DRAFT AUGUST 1, 2007

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

I. Introduction and Overview

The Community Participation Plan describes the methods by which the City of Norcross officials will engage the public in developing a Community Agenda. It also presents a schedule of activities and benchmarks for that process.

Involving a diverse set of stakeholders in the planning process will help ensure that the Community Agenda reflects the values of the City's citizenry. Meaningful involvement by informed constituents will also validate the Community Agenda as a community-endorsed public policy document used to guide future land-use decisions. When many members of the community participate in establishing the Community Agenda, they lend support to city officials to implement the policies established within the document.

A. Review Process

Prior to the development of a Community Agenda, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) requires that the local jurisdictions transmit the Participation Plan along with a Community Assessment for review. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the regional arm of DCA that reviews these two documents to determine whether or not they are complete; upon this verification, ARC in turn transmits these documents to DCA. DCA conducts a report of findings and recommendation, and ARC issues the local government a final report that includes DCA's comments.

B. Public Participation in Recent Planning and Development Activities in Norcross

The City of Norcross has undertaken several recent planning activities involving community meetings and planning charettes related to growth and development issues.

Revitalization and Redevelopment Plans.

Urban Collage completed in 2006 a Strategic Development Plan for downtown Norcross. The Strategic Development Plan was created as an opportunity to build upon the accepted community-based vision of previous planning efforts and also incorporated citizen input through new community meetings.

In 1987 EDAW, Inc. conducted a Historic District Study for Downtown Norcross. The study resulted in a Downtown Development Plan, recommendations for sidewalk materials and street furniture and a detailed facade improvement plan. The City is currently updating its historic resources inventory; information from this completed study will be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Norcross is also supporting the Jimmy Carter Blvd./Buford Highway Redevelopment Plan that is currently being undertaken by the Gwinnett Village CID. The Community Development Director for Norcross serves on the Steering Committee for this project, as it encompasses a

significant portion of the City of Norcross outside of the existing LCI study areas. Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District is conducting this study as a two-part process; to consolidate and update prior planning efforts into a comprehensive Redevelopment Plan and to take that plan and create an Overlay District. The Overlay will be a layer of regulation that provides for and encourages higher-density, mixed-use redevelopment, and which sets design standards for the purpose of creating an attractive and consistent gateway for the front door of Gwinnett County. Community input from the project will be considered in the Comprehensive Plan recommendations; additionally, coordination is planned with planners conducting the Jimmy Carter Blvd./Buford Highway Redevelopment Plan.

Other parks, greenspace, master planning, historic preservation planning that has occurred since 2001 (LCI) and since the completion of the current Comprehensive Plan includes a plan for revitalizing the area around Lillian Webb Field.

Livable Centers Initiative Studies

Norcross LCI 2001

The Norcross Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is an exciting plan that builds upon the success of the City's on-going redevelopment efforts. In March 2001, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) awarded a LCI grant to the City of Norcross to produce a comprehensive master plan that would assist the community in reaching its goals. The Norcross LCI public involvement effort facilitated the creation of meaningful input because citizens gained a thorough understanding of the issues, options and consequently, the difficult choices facing them. As a result of the citizen input and overall LCI effort, the following goals were established:

- Provide housing opportunities downtown
- Encourage mixed-use development
- Expand retail opportunities
- Increase Norcross' existing sense of place and community identity
- Increase pedestrian connections by expanding sidewalk network and trails
- Improve pedestrian safety throughout the study area
- Plan for future transit and commuter rail stops and expanded parking needs

These goals will be evaluated by citizens during the Comprehensive Planning Process to determine their current applicability and whether they should remain primary goals of planning efforts in Norcross.

Lilburn-Indian Trail LCI 2006 (completed March 2007)

A small portion of the study area for the Lilburn-Indian Trail LCI Study is located within the City of Norcross along Beaver Ruin Road and a portion of Buford Highway. Thus, the City of Norcross served as a jurisdictional partner in the LCI study effort which was lead by Gwinnett Village CID. While this study only encompasses a small area of the city, it is an area that was not included in the Norcross LCI completed in 2001; it is important to consider and incorporate applicable study results in the Comprehensive Planning efforts as these results were likely drawn from a different group of stakeholders via the community input process.

