

PREFACE

THE CHALLENGE: PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Fayette County is a beautiful county. Rural scenes, natural areas, and open spaces provide a retreat from the congestion of the Atlanta metropolitan area. Fayette County's quality of life matches the beauty and serenity of its surroundings. Fayette County provides residents with quality educational facilities, easy access to the Atlanta metropolitan area, and a rural, family-oriented atmosphere. The challenge is to preserve the existing quality of life, while still accommodating the necessary and inevitable forces of change. Planning for growth is essential if Fayette County is to develop in a manner consistent with the wishes and desires of its residents, while providing opportunities for managed growth.

CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

Over the last ten years, Fayette County has experienced development pressures and its effects. The county's easy access to Hartsfield International Airport and downtown Atlanta, and its rural, low-density character, its low crime rate, and its quality schools have attracted many new residents. Nonresidential growth has closely followed this residential growth.

This comprehensive growth management plan seeks to position the county to respond firmly and fairly to both the residential and nonresidential development pressures. It provides standards and criteria against which to measure proposed development.

FUNDING FOR GROWTH

As Fayette County grows, the need and demand for services increases. With such rapid growth, the county's operating budget is stretched just to replace, maintain and upgrade existing facilities, roads, and public safety functions. Decisions on where to spend limited funds take on critical importance. This comprehensive land use plan will be used in conjunction with the County's Capital Improvement Program to plan for the physical development of the County.

THE VISION STATEMENT

The plan is developed to answer the following questions. "What do we really want Fayette County to become?" "What do we have as a county?" and "How can we accomplish what we want?" These aren't simple questions to answer. Any county starts out with benefits and opportunities inherent by its location, makeup, and special circumstances. This Comprehensive Plan creates a vision for the future of Fayette County. Essentially, what we want Fayette County

to be and to become is a county that is livable for its residents - a county that offers its residents the opportunity to live in an urban setting, a suburban subdivision, or on rural acreage. A county where residents can learn, shop, work, and plan, with pride, in safety and comfort. With livability as the plan's cornerstone, several broad visions come into focus:

OFFER CHOICE OF LIFE STYLE

Fayette County must provide alternative living styles. Opportunities for urban living in close proximity to the Atlanta metropolitan region must be balanced with opportunities for a suburban/rural lifestyle.

PRESERVE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Fayette County and its municipalities must each keep their own unique identity. They should grow and prosper according to their own chosen destiny. Care must be taken to ensure that they do not lose their individuality by growing together into one large metropolis in the county.

STIMULATE THE ECONOMY

To be livable is to be diverse and economically healthy. Economic development and the continued livability of an area go hand-in-hand. Neither improves without the other. Without economic development, if livability is the goal, it will be at the expense of the residential property owner.

SHARE RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Fayette County's future depends on its being a successful local and regional partner. Fayette County, its municipalities and its regional neighbors must incorporate mutual strategies which strive for the common good.

PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Fayette County's natural environment is a large part of its appeal. Current county regulations and the county's participation in the Georgia Greenspace Program seek to protect and preserve this natural environment. Water and land conservation are the most critical environmental concerns for Fayette County. Rapid and sometimes inappropriate development can damage water quality and supply and increase the risk of floods. Countywide decision-making is necessary to balance the need for ecological health and housing availability with environmental concerns.

COUNTY PROFILE

Fayette County covers 199 square miles and is comprised of the unincorporated county and five municipalities: Brooks, Fayetteville (County seat), Peachtree City, Tyrone; and Woolsey (see Figure ---). Located approximately 30 miles south of the City of Atlanta, Fayette County is an integral part of the Atlanta Metropolitan Region - a region that encompasses hundreds of square miles and over four million people - and is a member of the ten-county Atlanta Regional Commission. Up until the early 1980's, Fayette County was a rural farming community. The County's proximity to the Atlanta metropolitan area and, even more importantly, to Hartsfield International Airport, saw its population grow to 91,263 in the past twenty years, an increase of 214 percent (Figure --). Together, Fayette County and its municipalities offer a wide variety of lifestyles ranging from urban to suburban to rural.

GOALS FOR FAYETTE COUNTY

Beginning in 1985, the Fayette County Board of Commissioners approved a set of goals, objectives and policies which serve as a framework to guide the development of the Fayette County Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Over the years, through the participation of task forces, individual citizens, county staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Commissioners, these policy statements have continued to provide a common direction for the County's efforts in land use planning and to identify, in writing, what the County is striving to accomplish.

