

HIGHWAY 411 OVERLAY ZONE

In June 2005, after working with stakeholders in Floyd and Bartow counties, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs published the *Scenic Corridor Concept Plan* for U.S. Highway 411. This concept plan states “the vision for Highway 411 is a scenic highway that protects the pastoral views and rural character, maintains the efficient regional connection between Rome and Cartersville and creates sustainable rural nodes that support long-term economic value.” Several implementation elements were identified by this plan, including: limiting highway access points, acquiring access rights to 411, encouraging pedestrian oriented development, establishing a local street network, and protecting natural viewsheds.

Also in 2005, Rome and Floyd County began the process of updating the community’s comprehensive plan. Two priorities that came out of the workshops during this process were 1) protecting Floyd County’s rural character and 2) enhancing the transportation corridors coming into the City of Rome. Additionally, the economic development focus group, along with others, stressed the need to protect U.S. Highway 411 as the community’s only direct route to Interstate 75. These objectives are reflected in the Community Agenda in GOAL 2 – Rural Area: “Preserve and protect important natural resources and agricultural and forestry areas from the undue encroachment of other land uses” and GOAL 3 – Corridors: “To maintain the major highway corridors through the County as attractive and functional gateways to Rome and Floyd County.”

Responding to the community’s desire to maintain the rural character of the community and protect transportation corridors, the Floyd County Board of Commissioners and the Rome City Commission obtained the services of Planning Works to assist the community in developing an overlay zoning district for the U.S. Highway 411 area. The stated purpose of this overlay zone is to “maintain this major highway corridor through the County as a safe, functional and attractive gateway to Rome and Floyd County.”

The proposed overlay zone adds additional standards for new development within 600 feet of U.S. Highway 411 from the Ledbetter Interchange east to the Bartow County Line. Agricultural activities and existing single family residences are exempted from the requirements of the overlay district. The following are among the additional standards placed on development in the proposed Highway 411 overlay zone:

1. Spacing of future access points to 411 would be increased to a minimum of 550’ of separation from 300’ in the ULDC; and access to other streets from 2 per 200’ to 1 per 200’.
2. The front landscaping strip would be increased from 20’ to 25’ and additional vegetation would be required.
3. Additional landscape and design standards would be placed on large parking areas.

4. The minimum building setback from 411 or a parallel access road for development in the area would be 25 feet. When adjacent residential property the minimum setback for non-residential development would be 50' along side and rear property lines. Underlying zoning requires a front setback of 20' to 100'; side setbacks of 15' to 200' and rear setbacks of 25' to 200'.
5. Utilities are encouraged to be underground or screened from Highway 411.
6. Dumpsters, HVAC Units and other outdoor equipment, as well as outdoor storage and display areas, must be screened from view from Highway 411.
7. Non-residential buildings would be required to provide at least one customer entrance directly facing or not more than ninety (90) degrees from directly facing Highway 411, and the entrances would have to incorporate some architectural detailing, such as arches, arcades, recesses and projections.
8. Walls of commercial buildings facing Highway 411 and over 100 feet in length would have to incorporate architectural detailing in their design.
9. Commercial buildings would be required to screen rooftop elements from view from Highway 411, and the roof of buildings over 40,000 square feet would be required to incorporate architectural details into their design, such as peaks or parapets.
10. Non-residential buildings would be required to "be constructed or clad with materials that are durable, economically-maintained, and of a quality that will retain their appearance over time." Some examples are listed, and alternatives can be approved by the Planning Director and Chief Building Official.