

Partnership Gwinnett Strategic Plan

Quantitative and qualitative input will result in a vision for Gwinnett County's preferred future. This vision will be focused on economic growth in key industry sectors where Gwinnett is most competitive, and will leverage a best-practice K-16 education and workforce development system, physical and technological infrastructure enabling Gwinnett to be competitive now and into the future, and a dynamic quality of life that will attract workers and companies alike, and retain existing young professionals, college graduates and incumbent companies. Quantitative research will focus on recent economic and demographic trends, and Gwinnett's competitiveness in the categories of: education and workforce development; infrastructure; business costs; and quality of life. Qualitative input will include 20 interviews, 10 focus groups, a community-wide online survey, and a project website. The plan will be completed in December 2006.

The Gwinnett Unified Plan

The Unified Plan is an ambitious attempt to coordinate the state-mandated update of Gwinnett County's Comprehensive Development Plan with updates of its Comprehensive Transportation Plan and its Consolidated (Housing) Plan. No county in Georgia has attempted these three processes in unison. The ultimate goal of the Unified Plan process is the creation of a plan that can win widespread community support, guide the key decisions the County must make over the next decade, and protect and enhance the quality of life of Gwinnett's current and future residents.

Primary planning concerns include: a dwindling supply of land for development; potential re-development of ageing areas; an increasingly complex demographic base; quality of life issues; and issues of road capacity, housing affordability and choice, County planning priorities, and natural resources supply/capacity. The Unified Plan will utilize quantitative research and qualitative input to facilitate a "scenario-building" process to summarize different growth and development scenarios for Gwinnett over the next decade plus. These scenarios will then be confirmed and prioritized by County stakeholders, resulting in the final development of the transportation, housing, land-use, environmental and affiliated guidelines in the final Unified Plan. The plan will be completed in July 2007.

Similarities and Differences Between the Two Efforts

The simple answer is to say that the Partnership Gwinnett plan will be much more actively focused on what needs to happen for Gwinnett to grow economically, how that growth can best be realized, and who needs to be involved in achieving that growth. "Growth" is defined more in terms of job growth, income growth and expansion of the workforce's capacity and skills-base. Because economic development today is holistic and inclusive of issues related to education and workforce, infrastructure, business costs and quality of life, they will all be assessed to determine how Gwinnett can become most competitive for the type of economic growth it desires. Strategies will be oriented around a five-year growth timeframe.

The Unified Plan will also focus on issues of growth, but more in the context of physical growth and development in the areas of land use, housing, transportation, environmental concerns, and physical infrastructure related to utilities and telecommunications. It will assess demographic and quality of life issues to the extent that these trends can affect growth patterns and determine where people will be living and working in ten years, and at what levels of density residential and commercial development will be pursued. The Plan's economic component is directed at providing the infrastructure needed to support economic and physical development. As such, development of planning scenarios will also project infrastructure-related needs based on research-informed economic growth modeling. Strategies will be oriented around a ten-year growth timeframe.

There are certainly a few overlaps between the research and development phases of both processes, and the Partnership Gwinnett lead consultants, Market Street Services of Atlanta, and the Unified Plan lead consultants, Parsons Brinkerhoff of Baltimore, have pledged to work as closely as possible to ensure that the two planning efforts are complimentary and not adversarial. Potential areas of cooperation include sharing demographic data, results of interviews and focus group sessions, and Parsons Brinkerhoff determining to utilize the Partnership Gwinnett strategy as one of its planning "scenarios" in the development of the Unified Plan.