

**Expanded Thornton Opportunity Zone  
Douglas County, GA  
2013**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Douglas County was created in 1870 from portions of Cobb, Campbell and Carroll Counties. Located in the Atlanta Region, it has been designated as part of the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area by the US Census Bureau. Douglas County contains approximately 200 square miles of predominantly rural, yet vastly increasing suburban/urban landscape. Douglas County's urban population consists of three municipalities: Austell, Douglasville, and Villa Rica. The largest of the municipalities and the only one wholly contained in Douglas County is Douglasville with a population estimated by the US Census Bureau in 2010 at 30,961 residents. Douglas County's total population as estimated by the US Census Bureau is 132,403.

Douglas County is strategically located in the region's western growth path, linked to the metro Atlanta area and Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport by the Westside I-20. Because of its proximity to Atlanta, and abundance of availability of affordable housing stock, Douglas County has undergone a transformation over the last 15 years from a mostly rural county to a bedroom community within the Atlanta metropolitan area. Over the last 30 years the County has been urbanizing rapidly, with a large portion of growth over the last 15 years. Thirty-two percent of all dwelling units were constructed over this 15-year period. Downtown Douglasville has served as a central economic core of the Douglas County community for many years. While the downtown continues to host a diversity of professional, retail and government functions, the construction of I-20 through the City of Douglasville several miles south of the downtown drew much of the retail shopping activity to corridors perpendicular to the interstate highway at the location of exits for state highways 92 and 5 and Chapel Hill Road. Development activity in the County has concentrated around the incorporated area of Douglasville, and more recently outward along major transportation corridors further west.

## **THORNTON ROAD AREA**

The Expanded Thornton Road Urban Redevelopment Area/Opportunity Zone area general boundaries begin at the intersection Interstate 20 West at Lee Road, running north along both sides of Lee Road up to and including Sweetwater Industrial Boulevard and running south along Lee Road to Monier Avenue. Monier Avenue becomes Blairs Bridge Road at the intersection with Mt. Vernon Road with the boundary continuing on to Thornton Road south of Interstate 20. The expanded boundary also includes portions of Thornton Road south of Interstate 20, along portions of Douglas Hill Road, Blairs Bridge Road, Interstate West Parkway, and Trae Lane, down to the Thornton Road intersection with Riverside Parkway including parcels along both sides of Riverside Parkway to the Cobb County Line and the Douglasville City Limits. For the purposes of continuity throughout this document, all data is analyzed based on the time frames referenced in the original Opportunity Zone application Douglas County submitted to DCA in June 2012.

In the 1970s, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners zoned an approximate 400 acre tract along the northern portion of Thornton Road for what would become the mixed use Planned Unit Development known as Westfork. It would eventually be the home of a primarily mixed commercial and light industrial park with offices fronting the roadway and warehouse space and truck docks to the rear with a multi-family component on several tracts. In the late 1990's and early 2000's Westfork was essentially built out.

As more people have moved farther west into Douglasville and beyond and as Westfork began to build out, the area around Lee Road, which is the next interchange to the west, began to feel the development pressure and a small industrial park was constructed and surrounded by smaller commercial developments. Largely due to the recession, there has been significant disinvestment in the Lee Road area which has significantly obsolete buildings. One such building is in the process of being retrofitted for a new user, but that is more the exception than the rule in the area. Many companies are closing or paring back their work forces leaving large portions of buildings mostly empty where hundreds of people once worked.

As the Lee Road area met its potential quickly, Blairs Bridge Road and the southern part of Thornton Road began its industrial boom in the 1990's and early 2000s. Developments such as Corporate Ridge on Trae Lane and others provided flex space for technology and other firms while the Terminus West development offered traditional office space on the front and truck docks with warehousing space to the rear. Significant disinvestment is also now apparent in this area with several vacant buildings available with space sizes ranging from less than 15,000 SF all the way up to ½ million square feet nearby. One such specific example is a well-known internet search engine company that has developed a campus consisting of two buildings in this corridor with one building containing approximately 150,000 SF remaining virtually unoccupied at this time. Due to the industrial zoning on a vast majority of these parcels the County is not seeing a proliferation of second and third-tier tenants as in the northern part of the Thornton Road corridor. Properties in the area remain largely vacant, waiting for industrial tenants. In addition, lots that were at some point pad graded and in the process of being readied for development have become overgrown with high grass and small trees such as parcel 01810150001, 01820150004, 08761820003, 09951820002 and 07081820005, to name a few. Parcels 09451820002 and 09461820001 are both currently under the same ownership and have recently been combined by plat and deed and sometime in the past, parcel 09451820002 was subject to site preparation work including clearing and grading that was eventually abandoned and has begun to re-forest, in essence like the above mentioned parcels. These previously prepared lots are highlighted on an attached aerial map.

