



## MEETING MINUTES

### STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #5\*

August 2, 2016

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Suite 220, County Administration Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representing the Steering Committee: Bobby Thomas, R.J. (Pete) Amos, Jayne Iglesias, Liz Shaw, Tim Perry, Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Greg Dolezal

Representing Forsyth County: Tom Brown, Director of Planning and Development; Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Representing the Consultant Team: Amanda Hatton and Allison Stewart-Harris (Jacobs)

#### Welcome and Project Update

*Amanda Hatton, project manager with Jacobs, called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm with two members of the Steering Committee absent (Claudia Castro, Betty Pita).*

*Before beginning the meeting, a quorum for the Steering Committee was verified. The meeting then began with a brief overview of the project status. Ms. Hatton reminded all that this is the final steering committee being conducted during the planning process. The planning process is currently in Task 4 and Task 5. We are finishing up the prioritization and implementation planning phase (Task 4) at the end of August and recently moved in the plan finalization and adoption phase (Task 5). The project is on schedule with Open Houses planned for the end of the month (August 29 and August 31) and transmittal hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners scheduled for September 27 and October 6, respectively. [Note: At a later date, the Board of Commissioners elected to move the October 6 transmittal hearing to December 1.]*

*Ms. Hatton highlighted the goals of the meeting: 1) Collect input on the Community Work Program, 2) Provide an Update on the Community Character Map, and 3) briefly review the approach for Open Houses.*

*\*Please note that because this was the last meeting of the Steering Committee, there was not an opportunity for these minutes to be formally adopted by the committee.*



## Meeting Goals and Adoption of Minutes from 07/14

*There was a motion by Pete Amos and a second by Tim Perry to adopt the meeting minutes from July 14, 2016 as provided. Motion carried with seven members in favor (Thomas, Amos, Iglesias, Shaw, Perry, Bernstein-Goldman, Dolezal) and two members absent (Castro, Pita).*

## Community Work Program Review & Discussion

*The committee then participated in an activity to review and provide feedback on draft actions for the five-year Community Work Program. Actions were presented on boards by each element of the plan (land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and quality of life). Committee members were given 20 green dots and 10 red dots. The green dots were to indicate “must actions” for the work program, and the red dots were provided to identify actions that committee members felt did not belong in the five year period. (Committee members did not have to use all their dots.) Committee members also received post-it notes to identify projects they felt may be missing.*

*Committee members then reviewed each board as a group with a focus on items that received red dots as well as any other action committee members wanted to discuss in detail. Key discussion points are documented below as relates to each element.*

### Comments on 5-Year Action Plan

#### *Land Use*

- *The committee agreed that recommending higher density residential zoning districts (RES 8 and RES 12) should not be a part of the plan. The group was fine with higher density residential as a part of proposed, new mixed-use zoning districts.*
- *Town centers should be commercial-driven. Committee members want to see more commercial in each area before allowing for high density residential, unless the housing is part of a mixed use development. Can a mechanism be added to allow higher density housing after a set commercial threshold is reach?*
- *The McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is outdated and should not advance as is; a major update would be appropriate if it takes a fresh look at things.*
- *An action item should be added to review and update buffer and landscape standards.*
- *Consider adding a Planned Unit Development zoning category that includes residential only to allow for a variety of housing densities in one development.*



### *Economic Development*

- *There is concern about the Chamber of Commerce continuing in its current role as is. The County has different goals than the City of Cumming. Part of the action plan should include an evaluation of the performance of the Chamber and appropriate adjustments moving forward. Other nearby communities' economic development programs should be reviewed; suggestions of comparison communities included Alpharetta, Johns Creek, and Cherokee County. This concern also related to the action item of strengthening the partnership with the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber.*
- *One action item is to establish an economic development role within the County administration. Although the group generally agreed with this recommendation, it was noted that the County is currently paying for this role within the Chamber of Commerce.*
- *There was discussion about the action item of completing a feasibility study for a dedicated performing arts center in the County. Some thought this was a good action item, and others were skeptical. There was concern that these facilities tend to be financial drains. It was pointed out that there are many types of models. It was agreed that the facility should be more broadly defined to support more than just the performing arts. The feasibility study would determine whether the investment makes sense or not and would be an important first step before making a decision to proceed.*

