



PlanFirst

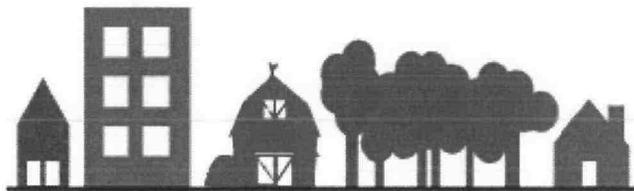
Introduction: *The Department of Community Affairs' PlanFirst Program rewards local governments that clearly demonstrate success with implementing their local comprehensive plan. To apply for PlanFirst designation, a local government must have Qualified Local Government certification and be current on required reporting to DCA (to check status for both, please visit <http://www.georgiaplanning.com/planners/planreview/default.asp>). To be selected for PlanFirst designation, a multi-agency review panel will evaluate a number of indicators of community success with plan implementation. All of these indicators are equally important, but size of the community is taken into consideration in the evaluation so that communities of various sizes are equally competitive for PlanFirst designation.*

Instructions: *Please answer all the following questions, attaching additional pages where necessary. Attach letters of support or other evidence of local commitment to successfully participate in this program if selected. Total application length, including support letters, must not exceed 20 pages.*

1. Applicant Government City of Woodstock, Georgia
2. Address 12453 Hwy 92, Woodstock, GA 30188
3. Contact Person Katie Coulborn
4. Telephone 770-592-6000 ext. 1601
5. E-mail kcoulborn@woodstockga.gov
6. Application prepared by Katie Coulborn

I, the undersigned authorized representative of the applicant, certify that to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is true and correct.

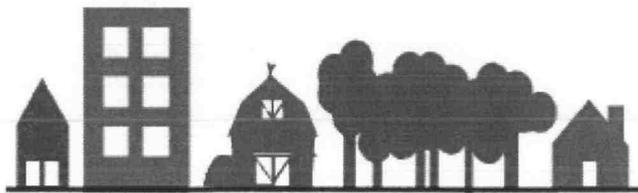
7. Official Signature 
8. Date May 8, 2014
9. Name (please print) Jeff Moon
10. Title City Manager



APPLICATION

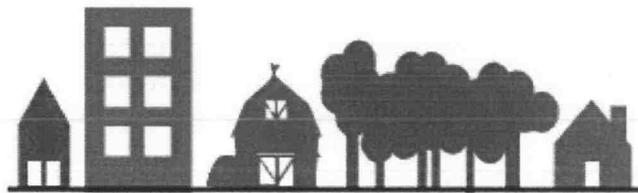
7. For each of the following indicators, briefly explain how your community addresses this indicator and identify specific examples and resulting local successes. (Each indicator will be scored 1, 3, or 5 points, except indicators 11 j. and 11 t. which may score up to 10 points)

Indicator	Explanation
a. We have a good track record with maintaining our Qualified Local Government status and submitting required reports to DCA.	Answer on separate page
Goals	
b. The Goals (or Vision) section of our comprehensive plan is supported by the community and its leadership	Answer on separate page
c. The Goals are both ambitious and achievable for the community	Answer on separate page
d. The Goals steer local decision-making on a continuous basis	Answer on separate page
e. Consistent progress is being made at achieving the Goals	Answer on separate page
Leadership	
f. We have effective planning staff or another suitable arrangement for handling community planning matters	Answer on separate page
g. We have an active planning commission or similar body to steer local planning decisions	Answer on separate page
h. We have a regular local plan effectiveness evaluation process (such as annual planning retreats of elected leadership)	Answer on separate page
i. All local officials (both elected and appointed) involved in local planning processes have recently	Answer on separate page



APPLICATION

Indicator	Explanation
attended training in how to use the plan effectively. Please indicate what trainings and the date(s) attended.	Answer on separate page
j. Provide up to ten of your best recent examples where the plan steered a key local decision	Answer on separate page
Participation	
k. Our comprehensive plan was prepared with multiple community input opportunities	Answer on separate page
l. The community input received during plan preparation influenced the content of the plan	Answer on separate page
m. Our steering committee that guided development of the plan included local leaders and elected officials	Answer on separate page
n. We have an active, ongoing, outreach process for soliciting input on planning matters from a broad spectrum of the community, including non-traditional populations, and the resulting input is listened to by community leaders	Answer on separate page
o. We have active advocates for plan implementation (such as activist citizens, organizations or neighborhood groups) that are listened to by community leaders	Answer on separate page
Implementation	
p. The Work Program section of our comprehensive plan consists primarily of	Answer on separate page



