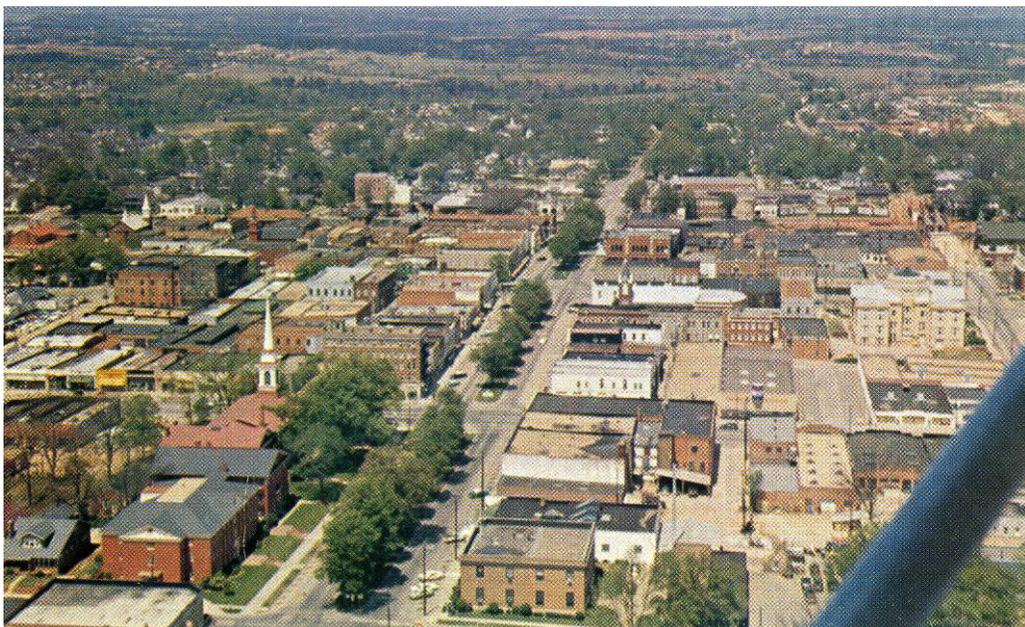


CHAPTER 1

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW



Aerial View of Downtown Griffin from Postcard, c 1960

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose

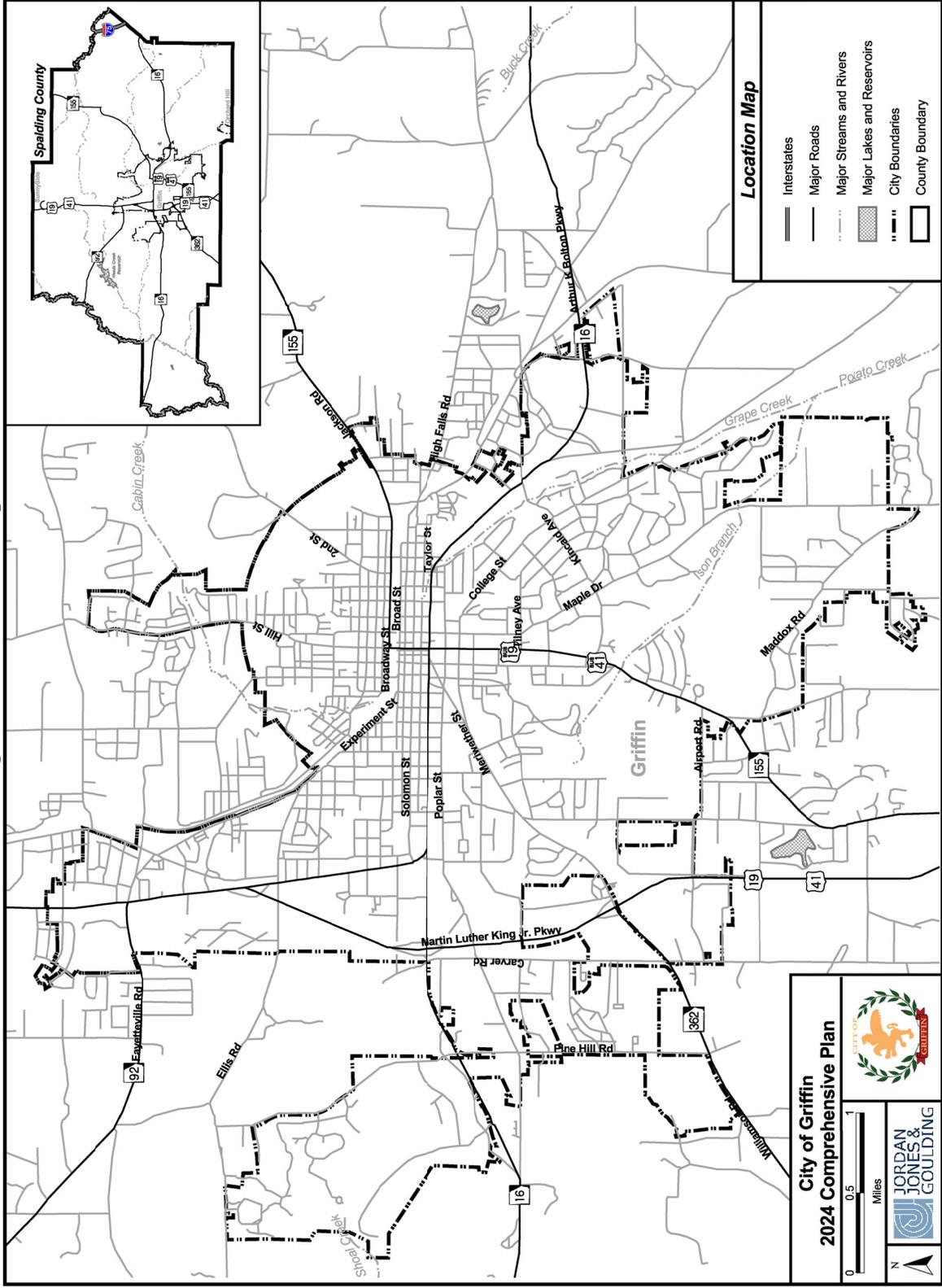
The City of Griffin 2024 Comprehensive Plan provides city officials, staff, and residents with a blueprint to guide growth and development over the next 20 years. This plan addresses a wide range of elements including demographics, economic development, natural and cultural resources, housing, community facilities, land use and transportation. This official statement will be used as the basis for zoning, transportation planning, and utility system decisions in the future. This plan serves as a major revision to the City’s Comprehensive Plan completed in 2001 and is prepared in compliance with the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Future major updates to the Comprehensive Plan shall occur, at a minimum, every 10 years. However, after five years the Short Term Work Program is required to be updated and community leaders should determine if the Comprehensive Plan needs a major update, based upon the degree of change in the community. If little has changed, minor revisions to the plan may be sufficient, in the form of plan amendments. If major changes have occurred or if the data upon which the plan is based has become dated, a complete update of the Comprehensive Plan should be initiated.

This document represents a major update of the Comprehensive Plan even though the last major update of the City’s Comprehensive Plan was adopted in December 2001. The reason for this is that since the plan was last adopted, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs updated the “Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning” effective January 1, 