The Goals for Fayette County which follow are comprehensive, encompassing the various aspects of the planning function. They will provide the strategic focus for the development of Fayette County and for the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan that follow in their respective chapters.

Economic Development - Fayette County should provide for the continued development and expansion of a diversified economic base. The maintenance and enhancement of a prosperous economic climate provides Fayette County citizens with an increased tax base and expanded opportunities for employment. By providing expanded employment opportunities consistent with the demographic profile of Fayette County, the quality of life for Fayette County citizens is enhanced by reduced commute times and air quality is improved by reduced commute distance.

Housing - A variety of housing choices which are adequate, safe, and convenient for existing and future residents should be available in Fayette County. The availability of housing choices should be greatest in locations that are in close proximity to existing infrastructure and/or employment areas.

Natural and Cultural Resources - The amount and distribution of population density and land uses in the county should be consistent with environmental constraints which preserve natural resources and to meet or exceed federal, state, and local standards for water quality, ambient air quality, and other environmental standards. Development in the county should provide for the conservation and protection of the environment through the proper utilization and management of

the county's natural resources. The county should support the conservation of appropriate land areas in a natural state to preserve, protect, and enhance stream valleys, woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and plant and animal life in conjunction with the Georgia Greenspace Program, creating a system of public recreation and cultural spaces.

The county should provide a healthful, safe, productive, culturally satisfying and aesthetically pleasing environment that conserves and protects the historic, archaeological, and cultural resources of the community and ensures a high quality of life for all the residents of county.

Community Facilities and Services - Development in the county should be held to a level and rate which is consistent with the availability and adequacy of the county's community facilities. The provision of community facilities must ensure an adequate level of service for existing and future residents. Plans to provide for new community facilities and for the maintenance of existing community facilities should take into account financial limitations associated with increased needs for community facilities.

Transportation - Growth should be balanced with the supporting transportation infrastructure. Fayette County will continue to development a transportation system to move people and goods efficiently while minimizing environmental impact and community disruption. Further, the county should establish a framework to ensure the improvement and further development of the transportation system. Sidewalks and trails should be developed as an enhancement to transportation facilities.

Land Use - Growth and development should be consistent with the county's land use plan, which provides for the orderly, balanced and quality development of all land uses consistent with the physical and economic limitations of the county. Growth should take place in accordance with criteria and standards designed to preserve, enhance, and protect an orderly mix of residential, commercial/industrial facilities, and open space without compromising existing residential development.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Fayette County Comprehensive Plan consists of this planning document, the Land Use Map, and the Thoroughfare Plan Map. This planning document contains goals, objectives, policies and background information relating to six functional elements: Economic Development, Housing, Natural and Cultural Resources, Community Facilities and Services, Transportation, and Land Use. The goals, objectives and policies guide planning and development review by describing future development patterns in Fayette county and protecting natural and cultural resources for present and future generations.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide a concise statement of objectives, policies, and guidelines for implementing the county's goals that apply to future development in Fayette County, while protecting natural and cultural resources for present and future generations. It will serve as a general development and redevelopment guide for the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, county staff, and the citizens of Fayette County. The plan encompasses the anticipated changes to the county over the next twenty years. As required by Georgia law, the county will review this plan at least once every ten years.

SCOPE

The goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines are defined as follows:

- Goals provide general direction regarding the aspirations of the community;
- Objectives provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal:
- Policies are approaches for pursuing a given objective; providing guidance which, when pursued, will assist in implementing the objectives;
- Guidelines provide more explicit guidance for achieving policies.

This plan incorporates this structure into the following sections:

The Preface and Introduction presents the challenge, vision, and goals for Fayette County, which form the basis of county policy. This section also presents the purpose and scope of the Plan. It offers a profile of the county followed by a history of past county planning efforts. Finally, Plan implementation and monitoring, as well as the role of community participation, are addressed.

The Planning Elements section addresses county policy by specific planning element. This contains the goals, objectives, and policies for economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, community facilities and services, transportation, and land use. The purpose of this component is to guide decisions that affect the county's developed and natural environments.

