



PHASE 2: FINAL VISION PLAN

Submitted by Market Street Services Inc.
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MARKET ST



Final Vision Plan





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“Love it here, it can only get better.”

“Smyrna is a great place to live but we do need a vision.”

“Smyrna has done a great job of morphing into a progressive upbeat city – let’s continue the strides to make it even better for the future.”

-Public Input Participants



PROJECT OVERVIEW: SMYRNA'S VISION

Working closely with City leaders, the business community, and Smyrna citizens, *Market Street Services* is facilitating an in-depth process that will culminate with a clear **10-year Vision Plan** for Smyrna and guidelines to assist the City and its partners in implementation activities. The development of Smyrna's Vision will occur in three phases. Each phase will be guided by an engaged Steering Committee of leaders from across the community and will be informed by community feedback.

Community Engagement

The inclusion of community stakeholders in Smyrna's Vision is critical to the plan's implementation and long-term sustainability. Community involvement opportunities included public feedback and opinions gathered through focus groups, stakeholder interviews, an online community survey, and social media.

Phase 1: Community Assessment

The first phase of this process combined qualitative and quantitative research to produce a clear profile of the City. The Community Assessment is structured around seven "storylines" and is intended to provide a common base of knowledge for thinking about the future of Smyrna. To provide context for the data analysis, Smyrna was compared to Marietta, Georgia; Cedar Park, Texas; and Matthews, North Carolina. Data for Metro Atlanta, Cobb County, the State of Georgia, and the nation was also included.

Phase 2: Smyrna's Vision

The second phase of the process focused on the determination of "what" Smyrna will do over the next 10 years. The Vision Plan was informed by and reflective of all the community input to-date, research findings, and discussions with community stakeholders. Not only does the Vision Plan articulate a concrete vision, it also includes objectives, actions, and tactical recommendations that allow City leaders and residents to affect the desired change.

Phase 3: Implementation Guidelines

Timely and effective implementation is critical to the ultimate success of Smyrna's Vision. If the Vision Plan represents the "what," the Implementation Guidelines represent "how" Smyrna's Vision will be accomplished. The Implementation Guidelines will include detailed timelines, propose potential lead and supporting implementation partners, address capacity constraints, estimate which actions are likely to have more significant implementation costs, suggest possible funding sources, and provide measurement tools that will enable Smyrna's leaders and residents to track progress and goal attainment.



SMYRNA VISIONING INITIATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE ROSTER

Teri Anulewicz, City of Smyrna Councilwoman Ward 3
Holly Bass, Cobb Travel & Tourism
Jeff Belle, Vinings Mortgage
Maryline Blackburn, Artist and entertainer
Angie Bolton, IBM
Kim Brinson, Smyrna Tree Board
Anthony W. (Tony) Britton, Branch Banking & Trust Company, Co-Chair
Liz Davis, Keep Smyrna Beautiful
Stacey Evans, State Representative, House District 42
Ron Fennel, City of Smyrna Councilman Ward 7
Colin Gallagher, SmartBuild LLC
Slade Gulledege, Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Co-Chair
Chandra Harris, Congressman David Scott - Smyrna District Office
Eric Homansky, Smyrna Soccer Club
Winston Johnson, Maandi Media
Bill Marchione, Smyrna historian
David Monroe, Realtor
Susan Morgan, Public Relations Executive
Michelle M. Murphy, Co-President, Smyrna Elementary PTA
Derek Norton, Atlanta Apartments Association
Pastor Shell Osbon, Life Church Smyrna Assembly of God
Mel Pender, M&D Consulting Firm
Dan Penick, Campbell High School
Melleny Pritchett, City of Smyrna Mayor Pro-Tem and Councilwoman Ward 1, Co-Chair
Tim Stultz, Cobb Board of Education
Paula Weeks, The Coca-Cola Company
Charles Welch Jr., South City Partners
Tom Wood, Whitefield Academy

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

Eric Taylor, City Administrator
Ken Suddreth, Community Development Director
Jennifer Bennett, Community Relations Director
Tom Boland, Economic Development Manager
Christy Ullman, Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council

MAYOR AND SMYRNA CITY COUNCIL

Market Street would also like to thank Mayor Max Bacon and the City Council for their continued input and engagement in this process. *Market Street* will continue to provide detailed updates to elected leadership throughout the process.



INTRODUCTION

"I want my city described as something that makes me feel ALIVE, EXCITED, [and] PROUD"

"There is an opportunity to build something very special in Smyrna that doesn't exist anywhere else in Metro Atlanta."

-Public Input Participants

There is a palpable feeling that Smyrna is creating something unparalleled in Metro Atlanta. Among the many suburbs in the region, Smyrna can be a community that excels in providing the "best of both worlds" – a small town community experience with all the amenities of the metro area. However, there is much work to be done if Smyrna is going to create the future that residents desire. Building on the findings of the Community Assessment, the Vision Plan is where opportunities and challenges are turned into action. The seven storylines from the Community Assessment are summarized below and on the following pages.¹

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Past, Present, and Future: What's Next for Smyrna?

There is a distinct feeling in Smyrna that the future holds great promise. The development of the Atlanta Braves stadium; momentum for development of major parcels including the former Jonquil Plaza site and others; consideration for Google fiber; and the planned Riverview Landing project by Jamestown Properties provide great optimism for many residents. These projects are just a few of the activities that support the sense of ascendancy in Smyrna and many people believe that negative perceptions of Smyrna are fading. However, there is also concern about the effects of these projects on traffic and congestion, as well as the omnipresent shadow of concerns that public schools may be underperforming. While Smyrna is a destination for a young, diverse, and well-educated population, there is a distinct question about Smyrna's ability to attract and retain families.

Smyrna's Growth and Development

Population in Smyrna has grown over the past decade, outpacing the City of Atlanta, but lagging behind many other suburban communities in Metro Atlanta. Between 2007 and 2012, when mobility was severely

¹The full Community Assessment can be accessed either on the project website (smynavision.com) or via the City of Smyrna official website and archived information (smyrnacity.com).



hampered by the Great Recession, Smyrna continued to add residents, underscoring its status as a destination within Cobb County. In order to accommodate the population growth, Smyrna has primarily added density, rather than new land area. This density, coupled with a moratorium on apartments that began in the early 1990s, can be associated with the community's aging stock of multifamily buildings. The lack of new apartment buildings, especially high quality units, has eroded any competitive or market pressures that would be placed on current apartment building owners. The result is that rents are competitively lower, allowing for younger people to access the market. At the same time, there is concern that community tenure and attachment are being eroded by the less expensive, poorly maintained housing options that increase levels of transiency among the population.

Public Education and Smyrna's Transitional Image

When survey respondents were asked to identify Smyrna's greatest challenge, the overwhelming answer was "schools." Concerns over underperformance (especially in middle and high school), both real and perceived; school safety; physical appearance; and leadership quality were apparent and are supported by input and data. The result has been an exodus of young families. In fact, of the comparison communities, Smyrna has the highest share of residents under the age of two, but has the lowest share of population between ages seven and 20. This "hollowing out" of the population directly correlates to the core school years. However, with many people in Smyrna immobilized by the Great Recession, fewer families were able to leave the community in the years that followed and the local schools and enrollments in public schools have elevated. Public input revealed that some parents believe that change is in the air. The new elementary school built in 2013 to replace the aging Brown Elementary School and to accommodate some of the increase in demand has generated positive initial feedback. Many parents and stakeholders believe that now is the time to demand higher performance, increase parental involvement, and support the local schools to be points of pride in the community.

Quality of Place: A Defining Factor

The quality of the place-based amenities and experiences a community offers its residents is not easily quantified. Whether it's education opportunities, the weather, health care, public safety, amenities, proximity to family (near or far), or other considerations, people choose to live in places for different reasons. In Smyrna, input participants overwhelmingly said they enjoy living in Smyrna and would like to continue living in the City. The "sense of community" that people feel in Smyrna was identified as the City's greatest strength by survey respondents and binds many people to the area. Location, green space, recreation opportunities, diversity of housing options, and the appearance of Smyrna as a whole garnered high ratings among quality of life characteristics. Nightlife opportunities, commuting, availability of charitable assistance, and shopping and dining opportunities were scored lower among quality of life items. Concerns over embracing diversity, leadership division, and overall engagement were also apparent from survey results. Protecting and enhancing the things residents love about the City will be important to Smyrna's future as growth and development continue.



Population Growth and Composition

Smyrna's growth, development, education, and amenities are shaping its appeal to various demographic and socioeconomic groups. Given the attractiveness of the housing market, proximity to green space, opportunities to participate in many community events, the Market Village, and proximity to job centers, it is not surprising that Smyrna is attracting a wide range of individuals and a very diverse population. One of the hallmarks of the population in Smyrna is that it is a majority-minority community, meaning less than half of residents are Caucasian, non-Hispanic. Overall, Smyrna is capturing growth from many different races and ethnicities, except the Hispanic population. Such diversity is a key strength for Smyrna and should be celebrated as the community reflects what a "new America" will look like. Many communities would envy Smyrna's position as a destination for young professionals and young families. However, as shown in previous storylines, residents and stakeholders must candidly address the flight of families with school-aged children from the community and think anew about how to change that trajectory.

Smyrna's Economic Landscape

The Great Recession wreaked havoc on the American economic landscape and the long-term trends are still unraveling. While the official end of the recessionary period occurred in June 2009, many communities are just now regaining some of the jobs that were lost. In the Smyrna area, employment declined by 10.7 percent driven by a loss of 3,538 jobs. These losses accounted for 9.7 percent of Cobb's total job loss, slightly higher than Smyrna's share of Cobb employment in 2009 (9.1 percent). Since the end of the recession period, employment has been growing and unemployment has fallen by over five percentage points reflecting the increasing strength of the labor market in Metro Atlanta and the employability of workers in Smyrna. Despite being home to a decent share of Cobb County jobs, residents tend to work in other places in the Metro. Of the workers who live in Smyrna, 48.6 percent work in Cobb County and only 17 percent work in Smyrna. Smyrna's proximity to large office markets and major corporate headquarters is a defining competitive factor, but concerns remain over the impact of increasing traffic congestion and the impact of underperformance by local public schools.

Looking to the Future: Economic Opportunities

In 2013, the Smyrna area had just over 32,000 jobs. This level represents a decrease of about one percent over the previous five years and growth of 3.1 percent over the previous 10 years. The largest sectors of economic activity are wholesale trade (13 percent), construction (11.4 percent), health care and social assistance (11.2 percent), professional, scientific, and technical services (10.7 percent), retail trade (10.7 percent), and accommodation and food service (10.4 percent). The two sectors that provided the largest shares of job growth during this period were health care and social assistance (added 1,207 jobs) and professional, scientific, and technical services (added 753 jobs). Thinking about the future, many public input respondents provided thoughts and ideas about opportunities that could help increase the economic position of Smyrna. Focus group participants representing the Smyrna Technology Initiative and other



small business owners and managers identified opportunities related to stronger support systems for entrepreneurs and tech talent. Potential opportunities such as developing a technology incubator, better connections to Southern Polytechnic State University, Kennesaw State University, and Chattahoochee Technical College, and increased support for downtown businesses were mentioned. Moving forward, Smyrna will need to work with regional economic development organizations and stake out its economic position as it best balances growth, quality of life, and economic vibrancy.

Note: The figures provided in the Community Assessment were the most recent available data at the time they were analyzed and do not reflect any recent changes or announcements made that may impact the current or future composition of the community. The information in the Community Assessment provides a snapshot of the demographics, trends, and economic conditions in order to identify assets and challenges facing Smyrna. Please visit the City or project websites for a full analysis of the findings.



OUR INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP The future of Smyrna is very much contingent on how residents, leaders, and other stakeholders work together. With a diverse, young, well-educated population, the possibilities for affecting positive change are endless. However, without actively working to build connections among people there is a possibility for a splintering of the community.

OUR QUALITY OF PLACE The quality of place attributes of a community impact resident attachment. The built environment has the ability to bring people together and create a feeling that “this is our place.” Complementing the aesthetic experience, the built environment is the aspect of the community that people actively experience. It can also reach further and transform a place into a destination that others seek out and emulate. Sustaining the parts of Smyrna that have been transformative to Smyrna’s sense of place and finding new catalysts will be important to Smyrna’s future.

OUR IMAGE AND IDENTITY Smyrna residents are proud of the progress that their City has made in terms of building a positive reputation. While many people recalled a time when Smyrna was associated with some negative stereotypes, it is clear that era is ending. Thinking about the future, Smyrna has the opportunity to define, grow, and foster those assets that will be the core elements of its identity.

