



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bill Grant
Canton City Council

CC: Citizens of Canton
Annie Fortner, City Clerk
Nathan Ingram, Assistant City Manager
Bobby Dyer, City Attorney

FROM: Billy Peppers, City Manager

DATE: March 22, 2024

RE: City of Canton Roadmap for Success Update—March 2024

Following the conclusion of the most recent City Council Retreat (March 15-17, 2024), I am attaching a review of the City's progress on the *Canton Roadmap for Success* adopted by the Mayor and Council in late 2020. The work on programs, projects, and policies is outlined under each of the 8 Tenets of our Roadmap Success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wm A. Peppers". The signature is written in a cursive style.

William A. Peppers,
City Manager



March 2024 Roadmap Review

March 22, 2024

Creating Great Neighborhoods

Policy/Programing Updates—

- Thomas P. Miller Housing Analysis (drafted 2020, updated 2023)
- All new developments are required to sign an affidavit that they have reviewed the Thomas P. Miller Housing Analysis and the City of Canton Roadmap.
- A new position was created to serve as the Housing Initiatives Director for the City.
- Cottage Home Development Regulations were adopted into ordinance in 2022 to allow for small home development in the City.
- The Canton Down Payment Assistance Program was created to provide funding for new home buyers through a forgivable loan over 5 years up to \$12,500. The program was modified to meet rising costs, increase availability to borrowers, and funding has been reallocated. No applications have been filed to date; however, the City has several financial organizations that are signed up to assist.
- Canton was selected in 2023 to join the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) program. A GICH stakeholder team was created to assist with the efforts of that three-year learning/planning program.
- Canton is working with Cherokee County and other cities on the creation of a land bank.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) were modified into City codes to be allowed uses in 2023. The City purchased four floor plans that are available at no cost for projects in the City of Canton. Permit fees were capped at \$300 per project. The first ADU is under construction.
- GICH, Staff and the City Attorney are reviewing options for a potential Canton Land Trust. This entity could own land and do long term leases for residential development to reduce housing costs.
- An abeyance was put in place in November 2022 to allow time for several projects to be initiated or completed, review all current zoning procedures, update ordinances, and adopt a new zoning map. Currently, the only items outstanding are a few edits to the zoning ordinance, consolidation/streamlining of zoning categories and the adoption of the new zoning map. The abeyance sunsets on March 31, 2024. Staff are working to consolidate RA-6 into RA-8, NC into GC, eliminate OR-T and transition those properties to either residential or commercial categories, and text amendments to the zoning ordinance, with the expectation of those moving forward in April. The Council needs to determine any changes to the traditional residential zoning categories of R-40, R-20, R-15, R-10 and R-4.
- Enhanced right-of-way standards were created to assure that developers were completing streets properly as part of development, residents had a method for making improvements in the ROW, and areas that were left behind by developers were improved to City standards.



Public Housing—

- Tanner Place—working to close, finalizing development plans. Canton Housing Authority (CHA) will replace 70 aging units at Shipp Street and Jefferson Circle with 70 new units along Shipp Street in a project called Tanner Place. The City invested \$2.8 million over 30 years at a sub-market rate and abandoned the right-of-way for Shipp Street within the project. In exchange, CHA will have an appraisal created for Jefferson Circle and the City can take ownership of that property utilizing the loan as payment up to the appraised amount. This project will take 18 months to construct.
- Oakside—CHA is replacing the units at Oakside with new units in a more concentrated fashion on the property with the goal of adding new units after the first phase of replacement is completed. The City committed up to a \$1 million loan for the project.
- In total, the City will see 100% of publicly owned housing units replaced in the next 4 years.
- City Initiated Development--
- North Canton Cottage Village—The City rezoned approximately 1.91 acres at 70 Laurel Canyon Village Circle to allow for residential uses in 2021. The property was initially set aside for a fire station but was rendered unnecessary for that use through the fire consolidation agreement with Cherokee County in 2017. The City contracted with Lew Oliver to design a cottage village on the site. The latest plans show 9 single family units with one ADU. To maximize the site, Council will need to agree to a one-way drive instead of a public roadway to service the site. The Council will need to determine if it wishes to move forward with the project and at what costs. Alternative options could include disposing of the site to a developer with restrictions to build the design, providing the site to another governmental authority or non-profit to build as designed, or to abandon the project and determine another use for the property.
- North Canton/Tippens Elementary School Site—The City took ownership of the school site in the North Canton Mill Village in January following the removal of a deed restriction from County owned property in the Bluffs. CHA received an American Rescue Plan Act Grant from Cherokee Board of Commissioners to demolish the school. Demolition will occur in April/May. Per agreement with CHA, the City will work on a redevelopment plan for the site.