A large majority of the properties along the southern Thornton Road corridor had existing industrial zonings as is the case with Douglas Hill Business Park. The business park began to develop in 2003 and five buildings were constructed and additional lots remain vacant though graded and subsequently overgrown while several buildings there suffer with the same high vacancy rates. During this same time period while the Douglas Hill campus was developing, an additional 300+ acres were zoned for industrial purposes

along Thornton Road and Riverside Drive. Out of that, the first phase of the industrial subdivision Westpoint at Riverside was platted with five lots. Shortly thereafter, the recession hit and development has been extremely slow since then, with a few speculative buildings about to complete construction and no additional platting of lots in any industrial subdivision. Most of the un-platted acreage is still held in common ownership by the original industrial developer though in some instances contracts with individual owners have lapsed.

In general we see this development trend of “pipe farms” and re-forested pad graded sites in addition to empty space in both unincorporated Douglas County and the neighboring Corporate Limits of Douglasville which is also pursuing amendments to its Urban Redevelopment Plan and Opportunity Zone area. The addition of these parcels to the respective plans and zones will provide a necessary tool in the redevelopment tool-kit to help revitalize these hard hit areas.

Douglas County as a whole, during this most recent recession, has seen an overall unemployment rate climb from 4.8% in 2007 to 10.2% in 2011 while the State of Georgia unemployment rate in 2007 was 4.6% up to 9.8% in 2011. The trend in Douglas County, while closely mirroring that of the State over this period, has been consistently higher, and has more than doubled while peaking at 10.7% in 2009 and 2010.

As with most other jurisdictions, there has been a decline in overall development county-wide. Out of the 1,715 building permits issued in 2009, less than 1% were issued along this portion of the Expanded Thornton Road area. And while the number has risen, the number has remained low into 2010 and 2011 with permits issued being between one-third of one percent in 2010 up to roughly one percent of the total in 2011 (1,797 and 1,367), respectively.

In addition, the number of overall business licenses (Occupational Tax certificates) issued has shown a sharp decline and then remained fairly steady. In 2009 there were a total of 3,386 business licenses issued county-wide with 3.9% of that total issued for businesses in this corridor, 3,082 licenses issued in 2010 with 2.6% of those being in the corridor and 3,093 in 2011 with 2.6% being in this corridor.

County-wide vacancy rates have slowly been on the rise between 2009 and 2011 going from 14.7% in 2009 up to 17.9%. However, vacancy rates in the Expanded Thornton Road area have nearly doubled in that time period from 14.8% in 2009 to 28% in 2011. Translated into square feet, this is approximately 2 million SF of space ready and available for occupancy.

Code Enforcement actions have actually been minimal in this area between 2009 and 2011 due in part to several mitigating factors. First of all, the vast majority of properties, even if unoccupied, are maintained by property management companies and that tends to hold down violations attributed to disinvestment. Property management companies are more likely to keep properties in good repair in the hopes of attracting new tenants. In addition, in September 2009, Douglas County suffered severe flooding throughout the

County and very specifically in the eastern portion of the County. For this reason, the County continues to work with individuals to clean up and address code violations before issuing citations and summonses. Combined with the recession and the flood, and the fact that the area is predominantly zoned for industrial purposes taking second and third tier property uses out of the development picture, there has been a decline in enforcement actions in the area versus the County as a whole.

Lastly is the crime rate. Overall in the period 2009-2011, the County crime rate has held fairly steady in the upper 40's/1000 population. The Expanded Thornton Road area peaked in 2010 at 49.1 crimes/1000 population but has seen a somewhat modest decline in 2011 down to 35.9 crimes/1000 population. Crimes during this time frame range from assault (aggravated and non-aggravated), family violence, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, robbery and burglary with larceny-theft and burglary the most common incidents reported. The decline in incidents reported is attributed to the recent addition of a Sheriff's Office precinct in the general area and due to the generalized loss of population in the area due to the foreclosure crisis in the single-family residential market.

