

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE

Conservation Areas/Greenspace Areas

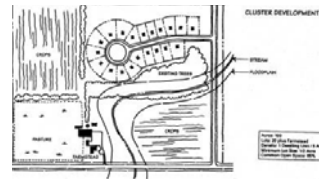
Vision

Austell will continue to protect conservation/greenspace areas within the city and actively seek to expand such areas. Conservation/greenspace areas are primarily undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas that are not suitable for development. As the city continues to grow in future years, it will become increasingly important to protect conservation areas, areas designated as greenspace, watersheds, and environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, stream corridors, and park/recreation areas.



Recommended Uses

- Passive Recreation
- Conservation
- Greenspace



Quality Community Objectives Addressed

- Open Space Preservation
- Environmental Protection

Implementation Measures

- Conservation Subdivision Ordinances
- Conservation Easements
- Greenspace Planning
- Code/Ordinance Enforcement
- Georgia Land Conservation Program
- Tourism

Suburban Area Residential

Vision

Austell will protect stable residential areas from the encroachment of incompatible land uses. Suburban Area Residential Districts are located throughout the city and include a mixture of old and new residential



developments. The primary threat to neighborhood stability in these areas is their proximity to commercial corridors and industrial districts.

Recommended Uses

- Single-Family Detached Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Public/Institutional
- Parks/Recreation



Quality Community Objectives Addressed

- Infill Development
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Sense of Place
- Heritage Preservation
- Housing Opportunities

Implementation Measures

- Screening and buffering requirements between neighborhoods and surrounding commercial/industrial uses
- Home ownership and maintenance programs
- Buyer education and counseling
- Strict code enforcement
- Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Development principles such as minimizing setbacks, pedestrian orientation, and public open space in development regulations
- Roadway Safety Improvements
- Traffic Calming

Traditional Neighborhood Areas

Vision

The unique character of Austell's older residential areas will be protected and maintained. These neighborhoods are predominantly residential with houses on small lots with small setbacks. Traditional neighborhood areas are very pedestrian oriented and epitomize a sense of community.



Recommended Uses

- Compatible Infill Development
- Single-Family Residential

- Neighborhood-Scale Commercial
- Public/Institutional
- Neighborhood-Scale Parks

Quality Community Objectives Addressed

- Infill Development
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Sense of Place
- Heritage Preservation
- Housing Opportunities



Implementation Measures

- Screening and buffering requirements between districts and surrounding commercial/industrial uses
- Home ownership and maintenance programs
- Strict code enforcement
- Encourage *Traditional Neighborhood Development* principles such as minimizing setbacks, pedestrian orientation, and public open space in development regulations
- Implement Streetscape Improvements
- Provide Pedestrian/Bicycle Connectivity

Historic Downtown

Vision

Austell will continue redevelopment efforts within its Historic Downtown District and further the development of a “town green” that will provide a unique sense of place and identity for the downtown area. The area will provide opportunities for mixed-use developments, be pedestrian-oriented, and serve as a venue for public gatherings and events.



Recommended Uses

- Residential (townhomes, condominiums, lofts, etc.)
- Traditional CBD retail
- Greenspace
- Office/Professional
- Civic/Institutional

Quality Community Objectives Addressed



- Appropriate Business
- Infill Development
- Regional Identity
- Sense of Place
- Transportation Alternatives



Implementation Measures

- Develop a “town green” with amphitheatre
- Encourage large-scale mixed-use redevelopment projects
- Provide transportation alternatives to and from the district
- Festival events
- Development regulations



Highway Corridor Areas

Vision

Commercial development occurring outside of the downtown areas and along major thoroughfares will provide shopping opportunities for all residents. Highway corridors are more automobile-oriented than the traditional neighborhood district and historic downtown district and are not pedestrian-oriented. Highway corridors shown on the Future Development Plan include major thoroughfares such as C.H. James Parkway, Maxham Road, Thornton Road, and Austell Road.

