

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN APPENDIX DOCUMENTATION OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

This appendix provides summaries of the comprehensive plan steering committee meetings and stakeholder interviews and other relevant information. The state's local planning requirements specify the following for this document:

“Include an appendix to the comprehensive plan which assembles documentation showing that the activities discussed, above, occurred. This documentation must include: a list of stakeholders who were specifically identified to provide input on the plan; an overview of the participation techniques used to gather community input; and a list of the members of the steering committee that specifically identifies the governing authority and economic development practitioner representatives. Additionally, documentation of the community involvement activities and events undertaken in preparing the plan must be provided. The breadth and types of documentation may vary based upon community dynamics and the nature of the specific activities the community has undertaken. Acceptable types of documentation includes, but is not limited to: sign-in sheets from meetings/workshops/etc.; photographs of community involvement events; survey questions and results; records/agendas/minutes of meetings; copies of published advertisements of events; and/or copies of published social media posts.”

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

Jefferson's public input process for the comprehensive plan included but was not limited to the following activities:

- A steering committee appointed by city council which met seven times and discuss the full range of plan material, including vision statement, needs and opportunities, land use, broadband services element, and community work program. See more on the committee's activities below. As a part of the committee work, the committee chair solicited feedback on a draft list of “needs and opportunities” which received nearly 200 responses.
- Planning staff interviews with 19 resident stakeholders, 2 large property owners, and about a dozen business/industry leaders in a roundtable luncheon.
- A public forum on the comprehensive plan and the parks and recreation master plan, held the evening of March 14, 2019. Exercises for the comprehensive plan focused on small area planning.

- Public hearings at the inception and at the conclusion of the planning process, as well as regular updates for city council at its regular work sessions for the first five months of 2019.
- A questionnaire, which was written to obtain input on both the comprehensive plan and the parks and recreation master plan. Community Survey results are included in this appendix.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A full list of the appointed members of the comprehensive plan steering committee is provided at the beginning of this comprehensive plan. The committee was chaired by a council member, Mark Mobley, and co-chaired by another council member, Don Kupis. In addition, two other council members as well as the mayor were regular attendees at most if not all of the seven meetings. Further, council members had additional opportunities to discuss comprehensive planning, including a City Council retreat conducted in February 2019 and regular monthly work session agenda items through the first five months of 2019 on the status of the comprehensive plan. John Scott, of the Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce, was involved in the planning effort via participation in a business and industry roundtable luncheon sponsored by the city on March 25, 2019. Summaries for six of the seven committee meetings were prepared and are included in this appendix.

STAKEHOLDERS

A listing of resident stakeholders interviewed is provided at the beginning of this comprehensive plan. A consolidated summary of resident stakeholder remarks is included in this appendix. In addition, the city hosted a business and industry roundtable luncheon to hear concentrated remarks from industries and businesses. A summary of the March 25th, 2019, roundtable luncheon is also included in this appendix. Further, planning staff wrote letters to about a dozen owners of sizable tracts of land in the city and invited their feedback. That effort led to correspondence and in-person discussions with two key landowners in the city.

ATTACHMENTS

- Steering Committee meeting summaries: February 4, 2019; February 18, 2019; March 4, 2019; March 18, 2019; April 1, 2019; and April 15, 2019 (a seventh and final meeting of the committee was held but a summary was not produced).
- A consolidated summary of resident stakeholder interviews was produced and is attached.
- Summary of the business/industry roundtable luncheon held March 25, 2019.
- Community survey results.

**Summary
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #1
February 4, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by committee chair Mark Mobley. He and Mayor Quinn welcomed the members and other attendees. The park and recreation master plan committee was also invited to the meeting, with several members attending.

Introduction

Mr. Mobley gave an overview of the comprehensive plan and the charge of the committee. He indicated that plans had been done in 2008 and 2014 and that the plan did not need to be built from scratch. The purpose of the plan is to guide decisions of residents, businesses, staff, and city council. He charged the committee members to represent the interests of their constituent groups as well as their own interests. He encouraged everyone to speak up (no speeches) even if their opinion was in the minority. The committee will not strive for consensus; the objective is not to gain consensus but to hear diverse viewpoints. He also indicated the comprehensive plan was being coordinated with other ongoing planning efforts (transportation – Jackson County; parks and recreation – City of Jefferson) and that the downtown master plan would be folded into the comprehensive plan.

Mr. Mobley continued with a summary of future public participation efforts which will include stakeholder interviews, a questionnaire, and additional meetings. A question was raised whether the comprehensive plan was just good practice or whether it had a legal purpose. Jerry Weitz indicated the plan was a guide with no legal status (not binding), unlike the comprehensive plan in Jackson County which must be followed when zoning decisions are made.

Introduction of Steering Committee Members

All committee members and park and recreation master plan committee members provided introductions about their backgrounds and interests.

Vision Statement Review

The adopted vision statement was reviewed and discussed. Mr. Mobley reiterated the questions he had raised to guide discussion, such as whether items were missing, or needed to be deleted. Several committee members spoke about the vision statement; comments received included:

- Is the vision statement realistic and can it be implemented?
- What about roads and infrastructure?
- If the vision is followed, it will mean traffic jams in downtown.
- Financial investment, cost constraints and feasibility should be considered.
- Is the vision statement supposed to be a motto (1 liner)?