**Opportunity Zone Data - Douglas County 2007-2011**

For purposes of continuity, data analyzed for same time period as the original Thornton Road Opportunity Zone

	Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Data</b>						
State Unemployment Rate		4.6	6.3	9.8	10.2	9.8
Douglas County Unemployment Rate		4.8	6.5	10.7	10.7	10.2
County Building Permits				1715	1797	1367
<b>Thornton Opportunity Zone Building Permits</b>				13	4	15
County Business Licenses Issued				3386	3082	3093
<b>Thornton Opportunity Zone Business Licenses Issued</b>				132	88	83
County Vacancy Rates (percentage)				14.7	17.2	17.9
<b>Thornton Opportunity Zone Vacancy Rates</b>				14.8	18.7	28.0
County Code Enforcement Actions				1525	1702	1517
<b>Thornton Opportunity Zone Code Enforcement Actions</b>				0	4	3
County Crime Rate (per 1000 population)				47.2	45.6	47.3
<b>Thornton Opportunity Zone Crime Rate</b>				31.75	49.1	35.9

Unemployment data--Bureau of Labor Statistics  
 Building Permit Data--Douglas County Building Department  
 Business License Data--Douglas County Occupational Tax

Vacancy Rates--Cushman & Wakefield  
 Code Enforcement Data--Douglas County Code Enforcement  
 Crime Data from Douglas County Sheriff's Office

## **STRUCTURE CONDITIONS**

	Expanded Thornton Road
Abandoned	0
Obsolete	15
Deteriorated	5
Dilapidated	0

Due to the length of time that each of the corridors has been developed, it is not surprising that a number of buildings can be considered to be obsolete, deteriorated or dilapidated. Out of the 86 parcels in the Expanded Thornton Road Opportunity Zone, 15 can be considered to be obsolete or in need of retrofitting or redevelopment while none can be considered to be dilapidated and in a state of disrepair or poor condition because of age and/or neglect and another 5 considered to be in a state of deterioration because of some type of decay or diminished quality.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS**

### **Thornton Road (State Route 6) Area**

Thornton Road is a multi-lane arterial. It is considered to be one of the Atlanta region's busiest major freight and logistics corridors and provides access to and from the Norfolk Southern - Austell intermodal yard approximately 6 miles north of Interstate 20. Thornton Road has extremely high traffic volumes comparable to interstate levels. The corridor experiences heavy truck traffic (14%) throughout the day as it serves freight traffic to and from I-20.

The roadway has steep grades between Interstate 20 and Riverside Parkway. Historical crash records show that truck rollovers are a problem at some of the intersections in this section of the corridor.

The roadway infrastructure within the redevelopment area has many needs to improve the travel mobility and the economic viability to the adjacent development areas. Roadway signage, signal coordination, lane widths, turning radiuses, and truck traffic management are all lacking qualities within the redevelopment area.

The interchange with Lee Road and Lee Road itself are currently being expanded. More information is outlined in Connect Six, the Georgia State Route 6 Transportation Corridor Study, available through the Atlanta Regional Commission.

1400 Lee Road (Parcel ID 07191820004)



2285 Sweetwater Industrial Blvd. (Parcel ID 06681820008)



2196 Sweetwater Industrial Blvd (Parcel ID  
06251820012)



2346 Sweetwater Industrial Blvd (Parcel ID  
06671820017)



1955 Monier Ave (Parcel ID 06701820003)



1255 Terminus Drive (Parcel ID 06741820006)



Blairs Bridge RD (Parcel ID 06741820004)