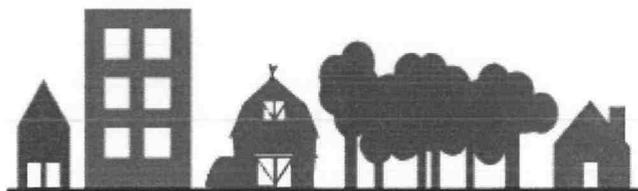
APPLICATION

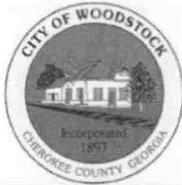
Indicator	Explanation
specific action items that make it clear exactly what we intend to do to implement the plan	Answer on separate page
q. Our Work Program action items clearly address local needs or Goals identified in the plan	Answer on separate page
r. We have a good track record of accomplishing most of the action items included in past plan Work Programs	Answer on separate page
s. Our local capital budget is consistent with, and is designed to implement, the comprehensive plan	Answer on separate page
t. Provide up to ten best of your best recent examples of important projects carried out as a result of the plan	Answer on separate page

Print Form

Once application is completed, print, scan with *Official Signature* and <mailto:Adriane.wood@dca.ga.gov>

Please answer all of the above questions in the application. You may attach additional documents including letters of support, images, or other evidence of local commitment in this program when sending the application. Total application length, including support letters, must not exceed 20 pages.





City of Woodstock
12453 Highway 92, Woodstock, Georgia 30188
Website: www.woodstockga.gov 770 592-6000

PlanFirst Application Responses

- A. We have a good track record with maintaining our Qualified Local Government status and submitting require reports to DCA.

The City of Woodstock has a good track record with the Department of Community Affairs and the Atlanta Regional Commission for updating our Comprehensive Plan, Capital Improvements Element, and Short Term Work Program on time for each reporting period during the past several years. We are also up to date with the required financial reporting.

- B. The Goals (or Vision) section of our comprehensive plan is supported by the community and its leadership.

The vision for Woodstock as set out in the Comprehensive Plan is "A walkable, historic community of neighborhoods located between the mountains and Atlanta, where a mix of housing types, a diversity of employment opportunities, shopping, entertainment and greenspaces create a modern day village." The City Council has shown their dedication to supporting this vision by, among other things, dedicating funds and staff time to developing the Greenprints Trail System, consistently making decisions which are in-line with the LCI plan recommendations, and adopting a form-based code in 2012.

Woodstock has made the transition from being a bedroom community for the Atlanta Metropolitan Area to being a destination on its own. This is evidenced by the award-winning downtown district and the recent booming development along Ridgewalk Parkway, where the Outlet Shoppes of Atlanta have supplied and attracted new jobs and entertainment opportunities. The community has shown its enthusiasm and support for the goals and vision repeatedly through extensive community involvement exercises for many of the City's initiatives, including the Comprehensive Plan update in 2008, the Greenprints Trail Project and Plan in 2007, the Livable Centers Initiative update in 2012, and the creation and implementation of the Form-Based Code in 2012.

- C. The Goals are both ambitious and achievable for the community

The first goal listed in the Comprehensive Plan is the best example of an ambitious, yet achievable goal. "Accommodate growth while creating a sustainable community and implementing the vision." This goal is ambitious because it encompasses so much of the community development process and because sustainability, particularly as far away as Woodstock is geographically from the metro area, is politically and financially challenging. This goal spells out a very delicate balance between encouraging growth and ensuring that the growth that happens is desirable to the community. The way Woodstock has chosen to achieve this goal is through good planning with the LCI and Form-Based Code, coupled with creative and concentrated economic development efforts. Other goals address connectivity and mobility, sustaining a unique community identity, offering choice to residents, and maintaining a balance between the built and

natural environment. All of these goals require the City leadership to negotiate every development and to perform the challenging balancing act between development and conservation.

D. The Goals steer local decision-making on a continuous basis

The Comprehensive Plan calls for the application of Character Areas as a way to guide new development so that it is consistent with the goals outlined in the Plan. For each and every zoning, annexation, and variance case, the staff, Planning Commission, and City Council are required to evaluate the project against the Character Area for the subject property that is found on the Future Development Map. Some goal-implementation strategies which are relied upon regularly that are listed in the Plan include requiring Traffic Impact Studies, Utilities Capacity Analyses, Parking Area Landscaping Requirements, and Context-Sensitive Roadway Design.