- There was discussion about the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement.
- There were several points made that the vision statement was too lengthy.
- There was some discussion of the tax base of the city (residential versus nonresidential).
- There was recognition that there are different subparts to the city, not just downtown.
- The vision statement is too “downtown-centric.”
- The vision statement may be too old now, Jefferson has changed; it fit the city 15 to 20 years ago, but the city is not necessarily that anymore. There’s no “Amazon” in the statement.
- Emphasis on “small town,” togetherness and spirit.
- The vision statement is about what we want to be as a city in the future, not what we are now.
- The statement doesn’t address growth and is not forward looking; it doesn’t speak to development. Nor is there much if anything said about transportation and the need to address infrastructure.
- One approach to redrafting the vision statement may be to search for 3 to 5 themes such as community spirit, economy, safety, public school excellence, and “beyond downtown.”
- One aspiration is that children raised in Jefferson will want to come back to the city and raise their families here.
- What the city wants: retail, restaurants, parks, trails, hotels, broadband.
- Spirituality and faith might be components of the vision statement.
- Small, home town feeling, manage growth.
- Inclusiveness of different age groups; diversity; culture; a welcoming community with a variety of people.
- One idea is to reach out to other cities like Dacula and Duluth which faced the same situations, learn from them.
- Tax base, where is voice of Kubota?
- Finding good employees, affordable housing, retaining talent with places to live.
- Are apartments in the mix, how does zoning handle apartments?
- Balance between big industry and small (Mom and Pop) businesses; small business cannot compete with larger industries for wages.
- What happens if big industries go empty?
- Youth are different from what they were 39 years ago. Optimism for youth needed.

Review of Goals and Implementation Techniques

There needs to be a better job of communicating future land use plans to all; for instance, residents have become surprised and angry about light industry which has been supported/called for in the city’s comprehensive plan. People don’t look at the comprehensive plan and don’t read their subdivision covenants. There is a need to fix or clean up industrial-residential land use conflicts.

Mr. Mobley replied that the city will do a high quality printing of the final adopted plan document so that it will serve as an improved communication mechanism.

Subdivisions in the city have houses that are too close together, and there are other houses in the middle of forests. Threat of fire in both instances. Firewise community rules should be added to the implementation techniques.

There must be economic development to make all other parts of the plan happen. Idea of small incubator sites for small stores. Creative ideas, incentives and partnerships are needed.

Redevelop existing facilities, refurbish for office; for instance, property behind Jimmy Bailey's Ford place. Need partnerships, grants, and willing developers.

Future development is more likely along the bypass, with big-box retailers. Roads are in disrepair and have taken a beating. Create value in town; lots of jobs but there is also unemployment. Is the city ready for low-income housing? Big business means employee needs and demands for housing and education, trade-up housing. People cannot afford to buy because housing in the city is too expensive.

Need to address "eyesores" in the community.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Weitz
Consulting Planner

Record of Attachments and Materials:

Agenda of 2/4/19 meeting
Extract of vision statement, goals and policies
Supportive data analysis for comprehensive planning (handed out at end)
Preliminary needs and opportunities (for discussion on 2/18/19)
Chairman's presentation (sent following the meeting)

**Summary
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #2
February 18, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by committee chair Mark Mobley. He thanked members for their service on the committee. Mr. Mobley asked for introductions from committee appointees attending for the first time. Chairman Mobley reminded the committee of the purpose of the comprehensive plan and reiterated ground rules. He pointed out information on the city's web page and how to access it:

<http://www.cityofjeffersonga.com/planning/page/comprehensive-plan>

(From the main page, choose the "City Hall" pull down menu, then select "departments," then click on "planning and development," then choose "comprehensive plan" on the left side of the screen).

OLD BUSINESS – POLICIES

The committee worked through the various policies, using the subject organization.

Annexation

Should school board recommendations be taken into account when the city annexes? Generally, there was agreement, yes. There was discussion about the existing situation and how residential annexations impact the school system. How does the city maintain the quality of the school system as it continues to grow?

Maybe the city should confine its boundary rather than jumping around and sprawling; define an outer boundary of annexation and then concentrate annexations within the boundary. To the contrary, establishing a boundary may leave no room to grow.

Natural Resources and the Environment

One comment received that wetland buffers should be increased from 50 feet to 100 feet, since water is our most valuable resource. Tree canopy is important; city is currently revising measurements/inventory of tree canopy. Questions were raised and answered about how the city's tree canopy regulations apply. No comments about conservation subdivisions.

There were questions about cutting a neighbor's tree if it was too close to an abutting house, about code enforcement, and about notices for variances and code enforcement (how they work).

Economic Development

Internet access is important to city businesses; some businesses may shy away from the city because of poor internet service. The existing policy language sounds like historic

preservation will trump economic development. The phrase “infrastructure readiness” was discussed – funds are not available for advanced placement of infrastructure – the city follows a “pay as you go” strategy. No funds to be proactive. To the extent this language suggests being proactive with infrastructure provision, it should be revised.

Discussion about reserving sewage capacity for industry and business. Also discussion about balancing interests of design/regulation and economic development. How is the city balancing the two – there is need for high quality development but there is a burden.

Housing

There was discussion about apartments and whether they are able to be built in Jefferson. There are some parcels that have been zoned for apartments but not yet built upon. The current density limit for apartments in the multi-family zone is eight (8) units per acre. There was discussion about minimum house sizes – in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts, the minimum house size is 1,600 square feet for one-story and 1,800 square feet for two-story homes). It was noted that the City of Commerce requires 1,600 square feet. Building with quality materials is important for both housing and businesses.

Community Facilities and Services

There was brief discussion about sanitary sewer.

Transportation

There was discussion about sidewalks, cycling and promoting more active communities. Cyclists are using Old Pendergrass Road. One cannot safely walk from school to the library (no sidewalk but people walk anyway). Discussion about road resurfacings; not enough money to do all. Question whether Elder Drive really needed resurfacing. The city gets a list of pressing needs from the roads and grounds department for resurfacing priorities.

Land Use

The city’s requirement for site and architectural design review was discussed.

RECESS

The committee recessed for approximately five minutes from about 7:00 p.m. to 7:05 p.m.

SWOT ANALYSIS

There was detailed discussion about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths

Intergovernmental relations was not considered a “strength” (delete from list). Up to 500 lots are ready for residential building. Interstate 85 was no longer a strength (but there was disagreement). \$500,000 homes on 1-acre lots would be an asset. Think of other cities like Braselton, Sugar Hill, Buford, etc. when considering the city’s strengths and weaknesses. There was a question about the planning department serving the City of Talmo and whether Jefferson should cut ties with the city. Through mayor’s lunch program the city has remained united with others. Without intergovernmental cooperation there may be duplication of services.

