



AGENDA REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

From: Sharon L. Ebert, Community Development Director

Date: August 13, 2018

Agenda: City Council ~~Work Session, Council~~ Meeting and Public Hearing on the Draft 2018 Comprehensive Plan

Issue: The Comprehensive Plan is required by State law to be updated every ten years. The City's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in November 2008. After 19 months of community engagement, the 2018 Comprehensive Plan is now ready for review and approval by the Mayor and City Council. Upon approval, the document will be ~~transmitted~~ to the Atlanta Regional Commission and Georgia Department of Community Affairs for their respective reviews this summer and for adoption by the Mayor and City Council ~~later this fall~~ in October.

Recommendation: Approve the draft 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

Background:

The City of Johns Creek started updating its Comprehensive Plan in the fall 2016. To date one (1) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) tour of three nearby walkable downtown areas was conducted, two consultant-led educational sessions and four consultant-led planning workshops were provided and sixteen CAC Meetings have been held.

In June 2017 the City's Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Plan consultants, TSW and Pond Associates, made a presentation to the public on the first draft of the Comprehensive Plan Update. After two months of public comment and feedback during the summer of 2017, in October 2017, the CAC and City Staff decided that the best course of action was to rewrite the first draft to address the issues raised by the public. City Staff spent approximately ten weeks rewriting and reformatting the entire document.

The City's rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan has taken a departure from the standard format of most comprehensive plans in that it not only has data at the City-wide level on demographics, housing, transportation, land uses and natural and historic resources, but has also has this data for each Community Area.

The revised 2018 Comprehensive Plan is structured so that an individual may only read their "Community Area Plan" to understand what is going on "in their own backyard" if they so desire. As presented to the City Council in October 2017, the CAC has settled on eight Community Areas – defining the City in terms of where one lived and shopped, verses creating areas solely based on the physical character of the area. The eight new Community Areas are: Newtown; River Estates; Autrey Mill; Ocee; Medlock; Johns Creek North; Tech Park; and Shakerag.



Update

On February 26 the second draft of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan was presented to the Mayor and City Council. During the months of March and April meetings were held in each of the eight community areas along with a citywide meeting on April 26th. The staff also attended the City's first International Festival on April 21st and received input from hundreds of residents on what they would like to see in the proposed Town Center for Tech Park. The connectjohnscreek.com website was completely revamped and received over 400 comments during the eight week period. Outreach for public input included not only the City's email blasts and social network postings, but also help from the Johns Creek Community Association (JCCA) electronic communications. 8,630 connectjohnscreek.com coasters were given out our neighborhood restaurants and 6,506 flyers were sent to all elementary school age children. In total 18,147 flyers were handed out to various businesses throughout the cities as well as being located in our libraries and in our Park Place senior center. Presentations were also given to the Johns Creek Advantage Board of Directors and to the members of the JCCA.

The comments and suggestions received from the residents were reviewed by the CAC members on May 2, 2018 and direction was provided to staff on which changes were to be incorporated into the revised draft. Revisions included updates to the Future Land Use Map, and Land Use Change Map on which parcels were most likely to be redeveloped over the next ten years, updates to the Transportation Map and Sidewalk and Trail Maps to reflect recommendations received from the public on projects that should be studied verses projects that are definitely desired, and revisions to the Buildout Maps and charts for Newtown, Ocee, and Autrey Mill were made. The effect of the changes in the Land Use Map and projected Buildout Analysis reduced the overall projection of potential new residential units to be developed over the next ten years from 6,044 to 5,502 residential units.

In addition, staff added a Parks and Recreation Profile section, a Natural Resources Profile section and rewrote a number of the goals and policies in the Vision chapter based on the feedback received from the public. Joan Compton from the Johns Creek Historical Society assisted by rewriting the historical sections of each Community Area and Karen Daniel from Autrey Mill Preserve, who is also a CAC member provided professional editing of the entire document.

A revised version of the second draft along with a list of changes made was sent to the Planning Commissioners, CAC members and the Mayor and City Council on May 18th for their review.

On June 5th a Comprehensive Plan update presentation was made to the Planning Commission by Sharon Ebert, the Community Development Director and CAC member Ed Pease spoke regarding the hard work of the residents who volunteered to participate on the Citizens Advisory Committee and their support for the current draft. A public hearing was then held before the City Planning Commission. Nine individuals addressed the Commission with their concerns. Six individuals represented the Atlanta Athletic Club (AAC); two attorneys and four board members. Their concerns were over the Future Land Use Map designation of the 77 acre property known as the Heisman Field, which was shown as undeveloped. They argued that this was a "takings" and that it devalued the property. They requested that the current designation of Distinctive Area be kept on the property and that the property be shown as a mixed-use allowing residential,



commercial and office uses. Their argument was that the Medlock Bridge Corridor is the City's premier commercial corridor and that as a gateway into the city this land should be developed with more commercial, office and townhouses.

Another individual spoke about the Implementation Plan section of the Comprehensive Plan and how it is a working document from where all city projects and initiatives originate. The resident expressed concern over how many projects and how much money was projected to be needed to complete the projects over the next ten year period and cautioned that the list should be culled through and only projects where money is available and of a high priority should be included on the list. The individual also spoke out against the Heisman Field being developed into another sprawling commercial area and recommended that it be kept at the same scale and residential density as Thornhill and Prestwick communities: one unit per acre.