1415 Trae LN (Parcel ID 07081820002)



1386 Trae LN(Parcel ID 07081820005)



913 Bob Arnold Blvd(Parcel ID 07071820020)



907 Bob Arnold Blvd (Parcel ID 07071820019)



780 Douglas Hill RD (Parcel ID 08771820008)



777 Douglas Hill Road (Parcel ID  
08771820001)



767 Douglas Hill RD (Parcel ID 08771820010)



2100 Thornton RD (Parcel ID 09371820002)



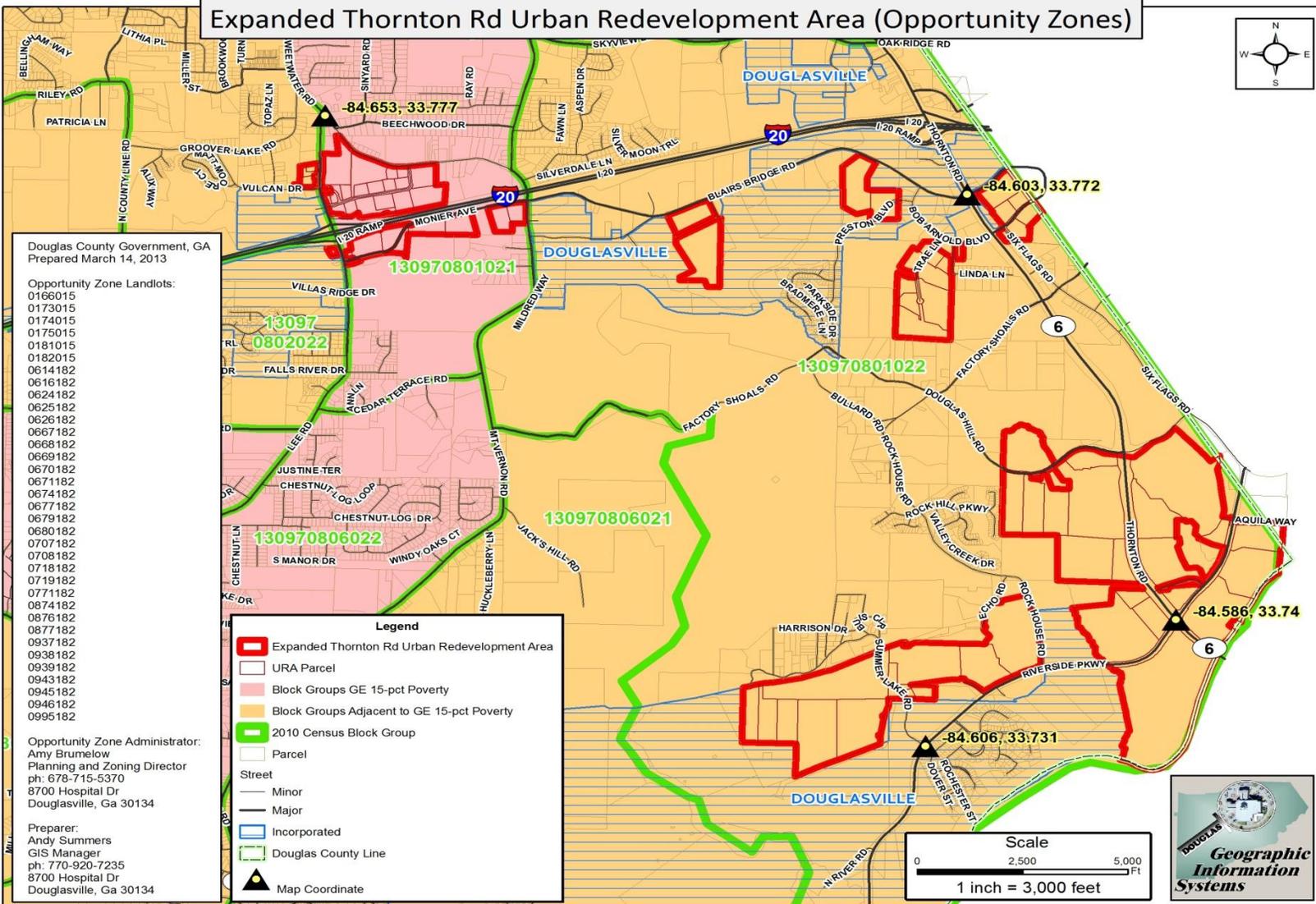
2223 Thornton RD (Parcel ID 09951820002)



600 Riverside PKWY (Parcel ID 01820150003)



# Expanded Thornton Rd Urban Redevelopment Area (Opportunity Zones)



Douglas County Government, GA  
Prepared March 14, 2013

**Opportunity Zone Landlots:**

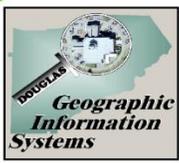
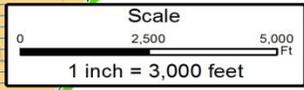
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- 0182015
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- 0667182
- 0668182
- 0669182
- 0670182
- 0671182
- 0674182
- 0677182
- 0679182
- 0680182
- 0707182
- 0708182
- 0718182
- 0719182
- 0771182
- 0874182
- 0876182
- 0877182
- 0937182
- 0938182
- 0939182
- 0943182
- 0945182
- 0946182
- 0995182

**Opportunity Zone Administrator:**  
Amy Brumelow  
Planning and Zoning Director  
ph: 678-715-5370  
8700 Hospital Dr  
Douglasville, Ga 30134