2004. These new standards require a more extensive planning effort than was accomplished in 2001, including the creation of two new planning elements, Transportation and Intergovernmental Coordination. This new plan was prepared to meet the new minimum standards and to incorporate changes in existing conditions. For example, since the last plan was completed the results of the 2000 Census have been released and several new public facilities have been constructed.

The City of Griffin 2024 Comprehensive Plan includes all of the incorporated area of the City. Griffin covers 13.9 square miles of the Piedmont Plateau of North Central Georgia. The city is approximately 40 miles south of Atlanta and 55 miles north of Macon. Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport is 45 minutes north of Griffin. The major roadways that serve the city include US 19/41, SR 16, SR 155, and SR 362. Additionally, I-75 passes through the extreme northeastern corner of Spalding County, see **Figure 1-1**.

Figure 1-1: Location Map



1.2 Planning Process

A three-step planning process was undertaken in updating this plan:

Step 1: Inventory of Existing Conditions

The inventory prepared for the 2001 plan was updated based on the results of interviews with local officials and community leaders, feedback received at public meetings, and recent work prepared for other local planning studies, such as the City’s Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Step 2: Assessment of Current and Future Needs

Based upon the inventory and assessment and the results of a Visioning Workshop, this step focused on providing both a factual and conceptual framework for making informed decisions about the future of the community. The results of this assessment are included near the end of each planning element or the next eight chapters of this report.

