



Norcross Comprehensive Plan Update

Summary of the Visioning Workshop

City of Norcross Community Center

August 22, 2013, 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Overview

The City of Norcross conducted a Visioning Workshop for the Comprehensive Plan on August 22, 2013. The meeting was held at the City of Norcross Community Center. Approximately 40 people attended, not counting City staff and consultants facilitating the meeting.

Members of the City staff present included Chris McCrary, Robert Patrick, Tixie Fowler, and Rusty Warner. Several members of the City Council, the Mayor and the City Manager were present as well. Four members of Jacobs consultant team were on hand, including Jim Summerbell, Amanda Hatton, Joe Shoffner, and Kyle Van Klompenburg. Light refreshments at the meeting were provided by the City.

The meeting began with a PowerPoint Presentation, which included an overview of the Comprehensive Plan Update process and an interactive voting session focusing on the vision statement and goals that are central to the plan's update and implementation.

Most of the meeting was spent in small group discussion, which focused on identifying 1) community resources that are unlikely or likely to change in the next 20 years and 2) what opportunities or challenges those areas face in achieving the communities vision for the future. Participants worked in one of three groups, one of which was facilitated in Spanish by Amanda Hatton and Arelis Rivera. The meeting ended with all three groups reporting their findings back to all the participants. The following pages provide a summary of the meeting proceedings and the discussion that occurred.



The next study meeting will take place on September 26 at the same time and place from 6:30 to 8:00 at the Norcross Community Center.

Introductions and Overview Presentation

Chris McCrary, City of Norcross Community Development Director, kicked off the meeting with a welcome and introductions of the consultant team and other city staff and officials in attendance. He then turned the meeting over to Jim Summerbell, Jacobs Project Manager, who presented a brief PowerPoint overview of the project, see attached PDF. Amanda Hatton also welcomed the participants in Spanish and helped explain the purpose of meeting.



The overview presentation laid out the goals, schedule, and organization of the Comprehensive Plan Update process as well as explained the purpose of the plan and its role in guiding City policy and capital improvement decisions. Jim also presented the Comprehensive Plan's current vision statement:

City of Norcross Vision and Goals from 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Norcross: Respecting the Past. Embracing the Future.

- In 2030, the City of Norcross will continue to offer a small town experience, with metropolitan access.
- Capitalizing on its location – direct access onto Interstate 85 and minutes from Atlanta's perimeter (I-285), the City draws corporate offices and education centers whose employees enjoy the charm of Historic downtown.
- Master Planning efforts coordinated with Gwinnett County, the Gwinnett Village CID and major property owners and investors along Buford Highway and Jimmy Carter Boulevard will have transformed the heavy commercial areas into more efficient and attractive corridors, and the City will have created Gateway areas which give Norcross visitors a distinct sense of arrival.

The vision statement was also handed out to the participants on the back of a comment form, which participants were encouraged to use to submit any recommended edits or to voice their support.

Voting Exercise – A detailed look at the Vision Statement

Amanda Hatton then led the group in a voting exercise, which allowed participants to express, on a scale of 1 to 5, their perspective on the importance of different segments of the vision statement as well as some additional concepts raised by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. Many of the workshop participants were bilingual and a few of the workshop participants only spoke Spanish, so the voting session was given in both English and Spanish. Officer Arelis Rivera from the Norcross Police Department and Amanda Hatton served as translators.

The results of the polling are attached, and as can be seen by the results, the current statement was largely supported by the participants, showing that the current plan provides a good foundation for update. Some minor additions to the statement may be appropriate based on some consensus raised by additional items.

After the voting exercise, the participants were divided into three groups to identify how this vision could be translated to the geographic space of the city and to help identify ways to make the vision more of a reality.