A resident from the Johns Creek North area spoke requesting that the traffic light at Sargent Road and Findley Road be kept since it works well and there is no need to replace it with a roundabout. He also suggested that a three way stop would be helpful at Findley Oaks Elementary school entrance, but not a roundabout. He also supported the recommendation to realign Douglas Road with Sargent Road at the intersection of Jones Bridge Road.

A resident from the Ocee area spoke with regards to the density prescribed for Ocee and recommended that it be reduced from three units per acre to two units per acre and that the subdivisions on the west side of Jones Bridge Road south of Buice Road be removed from the Ocee Community Area and put into the Newtown Community Area because they don't belong.

Commissioner LaFave also spoke with regards to the Ocee Community Area and expressed her concerns regarding the subdivisions located on the western side of Jones Bridge Road south of Buice Road not belonging to the Ocee Community but to Newtown. She also recommended that the residential densities in the two proposed mixed use areas be reduced. She recommended that the Goodwill shopping center's density be reduced from 8 units per acre to 5 units per acre and that the Grand Pavilion shopping center's density be reduced from 12 units per acre to 8 or 10 units per acre. She felt that Johns Creek look should not be confused with the denser feel of the City of Alpharetta. She also recommended that the terms HIMU (High Intensity Mixed Use) and LIMU (Low Intensity Mixed Use) be added to the glossary as well as some minor page corrections and editorial suggestions.

The Vice Chair of the Planning Commission Irene Sanders, who also served on the CAC, advised the other Planning Board members that the CAC had decided to eliminate all Distinctive Areas from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan as the term was too ambiguous and that the overwhelming majority of the residents in the River Estates Community Area had recommended that the land be developed similar to the surrounding context: single family residential at no more than one unit per acre.

The Planning Commissioners then discussed whether the AAC's request could be supported by them. They were divided over whether to allow mixed use on the land known as Heisman Field. In a split vote 3-2, the Planning Commissioners agreed to recommend to the Mayor and City Council that the AAC's request be considered. They also recommended that the comments received from the individual from Johns Creek North be incorporated into the next draft along with revisions requested for culling the Implementation Plan



to only projects that the City has funding available and the changes requested for the Ocee Community Area.

The Community Development staff based on the direction of the Planning Commission has made the following changes to the 2018 Comprehensive Plan document:

- The future Land Use Map for the Heisman Field has been changed to reflect the recommendation of the River Estates Community Area to reflect residential use in lieu of undeveloped land. The residential density assigned would be one unit per acre, the same as for the entire River estates Community. If the AAC's recommendation was followed the Low Intensity Mixed Use designation would permitted 616 residential units on the 77 acre parcel. The language regarding the preference for the Heisman Field to be turned into a future City park, if the property were to ever come up for sale was removed.
- The roundabout recommended to replace the traffic signal at Findley Road and Sargent Road was been removed from the Johns Creek North Transportation Map.
- The land use designation for the Grand Pavilion shopping center has been reduced from Medium Intensity Mixed Use (12 residential units per acre) to low Intensity Mixed Use (8 residential units per acre) reducing the overall number of permitted unit from 213 to 142 residential units for the parcel.
- The Implementation Plan has been revised to show the estimated costs of City funds verses other sources of funds and the list of projects has been re-evaluated based upon available funding to ensure a realistic list.
- The terms LIMU and HIMU have been added to the Glossary and defined.
- The page corrections and editorial improvements have been made.

Items that the Community Development staff recommend not changing include reducing the residential density of the Ocee Community Area from 3 residential units to 2 residential units. Staff feel that the overall character of Newtown, Ocee and Johns Creek North has more density than other areas in the City and that three units per acre was an appropriate density. Staff also recommend keeping the subdivisions located on the east side of Jones Bridge Road south of Buice Road in Ocee. This area has always been a part of the Ocee Character Area and does not seem to fit with either Newton or Autrey Mill community areas.

Three Public Hearings were held: June 18; July 9; and 23 during the scheduled June and July Mayor and City Council Meetings. Concerns were expressed by the Atlanta Athletic Club Board members and Counsel regarding the Future Land Use designation of the Heisman Field and a few residents from the Medlock Bridge Community Area regarding approximately 25 acres of land located west of the Johns Creek High School currently for sale. All parties were concerned with the change in designation from being classified as "Transitional/Distinctive Areas" under the 2008 Comprehensive Plan to recommendations of residential uses in the proposed 2018 Future Land Use Map. A couple of residents from the Ocee Community Area expressed concern over the density of their character area remaining at 3 residential units/acre and requested that two residential units/acre be considered as well as removing a small area of subdivisions located west of Jones Bridge Road and south of Buice Road. A few residents and CAC members spoke in favor of the draft Plan and recommended that the Mayor and City Council approve the Plan as drafted.



Discussion between the City Council members and the Mayor at all three meetings including the Work Session meetings primarily centered around Chapter 2 – City Vision, Goals, Objectives and Strategies. Several Strategies were either rewritten or eliminated based on direction from the Mayor and Council.

Next Steps

Upon receiving approval by the Mayor and City Council the 2018 Comprehensive Plan will be transmitted~~sent~~ to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for their reviews. This review period is typically 90 days, however recent communications from ARC staff have indicated that they anticipate completing their review in approximately thirty (30) days.—Once comments are received from the ARC and DCA, Community Development Staff will review with the Mayor and Council and make any appropriate changes and then bring the final draft to the Mayor and City Council for final-adoption in October -2018~~or November~~.

Attachments:

- Power Point Presentation
- Revised Second Draft 2018 Comprehensive Plan (includes recommendations from the Planning Commissioners) plus tracking sheet
- _____

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