Planning Related Items—

- The Historic Preservation Commission is weighing a proposal to expand the current historic district to mirror the approved state and nationally recognized historic district as well as implement residential guidelines. A town hall-style meeting occurred after property owners in the district were notified of the changes by mail. The HPC is currently reviewing the proposed guidelines and will meet again in April to do so. A potential public hearing on these items would be held by the City Council in May.
- Code Compliance development documents highlighting the top 10 code violations for residential and commercial properties. These were developed to hand out to new account holders through utility billing, used as education for enforcement, and were highlighted on the City's website, social media, and public events.



- Public Works and GIS completed a sidewalk inventory. It is currently mapped on the City's system and includes the location of the sidewalks, sidewalk ramps, and trails. Annual sidewalk repairs are being budgeted and conducted in concentrated neighborhood areas.
- Residents can register their home security systems with Canton Police Department. This includes information on how to handle alarm calls.
- Code Compliance created a process flow-chart to show how concerns are handled from notice of violation to adjudication.

Celebrating the Diversity of Our Community

Policy/Programming Updates—

- Canton is working to attract and retain bilingual employees. At one point in 2015, the City had no bilingual employees. Today, Canton has 8 bilingual employees.
- A Diversity & Inclusion Task Force began in June of 2020. The group held several meetings, but a lack of direction and meaningful participation put the advisory board into a period of hibernation. The Council will need to determine if this board remains or is transformed into a different format.
- CanTeen was established to encourage youth participation in the City of Canton. The group held several activities including an open house, youth job fair, MLK Service Project, and information tables at City events. The leadership of that group graduated. Staff will work with the Council to reconstitute this organization in Fall 2024.
- City websites were updated to seamlessly transition through Google Translation for over 100 different languages.
- Staff continue to work on physical document translation for the public.
- A new text message platform allows for communication through texts and phone calls in over 100 different languages.
- The City of Canton adopted the City of Civility program from the Georgia Municipal Association in 2023. It was the third city in Georgia to do so.
- Canton is currently reviewing the process to become a Certified City of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging through GMA. There are several criteria in several areas for consideration. Canton appears to be eligible for Gold or Platinum certification.
- Canton PD continues to spearhead the Multicultural Festival in September through the assistance of local churches, Canton Tourism, and other staff. The event continues to grow and attract record attendance.
- In 2023, the City launched a new Spanish movie series at the Canton Theatre to attract a new audience from our residents.
- The City hired two digital content specialists in mid-2023 to create engaging content for social media and the web.

Projects—

- Harmon Park expansion is nearly completion to include the new Atlanta United/LISC mini-pitch soccer field. A celebration of the facility will occur on April 23.



- Canton was awarded \$2.2 million by Governor Brian Kemp for the creation of pedestrian improvements in the Sunnyside/Marietta Road area. These projects must be completed by 2026. The Downtown Development Authority purchased the Canton Village Shopping Center to assist with these projects.
- The Council approved a partnership with History Cherokee to develop signage as a heritage marker for Stumptown to showcase black history in that area and as a larger part of the organization's new Black History Driving Tour across Cherokee County.

Advancing Regional Economic Success

Policy—

- Canton worked through several development projects to provide either zoning amendments, text amendments, or masterplan approvals/amendments to provide additional light industrial opportunities for regional, national, and international projects.
- Canton adopted a Connect Canton program that provides the first-year membership to the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce for new businesses to the City of Canton. Since 2022, 32 businesses have taken advantage of the program and received a ribbon cutting event. Additionally, only 4 have not renewed their membership.
- A new economic development and tourism manager position was created by the City.
- Canton Tourism was overhauled, and additional funding has been approved to expand the City's tourism efforts. This includes the development of Explore Canton, a tourism/experience-based website, the Explore Canton brand for tourism product development, streamlining grants for event and product partnerships, and growing overall market reach through digital, print, audio, and video marketing platforms.
- Design Review was streamlined from a committee including the Mayor to a staff only committee that meets weekly to expedite ordinance procedures for design review of commercial projects in the City.
- All occupational licenses were updated into an online system for application and renewal.
- SIC codes were transitioned to NAICS codes to bring the City's occupational tax program into compliance with federal guidelines.
- Film permits were consolidated into a single-entry point system through the City's Theatre & Facilities Director.
- Canton instituted court proceedings for businesses failing to apply for occupational licenses in 2023.
- Canton adopted distilled package sales through ordinance amendments and approved the four available distilled package licenses through a bid process. The process achieved over \$1.1 million in additional revenue through the innovative bid process.
- The first Tax Allocation District was created by the City of Canton to include the expanded boundaries of the Downtown Development Authority. The City is currently working with Cherokee County School District on an agreement for their tax increment as well as Cherokee County Board of Commissioners. The TAD increment started January 2023. The City Council agreed to provide a line of credit to the Downtown Development Authority for \$8 million to kickstart TAD projects with City Council approval.