Library and recreation (leisure services) might be listed as a strength (general agreement). Safety is another strength (not listed). Are all the strengths economic? What about social/cultural considerations, being a faith-based community. The city’s class 3 fire insurance rating (ISO) is highest it can be for an all-volunteer fire department.

Weaknesses

Taxes are higher. No senior educational benefit. It is not considered a weakness to not have an institution of higher learning in the city (Lanier Tech is in Commerce). Drugs are a problem, there is nowhere to get help (add). For the statement about concentration of poverty, take out “especially Black or African American.” It was noted that the city was welcoming to Christians but not Muslims, Jews, and Atheists (non-traditionals). There are limited resources available for underserved populations. Not much senior living in the city – have to go to Athens or Braselton. Change of voting precincts was discussed. There is no teen facility (youth programs for teens). Some teens are alone at home and there is a need for mentoring youth in the home and/or special facilities.

Opportunities

Maybe take out being “camera ready” (countywide program not directly applicable to the city). There was a chase scene filmed on the bypass in Jefferson. Maybe delete any single reference to business (reference: Old Jefferson cotton mill destination-making opportunity). Maybe an alternative is to “partner with the private sector” and/or “fast track redevelopment opportunities if they meet certain criteria. Suggestion to look at what Braselton does. Absence of hotels and motels.

Are there any non-economic opportunities? Airport access? The new agricultural center? An Aquatic center? Theater building bought, New empowered school in Jefferson.

Threats

Maybe take out residential growth or rephrase (can’t be a strength and a threat simultaneously). Small town means downtown, won’t lose it with sprawl (sprawl is not necessarily a threat). On the other hand, small town might include more than

downtown. Maybe “small town” is an attitude, the way Jefferson presents itself to outsiders and how citizens of the city treat each other.

Stormwater management may be more of a “service challenge” than a threat (suggest that it be taken out).

FUTURE MEETING CONTENT

Committee members were urged to review the future land use plan map on the city’s web page for the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments from the public were taken at 8:10 p.m. Hotels and motels are needed. There is a homeless population in the city, frequenting Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Borders Street, and Oak Street. They are residing in empty, falling-down houses.

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Next meeting date: Monday, March 4, 2019, 6:00 p.m., Jefferson Civic Center, 65 Kissam Street, Jefferson

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Weitz
Consulting Planner

**Summary
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #3
Jefferson Civic Center, 65 Kissam Street
March 4, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by committee chair Mark Mobley. Chairman Mobley reminded the committee of the purpose of the comprehensive plan and reiterated ground rules.

OLD BUSINESS – NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Priority Needs and Opportunities

Committee members were asked which of the many needs and opportunities listed were the most important. Responses are summarized below from individual committee members.

- Transportation infrastructure through downtown
- Paradox of poverty yet top schools; take care of poverty first. Draw a Lanier Tech like that in Winder. Sewer and water infrastructure
- Recreation: youth, invest in character building
- Associate some of the needs and opportunities together; certified local government (historic preservation status is low); grants are important
- Downtown (grouping) plus infrastructure; can downtown plans be supported with infrastructure?
- Keep infrastructure in good condition; city could become a natural gas provider (e.g., Buford); prepare for growth
- Land use and development (commercial/ mini-malls); jobs for elderly
- Parks and recreation
- Retail and restaurant deficiencies; greenways; healthier lifestyle
- Parks and retail – push retail to U.S. 129 bypass
- Environmental impacts
- Downtown retail and walkability; affordable housing (no price point for workers)
- School capacity; affordable housing; recreation
- Broadband infrastructure
- Careful planning
- Disconnect in walking on Gordon Street (lack of sidewalks)
- Infrastructure; chief complaints heard are Old Swimming Pool Road (no signal at bypass), Old Pendergrass Road (congestion at bypass); and broadband (lack of or poor service)
- Families at risk and youth; housing; drugs (14 deaths in 2018 from opioids)
- Clean water and sanitation; attract the right kind of growth; quality of life (remember it has to be paid for); Tax base is out of kilter; need better mix/blend

There was discussion about the tax base and what was meant by infrastructure, how the city's property tax base was divided among residential, commercial and industrial, and

what the tangible benefits of warehouses were. Generally, when committee members speak of infrastructure they mean all matters: roads, sidewalks, water, sewer, parks etc.

Needs and Opportunities to Remove from List

Committee members were asked which of the needs and opportunities might be removed. Responses follow:

- Whether to allow vinyl siding on homes
- Certified local government
- Cemeteries (review for certificate of appropriateness)
- Film production (reference to county certification as “camera ready”)
- Higher education (reference to lack thereof)
- Possum Creek Connector

Needs and Opportunities with Greatest Impact on Constituents

Committee members were asked which of the needs and opportunities have the greatest impact on the constituents they represent. Responses follow:

- Infrastructure (5 responses)
- Retail deficiencies (5 responses)
- Schools (3 responses)
- Others: downtown, land use, housing, greenspace, museum, rental opportunities

“Pet Projects”

Committee members were asked what their pet projects would be. Responses follow:

- Road resurfacing (5 responses)
- Downtown/downtown plan implementation (2 responses)
- Old Jefferson Cotton Mill
- Others: housing; education; sidewalks; retail; broadband; aquatic center; parks and trails, natural gas, public-private partnership; 4 lanes through downtown

Reactions to Rankings

Committee members were asked if they were surprised by how some items were higher or lower priority (for full list, see attached for rankings of needs and opportunities by committee members, quantitative summary prepared by chairman). Responses follow:

- The low rank for broadband was surprising given lack of high-speed internet
- Higher education versus connection to University of Georgia are similar but were ranked differently
- Some topics can be combined
- Employee inflow ranked about medium (not high or low)

- Schools; education; housing

LAND USE

After a short recess, the committee began discussion of the future land use plan map. Chairman Mobley went over the primary residential categories and their densities. In response to a question from the Chairman, very few members live on a lot with 0.5 acre or less.