Smyrna’s Schools

While several priorities or topical issues appear in two or three of the cornerstones – such as economic opportunities or the increasing awareness of the community’s multiculturalism – each of the three cornerstones heavily feature actions related to Smyrna’s schools. By including this as a common thread that connects the three areas, the Steering Committee is acknowledging the fundamental importance of education to Smyrna’s future. It is also important to note that it is understood that school-related recommendations, perhaps more than most other areas of this Vision Plan, require the community to exert significant **influence**, in the absence of full control, given that the schools are part of the Cobb County School District.

Document Structure: Within each cornerstone, there are Desired Outcomes (in bold); Recommended Actions (in small caps); Tactical Recommendations (preceded by a check mark); and Details as relevant (bullets). Best practices have been provided throughout, referenced in the appropriate cornerstone, and outlined further in Appendix A.



OUR INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

"Unless we are open to getting to truly know others, we can't move forward. And I'm not saying only getting to know people of different races within the middle class. We need to understand one another better. That is what will change lives and our community!"

-Public Input Participant

HOW CAN INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP HELP US STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT?

Strong communities do not just materialize. Rather, strong communities are built by people who are willing to ask the tough questions, volunteer first, and collaborate for results. By investing time and energy into an engagement infrastructure, Smyrna will be better able to leverage the strengths of its residents and businesses for progress. Understanding where relationships can be strengthened and how the next generation of leaders is created must be part of the strategic direction of the city.

WHAT ARE OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES?

The following statements represent the overall strategic objectives of what the actions in this section seek to achieve and serve as guiding principles for implementation partners.

Smyrna will be a welcoming place where all residents are invited to engage in the community.

Community leadership will reflect the diversity and demographics of the city.

Residents and visitors alike will continue to enjoy a wide range of signature community events.

Parents and businesses will be expected to be active partners with local schools.

Smyrna will be an active participant in collaborative economic development and planning efforts.

"...civic engagement and participation in civic clubs was identified as one of the key ways residents feel attached to the city. However, when it comes to voting turnout and future leadership, respondents expressed concern over small participation and the lack of a pipeline of new leaders."

-Community Assessment



SUMMARY OF DESIRED OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS – DETAIL PROVIDED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

1.1 Smyrna will be a welcoming place where all residents are invited to engage in the community.

1.1.1 *ESTABLISH A PHYSICAL PRESENCE AT ALL COMMUNITY EVENTS THAT PROVIDES RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT SMYRNA AND WAYS TO BE INVOLVED.*

1.1.2 *ENCOURAGE MORE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IN THE SMYRNA COMMUNITY.*

1.2 Community leadership will reflect the diversity and demographics of the city.

1.2.1 *ENSURE THAT CITY BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS ARE KEPT UP TO DATE AND REPRESENT ALL PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY.*

1.2.2 *STRENGTHEN SMYRNA'S ENGAGEMENT IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNANCE.*

1.2.3 *CREATE A STRONGER CONNECTION TO COBB YOUNG PROFESSIONALS (CYP).*

1.2.4 *ESTABLISH YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES THAT CONNECT LOCAL STUDENTS WITH GOVERNMENT.*

1.2.5 *ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION OF A FAITH-BASED LEADERSHIP COUNCIL TO REFLECT A SHARED MISSION OF COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF COMMUNITY NEEDS.*

1.3 Residents and visitors alike will continue to enjoy a wide range of signature community events.

1.3.1 *OPTIMIZE FOOD TRUCK TUESDAYS BY CONTINUING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES THAT COULD LIMIT THE LONG-TERM SUCCESS AND VIABILITY.*

1.3.2 *EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE TASTE OF SMYRNA AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT CULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION GOALS.*

1.3.3 *CONTINUE TO BE OPEN TO ADAPTING SUCCESSFUL EVENTS FROM ATLANTA TO A NEW SUBURBAN SETTING.*

1.4 Parents and businesses will be expected to be active partners with local schools.

1.4.1 *ENSURE THAT SMYRNA PARENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS ARE CONSISTENTLY REPRESENTED AT COBB COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS.*

1.4.2 *BUILD CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES AND LOCAL SCHOOLS.*

1.4.3 *EMPANEL A CAREER EDUCATION TASK FORCE TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPERIENTIAL-BASED LEARNING IN ALL LOCAL SMYRNA SCHOOLS.*

1.4.4 *HOLD A REGULAR FINANCIAL AID EVENT WHERE FAMILIES OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS CAN RECEIVE HELP WITH FILLING OUT THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) FORM.*

1.4.5 *CONTINUE TO RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING STUDENTS, TEACHERS, PARENT AND BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS.*

1.4.6 *ESTABLISH NEW WAYS FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LOCAL SCHOOLS.*

1.5 Smyrna will be an active participant in countywide economic development and planning efforts.

1.5.1 *IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS THAT ARE DRIVEN BY A FULLY SUPPORTED PROFESSIONAL STAFF TEAM.*

1.5.2 *ESTABLISH STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS.*

1.5.3 *ENSURE THAT SMYRNA IS INVOLVED IN COUNTY-LEVEL, REGIONAL, AND STATE-LEVEL INITIATIVES.*




1.1 Smyrna will be a welcoming place where all residents are invited to engage in the community.

Many communities want to be known as welcoming, but struggle with how to best achieve such a reputation. Smyrna should focus on not only welcoming new residents, but also on making sure that established residents feel welcomed. Further, welcome efforts need to build a level of expectation that residents, whether new or established, will be involved in community events and organizations. Continually “plugging” people into volunteer opportunities and encouraging them to be active participants in their community will increase community attachment.

1.1.1 ESTABLISH A PHYSICAL PRESENCE AT ALL COMMUNITY EVENTS THAT PROVIDES RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT SMYRNA AND WAYS TO BE INVOLVED.

- ✓ Establish a committee to support “community ambassador” activities at special events throughout the community including select school and neighborhood-specific events.
- ✓ Ensure that the committee is charged with both welcoming new residents and engaging existing residents.
- ✓ Work with neighborhood/homeowners associations and Keep Smyrna Beautiful to ensure that every new resident receives a welcome letter and an invitation to pick up a jonquil bulb in the fall.



“The city is doing a good job of making the area desirable to live in but work still needs to be done. Can you find an avenue to deliver information about what is happening at the [government] meetings, council and courthouse, new land developments, neighborhoods and businesses? Perhaps a link from Facebook to news articles and meeting minutes, use the Smyrna Magazine mailer to deliver this info. This will help increase awareness and community involvement.”
-Public Input Participant

1.1.2 ENCOURAGE MORE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IN THE SMYRNA COMMUNITY.

- ✓ Support a coordinated approach to maintaining information about opportunities and updated contact information through a dedicated volunteer or staff position.
 - Track involvement and publicize progress as compared to established goals.
 - Consider creating an app designed specifically to address Smyrna area volunteer needs.
- ✓ Encourage all volunteer-based organizations to link to and connect with existing clearinghouses and resources, such as Hands On Atlanta and Cobb County-based partner organizations.
- ✓ Expand formal volunteer recognition opportunities by building on the annual Smyrna Citizen of the Year award to include one or more additional categories of recognition.
- ✓ Enhance resources on the City’s website to provide more information about ongoing City-affiliated volunteer opportunities such as Keep Smyrna Beautiful, the Public Safety Foundation, and Friends of the Smyrna Library, among others.



1.2 Community leadership will reflect the diversity and demographics of the city.

Smyrna is a majority-minority community, meaning more than half of residents belong to another race and/or ethnicity than Caucasian, non-Hispanic. Community leadership, both elected and volunteer, does not reflect such diversity. Growing and developing a pipeline of new leaders must be a key piece to engaging more diverse leaders. Working to expose young people to leadership opportunities and breaking down barriers to leadership opportunities should be a part of Smyrna's future.

1.2.1 ENSURE THAT CITY BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS ARE KEPT UP TO DATE AND REPRESENT ALL PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

- ✓ Commit to timely appointments and term renewals of board and commission members.
- ✓ Work with a wide variety of community partners to ensure that boards and commissions are diverse in terms of city ward districts, gender, age, race and ethnicity, and tenure in the community.
- ✓ Create a user-friendly method for citizens to apply for positions and develop job descriptions for various appointed positions.
 - Include a list of all active boards and commissions and their members on the City's website.

>>>Best Practice: Citizen Participation Handbook, Town of Matthews (Matthews, NC)

1.2.2 STRENGTHEN SMYRNA'S ENGAGEMENT IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNANCE.

- ✓ Establish a citywide political candidate training program to share information about elected officials' responsibilities and the candidacy and election process.
 - Invite former elected officials, City staff, and governance support organizations such as the Georgia Municipal Association, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, and others to help guide the development of training materials for the program.
 - Focus initially on residents who have served as board and commission members.

>>>Best Practice: Forsyth County Political Candidates Education Program (Forsyth County, NC)

- ✓ Conduct a voter awareness campaign to increase voter participation.
 - Consider changing the city election cycle and/or amendments to the City Charter that could increase voter turnout and representation.
- ✓ Increase access to programs that help integrate new populations into the community and enable expanded engagement by all citizens.



- Support the expansion of Chattahoochee Technical College's English Literacy and Civics courses to serve additional Smyrna residents, potentially with services provided in the city.
- Work with the Cobb Literacy Council to assess needs specific to Smyrna.
- ✓ Develop a Citizen Planning Academy to educate the community about the City's planning process and to encourage positive engagement in the planning process.
 - Create a community-wide annual town hall event to initiate or conclude the annual Citizen Planning Academy, e.g. feature Jamestown Property's Riverview Landing development as the initial focus of the first annual town hall event.

1.2.3 CREATE A STRONGER CONNECTION TO COBB YOUNG PROFESSIONALS (CYP).

- ✓ Encourage Smyrna CYP members to lead initiatives to increase opportunities for service-driven projects as part of the CYP annual calendar.
 - Tie the service project to a Smyrna Vision Plan initiative.
- ✓ Select a City-sponsored event to feature CYP as a partner organization and include opportunities for CYP representatives to share program information with younger City employees and Smyrna residents who may be interested in joining CYP.
- ✓ Encourage Smyrna CYP members to participate in CYP's Next Generation Mentoring Program and the Smyrna Business Association.
- ✓ Encourage the CYP to expand the Next Generation Mentoring Program to provide opportunities for CYP members to mentor high school and college students.

1.2.4 ESTABLISH YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES THAT CONNECT LOCAL STUDENTS WITH GOVERNMENT.

- ✓ Develop a "Youth in Government" Day to provide the opportunity for Smyrna high school students to observe government in action.
 - Include a "Mayor for the Day" opportunity as well as the involvement of as many departments and functions of Smyrna City government in the day as possible.
 - Incorporate career education elements into the event.
 - Theme each year's day to correlate to another Vision Plan initiative (e.g., "Smyrna's 2015 Youth in Government Day featuring technology initiatives")
- ✓ Actively encourage more Smyrna high school students to attend City Council meetings (possibly in an honorary representative role) and apply for acceptance into the Cobb Chamber's Youth Leadership Steering Committee.



1.2.5 ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION OF A FAITH-BASED LEADERSHIP COUNCIL TO REFLECT A SHARED MISSION OF COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF COMMUNITY NEEDS.

- ✓ Include representatives from the proposed Faith-Based Leadership Council in important community initiatives.
- ✓ Seek guidance from the Council regarding best methods to share information about services, events, and leadership opportunities with under-represented communities.
- ✓ Over time, seek to expand representation to include individuals in addition to an organization-based roster of partners to share ideas and resources for the betterment of the entire community.

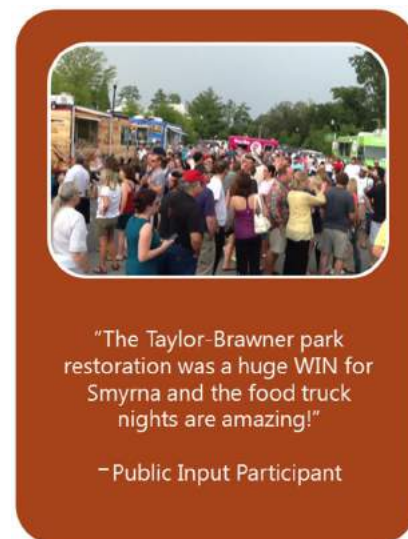
1.3 Residents and visitors alike will continue to enjoy a wide range of signature community events.

Smyrna is known for hosting great community events, including Food Truck Tuesdays, the Jonquil Festival, the annual St. Patrick’s Day celebration, and many others. Events like these are backbone activities for many people in Smyrna as they provide regular opportunities to celebrate their community and interact with a wide range of people. Smyrna should continue to foster and develop these types of interactions, while also seeking to push the envelope. Adopting events that are not typical of a suburban community could add depth to the types of events currently offered and reinforce the “niche” identity that Smyrna is seeking.

1.3.1 OPTIMIZE FOOD TRUCK TUESDAYS BY CONTINUING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES THAT COULD LIMIT THE LONG-TERM SUCCESS AND VIABILITY.

