Average per Subdivision Building Values 2002	Average Per Subdivision Buildings Values 2007	% Change from 2002 to 2007
ABBOTS GLEN	\$103,694	\$137,135	24
APPLE GATE	\$121,063	\$154,455	22
ARBOR WALK			No Data
ASCOT GLEN	\$128,747	\$147,851	13
ASHLEY GLENN	\$113,671	\$128,859	12
BAKER IND. PARK	\$0	\$0	No Data
BAKER RIDGE	\$77,258	\$95,281	19
CENTENNIAL COMMONS	\$0	\$0	No Data
CINDY ESTATES	\$135,837	\$145,730	7
CLARK CREEK ESTATES	\$124,180	\$180,051	31
CLEARWATER ESTATES	\$155,325	\$193,960	20
DEVONWOOD	\$122,925	\$132,890	7
EVERGREEN	\$169,964	\$187,972	10
GREENS CROSSING	\$105,717	\$151,165	43
HAMBY COVE	\$0	\$0	No Data
HAMBY HILLS	\$95,132	\$100,781	6
HAMBY PLACE	\$99,175	\$112,830	14
HICKORY CHASE	\$98,166	\$131,678	34
HICKORY COMMONS AT SHILOH RIDGE	\$0	\$0	No Data
HICKORY ESTATES AT SHILOH RIDGE	\$0	\$0	No Data
HICKORY FOREST	\$89,944	\$95,302	6
HICKORY GLEN	\$118,454	\$138,461	17
HICKORY GROVE NORTH	\$86,867	\$103,333	19
HICKORY STATION	\$94,873	\$120,291	27
HOWELL FARMS	\$146,975	\$161,055	10
KENNELAND	\$0	\$0	No Data
LAUREL COVE	\$140,663	\$167,748	19
LIETFORD	\$103,245	\$113,708	10
LOCHSHIRE	\$0	\$0	No Data
MOON STATION LANE	\$0	\$0	No Data
MRS. G.W. BRIMER	\$60,393	\$71,576	19
OAK POINTE	\$140,899	\$166,285	18
OLDE ROYAL PARK	\$0	\$0	No Data
OLDE ROYAL REGENCY	\$0	\$0	No Data
PACES CLUB	\$109,896	\$116,625	6
QUAIL POINTE	\$109,431	\$128,863	18
REMINGTON OAKS	\$130,471	\$150,637	15
REMINGTON TRACE	\$0	\$0	No Data
SHAW LAKE	\$140,373	\$165,550	18
SUMMERFIELD	\$87,198	\$103,316	18
WATERFORD CLUB	\$144,078	\$152,470	6
WATERSTONE	\$140,418	\$179,156	28
WHITFIELD PLACE	\$110,605	\$133,057	20
WHITMORE	\$105,026	\$123,464	18
WINDSOR GLEN	\$111,972	\$126,631	13
WINFIELD	\$0	\$0	No Data
WINTERSET	\$100,506	\$112,349	12
WOODLAND GLEN	\$0	\$0	No Data
YOHAN VALLEY ESTATES	\$95,043	\$115,345	21
Overall Avg Building Values	\$114,805	\$135,596	18%