A question was asked what was meant by the “adaptive reuse residential” category (it is a residential dwelling that is converted to office or commercial use). There was also a comment that there were many unincorporated islands and that these areas should have to go by city rules.

Land Use Categories Missing

There was a question about schools and churches; they are included in the public institutional category. There was some discussion whether they should be their own category or whether schools and churches should be separated from lower use institutional. “Tiny houses” were raised (not currently allowed on their own lot).

Land Use Categories to Delete

None suggested

Land Use Categories to Subdivide

There was some discussion about possibly dividing the commercial category into highway and neighborhood. There was a suggestion that the plan map should be divided into rings around downtown with the same color.

Land Use Categories to Redefine

There was some discussion about whether conservation should be separated from developed recreation. There was a question about conservation use assessment of land, and it was answered that conservation use for tax purposes is not included in the parks/recreation/ conservation category but would be included in the agricultural and forestry category.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Mobley noted the city has scheduled a public forum on the parks and recreation master plan and the comprehensive plan on Thursday, March 14th, at the Civic Center at 6:00 p.m. He urged all committee members to attend.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Next committee meeting date: Monday, March 18, 2019, 6:00 p.m., Jefferson Civic Center, 65 Kissam Street, Jefferson

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Weitz
Consulting Planner

Attachment: needs and opportunities ranking by committee members, quantified by Chairman Mobley

**Summary
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #4
Jefferson Station Community Room
1000 Washington Street, Jefferson, GA 30549
March 18, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by committee chair Mark Mobley. Chairman Mobley reminded the committee of the purpose of the comprehensive plan and reiterated ground rules.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation on Countywide Transportation Plan

Steve Cote, planner and engineer with RS&H presented to the committee information about the countywide transportation plan which is in process. The plan will include all cities and is partially federally funded. A technical team has been established which meets once monthly. Technical elements include safety, “hotspots” (crash history) (which include most of the U.S. Highway 129 intersections) existing bottlenecks, bridge conditions (sufficiency rating), commuting patterns, and growth projections. The countywide plan looks at the year 2050. Most of the data utilized is from 2016. Mr. Cote indicated the project involved a travel demand model with small area forecasts of population, households, and employment.

There was some discussion about the intersection of SR 82 and Legg Road which shows in the presentation as moderate congestion. Yet the congestion map did not show Old Swimming Pool Road and Old Pendergrass Road intersections with U.S. Highway 129 as congested.

Mr. Cote also summarized the public outreach completed for the countywide transportation plan. The robust efforts included “pop-up” events in Commerce, Braselton, and Jefferson. There were a total of 11,799 responses to the questionnaire. County Public Works is already fixing things based on the results. Respondents dropped pins on hotspots, outlined safety concerns and requested bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

There was some discussion about the financial feasibility of completing bike improvements and also public transportation.

Discussion of Transportation Policies

After a short recess from 6:50 to 6:57 p.m., the committee reconvened to discuss transportation policies of the comprehensive plan. Going around the room, the

committee members indicated some agreement that sidewalks were important to the constituencies they represent. There was mixed reaction to the idea of city investment to install sidewalks in “legacy” neighborhoods (i.e., those built long ago or not to current city standards which require sidewalks on new local streets); neighbors may not want sidewalks in some cases, and some may not have the right physical environment. It was indicated that a per foot linear assessment could be charged. Chairman Mobley indicated that if pursued the city could start in the downtown area and work its way outward.

The committee was generally negative regarding city funding to install bike lanes. Law regarding use of sidewalks by bicyclists was discussed. Reactions were mixed to the idea of striping bike lanes when city streets are repaved. There seemed to be consensus on not requiring the acquisition of additional land to provide for bike lanes.

The informal policy on requiring two entrances for projects with 50 or more units was discussed. The consensus was in favor of this policy and it was suggested that it be made official (i.e., write it into the code rather than consider it informally). Mr. Mobley indicated that the city council had sought and received approval from the state to establish community improvement districts.

Traffic calming (a.k.a. speed bumps) were also discussed. Mr. Mobley indicated the policy now was to not provide for speed bumps. It was indicated that traffic calming was needed at the Boys/Girls club site, that Elder Dr. was used as a cut through, and that people speed up the hill at Martin Street. It was also suggested that if traffic calming is needed, the city should look at means other than speed bumps.

There appeared to be agreement that deceleration lanes were needed and should be required as a condition of approval of office parks and new residential subdivisions. The committee agreed with the existing policy.

It was noted that there is no right turn lane from the bypass onto SR 11 Business at Crow’s Lake. Speed limits were discussed, but there were no specific suggestions for raising or lowering existing speed limits.

There was some discussion about the policy requiring installation of sidewalks. Mr. Weitz indicated this was one of the most difficult policies and code requirements to enforce uniformly. Weitz suggested he would propose a more specific policy for sidewalks.

There were four transportation problems that were given out to committee members as a possible, optional, homework assignment (not required).

There were no public comments from non-committee members.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Next committee meeting date: April 1, 2019, 6:00 p.m., Jefferson Civic Center, 65 Kissam Street, Jefferson

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Weitz
Consulting Planner

**Summary
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #5
Jefferson Civic Center
65 Kissam Street, Jefferson, GA 30549
April 1, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by committee chair Mark Mobley. Chairman Mobley reminded the committee of the purpose of the comprehensive plan and reiterated ground rules.

OLD BUSINESS: TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

The committee discussed two of the issues presented during the March 14th public forum:

Cotton Mill Area Road Abandonment/Land Use

Members offered opinions as to whether the city should abandon certain roads (Cobb Street, Railroad Street) immediately around the Old Jefferson Cotton Mill, if a redevelopment opportunity was proposed. Opinions were mixed: opinions ranged from not liking the idea, to not caring, to liking it. It was agreed that abandonment made sense from a safety standpoint. Consensus was not to do anything proactively, but rather, respond if there was a redevelopment proposal.