- ✓ Continue to solicit input from vendors and participants to better understand what would make the event even more successful and sustainable over the long-term.
- ✓ Continue to address accessibility concerns and explore options that could alleviate parking limitations.
- ✓ Widely publicize the participation and impact of Food Truck Tuesday.
- ✓ Coordinate other high priority events and initiatives around Food Truck Tuesdays to build off the series’ momentum.

- Consider dedicating a small space to feature different community groups on a rotating basis.





1.3.2 EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE TASTE OF SMYRNA AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT CULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION GOALS.

- ✓ Create a connection between Taste of Smyrna and increasing awareness and appreciation of the community's multicultural diversity.
 - Consider creating spin-off events that are complementary to Taste of Smyrna and promote both the history of the community and its newer cultural identities, such as "Smyrna International BBQ Invitational" or something similar.

1.3.3 CONTINUE TO BE OPEN TO ADAPTING SUCCESSFUL EVENTS FROM ATLANTA TO A NEW SUBURBAN SETTING.

- ✓ Evaluate existing best practice events to identify good opportunities for Smyrna to become the first community "outside the perimeter" to host successful events adapted from in-town models.
 - Consider building on partnerships that already exist between the cycling community, Jamestown properties, and the Atlanta Streets Alive initiative to create a distinctly Smyrna-branded Streets Alive day.
 - Establish Smyrna as the "first" to support/sponsor/adopt other regional initiatives that reinforce the community's vision.
- ✓ Assess where there are opportunities to fill an event or festival niche that doesn't currently exist and could complement the existing community calendar without creating detrimental competition.
 - Consider where existing events could be collaboratively scheduled and/or combined, as well.
- ✓ Identify partners and resources that would be needed to support the addition of new events.

1.4 Parents and businesses will be expected to be active partners with local schools.

Education is a rallying point for the community. There is no doubt that parents and businesses alike think that education is a challenge for Smyrna. If the situation is going to change, there must be a community expectation that people and businesses are actively supporting local schools and advocating on behalf of the students and entire school community. Smyrna should look to be on the cutting edge of establishing strong and sustainable relationships with businesses, while also expecting parents to commit to active school participation. Of course, without an end goal or strategic agenda, efforts will be uncoordinated and momentum will be lost.

1.4.1 ENSURE THAT SMYRNA PARENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS ARE CONSISTENTLY REPRESENTED AT COBB COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS.

- ✓ Publicize Board meeting dates and locations throughout the community.
- ✓ Assemble a "delegation" of parents and stakeholders representing all Smyrna schools to regularly attend Board meetings, which could function as a "Super PTA" or "Smyrna PTA Council."



- Encourage individual school liaisons to report back to schools via newsletters, PTA meetings, or other appropriate mechanisms.
- ✓ Invite Board members to significant community events and individual school events.

1.4.2 BUILD CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES AND LOCAL SCHOOLS.

- ✓ Include representatives from the Smyrna Technology Initiative in curriculum showcase events at individual schools.
- ✓ Identify opportunities for businesses to engage in partnerships similar to the existing collaboration between IBM, Keep Smyrna Beautiful, and the Smyrna Education Foundation.
- ✓ Coordinate efforts among various school PTAs and Foundations to solicit financial, in-kind, and volunteer engagement by local technology companies.
 - Organize a joint presentation to one of the Smyrna Technology Initiative's monthly meetings by volunteer leaders from each PTA and Foundation outlining the benefits of supporting the schools.

>>>Best Practice: Code.org and the Hour of Code

1.4.3 EMPANEL A CAREER EDUCATION TASK FORCE TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPERIENTIAL-BASED LEARNING FOR ALL SMYRNA STUDENTS

- ✓ Ensure that the proposed Task Force is coordinating directly with existing and future efforts and partners, including the Communities in Schools, Partners in Education, the Smyrna Education Foundation, and that it includes teachers and school administrators.
- ✓ Work with business partners to create opportunities that are sustainable, including internships and job shadowing.
 - Consider expanding existing programs, including but not limited to Campbell Middle School and Campbell High School's participation in Junior Achievement of Georgia programs.
- ✓ Encourage businesses and students to sign up with cobbworks.org to expand participation in internships.

>>>Best Practice: Junior Achievement

>>>Best Practice: 12 for Life and Georgia's Promise Program

1.4.4 HOLD A REGULAR FINANCIAL AID EVENT WHERE FAMILIES OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS CAN RECEIVE HELP WITH FILLING OUT THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) FORM.

- ✓ Gain commitments from counselors, administrators, teachers, social workers, and other members of the community (including business community partners) to volunteer their time several times a



year (or monthly) to educate families about financial aid opportunities and help them complete FAFSA, among other forms of financial aid.

- ✓ Develop a system to track families and students assisted, measuring their receipt of financial aid, college choices, and college success.

>>> **Best Practice: Financial Aid Saturdays, Austin Chamber of Commerce (Austin, TX)**

1.4.5 CONTINUE TO RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENT AND BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS.

- ✓ Expand the twice-yearly Mayor's Education Awards.
 - Include principals and businesses in addition to students, teachers, and volunteers.
 - Provide scholarships for middle school student award recipients to fund future participation in the Cobb Chamber's Youth Leadership Steering Committee.
 - Create simple collateral materials related to the Awards and expand information available about the selection process, past recipients, and success stories on the City's website to enable potential outside funding.
- ✓ Support efforts to pursue District and State Teacher of the Year recognition for Smyrna area teachers and widely promote successful efforts.

1.4.6 ESTABLISH NEW WAYS FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LOCAL SCHOOLS.

- ✓ Foster opportunities for parents to partner together to participate in school activities and classroom engagement to help families with less time available connect with the school.
- ✓ Establish a foundation at every school in Smyrna.
- ✓ Encourage opportunities for incoming and current school parents to socialize during evening and weekend events that would be more conducive to dual income and/or single parent households.
 - Replicate existing events such as the Griffin Middle School Parent Mixer.
- ✓ Create a "Parent Pledge" campaign to encourage parents to engage in schools and widely promote the many opportunities to be involved in the classroom and from home.

1.5 Smyrna will be an active participant in collaborative economic development and planning efforts.

It is important that the City take a proactive approach to shaping its future economic landscape. Representing nearly 10 percent of employment in Cobb County (despite only representing just over 7 percent of the population), it is imperative that Smyrna's leaders work with county-level, regional, and state-level partners, improve their relationship, and be "at the table" in making decisions that impact the city. Encouraging partners to engage in Smyrna's efforts is equally important.



1.5.1 IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS THAT ARE DRIVEN BY A FULLY SUPPORTED PROFESSIONAL STAFF TEAM.

- ✓ Establish a clear, measurable Economic Development Agenda for the City and consider incorporating a number of actionable items, including:
 - Continuing an active role in concurrence with the Cobb Chamber's ongoing business visitation program through visitation and tracking of collected information to identify ongoing needs and challenges as well as opportunities for business growth, with a specific focus on targeting small technology employers that may not be part of Cobb's program.
 - Expanding existing engagement in countywide efforts to support Dobbins Air Reserve Base and retaining local jobs and encouraging more Smyrna leaders to participate in the Honorary Commander program (a cooperative effort of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Dobbins Air Reserve Base (ARB), General Lucius D. Clay National Guard Center, Navy and Marine Corps).
 - Leveraging the resources of the Cobb Chamber and the EDGE program² to ensure that the needs of major employers are being met as much as possible and that contingency plans are in place in the event that major employers downsize or leave Smyrna.
 - Complementing Cobb EDGE's efforts by developing case statements and relevant data related to Cobb EDGE targets that are the best fit for Smyrna, including Travel and Tourism, Professional and Business Services, and Wholesale Trade.
 - Evaluating continuing efforts to establish a small-scale incubator and mentoring programs in partnership with Cobb EDGE, surrounding higher education partners, and existing businesses.
 - Co-hosting the Cobb Chamber's Existing Industry Symposium.
 - Outlining City policies related to business retention tools and resources.
- ✓ Evaluate the success of Smyrna's Enterprise and Opportunity Zones and Tax Allocation District and continue to use these tools to create prosperity for residents, businesses, and increase the vitality of these areas of the city.
- ✓ Evaluate the benefits of establishing a City department dedicated to economic development that works in partnership with Community Development and other departments.

² Cobb's Competitive EDGE, an initiative of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce and its community-wide partners, is Cobb County's first holistic, transformational community and economic development strategy and implementation plan designed to strengthen our quality of life, education and infrastructure assets – and market Cobb County to the world, thus generating high-wage job growth. EDGE partners include Cobb County Development Authority and the development authorities of Cobb's cities. <http://www.cobbedge.com/>.



- ✓ Assess the City's existing tools and statutory entities, clearly articulate the resources and powers these entities have, and differentiate roles between staff, elected officials, and appointed leadership.

1.5.2 ESTABLISH STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS.

- ✓ Work with partners to inventory existing tools and resources that provide access to advice, mentoring, market information, funding sources, and other support.
 - At a minimum, include the Smyrna Business Association, the Smyrna Technology Initiative, the Small Business Development Center at Kennesaw State University, SCORE, Chattahoochee Technical College, and the Cobb Chamber's Business University program in the inventory.
- ✓ Create additional resources as needed to fill in any gaps or to provide Smyrna-specific information.
 - Begin by creating a straightforward checklist for starting a new business in Smyrna.
 - Once established, connect small business and entrepreneurial training back to Smyrna's schools as part of career education programs that can be incorporated into existing curricula standards.

>>> Best Practice: Snellville Business Toolbox, City of Snellville (Snellville, GA)

1.5.3 ENSURE THAT SMYRNA IS INVOLVED IN COUNTY-LEVEL, REGIONAL, AND STATE-LEVEL INITIATIVES.

- ✓ Establish the expectation that Smyrna will be consistently represented at meetings that involve regional and state-level decision-making expected to significantly impact Smyrna.
 - Partner organizations include but are not limited to: the Cumberland Community Improvement District; the Cobb Chamber of Commerce; Cobb Travel and Tourism; the Cobb County Commission; Cobb County Department of Transportation; the Atlanta Regional Commission; the Georgia Chamber of Commerce; and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.
- ✓ Build on existing collaborations such as the Smyrna Area Council of the Cobb Chamber by holding regular meetings of business, community, and elected officials, including the Smyrna state legislature delegation.
- ✓ Encourage all county, regional, and state partners to participate in planning activities and prioritized informative events led by Smyrna's elected officials, school leaders, and Vision Plan implementation groups.



OUR QUALITY OF PLACE

"Smyrna's strengths are its location, small town feel, walking access (downtown Smyrna, Food Truck Tuesdays, Silver Comet Trail, etc). It also has great elementary schools and wonderful families that support them. There is a great sense of community and responsibility to take care of it."

-Public Input Participant

HOW CAN QUALITY OF PLACE HELP US STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT?

The quality of a place depends on a myriad of factors, many of which are hard to change. However, the difficulty in demanding change for the better should not be upheld as a reason for inaction. Smyrna provides its residents with a great quality of place experience and people are seeking it out. At the same time, there are thorny issues, such as transportation, education, and housing development that are at the forefront of citizens' minds. Having the courage to hold candid conversations, determine a course of action, and implement solutions is imperative to making and showing progress.

WHAT ARE OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES?

The following statements represent the overall strategic objectives of what the actions in this section seek to achieve and serve as guiding principles for implementation partners.

Smyrna's public schools will be high-performing and sought out by parents and families.

Residents will enjoy a range of transportation options and modes of activities, including increased pedestrian connectivity to destination centers inside and outside City borders.

Smyrna will elevate opportunities for recreation and experiencing arts and culture.

Housing diversity in Smyrna will enhance community attachment, cater to a diverse population, and be a model for other growing cities.

Core City services, development, and redevelopment efforts will enhance quality of life and diversify the tax base.

Retail options will align with resident preferences and more expenditures will stay in Smyrna.

"Overall, when asked to rate the overall quality of life in Smyrna, 76.7 percent ranked it as 'good' or 'excellent.'" -Community Assessment



SUMMARY OF DESIRED OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS – DETAIL PROVIDED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

2.1 Smyrna’s public schools will be high-performing and sought out by parents and families.

- 2.1.1 *ENCOURAGE A SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION OF THE SMYRNA EDUCATION FOUNDATION’S (SEF) ABILITY TO IMPACT POLICY, LEADERSHIP, AND FURTHER INVESTMENT IN AREA SCHOOLS.*
- 2.1.2 *LED BY THE SEF, ESTABLISH AN EDUCATION AGENDA FOR SMYRNA THAT PROVIDES A DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY’S EXPECTATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SMYRNA.*
- 2.1.3 *BUILD ON THE SUCCESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS AND EXPAND COMPLEMENTARY AND SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS.*
- 2.1.4 *CONSIDER EXPANDING LEADER IN ME PROGRAMMING TO ADDITIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.*
- 2.1.5 *PROMOTE AND EXPAND RESOURCES THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN THE CLASSROOM AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN LOWER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS.*
- 2.1.6 *EVALUATE THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A CITY OF SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT.*
- 2.1.7 *COORDINATE WITH CAMPBELL HIGH SCHOOL BOOSTER CLUBS TO CREATE COMMUNITY EVENTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SCHOOL FUNCTIONS.*

2.2 Residents will enjoy a range of transportation options and modes of activities, including increased pedestrian connectivity to destination centers inside and outside City borders.