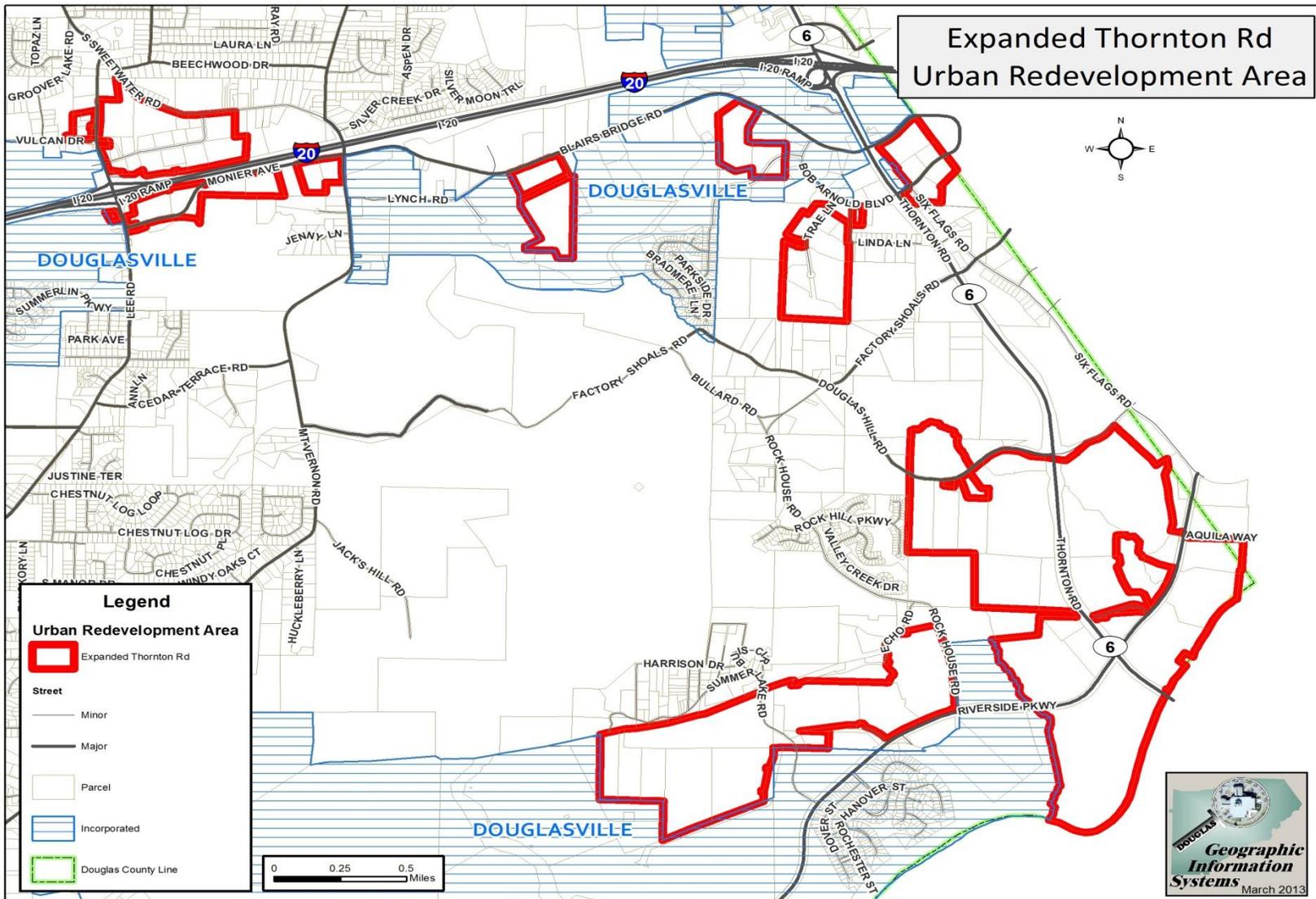
**Preparer:**  
Andy Summers  
GIS Manager  
ph: 770-920-7235  
8700 Hospital Dr  
Douglasville, Ga 30134

**Legend**

- Expanded Thornton Rd Urban Redevelopment Area
- URA Parcel
- Block Groups GE 15-pct Poverty
- Block Groups Adjacent to GE 15-pct Poverty
- 2010 Census Block Group
- Parcel
- Street
  - Minor
  - Major
- Incorporated
- Douglas County Line
- Map Coordinate