There was no objection posed to the idea of incorporating housing into the Mill complex if redeveloped. There was little if any support expressed to change the land use plan to support the conversion of single-family houses on the north side of Lynn Avenue to office or commercial use. It was noted that these existing homes constitute affordable housing and that a change of land use would increase traffic. The same question was considered for Old Pendergrass Road, but there wasn't any support expressed for that idea, either. There was little if any support expressed for changing the land use plan for vacant parcels near the mill zoned/planned from single-family residential to another land use category; however, the city should remain open and flexible.

Another idea, of considering one-way streets with sidewalks along Lynn Avenue, was discussed. It was noted that redevelopment needed to be a part of any such proposal and that the city should not be proactive with regard to this idea.

U.S. Highway 129 Overlay

The committee also briefly discussed the proposed frontage road and multi-use trail plan that is a part of the comprehensive plan now. There was some discussion of the previous Wal-Mart development proposal and whether all properties along the bypass should be commercial (no conclusion).

NEW BUSINESS: BROADBAND ELEMENT

After a short recess from 7:04 to 7:10 p.m., the committee began to discuss broadband. Chairman Mobley went over terminology including cable, DSL, Fiber, WISP (wireless internet service provider), small cell, WLAN (Wide local area network), last mile, and right of way. The committee had access to the final report of the Jefferson Broadband Committee (2016).

There was some discussion that broadband did not rank very highly as to the priority needs and opportunities. Chairman Mobley noted that through Facebook he received more than 200 replies on the priorities for needs and opportunities and indicated that broadband was the (or top) issue. People want to telecommute, plus broadband is also an economic development issue.

Internet service providers were discussed included Paladin, Comcast and Windstream. It was noted that several folks received a notice of bankruptcy from Windstream. Comcast is extending service into several subdivisions in the city.

In response to a question about whether small cell applications should be allowed in city rights of ways, responses were mostly negative. It would involve new poles and was it was not necessary. If allowed, they should use existing poles, one said. This may be a good solution for underserved areas (another remark). With one exception, committee members commented that water towers should not be used for private use by broadband companies. Maybe the county communication tower might be a good spot.

The committee also debated whether the city should create a broadband utility. It was noted the City of Commerce set up its own internet which is limited to downtown; the city has not been competitive in residential areas. Based on a report, two other cities have become broadband utilities but it took issuance of bonds in the range of \$12-17 million. With three providers in the city now, the general consensus was not to pursue a city broadband utility. The committee also discussed “last mile” fiber construction for new residential subdivisions but with no consensus reached.

There were no public comments from non-committee members.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Next committee meeting date: April 15, 2019, 6:00 p.m., Jefferson Civic Center, 65 Kissam Street, Jefferson

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Weitz
Consulting Planner

Summary
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #6
Jefferson Civic Center
65 Kissam Street, Jefferson, GA 30549
April 15, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by committee chair Mark Mobley. Chairman Mobley reminded the committee of the purpose of the comprehensive plan and reiterated ground rules.

The agenda called for discussion of the existing community work program (including capital improvement program) and the existing capital improvements element for parks and recreation.

In advance, Chairman Mobley posed several questions for discussion. These are provided in the summary, followed by answers provided by committee members.

1. Should we still plan to develop Wi-Fi in the downtown area of Jefferson? Why or why not?

Wi-Fi is still an issue in Jefferson's downtown. Some downtowns have free Wi-Fi. On the other hand, with 5G on smart phones, it may not be needed. It would be expensive to provide, and it is "hackable." Business could provide Wi-Fi for their own customers. Responses were split, but several members said "no" to this for a variety of reasons.

2. Should we publish a City Brochure? Why or why not?

The chamber of commerce has published brochures. Sponsors can advertise on them. Alternatives include improving the city's website and preparation of activity guides for downtown. The city publishes a community guide that does out to water customers. Another option is to have a kiosk (the city has one which cost \$2000). Also, the city publishes a newcomer's guide (packet/folder). Some believed the brochure would be good if sponsors pay for it. Another option is water bill inserts. There was no clear conclusion from the discussion, but it appeared that the committee members overall were favorable to the idea of publishing a city brochure.

3. How can the City of Jefferson best communicate with its citizens?

Communication mechanisms identified included the local newspaper, water bill inserts, website, at festivals, online mailers (e-mail blasts), texts, monthly or quarterly newsletters, social media, and live-streaming of city council meetings. There was consensus the city could do a better job overall at communication. It was acknowledged that the city would probably need a new employee to keep the city website regularly updated. There was a need identified to get old or obsolete

information off of the website. It was also noted that people residing outside the city don't know or have a way of knowing the city is having festivals.

4. Should we dedicate part of the City Park property for stadium parking?

Although members recognized the need for more parking for city school sports events, there appeared to be consensus against the city devoting some of the space in City Park for school sporting event parking. There was a question whether McKinney Hill could be used, and it was noted there was a verbal agreement on the part of the city, once purchased, to keep it as green space.

5. Should we obtain property on the east side of Memorial Drive to expand stadium parking?

This option was viewed by many committee members as more viable than converting park land to parking. The city uses city school fields and the track, and so it may not be a problem if the city acquired land for additional stadium parking. Another suggestion was that a fee should be charged if city parking is provided. Another suggested spending the money on sidewalks would be better. Yet another noted the cost may be as high as \$10,000 to \$12,000 per parking space.

[The meeting recessed from 7:14 to 7:21 p.m.]