- 2.2.1 *ADVOCATE FOR ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THAT CAN ALLEVIATE CONGESTION FOR SMYRNA RESIDENTS.*
- 2.2.2 *EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE SUBSIDIZED SHUTTLE SERVICE TO HARTSFIELD JACKSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FOR SMYRNA RESIDENTS AND WORKERS TO PROVIDE A DISTINCTIVE AMENITY FOR THE SMYRNA COMMUNITY.*
- 2.2.3 *BECOME THE FIRST COMMUNITY “OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER” TO CONNECT TO THE ATLANTA BELTLINE.*
- 2.2.4 *IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO TRAIL AND PATH CONNECTIVITY AS CONTAINED IN THE PARKS AND RECREATION TEN YEAR MASTER PLAN.*
- 2.2.5 *UNDERTAKE A CATALYTIC PROJECT IN OR ADJACENT TO THE MARKET VILLAGE AREA.*
- 2.2.6 *EVALUATE THE FEASIBILITY OF SHUTTLE SERVICE BETWEEN COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS IN SMYRNA AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES STADIUM USING THE CIRCULATOR SYSTEM BEING ENVISIONED FOR THE CUMBERLAND GALLERIA AREA.*

2.3 Smyrna will elevate opportunities for recreation and experiencing arts and culture.

- 2.3.1 *ESTABLISH AN ADVISORY ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMMING.*
- 2.3.2 *EXPLORE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO COMPLEMENT ONGOING PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM INVESTMENTS.*
- 2.3.3 *CREATE A TOUR MAP OF SMYRNA HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SITES.*
- 2.3.4 *EVALUATE FEASIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING A NEW AQUATICS CENTER.*

2.4 Housing diversity in Smyrna will enhance community attachment, cater to a diverse population, and be a model for other growing cities.

- 2.4.1 *CONDUCT A HOUSING MASTER PLAN TO PROMOTE THE DENSITIES AND TYPES OF HOUSING THAT WILL BE FAVORABLE TO SMYRNA’S CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT.*
- 2.4.2 *EVALUATE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF CITY INCENTIVES FOR NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT.*
- 2.4.3 *IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING AND THE LIVING EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENTS.*

2.5 Core City services, development, and redevelopment efforts will enhance quality of life and diversify the tax base.

- 2.5.1 *CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS FOR THE DELIVERY OF ALL CITY SERVICES.*
- 2.5.2 *PRO-ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE HIGH QUALITY REDEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE CITY.*
- 2.5.3 *SEEK TO INCREASE THE INVENTORY OF QUALITY OFFICE SPACE WITHIN THE CITY.*

2.6 Retail options will align with resident preferences and more expenditures will stay in Smyrna.

- 2.6.1 *LEVERAGE FINDINGS OF RETAIL LEAKAGE AND SURPLUS STUDY TO STRENGTHEN RETAIL RECRUITMENT AND EXPANSION EFFORT.*
- 2.6.2 *IMPLEMENT A “BUY LOCAL” PROGRAM.*



2.1 Smyrna's public schools will be high-performing and sought out by parents and families.

Public education in Smyrna is a top concern of residents and is recognized as a large challenge that needs to be overcome for the community to prosper. While the schools in the city are Cobb County Public Schools and there are barriers to some options for improvements, there are many opportunities to affect change and to aid in raising the quality of education for Smyrna students.

2.1.1 ENCOURAGE A SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION OF THE SMYRNA EDUCATION FOUNDATION'S (SEF) ABILITY TO IMPACT POLICY, LEADERSHIP, AND FURTHER INVESTMENT IN AREA SCHOOLS.

- ✓ As a community, commit to funding a staff position to direct the Foundation's programming, advocacy initiatives, and grant-seeking efforts.
- ✓ Consider expanding the size of the Board and the scope of the mission.
- ✓ Pursue funding from a wider pool of sources, including the Atlanta Braves Foundation, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, and crowd-sourcing platforms, to significantly increase the impact of SEF.

2.1.2 LED BY THE SEF, ESTABLISH AN EDUCATION AGENDA FOR SMYRNA THAT PROVIDES A DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY'S EXPECTATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SMYRNA.

- ✓ Work closely with School Councils, PTAs, and individual school foundations to ensure that current and ongoing efforts are incorporated into the Education Agenda.
 - Include grassroots efforts such as Wave of Excellence in outreach efforts and potentially in the creation of the Education Agenda.
- ✓ Ensure that the agenda addresses curriculum; student safety; school leadership, teaching, and staff expectations; Board of Education leadership expectations; increased opportunities for school-based management; and facility needs.
- ✓ Widely publicize the Education Agenda and use it to hold elected officials at all levels accountable.
 - Coordinate with the School Board meeting delegation (Desired Outcome 1.4).

2.1.3 BUILD ON THE SUCCESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS BY CONTINUING TO SUPPORT AND EXPAND COMPLEMENTARY AND SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS.

- ✓ Expand middle and high school programs to increase students' exposure to advanced placement (AP) and college coursework.
 - Hold additional College Credit Now Summit(s) and/or create ongoing resources (hotline, website with helpdesk, etc.) to increase opportunities for all students and families to learn about dual enrollment options and other opportunities.



- Explore opportunities to provide students with informed and guided access to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).
- ✓ Strengthen career and technical training opportunities through partnerships with business associations, Chattahoochee Technical College, and employers.
 - Support involvement in Campbell High School's Go Build Georgia team.

2.1.4 CONSIDER EXPANDING LEADER IN ME PROGRAMMING TO ADDITIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

- ✓ Evaluate the first years of Smyrna Elementary School's experience with the program and, if warranted, identify additional schools that could benefit from adopting the program in the coming years.

>>>Best Practice: Leader in Me, A.B. Combs Elementary (Raleigh, North Carolina)

2.1.5 PROMOTE AND EXPAND RESOURCES THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN THE CLASSROOM AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN LOWER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS.

- ✓ Maintain a central listing of programs and resources and provide this information in a variety of formats (online, paper, in Spanish, etc.).
 - Include countywide services available in addition to existing school-specific or privately provided enrichment programs such as Path to Shine.

2.1.6 EVALUATE THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A CITY OF SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

- ✓ Survey the public to determine if residents would like to pursue this option.
- ✓ If desired, complete a study on the financial feasibility for a Smyrna independent school district.
- ✓ Consult with Georgians for Local Area School Systems (GLASS) regarding the process of proposing an amendment to the Constitution to allow for additional school districts.³
- ✓ If pursued, create clear, measurable goals before undertaking effort.

2.1.7 COORDINATE WITH CAMPBELL HIGH SCHOOL BOOSTER CLUBS TO CREATE COMMUNITY EVENTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SCHOOL FUNCTIONS.

- ✓ Involve CHS booster clubs in existing and future Smyrna events to provide opportunities to promote school functions open to the community.
- ✓ Partner with faith-based organizations and businesses to expand awareness of CHS school functions on an ongoing basis.

³ In 1945, Georgia passed a constitutional amendment that capped the number of school districts in the state. GLASS is an advocacy group working to pass an amendment that would allow municipalities that were created after January 1, 2005 to establish independent school systems.



2.2 Residents will enjoy a range of transportation options and modes of activities, including increased pedestrian connectivity to destination centers inside and outside City borders.

Smyrna residents are concerned about current and future traffic congestion, especially regarding the new development of the Braves Stadium and the surrounding developments that will come with it. The inconsistent presence of sidewalks, bike lanes, timing of traffic lights, and public transportation options were also among the top responses regarding mobility challenges. Further, Smyrna residents desire increased clean and efficient transportation options, and although the 2012 TSPLOST was overwhelming voted against, Smyrna had some of the highest percentage of votes in favor of it in Cobb County. Approximately 41 percent of Smyrna voters were in favor of the TSPLOST compared to 31 percent of Cobb County voters.

2.2.1 ADVOCATE FOR ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THAT CAN ALLEVIATE CONGESTION FOR SMYRNA RESIDENTS.

- ✓ Investigate the value of incorporating elements of “Complete Streets” into all transportation planning and encourage the support of Georgia’s Safe Routes to School program.
- ✓ Regularly review feedback received from Smyrna residents regarding interest in MARTA service and other public transportation options with Cobb County leaders.
 - Advocate for the expansion of Cobb Community Transit (CCT) routes as needed.
- ✓ Ensure Smyrna’s senior citizens’ transportation needs are met.
- ✓ Coordinate ride-sharing programs and set aside space for commuter park-and-ride lots.
- ✓ Ensure that road infrastructure and traffic signalization focus on alleviating congestion around key intersections and along major corridors.

2.2.2 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE SUBSIDIZED SHUTTLE SERVICE TO HARTSFIELD JACKSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FOR SMYRNA RESIDENTS AND WORKERS TO PROVIDE A DISTINCTIVE AMENITY FOR THE SMYRNA COMMUNITY.

- ✓ Evaluate direct shuttle service options that could be partially funded by area employers.
- ✓ Work with emerging transportation partners such as Uber and Lyft to explore options that would be mutually beneficial to the city and privately-held businesses.

2.2.3 BECOME THE FIRST COMMUNITY “OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER” TO CONNECT TO THE ATLANTA BELTLINE.

- ✓ Working closely with the Connect the Comet initiative, broadly publicize efforts to extend the Silver Comet to the borders of Atlanta and then to the Atlanta Beltline.
 - Ensure that advocacy efforts positively reinforce the benefits of connectivity.

2.2.4 IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO TRAIL AND PATH CONNECTIVITY AS CONTAINED IN THE PARKS & RECREATION TEN YEAR MASTER PLAN.

- ✓ Create a city-wide master plan for trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and bike-share roads.
 - Coordinate planning with the ongoing Cobb Chamber and Cumberland CID trail and multi-use initiative.
 - Include a focus on linking urban areas, residential areas, and parks to the Silver Comet Trail.
- ✓ Ensure there are a sufficient number of bike repair stands strategically located.
- ✓ Consider conducting a financial feasibility study on the implementation of a bike-sharing program.



2.2.5 UNDERTAKE A CATALYTIC PROJECT IN OR ADJACENT TO THE MARKET VILLAGE AREA.

- ✓ Dedicate a portion of the Market Village to a use that will increase foot traffic in a way that complements existing occupancies and events, such as a small business incubator space, an “artist-in residence” space, a co-working space, online education center, or something similarly transformative.
 - Consider purchasing one of the townhomes to use in conjunction with the new space, within parameters of covenants.
 - Tie the usage back to the priorities related to education and the technology sector to reinforce Smyrna’s image and niche opportunity(ies) message.
- ✓ Consider building a pedestrian walkway over Atlanta Road to connect the Market Village with Jonquil Plaza’s future development.

2.2.6 EVALUATE THE FEASIBILITY OF SHUTTLE SERVICE BETWEEN COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS IN SMYRNA AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES STADIUM USING THE CIRCULATOR SYSTEM BEING ENVISIONED FOR THE CUMBERLAND GALLERIA AREA.

- ✓ Work closely with the Cobb Chamber, Cobb County Government, Cobb Travel and Tourism, and the Cumberland Improvement District to align efforts with ongoing discussions.



2.3 Smyrna will elevate opportunities for recreation and experiencing arts and culture.

Quality of life amenities are important to residents and future residents in communities across the nation, and Smyrna is no different. Activities and events increase community attachment, keep residents spending their money locally, and bring in revenue from non-residents – marking the city as a destination for entertainment. The parks, library, and biking paths are top assets in Smyrna and can be further utilized through improvements, but current options for arts and culture in the community are scarce.

2.3.1 ESTABLISH AN ADVISORY ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMMING.

- ✓ Determine whether the Arts and Cultural Council will be broad-based, or will focus on a specific medium that connects to other initiatives (e.g., visual arts could leverage Park with Art event; digital media business niche; Lillie Glassblowers and other local artisans; schools' involvement in the Reflections art contest; the Congressional Art Competition supported by Congressman David Scott; and other existing initiatives).
- ✓ Under the auspices of the Council, cultivate partnerships with existing entities in the city and in surrounding areas that will facilitate an expansion of arts and cultural events and activities that complement City of Smyrna-sponsored programming.
 - Include the South Cobb Arts Alliance and Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art in outreach efforts and consider seeking expansion of Art in the Park, Marietta ChalkFest, the Theater Project, and the Smyrna Village Players.
 - Explore facility-sharing opportunities with K-12 and post-secondary education partners when in need of venues for arts and cultural activities.
- ✓ As part of the Council's possible mission, create a vision for installing a public art collection throughout Smyrna.
 - Encourage public and private development projects to include permanent indoor and outdoor artistic amenities that could become a destination, including but not limited to sculptures, fountains, waterfalls, and exhibits.
 - Collaborate with the City to establish guidelines that could be incorporated into development standards.