Recommended Uses

- Commercial
- Office/Professional
- Public/Institutional
- Sense of Place

Quality Community Objectives Addressed

- Employment Options
- Transportation Alternatives
- Appropriate Business

Implementation Measures

- Design/architectural guidelines
- Zoning/development regulations
- Pedestrian safety improvements

- Access management
- Buffering between commercial uses and surrounding neighborhoods
- Inter-parcel connectivity

Neighborhood Commercial Area

Vision

Commercial development occurring outside of the downtown area and established highway corridors will provide neighborhood-level shopping opportunities to area residents. Pedestrian improvements will be provided to link these areas with existing residential areas. Land use regulations will ensure that this type of commercial development is confined to well-established nodes throughout the city.

Recommended Uses

- Commercial
- Office/Professional
- Public/Institutional
- Sense of Place



Quality Community Objectives Addressed

- Employment Options
- Transportation Alternatives
- Appropriate Business

Implementation Measures

- Design/architectural guidelines
- Zoning/development regulations
- Pedestrian safety improvements
- Access management
- Buffering between commercial uses and surrounding neighborhoods
- Inter-parcel connectivity

Industrial Areas

Vision

Industrial land uses within Austell will, whenever possible, be part of planned industrial parks having adequate utilities such as water, sewer, stormwater, and roadways in place. Industrial areas will be adequately buffered and segregated from surrounding neighborhoods. Future industrial areas will be carefully

managed in order to avoid interference with surrounding neighborhoods and commercial districts.

Recommended Uses

- Industrial
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Commercial
- Warehousing/Distribution



Quality Community Objectives Addressed

- Appropriate Business
- Employment Options
- Regional Cooperation



Implementation Measures

- Industrial park planning
- Screening and buffering requirements
- Signage and lighting guidelines to enhance aesthetics
- Encourage greater mix of allowable uses

COMMUNITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Like many communities experiencing growth and development, Austell is facing several significant issues. The following presents a listing of issues and opportunities that have been identified during the course of the planning process.

Population

- The city's aging population will change the needs for senior programs/activities, housing choices, healthcare requirements, recreation programs/activities, service industry mix within the city, and continuing education services.
- The ethnic diversity of the city will continue to increase. This change will require adapting schools and public services to a wider array of language and cultural patterns.

Economic Development

- Revitalization of Austell's downtown area will serve as a catalyst for new development and redevelopment within the area.
- The Livable Centers Initiative study will likely lead to increased developer interest in downtown Austell.
- There has been minimal growth in the city's industrial base and there is limited property available for new industrial sites.
- There has been a decline in the city's manufacturing base and a significant increase in lower paying service sector employment.
- There are no business recruitment and retention programs in place to attract and support neighborhood-based businesses within the city.

Housing

- There are residential neighborhoods within Austell that are in need of revitalization. Revitalization efforts will continue and be expanded during the planning period.
- The composition of housing types within the city needs to be better diversified. Existing zoning provisions will be reviewed and amended as necessary.

- The city's residential neighborhoods do not have an adequate mix of uses within easy walking distance of residences.
- There is a lack of affordable or subsidized housing within the city.
- Vacant land suitable for residential use is currently quite limited.
- Work will continue on keeping ordinances, codes, and other development regulations up-to-date.
- Infill development will be encouraged.

Natural & Cultural Resources

- The city needs additional greenspace, conservation, park, and passive recreation areas.
- A Historic Preservation Ordinance is needed for properties located within the downtown area.
- Environmental education efforts need to be increased.
- Better linkages are needed between existing greenspace, parks, cultural/historic resources, trail systems, and bicycle routes.
- The development of conservation subdivisions will be encouraged.
- Develop 120 acres of donated Norfolk Southern land for greenspace, open space, and recreation uses.

Community Facilities & Services

- Additional parks, recreation areas, and greenspace are needed to meet existing and future demand for these facilities.
- There is an identified need for a multi-use community center within the city. Potential funding could be CDBG.
- Various city departments will continue to grow and have increased demands.
- Expanded programs to serve the city's aging population will be required during the planning period.
- Transportation planning and plan implementation will become increasingly important.