Group 1 Summary

1. Community landmarks, established neighborhoods, or other unique resources
 - a. Historic Downtown
 - b. Railroad
 - c. Cemetery
 - d. Established residential – older homes
 - e. Parks
2. Most Likely/Desired areas for significant change
 - a. Buford Highway Corridor
 - b. Mitchell Rd – area between Buford Hwy and I-85
 - i. Preserve: Community/Residents
 - ii. Potential to become more mixed-use center
 - iii. Blaze recycling needs to be redeveloped
 - c. Jimmy Carter Blvd
 - d. West Peachtree @ JCB and South Peachtree @ JCB
3. Specific areas for Revitalization/Mixed-Use/Community Amenities
 - a. School Districts need to be realigned, no reason for so many in Norcross. Group realized this is out of the City's direct control, but maybe the City can influence it.
 - b. Buford Highway redevelopment
 - c. Heritage and ecotourism are two potential avenues the city needs to capitalize on
 - d. Johnson Dean Park
 - e. Public Housing – needs to be upgraded
 - f. Need to support aging in place as the city's population continues to get older.
 - g. More and better sidewalks
 - h. Regional Public Transit – this could open up I-85 to higher density Transit oriented development.
4. Activity Hubs
 - a. Downtown will be the primary focus of activity, but second should be Buford Highway
 - b. Indian Trail and Beaver Ruin Road would be good location for future rail station, which would likely be at the GDOT Park and Ride lot.
 - c. JCB and I-85 – centered around the OFS site
 - d. Technology Park at JCB and PIB, is outdated and needs redevelopment
 - e. Beaver Ruin and Buford – new Summerour School redevelopment can be an anchor.
 - f. Mitchell Road and I-85 – very visible, can be a good gateway for the city.
5. Great Ideas
 - a. Tourism – OFS movie studio, Ecotourism, Heritage Tourism
 - b. Regional rail – could be a big boost to the local economy
 - c. Multi-use trail network between Buford Hwy and I-85
 - d. Extend Historic Downtown character along Peachtree to JCB



Group 2 Summary

1. Positives – What are our sacred cows?
 - a. Many businesses
 - b. Access to the highway
 - c. Accessibility to the overall Atlanta region
 - d. The schools
 - i. Norcross High School
 - ii. Norcross Elementary (70% Latina)
 - iii. Stripling Elementary (62% Latina)
 - iv. Summerour Middle School
 - e. Recreational parks
 - f. Historic downtown Norcross
 - g. Thrasher Park
 - h. Lillian Webb Park – very popular
 - i. Kids enjoy the fountain
 - i. The Latin American Association
 - i. It needs better signs
 - ii. Very important resource to community
 - iii. Helps with integration of people into the community
 - iv. This attracts more people to Norcross
 - v. The LAA has been located in Norcross for 6 years
 - j. The police and firefighters
 - k. Bus service, particularly that providing access to MARTA
 - l. The Norcross Co-op on Mitchell Road
 - m. Norcross' central location in Gwinnett makes it attractive
2. What areas are most likely or most desired to undergo significant change? (problems/ things that should change)
 - a. Mitchell Road
 - i. It looks abandoned and is unsafe
 - ii. Aesthetics should be improved
 - iii. It is a major entrance into the community
 - b. The Shell station on Mitchell Road has become a youth hangout
 - i. It is ugly and causes trouble
 - ii. It needs more lighting and police presence
 - c. The road striping on Jimmy Carter is difficult to see, particularly at night; they should be repainted.
 - d. Crosswalks on Jimmy Carter need to be repainted
 - e. Bus stops need improvement – trash cans, seats, shelters
 - f. The city needs more parks and places to play football
 - g. The Blaze facility
 - i. It is dangerous to little kids and people living in the nearby area.
 - ii. Causes traffic back-up due to people waiting to enter facility
 - iii. Another entrance is needed or perhaps traffic can be rerouted a different way.



