ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This plan document is the product of a collaborative effort on the part of Smyrna community, including: community members, City of Smyrna elected officials, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, City of Smyrna staff, and the consultant team.

A special thank you is given to community members that shared input, ideas, and feedback throughout the planning process to help define the vision and priorities for the City of Smyrna.

The following individuals played a lead role in the plan’s development. Members of the City Council and Planning & Zoning Board who were also a part of the Steering Committee are denoted by an asterisk (*):

**CITY OF SMYRNA MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**
- A. Max Bacon, Mayor
- Derek Norton, Ward 1
- Andrea Blustein, Ward 2
- Teri Anulewicz, Ward 3 & Mayor Pro Tem *
- Charles Welch, Ward 4
- Susan Wilkinson, Ward 5
- Doug Stoner, Ward 6 *
- Ron Fennel, Ward 7

**CITY OF SMYRNA PLANNING & ZONING (P&Z) BOARD**
- Joel Powell, Chairman *
- Ron Roberts, Ward 1 *
- Leslie Lightfoot, Ward 2 *
- Emily Hein Warren, Ward 3 *
- Earl Rice, Ward 4 *
- Cheri Harrington, Ward 5 *
- Denny Campo, Ward 6 *
- David Monroe, Ward 7 *

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**
- Teri Anulewicz, City of Smyrna, Mayor Pro-Tem
- Joel Powell, City of Smyrna Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Board, Chairman
- Ron Roberts, City of Smyrna P&Z Board Member, Ward 1
- Leslie Lightfoot, City of Smyrna P&Z Board Member, Ward 2
- Emily Hein-Warren, City of Smyrna P&Z Board Member, Ward 3
- Earl Rice, City of Smyrna P&Z Board Member, Ward 4
- Cheri Harrington, City of Smyrna P&Z Board Member, Ward 5
- Denny Campo, City of Smyrna P&Z Board Member, Ward 6
- David Monroe, City of Smyrna P&Z Board Member, Ward 7
- Troy Sather, Smyrna 2014 Vision Plan Representative & Smyrna Arts and Culture Council
- Amanda Coffelt, Smyrna 2014 Vision Plan Representative
- Corbin Adams, Magnolia Homes of Georgia
- Bennett Sands, Wood Partners
- Doug Stoner, City of Smyrna City Council Member, Ward 6
- Slade Gulledge, Cobb Chamber, Vice President Advocacy and Government Relations
- Chad Koenig, Smyrna Education Foundation

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- Kathe Roper, GIS Specialist
- Kelsey Scott, Community Liaison

**CONSULTANT TEAM**

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- Joe Shoffner
- Olivia Norfleet
- Paul Culter, AICP
- Tanya DiClemente
- Christine Harris

**Market Street**
- Ranada Robinson
- Kathy Young
- Katie Thomas
Resolution No. 2017 - 18

A Resolution of the City of Smyrna to adopt the Smyrna 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Whereas: The Comprehensive Plan for Smyrna, Georgia is mandated by the Georgia Planning Act 634 (Georgia Law 1989, pp. 1317-1391);

And whereas: This act requires that each jurisdiction in the state prepare and implement a Comprehensive Plan, which is reviewed by the regional development commission;

And whereas: The Smyrna 2040 Comprehensive Plan was reviewed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in August of 2017. Smyrna Community Development has received the comments from both ARC and DCA regarding the document and has made the necessary changes suggested for its completion;

Now therefore be it resolved:

That the Mayor and Council of the City of Smyrna do hereby adopt the Smyrna 2040 Comprehensive Plan;

Resolved: By the Mayor and Council of the City of Smyrna this 16th day of October 2017.

A. Max Bacon, Mayor

ATTEST: Terri Graham

Terri Graham, City Clerk

Approved as to form: City Attorney Scott Cochran
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The City of Smyrna’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for making rezoning and capital investment decisions by City officials and staff. It also provides the greater Smyrna community a snapshot of where the community is today and what it wants to be tomorrow through the year 2040. It builds upon the efforts of the previous 2030 Comprehensive Plan, prepared in 2007, and incorporates the findings and recommendations of several subsequent planning studies, including the 2014 Smyrna Strategic Vision Plan, the Cobb County Consolidated Plan, the Cobb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan 2040 Update, the South Cobb Drive Corridor Development Study, the Spring Road Livable Centers Initiative Study, and the Georgia Tech Studio Smyrna Crossroads Study.

The plan’s preparation was guided by the state’s planning requirements, adopted by Georgia Department of Community Affairs in 2014. As a result, its organization and content are primarily focused on the community’s future vision and how to achieve it. This update is the result of an extensive public outreach effort that included an online survey, public workshops, an open house, Steering Committee meetings, and interviews with local leaders. The planning effort included a detailed analysis of housing, economic development, transportation and land use data. The details and finding of this analysis are documented in the accompanying Technical Addendum, along with a summary of the record of accomplishments from the previous plan, detailed documentation of public involvement, and definitions.