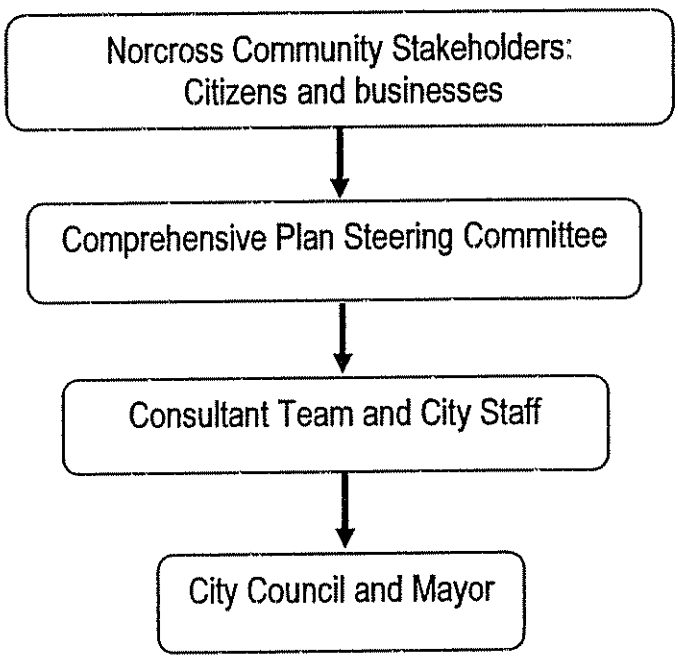
The purpose of this study was to:

- Identify opportunities for mixed use development;
- Create development nodes;
- Expand bicycle and pedestrian facility connectivity;
- Improve connections to local and express bus services; and
- Manage vehicular access.

The results of this study indicate that Norcross should primarily engage in a collaborative effort with Gwinnett County in evaluating the zoning, land use, and development standards policy and rule changes that must occur to allow the catalyst LCI projects to advance. The Comprehensive Plan will utilize citizen and stakeholder input to confirm and further define the next steps for the City of Norcross in implementing the LCI vision.

Conclusion. Given the recent and up-coming set of public engagement activities, the City of Norcross will ensure that the Comprehensive Plan does not duplicate these efforts, but instead will build upon the community's past and pending investment of time and energy. The program for engaging the public in Comprehensive Planning will focus on reaffirming recent and prior planning outreach as well as expanding participation efforts as necessary to reach a broad audience and meet or exceed DCA requirements.

II. Public Participation Process Structure



III. Steering Committee

Prior to the initiation of the Community Agenda portion of the Comprehensive Plan, a Steering Committee was appointed to represent the broader citizen base of the community. The Norcross City Council appointed an eleven member Steering Committee on July 9, 2007; the first meeting was held on July 25,2007 with ten members having accepted the invitation to participate on the Committee. The Steering Committee will be convened regularly prior to and in between the community meetings; the Committee will be asked to attend the community meetings in order to hear the input from the larger audience and assist in interpreting that information. The Steering Committee will be tasked with reviewing consultant documentation, and providing feedback based on the community input into the vision for the City. The Steering Committee will also review the synthesis of community input, as prepared by the consultant team, into relatable goals and policies included in the Community Agenda. The following members were appointed to the Norcross Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee:

NAME
1. Randy Meacham
2. Skip Nau
3. Jeff Hopper
4. Tim Hopton
5. JT Stewart
6. Paul Sumner
7. Blake Manton
8. Bob Wilkerson
9. Jim Scarbrough
10. Catherine Cash

IV. Recommended Stakeholders List

As part of targeted public outreach efforts, the Comprehensive Plan effort will engage a network of community organizations, businesses, and small groups as a resource for information distribution to the community as a whole. Channeling communications such as meeting notices, posters, and agendas through these groups will also provide these groups with an opportunity to give direct input into the process and how the content of meetings and presentations may be adapted to meet a variety of needs.