3. What areas are primed for revitalization, mixed use, community amenities?

Revitalization

(see notes under 2 above)

Community Amenities

- a. A sports complex is needed in the area just east of Mitchell Road area including a soccer field, a pavilion for holding activities and areas for barbequing
 - i. The park would serve families in the city
- b. A trail/path would also make sense in the area near Mitchell Road
- c. Need to attract heavy rail (MARTA) to the city – this is long term need
 - i. Could connect at Indian Trail park and ride lot

Mixed Use

- a. Pinnacle Way area is an opportunity for a “Little Mexico” or International Center
- b. A circulator bus could connect downtown to this new activity nod
- c. A super market is needed that could also serve as a new activity center; locating one near Beaver Ruin makes sense.

4. Underlying community values that came out of discussion

- a. Did not have time to discuss
- b. Key themes heard were good education, community gathering places and resource centers, safety, good transit, opportunities for the overall community to connect and interact

5. What are the great ideas that came out?

- a. Did not have time to discuss
- b. Great ideas heard were a new international center in the Pinnacle Way area, a circulator bus that connects people from new activity centers to downtown, a new park with pavilions and spaces for barbequing, and reworking the Blaze facility to have less negative impact on the community

Group 3 Summary

1. Community landmarks, established neighborhoods, or other unique resources:

- a. Historic Downtown
 - i. Charm and Safety
 - ii. Concerts
- b. Proximity to Perimeter
- c. Thrasher Park and Lillian Web Community Park
 - i. Walkability
- d. Historic Homes
- e. Tree Canopy
- f. OFS redevelopment
- g. Train Tracks



2. Most Likely/Desired areas for significant change
 - a. Buford Highway Corridor
 - i. Preserve: Diversity
 - ii. Preserve: Ethnic Restaurants
 - iii. Negativity towards used car lots
 - b. Buford Highway specifically between Beaver Ruin and Mitchell Rd
 - i. Preserve/Expand: Walkability/Bikeability
 - ii. Asset: Connectivity to Downtown
 - c. Mitchell Rd
 - i. Preserve: Community/Residents
 - ii. Potential to become the “new” North Peachtree St
 - d. Jimmy Carter Blvd
 - i. Emphasis on safety/better uses
 - ii. Potential to be more aesthetically pleasing

3. Specific areas for Revitalization/Mixed-Use/Community Amenities
 - a. Mixed-Use: Utilize space on/around Lillian Webb Community Park
 - i. Development Potential on Southwest corner of Park on North side of Holcomb Bridge Rd
 - ii. Development Potential on either side of the fountain
 - b. Revitalization/Mixed-Use: Alleyway between Holcomb Bridge Rd and Carlyle St
 - i. Currently auto industry/service?
 - ii. Asset: nestled between Historic Downtown Stretch and the Carlyle House
 - iii. Potential extension of Downtown
 - c. Community Amenity: Southwest corner of S Peachtree St and Holcomb Bridge Rd
 - i. Currently a large gravel lot (owned by train company?)
 - ii. Only used one or two times a year for storage of containers etc.
 - iii. Potential for shared/alternate use 350 days a year – stripe for parking and use as overflow for Historic Downtown
 - d. Community Amenity: Beaver Ruin Creek (runs parallel to Mitchell Rd)
 - i. Potential for parkland/nature trails etc.
 - ii. Potential Pedestrian connection between southern neighborhoods and Downtown
 - iii. Current Problem: Access
 - e. Revitalization: Blaze Recycling & Metals Property
 - i. Currently operating business, potential for environmental contamination
 - ii. Talk by community members saying the business didn’t want to be there?
 - iii. Potential large parcel of land for development and
 - iv. Access to Beaver Ruin Creek-potential for future node
 - f. Community Amenity: Pedestrian Trails along power line right of way
 - i. Asset: pre-dedicated right of way waiting to be utilized
 - ii. Both east-west and north-south connections
 - g. Community Amenity: Need for more community centers and connections
 - i. Multiple disjointed neighborhoods with poor connectivity each need a place to go (i.e. community center/park/etc.)
 - ii. Example location: Old Norcross High School
 - h. Community Amenity: Regional Public Transit

- i. Small talk about transit access along I-85
 - ii. Unmentioned side note: MARTA Gold Line runs on same tracks that go through Historic Downtown, with its last stop currently just inside Atlanta's Perimeter
4. Underlying Community Values
- a. Redevelopment with respect to our historic small town character while embracing our cultural diversity and sense of community
 - b. Unifying multiple diverse neighborhoods into one large community

Small Group Discussion Wrap Up and Final Comments

At the end of the meeting, each group identified a spokesperson who presented the findings of his group to all participants in attendance. In general, it was discovered that although each group was unique in membership, they all agreed on a number of key items, as the summaries above indicate. These common findings will be presented back to the Steering Committee and will serve as the foundation for efforts at the next workshop on September 26.

