

Gwinnett County
2009-2014 Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments
And
2014-2019 Short Term Work Program

I. Introduction

This document is Part 1 of the first update of the Gwinnett County 2030 Unified Plan since its adoption in 2009. Part 1 consists of a 5-Year Short Term Work Program (STWP) Update under the old local planning rules (Chapter 110-12-1-.08(3)(c)(ii) *Five-Year Short Term Work Program Update Option*). The intent is to complete Part 2, which is to be a more comprehensive plan update that will include Community Goals; Community Needs and Opportunities; Community Work Program; Community Land Use Element; and, a Fiscal Analysis, by the end of 2014.

This document includes plan accomplishments from the previous Short Term Work Program (2009-2014) and describes initiatives or programs that are planned to address the needs of the community during the next five years (2014-2019).

II. Public Participation and Notification

November 2013 - A legal notice was published in the Gwinnett Daily Post advertising the update of the Short Term Work Program.

November 2013 - Draft copies of this document were made available for viewing at the office of the Department of Planning & Development at One Justice Square, and posted on the Gwinnett County Website.

December 2013 – The Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to transmit this document to the Atlanta Regional Commission (December 4th)

-A Public Hearing will be held before the Board of Commissioners regarding the update of the Short Term Work Program (December 17th).

-The Board of Commissioners will adopt the update of the Short Term Work Program (December 17th)

III. Short Term Work Program

The Short Term Work Program is a key implementation tool, which reflects those activities and strategies the local government has chosen to be undertaken in the current five-year period.

The section below highlights major accomplishments Gwinnett County has completed since the last STWP was submitted. This is followed by the new STWP that describes the major actions to be undertaken to further implement the goals of the 2030 Unified Plan. Following each section is a spreadsheet description of all the planning activities.

A. Report on Accomplishments

Maintain Economic Development and Fiscal Health

i. **Policy A.1.1: Promote Major Mixed-Use Developments.** The County is in the process of completing a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). This new ordinance will include three new mixed-use zoning districts of varying intensities. The first, Neighborhood Mixed-Use (MU-N), is to promote complementary groupings of small-scale mixed-use buildings that are within walking distance and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. It is the intent of this district to provide for diverse housing options to accommodate multigenerational communities with a range of residential building forms, lot sizes and dwelling sizes and neighborhood-oriented retail, services and low intensity office uses that are within convenient walking distances. The second, Community Mixed-Use (MU-C) is to promote complementary groupings of community-scale mixed-use buildings and activity areas along commercial corridors at locations that have adequate infrastructure and transportation access. The intent of this district is to promote diverse uses, including places of employment, shopping and commercial services, varied housing options for multigenerational communities within pedestrian and bicycle friendly mixed-use activity centers and corridors that are compatible with established surrounding neighborhoods. The third, Regional Mixed-Use (MU-R) is to encourage the development, redevelopment or revitalization of commercial and residential areas along major transportation corridors into vibrant, high density, pedestrian friendly, live-work-play environments that offer employees and residents the opportunity to fulfill their daily activities with minimal use of single-occupant automobiles. The intent of this district is to allow flexibility in design standards and high density residential development in exchange for innovative and high standards inclusive of landscaping, green space, urban space, and public amenities within a distinct, unified theme that can improve the viability of the development and surrounding communities.

ii. **Policy A.1.2: Designate large, well-located parcels/areas for office use.** This is an initiative that will begin in earnest in 2014. It is expected to be a joint effort between planning and economic development staff and the staff of Partnership Gwinnett using GIS technology along with various data regarding office needs for the County. The outcome of this effort will help to produce the highest form of sustainable economic development which is vital to the long-term economic health of Gwinnett.

iii. **A.1.6: Promote University Parkway (Hwy 316) as Gwinnett's Research and Development Corridor/Grade Separation along Highway 316.** The 2030 Unified Plan identified the Highway 316 Corridor as a prime area to further develop into a Research and Development Corridor. The corridor presently has a number of resources to serve to anchor further high tech-biotech development, including the recently expanded Gwinnett Medical Center, existing industrial parks, Briscoe Field, the Georgia Gwinnett College and Gwinnett Technical College. With the two ongoing Georgia DOT interchange grade separation projects scheduled to complete in 2015, the corridor is moving toward becoming a limited access parkway, which will contribute to its success as a Research and Development Corridor. The Unified Development Ordinance incorporates several new zoning districts which are designed to attract high tech-biotech employees to live, work and play in the County. A Sector Plan for the corridor was initiated concurrent with the development of the UDO in 2010 and will be completed during 2014. This Sector Plan will identify additional initiatives and activities to promote this as a Research and Development Corridor.

