



Norcross Comprehensive Plan Update Summary of the Action Planning Workshop

City of Norcross Community Center

November 21, 2013, 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Overview

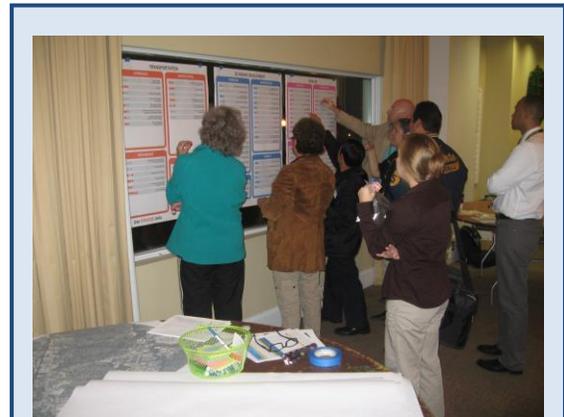
On November 21, 2013, the City of Norcross held the last of three workshops to support the update of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Action Planning Workshop focused on collecting public input on key needs and opportunities that the City should pursue in the future as well as strategies to achieve core goals. The workshop had a work-out theme, complete with a warm-up, stretching, and group exercise prior to a cool-down and adjournment. An estimated 30 community members attended.

Meeting Agenda

- 6:30 Sign in & Warm-up Exercise
- 6:55 Group Stretching – Why Action Plan?
- 7:10 Group Exercise – Strategies Discussion
- 8:10 Cool Down – Reconvene
- 8:30 Adjourn

The meeting included three key activities.

- 1) A warm-up exercise in which attendees prioritized top needs and opportunities;
- 2) A brief presentation explaining the purpose of the day's workshop and the action plan as a key implementation piece of the Plan; and
- 3) Group discussions to identify key strategies to achieve community goals.



Warm-up Exercise



Strategies Discussion

A brief description of each of these parts of the meeting is summarized on the following pages, followed by comprehensive notes on pages 5-16.

Sign-in and Warm-up Exercise – Needs & Opportunities Review

Upon arrival, attendees registered their attendance and were invited to participate in a warm-up activity. Participants used dots to identify top needs and opportunities by substantive element of the plan. Each participant was given six sets of colored dots; each set had a different color that corresponded to a board for each of six elements of the plan: Population, Housing, Economic

Development, Land Use, Transportation, and Community Facilities. Each board was organized by Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that had been identified in Steering Committee meetings. Attendees had four dots for each board for which they were guided to place next to the top needs and opportunities for each of the six elements.

Needs & Opportunities Results

The Needs and Opportunities review led to a broad spread of responses. Below are the needs and opportunities that received 9% or more of the votes under a given element of the plan. *Complete results are provided at the end of the summary.*

<p>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength Police Department (13%) • Opportunity Locate community facilities outside of downtown (13%) • Strength Parks (9%) 	<p>POPULATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength Highly engaged population (12%) • Opportunity Immigrant assimilation into American Culture (9%) • Weakness Limited contexts that engage all citizens (9%) • Weakness Disparity between newly annexed area and rest of city (9%) • Threat Failure to appeal to and capture millennial population (housing) (9%) 	<p>HOUSING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakness Lack of local public transportation (13%) • Opportunity Transition from renting to owning all within Norcross (13%) • Strength Neighborhoods with walkability to stores and community resources (9%) • Weakness Lack of young professional housing (9%)
<p>TRANSPORTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength Location (11%) • Weakness Lack of bike lanes (11%) • Weakness Railroad crossing (9%) • Opportunity Access to match money for project funds (9%) 	<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakness Limited fiber optics/high speed internet (10%) 	<p>LAND USE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat Perception of poor schools (11%) • Strength City's financial stability (10%)

Group Stretching – Why Action Plan?

