



October 9 & 13, 2015

**Youth Leadership Sandy Springs
and
Leadership Sandy Springs**

Discussion Summary

Summary

The project team organized activities to get input related to **The Next Ten** from the [Youth Leadership Sandy Springs](#) and [Leadership Sandy Springs](#) class members during their regularly-scheduled meetings on October 9 and October 13, respectively. Both of these groups are made up of current and emerging leaders who are interested in learning about, and improving, the Sandy Springs community.

There were 38 participants at the Youth Leadership event on October 9th and 33 at the adult Leadership event on October 13th. Activities included break-out discussions, where each set of participants had conversations (facilitated by City staff) on a set of topics related to the Comprehensive Plan update. The ideas, needs, and opportunities identified in these discussions are summarized in this document.



Youth Leadership Sandy Springs, 10/9/2015 (Photos: Polly Warren)



Leadership Sandy Springs, 10/13/2015 (Photos: Catherine Lautenbacher)

Youth Leadership Sandy Springs (October 9, 2015)

Transportation ideas

- Regarding MARTA
 - Expand both rail & bus networks. East/west rail expansion is of particular interest.
 - Shuttles to and from MARTA (to solve the “last mile” issue), with shuttle app for convenience
 - Improve the perception of MARTA buses
- Create a biking culture
 - Bike share programs
 - Facilities for people riding bicycles, e.g., bike parking/storage
 - More dedicated bike lanes with more separation between bicycles and vehicles
 - Improve safety & awareness of people riding bicycles
- Increase pedestrian access to all parts of the city
 - Look to Beltline for inspiration (bike, pedestrian, & leisure accommodation)
 - Trails and facilities, including water fountains and mile markers along paths, for runners
 - Pedestrian safety
 - Trees between road & sidewalk to encourage safety
 - More sidewalks (wide and straight) & crosswalks
 - More river crossings
 - Riverside neighborhood needs more sidewalks
- Install more electric vehicle charging stations

Parks, Recreation, and Green Space Ideas

- Expand Beltline (or similar park system) through Sandy Springs
- Clean the image of the Chattahoochee (and actually clean it)
 - Access to the river (e.g., beach)
 - Kayak rentals
 - More parks on Sandy Springs side of the river
 - More trails along the river
- Creation of a large park (like Piedmont Park) to have more activities
- Events like races or concerts to promote the parks
- Dog parks

Community Sustainability Ideas

- Encourage recycling in the city, including the installation of more recycling facilities and adding recycle bins at shopping centers (rather than just having trash cans)
- Diversity in the community is lacking
 - Discussion of fostering Sandy Springs “China Town”
- Promote start-ups & new businesses
- Redevelop older shopping centers

- Encourage quality restaurants & small local businesses (e.g., book store) near residential areas
 - “Taste of Sandy Springs”
 - Food trucks at parks
 - Local coffee/bakery shops
- More things to do for older kids (e.g., movie theaters, concert venues)
- Improve mix of uses, similar to Buckhead or Avalon
- Different parts of town are very different and/or isolated. Make the pan-handle residents feel like they’re part of Sandy Springs (bring City Hall to that part of town).

Neighborhoods & Housing Ideas

- Affordable housing should be a priority
- Accommodate larger families through townhomes rather than only more apartments
- Preference for loft style apartments rather than traditional apartments
- Less construction happening at the same time
- Many participants enjoy neighborhoods with larger lots & trees cover
- Desire for more neighborhood events
- Want to see smart technology incorporated into houses

Technology & Innovation Ideas

- Develop a Sandy Springs app that has information about:
 - Park locations
 - City events
 - Traffic
 - Weather
 - Schools
- Promote new businesses
- Utilize billboards & advertisement to promote city events & notifications

Leadership Sandy Springs (October 13, 2015)

Community Sustainability

Economic Areas

- When asked which areas of Sandy Springs felt strongest, economically, groups chose to list areas which exhibit resilience and growth in industry and employment, including Pill Hill, Perimeter, Roswell Road corridor south of Hammond, and Mount Vernon Highway north of Johnson Ferry.
- Many participants mentioned the seeming disparity in concentration of industry and jobs between the north and south sides of the city, particularly along Roswell Road.
 - One participant called it a “thinning of job opportunities” as one travels north on Roswell Road through Sandy Springs.