Community Groups/Neighborhood Associations

Latin American Association
Homeowners/Condominium Associations
Education Associations
Garden Club
Boy Scouts/ Girl Scouts
Norcross Neighbors
Downtown Merchants Association
Progressive Development Committee (PDC)
Norcross Business Association (NBA)
United Peachtree Corners Civic Association (UPCCA)

City Boards, Associations, and Departments

Norcross Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
Chamber of Commerce (Gwinnett)
Planning and Zoning Board
Norcross Housing Authority
Norcross Historic Preservation Committee
Norcross Tree Board
Architectural Review Board
Parks and Greenspace Commission
Public Works
Cultural Arts and Community Center
Utilities
Transportation Agencies

Recent Committee Leadership

Gwinnett Village CID
Downtown Strategic Plan

School Leadership

Norcross Elementary
Summerour Middle
Norcross High
International Schools

Religious Community Leadership

Local churches and synagogues
International community churches/institutions
Other

V. Participation Techniques

The City of Norcross has established a Steering Committee to oversee the Comprehensive Planning process and make recommendations to the City Council and Mayor on the final product.

Given the series of recent, related public planning activities identified above, the Steering Committee will determine how many community meetings should be conducted. The consultant team will conduct a minimum of three (3) community meetings.

Education/Information

Lobby Displays –	*Post maps and information at City Hall.*
Printed Information –	*Flyers and Newspaper information will be distributed; flyers to be announcing public hearings to be mailed when feasible.*
Website –	*A web link has been created on the City web page with draft documents and draft documents. The City website will also be set up for direct Citizen feedback via posts and/or a blog for the Comprehensive Plan process.*
Media and Press Releases –	*The local newspaper will be contacted to advertise meetings and/or status of the plan to the community.*
Mailing Lists –	*The City of Norcross has a mailing list and Steering Committee members will create e-mail lists and/or online discussion groups for announcing events and project updates.*

Public Input

Official Hearings –	*Two (2) required public hearings will be held; one to present the Community Participation Plan and one to present the Community Agenda. At least one Work Session before the City Council will be conducted where progress to date will be presented.*
Community Meetings –	*A minimum of three (3) community meetings will be held that include the interaction techniques below. These meetings may also include charettes and open houses.* *Two Community Meetings are initially scheduled for* ***September 12*** *and* ***October 11****; these will be followed by an open house style community meeting in November.*
Website –	*The City of Norcross will create a web link on its main web page to solicit public input and provide information to the citizens about the Comprehensive Plan process, progress, and schedules of activities. The address for the City of Norcross website is* ***www.Norcrossga.net****.*

The consultant team will prepare materials for updates to the website on a regular basis throughout the public participation process and will provide copies of draft documents for public review as they are available.

Select Interviews – *Select stakeholders will be interviewed in order to gain more detailed information on certain topics, such as housing, economic development and local industry, and Hispanic population growth and needs, etc.*

Public Interaction

Vision, Goals, Objectives Meetings - *Facilitated meetings to determine answers to three major planning questions: Does the vision articulated in your existing policy documents still seem appropriate? What additional objectives does the community identify for the City? What Issues and Opportunities exist for the community to achieve goals and vision?*

Public Partnership

Steering Committee Meetings – *The first Steering Committee Meeting was convened on **July 25, 2007**. Monthly Steering Committee Meetings have been scheduled through October and may continue for one to two additional months. These meetings will be held on the 4th Wednesday of each month. Regularly scheduled meetings are important so that the Steering Committee group can provide consistent feedback and advise the planning team. The Steering Committee and consultants may consider sub-committees to manage specific subject matter or to coordinate facilities; sub-committees may lead to more focused outcomes.*

Technical Advisory Committee– *Established if it is determined that specific community objectives need special study and analysis. This committee would also work to ensure that another level of input and oversight is included in the planning process. Members may include City departments heads and other appointees who are not on the Steering Committee.*

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VI. Comprehensive Plan Schedule of Events

The Steering Committee will work with the City Council and Mayor to establish exact dates for public meetings, considerate of other community events and activities. These dates will be published in the local newspapers and posted on the City official web site. The following identifies the sequence of events to occur through February 2008.

	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
Community Assessment										
Data Collection: See Gwinnett CA										
Data Analysis										
Executive Summary										
Document Production										
Revisions										
Transmittal to DCA										
DCA REVIEW										
Community Participation Plan										
Draft Document										
Steering Committee Prep										
Steering Committee Meetings										
Community Agenda										
Future Development Map										
Future Development Narrative										
STWP/Implementation Plan										
STWP update										
Public Hearing										
Transmit document										
DCA REVIEW										