iv. **Policy A.1.8: Obtain appropriate balance of retail.** This is an initiative that we plan to pursue in 2014/2015. The 2030 Unified Plan recognized that certain areas of Gwinnett appear to be over-served by conventional retail development, resulting in lower dollar per square foot yields on retail floor space. Since the economic downturn in 2008, the number of empty stores and declining strip centers has increased significantly. The Unified Development Ordinance includes some incentives to encourage redevelopment of these vacant and under-performing retail centers into a wider mix of

retail/office/residential uses. Further work will be jointly done by planning and economic development staff to identify other potential solutions to this unbalance over the next couple of years.

v. **Policy A.1.4: Use Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) for rural estate housing in the eastern portion of Gwinnett.** As part of the Unified Development Ordinance, a study was initiated on Transfer of Development Rights. The study outlined the benefits of such a program, serving to educate both staff and elected officials regarding TDR programs, and included a hypothetical TDR sending and receiving program analysis for the County. This study will be finalized, with recommendations on whether to proceed with a TDR program or to pursue other options to accomplish 2030 Unified Plan goals, in 2014.

vi. **Policy A.1.7: Employ debt financing for major infrastructure.** Gwinnett County has a long history of using a “pay as you go” approach to financing major infrastructure. The Unified Plan recommended that the County begin to explore other options, primarily debt financing, in order to provide needed County infrastructure going forward due to several factors, including reductions in State and Federal funding opportunities and tax revenue decreases during challenging economic times. Since the adoption of the 2030 Unified Plan, debt financing has been utilized to construct two major wastewater projects totaling over \$300M, the Yellow River Water Reclamation Facility Expansion and the Reuse Line to Lake Lanier.

vii. **Policy A.1.5: Revise millage rates.** During the development of the 2030 Unified Plan, it was identified that Gwinnett County was heavily reliant on SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) revenues, developer fees and new development property taxes to raise revenues necessary to provide services and maintain and construct County infrastructure over the past years. This made the County highly dependent on that continued growth and development which was beginning to taper off by the time that the 2030 Unified Plan was adopted. Fiscal analysis showed that the County needs to maintain or increase the millage rate as property values increase, in order to allow tax revenues to increase to sustain funding for necessary services and infrastructure. In December 2009, the County raised the millage rate to restore some key services that had been cut during that year due to slowed growth and decreased property values.

viii. **Policy A.1.3: Strategic Placement of Sewer.** The 2030 Unified Plan fiscal analysis concluded that for Gwinnett County to be sustainable into the future, it would be necessary to encourage higher density redevelopment along major corridors that were already served by sanitary sewer, and to perhaps limit sewer extensions in the eastern part of the County in order to preserve funding for office, mixed-use employment and hospital expansions in key locations. The analysis was based on the assumption that this higher density redevelopment would require major upgrades of the already existing sewer system to accommodate the increase in wastewater flows. Based on this assumption, it was concluded that the County could not afford to construct both the upgrades necessary along with the new large sewers to serve the entire outlying eastern County. Following the adoption of the 2030 Unified Plan, a 2030 Water and Wastewater Master Plan (Master Plan) was completed. Extensive hydraulic modeling of the existing sewer system was performed during this project, utilizing projected wastewater flows from the redeveloped corridors identified in the 2030 Unified Plan. Modeling demonstrated that in actuality, the magnitude of sewer system shortfalls was significantly less than had been assumed in the 2030 Unified Plan. Only a handful of both short and long-term sewer projects were identified to be needed in the Master Plan. The Department of Planning and Development works closely with the Department of Water Resources to monitor flows in key locations throughout the entire sewer system in order to have a realistic idea of when specific system improvements will be needed. Projects

that have been fully demonstrated to be necessary will be added to the Capital Improvements Program in the Department of Water Resources in order to have them in place when needed. Priority is given to projects to serve office, mixed-use employment and hospital expansions to ensure that infrastructure is in place to support sustainable development/redevelopment.

