

WORKSHOP NOTES

Research & Development Corridor Sector Plan

DATE: Thursday, May 19, 2011
TIME: 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
LOCATION: Gwinnett Technical College

AGENDA

4:00 pm Open House
4:30 pm Welcome & Objectives of Workshop
4:45 pm Presentation of Assessment Findings
5:15 pm Interactive Exercise
5:30 pm BREAK
5:35 pm Small Group Discussion: Conceptual Planning
6:35 pm Group Reporting
7:00 pm Adjourn



Open House

Upon arrival to the Workshop, participants had the opportunity to participate in a live/work map/dot exercise, review boards describing base conditions in the corridor, and chat one-on-one with project staff.

Presentation of Assessment Findings

- Bryan Lackey welcomed meeting attendees and kicked off the meeting.
- Jim Summerbell provided a base assessment of the study area, including past and current studies, R&D case studies, jobs-housing balance considerations, existing land use, and transportation analysis.
- Participants were asked, “What comes to mind when they think of an R&D corridor?” Responses included Silicon Valley in California, 128 in Boston, and Research Triangle in North Carolina.
- Participants seemed to agree that the vision to strengthen the 316 corridor a research and development area was appropriate and desirable.
- Matt Cherry of Urban Collage reviewed the design assessment of the study area, which focused on existing character and circulation patterns.

Interactive Exercises

Urban Collage, led by Matt Cherry and Eric Bosman, carried out two interactive exercises. The first exercise asked participants to identify what should change or not change along the corridor. The second exercise included small group discussions focused on either the east or west side of the study area. Participants identified design, transportation, land use, and

recreational needs along the corridor as well as potential catalyst projects to meet the vision for the area.

CHANGE VS. DO NOT CHANGE – See attached Map A for reference.

Highlights include the following.

- Majority of “I want this to change” (red) dots were placed on the roadway corridor itself, presumably because of traffic congestion and travel delays. The two most problematic intersections being Collins Hill Road (5 votes) and Buford Drive (7 votes). Several others include Hi Hope Road, Cedars Road, and Winder Highway 29 (all three of which got 4 votes).
- Conflicting votes focused around the airport area, probably due to controversy associated with recent airport conversations.
- The majority of “I don’t want this to change” (green) dots were placed on long-standing institutions and corporate campuses, including Gwinnett Technical College (5 votes), Cisco (4 votes), Gwinnett Medical Campus (5 votes), and Georgia Gwinnett College (5 votes).
- Greenfield areas including the far eastern land parcels near Dacula (4 votes) and the undeveloped areas along Hurricane Shoals Road (5 votes) were also targeted as areas to preserve natural lands.

SMALLGROUP DISCUSSIONS: CONCEPTUAL PLANNING

Breakout Group 1: Western Study Area

The table included a group of six to eight stakeholders. Conversations focused on the potential of each of three major corridors intersecting 316 and lighting/signage/wayfinding improvements to Highway 316. Discussion included the following thoughts and ideas.



- Sugarloaf Parkway area- consider a small retail node near Gwinnett Technical College to create a “home base” for students and an enhanced neighborhood shopping node at Sugarloaf/Old Norcross (design guidelines, greater walkability, etc.).
- Riverside Parkway area- redevelop the Kroger shopping center (consider senior housing and/or mixed/multi-use community). Consider a greenway trail along the Yellow River connecting the area south of 316 to the redevelopment area an up to neighboring communities and school site.

- Enhance walkability and design guidelines near Gwinnett Medical Campus. Consider access management and a traffic light at the hospital entrance along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road.
- Future of existing Kroger shopping center on Riverside Pkwy has potential for future office uses or a new retail format (second generation, not big box).
- Wayfinding signage needed for local cities, major destinations, and for information (particularly for Riverside Parkway).
- A good case study is ICAR (Clemson Automotive Research Campus) as an example of a contemporary R&D Corridor.
- More lighting needed to enhance character and safety.
- Landscaping at interchanges could go far to enhance visual experience of the corridor.
- Senior living and aging in place/lifelong communities' amenities and characteristics may be appropriate for certain locations in the study area.
- Traffic calming would enhance the feel of the corridor.
- A round-a-bout may work well in certain locations.
- Street trees and strategic landscaping in parking lots would help revitalize the corridor, provide relief from summer heat, and increase pedestrian safety.
- There is a need for more usable space, green space in the corridor. One idea is to create a multi-use trail along the creek.
- A service/amenity center adjacent to the Gwinnett Technical College would help alleviate traffic and accommodate needs of college students.