After the warm-up exercise, community members were welcomed by Community Development Director, Chris McCrary. Jim Summerbell, Jacobs' project manager, then gave a brief overview of the meeting goals, project schedule, and progress to date, including outcomes of public and stakeholder engagement activities. Amanda Hatton briefly highlighted the results of the Community Survey carried out in October and November. Approximately 160 people participated. A summary report of results is forthcoming. This was followed by a short presentation on what the updated Comprehensive Plan will contain and why the “action plan” is an important part of it. The plan will build off the City’s ongoing planning efforts. There are many ongoing or proposed projects already identified or underway.

Group Exercise – Strategies Discussion

After the presentation, attendees joined one of three small groups to identify and prioritize key strategies to achieve draft overarching goals for the Comprehensive Plan. Each group focused on three of five goals. Twenty minutes of discussion were allotted for each goal.

- Discussions began by attendees writing strategies on index cards.
- Each group then discussed the strategies that were developed and added them to an overall decision tree for how the goal should be best accomplished in the future.
- Drawing paper, markers, index cars, and tape were provided for each group to identify strategies and create a visual depiction of how those items relate.
- Each group’s aim was to narrow down to the key strategies for each overarching goal and to begin identifying action items under each of those strategies.

DRAFT GOALS	
	1. Continue to Define Norcross’ Sense of Place
	2. Continue to Strengthen Norcross as a Livable and Safe Environment
	3. Increase Opportunities for Travel via Different Modes within and Outside Community
	4. Further the City’s Tradition of Strong Leadership and High Level of Quality Services
	5. Maintain a Vibrant Economy and Continue to Facilitate Job Growth

Strategies Results

Top strategies for each goal, by group, are highlighted below.

	Group 1 – Facilitated by Jim & Kyle	Group 2 – Facilitated by Wade & Joe	Group 3 – Facilitated by Amanda & Arelis
1. Continue to Define Norcross’ Sense of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community hubs • Defining gateways to the city • Historic character • Volunteerism • Streetscapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase citizen engagement • Build off energy/ character of Downtown • Connect the different parts of the city • Diversify transportation opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security • Provide more recreational resources • Gateways • Improve transportation for pedestrians and cyclists • Create a Cultural Center
2. Continue to Strengthen Norcross as a Livable and Safe Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifelong communities • Visible police force with healthy community interactions • Code enforcement • Additional parking • Continue and increase sustainability initiatives • Parkland • Walkability 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and housing assistance • Improve rental housing stock • Preserve the cultural and historic traditions of Norcross • Make sure people know about the services offered by the city • Security • Help regulate utilities

	Group 1 – Facilitated by Jim & Kyle	Group 2 – Facilitated by Wade & Joe	Group 3 – Facilitated by Amanda & Arelis
3. Increase Opportunities for Travel via Different Modes within and Outside Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenways • Safe bike lanes • Bring rail here • Bus to MARTA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand local public transportation options • Improve and create multi-use paths • Improve pedestrian and bike facilities • Plan for long-term regional transit connections 	
4. Further the City’s Tradition of Strong Leadership and High Level of Quality Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish benchmarks to gauge outcomes • Integration of municipal and volunteer organizations • Maintaining services • Retain quality professionals in all departments • Outreach for specific skillsets • Public education of city services and strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that City is involved in regional discussions and activities • Continue to run City like a business (balanced budget) • Continue intergovernmental coordination • Create opportunities for civic leadership development among citizens 	
5. Maintain a Vibrant Economy and Continue to Facilitate Job Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure • Zoning incentives • Mentor high school and college grads • Living and working within Norcross 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further City’s reputation as a high tech hub • Diversify housing mix • Encourage mixed use and catalyst developments (brand name retailer, restaurant, landmark destination) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Promote existing Norcross businesses • Provide financial incentives • Maintain good quality business buildings • Ensure a strong community

Reconvene and Adjourn

Attendees reconvened at the end of the meeting. Jim Summerbell provided final commendments, reminding all of next steps. Attendees were invited to review the discussion outcomes of the three groups. The meeting adjourned just after 8:30 pm.