E. Consistent progress is being made at achieving the Goals

Each year, we submit a new Short Term Work Program, and each year, we make progress on the list of implementation items. Some significant achievements include

- implementation of an Impact Fee program,
- development of a Service Delivery Plan,
- ongoing downtown streetscape project implementation,
- development and implementation of an identity program which includes a gateway signage package,
- demonstration of support of the restoration of historic façades and buildings with the Façade Grant Program,
- adoption of the Form-Based Code to further encourage walkable, mixed-use development and traditional neighborhood street design, and
- development and implementation of a Green Building Incentive Program.

F. We have effective planning staff or another suitable arrangement for handling community planning matters

The City of Woodstock has a very effective planning staff. The planning staff is responsible for current planning cases for annexations and rezoning, maintenance of the City's long-range plans, and land development ordinance text amendments. Outside these typical planning duties, our planning staff is engaged in many other activities to serve the community. This includes extensive public outreach efforts such as social media engagement on a daily basis, mentoring high school seniors who are working on planning and urban design-related projects, and speaking at local community meetings about planning-related matters. For example, each month, the planning staff creates a map showing the locations of the current planning cases on the Planning Commission agenda, with a brief description of each case, and posts it to the department's social media outlets so that the public can see at-a-glance whether there is an upcoming case near them.

G. We have an active planning commission or similar body to steer local planning decisions

The City of Woodstock has a 7 member Planning Commission. The Mayor and each Councilperson appoints a Planning Commission member from their ward. The Planning Commission receives an orientation from staff when they are appointed and has a training budget so that they may regularly attend trainings such as the ARC's Community Planning Academy. The Planning Commission meets on the first Thursday of each month and has engaged in topic-specific work sessions in the past. For example, the Planning Commission recently held a work session for an hour before the regular

meeting with the City Attorney to have a legal refresher course and ask any legally relevant questions about the scope of their duties.

H. We have a regular local plan effectiveness evaluation process (such as annual planning retreats of elected leadership)

A two-day planning retreat is held by the City Council annually. This year's retreat was held on January 24th and 25th. All Council Members, the Mayor, the City Manager, and all Department Directors were present, along with a hired facilitator and the press. The retreat began with team-building exercises and a discussion of top priority items. Each Department Director gave a presentation on their department's needs, accomplishments, and goals. Each identified action items to be completed. This was followed by a Council Policy Manual review and a Code of Ordinances review. Before final adjournment, the community vision was discussed and new long- and short-term priorities were voted on through a scorecard process.

I. All local officials (both elected and appointed) involved in local planning processes have recently attended training in how to use the plan effectively. Please indicate what trainings and the date(s) attended.

- City Council trainings:
 - On 3.16.13, Councilmember Basford attended Planning and Zoning training with the Georgia Municipal Association.
 - On 6.22.13, Councilmember Baxter attended GMA training on Downtown Development Authorities
 - On 6.26.10, Councilmember Casdia attended GMA training on Planning and Zoning
 - On 6.26.10, Councilmember Leonard attended GMA training on Planning and Zoning
- Planning Commission trainings:
 - 2 Commission members attended the Community Planning Academy training at the Atlanta Regional Commission in October 2012.
 - In July 2013 one Commission member attended planning training at the Carl Vinson Institute.
- Upcoming training: The Planning Department has made plans to host a Woodstock-specific version of the Georgia Conservancy's "Good Urbanism 101" training session. The training will be for both the City Council and the Planning Commission. The Downtown Development Authority and Main Street members will also be invited.
- Policy: We have an adopted policy regarding planning training that states in part "It is hereby the policy of the Mayor and Council to budget for and encourage attendance to these trainings and workshops annually for the elected officials, appointed citizen board members and local government employees."

J. Provide up to ten of your best recent examples where the plan steered a key local decision

1. Recently, several major zoning cases have been approved where the Council has added a condition requiring the applicant to follow our Greenprints Trail Plan and build out multi-use trail connections at locations where the future trail map specified connections on the subject property. This supports the Comprehensive Plan goal to balance the built and natural environment and to provide increased mobility. Recent developers and projects that have built or will build significant trail

sections include Walton Communities/Woodstock West, Ashton Atlanta Residential/74 unit neighborhood, Breezy Hill Land, LLC/South Main (575 units), and Duke Land Group/Rope Mill (72 units).