Projects—

- Canton hired Horwath HTL to do a hotel feasibility study for 250+ acres of land purchased at The Bluffs along the reservoir. The study came back favorable and a second agreement for the marketing of the site and development of an RFP process is underway.
- The DDA hired Horwath HTL to do a hotel feasibility study for a downtown hotel site. The study came back favorable and a second agreement for the marketing of downtown for a boutique hotel and development of an RFP process is underway.
- Three new hotels under two roofs opened in 2022-23 on Reinhardt College Parkway. In 2023, the City's hotel tax eclipsed \$1m in revenue.
- Canton sold 50 acres of property to Cherokee Office of Economic Development along Technology Ridge for the expansion of Bluffs Court and adjacent light industrial property.
- Canton rezoned 50 acres along Knox Bridge Highway for Cherokee Office of Economic Development for the creation of Canton Corporate Park. The land is currently under design and permitting review for access through GDOT.

Enhancing Historic Downtown Canton

Policy/Programming Updates—

- The Downtown Development Authority was constituted with new membership to focus more on real estate and development than events and street furnishings.
- The DDA Boundaries were redrawn to match a new Tax Allocation District. This allows the DDA to act on behalf of the City with development agreements and project negotiations.
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and Solar projects were approved by the Council to enhance downtown offerings and offset general fund expenditures through SPLOST outlays.
- Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund projects have occurred through the DDA.
- Main Street issued façade grant funding to downtown projects
- The DDA is funding a Downtown Master Plan project to incorporate transportation, land use, and destination planning.
- Public Works created a Downtown Maintenance Manager position to handle all downtown projects.

Projects—

- The DDA sold the Jones Building for a mixed-use office/retail/food project that opened in December 2023.
- The DDA purchased the Bray property for a potential hotel site. Bray has access to the property for another year.
- The DDA purchased the Atkins portion of Fincher Atkins Park for future redevelopment.
- The DDA purchased Edgewater Hall to alleviate a lawsuit related to the sewer and trail project.
- The DDA purchased Canton Village Shopping Center to assist with a transformative pedestrian project and transportation improvements in the area, including the replacement of Canton Creek bridge.



- The City constructed a new downtown parking deck adjacent to City Hall to double the capacity of the existing lot, add EV charging stations, and a solar canopy.
- History Cherokee, through the financing of the property by the City, opened the History Museum.
- The West Main Pedestrian Project is underway to convert West Main at the triangle to Railroad Street into a one-way street with on street parking, pedestrian improvements, and downtown's first underground utility conversion.
- Canton received an Appalachian Regional Commission Grant (\$600k+) for a pedestrian bridge across the Etowah River from The Mill on Etowah to a new trail project. It is currently in design and will include a put-in/take-out from the River.
- A sanitation and grease trap project were created on North Street. This project was funded through the DDA and provides for a single point of refuse disposal and collection for a major block of downtown. This project allowed for the removal of a few dozen curbside containers to reactivate a sidewalk area. Underground grease traps also allow local restaurants better access to grease disposal. The costs of these projects will be offset over time by user fees.
- Public Works started a new downtown hanging basket program with a local landscaper to do seasonal plantings through the downtown area.
- Public Works developed a contract for downtown tree lighting that includes annual maintenance and re-installation.
- Downtown street signs were updated to include the Canton logo.
- The Canton Theatre is currently working on a lighting and sound upgrade project. In the past several years, the curtains, carpet, and stage have been improved.
- Downtown Canton hosted the 2023 Georgia Downtown Conference in August. The event brought several hundred visitors to the area.
- New events were added to the City's annual downtown event calendar including Chocolate Walk, Garden in the Park, Think Pink Walk, Shopping by Lantern Light, Taste of Canton, and Downtown Mingle.
- The Cannon Park gazebo was rebuilt to ensure its integrity within the park.

Sustaining Our Natural Environment

Policy/Programming Updates—

- The City hired HGOR to study the buffer of the Hickory Log Creek Reservoir. This included reviewing the buffer, slopes, and vegetation to determine potential options for trails. An initial concept was drafted.
- The City hired HGOR to study the City owned properties along the Etowah River to assist with vegetation planning and access.
- The City hired HGOR to review the City's plant palette and provide updates to assure native species are preferred and remove any invasive or inappropriate materials.
- The City drafted the job of Operations Manager at Public Works to serve as Sustainability Manager.
- An Environmental & Sustainability Advisory Board was created to review projects and assist the Council on policies and programs to meet the sustainability tenet.