Step 3: Articulation of Goals and an Associated Implementation Program

Finally a five-year work program was developed based on the community’s needs and goals. These goals were derived from the assessment of current and future needs, community input, and a common vision. Each chapter includes a list of goals and recommended implementation steps. A comprehensive list of action items is included in the Implementation Plan, Chapter 10.

Step 1: Inventory and Assessment

The “Inventory and Assessment” portion of each chapter lists the resources in the City of Griffin and addresses the following eight elements. The adequacy of these resources is assessed based on interviews and meetings with elected officials, city staff, and residents.

Chapter 2 - Population

The population element specifically addresses total population, households, age distribution, racial composition, educational attainment, and income. Current, historic, and future data is provided for several of these population characteristics. This data is analyzed in increments from 1980 until 2025. Comparisons were also made between the City, the county, the region, and the state.

Chapter 3 - Economic Development	The economic development element examines the City’s economic base, labor force characteristics, and local economic development opportunities and resources to determine economic needs and goals.
Chapter 4 - Housing	The housing element provides an inventory and assessment of the City’s housing stock. Specifically this section addresses types of housing units, age and condition of housing, owner and renter occupied units, and cost of housing.
Chapter 5 - Natural and Cultural Resources	This element evaluates the City’s culturally and environmentally sensitive areas and outlines strategies for their appropriate use, preservation and protection.
Chapter 6 - Community Facilities	The community facilities element inventories and assesses existing public facilities and services to ensure they have the capacity to support and attract growth and development and/or to maintain and enhance the quality of life of the City’s residents. This section specifically addresses law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services, water supply and treatment, wastewater treatment, solid waste management, health care services, recreational resources, governmental facilities, educational and cultural facilities.
Chapter 7 - Land Use	The land use element of the plan assists local governments in determining existing land use patterns and future patterns of growth. Categories of land use include parks, recreation and conservation; agricultural; commercial; residential; industrial; public/institutional; government; transportation, communications and utilities; and undeveloped properties.
Chapter 8 - Intergovernmental Coordination	This planning element includes an inventory of existing coordination mechanisms to serve current and future needs of the community.
Chapter 9 - Transportation	This element includes an inventory of various components of the local transportation network, including roadways, bicycle and pedestrian ways, significant parking facilities, railroads and public transportation.

Step 2: Assessment of Current and Future Needs

After conducting an inventory for each planning element, an assessment of current and future needs was undertaken. Much of this work was based on public input gathered at a Visioning Workshop on January 10, 2004. City officials and staff also assisted in this effort which is summarized toward the end of each element.

Step 3: Articulation of Goals and an Associated Implementation Program

Based on the current and future needs for each planning element, an implementation strategy was prepared. The implementation strategies' section of this plan provides a Five-Year Short Term Work Program and a Record of Accomplishment. The work programs indicate the projects and programs that will be initiated in the next five-year period. The programs and projects are prioritized, a cost estimate provided, and responsibility assigned to each project. The Record of Accomplishment reports on what action items identified in the last plan were accomplished, dropped, or postponed.

1.3 Public Hearings

The Minimum Local Planning Standards require that all local governments follow the three-step planning process outlined above. The minimum standards require holding two public hearings during the planning process. An initial public hearing is held before any planning begins to inform the community about the purpose of the plan, the planning process used in its preparation, and to encourage community input on local needs, issues and goals. This public hearing was held on September 30, 2003. Another public hearing is held after the draft plan is prepared and before it is submitted for review. At this hearing, the community is informed about the content of the plan, its recommendations, and is allowed to make suggestions, additions or revisions. This hearing was held on April 13, 2004.

1.4 Visioning Workshop

The minimum standards also require that local governments provide adequate opportunities for the public to help articulate a community vision, goals and associated implementation program. To meet this requirement, a one-day Visioning Workshop was held on January 10, 2004. The workshop was held in downtown Griffin at City Hall from 9 AM to 5 PM. This intense day-long workshop was the culmination of nearly four months of active data collection and discussion focusing on the existing conditions and future growth and development of the City. The workshop resulted in a number of consensus-based recommendations which have helped form this update of the comprehensive plan.