2. The Comprehensive Plan and LCI plan have influenced the site plans that were approved for three recent major projects, Woodstock West, the Outlet Shoppes at Atlanta, and South Main in terms of the City requiring grid streets to be built and connectivity to be the defining feature of each plan. In each case, the development ended up with more connectivity than was originally proposed by the applicant.
3. Duke Land Group recently applied for rezoning to Infill Village, one of the new Form-Based Code zoning classifications. This zoning shaped the project and caused the neighborhood to be designed in such a way that it closely embodies the future character area for the property, T5 – Urban Village. This is one of the first cases that have been so clearly influenced in so many ways by our long-range plans. The project features several civic spaces, a dense mix of townhomes and single family, alley-fed houses and townhomes, some of which face a greenway, pedestrian-scaled street design with on-street parking, and several points of future street connectivity. During the process, the applicant worked with staff to adjust the plan so that it met all the standards of the Form-Based Code and the Character Area.
4. The FY 2013 Short Term Work Plan identified the need to acquire property for and build a new fire station to include a police mini-precinct in years 2014, 2015, and 2016. In the recent rezoning case for Duke Land Group, the City has partnered with the land owner to develop a new fire station on the civic space portion of the site. The land will be dedicated to the City before final plat approval. Having a new fire station in this location will help the City maintain its ISO rating of 3, and having a police mini-precinct in this area which is close to the Outlet Shoppes of Atlanta will be beneficial to the business owners there.
5. The Ridgewalk Parkway/I-575 Interchange was on the Short Term Work Program list for many years and was completed in 2012. The interchange was a substantial cost to the City and has provided substantial opportunities for economic development within the City.
6. This month, the Town to Creek trail, a part of the Greenprints Master Plan, was completed. This is the first major trail section to be fully completed and creates connectivity from downtown Woodstock to Highway 92, with connections to several residential areas along the way, including Woodstock West, the Pinehill neighborhood, and the future South Main neighborhood. This year, construction will begin on the Rubes Creek Trail, funded through a TE Grant with a local match. The decisions to acquire right of way, fund, and build these trail sections all stem from the Greenprints Master Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.
7. The South Main Street Streetscape project is currently under review at GDOT and is expected to be under construction in 2015. The streetscape will include enhanced pedestrian facilities and on-street parking, both of which are supported in the Comprehensive Plan and the LCI plan. This project also appears on the Short Term Work Programs in each plan.
8. The recently approved Wayfinding Signage Package is an effort that came directly from the Comprehensive Plan in 2008 (goal: continue to create and sustain a unique community identity and structure), and was emphasized as a priority again in the 2012 LCI Update. The first phase of the project has been implemented, with several signs having been installed for public parking and directional information for main

attractions. This project was funded jointly by the City, Main Street, the Downtown Development Authority, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

9. One of the implementation strategies found in the Comprehensive Plan is “continue to support the restoration of original historic facades and buildings; investigate alternative financing methods.” Subsequently, the city implemented the Façade Grants Program, which has granted \$51,590.00 to downtown businesses and restored 14 façades on our historic Main Street. The total investment in these projects by the property owners exceeds \$208,695.00
10. This year, the City was awarded additional LCI funds and will provide a 20% match to extend the LCI area along the Highway 92 commercial corridor. This will promote continued support of the downtown area and create a plan for an appropriate gateway into the downtown area from the south.

K. Our comprehensive plan was prepared with multiple community input opportunities

The first part of the Comprehensive Plan was the Community Participation Program that was adopted by all parties involved in shaping the City’s Comprehensive plan in order to take advantage of extensive ongoing citizen participation activities. The Stakeholders Committee formed for the Joint Comprehensive Plan process (called the Citizen’s Roundtable, which included representatives appointed by the County, the Board of Education, and each of the cities in the county) included a Woodstock Subcommittee as well.