Breakout Group 2: Eastern Study Area

This table was comprised of about 10-12 people. Conversation focused mainly around circulation associated with Georgia Gwinnett College, prioritizing 2-3 key development areas, land use changes anticipated due to potential airport changes, and types of industries that would ideally be targeted for the corridor. Some highlights are listed below:



- Should look into re-designating the corridor as an interstate, much like Gainesville did with I-985. This change could heighten the profile of the corridor, potentially bringing more investment.
- In order to target “Google-type” companies, land use/zoning regulations will need to be conducive to allowing a mix of uses on one parcel of land. These types of hi-tech companies want to develop campuses with employees and amenities nearby.

- As we attract technology-related companies, we'll need to respect/preserve character and scale of existing single-family neighborhoods.
- There should not be a limit on building height.
- Currently, there exists a significant amount of foot traffic across Highway 316 along Collins Hill Road. As Georgia Gwinnett College grows to 8,500 in tandem with roadway reconstruction along the corridor, pedestrian amenities/safety on the future bridge overpass should be considered.
- Future interchange around 316/Buford Drive should be a priority redevelopment area.
- There was much discussion on the future of "Greenfield" areas towards far eastern end of study area. Several folks recognized it as a prime economic development opportunity, yet several folks cautioned that the County should be looking to preserve as much agricultural/open space as possible and concentrating on redeveloping vacant/aging parcels elsewhere.
- If/when we look at a potential overlay district, it should include architectural and signage standards.
- Potential Airport expansion could trigger land use changes.
- Much support for Commuter Rail/Brain Train

Comments

Participants engaged in conversations with project staff during the open house. Ideas/concerns heard included the following:

- *Targeted Industries* - The County should have a clear idea of what specific industries it wants to attract and what the specific facility needs of those businesses might be. Understanding targeted industries will identify what land uses are appropriate. For example, the growing virtual industry may not need office space. They may work virtually and use a central-shared office space. Additionally, some high-tech businesses may just need processing facilities but not full-time office space.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned around 6:30 p.m.

Workshop Attendees

Consultant Team

- ◆ Eric Bosman, Urban Collage
- ◆ Matt Cherry, Urban Collage
- ◆ Gary Cornell, Jacobs
- ◆ Niti Gajjar, Urban Collage
- ◆ Amanda Hatton, Jacobs
- ◆ Jim Summerbell, Jacobs

Recorded Participants

- ◆ Taylor Anderson, Blue Landworks
- ◆ Dana Baites, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Dennis Billew
- ◆ Maurice Blount, Georgia Gwinnett College
- ◆ Marcia Bumbalough
- ◆ Bill Cornell, PPI
- ◆ Clint Dixon, Gwinnett County Planning Commission
- ◆ P.K. Hale
- ◆ Carol Hassell, Georgia Piedmont Land Trust
- ◆ Kathy Holland, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Patricia Huguenard, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Tommy Hunter, Gwinnett County Planning Commission
- ◆ Mike Jenness, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Donna Joe, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Mayor Judy Jordan Johnson, City of Lawrenceville
- ◆ Maureen Kelly
- ◆ Bryan Lackey, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Nancy Lovingood, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ James Pugsley, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Patrick Quinn, Gwinnett P&D
- ◆ Mark Mullin, Gwinnett Hospital System
- ◆ Glenn Park, KAAG
- ◆ Mike Royal, Gwinnett ZBA
- ◆ Benny StaRomana, SantaRomana & Associates
- ◆ Ann Sechrist, Gwinnett Tech
- ◆ Jeff West, Gwinnett P&D

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Map A