>>> **Best Practice: Syracuse Public Arts Task Force (Syracuse, NY)**



2.3.2 EXPLORE ADDITIONAL OFFERINGS TO COMPLEMENT ONGOING PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM INVESTMENTS.

- ✓ Consistently acknowledge the value of the library as a major community asset and provide training, materials, and facility maintenance as needed.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of providing offerings in the southern portion of the city.

>>> Best Practice: Little Free Libraries

2.3.3 CREATE A TOUR MAP OF SMYRNA HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SITES.

- ✓ Work with partners including the Smyrna Historical and Genealogical Society, the Smyrna Museum, River Line Historical Association, Mableton Improvement Coalition, and the Vinings Historic Preservation Society to create and distribute/promote a detailed map of sites and attractions.
 - Promote the City's Civil War Artifacts Collection and consider securing a long-term location for the collection and other historical artifacts.
- ✓ Collaborate with the National Park Service to more closely connect Smyrna's historical and cultural sites to Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park programming and visitors.



2.3.4 EVALUATE THE FEASIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING A NEW AQUATICS CENTER.

- ✓ In partnership with Cobb County Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs and Cobb Travel and Tourism, investigate the impact that a competitive aquatics center could have for Smyrna.
- ✓ If justified, include the development of a year-round aquatics center that meets the needs of residents, recreational clubs, school-affiliated clubs, and the sport-tourism market in a future SPLOST priority project list.

2.4 Housing diversity in Smyrna will enhance community attachment, cater to a diverse population, and be a model for other growing cities.

While the lack of market pressure has resulted in more affordable housing choices in the rental market, there is a need to ensure that all residents – including young couples, single professionals, and older residents – have access to quality housing choices and density types. A common refrain among young professionals and new homeowners during the input process was the necessity of having options at all financial levels. While there were no concerns about the availability of high quality single family homes, there is an interest in ensuring that future housing complements existing levels of quality housing and neighborhoods throughout the city.



2.4.1 CONDUCT A HOUSING MASTER PLAN TO PROMOTE THE DENSITIES AND TYPES OF HOUSING THAT WILL BE FAVORABLE TO SMYRNA'S CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT.

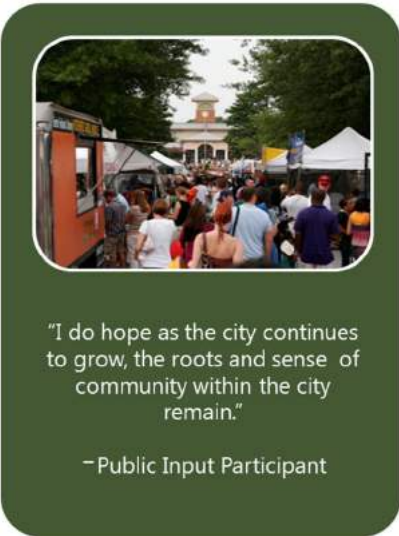
- ✓ Initiate the process by passing a resolution that expresses the community's desires related to various housing and density types.
 - For example, the multi-family housing standards might address property aesthetics and maintenance, code adherence, safety measures, promotion of opportunities to engage residents in the community, and corporate-driven support for programs that specifically focus on children and education.
- ✓ Involve the Smyrna Housing Authority in the creation of the Master Plan.
- ✓ Continue to maintain an inventory of public and private land available for the development of future housing.
- ✓ Ensure housing options for Smyrna's multi-generational population includes a healthy stock of quality rental units, owner-occupied options, and a nursing facility for Smyrna's elderly citizens.

2.4.2 EVALUATE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF CITY INCENTIVES FOR NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT.

- ✓ Task the Downtown Development Authority and Economic Advisory Incentive Committee with working together to support or conduct the evaluation as a regular task (every three years or so).

2.4.3 IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING AND THE LIVING EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENTS.

- ✓ Working with partners including but not limited to the Atlanta Apartment Association (AAA), seek input from developers and property owners to better understand factors that motivate redevelopment decisions.
 - Consider sharing resources such as AAA's Toolbox with local leaders and citizens.
 - Include apartment management companies in ongoing dialogue about the potential negative impact of "first month free" incentives and discuss alternatives.
- ✓ Create a preferred vendor recognition category for multi-family properties that embody the management best practices outlined by the community and share the list regularly with community service organizations, higher education institutions, and business organizations.



- Consider the creation of a property tax incentive to encourage upgrades related to façades, amenities, interiors, energy efficient systems, and other potential target areas.



- Create a “Developer of the Year” program to recognize new partners that meet and exceed established standards.
- Create a “Redevelopment of the Year” award to recognize companies that significantly upgrade existing properties.
- ✓ Working with charitable partners, promote awareness of existing resources for families that address basic needs by expanding economic opportunities through job training, educational assistance, and other support programs.
 - Continue to support the Shop with a Hero program.
 - Poll multi-family residency occupants to assess needs and preferences that could be provided on an informative basis to property managers, owners, City departments, and future developers.

2.5 Core City services, development, and redevelopment efforts will enhance quality of life and diversify the tax base.

Many of the positive aspects of living in Smyrna can be attributed to the City’s continual ability to provide services to its residents in a consistent and efficient manner and the amenities that exist throughout the community. There are many aspects of the City’s operations that have resulted in creating a very livable community, and prior to the announced closure of the Emory-Adventist Hospital, concerns about access to healthcare services were not an issue. However, it is important to ensure that services and amenities are sustainable, and contentious issues continue to benefit from open discussions. Finding ways to educate and inform public stakeholders about development processes; pro-actively encouraging quality redevelopment; and creating a more competitive inventory of office space can maintain the spirit of Smyrna while also diversifying the tax base. Integrating the impact of the hospital closing and the potential opportunities related to the site’s redevelopment can be integrated into these conversations as well.

2.5.1 CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS FOR THE DELIVERY OF ALL CITY SERVICES.

- ✓ Maintain the City’s AAA Bond rating.
- ✓ Maintain a strong commitment to consistent code enforcement and ensure that actions are as proactive as possible.
- ✓ Continue to revisit zoning regulations regularly and ensure that City decisions are as proactive as possible, and in keeping with long-term land-use planning, ongoing leadership decisions, and the impact of major development including but not limited to the new Atlanta Braves stadium.
- ✓ Continue to invest in police department, fire department, and emergency services to ensure that citizens are as safe as possible.



- Support recognition and appreciation programs including but not limited to programs affiliated with the Smyrna Public Safety Foundation and events sponsored by the faith-based community, and other organizations.

2.5.2 PRO-ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE HIGH QUALITY REDEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE CITY.

- ✓ Co-host the Cobb Edge Redevelopment Forum and consider the creation of a regular Developer Fair to complement Redevelopment Forum.
- ✓ Focus annexation efforts on high value, high visibility areas that can be a financial asset and enhance quality of life opportunities for residents.
 - Provide the support to City Community Development efforts to ensure that future planning for acquisition and annexation is fully informed and carefully evaluated.
- ✓ Consider the feedback community members shared following the announced closure of Emory-Adventist Hospital during redevelopment discussions related to the site.
 - Weigh the community's healthcare service accessibility needs (particularly related to emergency room services and the needs of aging citizens) alongside employment goals and the catalytic opportunity of the site.

2.5.3 SEEK TO INCREASE THE INVENTORY OF QUALITY OFFICE SPACE WITHIN THE CITY.

- ✓ Gain a better understanding of the business community's specific needs by incorporating questions about the physical office environment into business retention visits conducted by the City and Cobb EDGE partners.
- ✓ Seek opportunities for adaptive re-use of non-traditional spaces to make a wide variety of properties available to small business owners and potential entrepreneurs.

2.6 Retail options will align with resident preferences and more expenditures will stay in Smyrna.

Shopping and retail opportunities support quality of life and provide tax revenues for the City. Without attempting to overly intervene in the market-driven development process, the City can continue to serve in a "curator" role to help attract new retail that can not only be patronized by residents, but bring in shoppers from other jurisdictions. Further, residents should be encouraged to support local retail whenever possible; "buy local" programming can ingrain that mentality into the community.

2.6.1 LEVERAGE FINDINGS OF RETAIL LEAKAGE AND SURPLUS STUDY TO STRENGTHEN RETAIL RECRUITMENT AND EXPANSION EFFORT.

- ✓ Share a summary of the findings with existing businesses to inform purchasing and marketing decisions that will benefit Smyrna.



- ✓ Create stronger relationships with nationally-respected retail consultants to ensure that Smyrna is being fully marketed as a potential destination for future high quality investments.
 - Consider obtaining a full retail analysis to expand on the information provided in the leakage and surplus analysis recently conducted.

2.6.2 IMPLEMENT A "BUY LOCAL" PROGRAM.

- ✓ Encourage residents and businesses to shop locally and increase spending in Smyrna.
- ✓ Evaluate what aspects of a buy local program the City could endorse or adopt, as it relates to purchasing and contract.
- ✓ Collaborate with local businesses, Taste of Smyrna, the Smyrna Fresh Produce Market, and invested stakeholders into the promotion and involvement of the campaign.
- ✓ Widely promote the economic and community-building benefits of buying local and coordinate with Keep It In Cobb efforts.

>>>Best Practice: Buy Local Efforts (Various Communities)



OUR IMAGE AND IDENTITY

"I think Smyrna has done a lot in the past few decades to build a stronger community and image. The Market Village revitalized the heart of Smyrna. I think the city is off to a great start, but it needs to continue this trend in other neglected areas."

-Public Input Participant

HOW CAN IMAGE AND IDENTITY HELP US STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT?

It is imperative that residents and stakeholders understand and rally around the strategic direction of the City, are proud of the area's aesthetics, and are ambassadors for Smyrna's story. Becoming the best community in Metro Atlanta, by continuing to nurture an "atypical" suburban experience that honors historical traditions and the city's proximity to regional destinations, is Smyrna's core value proposition. Curating identity and community perception, including adapting to and promoting effective and evolving communication platforms for a wide ranging audience will require increased commitment and resources.

WHAT ARE OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES?

The following statements represent the overall strategic objectives of what the actions in this section seek to achieve and serve as guiding principles for implementation partners.

Smyrna will be known for its high quality schools.

Smyrna will actively tell its story to internal and external stakeholders.

Smyrna's aesthetics will be distinctive, of high quality, and recognizable to visitors and residents alike.

Smyrna's entrepreneurial and technology assets will be part of its regional and national reputation.

Smyrna will be known as a city that celebrates its diversity.

"...future development will impact many different facets of the community, including the local economy and quality of life, but [also] has the potential to dramatically increase Smyrna's visibility 'as a community known for something distinctive.'"

-Community Assessment



3.1 Smyrna will be known for its high quality schools.

- 3.1.1 *TELL THE SUCCESS STORIES OF SMYRNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIENCES.*
- 3.1.2 *INCREASE SCHOOL PRIDE THROUGH TARGETED CAMPAIGNS TO MAINTAIN AND UPGRADE SCHOOL EXTERIORS AND GROUNDS.*
- 3.1.3 *EXPAND INFORMATION SHARING BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS.*

3.2 Smyrna will actively tell its story to internal and external stakeholders.

- 3.2.1 *DEVELOP AN INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PLAN THAT SEEKS TO INFORM COMMUNITY MEMBERS ABOUT SMYRNA AND THE DIRECTION IT'S HEADED.*
- 3.2.2 *TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE COBB EDGE COMMUNITY IDENTITY PANEL INITIATIVE.*
- 3.2.3 *COLLABORATE WITH COBB EDGE, COBBWORKS, AND OTHER WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS TO HIGHLIGHT SMYRNA AS A PROGRESSIVE, HIGH-ACHIEVING DESTINATION FOR EDUCATED AND SKILLED TALENT.*

3.3 Smyrna's aesthetics will be distinctive, of high quality, and recognizable to visitors and residents alike.

- 3.3.1 *HOLD A FIRST IMPRESSIONS EXCHANGE PROGRAM WITH ANOTHER REGIONAL CITY TO RECEIVE CANDID FEEDBACK ON THE APPEARANCE OF SMYRNA.*
- 3.3.2 *EXPAND UPON EXISTING BEAUTIFICATION EFFORTS.*
- 3.3.3 *CREATE GATEWAYS INTO SMYRNA THAT ARE RECOGNIZABLE AND DISTINCT.*
- 3.3.4 *STRENGTHEN SMYRNA'S IMAGE AS A CITY COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.*

3.4 Smyrna's entrepreneurial and technology assets will be part of its regional and national reputation.

- 3.4.1 *SEEK ENTREPRENEUR FRIENDLY COMMUNITY STATUS THROUGH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.*
- 3.4.2 *BUILD ON THE GOOGLE FIBER INITIATIVE TO EXPAND AWARENESS OF EXISTING SUPPLY AND DEMAND THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.*
- 3.4.3 *WIDELY PROMOTE COLLABORATIONS AND ACCESS TO THE REGION'S ROBUST TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT.*

3.5 Smyrna will be known as a city that celebrates its diversity.

- 3.5.1 *CREATE A MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE TO REINFORCE SMYRNA'S IMAGE AND IDENTITY AS A CITY THAT CELEBRATES ITS DIVERSITY.*
- 3.5.2 *BUILD AWARENESS OF EXISTING MULTICULTURAL CELEBRATIONS AND/OR EXPAND TO INCLUDE A SIGNATURE EVENT.*



3.1 Smyrna will be known for its high quality schools.

Currently, the public schools that serve Smyrna do not consistently enjoy reputations for high quality. Many public input participants said that families seek out the public elementary schools, but that the quality erodes at the middle and high school levels. Painting the school situation with a broad brush should not be the default tactic as there are many great stories to tell about schools at every level, including the community's charter and private schools.