The following public participation tools were used during this process to gain input and feedback:

- Countywide kick-off meeting
- Five sets of open public Community Assessment/Town Hall Issue Forums
- A series of five District Plan Workshops to identify local land use and planning issues in the form of charettes
- A workshop held in Woodstock and five supplemental meetings in Woodstock
- Citizen’s Roundtable meetings
- Five “Plan Cherokee” educational meetings
- Seven briefings with elected officials from all participating jurisdictions in the county
- Woodstock City Council workshops
- Planning Commission workshops
- Two DCA required public hearings at the City of Woodstock
- Citizen surveys and comment sheets, email blasts, mailings, print media and web notifications to reach as many citizens and businesses as possible

L. The community input received during plan preparation influenced the content of the plan

Throughout the planning process, data analysis and community input lead stakeholders along many paths, and we adjusted original assumptions and ideas accordingly. We believe that the fluid process of meetings and workshops has led to a document that has truly achieved a consensus and Vision that represents the diverse interests of the residents and business community in Woodstock.

M. Our steering committee that guided development of the plan included local leaders and elected officials

The steering committee included the City of Woodstock Mayor, the entire Planning Commission (7 members), and local leaders from the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce, among many others.

N. We have an active, ongoing, outreach process for soliciting input on planning matters from a broad spectrum of the community, including non-traditional populations, and the resulting input is listened to by community leaders

Our ongoing outreach process for planning matters includes Towne Hall Meetings, social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter, email blasts for notification of upcoming events, and planning staff speaking and appearing at local events, such as the Downtown Buzz monthly morning business meeting. With such a varied strategy, we hope to capture a wide section of our population. When the community has input, for example, on current planning cases, staff includes this input in writing along with the other pertinent documents for the case for the Planning Commission and City Council to consider. Often, conditions are added to zoning cases based on community feedback.

O. We have active advocates for plan implementation (such as activist citizens, organizations or neighborhood groups) that are listened to by community leaders

We have many groups who actively advocate for a wide variety of plan goals, and many of them keep in close contact with staff and appear at Planning Commission meetings and City Council meetings to speak during public comment. We have strong relationships with the following area groups, organizations, and individuals:

- The Greenprints Alliance – A non-profit group organized to raise funding for and promote the implementation of the City’s Greenprints Trails Master Plan
- Elm Street Cultural Arts Village – A non-profit arts group who occupies city-owned land and buildings, and works to further the City’s cultural aspirations. As part of our agreement, this group gives an annual update on their progress to the City Council, and the City supports the group’s objectives and responds to their needs when possible.
- Woodstock Downtown HOA – the HOA for the downtown neighborhood has worked closely with the City on connectivity and infrastructure issues in the neighborhood and was heavily involved in the Livable Centers Initiative process
- One activist citizen, Mr. Tom Holtz, was heavily involved in planning processes and every public meeting during the development of the Ridgewalk Parkway interchange and Outlet Shoppes of Atlanta development process. Mr. Holtz has now been appointed to the Planning Commission. In addition to Mr. Holtz, our Planning Commission is comprised of leaders from each of the City’s six wards, and includes experts in architecture and local government.
- We have a very active Main Street Organization, which is nationally accredited and offers many opportunities for their members. They have a direct link to the City leadership through the Economic Development Office, with the Director of Economic Development serving as the President of the Organization. This group has been involved in every major planning effort that the City has undertaken recently.

P. The Work Program section of our comprehensive plan consists primarily of specific action items that make it clear exactly what we intend to do to implement the plan

The action items on our current Work Program are mostly specific in nature. A few examples follow:

- Façade improvements along Wall Street, addition of sidewalks and lighting
- Continued implementation of wayfinding signage package
- Develop trolley route and purchase trolley
- Explore options for relocation of City offices to include possible public/private partnerships and explore funding in the next SPLOST cycle
- Acquire property for and build new fire station to include police mini-precinct
- Construct restrooms at Rope Mill Park
- CALEA National Accreditation fro the Police Department
- One running track and one walking trail at Dupree Park
- Construct amphitheatre in Woodstock City Park
- Towne Lake Parkway road widening – Sherwood Drive to Neese Road
- South main Street Streetscape
- Revise State Route 92 Corridor standards and regulations
- Develop citywide Design Guidelines to include a public art program, gateway features, streetscapes, street furniture, lighting, and other public amenities

Q. Our Work Program action items clearly address local needs or Goals identified in the plan

It is clear, particularly in the transportation section, that our action items address local needs. The action items that are related to design, such as the streetscape and corridor standards, address the goals in the Plan related to walkability and mobility. Many of the economic development-related action items, such as the trolley and wayfinding signage package, relate directly to the goals of sustaining a unique community identity and creating a wide range of economic development opportunities.