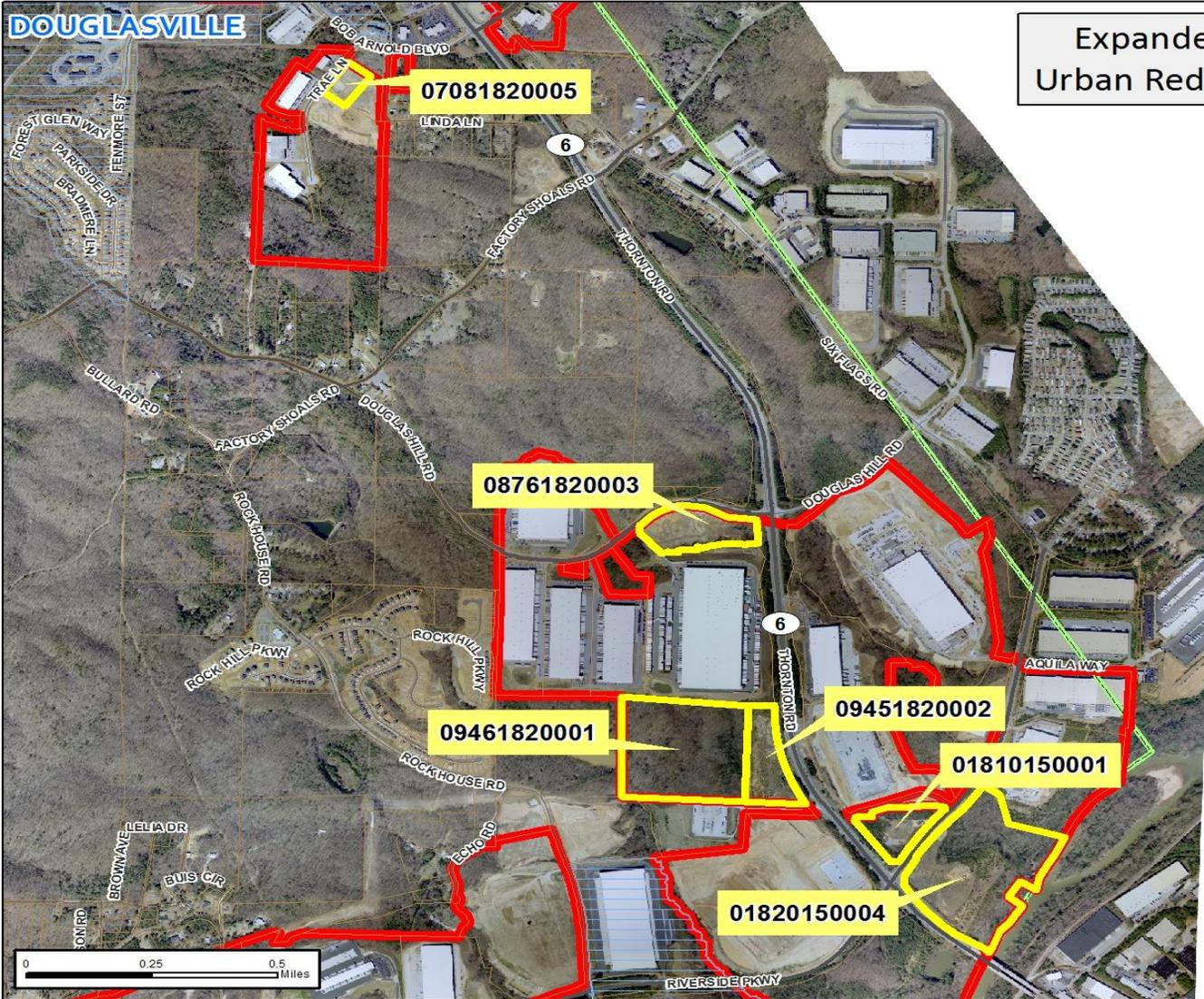
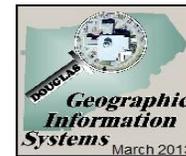