Retail/Dining Options

- **Shopping:** When asked whether they stay inside the city limits to complete shopping for everyday items, large purchases, entertainment, and food, the results were varied. Generally, all groups agreed that quotidian errands (grocery, pharmacy, sundries) could be accomplished while staying in Sandy Springs; indeed, most participants stated that they stayed within the city boundaries for such shopping tasks. Some participants regularly make large purchases (such as appliances) in the city, depending on the proximity of the closest big box outlet. Most participants do not feel options exist for clothing or furniture shopping in Sandy Springs. Some participants noted that consignment shopping in Sandy Springs is plentiful.
- **Dining:** Most agreed that though the city has great dining options, they are scattered geographically and very few, if any, are destinations. Many agreed that the city could benefit from a clustering of dining options within walking distance of each other.
- **Entertainment:** Groups discussed the lack of entertainment options in Sandy Springs, including options for cinema, live music, performing arts, comedy, and theatre.
- **Gathering:** Some participants stated they’d like to see a small scale venue which could double as a community meeting/events/collaboration space, but not with the goal of competing with larger successful venues in operation in Atlanta and Alpharetta.

Diversity

- Participants mostly agreed that although Sandy Springs retains a diverse population, the diversity is disparate, separate, and heterogeneous. Many mentioned that the city should make a greater effort to foster a “blending” of ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Participants vehemently supported the idea of celebratory events, where residents are introduced to, and celebrate, the culture of their neighbors.

Parks, Recreation, and Greenspace

Better Utilize *Existing* Parks and Greenspace

- **Favorite parks:** Most groups began mentioning some Sandy Springs parks, such as Big Trees, Overlook, Hammond, and the Abernathy Greenway. They would typically then mention parks in the metro region, such as Piedmont, Chastain, the Botanical Gardens, and the Beltline.
- **Would like to see more activities for more people:** Participants typically preferred parks outside of Sandy Springs because they felt as though the programming offered there was not exclusively designed for families. They felt as if Sandy Springs could do more to promote its existing parks and open space, and could potentially modify programming to attract groups outside of families. Suggestions included modifying signage to be more visible and creating a pamphlet with information about each park. Participants appreciate when parks host outdoor concerts and encourage hiking, rock climbing, and intramural activities, and enjoy having access to bars and restaurants near the park. Allowing food trucks in city parks was a suggestion to accommodate that need. Participants felt as if some of the parks needed to be enlarged to be capable of accommodating these types of events, but that there should be a clear difference between active and passive greenspace.

New Parks, Greenspace, and Recreation

- **Facilities they would like to see:** Dog parks, sports complexes including baseball fields, mini golf, and drive-in movie theaters.
- **Green roofs:** One group was particularly interested in the installation of green roofs across the city and ensuring that adequate greenspace is incorporated into all new development. Suggested locations for added greenspace included areas around the Perimeter Center, near Pill Hill, and on the Tom Jumper Chevrolet site.

Bike/Ped Connectivity

- **Connectivity:** Although some thought that certain areas of the city would benefit from the addition of new parks, others found that creating walkable/bikeable connections between existing parks and across jurisdictions would be more logical and beneficial for the community. There was particular interest in establishing better connections from existing greenspace to greenspace along the river.
- **Sidewalks:** Encouraging the development of wider, more pedestrian friendly sidewalks to create a “community feeling” was discussed as a way to encourage people to become actively involved in their own communities.