APPENDIX: Detailed Workshop Notes

Needs & Opportunities Review

Community Facilities and Resources		
Strengths	Votes	
CID	2	4%
Parks	5	9%
Police Department	7	13%
Code enforcement	4	7%
City leadership	2	4%
City Council	2	4%
City is run as a business	3	5%
Integration of Leadership (elected and non-elected)	2	4%
Quick responses to local street issues	0	0%
Strong financial resources	0	0%
Existing facilities (City Hall, Community Center, etc.)	1	2%
Weaknesses	Votes	
Lack of IT resources	1	2%
Lack of fiber optics	3	5%
Limited accessibility to concentrated city facilities	2	4%
Opportunities	Votes	
Enhance fiber optic network	1	2%
Locate community facilities outside of downtown	7	13%
Provide wireless network in public spaces	2	4%
Educate community on the costs of services/facilities	3	5%
Threats	Votes	
Limited electrical network	1	2%
Storm-water infrastructure is aging	4	7%
Maintenance of additional facilities	1	2%
Increased maintenance obligations	3	5%
TOTAL VOTES	56	100%

Population		
Strengths	Votes	
Diversity	3	5%
Youth of population	0	0%
Balance of age groups	1	2%
Highly educated	1	2%
Not over-populated (city services provided are in proportion to current pop levels)	2	3%
Highly engaged population	8	12%
Weaknesses	Votes	
Limited contexts that engage all citizens	6	9%
Disparity between newly annexed area and rest of city	6	9%
Transient population	1	2%
Stereotypes	1	2%
Opportunities	Votes	
Increased bilingual abilities by offering Spanish and other foreign language classes	5	8%
Job opportunities	5	8%
Great school system	3	5%
Marketing/PR to promote great schools, programs, etc.	0	0%
Create a greater sense of community	3	5%
Places and programs that engage youth	1	2%
Promotion of private/non-profit events and programs	0	0%
Millennial (18-33) resources (housing, etc.)	1	2%
YMCA	0	0%
Connect volunteers with community needs (i.e. Hands on Atlanta)	2	3%
Immigrant assimilation into American Culture	6	9%
Social Media to reach all levels of population	0	0%
Utilize technology (hard copy, email, internet, et al.)	1	2%
Increase population engagement (i.e. voting turnout)	0	0%
Threats	Votes	
Providing the right resources to support an aging population	3	5%
Funding to provide programs for population	1	2%
Nowhere to engage people	0	0%
Failure to appeal to and capture millennial population (housing)	6	9%
TOTAL VOTES	66	100%

Housing		
Strengths	Votes	
Downtown core	3	5%
Neighborhoods with walkability to stores and community resources	6	9%
Strong planning and zoning core of city	2	3%
Annexed area has been "cleaned up" due to code enforcement	3	5%
Weaknesses	Votes	
Limited zoning regulations outside downtown	1	2%
Lack of local public transportation	8	13%
Limited, quality rental housing	3	5%
Lack of young professional housing	6	9%
Opportunities	Votes	
Remodeling of older housing	2	3%
Redevelopment of some areas	4	6%
Infill development	1	2%
Tools to support desired housing	0	0%
Hubs of activity to support residential areas outside downtown	5	8%
Leverage public investment to spur private investment	5	8%
Transition from renting to owning all within Norcross	8	13%
Threats	Votes	
Funding	2	3%
Reliance on private sector to move forward	5	8%
TOTAL VOTES	64	100%

Transportation		
Strengths	Votes	
Traffic counts on major arterials	0	0%
Location	6	11%
Sidewalks/walkability	1	2%
Strong and effective taxi service	0	0%
Easy to get around with alternate routes	2	4%
Partnership between CID and City addressing transportation needs	4	8%
Implementation of Safe Routes to School Program	2	4%
City is competitive for grant money	2	4%
		0%

Transportation		
Weaknesses	Votes	
Speeding on Holcomb Bridge and North Peachtree	0	0%
Cut-through traffic	0	0%
Dangerous intersections	4	8%
Railroad crossing	5	9%
Accidents on Buford Hwy and Beaver Ruin	2	4%
Lack of bike lanes	6	11%
		0%
Opportunities	Votes	
Access to match money for project funds	5	9%
Traffic calming	4	8%
Round-a-bouts	0	0%
Development of a bike and pedestrian plan	3	6%
LCI funding for bike and pedestrian plan	2	4%
Preserve excellent traffic flow	0	0%
Promote the #10 bus connection to MARTA	2	4%
		0%
Threats	Votes	
Conflict between Georgia Power and City over easement trail	4	8%
Expensive rights-of-way for bike facilities	4	8%
TOTAL VOTES	53	100%