- Better communication with local, regional, and state agencies regarding infrastructure (water, wastewater, transportation) improvements.

Transportation

- There is little connectivity between pedestrian, bicycle, public transit (CCT), and highway facilities.
- County and regional public transportation systems need to be expanded so they are both cost-effective and accessible to more potential users.
- There is not a good mix of transportation modes (bicycle, pedestrian, transit, carpooling, etc.) within the city.
- Many major arterial corridors are experiencing increased peak period traffic congestion, unappealing commercial signage clutter, and a heightened level of sprawling development patterns.

Land Use

- Blighted areas exist within the city.
- Availability of large tracts for future development is currently limited.
- There is a lack of public space areas for uses such as greenspace, parks, open spaces, gathering places, and community centers.
- In general, existing development patterns do not create safe and pedestrian friendly environments.
- Ordinances and regulations do not adequately address infill development.
- Past development practices do not promote resource conservation.
- Land use regulations do not encourage mixed-use development.
- Conflicts between incompatible land uses exist throughout the city.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- There is little or no coordination with other local governments in order to manage economic opportunities.
- Annexations often result in land use conflicts

- There is no process in place to ensure consistency with the land use regulations of contiguous local governments.
- Service areas for public safety and utility service are not delineated adequately.
- There is a need to better coordinate water and wastewater service districts with Cobb and Douglas counties.
- There is a need to strengthen relationships with the South Cobb Municipal Association.

POLICIES

Economic Development

- Recruit retail businesses to serve underserved residential markets.
- Establish a comprehensive package of economic development incentives aimed at encouraging redevelopment.
- Recruit new office development to the downtown area.
- Continue working cooperatively with Cobb County, utility companies, and state agencies in coordinating local economic development efforts.
- Actively promote the expansion and retention of existing business and industry through knowledge of and participation in various state sponsored economic development programs.
- Develop a marketing program to better publicize Austell's strengths and quality of life.

- Prepare a Business Recruitment Plan that identifies the various types of retail and industrial establishments that are needed and/or desired in Austell.
- Utilize and support the efforts of existing county educational resources to ensure that a skilled, educated labor force is available to support, attract, and maintain a strong employment base.
- Strongly support local crime prevention and repression programs to promote an attractive, safe, and desirable business environment.
- Support efforts in promoting a sense of "community" in Austell.
- Prepare and distribute a city newsletter to inform city residents and businesses of events and activities occurring within the city.

Housing

- Preserve and enhance the residential character of neighborhoods and prevent the encroachment of incompatible land uses.
- Strictly enforce building codes and zoning ordinances in order to preserve the city's stable residential areas.
- Provide opportunities for a range of housing options in areas undergoing redevelopment.
- Adapt the city's housing to the aging of the general population and encourage the development of affordable housing for senior citizens.
- Strictly enforce codes and ordinances through all appropriate channels.
- Support the continued use of federal and state financial assistance programs to improve areas of substandard housing.
- Utilize the zoning ordinance and zoning map to encourage a better balance between single family housing and multi-family housing.
- Establish contact and coordination with multi-family complexes regarding general maintenance, appearance, and security issues.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Continue fostering good land management practices in floodplain areas, groundwater recharge areas, and wetlands to avoid negative environmental impacts.

- Ensure compliance with state environmental planning standards.
- Work with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Atlanta Regional Commission to identify the specific location of groundwater recharge areas.
- Incorporate DNR's freshwater wetlands data base into land use plan when data is available.
- Maintain close contact with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) to coordinate local, state, regional, and federal activities regarding issues of inter-jurisdictional concern such as clean air, water quality, and other environmental issues.
- Assist in nominating historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places. Several structures possessing historical significance exist in Austell.