### *Housing*

- *The action item to address substandard housing through code revisions was identified as a non-issue. Committee members stated that this should not be an action. The item was carried over from the current Comprehensive Plan.*
- *The action to research incentives and other methods to promote affordable housing through potential Unified Development Code modifications was identified by the committee as something that should not move forward. Land prices will control this; it is a market function. The group agreed that they did not think the County should be involved in facilitating affordable housing.*

### *Transportation*

- *There was concern about the action item to complete a full update of the McFarland-Stoney Point LCI to leverage regional transportation funding. The group was fine with the action if it included taking a fresh look at reworking the plan.*
- *There was a comment to develop objective metrics to justify transportation funding. This is an action that would be a part of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan update.*



### Quality of Life

- *The committee agreed that there was no need for an action to pursue farmland protection measures through applicable revisions to the Unified Development Code. The state already has a tax abatement program; the County should help ensure that this incentive remains.*

### Community Character Map and Zoning Matrix Update

#### Feedback on Character Areas/Zoning Matrix

- *Q: In North GA 400, why is RES 1 not appropriate? There was some discussion about whether Res1 should be appropriate in all character areas, although some members agreed; no consensus seemed to be arrived at among committee members.*
- *C: Nodes need to be parcel-specific, even more so than character areas.*
  - *R: The planning team noted that the team was still determining whether parcel specific nodes were appropriate as a part of this plan process.*
- *Q: In the design workshops we had three poker chips for nodes, but now we're showing 14. Are these the same things?*
  - *A: No. Those poker chips were intended to demonstrate town centers. There are anticipated different degrees of intensity in the different nodes.*
- *Q: Vickery is already a node—does this mean we're expanding it?*
  - *A: Yes, the node is anticipated to become larger.*
- *C: Steering Committee would like more time with the draft Community Character Map and zoning matrix and requested that they be sent an electronic copy to review outside the meeting.*
  - *R: The planning team should be able to do this, although there will be a short review time to allow for input to be incorporated in the first draft of the plan.*
- *Clarification about the matrix: although it is somewhat based on existing zoning, it addresses re-zoning in the future.*
- *Q: For the zones that are identified as okay with design standards, what do we do in the interim before those standards are in place?*
  - *A: The planning team will address this concern in the narrative in the plan document.*
- *C. Assumptions that informed the zoning matrix need to be documented clearly.*
- *C. The zoning matrix implies that there are potentially several design standards that would need to get developed. The plan document needs to clearly state what those are that need to be created and otherwise explain how those design criteria are addressed in the plan.*
- *C: If the character areas are getting more detailed design and aesthetic standards down the road, we will need to revisit existing overlays as well as consider the geographic areas of recommended sub-area studies, tying them back to the character areas.*
- *Q: How are we defining the vision for HB/HC? Is it what's already in the code? For example in Campground, why are business parks not allowed but heavy commercial uses are allowed? The planning team should revisit this in the matrix. The HC column seems wrong.*



- *C: There is a need to highlight what zoning districts are changing from the existing status; what will be different?*
  - *R: The planning team suggested that potentially a table could be included in the document that lays out zoning districts that are new or are recommended for change with notes about proposed changes.*
- *Q/C: What is our intention about “tying the Commissioners’ hands?” It was commented by one member that the plan should be flexible to allow the Board of Commissioners to make logical decisions. A parcel specific map may not allow this.*
- *C: The public’s desire for certainty may mean that they want more certainty about land adjacent to their properties; maybe this could be addressed by buffer ordinances, etc.*
- *The Haw Creek character area boundary does not seem accurate. It seems to have shifted. There was a request for the planning team to revisit this and also revisit its assigned zoning categories in the zoning matrix.*

### **Population Projections**

*Ms. Stewart-Harris of the planning team briefly reviewed revised population projections, which are based on the future land use vision captured in the Community Character Map and associated narrative. These projections differ from the projections created at the beginning of the planning process as those were based on current development trends. There were no questions about the projections.*

### **August Open Houses**

*Ms. Hatton briefly reminded the committee members of the upcoming Open Houses on August 29 and August 31. The meetings will be informal with displays and opportunities to discuss questions and concerns about the draft plan with the planning team members. The draft plan document will be posted the week of the open houses for public review.*

### **Adjournment**

*The committee was thanked for their involvement in the planning process and encouraged to stay engaged throughout the Open Houses and public hearing and finalization process. There was a motion by Pete Amos and a second by Tim Perry to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 pm. Motion carried with seven members in favor ( Thomas, Amos, Iglesias, Shaw, Perry, Bernstein-Goldman, Dolezal) and two members absent (Castro, Pita).*