Before starting this comprehensive plan update process, the City had already undertaken a major visioning effort that resulted in the adoption of the 2014 Smyrna Strategic Vision Plan. That plan focused primarily on quality of life issues and economic development, and the community continues to actively refine its recommendations through vision committee efforts. Where appropriate, the recommendations of the strategic vision plan and its committees were incorporated directly into policies and action items of this comprehensive plan update. To best serve as a guide in making land use decisions, the intent of this comprehensive planning effort was to translate the strategic visioning efforts into the language of place. This can be seen in the vision statement: “Smyrna will emerge as a regional destination known for its sense of community, ease of access and connectivity, signature public spaces and art, entrepreneurial spirit embodied in unique local businesses, and its diversity of distinct and welcoming neighborhoods.”

This place-based vision for the future is embodied in two maps: the 2040 Future Land Use Map, and the Comprehensive Plan Policy Map. The 2040 Future Land Use Map offers parcel-based guidance for rezoning decisions by designating each parcel of with a character area that depicts how the community would like it to develop in the future. In similar fashion, the Comprehensive Plan Policy Map provides general guidance on where the community
sees the need for preservation and protections as well as opportunities for change and growth. Features of both maps tie directly to policies that help guide day-to-day decisionmaking for city officials.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Among the many recommendations of this plan, the following items stand out as key in achieving the community’s vision for the future by helping the city achieve multiple goals and its long-term vision:

1. Revise and update the City Zoning Ordinance to improve readability and ease of use, and to allow the development of new residential, industrial, and commercial products in line with the community’s vision.

2. Conduct a study of infill development guidelines, and adopt recommended infill development guidelines.

3. Study the potential application of architectural design standards to key activity centers and corridors of the city.

4. Consider establishing a land bank that can be used as redevelopment tool to purchase foreclosed and delinquent properties for future sale or development.

5. Implement the recommendations of the Spring Road Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study.

6. Undertake a transit feasibility study.

7. Implement and regularly update the City’s *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*.

8. Consider expanding the City’s Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.

9. Seek Entrepreneur Friendly Community status through the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

10. Consider repackaging current incentives to property owners for making improvements to commercial properties to increase the likelihood of occupancy as a special program, i.e. the Commercial Revitalization Program.

11. Conduct an annexation study in order to establish future city expansion areas based on fiscal impacts.

**VISION**

“Smyrna will emerge as a regional destination known for its sense of community, ease of access and connectivity, signature public spaces and art, entrepreneurial spirit embodied in unique local businesses, and its diversity of distinct and welcoming neighborhoods.”
SMYRNA TODAY: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter provides a broad snapshot of Smyrna as a city today. It answers basic questions that the community asked early in the planning process, such as:

• How would you describe Smyrna today?
• What are the key needs and opportunities influencing growth in our community?
• What plans are already in place influencing future development?
1. SMYRNA TODAY: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A viable plan for the future is grounded in a thoughtful understanding of the past. The existing conditions highlighted in this chapter reflect data and information collected in the early stages of the planning process and vetted with the Steering Committee and the public. It includes a technical review of existing conditions, a summary of the community engagement process, and the priority needs and opportunities identified for the City to address in planning for the future. A more detailed review of existing conditions is provided in Appendix B: Baseline Conditions Report and Appendix C: Community Engagement.

SMYRNA STRATEGIC VISION PLAN

This comprehensive plan represents a continuation of an ongoing planning process, including the findings and recommendations of the current 2030 Comprehensive Plan, recent visioning efforts undertaken as part of the 2014 Smyrna Strategic Vision Plan, and the planning and analysis provided in a number of other related studies. The 2014 Smyrna Strategic Vision Plan, however, stands out from the pack. Recently adopted by the City Council, it includes a clear vision for the future of the city as it relates to involvement and leadership, quality of place, and the city’s image and identity. In addition, findings and recommendations of the plan are continually being refined through ongoing committee efforts.

The insight gathered and collective vision established through that process served as a launching point for the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Where the 2014 Smyrna Strategic Vision Plan focused mainly on overall quality of life and
What is Smyrna like today?

**1. Evaluate the baseline conditions**

What should Smyrna be in 20 Years?

**2. Engage the community to establish a vision for the future and understand priorities**

How do we achieve our vision?

**3. Develop policies and strategies to implement the long-term vision, focused on the next five years. These include:**

**FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM)**
The FLUM identifies the desired future character of different areas of the city. Each piece of land is assigned a category, and each category has a description with the vision for the area, character images, appropriate land uses, appropriate zoning districts, and strategies to advance the vision.