R. We have a good track record of accomplishing most of the action items included in past plan Work Programs

On our most recent Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments, we were happy to report completion of seven major items. We dropped some items that have been accomplished in other ways, such as through ordinances, and some items that were not specific enough, such as “determine an east-west route through town.” We added several new items that were much more specific. We also have a good track record of completing items on the work plans of our other long-range plans, such as the LCI, evidenced by the Atlanta Regional Commission’s decision to award us another grant for a supplemental study.

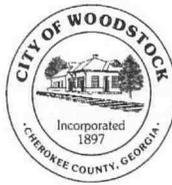
S. Our local capital budget is consistent with, and is designed to implement, the comprehensive plan

The City has a track record of dedicating the necessary capital in order to facilitate plan implementation. Two specific examples in recent history include the expenditure of SPLOST funds for the Ridgewalk Parkway/I-575 interchange, as well as using SPLOST funds to partner with Walton Communities on installation of the first grid streets in downtown. Furthermore, the revenues generated through impact fees are dedicated to the acquisition of open space, and the City has contributed matching funds to TE projects, including the Rubes Creek Trail and the South Main Streetscape project. Each of these projects were identified as action items through the planning process, and the

City has taken purposeful steps toward completion of these projects, including providing necessary funds.

T. Provide up to ten best of your best recent examples of important projects carried out as a result of the plan

1. North Main Street Streetscape
2. Ridgewalk Parkway/I-575 Interchange
3. Creation and Implementation of the Form-Based Code
4. Wayfinding Signage Package approval and installation of Phase I
5. Green Building Incentive Program implementation
6. Adoption of Sustainability Policy (carried out as a result of the Vision)
7. Construction of the first full trail section from the Greenprints Trail Plan
8. Façade Grant Program
9. Creation of the Downtown Development Authority
10. "Woofstock" Dog Park (carried out with Impact Fees which were a result of the Plan)



City of Woodstock
12453 Highway 92
Woodstock, GA 30188
Website: www.woodstockga.gov

May 12, 2014

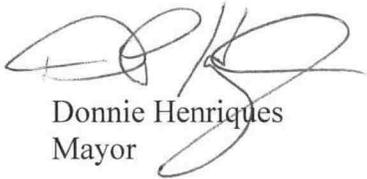
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
60 Executive Park South, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30329-2231

To Whom It May Concern:

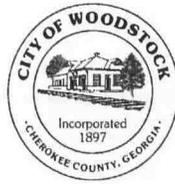
The City of Woodstock is a community that values long range planning, and works purposefully toward plan implementation. This is apparent with each zoning decision, as we use the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Development Map as a guide for decisions regarding the future development of our city, ensuring that is in the best interest of our citizens and future generations. Investments in infrastructure are prioritized in accordance with the Short Term Work Program. The citywide Greenprints Trail Plan is also in the implementation stage, with the first sections of the Greenprints Trail network have recently opened for public use. Perhaps the most notable evidence of the City's commitment to planning and plan implementation is the award-winning downtown area, which was borne out of a vision defined in Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plan in 2002, reiterated in Comprehensive Town Plan 2008, and further confirmed through the LCI 10-Year Update in 2012. Downtown Woodstock is exemplary of what can be achieved through diligent planning and implementation efforts, along with partnership between the City and the private sector.

In Woodstock, we are advocates of good planning, and believers that the planning process is not complete until the vision becomes a reality. I am in full support of the City's application for designation as a PlanFirst Community by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Sincerely,



Donnie Henriques
Mayor



City of Woodstock
12453 Highway 92
Woodstock, GA 30188
Website: www.woodstockga.gov

May 12, 2014

Georgia Department of Community Affairs
60 Executive Park South, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30329-2231

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for the City of Woodstock's application to be designated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as a PlanFirst Community. We have consistently enjoyed the benefits of following through with our Comprehensive Plan and the items listed on our Short Term Work Program.

Our Comprehensive Plan envisions a walkable, sustainable community of neighborhoods where people can live, work, and play. In the years since the adoption of the plan, the City is becoming just that. Our award-winning downtown developments are thriving. Our downtown has become a sought after location for businesses, residents and visitors alike, and we owe the way in which it has developed to the follow-through with our long-range plans.

Thank you for your consideration of our application materials, and we hope you will select Woodstock as a PlanFirst Community.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Moon
City Manager