

Guiding Principles, Objectives, Strategies and Policies

Section 1 Introduction

These Guiding Principles were adopted as part of the 1999 Athens-Clarke County Comprehensive Plan and are carried over, in their entirety to the current plan.

Based on the results of the Visual Preference Survey, and the findings of each planning element, a set of Guiding Principles, Objectives, Strategies, and Policies was developed. This portion of the Comprehensive Plan process was facilitated by Connie Cooper of the planning consulting firm of Cooper-Ross, sv, of Birmingham, Alabama.

The Guiding Principles are broad, community-wide “need statements,” designed to encompass a variety of related issues. These related issues are referred to as Guiding Objectives, which are specific items that need to be addressed. The Guiding Strategies are the methods identified for addressing the Guiding Objectives, and the Guiding Policies are the specific action steps that are recommended to implement the Guiding Strategies.

Section 2 Approval of the Guiding Principles, Objectives, Strategies, and Policies for Athens-Clarke County and the City of Winterville

The following Guiding Principles, Objectives, Strategies, and Policies were adopted by Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission on Tuesday, November 3, 1998. These same Guiding Principles, Objectives, Strategies, and Policies were approved by the Winterville City Council on June 7, 1999.

Section 3 Guiding Principles, Objectives, Strategies, and Policies for Athens-Clarke County and the City of Winterville

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Guiding Principle: To include the community in an open process of public decision making.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. We will actively encourage and facilitate citizen involvement in the planning and decision-making processes of our government.
- B. We will take pro-active steps to coordinate various public sector agencies with the Comprehensive strategies and policies of Athens-Clarke County.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

1. Create a process for promoting community awareness and involvement in land use issues affecting neighborhoods.
2. Identify community planning districts to increase involvement in the planning and implementation of improvements at the neighborhood level.
3. Involve public sector agencies in the community planning district process.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Guiding Principle: To preserve the beauty of our community and act as responsible stewards of the natural environment.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. We will be responsible stewards of the natural environment
- B. We recognize the importance of ensuring adequate supplies of quality water through the protection of ground and surface water sources.
- C. We will protect environmentally-sensitive corridors and utilize appropriate spaces to create a community-wide system of greenways and open spaces.
- D. We consider as critical importance to our community the preservation and protection of flood plains, wetlands, stream corridors, wild life habitats, tree canopies and unique topography.
- E. We will develop and manage our land and transportation network to ensure the quality of our air and water.
- F. We will support enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

- 1. Complete public and private infrastructure improvements and site development in a manner that protects the quality of the natural environment; we shall do no harm.
- 2. Set back buildings and paved parking areas from the North Oconee, Middle Oconee River, McNutt Creek, Cedar Creek, Trail Creek, Sandy Creek corridors a minimum of 200 feet in the rural area and 100 feet in the urban area; set back from tributaries to these rivers 75 feet; and create a non-disturbance area of 50 feet along any flowing water course. (All measurements are from the top of the bank and on each side.)
- 3. Incorporate the connection, maintenance and enhancement of greenspace in all new development.
- 4. Protect the aquifer recharge area of southeast Athens-Clarke County from urban development by limiting development densities.
- 5. Prohibit development of structures in the floodway.
- 6. Discourage and strictly regulate development in the flood fringe area.

7. Reduce the impact of development on the natural topography and existing vegetation through limiting land disturbance activities and clear cutting.
8. Improve standards for minimizing impervious surface areas in construction of residential and non-residential development.
9. Identify and protect wetland areas.
10. Cluster development in a manner to protect environmentally-sensitive areas such as habitats, flood plains, and open space.
11. Establish a non-point source pollution program that emphasizes a comprehensive watershed approach.
12. Utilize alternative fuels in the Athens-Clarke County transportation fleet.
13. Promote pre-cycling and increase the capture of recyclable materials from residential and non-residential users.

GROWTH AND ECONOMY

Guiding Principle: To support growth that protects community resources and sustains the high quality of life we want in Athens-Clarke County.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. We will adopt measures to manage and control the growth of our population as much as possible.
- B. We will adopt measures that will enhance the future profile of our population.
- C. We will actively participate in and support regional growth planning in the twelve counties of Northeast Georgia.
- D. We will enhance Athens-Clarke County as the commercial, tourist, educational, medical, arts and recreation center of Northeast Georgia.
- E. We will encourage the retention, expansion and creation of businesses that enhance our economic well being.
- F. We will encourage the development of Downtown as a vibrant center for culture, government, dining, residential and retail diversity.
- G. We will protect and capitalize on the historical heritage of the community as a major economic development tool.
- H. We will promote and support the growth of the "Arts Industry."