6. What facilities would you like to see in a downtown park?

The downtown park area is approximately 18.5 acres. During the downtown planning process (RSVP), there was a preference expressed for performance space, amphitheater, trails, picnic grounds, and playgrounds. There appeared to be consensus among members to support these types of uses. Other ideas including an arboretum, an entertainment district (arts and expansion of businesses and restaurants), a dog park, facilities for different ages, and a splash pad. The close proximity of the city-owned public housing (apartments) was mentioned, along with the suggestion that their appearance be spruced up.

7. Are you in favor of the City constructing a downtown amphitheater/performance space?

The chair deliberately skipped over this question in light of the answers provided in #6.

8. Would you be in a favor of a second field complex located at a different part of the City to augment the fields at the Jim Joiner Recreation Complex?

One suggested no, don't build a second field complex until we build something we don't already have, like an aquatic center. Several other members said no, while recognizing there was a need for new ballfields. There are shortages already, and practices go beyond 8:00 p.m. already. Over the long term there must be more fields. It was also noted that the city relies on city school fields and that eventually the school system may need to use some of the fields for buildings as part of a school expansion program.

9. Does Jefferson need more passive outdoor picnic shelters?

Members were mixed on this question. They were deemed especially appropriate at the ballfield complex and in the downtown.

10. What additions would you make to the Capital Improvements planned for Jefferson?

Only a few suggestions were made: build an aquatic center, and build more gymnasiums (could make money off them). There discussion about the city's ownership and future use of the Regions building downtown.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

One citizen asked if the downtown park could include a clubhouse with a stove, like the current clubhouse at city park. It was mentioned this was not "on the list" but it could be considered.

Another citizen remarked about the brochure issue, stating that people come into store and the museum and are looking for something to do or places to eat.

Another comment was made that the T-ball fields at City Park should not be used for parking. Another suggestion for the downtown park was for passive picnic tables, since there are not that many restaurants in downtown.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:55 p.m.

Next committee meeting date: May 6, 2019, 6:00 p.m., Jefferson Civic Center, 65 Kissam Street, Jefferson

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Weitz
Consulting Planner

**RESIDENT STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY
JEFFERSON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 5-YEAR UPDATE
Revised April 1, 2019**

Resident Stakeholders Interviewed:

Alan Ashley
Kevin Baxter
Andy Bragg
Rachel Dunagan
Steve Frazier
Pete Fuller
Tracy Gilmore
Darryl Gumz
Brad Hobbs
Josh Hollum
Mike Martin
Jamie Mitchem
Jeff Mixon
Angelica Niccolai
Brittany Odom
Fern Pegus
Dana Phillips
Bill Stokes
Aaron Walker

Stakeholders were asked to comment on the following four questions:

1. What do you like most, and least, about the city?
2. Do you have any experience with any city departments and if so what are your opinions of them?
3. Do you have opinions about the overall direction of growth and development in the city?
4. What would be your highest priorities for improvement?

Responses are consolidated to preserve anonymity and to organize and group similar responses.

LIKES

- Small town community feel (multiple): know lots of people; people know you by your first name; Norman Rockwellish; see everyone at Kroger; “vibe”; proud to live here; festivals and events on the square pull people together; rural/countryside; less crowded; slower pace, able to relax, Laid back; small businesses; family relationships; friendly; close-knit, get anywhere in city in 10 minutes; convenient; friendliness, slower feel, lack of congestion
- Wooded and picturesque

- History
- Good for children and kids
- Excellent location – proximity to I-85 and Athens
- Potential – chance to be proactive. Jefferson’s potential – relation to Athens and access to I-85
- Schools (6); like that all the schools are together; good ranking; attractors
- Low crime, safe to raise a family
- Leadership is accessible, approachable and communicating with online access via social media, next door, and city website
- Small businesses; Mike’s Grill (when it was open)

DISLIKES

- **Lack of retail/restaurants.** No retail/no retail center/ no restaurants (multiple); money is spent elsewhere; cannot buy underwear in the city; have to go to Athens to buy goods; Swirlee’s is the only place open at night; no reason to go to downtown; no need to stay in town. Need sit-down restaurants (mid-scale, up-scale, healthy). No place to have coffee on Friday night. Local hardware store closes at noon on Saturday.
- Traffic. Including downtown
- Facing overcrowding (roads, parks, buildings)
- Internet service is substandard
- Clean up the mess at U.S. Highway 129 and interstate – (Georgia DOT site) needs to be a welcoming place (2)
- Rural cuts both ways (lack of restaurants and retail)
- Resistance to break free of “good old boy” mentality (keeping things close; behind the scenes influence) (new mayor helps)
- Newer residents not listened to as much as older residents (old timer decision making process dominates, especially city schools (city is more receptive)
- Sports culture of city education
- Lack of cultural facilities
- **Downtown business.** Not enough destinations in downtown (park and walk); amphitheater and new restaurant (“Friends”) will help; storefronts not available downtown, don’t like lawyers in storefronts; develop small businesses especially downtown
- **Downtown parking:** still an issue (2) – will fill up
- **Downtown pedestrian orientation:** Walkability is horrible. Would like to walk downtown but it is not safe (especially Gordon Street – criminal element, people on foot all the time)
- Don’t want Gwinnett County (= traffic + crime + Section 8 housing)
- **Damon Gause Bypass.** Bypass segregates population (difficult to cross); Old Swimming Pool Road is a fiasco without a traffic signal
- **Traffic.** Eats up what makes the city great.
- **Communication.** Lack of consistent messaging among departments; need for more consistency; communication among different departments; they use

different strategies but should have a central, consistent blast. Avoid inconsistencies.

- Zoning around the city (controlled by county – city cannot control); example of warehouses at Storey Lane
- Storey Lane is dangerous; accidents and near misses; too narrow; tractor trailer trucks are using it frequently even though no-truck route.
- **Warehouses (3)** – ridiculous, need to curb; require park around them; eyesores; what to do with them if they go vacant. Headed to be like Doraville; too top heavy with warehouses, what if they vacate in 15-20 years (see related additional comments)
- **Lack of public meeting space** – pay to meet at clubhouse – this is okay but groups like political parties and theater board go to Ozark Bank. Why cannot such groups use public spaces?