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- The City eliminated permit fees for residential solar projects.
- The City purchased electric landscaping equipment to test in the downtown area.
- A sustainability audit was conducted following an RFP for auditing services. Schneider Electric entered a contract with the City in 2023 to complete projects for building efficiencies, lighting efficiencies, and solar demonstration in the City.
- Water bottle filling stations were added to City facilities and parks.
- A sustainability policy was drafted and will be introduced to the Council in April.
- New electric vehicles have been purchased for use within the City. These include two electric motorcycles for PD, a new administrative vehicle for pool use, a truck in engineering, and a truck in community development.
- A new recycling program started at City facilities in 2024.

Projects—

- The solar canopy on the parking deck began operations in 2023 to help offset electricity costs for City Hall.
- City Hall received a new roof to improve energy efficiency.
- HVAC replacement projects are underway for City Hall and the Public Safety & Municipal Court Complex.
- Automated Meter Reading Technology (AMI) is being installed throughout the City to assist in real-time water metering. This will assist in improving billing, leak detection, onboarding/offboarding of customers, and overall system efficiency.
- A solar picnic table was added as a demonstration piece at the new Heritage Park playground.
- Work is underway on an educational component of sustainability efforts that will be outside of the City Hall Auditorium.
- A demonstration solar light structure will be installed in 2024 in Etowah River Park.

Connecting Citizens to Parks & Recreation

Policy/Programming Updates—

- A parks and recreation master plan project is ongoing. It was awarded to Brandstetter Carroll following an RFP process. Public feedback was collected through an open house, pop up events, online survey, and mail out survey. Information was collected from focus groups of stakeholders. A steering committee was formed and had the first of three meetings in March 2024. There will be a total of 4 steering committee meetings. The project is scheduled to be completed in August 2024.
- The City purchased park property in South Canton along Ridge Pine Drive for a new park in 2022.
- A new special event policy was adopted to assure that events using City facilities provide accurate fees for use as well as liability coverage.
- Canton River Rock was consolidated from a series of concerts over the summer months into a single weekend of concerts in 2023. This will return the last weekend of July in 2024.



Projects—

- The trail from Etowah River Park east along the Etowah River and under I-575 to the City limits was completed in 2022.
- The trail from Boling Park to Heritage Park is completed except in three areas. The connection in Boling Park is on hold until Phase I of the Water Pollution Control Plant is completed which includes the resurfacing of that trail head parking lot. There are a series of three bridges near the Walska Street Bridge that are awaiting completion (including approaches). The last phase of the project to be completed is in an area where the new pedestrian bridge is planned. Staff is working with the project to get a plan to move that section forward.
- Additional parking was added near the Etowah River Park Amphitheatre.
- Heritage Park restrooms were added near the trail connector in 2023.
- A new playground facility was added to Heritage Park and opened in 2023.
- An outdoor gym was installed at Heritage Park with assistance from a private grant and opened in 2022.
- Harmon Park underwent a major rehabilitation project in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The project included CDBG funding for facility improvements to the existing structures including roofing, structural enhancements, and painting. Additional acreage was purchased adjacent to the park on the south side and an adjacent property owner to the north donated property to the City. Through this size increase, the City converted the park drive to a one-way street with added parking, added sidewalks along Harmon Circle, added a trail along the Etowah River and adjacent streambed, added a pavilion on the river, added a mini-pitch soccer field, added an outdoor basketball court, improved all pedestrian areas, added a small greenspace and outdoor seating, and rehabbed the baseball fields with new fencing, turf, and windscreens.
- Boling Park received a fresh topcoat of asphalt in the drive and parking areas.
- A new mural was installed on the Boling Park basketball court.
- New lights, fencing, and turf were installed on the Boling Park baseball fields along with lighting improvements to the tennis court.
- Restroom facilities have been approved for Etowah River Park and Boling Park.
- New landscaping has been added to Heritage Park and invasive Chinese Elms are being removed as part of a phase-out plan.
- A trail concept plan was created by HGOR for the Hickory Log Creek Reservoir.
- Little Free Libraries were added to all City Parks.
- WiFi was added to City Parks using federal coronavirus grant funding.

Improving Infrastructure for Future Demands

Policy/Programming Updates—

- An RFP for the construction of the City's water pollution control plant expansion project was issued and awarded to Clark/Reeves Young with Atkins as the Construction Manager in 2020. The City was able to fund the project using bond proceeds at an interest rate of just above 1%.