The Appendix contains the Capital Improvements Element and the Short Term Work Program. The Capital Improvements Element addresses the imposition of impact fees for fire services for the unincorporated area, Brooks, Tyrone, and Woolsey. The Short Term Work Program identifies capital projects, service expansions, or other strategies to be implemented during the planning period.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The preparation of this plan follows the requirements of Georgia Law 1989, Chapter 110-3-2, Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures. The regulations provided in this chapter “. . . provide a framework to facilitate and encourage coordinated, comprehensive planning and development at the local, regional and state government levels.” The law stems from the Legislative Intent that “. . . the state has an essential public interest in promoting, developing, sustaining, and assisting coordinated and comprehensive planning by all levels of government.”

The law sets minimum standards to “. . . guide local governments through the coordinated and comprehensive planning process.” The law identifies six functional areas to use in preparing comprehensive plans. These are: economic development, housing, natural and historic resources, community facilities, and land use. Data on the general population must also be included. In addition to goals, policies, objectives, and guidelines, inventories and assessments are identified for each topic.

The local jurisdiction is required to conduct a comprehensive review of the Comprehensive Plan at least once every ten years or when major amendments to the plan occur.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS IN FAYETTE COUNTY

Planning efforts in Fayette County began in the mid 1970's with area development plans prepared by what is now the McIntosh Trail Regional Development Center. These were general land use plans prepared for the eight county area in the McIntosh Trail district. In 1978, the Land Use Committee of Fayette County had formulated “Adopted Resolutions Regarding Future Land Use.” These resolutions were incorporated into “A Land Use Plan For Fayette County, Georgia”, prepared by the McIntosh Trail Regional Development Center in the early 1980's. This land use plan was the first developed exclusively for Fayette County. The plan included a summary of the existing land use findings. It also included a briefing on land use planning constraints, future land use projections and policy recommendations for implementation. However, there is no record of this plan ever being officially adopted.

In 1985, the Board of Commissioners adopted a new Land Use Plan. Prepared by a consultant, the central purpose behind the 1985-2000 plan was “. . .to provide a realistic guide of framework for future development.” This plan presented goals, objectives and policies for Fayette County's growth and development. It also provided an inventory of existing land use conditions and detailed a future land use map for the county. This land use plan and map guided the county's development through the 1980's and, with various amendments, continues to guide county development decisions today.

The Fayette Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, adopted in 1991, was only the second major planning effort for Fayette County. However, it was the first to provide a growth management plan for the build-out of Fayette County. It pulled together the various elements

involved in the physical development of the county as required by the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures law (i.e. housing, natural and historic resources, economic development, community facilities, and land use), providing goals, objectives, inventory and analysis for each element.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION/PLAN MONITORING/CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION

The Fayette County Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic document which is actively used by the Board of Commissioners, the Fayette County Planning commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, County staff, and the public to guide decisions about the built and natural environment. There are a variety of ways to assure the dynamic nature of the Comprehensive Plan. One is to monitor the Plan on a frequent basis. This is accomplished not only by state mandate (every ten years at a minimum), but by Board of Commissioner policy to review the plan, or any section of the plan at any time depending on current activity or impending projects. Citizen participation is the foundation of the planning process in Fayette County and a wide range of participation opportunities assure active involvement of the public in County planning.

Implementation, monitoring and citizen participation mechanisms for the Comprehensive Plan are elaborated in the following sections.

MECHANISMS TO IMPLEMENT COUNTY PLANNING POLICY

The Comprehensive Plan - The Plan is, in itself, a mechanism for implementing the Board of Commissioners Goals for Fayette County. This is carried out through the Plan which contains countywide objectives and policies relating to the Goals. The Plan is used to guide decision-making for county issues and to guide existing implementation mechanisms, (i.e., provide direction for evaluation of zoning proposals).

The Zoning Ordinance - This ordinance and its accompanying maps prescribe both the size (intensity and bulk regulations) of lots and the uses which may be placed on the property. All property in the county is mapped to a certain zoning district. The Zoning Map, therefore, is a primary means by which the use and intensity for specific land use recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are implemented.

Subdivision Regulations - This is the basic tool for controlling the subdivision of land. It contains the regulations for dividing parcels of land into smaller building lots and the subsequent development of the land including the provision of public facilities, if required, to serve the lots so formed. Lots to be developed must conform to applicable zoning regulations.

Development Regulations - These regulations affect the use and intensity of land development. Included within the Development Regulations are the following regulations, requirements, and ordinances: Street Design Standards and Specifications; Flood Plain Regulations; Buffer and Landscape Requirements; Tree Retention, Protection, and Replacement; Watershed Protection Ordinance; Off-Street Parking and Service Requirements; Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance; Dam and Impoundment Design and Specifications; and Groundwater Recharge Area Protection Ordinance.