**POLICIES**
General policy statements define how Smyrna will approach various issues and guide future decisions by staff and officials. Policies address issues of land use, transportation, housing, and economic development.

**COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM**
Action items are organized into a 5-year work program with a timeline, responsible party, estimated cost, and potential funding sources for each. This becomes the game plan for Smyrna’s planning staff and officials.
economic development issues, this plan focuses mainly on the built environment. Dialogues with the Steering Committee and public helped translate the broader vision into the language of place and determine how that vision and related policies should be reflected in maps, images, and city policies.

**METHODOLOGY**

The Smyrna 2040 Comprehensive Plan was developed as part of a four-stage planning process as summarized in Figure 1.1. Project Schedule was directed by the city Community Development Department staff and supported by the efforts of a consultant team led by Jacobs. The consultant team also included Market Street, the same consultants that prepared the 2014 Smyrna Strategic Vision Plan. The community was actively engaged throughout the process. Plan development took place in four stages: 1) inventory and trends analysis, 2) visioning, 3) implementation planning, and 4) plan compilation. The inventory and trends analysis resulted in the preparation of the Baseline Conditions Report, which was used as a resource for the Steering Committee and public as they identified the priority needs and opportunities that will influence the future growth of the city. The visioning stage resulted in the development of a vision statement, a policy map, and a future land use map that will help guide city officials in making zoning and capital investment decisions, described in Chapter 2. Implementation planning was primarily the result of close coordination with the Steering Committee and city staff to develop a community work program with key action items and policies to help the city achieve its vision, outlined in Chapter 3. Finally, the plan compilation phase resulted in this plan document and the Technical Addendum, which documents the findings and recommendations of the planning effort for ongoing and future reference. These final documents are the result of an iterative review process between the consultant team, city staff, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and the City Council.

**Figure 1.1. Project Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Project Management</th>
<th>Dec 16</th>
<th>Feb 17</th>
<th>Mar 17</th>
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○ Public Meeting
○ Draft Plan Available
○ Public Hearing
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Insight from Smyrna community members drove the development of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Key community engagement activities and outcomes are summarized below and complete summaries of all community engagement activities can be found in Appendix C.

STAKEHOLDERS

To ensure the diverse voices of Smyrna’s population were represented in the plan, a variety of engagement opportunities targeted different groups throughout the process. Key project stakeholders included community members, the Steering Committee, the Mayor and City Council, the Planning and Zoning Board, and local developers and business owners.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee was made of representative members of the Smyrna community who provided guidance to the planning team, served as champions of the plan, and helped engage the community in the planning process. The committee met four times throughout the planning process and included members of the Planning and Zoning Board, elected officials, local developers and business owners, nonprofit representatives, and vision committee members.
WEBSITE

The project website, www.guidesmyrna.com, was the landing page for all project content and the primary point of online community engagement. The site included information about the planning process, the project calendar, access to the online survey, meeting minutes, draft plan materials, and contacts for the planning team.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The planning team conducted a series of 24 stakeholder interviews at the onset of the planning process to help identify key topics and top opportunities and concerns that should be further considered in the community engagement process. Interviewees included elected officials, neighborhood representatives, nonprofit leaders, city and county staff, developers, business owners, and vision committee members. They noted the city’s strong recent progress, Smyrna’s unique character, local mixed-use development, impacts of the Windy Hill Road construction and SunTrust Park, traffic concerns, the need for improved transit, and housing affordability as key trends to examine in the planning process.
Public Workshop #1 focused on building consensus around the community’s vision, challenges, and opportunities, as well as educating participants about the role of the Comprehensive Plan and the planning process. Discussion groups addressed three major topics: neighborhoods, activity centers, and corridors.

Key themes included the need to accommodate quality infill housing; need for starter homes; desire to preserve the character of established neighborhoods; potential for expanding housing typologies in certain neighborhoods; an appetite for medium-intensity activity centers; locations appropriate for future mixed use development; support for active transportation options; need to reduce traffic congestion; and desire for improved transit services along major corridors.
PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2

At Public Workshop #2, participants rotated through a series of four small group discussions centered on 1) residential areas, 2) activity centers, 3) public spaces and transportation facilities, and 4) places of work and commerce. Participants provided feedback on the Draft Policy Map, priority needs and opportunities, and potential action items related to each topic.