Transportation

Issues to be addressed

- **Regional needs:** Traffic issues are regional and need intergovernmental growth planning
- **Transit**
 - Need to change the perception of MARTA so that it becomes more “socially acceptable” (i.e., trustworthy, safe, and convenient) and so people understand the full rail and bus extent of the system
 - MARTA doesn’t go where people need it to go – need to expand the system
 - Buses on Roswell Rd stop all vehicular traffic when picking up passengers
- **Connectivity:** East-west access is an issue
- **“Drive through” congestion:** Congestion isn’t that bad during off-peak hours. Non-residents come to Sandy Springs to work, then leave to go home in the evening, leading to a disconnect between the place of employment and place of residence.

Potential solutions

- **Parking:** Encourage urban design that provides places to park once and then walk to your destinations
- **Commute hours:** Encourage employers to offer staggered work hours, flex hours, or tele-commute options.
- **Transit:**
 - Make transit convenient and safe
 - Run buses more frequently and consider bus pull-offs on Roswell Road
 - Develop a streetcar or trolley network (e.g., between MARTA stations)
 - Run shuttle buses in a loop and give corporate tax incentives for shuttles
 - East/west MARTA expansion
- **Bicycle/Pedestrian**
 - Add more sidewalks
 - Add police patrols on trails/paths
 - Streets should be complete and include facilities for pedestrians and bikes
 - Provide bike parking at destinations
 - Promote idea of a “healthy city”
- **Roadway**
 - Do not increase car capacity
 - Close off some commercial roads to vehicles on the weekend
 - Replace the middle turning lane on Roswell with a median for safety
 - Traffic lights need to be better timed
 - Transform more interchanges into diverging diamonds
 - Fix road in entire areas, not just road segments
 - Reduce number of curb cuts
- **Connectivity**
 - Build an east-west axis at the regional level, like Cobb’s E-W Connector
 - Side streets could be used more often as alternatives to Roswell Road

Neighborhoods & Housing

General comments

- Consider micro-apartment concept
- Improve access between neighborhoods and MARTA
- Add a convenience store to mixed-use developments (townhouses/apartments)

Most liked neighborhoods, and why

- Inside the Perimeter: Convenience (20 minutes to everywhere); less traffic; walkable
- Riverside: Aesthetics; lot size; trees and parks; authenticity
- Mount Vernon Way: Mature trees
- Huntcliff: Golf course
- Spalding Woods and Wyndham Hills: Proximity to park; not a cut through
- Wildercliff/Grogan's Bluff/Jett Ferry: River; large houses; secluded feeling
- City Springs: Retail accessibility/walkability
- Chastain: Homes; trees; landscaping; activity options
- Peachtree Dunwoody area/Panhandle: Locality
- Lake Forrest: Lot sizes; varied architecture
- Wieuca Road and High Point: Trees; accessible; walkable
- Peachtree Dunwoody Road/Roswell Road/ Hammond: Walkable (e.g., 1160 Hammond)
- Canton Street, Roswell: Would like to see this in Sandy Springs

Ideas for improvements

- Roswell Road
 - All: Needs more greenspace, wider sidewalks, and improved aesthetics (e.g., make more consistent, and consider adding underground power lines)
 - Southern segment (down to West Wieuca): More affordable housing; seek opportunities for redevelopment
 - Northern segment: Improve underperforming businesses; foster nodes
- Northwood Drive (Prado): Redevelopment opportunity
- Johnson Ferry Rd & Riverside Dr: Remove construction lot (has been vacant and left as is for many years); provide balance between affordability, access, and transportation
- Northwood/Winding River: Improve appearance of buildings and bring them up to code
- City Springs: Create a cluster of quality restaurants
- Northridge Road/Roswell Road: Safety concerns – would like a greater police presence; create a live/work/play environment; incentivize public/city employees to live in the City; enforce code violations; provide assistance programs for lower income families; increase sense of community
- Big Lots: Redevelop plaza
- Roswell Rd/Dunwoody Place: Redevelop Stars & Strikes Plaza; pursue affordable housing, including single-family residences
- North Sandy Springs: Pursue upscale shopping similar to the Avenue, Avalon, and New Buckhead