



**Georgia EMC**

City of Canton

# **Strategic Planning Retreat**

March 9-11, 2016

Facilitation provided on behalf of

**Cobb EMC**



**STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT  
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The participants were then asked to outline their vision and wishes for the City of Canton under each of the following categories:

**RECREATION AND AMENITIES**

- Handicap friendly playground equipment at our parks
- Senior Playground
- Trail System Completed by 2020 with connections to Woodstock and Cobb County Trails
- Indoor Gym
- Community Center
- Riverwalk in Downtown
- Make River more usable
- Add boat launches
- Trail from Walgreens at Riverstone to Waleksa
- Connect neighborhoods and areas of the City with sidewalks and trails
- Create ordinances that encourage Low Speed Vehicles (LSV)
- Add charging stations for electric vehicles
- Consider adding requirements in development codes to add charging stations at neighborhood clubhouses
- Amphitheatre
- Technology Infrastructure as a local amenity
- Expand WiFi throughout City Parks
- Zip Line Course
- Connect Northside Hospital to Downtown with gondola
- Cultural Arts Center/ Artist Colony at River Mill
- Dogs welcome in all city parks
- Small Convention/Meeting Center
- Public art throughout city and at parks
- Recruit higher end department stores
- Acquire more park lands
- Unique Retail- Makers Space/Boutique Shops
- Need more professional office space in Downtown Canton
- Expand the boundaries of Downtown to the funeral home
- More communication between the DDA/Main Street/Mayor and Council
- Create a Council Liaison position with the DDA
- Set expectations for each community organization with a focus on specific projects to be completed
- City Employee to manage Arts & Culture/Marketing & PR
- Attract redevelopment of the Jones Building

**SAFETY AND SECURITY**

- Increase presence of Police between I-575 and Main Street
- Increase administrative support staff for Code Enforcement
- Code Enforcement should always run a title report on properties being considered for demolishing
- Create a Blight Inventory (or Rental Property Registry)
- Fire Service- Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate whether or not it would be beneficial to consolidate services

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**TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Connection to Atlanta
- Commuter Rail
- Attract Millennials
- More discussion with GRETA about becoming a hub for regional transit
- Traffic flows and parking in Downtown
- Parking enforcement
- Relocate all day users (City Employees, Business Employees, etc.)
- Construct parking deck in Downtown
- Design creative ordinances to create funding in Downtown
- Pavement and sidewalk management system in Downtown
- Better pedestrian signage
- Have cameras in Downtown to be monitored by Police
- Need to expand wastewater treatment capacity
- Need to expand water treatment facility
- Create a Water and Wastewater Master Plan for the next 20 years

**HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Maintain prevalence single family homes
- Diversify what is characterized as "Single Family" to attract more Millennials
- Limit annexation for Multifamily Housing
- Investigate current development agreements (add sunset restrictions)
- Create an ordinance to require Site Plan Specific Master Plans
- Attract more commercial development at the Bluffs
- Give more instruction about the City's Economic Development goals

**TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Create a Public Information Officer for the City
- Be proactive with utility service
- Transfer all meters to electronic readers to help monitor leaks
- Let homeowners know if work will be done on their property
- Redesign budget to be more digestible/visual for residents

**ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES**

The City Manager led a discussion about the Issues and Opportunities facing the City of Canton. Following the discussion, the ideas were grouped into goals under each of the following 6 categories:

**RECREATION & AMENITIES**

- Develop Design and Master Plan for City Wide Trails
- YMCA
- Community/Recreation Center Concept
- City Managed Recreation Programs
- Community Garden at Juniper Park

**SAFETY AND SECURITY**

- Feasibility Study of the Future of Fire Services
- Organization of Code Enforcement, Including Review of Ordinances
- Assessment of Police Staffing Needs

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**TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Master Plan for Water and Wastewater
- Study and Plan for Street Maintenance
- Parking Deck
- Regional Transportation Opportunities(GRETA)
- Downtown Parking Management and Enforcement

**HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Review of Current Unbuilt Zoning
- Review of Codes Related to Zoning (Site Plan Specific)
- Develop a Rental Property Registry
- Define Blight and Develop a Management Plan
- Develop a Plan for Low Income Housing

**TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Create a Communications Department for the City
- Convert to Wireless Utility Meters
- Review all City Boards and Authorities
- Appoint a Council Liaison for All City Authorities
- Hold Town Hall Meetings for Each Ward

**COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES**

- Re-envision the Bluffs
- Add Arts and Culture to City Programming
- Partner with Northside for Future Development
- Become a Millennial Enclave

**PRIORITY GOALS FOR 2016/2017**

The participants then voted on which goals should be the highest priority for the City in 2016. The following are the 8 priority goals for 2016. The goals are listed in order of highest priority.

1. CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

2. DEVELOP A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF FIRE SERVICES

3. DEFINE BLIGHT AND DEVELOP A MANAGEMENT PLAN

4. DEVELOP A MASTER PLAN FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER

5. REVIEW CURRENT UNBUILT ZONING

6. RE-ENVISION THE BLUFFS

7. DEVELOP A MASTER PLAN FOR CITY WIDE TRAILS

8. PARTNER WITH NORTHSIDE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

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## ACTION PLANNING

For each priority goal, the participants identified a Task Master, the partners and resources needed to accomplish the goal and the next steps that will be taken. The Task Master is the person who is responsible for checking in with the group about the progress of the goal.