Key discussion points included:

- Openness to a greater variety of housing types;
- Need to maintain housing affordability;
- Desire to maintain neighborhood quality; need for infill development guidelines;
- Preference for locating denser housing near SunTrust Park or Riverview Landing;
- Vision for the SunTrust Park area as transit-oriented development;
- Need to improve usability of zoning ordinance;
- Support for investment in Spring Road and Atlanta Road as signature corridors;
- Desire for enhanced transit service, especially in the northern part of the city;
- Need for safer pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- Desire for a large, signature park;
- Opportunity for an industrial mixed use area off Jonquil Drive;
- Placemaking as an economic development strategy;
- Desire for additional retail; and
- An opportunity to leverage SunTrust Park.

ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

More than 500 community members participated in the online survey, responding to questions about land use, housing, transportation, economic development, satisfaction with the city, public investment, and overall priorities. Overall, respondents value Smyrna’s convenient location, small town feel, and affordability; worry about transportation choices, school quality, and the rapid pace of development; think new development needs corresponding transportation improvements; desire coordinated signal timing, sidewalk improvements, local shuttles, connection to MARTA, and more efficient roadway designs; would like to walk or bike
WHAT WILL SMYRNA BE KNOWN FOR IN THE FUTURE?
Jonquil Festival attendees shared their visions for the city’s future, sharing their ideas about the community amenities and access they thought would make Smyrna a fun and welcoming home for all.
to activity centers and recreation facilities; want to leverage development interest around SunTrust Park; and would like additional park space.

**JONQUIL FESTIVAL BOOTH**

The planning team hosted an interactive booth at the Spring Jonquil Festival to connect with stakeholders that may not typically attend public meetings. The booth provided information about the planning process and solicited input about the vision for the city’s future, public investment priorities, future transit services, annexation, and targeted future development questions about three key areas: the SunTrust Park area, Windy Hill Road, and the Market Village area. Most participants wanted a signature park, walkable residential, and mixed use with a retail focus near SunTrust Park; additional development around Market Village, especially restaurants, retail, and arts and culture organizations; and a linear park, small mixed-use development, and small businesses in converted homes along Windy Hill Road. The majority supported both expanded transit services and annexation. Parks, recreation, and open space and transportation were considered priorities for city funding.

**OPEN HOUSE**

Draft plan materials were presented to the community at the Open House to collect feedback and refine the plan. Participants reviewed the priority needs and opportunities, vision, goals, 2040 Future Land Use Map, and proposed action items for the Community Work Program.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Public hearings were held before City Council to announce the project, transmit the plan for state and regional review, and adopt the plan, providing additional opportunities for citizens to voice their opinions about its process and content.
BASELINE CONDITIONS

SUMMARY

The Baseline Conditions Report provides a high level review of existing conditions and trends in the City of Smyrna in an effort to support and inform the update to the city’s Comprehensive Plan. To better understand how Smyrna compares to other communities, its characteristics and performance have been benchmarked against five peer cities-- Cedar Park, TX; Duluth, GA; Marietta, GA; Matthews, NC, and Woodstock, GA-- along with Cobb County, the Atlanta MSA, Georgia, and the United States*. This summary focuses on Smyrna itself, with comparative assessments and more detailed information available in the full Baseline Conditions Report in Appendix B.

OVERVIEW

Located within Cobb County, Georgia, the City of Smyrna is 15.46 square miles and centrally positioned in the Atlanta region, with the City’s southern boundary abutting the Chattahoochee River and the City of Atlanta (see Figure 1 on page C-2). The City’s northern boundary abuts the southern tip of the City of Marietta and Dobbins Air Reserve Base (ARB), with the bulk of the city adjacent to unincorporated areas of the Cobb County, including the prominent Cumberland Community Improvement District on the northeast, home to one of Atlanta’s important employment centers and Atlanta’s Major League Baseball team, the Atlanta Braves, at SunTrust Park.

RECENT PLANS & STUDIES

The City of Smyrna has grown and developed with the guidance of a long history of planning. The recent and ongoing plans summarized in Table 1.1 are particularly relevant to the update of Smyrna’s Comprehensive Plan.