- Staff met with Cherokee County about the CATS service. The County is going to move into more of an on-demand program with less focus on fixed routes. City Staff support that option.
- Personal Transportation Vehicle districts were created through ordinance and River Green and Towne Mill currently have approved districts.
- LAP Certification was achieved by City staff to be able to manage federally funded projects.
- Major road areas were added as possible project options to the Capital Impact Element.
- Through Service Delivery Strategy negotiations, the City was able to get a county-wide study conducted on old highway 5.
- The City transitioned to a fleet vehicle program with Enterprise to improve the age of fleet, cut down on long-term maintenance, and reduce capital investment that diminishes faster than value. This has included introducing electric vehicles to the fleet.

Project Updates—

- The Water Pollution Control Plant is on schedule to have closed loop testing begin in the next couple of weeks, which will result in the completion of phase 1. The project is scheduled to be completed through phase 5 by the end of May 2025.
- Water booster pump stations have been completed at Laurel Canyon and are under design at Brown Industrial Park.
- Unused water tanks were removed on East Main Street and Brown Industrial Park.
- Land for a new Ridge Pine tank was purchased and the tank is currently under design.
- Generators were added to water and wastewater infrastructure to improve redundancy.
- The City purchased the remaining acreage from Technology Park Atlanta for The Bluffs. A portion of this property sits adjacent to the County Administrative Building and is a possible site for a new water treatment plant.
- The City amended the contract with H2O Innovations to provide for a line crew that can do utility installation work in the City.
- A water line expansion under I575 at Exit 19 is in design.
- The City completed a joint study with Cherokee County on improvements to SR 140 from Riverstone/Marietta Hwy to Laurel Canyon. Based upon this study, project segments have been added to the Atlanta Regional Commissions Transportation Improvement Plan including awards for funding a portion of the work. The City also added the roadway as an impact fee eligible project.
- Contracts were awarded to Michael Baker for the design of roadway improvements at SR 140 Riverstone Parkway/Marietta Highway and designs are ongoing.
- Contracts were awarded to Michael Baker for the design of roadway improvements at SR 140 and Reinhardt College Parkway and designs are ongoing. This project will be a roundabout.
- A traffic signal was designed and added at Teasley Middle School.
- A traffic signal was designed and is awaiting final permits from GDOT for Reservoir Drive at Reinhardt College Parkway.
- The West Main Street pedestrian project (listed under Enhancing Historic Downtown Canton) is underway.

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- A Transportation Master Plan was awarded to Modern Mobility. It was concluded in 2023.
- A Downtown Master Plan is underway to take information from the Transportation Master Plan and develop implementation strategies.
- A traffic study at Prominence Parkway is underway.
- A striping plan at Laurel Canyon Parkway near Horizon was designed and is awaiting Council direction.
- A pedestrian crossing on Riverstone Parkway near Medical Lane is in design.
- Water relocation on SR 140 near Avery Road is underway.
- A sidewalk and pedestrian crossing project on East Main were designed. Residents did not want the project to move forward.

Leading with Excellence

Policy/Programming Updates—

- The City Council created Canton's Roadmap for Success using feedback from local stakeholders.
- The City was awarded a Visionary City Award from the Georgia Municipal Association for the Roadmap for Success.
- A Citizen Participation Application was created to spur interest for boards, commissions and authorities. A review committee looked at these boards and determined that a form understanding the roles of those organizations needed to be developed and signed by the volunteer and the appointing elected official.
- The City instituted a new Ethics Ordinance.
- The City instituted a new Charter.
- The City instituted comprehensive ordinance amendments.
- The City negotiated Service Delivery Strategy with peer municipalities and Cherokee County.
- The City launched a new website.
- All City staff and elected officials participated in DEI Training through the Georgia Municipal Association.
- City Staff evaluations were moved into annual employee roadmaps.
- All staff participated in a Roadmap For Success Launch Huddle in 2021. Quarterly Huddle updates occur throughout the year.
- The City utilizes JustFOIA for open records requests.
- The City implemented a Step/Grade Pay Platform for Police Officers.
- The City contracted with Condrey and Associates for a compensation and classification audit.
- The City implemented LAMA software for online plans and permit review and submission.
- City Council retreats twice annually to discuss projects and plan work through the Roadmap.
- The City cohosts a variety of training including items for small business development, mental health, women empowerment, health and wellness, housing, and employment.
- The City adopted updated personnel policy manual.
- The City initiated paternal leave.
- The City added Roadmap information to all meeting rooms.



- The City publishes an annual look book, started in 2022.
- City staff are provided with training opportunities to advance their careers.