Economic Development		
Strengths	Votes	
Residential markets picking up	2	3%
More activity/people	0	0%
City has dedicated economic development staff	4	7%
Fortune 500/1000 Companies	1	2%
Opportunity zones	0	0%
SPLOST	2	3%
Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce	0	0%
SW Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce	0	0%
Numerous mid-tier companies	0	0%
Diverse workforce to meet employers' needs	4	7%
Diversity	0	0%
Location	1	2%
MEAG/Norcross provides electric power	1	2%
Favorable business environment (one stop shop)	0	0%
Entrepreneurship	0	0%
Gwinnett Village CID	3	5%

Economic Development		
Intergovernmental coordination	1	2%
Weaknesses	Votes	
Limited fiber optics/high speed internet	6	10%
Cost of redevelopment/assemblage of parcels	0	0%
Auto-orientation of Buford Highway	4	7%
Opportunities	Votes	
Economical Buford Highway Redevelopment	4	7%
Long-term preservation of City's historic assets	1	2%
Promotion of Historic Norcross	0	0%
Development around Lillian Webb Park	2	3%
Partnering with local schools/technical colleges	2	3%
Lifelong communities	2	3%
Cultural plan	0	0%
Partnerships	0	0%
International hub	1	2%
City's website	0	0%
Increasing the arts to attract the creative class	5	8%
Cemetery area as industrial/logistics hub	0	0%
Threats	Votes	
Perception of safety	3	5%
Someone else doing it first	0	0%
Schools	3	5%
Mis-identification of areas around Norcross as part of the City	2	3%
Limited inventory (land/buildings)	4	7%
Competition from other communities in metro area	1	2%
TOTAL VOTES	59	100%

Land Use		
Strengths	Votes	
Location (near Atlanta)	4	6%
Infrastructure	0	0%
Planning vision	5	7%
Property values increasing	1	1%
Good mix of residential/commercial	2	3%
Strong transportation corridors	0	0%
Energy/vitality of community	1	1%
Authentic downtown center	4	6%

Land Use		
City's financial stability	7	10%
Public safety and security	4	6%
Weaknesses		
	Votes	
Lack of redevelopment on Buford Highway	5	7%
Difficult to assemble parcels	0	0%
Extended stay hotels	1	1%
Inequality of property values north/south of Buford Highway	1	1%
Lack of city-wide design standards	1	1%
Not much vacant land, redevelopment required	1	1%
Need for additional facilities	0	0%
Four lane road (Buford Highway) splits community	3	4%
Public transit provides accessibility to other areas	0	0%
Opportunities		
	Votes	
Smart code in place of traditional code	0	0%
Leverage new school development	1	1%
Parking deck/library	5	7%
Downtown entertainment	1	1%
Gateways	1	1%
Leverage entertainment interest at OFS site	4	6%
Low cost housing	1	1%
Attract new grocery store(s)	4	6%
Regional storm water management facility	1	1%
Support for tech related business park in Peachtree Corners	0	0%
Threats		
	Votes	
Environmental concerns on parcels	2	3%
Perception of lack of safety	2	3%
Perception of poor schools	8	11%
Resistance to change	0	0%
Expansion pressure from neighboring communities	1	1%
TOTAL VOTES	71	100%

Strategies Discussion

GROUP 1 NOTES

1. Continue to Define Norcross' Sense of Place:

- Community Hubs
 - Parks
 - Social
 - Schools
 - Athletic
- Defining Gateways to the City
 - Annexed area
 - Historic Areas
 - Architecture
 - Signage
- Historic Character
 - Zoning
 - Incentivizing private ownership to maintain
- Volunteerism
 - IT Database
 - Coordination
 - Finding people to be helped
- Streetscapes
 - Lighting
 - Landscaping
 - Benches
 - Banners
 - Expand Downtown?