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

- 1. Use the Comprehensive Plan's guiding housing strategies and policies as central tools for managing and controlling growth of Athens-Clarke County's population.
- 2. Limit the amount of urban development within Athens-Clarke County to areas that can be reasonably served by public infrastructure.
- 3. Develop an economic development strategy that encourages high paying business and industry that employ and train a skilled labor force.
- 4. Establish an atmosphere in which entrepreneurial enterprise is nurtured in Athens-Clarke County.
- 5. Develop an economic development strategy that promotes Athens-Clarke County as the commercial, tourist, educational, medical, arts and recreation center of Northeast Georgia.

6. Develop incentives that encourage the arts to expand within Athens-Clarke County.
7. Promote Athens-Clarke County as a retirement community.

LAND USE

Guiding Principle: To enact land use policies that avoid urban sprawl.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. Our community will use land effectively to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- B. We will preserve the rural character and the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of our community.
- C. We will develop a recognizable transition from the urban to the rural areas of our community.
- D. We will support urban and suburban development where it can be adequately served by public facilities as designated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- E. A higher level of urban services (sewer, water, fire, police, recreation, etc.) will be provided to areas of our community that we want to develop at urban-level densities.
- F. We will be committed to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas located within our community.
- G. We will encourage developments that provide a mix of shopping, housing and jobs.
- H. We will support opportunities for residential and non-residential in-fill development that positively impacts the character of existing neighborhoods.
- I. Recreation and greenspace will become an integral facet of our community's land use.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

- 1. Create incentives for agricultural areas on the periphery of the urban area to remain as productive agricultural lands by using techniques such as transfer of development rights, conservation easements and open space subdivisions.
- 2. Designate areas that are predominantly rural in character as a boundary for limiting expansion of urban development.
- 3. Extend water and sewer service into existing and future urban areas where urban densities are desired and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- 4. Promote increases in residential densities in areas that meet community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities.

5. Make as a priority the development of mixed uses, redevelopment and revitalization of existing underutilized commercial and industrial areas over development of new land for commercial purposes.
6. Permit appropriately designed mixed use developments that facilitate efficient and attractive employment and residential opportunities and enable these areas to function as centers of community life.
7. Facilitate, through incentives and standards, commercial development and redevelopment as distinct commercial centers while discouraging "strip commercial" (development characterized by shallow commercial frontages along major thoroughfares, with multiple curb cuts, large front yard parking, single-storied and often single-purpose buildings, with minimal pedestrian access).
8. Encourage redevelopment and in-fill over development of new property on the periphery of the urban area.
9. Implement redevelopment of Downtown-East.
10. Encourage downtown parking structures to incorporate retail opportunities.
11. Encourage development of additional retail shopping and restaurants in the downtown area.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Guiding Principle: To establish Athens-Clarke County as a community that supports life-long learning for its citizens.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. We will recognize the importance of providing life-long learning opportunities for ...
 - Cultivating the strengths of our citizens
 - Enhancing our job skills
 - Understanding the environment
 - Increasing our cultural enjoyment
 - Exploring retirement interests
 - Affording personal enrichment
- B. The neighborhood public school concept is the foundation of our community's long-term prosperity.
- C. University and vocational education will continue to be life-long learning opportunities for our residents and visitors.
- D. The long term prosperity of our community will be supported by the educational function of our parks and recreational services, public libraries, museums and other cultural amenities.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

1. Establish and maintain an effective working relationship between the Athens-Clarke County and the Board of Education to develop mutually beneficial locations for schools and appropriate land uses adjacent to and/or near school property.
2. Promote the concept of neighborhood schools in future development, as well as, promote the same concept regarding the use of schools that are currently located near or in close proximity to existing neighborhoods.
3. Support other existing educational institutions and encourage development of new opportunities to educate Athens-Clarke County citizens.
4. Communicate with the University of Georgia to encourage commitment to accommodate the needs of non-traditional learners by providing access, services, and instruction, in accordance with the University of Georgia's Comprehensive Educational Plan.