Capital Improvements Program - This document is a guide toward the efficient and effective provision of public facilities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) document is published annually and proposes the development, modernization or replacement of physical public projects over a multi-year period. The CIP shows the arrangement of projects in a sequential order based on a schedule of priorities set by the Board of Commissioners and assigns an estimated cost and anticipated method of financing for each project.

Programming capital facilities over time can promote better use of the county's limited financial resources and assist in the coordination of public and private development. In addition, the programming process is valuable as a means of coordinating among county agencies to avoid duplication of efforts and to take advantage of joint planning and development of facilities where possible. By looking beyond year to year budgeting to project what, where, when, and how capital investments should be made, capital programming enables public bodies to maintain an effective level of service to the present and future population.

Although this Comprehensive Plan provides a twenty-year projection of types of facilities and approximate measures to determine their numbers, timing of facility construction is dependent upon a number of variables. For example, in addition to the Capital Improvements Program, projects are evaluated on an annual basis through the county budget process, to determine viability in light of fiscal constraints. Additionally, facilities proposed now may not be necessary in the future due to any number of factors, such as the provision of services through the private sector or changes in Federal policy and/or funding.

MAINTAINING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The comprehensive plan is maintained to accurately reflect the county's current goals, objectives, policies and priorities. The plan will be amended when the conditions and/or policies on which the plan is based, have significantly changed so as to materially detract from the usefulness of the comprehensive plan as a guide to local decision making.

Updates to the comprehensive plan shall occur, at a minimum, approximately every ten years, as required by the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures Act. However, the Board of Commissioners may determine when the comprehensive plan needs a substantive update, based upon the degree of change in the community. If little has changed, revisions to the plan may be

sufficient, in the form of plan amendments. If substantive changes occur or if the data upon which the plan is based becomes outdated, a complete update of the comprehensive plan (or a major plan amendment) can be initiated.

In addition to the comprehensive plan document, the county updates the Short Term Work Program (see Appendix) on an annual basis due to the imposition of impact fees. This is the implementation program where the county identifies capital improvements, service expansions, or other strategies to be implemented during the planning period. Each annual update includes a new fifth year and any changes to any other year's work program.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Community involvement is important, both to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan is being implemented as intended and to ensure that the Plan reflects current needs, through periodic review. A variety of opportunities exist for a member of the community to become active in the planning process, including the following:

- Plan Maintenance/Amendment Process:
- Special Study Task Forces:
- Board-Appointed Commissions
- The County Budget Process and the Capital Improvements Program:
- County Authorities

The list above describes the highlights of the opportunities available to the community to become involved in the planning process. Even if a citizen is not a member of an organized group, he or she can:

- Follow local issues in the press and on the county's web site;
- Attend public hearings to voice opinions;
- Vote on bond issues;
- Attend meetings of the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Commission, and other commissions and authorities;
- Be active in a neighborhood association to monitor local planning and zoning activity.

All of these aspects of public participation strengthen the planning process by tapping the community's most important resource, those who have a stake in enhancing the community's quality of life.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLANNING ELEMENTS

SCOPE

The following sections of the plan contain the county's goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines for seven planning elements.

- Population
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Community Facilities and Services
- Transportation
- Land Use

The planning elements share a common structure. Each element contains the three-step planning process as required by the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning. The three steps are: (1) Inventory of Existing Conditions, (2) Assessment of Current and Future Needs, and (3) Articulation of Goals and an Associated Implementation Program. The first two steps provide an overview of the issues facing the county, both now and over the next twenty years. These are followed by the appropriate Goal that pertains to the corresponding element. The goals are followed by objectives, each with its own set of policies and action agenda items.

The approach used to develop the content of this document involved working through a logical progression from general goals to increasingly more specific objectives, policies and, in some cases, guidelines and/or standards. Goals are broad statements of the county's aspirations. Objectives, the next step in the hierarchy, have been derived from key points that are stated in or implied by the goals. Thus, objectives are statements that provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal. Policies have been derived from the objectives. These policies are approaches for pursuing a given objective. Adopted in the Plan, the policies give guidance, which when pursued, will assist in implementing the objectives. Guidelines and standards, in turn, give more detailed direction for implementing some of the policies.