2. Continue to Strengthen Norcross as a Livable and Safe Environment:

- Lifelong Communities
 - Zoning for granny House/Flat
- Visible Police Force with Healthy Community Interactions
 - News Letters
 - Continue and enhance Police outreach programs
- Code Enforcement
 - Increase Staff vs. expect more
 - ID Volunteering Opportunities
- Additional parking without compromising water and environmental qualities
 - Pervious Pavements
 - Low Impact Development Standards
- Continue and Increase Sustainability Initiatives
- Parkland
 - Park Plan Implementation
 - Communicate Public on Value
 - Ownership of Stream Buffer Zones
- Walkability

- Across Rail lines
- Safe Routes to School

3. Increase Opportunities for Travel via Different Modes within and Outside the Community

- Greenways
- Safe bike lanes
- Bring Rail here
 - I-85
 - Supporting Services
- Bus to MARTA
 - Bus #35

4. Further the City's Tradition of Strong Leadership and High Level of Quality Service

- Establish Benchmarks to Gauge Outcomes
 - Measure Outcomes
 - Baseline Data
- Integration of Municipal and Volunteer Organizations
- Maintaining Services
 - Website
 - GIS
 - Databases
- Retain Quality Professionals in All Departments
- Outreach for Specific Skillsets
- Public Education of City Services and Strategies
 - Communication of Vision
 - Tell Success Stories

5. Maintain a Vibrant Economy and Continue to Facilitate Job Growth

- Infrastructure
 - IT infrastructure
 - Stormwater
- Zoning Incentives
 - Stormwater Management
 - Density
- Mentor High School and College Grads
- Living and working within Norcross
 - Upscale Rentals
- Support, develop, and promote schools
 - Continued education classes
 - Excel, Word, Basic Programs
- Economic Development Strategic Plan
 - To show expectations

GROUP 2 NOTES

1. Continue to Define Norcross' Sense of Place

- Lilian Webb Park / Galloway Point
- Historic Town / small town sense/feeling
- More large events
- Develop areas adjacent to Lillian Webb Park from Buford Hwy up to the top of the park with facilities and businesses that attract all citizens and visitors
- Railroad station
- First city out of the loop (I-285) on I-85 North
- Encourage more citizens to engage with the city
- We don't want to become just an obstacle to people traveling through
- Increase the mobility options for moving within the city
- Get more people involved in citizen boards & events
- Develop tech savvy environment
- Redevelop Buford Hwy into boulevard area
- Integrate parts into one city
- More creative/unique events
- Expand sense of community into multiple connected communities
- Align activities & events with Peachtree Corners City
- Restaurants

3. Increase Opportunities for Travel via Different Modes within and Outside the Community

- Bus transit is an interim solution, offering quick return on investment. But trains are the long term solution
- Increase MARTA or public transportation to MARTA
- Local public transportation
- Golf cart trails
- Golf cart lanes or electric car lanes "small vehicles"
- Wayfinding signage / identifiable landmarks
- Clean energy transportation opportunities
- Build better pedestrian and bike paths w crossing that allow for recreation and shopping via these means
- Ideally, create a community where car ownership is a choice, not a necessity
- Figure a way to provide more bike lanes
- City install compressed natural gas filling station in partnership with private investment
- Shuttle among local shopping areas
- Transport service for senior citizens

4. Further the City's Tradition of Strong Leadership and High Level of Quality Service

- Encourage mayor and council members to assume leadership roles for Gwinnett County & the Metro Atlanta Region
- Encourage businesses that keep our citizens doing business locally
- Maintain the balanced budget way of doing business. This is a bragging right in today's economy
- Continue "business" ran city