*For basic population data, the U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates program was used. For 2000 to 2009 data, the 2010 Intercensal Dataset from the Census was utilized. For 2010 to 2015 data, the Vintage 2015 Population Estimates was utilized. For detailed data, the American Community Survey (ACS) was the primary source. Due to the size of the city, ACS estimates are five-year averages. For the most recent data available, the 2011-2015 American Community Survey was used, and for historical estimates, the 2006-2010 American Community Survey data was used.
Table 1.1. Summary of Recent Plans and Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing Plans &amp; Studies</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMYRNA STRATEGIC VISION PLAN (2014)</td>
<td>Sets a strategic overarching vision, goals, and actions for the City’s next 10 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COBB COUNTY CONSOLIDATED PLAN (2016)</td>
<td>Addresses special housing and community development needs in Cobb County and its municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COBB COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2040 UPDATE (2015)</td>
<td>Countywide plan for improvements to transportation with Cobb County and its municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH COBB DRIVE CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT STUDY (2017)</td>
<td>Covering South Cobb Drive corridor from Concord Road to Windy Hill Road. This collaborative effort between the City and the Georgia Department of Transportation, Cobb County and CobbLinc will formulate various concepts for corridor improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPRING ROAD LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE (LCI) STUDY (2017)</td>
<td>Focusing on guiding redevelopment along Spring Road corridor from Cobb Parkway to Atlanta Road and identifying appropriate investment projects to improve the aesthetics and functionality of this corridor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGIA TECH STUDIO SMYRNA CROSSROADS STUDY (2016)</td>
<td>In coordination with the Spring Road LCI, Georgia Tech developed a vision for the gateway area around SunTrust Park, including land use, transportation, and economic development.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

Smyrna, like many similar areas in metro Atlanta, has experienced significant population growth over the past decade, with a population of more than 56,000 in 2015, an increase of 18 percent over a 10-year period. Of this rapidly expanding population, Smyrna enjoys more racial diversity than many peer communities. Smyrna’s population is nearly half non-white. Additionally, 14 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino and roughly half of this Hispanic or Latino population is non-White. This indicates that while the United States is not projected to be a majority-minority nation until 2044, Smyrna is ahead of the trend with only 45 percent of its population being White, non-Hispanic. Smyrna residents are not only diverse, but also relatively young with nearly 70 percent of residents under the age of 45. Many of these community members are between 25 and 44, representing young professionals, typically beginning their careers and starting families. (See Figure 1.3.) Smyrna also has a relatively small average household size of 2.27 persons per household.

Figure 1.3. Population Age Distribution

56,146 RESIDENTS in 2015

21.8% of youth living in POVERTY

Median INCOME of $62,363

52% of community has a COLLEGE DEGREE

70% UNDER 45 years old

55% MINORITY population

81.4% DRIVE ALONE to work
TRANSPORTATION BEHAVIOR

While much of metro Atlanta is notorious for long commute times and distances, more than half of Smyrna residents live within ten miles of their place of employment and a quarter of residents commute into the city of Atlanta for their primary job; however, the average travel time to work for Smyrna residents is on the rise. While the average travel time to work for residents was 28.7 minutes in 2015, this commute time has increased by 3.3 minutes in recent years. Analysis indicates that this increase was most likely influenced by the increase in residents who commute more than 60 minutes to work each day. Although commute distances are generally less than those of comparable baseline communities, Smyrna residents, like most in the metro Atlanta region, travel primarily by personal vehicle. More than 80 percent of residents drive alone to work, and only 5 percent ride bikes, walk, or take public transportation.

EDUCATION & INCOME

Smyrna boasts an extremely well-educated population, with more than half of residents aged 25 and older having a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, when race and ethnicity are taken into account, disparities among Smyrna’s black and Hispanic residents are clear. Educational attainment for black and Hispanic community members is competitive among baseline comparison communities. Given the high levels of educational attainment, it is not surprising that Smyrna residents have relatively high household incomes. In 2015, the median household income was more than $62,000, a 14.2 percent increase over the past decade. Although household income levels in Smyrna are generally high, they are accompanied by an increasing rate of poverty. In 2015, 13.4 percent of Smyrna’s total population and 21.8 percent of Smyrna’s youth population were living in poverty with an annual household income of less than $24,339. Therefore, there is a growing disparity in income between those with a higher household income and those who live in poverty.
LAND USE

EXISTING LAND USES

The more than 15.5 square miles of land in Smyrna are separated into residential, commercial, office, industrial, support, and vacant land uses. The most prominent of these land uses is residential, accounting for approximately 64 percent of the land in Smyrna, nearly two-thirds of which is single-family residential. Slightly less than 17 percent of the city can be classified as employment-based or commercial and industrial. Roughly 13 percent is support-based, used for Transportation/Communications/Utilities, Public/Institutional, and Parks/Recreation/Conservation. Only about 5 percent of the city is still vacant or undeveloped, indicating that most of the new construction in the city will be in the form of redevelopment.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Smyrna is part of the North Georgia Water Planning District, which oversees the area’s Water Supply and Conservation Management Plan, Watershed Management Plan, and Wastewater Management Plan. The city is in compliance with its stormwater protection requirements, and regulations for stormwater management, floodplain management and flood damage prevention, stream buffer protection, illicit discharges and illegal connections, and litter control have been adopted as part of the Code of Ordinances.