3.1.1 TELL THE SUCCESS STORIES OF SMYRNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIENCES.

- ✓ Expand upon the existing countywide "Principal for a Day" program to encourage local business leaders, realtors, and parents to spend time in Smyrna's schools.
 - Follow-up with participants to encourage sharing of positive experiences throughout the community.
- ✓ Hold an annual Smyrna School Fair to promote the diversity and strengths of all Smyrna-area schools.
 - Consider coordinating the fair with the annual Jonquil Jog, a fundraiser for Campbell High School.
 - Consider coordinating with Smyrna area summer camp providers to expand the range of information available to parents.
- ✓ Encourage parents and school partners to use online rating sites related to school performance and experience.
- ✓ Share information about school performance (including background information about methodology and historical trends and benchmarking) widely throughout the community and make information readily accessible online.

3.1.2 INCREASE SCHOOL PRIDE THROUGH TARGETED CAMPAIGNS TO MAINTAIN AND UPGRADE SCHOOL EXTERIORS AND GROUNDS.

- ✓ In addition to advocating for resources at the county system level, widely publicize the list of physical improvement and maintenance needs of all schools and seek partnerships with the volunteer and business community to fulfill needs.
- ✓ Fully reestablish the Campbell Cares program as a model to be used throughout the community, focusing on the creation of a Quarterly Clean-up Calendar.

3.1.3 EXPAND INFORMATION SHARING BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

- ✓ Provide information for students to have additional educational experiences by identifying students that could benefit from participation in enrichment opportunities offered by private schools.



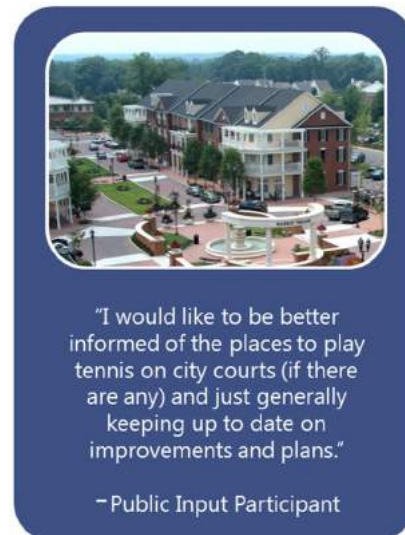
- ✓ Invite families of children in private schools to public school-sponsored events and activities.

3.2 Smyrna will actively tell its story to internal and external stakeholders.

Smyrna's story as a destination for young professionals and an atypical suburban community is reaching only a select few stakeholders. In order for Smyrna to continue building its reputation, the City and its stakeholders must not only employ a targeted marketing program, but citizens need to be "brand ambassadors" who are excited about amplifying Smyrna's message.

3.2.1 DEVELOP AN INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PLAN THAT SEEKS TO INFORM COMMUNITY MEMBERS ABOUT SMYRNA AND THE DIRECTION IT IS HEADED.

- ✓ Identify the audiences that should be targeted with communications and develop specific strategies for reaching them, including the creation of a progressively maintained communications plan that specifies the message, timing, and tools for pushing information out to selected groups.
 - Ensure that the plan includes feedback loops, including the Granicus platform and ThinkSmyrna.com to facilitate specific feedback.
 - Support and build upon existing social media efforts and commit to community-wide standards that reflect best practices and have quantifiable impact.
- ✓ Evaluate how residents receive their news and how they would like to receive information related to the City.
 - Design a simple survey and other information-gathering tools that gauge the effectiveness of different communications tools.
 - Parse the data collected into subgroups, including age, race, ethnicity, and tenure in the community.
- ✓ Increase ease of access to City performance measures and seek to maintain full transparency on financial decisions.
- ✓ Encourage Council members to regularly share information about City decisions with constituents, including updates regarding Vision Plan implementation.



3.2.2 TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE COBB EDGE COMMUNITY IDENTITY PANEL INITIATIVE.

- ✓ Co-host a Community Identity Panel and use the event as an opportunity to feature innovative and distinctive Smyrna assets.



- ✓ Expand Smyrna residents and stakeholders' knowledge of best practices by including emerging leaders and under-represented populations as Panel attendees and/or participants.
- ✓ Build on the Identity Panel opportunity with the creation of communication messages that focus on why people love Smyrna now and the potential the city has.
 - Develop low-cost video testimonials by residents.
 - Include businesses by potentially featuring a regular "Smyrna Success Story" as a media feature.
 - Feature new projects, developments, and companies that showcase Smyrna's potential, including the selection of Smyrna by Jamestown Properties for its first-ever non-urban project (Riverview Landing); the proximity to the relocated Braves stadium; and the location of Maandi Media, an emerging leader in digital media.
- ✓ Encourage community groups, particularly community ambassadors and others representing broad-based initiatives, to adopt these messages and take a leadership role in telling the Smyrna story.

3.2.3 COLLABORATE WITH COBB EDGE, COBBWORKS, AND OTHER WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS TO HIGHLIGHT SMYRNA AS A PROGRESSIVE, HIGH-ACHIEVING COMMUNITY AND DESTINATION FOR EDUCATED AND SKILLED TALENT.

- ✓ Work with Cobb EDGE and other economic development partners to understand Smyrna's perception and how the city is portrayed in marketing materials.
- ✓ Establish a set of talking points and highlights that showcase the skilled talent that lives in Smyrna.
- ✓ Develop a tagline, marketing materials, or special hashtag to help convey this message.
- ✓ Increase efforts to place more positive stories about Smyrna in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Marietta Daily Journal* and *Cobb Business Journal*, *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, *Georgia Trend*, *Atlanta Magazine*, *Smyrna-Vinings Patch*, *Georgia Traveler*, and other regional news outlets and social media platforms.
 - Include stories that highlight national awards, rankings, and recognition as a best practice community (the City's planning achievements, Keep Smyrna Beautiful, school-related awards, etc.).

3.3 Smyrna's aesthetics will be distinctive, of high quality, and recognizable to visitors and residents alike.

Respondents to the online survey overwhelmingly said that City leadership has done a great job of increasing the aesthetic appeal of the city. At the same time, there is concern that not all parts of the city



uphold or reflect these improvements. Moving forward, Smyrna should focus on impacting the look and feel of its less appealing corridors to reflect the distinct image of Smyrna.

3.3.1 HOLD A FIRST IMPRESSIONS EXCHANGE PROGRAM WITH ANOTHER REGIONAL CITY TO RECEIVE CANDID FEEDBACK ON THE APPEARANCE OF SMYRNA.

- ✓ Identify another city to partner with and conduct outreach to key stakeholders.
 - A First Impressions Exchange is a program that many cities use to gather feedback on how visitors experience their city. Typically, teams from each city will go “undercover” to visit the other city and will report back on aesthetic appeal, including cleanliness, ease of navigation, the appearance of key intersections and corridors, and so on.
- ✓ Agree on the parameters of the program and design guidelines for the undercover teams to follow.
- ✓ Conduct the exchange and facilitate the reporting back through a joint meeting.

>>>Best Practice: First impressions exchange, The Christian County Chamber of Commerce (Christian County, KY)

3.3.2 EXPAND UPON EXISTING BEAUTIFICATION EFFORTS.

- ✓ Support expanded Keep Smyrna Beautiful activities that focus on aesthetic upgrades and tree plantings, in coordination with the Smyrna Tree Board.
- ✓ Establish a façade improvement grant program to incentivize the upgrading of aging and dilapidated storefronts.
 - Research best practice façade grant programs.
 - Determine eligibility criteria, including grant matching formula, and develop application.
 - Identify a funding source and capitalize the initial grant program.
 - Track and measure the impact of the program.



>>>Best Practice: Beautification Task Force, City of Pacifica (Pacifica, CA)

3.3.3 CREATE GATEWAYS INTO SMYRNA THAT ARE RECOGNIZABLE AND DISTINCT.

- ✓ Building off of recent monument signage re-branding efforts, focus on creating signature gateways into the city.
 - Identify key gateways around the city to focus on from the primary 10 to 12 entryways.



- Leverage development soon-to-be underway around the Braves stadium (specifically Spring Road and Cobb Parkway) and align design standards or themes to serve as a magnet for attracting tourists and potential residents that might not otherwise experience Smyrna.
- Conduct a regional tour or best practice presentation of gateway signage for elected officials and city stakeholders to learn from other communities' approaches.
- Coordinate with efforts of Keep Smyrna Beautiful and Tree Board, related to landscaping and beautification efforts.
- Improve the bridge in front of Argyle Elementary School to be a signature statement of arrival in Smyrna.
 - As one of the most visible structures visitors see upon entering Smyrna on Spring Road, the bridge should be designed to welcome residents and visitors.
 - Connect the design elements to the City of Smyrna and its technology and education assets.

>>> Best Practice: Cedar Park Gateway Signs, City of Cedar Park (Cedar Park, TX)

- ✓ Ensure that street sign "toppers" are easy to read and in good condition.
 - Upgrade older fixtures, aligning with existing City signage.
 - Add toppers to street signs in main corridors that do not already have them.
 - Coordinate efforts with neighborhood groups as much as possible.

3.3.4 STRENGTHEN SMYRNA'S IMAGE AS A CITY COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.

- ✓ Complete the process of replacing the light bulbs in the city streetlights with LED lights and encourage businesses and residents to make energy-efficient improvements.
- ✓ Establish appropriate recognition programs for businesses and residents that adopt sustainable practices and expand educational efforts related to sustainable practices.
- ✓ Continue to promote the City's Bio-diesel Production Program.
- ✓ Continue to promote awareness of recycling opportunities, particularly in conjunction with community festivals.



3.4 Smyrna's entrepreneurial and technology assets will be part of Smyrna's regional and national reputation.

Many public input respondents said that Smyrna needs to increase its visibility as a technology hub in Metro Atlanta. Already home to some innovative technology companies, along with proximity to major corporations and regional assets, Smyrna has an opportunity to further develop the niche. While there is a strong connection to the fundamental economic development "three-legged stool" approach – retention, expansion, and entrepreneurship – the focus here is on the activities that are more oriented towards the city's image and identity. Complementary actions are included in the Involvement and Leadership section.

3.4.1 SEEK ENTREPRENEUR FRIENDLY COMMUNITY STATUS THROUGH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

- ✓ Gain full understanding of the seven step process required to become designated.
- ✓ Seek out advice from other cities that have received designation, particularly those that have followed their county in achieving the status.

3.4.2 BUILD ON THE GOOGLE FIBER INITIATIVE TO EXPAND AWARENESS OF EXISTING SUPPLY AND DEMAND THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.

- ✓ Once improvements and enhancements are made, widely promote these assets to all citizens, economic development partners, and prospective businesses and residents.
- ✓ Develop a WiFi hotspot device lending program coordinated through the Smyrna Public Library.

>>>Best Practice: Connecting for Good (Kansas City, MO)

3.4.3 WIDELY PROMOTE COLLABORATIONS AND ACCESS TO THE ATLANTA REGION'S ROBUST TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT.

- ✓ Expand involvement with the Technology Association of Georgia.
- ✓ Include a focus on Smyrna's proximity to Georgia Tech, Dobbins ARB, and other resources in the City's marketing message and other external marketing efforts led by Cobb EDGE and other partners.

3.5 Smyrna will be known as a city that celebrates its diversity.

As a community that reflects the notion of a "New America" in terms of race and ethnicity, it is imperative that Smyrna embrace its leading position. Through candid conversations, a formal vehicle to advance initiatives, and a signature celebration, Smyrna can build community attachment and bring more people to the proverbial "table."