# Expanded Thornton Rd Urban Redevelopment Area



**DOUGLASVILLE**

**Expanded Thornton Rd  
Urban Redevelopment Area**



**Legend**

**Urban Redevelopment Area**

- Expanded Thornton Rd
- Highlighted Parcel within URA

**Street**

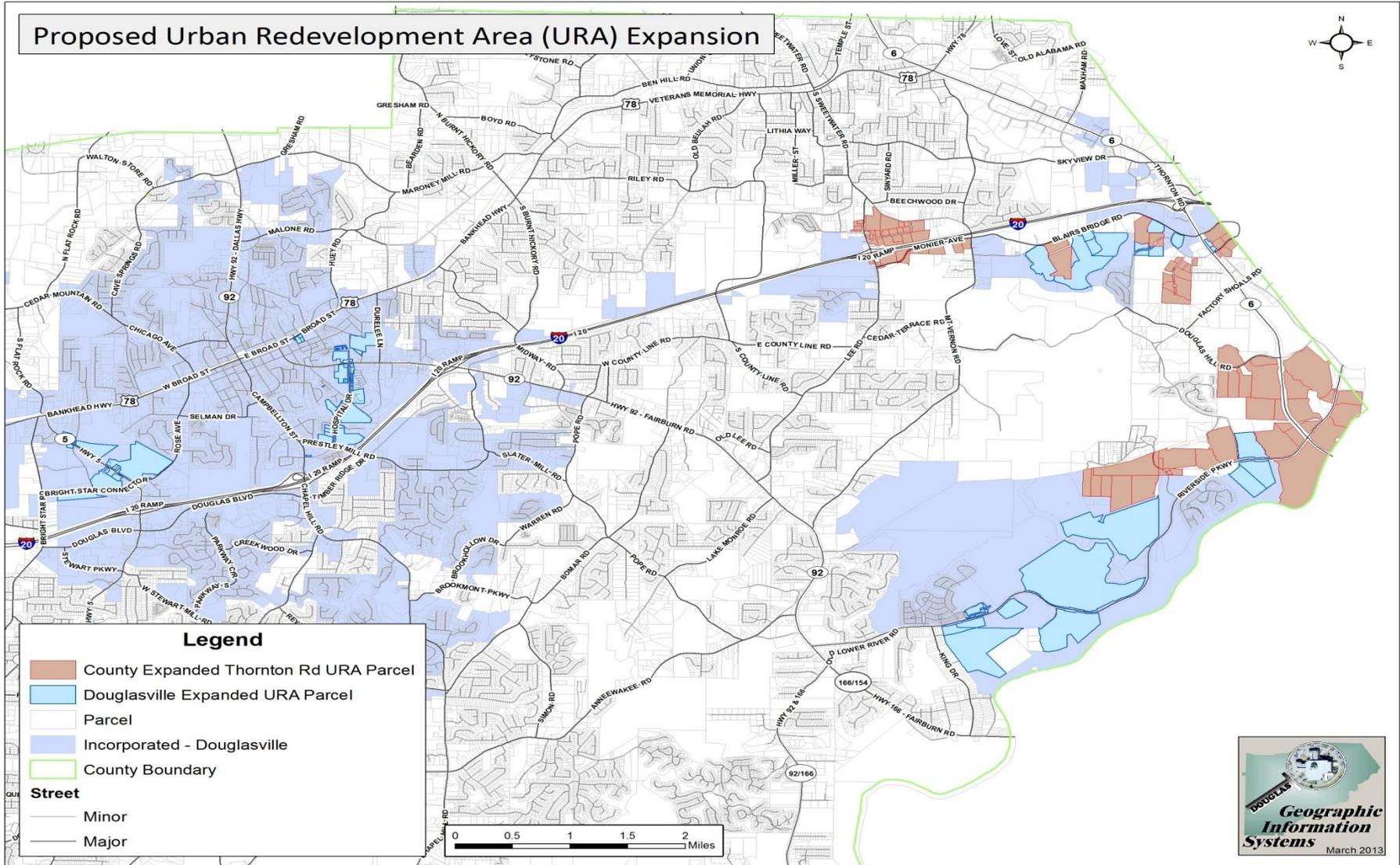
- Minor
- Major

**Parcel**

- Incorporated

**Douglas County Line**

# Proposed Urban Redevelopment Area (URA) Expansion

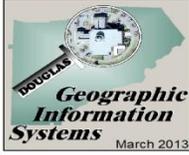


**Legend**

- County Expanded Thornton Rd URA Parcel
- Douglasville Expanded URA Parcel
- Parcel
- Incorporated - Douglasville
- County Boundary

**Street**

- Minor
- Major



**Expanded  
Thornton**

<u>Parcel</u>	<u>Tax Value</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Pervasive Poverty</u>	<u>Under Developed</u>	<u>General Distress</u>	<u>Blighted</u>	<u>G Total</u>
01660150002	120900.00	13.33	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01730150002	175100.00	37.961	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01730150003	282490.00	39.00	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01730150004	112800.00	13.33	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01730150005	112800.00	13.33	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01740150001	661600.00	61.00	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01750150015	69710.00	1.0	R	1	1	1	1	100%
01750150017	75610.00	1.0	R	1	1	1	1	100%
01750150018	100000.00	5.00	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01750150020	94000.00	4.7	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01750150040	26838400.00	48.95	I	1	1	1	1	100%
01750150041	11176800.00	24.4322	I	1	1	1	1	100%
01750150042	5016500.00	38.9456	I	1	1	1	1	100%
01810150001	567000.00	8.097	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01820150001	862500.00	126.4449	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01820150003	3172200.00	52.866	I	1	1	1	1	100%
01820150004	1176300.00	40.712	V	1	1	1	1	100%
01820150005	6402300.00	11.5	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06141820001	8441900.00	13.5	C	1	1	1	1	100%
06161820005	539980.00	21.008	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06241820008	4475700.00	7.430	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06251820009	741600.00	1.67	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06251820011	5757900.00	13.06	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06251820012	913400.00	2.10	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06251820013	982000.00	2.01	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06261820003	1449000.00	16.103	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06261820004	103000.00	1.737	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06261820005	586600.00	1.347	C	1	1	1	1	100%
06261820009	315570.00	1.746	C	1	1	1	1	100%