Chris McCrary thanked everyone for coming and encouraged them to come participate again on September 26 at the Character Area Workshop.



Polling Results

Choice	Question	Response
Let's Practice! How long have you been a part of the Norcross community?		
1	Not long (Less than 1 year)	7.9%
2	Between 1-5 years	15.8%
3	Between 5-10 years	26.3%
4	Between 10-20 years	31.6%
5	Forever! (20+ years)	18.4%
N		38
1. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is the small town experience?		
1	Unimportant	2.6%
2	Of Little Importance	2.6%
3	Moderately Important	7.9%
4	Important	31.6%
5	Very Important	55.3%
N		38
2. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is metropolitan access?		
1	Unimportant	0.0%
2	Of Little Importance	2.6%
3	Moderately Important	2.6%
4	Important	28.2%
5	Very Important	66.7%
N		39
3. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is capitalizing on our location?		
1	Unimportant	0.0%
2	Of Little Importance	0.0%
3	Moderately Important	0.0%
4	Important	23.1%
5	Very Important	76.9%
N		39
4. When considering our community's 20 year future is attracting corporate offices and education centers?		
1	Unimportant	2.6%
2	Of Little Importance	0.0%
3	Moderately Important	15.4%
4	Important	23.1%
5	Very Important	59.0%
N		39

Choice	Question	Response
5. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is the charm of historic downtown?		
1	Unimportant	5.1%
2	Of Little Importance	2.6%
3	Moderately Important	0.0%
4	Important	20.5%
5	Very Important	71.8%
		N 39
6. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is employees enjoying our city?		
1	Unimportant	0.0%
2	Of Little Importance	2.6%
3	Moderately Important	12.8%
4	Important	35.9%
5	Very Important	48.7%
		N 39
7. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important to is partnership with Gwinnett County?		
1	Unimportant	5.1%
2	Of Little Importance	5.1%
3	Moderately Important	17.9%
4	Important	35.9%
5	Very Important	35.9%
		N 39
8. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is partnership with the Gwinnett Village CID and major property owners and investors?		
1	Unimportant	2.6%
2	Of Little Importance	0.0%
3	Moderately Important	10.5%
4	Important	21.1%
5	Very Important	65.8%
		N 38
9. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is transforming heavy commercial areas into more efficient and attractive corridors?		
1	Unimportant	0.0%
2	Of Little Importance	7.9%
3	Moderately Important	23.7%
4	Important	28.9%
5	Very Important	39.5%
		N 38

Choice	Question	Response
10. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is having distinctive and attractive gateway areas?		
1	Unimportant	2.6%
2	Of Little Importance	0.0%
3	Moderately Important	15.8%
4	Important	10.5%
5	Very Important	71.1%
		N 38
11. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is connecting together unique areas of our community?		
1	Unimportant	0.0%
2	Of Little Importance	5.1%
3	Moderately Important	15.4%
4	Important	17.9%
5	Very Important	61.5%
		N 39
12. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is creativity in our approaches?		
1	Unimportant	0.0%
2	Of Little Importance	0.0%
3	Moderately Important	5.1%
4	Important	20.5%
5	Very Important	74.4%
		N 39
13. When considering our community's 20 year future, how important is supporting multiple hubs of activity - walkable, mixed use areas?		
1	Unimportant	0.0%
2	Of Little Importance	0.0%
3	Moderately Important	5.3%
4	Important	10.5%
5	Very Important	84.2%
		N 38