3.5.1 CREATE A MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE TO REINFORCE SMYRNA'S IMAGE AND IDENTITY AS A CITY THAT CELEBRATES ITS DIVERSITY.

- ✓ Convene and empanel a City-led task force to develop a program to better acclimate City personnel and leadership to working in a majority-minority community.
- ✓ Encourage the group to establish guiding principles for increasing awareness of Smyrna's many cultures within City government and initiatives throughout the community.
 - Consider partnering with Dobbins ARB to begin awareness efforts by recognizing the many contributions and positive impact that Smyrna's military community has made.

>>>Best Practice: Diversity Summits (Montgomery and Decatur, AL)

3.5.2 BUILD AWARENESS OF EXISTING MULTICULTURAL CELEBRATIONS AND/OR CREATE A NEW SIGNATURE EVENT.

- ✓ Coordinate with the Smyrna Public Library and Friends of Smyrna Library to develop a year-round or seasonal speaker series that features many of Smyrna's various cultures.
 - Coordinate with existing First Sunday Lecture Series and Black History Month events.
- ✓ Build off of Food Truck Tuesday and Taste of Smyrna to create a multicultural food festival.
 - Work closely with established groups and businesses including but not limited to the India American Cultural Association, the Atlanta Chapter of the African American Wine Tasting Society, and Nam Dae Mun Farmers Market.



CONCLUSION

The Steering Committee has collaboratively developed a document that reflects this process' transition from reviewing and discussing public input and research findings to outlining the steps needed to address the opportunities, issues, and needs of the community as a whole.



As has been discussed at length throughout this process, developing a **10-year Vision Plan** requires significant effort, time, and patience. Achieving consensus on the primary objectives can be challenging, but is the first step in ensuring that Smyrna moves forward in a pro-active way. Ultimately, the Vision Plan itself will be a living document. The next 10 years will bring changes that can't be anticipated, but can be addressed within the context of an actionable Vision Plan and future updates. The vision statement, the three cornerstones, and the primary outcomes should be seen as the framework that elected officials and the City's professional staff can use to guide decisions and actions. The statement, cornerstones, and outcomes can also bring community and business leaders together to work toward common goals and strengthen overall community attachment and commitment.

Now that the Steering Committee has developed a Vision Plan (with support from the Technical Advisory Group) to guide future actions, attention must turn to creating guidelines that will help with implementation of the Vision Plan. The Implementation Guidelines that will be developed during the next phase of this process will include detailed timelines; propose potential lead and supporting implementation partners; address capacity constraints, estimate which actions are likely to have more significant implementation costs; suggest possible funding sources; and provide measurement tools that will enable Smyrna's leaders and residents to track progress and goal attainment.



APPENDIX A: BEST PRACTICES

1.2 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION HANDBOOK, TOWN OF MATTHEWS (MATTHEWS, NC)

Matthews' convenient and detailed handbook includes information on all the boards and committees on which residents can serve. The handbook provides the responsibilities and mission of each board and committee as well as its composition, which provides the number of members and typical experience board members have that serve on it. Meeting dates, appointment terms, and attendance requirements are also provided to inform residents of the time commitment associated with the position.

The handbook offers several ways that residents can get involved and welcomes such resident interaction and citizen participation. The handbook can be found on the City website under citizen involvement for residents.

matthewsnc.gov/ForResidents/CitizenInvolvement.aspx

1.2 FORSYTH COUNTY POLITICAL CANDIDATES EDUCATION PROGRAM (FORSYTH COUNTY, NC)

The Forsyth Political Candidates Training Program is presented by the non-partisan Institute of Political Leadership and is sponsored by the Winston-Salem Foundation, the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, and Leadership Winston-Salem. The application-based program focuses on preparing civically engaged residents for the possibility of running for public office. The program is held over two days and is comprised of the following sessions: Strategy and Political Campaigning (2 hours), Messaging (4 hours), Campaign Finance Laws (2 hours), Fundraising (2 hours), and Why Are You Here? Opportunities and Challenges of Service (2 hours). The overall goal of the program is "to help civic-minded individuals seriously consider running for public office and to ensure that future elected officials run the office in an ethical, effective and inclusive way."

wsfoundation.org/document.doc?id=683

1.4 JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT USA

More than 4.4 million U.S. students were involved in the volunteer-delivered program, Junior Achievement, during the 2012-2013 school year where it was taught in over 190,000 classrooms. Programs are catered to each level, from kindergarten to 12th grade, and provide real-world examples of problems. The programs teach students work-readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy skills, among other skills such as critical thinking and teamwork. The programs are taught by volunteers from the local community and are typically five to seven weeks, with a 30-45 minute class one day a week.

Both in-class and after-school programs are available. Skill-level is age-appropriate with advances in difficulty with each program year. In kindergarten, the basics of recognizing the value of money, decision-



making, and teamwork are taught. In middle school, students are taught financial-management, risk, credit, and communication skills. In high school, students are taught career readiness, success skills, and personal finance.

The after-school program, JA Fellows, is an in-depth, leadership and entrepreneurship program. Working in groups of 15-20 students, the 18-week course tasks the teams to create and manage their own small businesses, where they learn skills such as market research, leadership, and financial management.

JA Biztown and Finance Park are one-day, hands-on simulations. Students in Biztown take on the role of an employee, tax-payer, and consumer. Students learn time and money management skills through the simulation where they must complete a day's work, deposit a paycheck, prepare a budget, and make consumer-based financial decisions. JA Finance Park is catered to students in grade 7 and 8. Similar to Biztown, students prepare for several weeks prior to their visit to the facility to learn the skills needed to participate in the simulation. At JA Finance Park, students are put in real-life situations where they are given scenarios that affect their job, income, education, and family. The interactive environment teaches the students financial literacy and challenges them to make a household budget and investment decisions.

Evaluation of program outcomes show that students who participated in Junior Achievement consistently have higher critical thinking, problem-solving, personal finance, business and economic concepts skills than their counterparts. Further, high school graduation rates among program participants were higher than students who were not enrolled in the program.

1.4 12 FOR LIFE (CARROLLTON, GA) AND THE GREAT PROMISE PARTNERSHIP (GEORGIA)

Initially implemented by Southwire, one of the largest electrical wire manufacturers in the U.S., the 12 for Life partnership with Carroll County School System focuses on high school students at risk for dropping out. The program mixes up the school day with traditional classroom time and then time on the factory floor at a Southwire facility where students work, receive on-the-job training, and are coached on job and life skills, all while receiving a paycheck. Students begin at \$8 an hour—much more than other part-time jobs in the area—and are eligible for raises based on attendance and work ethic.

The up-front investment of constructing a modified plant designed for the safety needs of teenagers was significant for Southwire and the company invested around \$4 million to get the program going. The costs have been balanced by the impact of training a future full-time workforce and the added benefit in a higher productivity level of the teenagers than that of grown-ups at other Southwire factories.

With a goal to see 175 high school students through to graduation in its first five years, Southwire has already helped 850 kids graduate. Further, since its launch of 12 for Life in 2007, the district's dropout rate has fallen by 13 percentage points, from 35 percent to 22 percent and its on-time graduation rate for the poorest students has jumped up 22 percentage points. Around 40 percent of 12 For Life graduates go to college, while 20 percent begin full-time positions at one of Southwire's main plants, where they receive prioritization for openings. In 2011, Southwire executives were invited to present their model to White



House staff. The program has been so successful for Southwire’s workforce that it is replicating 12 for Life in Alabama and at other plants in Georgia. It has been used as a national model and has been spotlighted in several media websites, including *Forbes* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs, along with several other partners, created the Great Promise Partnership (GPP) after being inspired by the success of the 12 for Life program. The GPP is a nonprofit organization focused on helping at-risk students to graduate from high school and to gain real-world jobs skills. The program was launched in January 2012 and is chaired by Stu Thorn, current CEO of Southwire. The organization works to build partners and replicate the 12 for Life program in other communities. There are over 30 sites across the state of Georgia where partnerships have been established and the program has been implemented. Over the 2012-2013 school year, 89 percent of seniors graduated from high school and there was a zero percent dropout rate.

1.4 FINANCIAL AID SATURDAYS, AUSTIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (AUSTIN, TX)

In 2005, the Austin Chamber launched their “20,010 by 2010” initiative to increase the rate of college applications submitted by local high school students and the enrollment rate at Metro Austin’s colleges. The Chamber created several programs to boost the educational attainment of the local workforce after realizing that much of the educated workforce in Metro Austin was imported through enrollment at the local universities and employment at companies in the area. The Chamber and its partners set a goal in increase enrollment college enrollment by 20,010 local students by the year 2010 to keep up with population growth and projected demand of occupations that require higher levels of education. Between 2005 and 2010, college applications were up 50 percent and enrollment had increased by 30 percent.

In pursuit of their goal, they identified three main obstacles that inhibit a person from going to college – they don’t apply, they can’t afford it, and/or they are not academically ready to attend a higher education institution. The second obstacle – those that don’t attain higher education because they don’t have money to attend college – was tackled through their “Financial Aid Saturdays” events. The program was implemented to help high school students and their families with the application process to receive federal student aid (FAFSA) and Texas financial aid (TASFA.) Seniors and their parents have free one-on-one assistance with filing the application from financial aid experts that volunteer from the business community and education partners, and over an eight-year period, financial aid applications were up by 99 percent.

1.5 SNELLVILLE BUSINESS TOOLBOX, CITY OF SNELLVILLE (SNELLVILLE, GA)

The City of Snellville Office of Economic Development released a one-stop-shop online resource for entrepreneurs and existing businesses in 2012. The website provides needed information in one convenient location to help business owners start, sustain, and grow their company. Among its many resources is a checklist catered to each of the three stages, steps to obtaining a business permit and license, tips on updating a business plan or budget, help with funding and other assistance. The website also serves as an online portal to connect entrepreneurs with mentors within the community and peer advisory boards.



Recently, the City's Economic Development office was awarded the Excellence in Economic Development Bronze Award by the International Economic Development Council for its work in creating an environment that fosters to small business success through its toolbox, the Snellville Entrepreneur Council, and the Entrepreneurship Alliance, among its other resources.

snellvillebusinessstoolbox.com

2.1 LEADER IN ME, A.B. COMBS ELEMENTARY (RALEIGH, NC), AMONG OTHERS

In 1989, Steven Covey released the best-selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. In 1999, A.B. Combs Elementary in Raleigh, North Carolina was struggling with low academic performance and lack of engagement among faculty and parents. Administrators and teachers began searching for a solution, including learning principle-based leadership skills and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. The lessons learned by teachers were taken back to the classroom, integrated into curriculums, and passed on to students. A.B. Combs formalized its leadership initiative to blend leadership training and character education into every facet of a school's curriculum and culture. While teachers integrate the Seven Habits into classroom lessons, the Leader in Me is not a specific curriculum or set of lesson plans. It is a model for transforming a school by integrating the Seven Habits into all aspects of the child's experience at school. Students are taught that "leadership is a choice, not a position" and are equipped with the self-confidence and skills that complement their academics. Students are taught how to set goals and track those goals throughout the year. In addition, students are taught public speaking skills and social etiquette, in an effort to prepare them to face the world head on. The Seven Habits identified by Dr. Covey (and the associated concepts as applied to elementary learning) that are central to the Leader in Me model are as follows:

1. Be Proactive (You're in Charge)
2. Begin with the End in Mind (Have a Plan)
3. Put First Things First (Work First, Then Play)
4. Think Win-Win (Everyone Can Win)
5. Seek First to Understand, Then Be Understood (Listen Before You Talk)
6. Synergize (Together is Better)
7. Sharpen the Saw (Balance Feels Best)

In a short amount of time, end-of-grade test scores improved dramatically. In just over one year, average end-of-year passing grades for students jumped from 84 to 94 percent. Discipline problems dropped significantly. Parents began reporting incredible shifts in their children's attitudes and behaviors. Students began problem solving and engaging in more positive ways with each other. The school saw significant and sustained increases in students' self-confidence and impressive increases in teacher and administrator job satisfaction. Today, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* has become completely integrated into the curriculum at A.B. Combs, and the school is widely recognized for its focus on leadership development.



The school has gone from threatened closure by the school board in 1999 to receiving the Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award in 2006 from Magnet Schools America, an honor recognizing the top magnet school in the United States.

In 2008, Covey released a new book, *The Leader in Me – How Schools and Parents Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time*, which details the successes at A.B. Combs Elementary. Other schools around the country are beginning to adopt similar approaches and in many cases see even greater benefits than those observed at A.B. Combs. In Decatur, Alabama, the program operates as a public-private partnership between the Decatur-Morgan County (Alabama) Chamber of Commerce, Decatur City Schools, and local government and business entities. All elementary schools in Decatur have incorporated components of the Leader in Me program. Meadowthorpe Elementary School, in Lexington, Kentucky, a Title 1 school, implemented the program in 2011, and by 2014, discipline referrals had dropped by 71 percent and the school ranked number one in academic growth across math and reading for the 2012-2013 school year. In the 2013-2014 Title 1 parent survey, over half of parents reported that they had volunteered at the school sometime during the school year and nearly 100 percent agreed that the teaching staff and administration was supportive for their child and had high expectations for them.