The city is part of two watersheds: the Upper Chattahoochee Watershed and the Middle Chattahoochee Lake Harding Watershed. Few wetland areas are present within the city, comprising 22 acres along stream banks and ponds. There are no groundwater recharge areas located within Smyrna. The city is in compliance with the

FAST FACTS

- 15.5 SQUARE MILES
- 360+ NEIGHBORHOODS and subdivisions
- 19,200 PARCELS of land
- Only 5% VACANT or undeveloped land
- SPRING ROAD corridor is booming after opening of SUNTRUST PARK

- 64% of land use is RESIDENTIAL
Figure 1.6. Existing Land Use Map
Metropolitan River Protection Act’s Chattahoochee River Tributary Protection Ordinance and requires 50-foot stream buffers on all state waters, a stricter requirement than mandated by the state.

**ZONING & OVERLAY DISTRICTS**

Zoning plays a critical role in implementing land use decisions, and current zoning closely mirrors existing land uses. Much like the proportion of residential land uses in Smyrna, two residential zoning categories (R-15 and RAD) cover almost 50 percent of the city. Six overlay districts— including the Downtown Design District, South Atlanta Road, Spring Road, Windy Hill Road, South Cobb Drive, and Concord Road— provide a guide for land use, design, and development in strategic areas of the city. (See Figure 1.7.) These overlay districts are currently planned along major commercial corridors of the city and the downtown area. Properties can also opt into the Redevelopment Overlay District (ROD), which is not applied to a specific geography and is meant to encourage pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use developments. Complete tables of zoning codes, maps, and other information can be found in Appendix B.

**RECENT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS**

Several ongoing and proposed developments indicate high development interest in the Smyrna area, many of which are either large mixed use developments or infill housing projects. The opening of SunTrust Park has also created increased development interest in the area, spurring the Spring Road Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study, which will have a direct impact on the land uses surrounding the Spring Road corridor. Additionally, there is an opportunity to increase environmental protection constraints to ensure the future of the community’s mature tree canopy and stream network.

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**DEVELOPMENT TREND: MIXED USE**

**WHAT IS MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT?**

Mixed-use development combines multiple land uses within close proximity to each other. It includes both horizontal mixed use, with different uses in separate buildings next to each other, and vertical mixed use, with different uses occupying parts of the same building.

**WHY MIXED USE?**

Mixed-use neighborhoods typically offer a convenient, walkable lifestyle, giving people a place to live, work, and play without relying on a car for every trip. Because they bring users to the area at different times of day for a variety of purposes, they tend to be more vibrant and interesting places than areas that serve a single purpose.

**WHAT’S HAPPENING IN SMYRNA?**

Recent development in Smyrna and throughout metro Atlanta have trended toward mixed use, including Market Village, Belmont, and Jonquil.

▲ Market Village is a signature mixed-use development in Smyrna, combining restaurants, shops, small offices, residences, civic facilities, and park space within a walkable area connected to the adjacent neighborhood. It was most frequently selected as participants’ favorite place in Smyrna during the community engagement process.
Figure 1.7. Zoning Overlay Map

Sources: City of Smyrna GIS Department; Atlanta Regional Commission
Smyrna enjoys direct connection to high-capacity interstate highways and principal arterials including I-75, I-285, SR 41 (Cobb Parkway), and the East-West Connector. This wealth of connectivity to major arterials, however, is fed through an abundance of small, residential road networks which lack cohesive connection. Of the 225.7 total linear miles of roadway in Smyrna, 91.5 miles (41 percent) are single outlet roads, which do not contribute to effective and efficient network connectivity. These residential street systems are a result of low density, suburban areas, creating inefficient and disconnected roadways.

A variety of projects and plans— a complete list of which can be found in Appendix B— impact the road network in Smyrna. There are currently $63 million in local transportation projects scheduled to be completed before 2023 through the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) alone. This network of roads is supported by a variety of parking options, with various public and private garages, surface lots, and on-street parking locations throughout Smyrna.
Figure 1.8. Road Network Map

Sources: City of Smyrna GIS Department; Atlanta Regional Commission
ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Local networks have contributed to challenges in Smyrna’s active transportation infrastructure. Active transportation is any form of transportation that is human powered, the most significant form of which in Smyrna is sidewalks. Sidewalks are present along most major roads, but their presence, quality, and connectivity is less consistent within residential neighborhoods. In addition to sidewalks, Smyrna has four major cycle routes: Atlanta Road Shared Path, Spring Road/Concord Road Shared Path, Village Parkway Shared Path, Silver Comet Trail. (See Figure 1.9.) These paths are primarily used for recreational purposes due to the connectivity barrier of a disconnected street grid.