A diverse group of stakeholders including elected officials, builders and developers, teachers, social service agencies, neighborhood activists and City staff attended the workshop. The group was led through a series of presentations and group exercises designed to help refine the City's

vision for the future, identify existing and future needs, and to possible implementation strategies.

The workshop began with a presentation on the City's trends and issues, outlining some of the findings and conclusions from the inventory of existing conditions. Following this the group was lead into a discussion of the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, or SWOT Analysis. Many of the stakeholders came to recognize through the discussion, that weaknesses and threats often present unique opportunities which can, in fact, enhance the livability of the City if planned for appropriately. The stakeholders listed a number of City strengths and opportunities including:



- Proximity to Macon, Columbus and Atlanta;
- Low-priced land;
- Good roads and access to major transportation corridors;
- Strong historic character and active downtown revitalization;
- Possibility of future commuter rail;
- Strong Development Authority and Downtown Development Authority; and
- Good recreation department and public parks.

The list of weaknesses and threats included:

- High percentage of rental and subsidized housing units (Section 8);
- High percentage of rental and some owner-occupied properties in disrepair;
- Lack of middle-class housing;
- High rate of public school student drop-outs;
- Disinvestments in older neighborhoods, particularly on the north side of Griffin;
- Aging infrastructure;
- Lack of public transportation; and
- Lack of community amenities including restaurants, retail establishments, and movie theaters.

Following the SWOT Analysis and group discussions, the workshop focused on goals and objectives for each of the plan elements. Participants were also asked to prioritize the goals to help identify immediate needs and action items. In crafting these goals, and throughout the planning process for this plan, the statewide goals and Quality Community Objectives were discussed and considered. By bringing these statewide goals to the attention of participants, they were able to be weaved into the long term goals each element. As a result, each element and the overall plan are consistent with this state



goals and objectives as required by the Minimum Planning Standards.

A priority board exercise was conducted to determine the current priority of the recommendations from the previous Comprehensive Plan. The goals and objectives used in the exercise dealt with the plan's recommendations for Land Use, Housing, Natural and Cultural Resources, Community Facilities, Economic Development and Transportation. Participants were given three dots of six colors (18 total) to vote on their current priorities. The three dots could be used to vote for three individual issues, or all could be used for one. The results of this exercise helped guide discussion on where current priorities were for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan.

Several large maps were displayed in the workshop room. Using strips of colored stickers, participants identified their favorite place, their least favorite place, a new park opportunity, a residential redevelopment opportunity, and a commercial redevelopment opportunity. This mapping exercise helped to gather pertinent land use and redevelopment information from participants that was used later in drafting the Land Use and Housing elements of the plan.

In closing, the visioning workshop participants were each asked what they thought the most important goal from the day was for them. Answers ranged from focusing on preservation districts, commuter rail, greenspace, housing, infrastructure, mixed-use development and employment issues to name a few. They also discussed the existing vision statement to determine if it still met the goals and objectives they saw for the City. Instead of changing the vision statement, a set of guiding principles was developed that includes:

- Provide excellent services
- Preserve small town charm
- Provide high quality education and encourage continuing education and skills
- Promote a friendly, inviting and cooperative city
- Redevelop residential and commercial areas
- Encourage a fiscally responsible government
- Promote the appreciation of the past in future growth
- Promote intergovernmental coordination
- Expand job base
- Protect the environment – (greenspace preservation, clean streams)

1.5 Vision Statement

VISION STATEMENT

The City of Griffin shall be a model of excellence in local government; a safe, well-planned community with equal opportunity for all.

MISSION STATEMENT

“In partnership with our community, the mission of the City of Griffin is to protect and enhance the quality of life by providing a high level of service in an efficient and responsible manner for all citizens.”

VALUES

- 1.** We believe in honest, open democratic government. We are dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in order to merit the respect, trust and confidence of the citizens of the City of Griffin.
- 2.** We believe our primary responsibility is to those who live, work, visit or otherwise come in contact with our City. We are committed to enhancing the quality of life by providing exemplary services.
- 3.** We believe that the employees of the City are its most important resource and through them our mission and vision will be accomplished. We will support them with dignity, respect and fairness.
- 4.** We believe it is important to listen to our citizens and be sensitive and responsive to their needs.
- 5.** We believe that planning, training and teamwork will fulfill our mission and vision for the future of the City of Griffin.