CITY DEPARTMENTS

- **Water Department:** fabulous; very pleasant; friendly; kind and helpful
- **Parks and recreation.** Recreation is generally good but there is turnover in city staff and they struggle with their communication strategies; lots of young employees; facilities were good earlier but they haven't been kept up; some cannot find a field to practice on; need more options for park and recreation; some programs are missing, others not publicized; sports complex is dissatisfying – no concession, parking and lighting are limited; availability is limited; dirty bathrooms
- **Animal control:** not a good experience dealing with barking dogs.
- **Library:** good; love it; needs expansion both physically and with regard to services
- **Police:** Police response times very good (2); police have gone way above and beyond what was expected (2)
- **Fire:** perfect
- **Schools:** praise for the schools; how will they keep up?
- **Mayor and City Council:** good at answering questions; kudos; this is part of small town feel (being able to converse with them); city council does good job to hear and react to concerns. Disheartening to hear of talk about doing things (playground equipment, broadband committee) but then no action or just small actions to placate – years go by with no action.
- **Planning and development:** nothing bad but wish there was a way to read zoning notice signs; best to provide a website so people can see proposals without calling
- **Main Street:** Downtown events are super but could do more (concerts, movies more often) especially April through September
- **Solid Waste:** Some complaints with new waste disposal firm not picking up garbage. WastePro took their trash cans away; with new collector, didn't have trash cans to begin with and residents had to complain to get trash cans; yard waste program very good, clean execution

- **Code enforcement:** good; code enforcement is in its infancy, but better look at it for growth. The code complaint form will actually deter people from completing it (needs review and revision); people don't know what code section a violation comes under.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Grow for revenue but with strategic thinking
- Need planned, smart growth, maintain greenspace
- Separate residences from industrial/commercial
- U.S. Highway 129 Business needs to be cleaned up and redeveloped; area should become a "targeted facelift area" all the way up old Highway 129; redevelop it to have an antique-looking city; need safe sidewalks.
- Need guided development around Old Mill (nice, not blighted yet)
- Approaches (entry routes) to the city should be local businesses with small scale; grow with a small-town feel, not gigantic warehouses
- The McGrath building rental facility (in City of Arcade) has an industrial feel and look to it; U.S. Highway 129 corridor should be retail, not industrial; maybe all industrial off the frontage but more infrastructure is needed
- **Big box retail.** Opposed to big box retail at Old Pendergrass Road; Better location for retail is up by Hog Mountain Road (as opposed to Old Pendergrass Road); Lowe's would be best located at interstate not U.S. 129; no big box has good aesthetics; establish policy against big boxes; common thread among some residents is that Target is acceptable but not Wal-Mart; keep big box retail off of Lee Street and Washington Street; not a fan of general merchandise stores – they are against Jefferson values, bringing low wages and crime; big boxes should be located 1 mile to the north of Old Pendergrass Road
- City opened up Pandora's Box with subdivisions along Old Swimming Pool Road; River Mist and other subdivisions should not have been approved with poor access (2)
- **Warehouses.** Define a true warehouse corridor; keep warehouses along interstate; steer away from warehouses. Out of control. Speculative and empty (2 or more responses). Warehouse growth has destroyed Stockbridge, McDonough and other parts of Henry County, as well as other places like East Point and Clayton County. The workers are from other counties. Warehouses destroy small town; instant loss in care of the community; people in warehouses don't have vested interest in the community, just working here. In 15 years the warehouses will be filled with robots and three people to fix the robots (no more employment).
- **Apartments.** Apartments are okay but should be limited and should provide an amenities package (pool, clubhouse, etc.); lack of apartments (no place to rent); don't care or see need for apartments
- **Economic development.** There are opportunities for white collar, satellite offices given the location of Jefferson. Not just warehouse labor (need more). Take advantage of Athens growth; opportunity to develop hotels and stores along

the throughput to Athens on game days (2); piggyback on school system attractors

- **Bicycling.** Bicycling teams come to area to compete and use Jefferson River Road, Apple Valley (noted internationally) and Brockton Loop. Look at economics of Silver Comet Trail. Link bicyclists into a greenway network.
- Be careful about annexations (impacts on schools); lots of gaps in the city limits – this leaves the perception that the city is picking and choosing
- **Architectural review and control.** Downtown could benefit from incorporating the same architectural building style in downtown, including gas stations; need more design scrutiny
- Unfair for existing residents to have to pay a price for road improvements, losing their front yards to road widenings
- Changes in downtown are good (small shops, additional activities)
- Caution: some businesses can result in a culture of poverty (pawn shops)

HIGHEST PRIORITIES

- **Broadband (3).** Improvement needed. Fiber to the curb program; city should consider getting into the business itself. Some residents and businesses may even leave the city because of improved broadband.
- **Transportation.** Make downtown pedestrian friendly; Make roads safer; Three-lane Interstate 85 – should have been done long ago; Transportation for the elderly - no transit available; Pathways to all parks; pathways around city like Atlanta Beltline; connect all parks with retail and restaurants in between; seniors could ride scooters; Safe crossing of bypass; bridge or tunnel across U.S. Highway 129 at Old Pendergrass Road; Need master plan for how traffic relates (overarching traffic plan). Sidewalks; lots of people are getting golf carts. Better access to address more traffic; roads;
- **Parks and recreation.** Expand (2). Need city parks as close as possible to downtown; need green spaces/ large passive park; need sidewalk to recreation center; expand recreation center. Aquatic center needed; if aquatic center is not done there must be something done with city pool; people have to leave the city for swim practice, and there's no place to swim in the winter.
- Road resurfacing
- Foster and support development of small businesses downtown (2)
- Term limits for all elected leadership
- Why not do live stream of city council meetings? Should have video recording of council meetings.
- Need more things for kids to do (water park or bowling center) – not having such things leads to bad things
- Don't compromise small town feel
- Information technology services
- Sustainability – solar on tower to power pumps, electronic car charging stations (like Commerce and Gainesville)
- Community gardens
- Connect seniors and young people