Community Facilities

- Consider the costs of providing city services to all residents when considering future annexations.
- Develop new park land and gathering places within the downtown area.
- Maintain a close working relationship with Cobb County regarding county provided services such as water, sewer, fire, and emergency medical service.
- Cobb County is responsible for providing many community facilities and services within Austell. In an effort to ensure that the city's needs are adequately addressed regarding the provision of these services, the city should make every effort to become involved in planning future improvements and facilities.
- Continue working cooperatively with the Cobb County and state/federal agencies to ensure a high level of police protection within the city.
- Monitor police department staffing levels and add new officers to maintain an acceptable level of police protection.
- Continue ongoing maintenance program for city streets and work closely with Cobb County, the Atlanta Regional Commission, and the Georgia Department of Transportation regarding improvements to county and state roadways within the city.

- Initiate an intensive effort to gain the support of the CSX railroad and the general public for railroad right of way beautification efforts.

Transportation

- Upgrade the pedestrian infrastructure throughout the city.
- Promote connectivity between Cobb Community Transit, open space areas, commercial, and residential areas with bike paths and walkways.
- Provide traffic calming improvements within residential neighborhoods in order to slow and minimize traffic.

Land Use

- Create design guidelines to address design elements such as architectural character, landscaping, parking lots, sidewalks, bus stops, and signs to improve the overall appearance of highway corridors.
- Continue administering and enforcing the city's zoning ordinance and other development regulations in an equitable manner.
- Update the city's zoning ordinance and zoning map.
- Obtain the services of a professional planner (AICP) to provide on-going planning assistance to the Planning and Zoning Board and the City Council.
- Through an active program of land use planning and zoning administration, protect the city's stable residential areas from the negative impacts of encroachment by incompatible land uses.
- Refer to the Future Development Map when making decisions on rezoning requests and other development proposals.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Maintain a close working relationship with Cobb County regarding county-provided services.
- Maintained required Service Delivery Strategy document.
- Ensure consistency of Austell's Future Development Plan with those of neighboring jurisdictions.

- Coordinate local transportation planning with regional transportation plans, highway corridor studies, and Cobb Community Transit.

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

The purpose of the plan's Short Term Work Program is to provide a detailed listing of the various projects and programs recommended for implementation during the first five years covered in the comprehensive plan. Priority projects and program initiatives resulting from the overall planning process are listed in the Short Term Work Program for each of the five years and are grouped under the planning element headings. Each recommendation should be undertaken and/or completed in the year under which it falls unless otherwise noted. In addition to the scheduling of priority items for the city, the five year work program also provides guidance to the city regarding cost estimates and potential sources of financing. By scheduling major city initiatives and capital expenditures in advance over a period of years, the five-year work program will assist the city in undertaking activities to implement its plan and achieve its goals.

In addition, the recommended capital improvement items contained in the work program will allow the city to schedule these "big ticket" items in a more logical and cost efficient fashion. To be effective, the Short Term Work Program must be linked to and coordinated with the city's annual operating budget. The majority of the items contained in the Short Term Work Program require direct city expenditures or indirect costs to the city through allocation of city staff. Therefore, implementation of most of Austell's goals is tied directly to the city's annual budget. As the city implements its plan it should: (1) review the recommendations in the Short Term Work Program for the upcoming year; (2) revise the recommendations based on current information; and (3) transfer the recommended items that require local funding in that year to the city's annual operating budget. Through such an approach, the city will be able to systematically implement its comprehensive plan.

As each year comes to an end, the city will review the Short Term Work Program and prepare another "to do" list for projects to be accomplished over the next five years. In undertaking this task, the city will review the entire comprehensive plan, identify the items that have been accomplished and determine what priority projects and program initiatives are needed for the upcoming five-year period to continue the implementation of the city's plan. By using this approach, the city will attain its goals and continue to provide a high level of services to its residents.

PREVIOUS SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM STATUS

A status report on Austell's 2002-2006 Short Term Work Program is included in this portion of the plan. In general, the city has done a good job implementing the various projects and programs recommended in the previous comprehensive

plan. Projects that were not implemented have been transferred to the new Short Term Work Program for implementation.