Foster Redevelopment

i. **Policy A.2.3: Use Tax Allocation Districts (TADs).** The 2030 Unified Plan recommended that Gwinnett County consider the use of TADs to fund infrastructure and other improvements needed to promote mixed-use development or redevelopment projects. TADs pledge the difference between the current taxed value of property and the future tax value of properties within a designated area to finance bonds that pay for improvements in that specific area. The increase in tax revenue is based on the increased value of the property, not on a tax increase. Since the adoption of the 2030 Unified Plan, much has occurred on this front. The Georgia General Assembly took action to allow revenue from School taxes to support TADs, which led to the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners implementing TADs in the County. The Department of Planning & Development, along with the Community Improvement Districts in the County, have created five TADs within the County. The timing of the creation of these TADs was unfortunate, in that the tax value was frozen at the height of the market, right before the economic downturn in 2009. Since that time, property values in the TADs, actually across the region, have dropped considerably, negating the benefits of the TAD. Gwinnett plans to reset the property values in the TADs over the next year, which should return the positive benefit to investment in TAD areas and will hopefully encourage that investment.

ii. **Policy A.2.1: Institute a variety of Redevelopment Incentives and Bonuses.** The Unified Development Ordinance includes a new Regional Mixed-Use zoning district that encourages redevelopment of commercial and residential areas along major transportation corridors into vibrant, high density, pedestrian friendly, live-work-play environments that offer employees and residents the opportunity to fulfill their daily activities with minimal use of single-occupant automobiles. This zoning district provides bonuses to developers in return for additional desired amenities to help to level the playing field with greenfield development. Specifically, the bonuses offered are in the form of additional Floor-Area Ratio (FAR) which in turn converts to additional building height and residential density. These bonuses are additive up to a total maximum FAR of 5.0 from the base FAR of 0.4. Examples of the desired amenities include additional common area, conservation of environmentally sensitive areas, enhanced greenspace, structured parking, vertical mixed-use, additional office space, parcel assemblages, transit support facilities, sustainable design, additional multiuse paths, and regional stormwater facilities.

Maintain Mobility and Accessibility

i. **Policy A.3.3: Enhance incident management (traffic control center).** The 2030 Unified Plan identified enhanced incident management as a viable and inexpensive method of reducing traffic congestion and increasing roadway safety. Since 2009, various ITS improvement projects, incorporating the latest technology, have seamlessly integrated the local road system with GDOT's statewide Navigator System. Gwinnett County DOT has also implemented numerous improvements to the County's Smart Commute Program.

ii. **Policy A.3.1: Enhance signal coordination and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS).** The 2030 Unified Plan identified this as a cost effective way to increase the efficiency of the existing road

system. The Gwinnett County DOT has installed several miles of ITS infrastructure along major arterials since 2009. This program will continue as funds allow, with the installation of additional fiber optic communications cable and CCTV cameras.

iii. **Policy A.3.2: Manage access on arterials.** The 2030 Unified Plan recommended that Gwinnett County strengthen its' access management program. A more integrated access management system would serve to reduce congestion, improve roadway safety and therefore increase the overall roadway capacity. The Unified Development Ordinance includes development requirements that will both limit driveway cuts and regulate distances from intersections.

iv. **Policy A.3.7: Prioritize strategic road widenings and new road alignments.** The 2030 Unified Plan recognized the benefit of a coordinated program of road capacity improvement projects. The Gwinnett DOT staff continually monitors traffic counts and recurring congestion to identify capital improvement projects. Levels of Service thresholds are used to help determine potential 2-to-4 lane widening, 4-to-6 lane widening and 6-to-8 lane widening projects. Development patterns and travel demand forecasting software are used to plan new roadway alignments.

v. **Policy A.3.6: Prioritize transit system initiatives.** In May 2010, the County completed the Gwinnett County Transit "Five Year Transit Development Plan". This plan prioritized transit system initiatives for the years 2009-2014 in order to make Gwinnett County Transit a sustainable operation.

Provide More Housing Choices

i. **Policy A.4.2: Preserve existing workforce housing.** The 2030 Unified Plan emphasized the importance of workforce housing in order to fill service sector jobs in a community. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) is a component of Gwinnett County's program to acquire and rehabilitate vacant and foreclosed housing in the County. Once the rehabilitation is completed, those homes are sold to income qualified homebuyers. One of the major targets for selling these homes has been the current Gwinnett County workforce. To date, the NSP has acquired, rehabilitated, and sold 123 homes in Gwinnett County. The Unified Development Ordinance also includes a new Traditional Neighborhood District (TND) which requires a variety of lot sizes and housing types in a single development. This includes single-family detached, single-family attached, villas, live-work units and accessory dwellings. This variety would be expected to appeal to multiple income levels.