TRANSIT

Additional transportation options include public transportation provided by CobbLinc, which operates between Cobb County and Downtown Atlanta. Four services operate within the City of Smyrna, including bus routes 10, 15, 20, and 25. While CobbLinc operates 100 buses on 18 routes, transit in Smyrna connects to limited destinations with infrequent service.
Figure 1.9. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Map

Sources: City of Smyrna GIS Department; Atlanta Regional Commission
HOUSING STOCK

Smyrna’s housing stock consists of a variety of different types of both single-family and multi-family homes. Roughly 59 percent are single-family homes— including both detached and attached units— and 41 percent are multi-family homes. (See Figure 1.10.) Nearly 80 percent of the housing stock was built in 1970 or later, with most of the older housing units located in the northern half of the city. (See Figure 1.11.) Newer single-family homes have been built both as subdivisions in the southern part of the city and as infill housing within older neighborhoods. While much of the housing stock in Smyrna is located in single-family neighborhoods, high density residential is located along major corridors, contributing to a more urban layout promoting live, work, play environments. A recorded homeowner vacancy of 2 percent and renter vacancy of 4.8 percent indicate a desirable location and additional opportunity for residential development. Due to limited available land, much of this development will likely take place in the form of redevelopment or infill residential projects.

Figure 1.10. Smyrna Housing Stock, 2016

Figure 1.11. Age of Housing

FAST FACTS

59% of housing is SINGLE FAMILY

$951 Median monthly RENT

8% housing VACANCY

45% renters are COST BURDENED

Median unit VALUE of $216,000

80% of housing built AFTER 1970
COST OF HOUSING

The median value of homeowner occupied units in Smyrna is $216,000. An estimated 23 percent of Smyrna homeowners with a mortgage and an estimated 8 percent without a mortgage are cost burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. This is fewer than most comparable baseline communities. With a median monthly rent cost of $951, an estimated 45 percent of Smyrna’s renters are cost burdened. While high, this number of cost burdened renters is not unique to Smyrna and is, in fact, less than the proportion of cost burdened renters of all other areas reviewed. Additionally, overcrowding does not appear to be a pervasive problem in Smyrna, with only two percent of occupied housing units having more than one person per room. Special needs housing, serviced by Cobb County, and affordability will continue to be relevant concerns for the City of Smyrna as property values continue to rise.

DEVELOPMENT TREND: INFILL

WHAT IS INFILL DEVELOPMENT?
Infill development refers to building within an already established area, rather than on an undeveloped greenfield site.

WHY INFILL?
Infill development typically occurs in built out urban areas where there is limited undeveloped land available, or to conserve remaining natural land. Because it utilizes existing infrastructure and helps preserve natural land, it is a more sustainable and economical alternative to greenfield development.

WHAT’S HAPPENING IN SMYRNA?
Smyrna has limited remaining undeveloped land, making infill a preferred and necessary approach to development. The primary form of infill development in Smyrna is in the context of residential development; typically replacing an older home with one or more new homes. It can also take the form of commercial or mixed-use development, such as the recent conversion of an aging strip mall in the center of the city into the Belmont development.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT OVERVIEW

Smyrna’s economy, as measured by total job growth, has outperformed the region, county, state, nation, and majority of the benchmarked peer communities since 2006. In 2016, there were an estimated 34,877 jobs in Smyrna. Furthermore, the average annual wage for jobs in Smyrna falls in the middle range among peer communities, and has increased by nearly 15 percent between 2010 and 2015. Over the same five-year period, the labor force grew by more than 5 percent and the number of residents with employment increased by 10.7 percent. More than 14 percent of the net gain in jobs was classified as food preparation and serving related occupations. Annual unemployment in Smyrna in 2015 was 4.9 percent, lower than metro Atlanta’s unemployment rate of 5.9 percent for the same year. More than 94 percent of Smyrna residents are employed outside of Smyrna for their primary job, and roughly half of residents work in one of five sectors: professional, scientific, and technical services; healthcare and social assistance; retail trade; educational services; and accommodation and food services.

Figure 1.12. Opportunity Zones and Enterprise Zones

Sources: City of Smyrna GIS Department; Atlanta Regional Commission; Georgia Department of Community Affairs

| FAST FACTS | 34,877 JOBS in 2016 | 15% annual WAGE INCREASE 2010-2015 | 94% residents EMPLOYED OUTSIDE of Smyrna | 4.9% annual UNEMPLOYMENT | 11% INCREASE in employed residents since 2010 | Architecture & engineering are the FASTEST GROWING jobs |
LOCAL & REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLANS