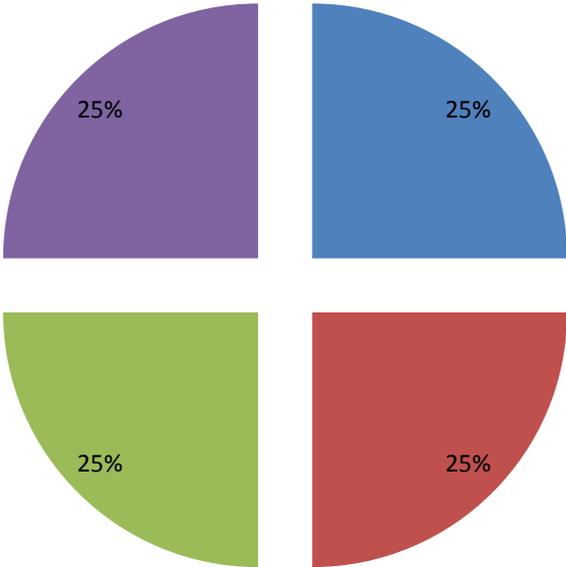
JVB 10-25-10

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06671820003	573800.00	1.104	C	1	1	1	1	100%
06671820008	135800.00	1.038	C	1	1	1	1	100%
06671820017	169300.00	2.263	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06671820018	851500.00	2.16	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06671820019	249300.00	2.156	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06671820020	107100.00	2.51	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06681820003	507500.00	2.41	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06681820004	794000.00	2.00	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06681820005	181200.00	4.47	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06681820006	1974100.00	3.98	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06681820008	2718000.00	6.834	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06681820010	978400.00	2.83	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06691820001	3214300.00	11.17	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06691820002	422400.00	7.676	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06701820001	4345000.00	7.81	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06701820003	1093000.00	7.828	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06711820004	648900.00	5.27	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06741820006	7084000.00	12.70	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06741820007	18931300.00	30.38	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06771820001	142400.00	7.123	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06771820007	57200.00	2.858	V	1	1	1	1	100%
06791820006	797800.00	1.15	C	1	1	1	1	100%
06801820001	1314200.00	3.827	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06801820002	2200000.00	5.361	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06801820003	1685100.00	5.0	I	1	1	1	1	100%
06801820005	6500000.00	5.068	C	1	1	1	1	100%
07071820020	403200.00	2.0	C	1	1	1	1	100%
07081820001	540000.00	2.00	I	1	1	1	1	100%
07081820002	2100000.00	4.72	I	1	1	1	1	100%
07081820003	1672200.00	5.10	I	1	1	1	1	100%
07081820005	250400.00	3.13	V	1	1	1	1	100%
07081820006	2454480.00	8.66	I	1	1	1	1	100%

07081820007	1228500.00	2.85	I	1	1	1	1	100%
07181820001	121600.00	5.53	V	1	1	1	1	100%
07181820002	2849800.00	10.708	I	1	1	1	1	100%
07181820004	220600.00	1.17	C	1	1	1	1	100%
07191820002	640800.00	0.754	C	1	1	1	1	100%
07191820004	403500.00	0.786	C	1	1	1	1	100%
07711820001	2272750.00	5.11	I	1	1	1	1	100%
07711820002	259600.00	17.31	V	1	1	1	1	100%
07711820003	854500.00	17.09	V	1	1	1	1	100%
08741820001	57480600.00	87.63	I	1	1	1	1	100%
08761820003	940800.00	11.757	V	1	1	1	1	100%
08761820004	28322220.00	58.881	I	1	1	1	1	100%
08771820001	10620600.00	18.803	I	1	1	1	1	100%
08771820008	13209194.00	26.573	I	1	1	1	1	100%
08771820010	10606712.00	17.530	I	1	1	1	1	100%
08771820011	9174140.00	18.433	I	1	1	1	1	100%
09371820002	9760300.00	26.38	I	1	1	1	1	100%
09381820003	436300.00	6.06	V	1	1	1	1	100%
09391820001	9890400.00	17.46	I	1	1	1	1	100%
09431820001	16987600.00	31.993	I	1	1	1	1	100%
09451820001	22000000.00	29.764	I	1	1	1	1	100%
09451820002	646800.00	10.76	V	1	1	1	1	100%
09461820001	256000.00	40.00	V	1	1	1	1	100%
09951820002	437500.00	6.25	V	1	1	1	1	100%
<b>Totals</b>		267.06		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

# Overall Rating Thornton Road

■ Pervasive Poverty ■ Underdeveloped ■ General Distress ■ Blighted



# OZ Chart Thornton Road