Keep Gwinnett a Preferred Place

i. **Policy A.5.1: Improve walkability of activity centers and neighborhoods.** The 2030 Unified Plan recognized the benefits of providing walking and biking access for daily activities to citizens. The Department of Community Services is presently updating the Gwinnett County Open Space and Greenway Master Plan which prioritizes bike and pedestrian trail routes identified in the original master plan. The prioritization of the trails was based on weighted factors such as trail proximity to libraries, schools and County owned land. Trail proximity to commercial uses and residential land use was also included.

ii. **Policy A.5.6: expand presence of the "arts community".** Communities that have a strong array of cultural attractions and businesses that support the arts strongly appeal to a creative class of workers, strengthening the overall economy. Most of these are privately run, or run by non-profit organizations. However, having a strong County-wide organization to promote and link these activities

would enhance the quality of life in the community. In 2009, an informal group of representatives from within the arts community in Gwinnett began meeting to begin discussing the formation of such an organization. This organization, ArtWorks!, became a formal 501c3 non-profit organization in October of 2010. ArtWorks! hired its first Executive Director in 2011, and has continued to grow since that time.

iii. **Policy A.5.3: Invest in youth enrichment programs.** The 2030 Unified Plan recommended that Gwinnett increase its investment in activities for young people as a crime deterrent and to provide healthy learning environments for youth. The Department of Community Services presently offers a multitude of programs, including Doc in the Park; Youth Sports; Environmental Heritage Center Daycare Programs; Special Events; 4H Leadership; Robotics; Health and Nutrition Program; and an After-School Program at Centerville Elementary School.

iv. **Policy A.5.2: Support/Promote Georgia Gwinnett College.** Gwinnett County is home to the newest four year public college in Georgia. It has grown from 113 students in 2006 to nearly 10,000 in 2013. The opportunities and benefits of having this college in the County are numerous. Gwinnett County fully understands the importance of support and promoting the college and works together with the college to determine needs and opportunities. Specifically, the Gwinnett County DOT has done/will do several projects to alleviate traffic conditions in and around the campus. Examples of these are the Walther Boulevard Grade Separation; Collins Hill/SR 20 Grade Separation; Pedestrian pathways; and, Tree Creek Boulevard.

v. **Policy A.5.7: Provide incentives for neighborhood parks and enhanced open space/trails dedications.** The 2030 Unified Plan recognized the importance of the preservation of open space in a rapidly developing county. In order to ensure adequate open space in the future, the Department of Community Services has met with several CID's to encourage the inclusion of privately owned and maintained plazas and other open space in developments in the CID areas where there is a shortage of public parks. The Unified Development Ordinance also includes several new zoning districts that provide incentives to encourage neighborhood parks and open space.

vi. **Policy A.5.4: Enhance development aesthetics.** Promoting high-quality development is a strategy for attracting top quality employers and affluent residents. In order to improve the design quality of developments in the County, the Unified Development Ordinance is including in the appendices enhanced Architectural Standards and a set of Design Guidelines. The Architectural Standards are required architectural elements and regulations that will provide a higher quality built environment. The Design Guidelines document is a set of photographs and sketches that illustrate desired building elements that the County would like to see incorporated into new projects.

Report of Accomplishments: Gwinnett County Short Term Work Program 2009-2014					
		Status			
Policy Number	Description	Complete	Underway	Postponed	Notes/Reason Postponed or Dropped
Maintain Economic Development and Fiscal Health					
1.1,2,2	Promote major Mixed Use Developments		✓		The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) introduces three new mixed use zoning districts.
1.2	Designate large, well-located parcels/areas for office use			✓	Plan to address this in 2014/2015
1.6	Promote University Parkway (Hwy 316) as Gwinnett's Research and Development Corridor			✓	Research and Development Corridor Sector Plan was initiated as part of the UDO Project. It will be completed in 2014.
	Grade separation along Highway 316		✓		Grade separation at Collins Hill Road and SR 20 under construction; scheduled completion March 2015; Federal highway funds
1.8	Obtain appropriate balance of retail			✓	Plan to address this in 2014/2015
1.4	Use Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) for rural estate housing in East			✓	A study on TDR's was initiated as part of the UDO Project. It will be completed in 2014.
1.7	Employ debt financing for major infrastructure		✓		Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources and Gwinnett County Public Schools have used debt financing
1.5	Revise millage rates	✓			Millage rate increase in 2009 http://www.gwinnettcountry.com/portal/gwinnett/Home/HiddenPage/Millage
1.3	Strategic placement of sewer		✓		Completed 2030 Master Plan; evaluated sewer needs in employment centers; identified shortfalls
Foster Redevelopment					
2.3	Use Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)	✓			Gwinnett County has five TADs
2.1	Institute a variety of redevelopment incentives/bonuses		✓		The UDO adds new zoning districts that have redevelopment incentives and bonuses to encourage redevelopment.
Maintain Mobility and Accessibility					
3.3	Enhance incident management (traffic control center)		✓		Since 2009, various ITS improvement projects, incorporating the latest technology, seamlessly integrate the local system with GDOT's statewide NaviGator system. Improvements to the GC Smart Commute program have also been implemented.
3.1	Enhance signal coordination and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)		✓		The Gwinnett County Department of Transportation has installed several miles of ITS infrastructure along major arterials since 2009. As funds allow, additional fiber optic communications cable and CCTV cameras will be installed.
3.2	Manage access on arterials		✓		UDO limits driveway cuts and distances from intersections.
3.7	Prioritize strategic road widenings and new road alignments		✓		County staff continually monitors traffic counts and recurring congestion to identify capital improvement projects. Levels of Service thresholds are used to help determine potential 2-to-4 lane widening, 4-to-6 lane widening and 6-to-8 lane widening projects. Development patterns and travel demand forecasting software are used to plan new roadway alignments
3.6	Prioritize transit system initiatives	✓			The Gwinnett County Transit "Five Year Transit Development Plan" was completed in May 2010.