### PRIORITY GOAL 1: CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

**Partners:** Camille, Department Heads, Pacer, Qualified Branding Firm, Local Media

**Resources:** Nathan, Hotel/Motel Funds, Budget Surplus

**Next Steps:**

- Create a job description and plan of action for the new position
- Task the Communications Department with public engagement strategies
- Advertise RFQ for the branding firm
- Communications Department could be a point person for special events, liaison with city groups, improving the City's website, customer service messaging and branding management
- "Community Outreach Liaison" or "Communications Director"

**Task Master:** Bill Grant

### PRIORITY GOAL 2: DEVELOP A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF FIRE SERVICES

**Partners:** Cherokee County Fire Department, E911, City of Canton Fire Department, Independent 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Consultant, GMA, Fire Association, Other Cities

**Next Steps:**

- Review existing services and compare to Cherokee County and other communities
- Look at shift organizations (24 hr vs 12 hr)
- Discuss the needs of equipment and best practices for deployment
- Discuss future plans with Cherokee County Fire Services (station locations)
- Billy Peppers will reach out to other communities that offer their own fire services inside of counties where both services are paid employees (no volunteers)
- Bring all data back to Council

**Task Master:** Billy Peppers

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**PRIORITY GOAL 3: DEFINE BLIGHT & DEVELOP A MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Partners:** Code Enforcement, City Attorney, Building Inspections, Fire Inspections, International Property Maintenance, Judge Roach, Chief Mitchell

**Resources:** GMA, Other Communities with a Blight Tax

**Next Steps:**

- Review the Urban Development Code (UDC) on the definition of blight
- Determine which portion is blight and which is nuisance
- Review other cities' code enforcement structure
- Implement a call number to allow citizens to report concerns or complaints
- Create additional oversight for all demolition orders
  - o Before there are any official court orders to tear down, City Council will have an opportunity to review
- Partner with the Housing Authority to create an incentive plan or add an additional tax to properties deemed "blighted"

**Task Master: Chief Mitchell**

**PRIORITY GOAL 4: DEVELOP A MASTERPLAN FOR WATER & WASTEWATER**

**Partners:** Utility Partners, Small group to review RFQ's, Cherokee County and Cobb County Water & Sewer

**Resources:** RFQ for engineering firm that specializes in Water and Wastewater

**Next Steps:**

- Contact County Water Department for engineering firm references
- Dave Hatabian will develop a RFQ
- Have County Water Department review RFQ
- Advertise RFQ

**Task Master: Dave Hatabian**

**PRIORITY GOAL 5: REVIEW CURRENT UNBUILT ZONING**

**Partners:** Ken Patton, City Attorney, Steve Green, Susan Stanton, Camille Wehs, Matthew Thomas, Pat Gold

**Resources:** List of existing apartment units, List of what's been approved, Current Zoning Map

**Next Steps:**

- Map out to date built and unbuilt apartments
- Evaluate viability of unbuilt apartments

**Task Master: Ken Patton**

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**PRIORITY GOAL 6: RE-ENVISION THE BLUFFS**

**Partners:** TPA, Misti Martin, Commercial Property Developers, Current Property Developers, Chattahoochee Tech, Cherokee County, Cherokee County Schools, Fire Departments (City and County), Realtors Association, Public Input

**Next Steps:**

- Meet with TPA to identify future plans
- Engage private firm for highest and best use
- Reach out to the Technical College System of Georgia for partnership/future plans
- Partner with the Development Authority to purchase property for an industrial park
- Partner with GDOT to make Fate Conn Road more accessible
- Look at current zoning
- Specifically recruit light industrial then repurpose other lands

**Task Master: Matthew Thomas**

**PRIORITY GOAL 7: DEVELOP A MASTER PLAN FOR CITY WIDE TRAILS**

**Partners:** Army Corps of Engineers, Boy Scouts (Dan Owen), GDOT, Green Prints, Riverkeepers, Northside Hospital, UAC, Cherokee County Parks Department, Other Cherokee County Cities, GPC, Current and Future Developers, Cherokee County, Tom Gilliam, Bo Morris

**Resources:** Atkins Concept, Sponsorships, SPLOST, Impact Fees, DNR grants, current development ordinances, Woodstock's Trail Plans for reference, SORBA

**Next Steps:**

- Identify potential sponsors
- Inventory what we have and see where the opportunities are
- Utilize as much of the Atkins concept as possible
- Assemble a core group of community stakeholders interested in this
- Create a sidewalk overlay
- Encourage development staff to look at Complete Streets Ordinances
- Hold a Town Hall meeting with Greenprints
- Add representation from Canton to the Greenprints board

**Task Master: Billy Peppers**



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**PRIORITY GOAL #8: PARTNER WITH NORTHSIDE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

**Partners:** Northside Hospital, Atlanta Northside Board of Directors

**Next Steps:**

- Questions to ask:
  - How can we partner on future development?
  - What will happen to the old hospital?
  - What are the plans for land around the new hospital?
  - Do you have a Master Plan for the site?
  - What is the long term goal for the new hospital?
  - What is the plan for transportation at Highway 140?
  - How do we set up direct communication?
  - How can we help to recruit doctors and nurses to Canton?

**Task Master:** Billy Peppers

**WRAP UP & ADJOURN**

Facilitator Carrie Barnes closed by telling the group she enjoyed working with them on behalf of Cobb EMC and looks forward to working with them in the future. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.