



FAQs: Community Planning

What is community planning?

Community planning, according to the American Planning Association, is “a process that seeks to engage all members of the community to create a more prosperous, convenient, equitable, healthy, and attractive place for present and future generations.” The final product that results from this planning process is the Comprehensive Plan for the community.

What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan provides guidance as well as recommendations on how land should be utilized to meet the needs and aspirations of a community. The plan also provides insight on the community’s vision, goals, objectives, policies, and strategies for the future growth, development, preservation of the community, protection of community assets, and provision of services. The comprehensive plan must be updated every five years.

What are the local benefits of comprehensive planning?

According to Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), there are several local benefits of comprehensive planning. First, comprehensive planning shows the importance of relationships between community issues. Second, local comprehensive planning creates an environment of predictability for business and industry, investors, property owners, tax payers, and the public. Lastly, the plan helps local governments to recognize and then implement important economic development and revitalization initiatives.

What are character areas?

Character areas identify places that share similar overall character such as a common form of development and land use pattern, lifestyle and feel, intensity of use, or design elements. The character area descriptions indicate the primary and secondary types of land uses, the infrastructure necessary for that type of development, and serve as a guide for future development approvals.

(cont.)

According to DCA, “character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions, instead of only existing land use.”

What elements are required or optional for a comprehensive plan?

Community Goals are required for all local governments in the state of Georgia. Community goals must include at least one or a combination of the following: general vision statement, list of community goals, community policies, and character areas and defining narrative. Additionally, Needs and Opportunities and Community Work Program are required for all local governments in the state of Georgia. The following elements are required for local governments as specified or are optional but encouraged for all other local governments:

- **Capital Improvements** - required for local governments that charge impact fees
- **Economic Development** - required for local governments included in Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1
- **Land Use** - required for local governments with zoning or equivalent land development regulations that are subject to Zoning Procedures Law and must include at least one of the two components: Character Areas Map and Defining Narrative and/or Future Land Use Map and Narrative
- **Transportation** - required for portions of a local government’s jurisdiction that are included in a Metropolitan Planning Organization
- **Housing** - required for Community Development Block Grant Entitlement Communities.

Where is the City of Canton’s most recent Comprehensive Plan?

Canton 2045: Comprehensive Plan was adopted in January 2024. The plan can be found [here](#) for additional information. The City of Canton’s next comprehensive plan update will be completed by February 2029.