Report of Accomplishments: Gwinnett County Short Term Work Program 2009-2014					
		Status			
Policy Number	Description	Complete	Underway	Postponed	Notes/Reason Postponed or Dropped
Provide More Housing Choice					
4.2	Preserve existing workforce housing		✓		The Neighborhood Stabilization Program works within Gwinnett County to acquire and rehabilitate vacant and foreclosed housing. Once the rehabilitation is completed those homes are sold to income qualified homebuyers. <i>[One of our target markets for selling these home is the current Gwinnett County workforce.]</i> To date the NSP Program has acquired, rehabilitated, and sold 123 homes in Gwinnett County.
Keep Gwinnett a Preferred Place					
5.1	Improve walkability of activity centers and neighborhoods		✓		Community Services is updating the Gwinnett County Open Space and Greenway Master Plan which prioritized bike and pedestrian trail routes identified in the original master plan. The prioritization of the trails was based on weighted factors such as trail proximity to libraries, schools and county owned land. Trail proximity to commercial uses and residential land use was also included.
5.6	Expand presence of "arts community"	✓			ArtWorks Gwinnett! hired their first Executive Director in 2011.
5.3	Invest in youth enrichment programs		✓		Community Services offers/is working on the following programs: Doc in the Park; Lacrosse; Environmental Heritage Center Daycare Programs; Special Events; 4 H Leadership; Robotics; Health and Nutrition; After School Program at Centerville Elementary
5.2	Support/promote Georgia Gwinnett College		✓		Gwinnett County DOT has done/will do several things to support/promote Georgia Gwinnett College by alleviating traffic conditions in/around the campus. (Walther Blvd Grade Separation; Collins Hill/SR 20 Grade Separaton; Pedestrian pathways; Tree Creek Blvd).
5.7	Provide incentives for neighborhood parks and enhanced open space/trails dedications		✓		The Department of Community Services has met with several CID's encouraging privately owned and maintained plazas and other open space be provided in developments. The UDO also includes new zoning districts that provide incentives to encourage neighborhood parks and open space.
5.4	Enhance development aesthetics		✓		The UDO includes new Design Guidelines and enhanced Architectural Standards to improve development aesthetics.

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Policy Number	Description	Ongoing	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Description
Provide More Housing Choice									
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Keep Gwinnett a Preferred Place									
5.1	Improve walkability of activity centers and neighborhoods	✓							Community Services is updating the Gwinnett County Open Space and Greenway Master Plan which prioritized bike and pedestrian trail routes identified in the original master plan. The prioritization of the trails was based on weighted factors such as trail proximity to libraries, schools and county owned land. Trail proximity to commercial uses and residential land use was also included.
5.6	Expand presence of "arts community"	✓							ArtWorks Gwinnett! hired their first Executive Director in 2011.
5.3	Invest in youth enrichment programs	✓							Community Services offers/is working on the following programs: Doc in the Park; Lacrosse; Environmental Heritage Center Daycare Programs; Special Events; 4 H Leadership; Robotics; Health and Nutrition; After School Program at Centerville Elementary
5.2	Support/promote Georgia Gwinnett College	✓							Gwinnett County DOT has done/will do several things to support/promote Georgia Gwinnett College by alleviating traffic conditions in/around the campus. (Walther Blvd Grade Separation; Collins Hill/SR 20 Grade Separaton; Pedestrian pathways; Tree Creek Blvd).
5.7	Provide incentives for neighborhood parks and enhanced open space/trails dedications	✓							The Department of Community Services has met with several CID's encouraging privately owned and maintained plazas and other open space be provided in developments. The UDO also includes new zoning districts that provide incentives to encourage neighborhood parks and open space.
5.4	Enhance development aesthetics	✓							The UDO includes new Design Guidelines and enhanced Architectural Standards to improve development aesthetics.