MOBILITY

Guiding Principle: To support transportation policies that offer viable alternatives to the automobile.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. Land use policies shall encourage transportation corridors that support multiple modes of transportation and enhance the aesthetics of the community.
- B. The multi-modal transportation network will be used to support efficient land use, minimize traffic congestion and facilitate community-wide and regional mobility.
- C. We will ensure that urban density will be located in areas that are conducive to walking and biking and are served by transit.
- D. We will coordinate high density land use with public transportation.
- E. The greenway corridor will be expanded and connected to support individual transportation needs.
- F. Transportation and greenway corridors will be supported by the community standards of aesthetics, urban design and environmental stewardship.
- G. We will take measures to ensure that vehicular traffic will not harm the residential nature of our neighborhoods.
- I. Traffic calming features that slow the speed of traffic and enhance safety and aesthetics without creating congestion will be a part of our street network design.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

- 1. Adopt an Official Street Map identifying the planned location of all new major roadways and connections, including alternate transportation pathways, between major residential and commercial developments.
- 2. Design all new and reconstructed roadways to reflect community standards of aesthetics, environmental stewardship and urban design.
- 3. Design new or reconstructed streets to accommodate fully multiple functions, including pedestrian movements, parking, alternate modes of transportation and local vehicular circulation.
- 4. Include sidewalks and bicycle lanes in the design of all new or reconstructed roadways.

5. Use public transit, such as the Athens Transit System, as a tool to organize the arrangement of higher density land uses, particularly multi-family developments, in the community.
6. Encourage high density development adjacent to the multi-modal center.
7. Provide increased access via a county-wide network of greenways or pathways.
8. Plan east-west mobility in the northern part of Athens-Clarke County in a manner that discourages urban sprawl.
9. Address increased capacity within the Athens Perimeter through multi-modal options and high occupancy vehicle incentives.
10. Create internal circulation networks within commercial and industrial developments to avoid over-dependence upon Athens-Clarke County's arterial street network.
11. Design parking and circulation routes within commercial centers as distinct streets with landscaped sidewalks, shade trees, small courtyards and short-term curb parking.
12. Provide for vehicular circulation routes in new neighborhoods that distribute traffic evenly, avoid excessive traffic and speed on any one street and have street block lengths not exceeding 600 feet.
13. Require internal street systems within multi-family and non-residential developments that enhance circulation and provide for on-street parking.
14. Integrate traffic calming designs and techniques to reduce the speed of traffic as a part of all development and redevelopment.

NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOUSING

Guiding Principle: To assure that neighborhoods reflect standards that respect the history and character of the community.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. Our neighborhoods will be interactive communities where people have easy access to schools, parks, residences and businesses through walkways, bike paths, roads and public transportation.
- B. Our neighborhoods shall be strongly linked to the neighborhood public school concept.
- C. Our growth strategies will continue to provide resources that support revitalization of neighborhoods and effectively address the physical environment of the disadvantaged.
- D. We will adopt measures to increase the percentage of owner-occupied housing.
- E. We will accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a harmonious mixture of housing types and uses.
- F. Neighborhoods will adhere to design standards that respect the community's historic character.
- G. "Classic and traditional" neighborhood development ideals will be used in our land use regulations to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

- 1. Complete a housing inventory every five years to monitor the health of the housing market.
- 2. Encourage housing policies, choices and patterns that move people upward on the housing ladder from dependence to independence.
- 3. Increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.
- 4. Work toward programs that deconcentrate assisted housing through dispersal throughout the community and create incentives for mixed income developments.
- 5. Increase investment in the housing stock through housing rehabilitation programs, utilization of housing codes, and general neighborhood improvement programs.
- 6. Determine ways to limit the number of rental units and encourage owner-occupied housing units.

7. Encourage owner-occupied housing in the Downtown area.
8. Encourage mixed use developments/redevelopment of residential, office, commercial and public uses in potential redevelopment areas utilizing the Downtown East development planning process.
9. Adopt "traditional neighborhood design" guidelines that
 - Encourage efficient urban residential densities
 - Orient homes to the street
 - Encourage the use of front porches
 - Incorporate landscaped pedestrian pathways
 - Reduce the street's importance as a thoroughfare
 - Provide public gathering places; and,
 - Have conveniently located local shopping.
10. Develop park facilities in accordance with the Leisure Services Master Plan.
11. Encourage parks and community facilities to be located as focal points in neighborhoods.
12. Develop guidelines that require new or retrofitted residential development to provide common open space, walking paths and bicycle lanes that are easily accessible to the development.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Guiding Principle: To reflect both a strong legislative and financial commitment to implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. We will make a strong commitment to implementing the Comprehensive Plan.
- B. We will identify the necessary financial resources to implement the Comprehensive Plan.
- C. We will ensure that proposed zoning decisions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

- 1. Develop and implement a system to evaluate our progress on the Comprehensive Plan.
- 2. Create an analytical method ("land use budget") to measure the impact of land use decisions on the amount of residential, commercial and industrial available in Athens-Clarke County.
- 3. Develop a new zoning ordinance and map to respond to the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 4. Adopt formal policies and procedures for amending the Land Use Map as a separate action from zoning.
- 5. Undertake sector/corridor and neighborhood planning to assure application of and the compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan.

UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

Guiding Principle: To recognize that The University of Georgia and Athens-Clarke County will work in concert to address mutual needs.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. We will work jointly with the University in developing strategies to address student, university and community issues of mutual concern.
- B. We will integrate land use and infrastructure planning efforts of Athens-Clarke County with the University of Georgia and develop mutual implementation strategies.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

1. Fully integrate the University's 10-Year Campus Master Plan into Athens-Clarke County's Comprehensive Plan's land use initiatives.
2. Support strategies that will accommodate University growth without removing additional property from the tax digest.
3. Define an ongoing working relationship that will assure a partnership in the development and redevelopment of all aspects of University infrastructure.
4. Work with the University to address the negative impacts of student housing on traditional single family neighborhoods.
5. Develop a certified system for accrediting off-campus housing that ensures a minimum level of safety and quality of life and promotes keeping University housing in the private sector.
6. Increase efforts to work with the University to address traffic impacts and transit needs of students, faculty and support staff.
7. Coordinate with the University of Georgia to prepare students for employment and life-long learning and accommodate the needs of non-traditional learners by providing access, services, and instruction, in accordance with the 1997 University System of Georgia Comprehensive Plan.
8. Encourage the University to increase the amount of recyclable material going to Athens-Clarke County Materials Recycling Facility.

URBAN DESIGN & AESTHETICS

Guiding Principle: To use sound design standards to govern development.

Guiding Objectives:

- A. Landscaping, lighting, signage, underground utilities and building design will be used to add value to our community.
- B. Green space will be a major component within our neighborhoods, along our streets, parking lots and within commercial and industrial developments.
- C. We will encourage mixed-use development and design standards that are more human-oriented and less auto-oriented.
- D. Design standards will guide development in order to contribute to our community's character and sense of security.
- E. Our gateways and corridors will have design standards that add visual value thus creating a "sense of place" to our community.
- F. We will apply design standards that reduce the adverse visual impact of the automobile in both commercial and residential areas of our community.
- G. Civic buildings will be located, designed and accessible to public transportation in a manner that enhances the community.
- H. We will apply urban design and aesthetic standards to neighborhoods and other developments as they are retrofitted.
- I. We will encourage historic designation for eligible sites and neighborhoods.

Guiding Strategies and Policies:

- 1. Develop and implement design standards for new development and redevelopment that address architectural composition (both material and form), site circulation, site and parking lot landscaping (including tree planting standards for parking lots), signage, lighting and noise level standards.
- 2. Adopt design standards for the Downtown.
- 3. Use "overlay" zones within gateways and arterial corridors to control signage, improve aesthetics, promote more landscaping, and require special protection for adjacent residential areas.
- 4. Encourage configuration of large commercial centers into "blocks" that promotes

additional development or allows for redevelopment of the site for new tenants, uses, or ownership patterns.

5. Orient buildings within development/redevelopment to encourage walkability, interaction among businesses, clear visibility of entryways and centralized open space.
6. Require the use of landscaping, reduced parking standards and site orientation to minimize the impact and visibility of parking areas.
7. Minimize the visibility of trash pickup and vehicular storage.
8. Incorporate street shade trees as an important part of residential and non-residential development.
9. Place all utilities underground or along rear or side yard easements in new development, in any redevelopment that requires a building permit and, as the opportunity becomes available, in any existing development.
10. Appropriately design and integrate signage within all development.
11. Require all future multi-family developments to meet specific design standards.
12. Create design standards that recognize the unique qualities of defined neighborhood to guide appropriate residential and non-residential in-fill development and redevelopment.
13. Incorporate the use of "crime prevention through environmental design" standards to make neighborhoods and business areas more secure.
14. Develop standards for property maintenance.
15. Adopt regulations that prevent unnecessary land disturbance and vegetation removal (i.e., excessive slope removal and clear-cutting).