



Growth in Water!

We have all likely had thoughts or conversations about how (or why) a community grows. There can be many reasons for the "why" - good schools, reasonable cost of living, access to healthcare, ease of public transit, community amenities, and low crime are always on the list. We want these things in our community, and when we have these things, others want to join our community. So how do we expand the infrastructure to accommodate growth?

The first thing to understand is that growth happens in many ways and for many reasons. Here in Cherokee County, the "how, why, and where" growth happens and depends on the County Government. The development (or planned growth) is described in pretty good detail in the Cherokee County Land Use Plan. This plan is meant to guide the growth in the County under specific desired outcomes. For example, some parts of the County desire to remain relatively rural, and the land use map and zonings require larger lots with less density in housing structures. Other areas are designated as commercial, light industrial, or denser versions of residential homes. All these areas are chosen and zoned according to the expected or desired outcome for that area. It is thoughtful planning that keeps the balance of "Live, Work, and Play" alive in this community.

Second, you might wonder, "how is infrastructure reflected in the community's growth?" As it turns out, this is an interesting question and relatively easy to understand. While I cannot speak for other utility functions, I can undoubtedly offer insight into your water and sewer infrastructure. Cherokee County Water & Sewer Authority is not part of the County Government. This is hard for some people to understand. Still, the descriptive part of our name (Cherokee County) is geographical and not indicative of an association between CCWSA and the County Government. The often-overlooked last word in the title gives us away - we are an Authority. An act of the Georgia Legislature created CCWSA in 1955; therefore, we are a quasi-state Government (an Authority). CCWSA receives no tax money from the state or Cherokee County, and we are not a political institution.

These facts really lay the foundation for how CCWSA participates in growth in Cherokee County, and it's actually pretty simple. We do not encourage or discourage growth within the County; we simply respond to requests for service. For example, if a developer purchases a plot of land (or several plots of land next to each other) in a particular area, they can develop that land according to the Land Use Plan and the Zoning for that area. If the developer wishes to increase the density of residential homes on that plot of land beyond the current zoning, they must apply to the County Government to change the zoning. Depending on what density (number of homes per acre) is allowed - having wells and septic tanks may not be helpful and require the developer to have water and sewer provided by CCWSA. If water and sewer infrastructure is close to the developed land, this can be a straightforward process of tapping into the existing infrastructure. If the infrastructure is a few hundred feet to miles away, tapping into it can be expensive if available. If water and sewer infrastructure is unavailable, the allowable number of houses will decrease since most of the space will be needed for septic tanks, drain fields, and wells since CCWSA does not provide infrastructure without a request to do so and a need for the infrastructure. It would not be a responsible use of money to lay pipe all over the County when there is no need for the infrastructure. For example, if installing pipes for water or sewer before a service request, the pipe and assets would simply sit in the ground and deteriorate; this is why we do not expand infrastructure without a request.

Now, how does CCWSA handle growth for existing infrastructure? That is a great question! Since we have been around since 1955, we have seen some change. The installed pipes are not still in the ground, partly because they would have exceeded their life expectancy and partly because they would no longer serve a purpose and address our current needs. CCWSA handles growth the way many of us do in our lives by upgrading and updating our infrastructure to match the community's needs. As more and more subdivisions develop, we plan infrastructure improvements and upgrades every year as part of our Capital Improvements Project (CIP). How do we fund these upgrades? Another good question! Since CCWSA is not part of the County Government and receives no tax dollars, the only source of revenue comes from the sale of services (Water & Sewer). In addition, tap fees are also included in the income, based on meter (or pipe) size and differ for water or sewer. As a not-for-profit, all the revenue that CCWSA obtains must go back to the infrastructure's maintenance, upkeep, and replacement. Before we get too carried away, infrastructure includes more than just pipes and meters! It also includes plant capacities, lift stations, booster stations, and many items needed to provide clean, safe drinking water and treat sewage for return to the environment. Sure, keeping the pipes and meters working is a big part of it, but with growth, we need to have enough capacity to provide water and treat wastewater for growth to continue. This is why we work so hard to teach our customers about water conservation and ensure they understand their water utility's role in the community.



To learn more about zoning in Cherokee County, visit:

<https://www.cherokeega.com/planning-and-zoning/resources/documents/Zoning%20Ordinances/Article-7-District-Uses-and-Regulations-040318.pdf>

To learn more about CCWSA, visit www.CCWSA.com

***Just as a reminder, if you have a particular topic or question you would like us to address, please send it to ccwsaea@gmail.com.**