The Leader in Me program has been implemented in nearly 2,000 elementary and middle schools across the U.S., Canada, and other parts of the world. In 2013, the Cobb County School District in Georgia implemented the Leader in Me in multiple elementary schools, including the newly opened Smyrna Elementary School.

theleaderinme.org

2.3 SYRACUSE PUBLIC ARTS TASK FORCE (SYRACUSE, NY)

The Syracuse Public Arts Task Force (known as the 40 Below Public Arts Task Force) was convened to create public art and cultivate a culture of public art in Syracuse, New York in 2007. Composing the Task Force were local artists, community leaders, arts organizations, and interested volunteers. Through the creation of public art, 40 Below seeks to:

- “ Foster community involvement.
- “ Beautify and add aesthetic interest to the City of Syracuse.
- “ Promote a vibrant, desirable community in which to live.
- “ Increase public awareness for the 40 below organization.

Along with a variety of public art projects, the 40 Below Task Force has converted an abandoned train yard into the city's first art park. Lipe Art Park is a public green space open to the community for personal recreation, public gatherings, and also serves as a creation, performance, and appreciation space for all forms of art.

Another program of the 40 Below Task Force supports the Syracuse Public Artist in Residence, who works with Syracuse University's Industrial Interaction Design students and community participants to create

public art that will act as a symbolic and formal reminder the importance of a local creek to the development of the City of Syracuse.

2.3 LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES

Little Free Libraries began in 2009 and as of January 15, 2014, there were over 15,000 Little Free Libraries registered in more than 50 countries. The project’s mission is to promote literacy and the love of reading through a free book exchange, and it has spread globally over the past few years. They are run by volunteers and operate under the “take a book, return a book” policy, but more than that, they increase interaction between neighbors, build community spirit, and inspire generations of people to pick up a book, despite living in a digital world. The libraries are waterproof boxes with a glass door and roof, but many of the people that build them create works of art.

Communities big and small are embracing the movement. In Pensacola, FL, the area has seen the number of Little Libraries grow from seven to more than 50 in less than two months. Rural areas and small towns, like in Carl Junction, MO, don’t have public libraries, so residents have come together to build Little Free Libraries to share their own collections with their neighbors. The libraries are easy and inexpensive to install and have been put in neighborhoods, at parks, community gardens, and around other public spaces by volunteers and organizations. Many public libraries are also getting involved in the movement and are helping to install Little Free Libraries in local neighborhoods. In Midland, TX, the Midland County Public Library has been encouraging readers to join the movement to help promote reading and offered to supply anyone interested in hosting a Little Library with books to get started. A map of locations of the little free libraries is available on the website and helps bring library options to other areas in towns that are far from the public library, while adding some art and community development to the city.



<http://littlefreelibrary.org/>



2.6 BUY LOCAL EFFORTS (VARIOUS COMMUNITIES)

Encouraging residents to make buy local is a popular way of keeping money in the local economy. However, buy local programs can be difficult to implement in an area with many alternative options for purchases, such as the Atlanta Metro area.

There have been a few past attempts in the Smyrna community to build the momentum of a buy local campaign. Smyrna Shop Hop was one such local initiative that started in 2012. In August 2012, 13 local businesses created a “Shop Hop” where participants were given a passport and had to visit each of the shops to get a stamp. After visiting all the businesses, participants turned in their passports and there was a drawing with a grand prize of \$1,000. Over 300 completed passports were submitted in 2012. A second Shop Hop was held in December of 2012, a “Holiday Hop,” and a third was held in September 2014.

The business community in Lynchburg, Virginia used a similar marketing initiative in August 2014 to encourage buying local. For one month, 40 local businesses participated in a “Where’s Waldo” scavenger hunt. Each business had a six inch tall Waldo hidden somewhere in the store and children were given a book where they collected stamps from each store once they found its Waldo. After finding a Waldo the child helped to hide it for the next child. At the end of the month, a local bookstore hosted a party with a costume contest for the best dressed Waldo, prizes, arts and crafts, and water balloons. Plans are in development to make this an annual event.

The City of Cedar Park, Texas created a shop local program aimed at keeping money in the city limits to increase sales tax revenue. The City created “Got it in Cedar Park” stickers that businesses put in their windows to designate they were within city limits. A map was also created to further aid residents in identifying stores and major shopping centers within the city limits.

The Charlotte Chamber recently developed a mobile app in an effort to encourage the community to buy local. The free app grants access to coupons provided by participating local businesses and chamber members. Users can then present their smart phone when checking out to receive the discount. Additionally, the app has a geolocation functionality built into it that allows users to quickly and conveniently find local businesses near them and search for coupons and deals nearby. Because this program is so new, it is too soon to tell whether this buy local program will be successful, however, this is one of the more innovative ways to encourage the community to buy local.

During the August 27th Steering Committee meeting for Smyrna’s Vision Plan, there was discussion surrounding the buy local action item in the Vision Plan and the conversation generated a suggestion that involved creating neighborhood maps that highlighted locally owned businesses in walking distance where neighborhood residents could shop, as a way of focusing efforts in a hyper-local way.

An increased presence of Smyrna businesses on coupon-based websites and applications such as Scoutmob, LivingSocial, or Groupon could help Smyrna businesses compete with metro-area alternatives that are readily accessible to Smyrna residents. As an example, Scoutmob works with local business owners and independent makers to market their products and offers an app with coupons and deals. Food, clothing, art, jewelry, and furniture are just a few of the types of products Scoutmob markets.



A buy local campaign builds community pride, can positively impact resident attachment and commitment, and in the case of locally owned, independent businesses, buying local can help keep money circulating within the community. The preceding examples provide a sample of some things other communities are doing to encourage their residents to buy local. These programs provide implementation partners a place to start and options that they can use, borrow, and modify, while building on past and current efforts and seeking additional input from residents. Through doing so, Smyrna the opportunity to create a tailored buy local program that is best suited for the community.

3.3 FIRST IMPRESSIONS EXCHANGE, THE CHRISTIAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (CHRISTIAN COUNTY, KY)

The Christian County Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Henderson-Henderson County (KY) Chamber of Commerce to conduct a First Impressions Exchange visit. The program is designed to help the two communities develop a more robust understanding of the “impression” they leave with visitors and newcomers. Each chamber organized a delegation of 10-12 volunteers who visited the other community during the month of June to compile a report on their first impressions. The undercover teams experienced many aspects of the community and offered feedback on cleanliness and appearance, directional signage, neighborhoods, downtown areas, retail options, friendliness, customer service orientation, parks and recreation, green space, industrial parks, key intersections and corridors, and many other areas of consideration. Representatives of each chamber then gave a presentation of their first impressions to the boards of the other chamber.

www.christiancountychamber.com/

3.3 BEAUTIFICATION TASK FORCE, CITY OF PACIFICA (PACIFICA, CA)

A desire to improve the look of his city prompted the Mayor of Pacifica to recommend the establishment of a Beautification Task Force to the City Council. The Task Force had the following three objectives:

- Identify and map City-owned parcels of land throughout the city with particular emphasis on main thoroughfares for planting and beautification.
- Establish themes and plants appropriate for use by community groups in these parcels with emphasis on native plants and water saving plants.
- Identify possible methods, outreach and funding sources for ongoing organization/volunteer participation and maintenance of these areas.

The Task Force was comprised on nine citizens representing a range of interests and organizations. The main thrust of the Task Force was to identify high-value areas and parcels in need of beautification efforts and to lay out a plan to coordinate the aesthetic upgrades. Four primary recommendations came from the Taskforce:

- Establish a beautification theme of Keep Pacifica Beautiful. The theme is comprised of a color palette, local plants, and common landscape themes, among other elements intended to invoke a sense of place.
- Establish a Beautification Taskforce Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee would consist of three to five members and would advise the Director of Public Works.
- Adapt the Adopt a Landscape Program to allow groups and individuals to adopt medians, road islands, parking lots, and public right of ways.
- Work with Cal Trans to increase participation and effectiveness of cleanup and graffiti removal along Highway 1.

The City Council adopted the plan unanimously on November 13, 2012.

cityofpacificac.org/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=5339

3.3 CEDAR PARK GATEWAY SIGNS, CITY OF CEDAR PARK (CEDAR PARK, TX)

During the planning process for building gateway signs throughout Cedar Park, the City turned to the residents to provide input on the choices of how the monument should look in a sign popularity contest. In the public contest, residents were given the opportunity to vote on one of four proposed designs. Community members' passion for the gateway signs resulted in a higher voter turnout than the most recent municipal election. And, although the Community Development Board had favored a different design than what the people had chosen, the City Council endorsed the winning gateway design that was chosen by the residents.



The gateway signs were planned to help brand the city and provide a feeling of community identity. The total cost of the gateways signs was approximately \$500,000 and was paid for through the Community Development Corporation, which receives funding from sales tax revenue.

Source: Austin American-Statesman



3.4 CONNECTING FOR GOOD, NOT-FOR-PROFIT (KANSAS CITY, MO)

Working to close the gap in the digital divide – the gap between those with access to quality internet and computers and those that are not able to benefit from the technology – Connecting for Good has created several programs in the Kansas City area aimed at training and providing the resources needed to connect low-income families to computers and internet. The organization saw the demand for services after Google Fiber’s arrival and the inequality in access to high-speed internet in the low-income neighborhoods. The organization’s values center on internet connectivity and the opportunities that it provides and that in-home internet access is an essential, vital resource for those in pursuit of a quality education, regardless of the education level. Connecting for Good supports that education is the number one thing that lifts people from poverty and that it is impossible to do so without internet.

In 2013, Connecting for Good donated 600 inexpensive refurbished computers to be used as a home computer for low-income families and taught over 1,000 people every day skills, such as email use, online job applications, banking, and government services search. The organization is also working to provide internet access for those low-income families that cannot afford it. They’ve already provided internet access to over 500 households, free of charge under the Wi-Fi mesh network the organization constructed.

connectingforgood.org/

3.5 DIVERSITY SUMMITS (MONTGOMERY AND DECATUR, AL)

Like many major Southern cities, Montgomery was an important location for a number of pivotal Civil Rights events of the mid-20th century, starting with Rosa Parks’ refusal to yield her bus seat to a white man in 1955. While the region’s role in social justice has been a point of pride for many, historic racial tensions and distrusts perpetuated among community members for decades.

In 2005, the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce initiated a process to develop their five-year strategy called “Imagine a Greater Montgomery.” During the course of strategy development, stakeholders identified a lack of diversity in Montgomery’s civic and business leadership that did not represent the makeup of the community’s demographics. “Civic engagement is badly colored by race,” said one community member. Others noted that women were underrepresented in decision making.

Four major goals emerged from this planning, one of which emphasized the community’s need to further embrace diversity and enhance leadership capacity. “The very future of Montgomery hinges upon our ability to capitalize upon the strength of our diversity,” the plan explains. The extent to which the chamber set out to accomplish this goal has been a model example for other chambers.

In September 2013, the chamber and its minority business development staff hosted Montgomery’s sixth annual Diversity Summit. The purpose of this day-long event was to offer executives, human resources professionals, and community leaders an opportunity to have a conversation about workplace diversity, inclusion, and engagement. Each year’s summit boasts a different theme as well as nationally-known speakers and leaders on topics related to diversity. The 2013 theme was “New Perspectives for Today’s



Workplace” with keynote speaker Steve Bucherati, Chief Diversity Officer, Coca Cola. Breakout sessions included:

Diversity as a Growth Engine: Building the Business Case for Diversity

Inclusion Begins with Leadership: Creating & Modeling an Inclusive Work Environment

“He’s How Old?” Bringing out the Best in Every Generation

Becoming a Phenomenal Woman Leader: Designing a Personal Blueprint to Reach the Corner Office

“That’s NOT What I Meant!” Virtual Communication in a Diverse World –The Unseen Effects of Diversity in Virtual and Online Communications

The summit’s success is evident as the sold-out event attracted over 800 attendees and coverage by national publications.

Inspired by Montgomery’s success, leaders in Decatur, Alabama, found a way to scale the Summit to fit their community. Every year since 2010, the community has come together to host their own annual Diversity Banquet, previously called the Minority Awards Banquet. Each September, the Chamber recognizes minority-owned businesses and honors individuals for their contributions to the community. The Banquet is hosted by the Chamber’s Diversity Development Committee, which also meets to discuss issues that are impacting the community and solutions to them. The Diversity Summit, also held in September, is a multi-cultural event with roundtable and panel discussions. Last year’s summit had discussions on race relations in the workplace and tailored the topic to jobseekers and HR professionals.