- Car wash
- Keep kids here after graduation
- Airport – will be beneficial, look out 20 years from now – get with Delta, extend runway; people will fly into Jefferson to go to Georgia Bulldogs game; consider a helicopter landing pad
- Lower and middle income housing
- Retirement centers should be considered as an economic development tool
- School – grow physically and in offerings. More than just sports; need vocational/ technical training also to train for jobs here
- Code enforcement for on-street parking in subdivisions
- Clean path to interstate; not cluttered up with warehouses; needs to be more inviting, currently not the best presentation of the city
- Recreation events for adults also, not just youth

MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS/IDEAS

- If the culvert under US 129 is used for the trail network, it will need lighting and a 911 call box
- It would help if state put in frontage roads along the bypass. Consider overpasses.
- Convert railroad to a trail if ever abandoned.
- In new commercial along bypass, make rock outcrops part of the landscape.
- Long range, turn Crow's lake into public with trails.
- Galilee Church Road should be three-laned with a traffic signal at U.S. 129
- Consider solar energy, like lighting – think ahead
- Water Drainage: big problems with flooding in backyards; some existing issues may need to be solved by city; may need mini-watershed studies
- City should sponsor a map of just Jefferson (chamber makes one but it is all of the county – need one for just Jefferson)
- Word has it there was an old fort located somewhere in Jefferson
- Conduct an independent security audit and have a disaster recovery plan
- The public should know what the schedule of all meetings related to planning
- Not enough information about finance in city council agendas
- Strong odor from industry at Apex Industrial Park (feed for poultry industry); smell can be a nuisance.
- Consider whether there are shared use agreements for city residents to use city school recreation facilities (e.g., tennis courts)
- Not fair for out of district residents to pay less than city residents (when considering taxes paid by existing residents)? Amounts to a subsidy. And then, do out of district students bump off opportunities for in-city residents to make certain sports teams?

**MEETING SUMMARY
BUSINESS/INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE LUNCHEON
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 5-YEAR UPDATE**

**March 25, 2019
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Jefferson Civic Center
65 Kissam Street
Jefferson, GA 30549**

Attending:

Priscilla Murphy, City Manager
Jerry Weitz, Consulting Planner
Ben Stafford, Pattillo Industrial Real Estate
John Scott, Chamber of Commerce
Casey Farmer, Pattillo Industrial Real Estate
Joe Hix, Jackson EMC
Wendy Davis
Blake Mooser, Pendergrass Flea Market
Tom Mooser, Pendergrass Flea Market

Ms. Murphy welcomed attendees and offered an overview of the purpose of the lunch meeting. Jerry Weitz gave background about the comprehensive plan and the city's process of updating it. He indicated the city was seeking comments, among other topics, regarding how the city could better serve business and industry.

Noise regulation

There was discussion about the past effort to pass noise regulations in the city. Jefferson has been labeled "not ready for business" based discussion at certain metro Atlanta industry roundtables, due to the city's regulation of noise.

Education about the advantages of retaining industry

A central "take away" from the discussion was that there is a need to educate residents about the advantages of industry. One such effort is planned at one of the next Mayor's lunches (a monthly program of cities in Jackson County). Further, Jackson County's economic development council is another monthly forum that could assist in this effort. There is concern about the talk of residents about their perceived low level of contributions to the tax base and other economic activity. There needs to be a high-level effort to educate folks and put out some positive media about the benefits of industry. For instance, a one-million square foot warehouse will move a property from about \$3,000 per acre in taxes to \$500,000 per year in taxes, and that the taxes never leave the city. There was also a defense of the "speculative" warehouse building; a speculative building is an enticement for someone else to build; two to five companies locate to the area after a spec building is constructed; it has a ripple effect.

Labor force

The relationship of the city's housing stock to the labor force for industry was highlighted. Many of the industries in Jefferson draw their labor from other counties, not from the city's working residents. It is generally true that a majority of working city residents are employed outside the county, while it also appears true that a majority of the workers in Jackson County come from other counties. This creates a significant mismatch that is a recipe for traffic congestion, Weitz remarked. Industry representatives confirmed that their labor supply is coming mostly from other counties. Why is this? One reason is that households that have two warehouse workers making about \$15.00 per hour cannot afford housing in Jefferson. It was determined that the range of need for affordable homeownership is from \$175,000 to \$240,000. Jefferson is not as affordable as Gwinnett County. Also discussed was the lack of rental opportunities in Jefferson. One of the reasons why apartments are not getting built is because residential densities allowed by Jefferson's zoning are only 8 units per acre, when something like 14 units per acre is needed to make projects economical to pursue. There is a need for entry level apartments, condominiums and townhouses, as well as starter single-family housing.

Existing Industry Person

There was discussion about having a staff member devoted to existing industries. It was suggested that such a position would pay for itself multiple times. It was also suggested that area mayors come out and visit industries every other year.

Kubota expansion in Gainesville

Asked why Kubota chose to expand in Gainesville rather than in Jefferson, it was suggested that the decision was driven by multiple factors, including labor force advantages in Gainesville, more affordable housing in Gainesville, the "noise" regulation deterrent, and also the fact that the mother company was in Gainesville not Jefferson.

Development impact fees

Asked about receptiveness to impact fees, the group was negative to the idea and indicated that it could deter economic development and make it leapfrog to the next county.

Lack of Retail

Asked to explain why Jefferson was unable so far to attract retail development, it was suggested that Jefferson is in between two stronger retail market areas: Hamilton Mill and Banks Crossing/Commerce. Also, extensive retail needs traffic counts and while Jefferson is nearing what is needed (the bypass carries 25,000 vehicles a day), the interstate would be the driving factor.

**COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(SEPARATE COVER ATTACHED PDF)**