



2018 ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Introduction

The Planning Department has begun the process of fulfilling our obligation to update the Comprehensive Plan. As required by state law, local governments throughout Georgia are required to complete a new plan every ten years. The current Comprehensive Plan, titled and completed in 2008, has served as a vital guide to the development of our community over the last decade. It has influence over zoning actions, government policy, and even strategic funding for expected growth.

Partnership Between Envision Athens / Comp. Plan

The community has already supported and put forth significant effort into a non-traditional, broadly expanded community and economic development strategy known as Envision Athens. The Comprehensive Plan was scheduled to commence in cooperation with Envision Athens, by design, to assist in stakeholder identification, data analysis, and public input that will in turn contribute profoundly to the Comprehensive Plan. Envision Athens takes a broader approach to community and economic development, while the Comprehensive Plan has set criteria that must be addressed in hopes of providing a collective outline for achieving initiatives highlighted in its plan. Though two separate efforts that will result in two separate documents, Envision Athens will clearly portray the lengths to which public comment was sought; data was gathered and subsequently analyzed; and which recommendations were determined to be of focus. This will in turn be tailored accordingly to both the rules for comprehensive planning provided by the State, and the discretion of the comprehensive plan steering committee, all in an effort to provide a guide that outlines the local government's responsibilities in achieving a bright future.

The Comprehensive Plan will not be a "re-branding" of Envision Athens, but instead a compliment to that plan. It would be difficult to ignore the hard work put into Envision Athens, especially given the fact much of the public input and data gathered is exactly what the Comprehensive Plan would have sought. In essence, Envision Athens has done some of the work, not all, and it is not our intent to duplicate those efforts.

Process

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan has already been initiated following a June 1, 2017 formal inception. This “kick-off” meeting was meant to establish the formal Steering Committee and allow staff to begin some “behind the scenes” data analysis and research gathering. This work will lay the foundation for the minimum standards the State expects in a comprehensive plan, in other words, the template. Going forward, the Steering Committee will tackle the various elements of the plan as they meet throughout the overall process. Staff will present them with applicable information, like that of Envision Athens, so that they may decipher the most appropriate content after hearing and carefully considering public input. It has always been the intent that this comprehensive plan be a bit different from previous versions. Athens-Clarke County is well-known for its participation in planning a better future, and continuously strives to achieve results beyond expectations. By combining the efforts of Envision Athens with that of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, the community will essentially put forth two exceptional plans, with double the amount of input, ideas, and implementation.

Outline

Since the last Comprehensive Plan (2008), State requirements have changed slightly, allowing for a more creative approach for each community. The plan must contain certain elements, which are highlighted below, but can then include any other associated information it feels will benefit the community moving forward. Athens-Clarke County has decided to take advantage of this approach, by not only meeting the minimum requirements, but exceeding them by referencing much of the documentation supported by Envision Athens.

Going forward, the Comprehensive Plan will seek to accomplish the required elements by first examining those similar aspects of Envision Athens. Doing so will avoid duplication but also unify the community’s overall position and outlook.

Upcoming Events

Public Presentations (Subject to Change – Visit Website for Final Determination)

Monday, Oct. 2, 2017; **Cornerstone Church - 4680 Lexington Rd.** 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 9, 2017; **Chase Street Elementary – 757 N. Chase St.** 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 16, 2017; **J.J. Harris Elementary – 2300 Danielsville Rd.** 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

For additional information regarding the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, please contact:
Planning Department, 120 W. Dougherty Street, Athens, GA 30601 📍 706-613-3515
www.athensclarkecounty.com/planning