- Continue great customer services from top down
- Make our development for our community's needs, but not conflicting with surrounding communities plans
- Don't be too quick to remove businesses that don't "fit" into a neighborhood
- Involve residences in more community involvement
- Outreach to surrounding communities
- Increase citizen engagement
- Promote city leadership's participation on boards, committees that benefit the region
- Increase tech ability (city-wide wireless)
- Advertise to the citizens the great work the city, its employees, its volunteers on boards, and committees do
- Change city charter to allow 4 year terms for elected officials
- Have police, fire, electric reach out more to Norcross citizens
- Initiate performance measurements
- Encouraging people to get involved and run for office
- Take full advantage of SPLOST & hotel/motel tax funds
- Improve website
 - More interactive
 - Include GIS
 - App (iPhone)

5. Maintain a Vibrant Economy and Continue to Facilitate Job Growth

- Cluster similar businesses, such as car repair, entertainment, shopping, etc.
- More "key-hole" neighborhoods, with businesses on the main streets and homes behind them with a slender access lane
- Catalyst mixed use project to attract high quality business
- High density housing such as mid rises to attract young entrepreneurs/millennials
- Lots of free parking. While cars are the primary means of transit, free parking encourages shopping without time limits
- Local microbrewery
- Improve technical infrastructure
- Multi use facilities
- Improve community involvement
- Continue to develop city hub (historic downtown)
- Attract similar tech companies where workers can transfer their skills without moving their residence
- Encourage citizens to take more interest in the community
- Build brand name grocery store within walking distance of downtown
- Attract higher wage companies
- Motivate/push developers that have approved zoning and site plans to construct the homes
- Figure ways to take advantage of OFS site changes
- Foster technology innovation companies
- Support the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce
- Work with Peachtree Corners on filling tech park and other regional opportunities
- Landmark attraction / like Space Needle / Gateway monument etc.

GROUP 3 NOTES

1. Continue to Define Norcross' Sense of Place

- Security
 - Visibility of streets
 - More street lights
- Provide More Recreational Resources
 - Public parks for families and individuals
 - Recreation center where the community can hang out
 - Rec centers for youth and families
- Gateways
 - Billboards to promote the city
 - Locate signage at the entryways into the Norcross city boundaries
 - Signage that is large enough that you can see it
 - Gateway that is very visible
- Improve Transportation for pedestrians and cyclists
 - Improve school routes – better paths/trails (sidewalks) on Beaver Run for example
 - Implement development plan for the safety of bikes and crosswalks
 - Buford Highway – corridors, sidewalks/lanes (bikes), crosswalk bridge
- Create a Cultural Center
 - Create another cultural center in the city like Historic Downtown
 - Create a training and recreational area at a new cultural center
 - Create civic center with a variety of activities for children and youth

2. Continue to Strengthen Norcross as a Livable and Safe Environment

- Housing and Housing Assistance
 - Accessible funding to redevelop living conditions of aging homes that exist within Norcross
 - Funding to rehabilitate aging homes
 - Community loans
 - Affordable housing to empower people to purchase their homes
 - Housing community/homes for seniors 60 years and older
- Improve Rental Housing stock
 - Improve existing apartment structures
 - Require/encourage apartment building owners to update/remodel the buildings
 - Ensure that renters take good care of their housing
- Preserve the cultural and historic traditions of Norcross
- Make sure people know about the services offered by the city
- Security
 - Increase monitoring services
 - Increase the amount of police to make the city safer
 - Strengthen public safety
 - Create a safe environment in all neighborhoods
 - Hire more police
- Help Regulate Utilities

- Street lighting
- Better regulate water rates, electricity and gas
- Supervise water, electricity and gas rates – they are very high.

5. Maintain a Vibrant Economy and Continue to Facilitate Job Growth

- Education
 - Promote professionals in the economy
 - Provide business classes
 - Educate people to start their own business to help the city to grow
 - Provide lower taxes for new businesses for a set period of time
 - Create new schools for adults and Hispanics
- Promote Existing Norcross Businesses
 - Promote the civility of workers
 - Promote local businesses
- Provide Financial Incentives
 - Provide loans to purchase small businesses and homes
 - Provide loans to open new businesses
 - Provide funding for educational loans
- Maintain good quality business buildings
- Ensure Strong Community
 - Facilitate and prioritize community
 - Develop foundations to help the community



Small groups discuss strategies for achieving community goals