Economic development is a “team sport,” as seen by the proportion of Smyrna residents who are employed outside of the city. Therefore, economic planning requires partnerships, collaborations, and ongoing communication with other municipalities and regional organizations. Smyrna last embarked on an economic strategic visioning process in 2014; however, various economic plans impact the economic development of Smyrna, such as Cobb’s Competitive EDGE and the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. These economic planning efforts have been reviewed as they relate to the future of Smyrna’s economic development, and further detail about each of these influencing plans can be found in Appendix B. The City of Smyrna offers several incentive programs for businesses, including an opportunity zone, an enterprise zone, and various fee waivers. (See Figure 1.12.)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

**LOCAL**
- City of Smyrna, Community Development & Community Relations
- Public schools and private schools
- Smyrna Education Foundation
- Wave of Excellence
- Smyrna Downtown Development Authority
- Smyrna Business Association
- Smyrna Economic Advisory Incentive Committee

**REGION- AND STATE-LEVEL**
- Georgia Power
- Atlanta Regional Commission
- Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)
- Georgia Department of Economic Development
- Technology Association of Georgia
- Georgia Economic Development Association
- Southern Economic Development Council
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs and Department of Labor
- Georgia Chamber of Commerce

**COUNTY-LEVEL**
- Cobb County Chamber of Commerce
- Cobb’s Competitive EDGE
- Cobb Travel & Tourism
- CobbWorks
- Development Authority of Cobb County
- Cobb County Commission
- Cumberland CID
- South Cobb Redevelopment Authority
- CobbLinc
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & RESOURCES

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Smyrna community has earned a reputation as a community of excellence in both services and treasured public amenities. With 28 park facilities in Smyrna, residents enjoy 304 acres of parklands, trails, and greenspace. Five new parks were added to the city as a part of the 2005 Parks Bond. Additionally, senior services are run through the Wolfe Center, hosting programs for 930 members as of 2014.

PUBLIC SAFETY & FACILITIES

Key public services and facilities in the city include the police department, fire department, sanitation services, and water and sewer services.

- **Police Department**: The Smyrna Police Department has 98 sworn officers, 20 jail employees, and 10 administrative staff members. The city is serviced by a 24/7 E-911 center with an operating budget of more than $1.5 million in 2017. A recent increase in arrest and citation percentages and a decrease in serious crime are attributed to shifts in community policing.

- **Fire Department**: The City of Smyrna Fire Department operates and maintains eight pieces of emergency response equipment and has 80 career employees.

- **Sanitation Services**: More than 10,000 tons of municipal solid waste are collected by Smyrna’s residential Sanitation and Recycling Division, a division of the Public Works Sanitation and Recycling Division, through a contract with Advanced Disposal Services Atlanta. Recycling bins are provided to all city residents, and recyclable materials are processed at the City’s Recycling Center.

- **Water and Sewer Services**: 240 miles of water lines and 130 miles of sewer lines are serviced by the City of Smyrna Public Works Department. Part of the city falls under the Cobb County Water System service area.

FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Key facility and resource updates in Smyrna include improvements to the City’s Recycling Center, replacement of the roof at Wolfe Pool, renovation of the Tolleson Park Pool Building, completion of the Concord Road Linear Park project, installation of the Atlanta Road and Spring Street shared paths, and the recently constructed Smyrna Elementary School. There are eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school serving the Smyrna area, all of which are managed and operated by Cobb County School District. Historic resources in Smyrna include Brawner Hall, Aunt Fanny’s Cabin, and the Chattahoochee River Line.
PRIORITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Smyrna’s priority needs and opportunities were identified based on the assessment of existing conditions, dialogue with the community, and refinement with the Steering Committee. These priorities set the direction for the land use, transportation, housing, economic development, and other issues addressed in the plan. The goals, policies, future land use recommendations, and community work program that follow were crafted in response to the particular needs and opportunities community members identified as most critical to realizing their vision for their future. The priority needs and opportunities are:

LAND USE

LU1. Target public investment in key nodes and corridors.
LU2. Increase adaptability of development regulations.
LU3. Ensure infill development is compatible with the surrounding area.
LU4. Maintain high design standards.

TRANSPORTATION

T1. Enhance and expand transit service.
T2. Reduce congestion on major roads.
T3. Expand the bike/pedestrian network.

HOUSING

H1. Continue to encourage the creation of diverse housing choices.
H2. Encourage home ownership and neighborhood stability.
H3. Continue to enhance quality of life in neighborhoods.
H4. Facilitate context-appropriate housing densities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ED1. Reduce commercial vacancies.
ED2. Expand retail in activity centers and priority redevelopment areas.
ED3. Leverage Braves stadium for restaurant and hospitality industries, as well as professional services.
ED4. Support and/or accelerate entrepreneurship.
ED5. Retain existing businesses.

OTHER

O1. Support school quality excellence.
O2. Provide additional parks and greenspace.
O3. Cultivate public art and culture.
O4. Develop a strategic approach to annexation.