

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Purpose

The purpose of the issues and opportunities list is to provide a list of problems and concerns that is specific to the community. The identification of issues and opportunities serves as a starting point for further community study and planning. City staff reviewed typical issues and opportunities provided in the State Planning Recommendations and compiled the items that were applicable for Smyrna. The list of identified issues and opportunities was then refined through the public participation process. Goal setting surveys were conducted and stakeholder discussion groups were held in order to establish priorities and an agenda for action.

Population

- Rapid population growth is expected in the next 20 years.
- The proportion of the population that is over 65 years of age will increase and this population group will require specialized housing and services.
- Increasing ethnic diversity will require the city to adapt public services to accommodate immigrant communities.
- Increasing numbers of highly-educated, affluent residents may enable the city to attract professional employment and targeted industries.

Economic Development

Existing

- Economic development programs should focus on retention, expansion and support of existing businesses (entrepreneur and small business assistance, business retention programs, etc.).
- Our community has an overabundance of commercial and retail space, but lack professional office space.
- Some existing businesses are struggling with rising rents and the changing retail market in Smyrna.
- Vacant “Big Box” stores represent a challenge for our major corridors.
- Neighborhood-serving retail, restaurants, arts, and entertainment establishments are desired.

Tools/Methods

- The city could benefit from a coordinated economic development strategy formulated with public input on the types of businesses and services needed within the community.
- Community efforts at recruiting targeted industries need to be improved.
- Business recruitment efforts should target growing industries that are underrepresented in the local economy, such as health care and social services.
- Our community economic development programs:
 - Should utilize multiple innovative tools, methods, and funding sources for encouraging growth (incubators, tax abatements, and infrastructure).
 - Should identify, acquire, assemble and/or stabilize property for redevelopment.

- Should analyze the types of enterprises that would fit effectively into the local economy, including those that could be accommodated immediately.
- Should identify compatible sites for targeted industries.

Economic Development & Land Use Interaction

- ❑ There are perceived additional and high costs for site assessment, underwriting, site development, rate of return, cleanup plan and cleanup.

Housing

Housing Mix & Future Demand

- ❑ The city should continue to provide a variety of housing options to meet resident's needs at all stages of life.
- ❑ There is a lack of special needs housing (elderly, handicapped, etc.) in our community.
- ❑ There is no inventory of public and private land available for the development of future housing.
- ❑ Continued townhome and condominium development will cause some areas of Smyrna to transition from a suburban to urban character.
- ❑ Conversion of apartments to townhomes may allow the city to upgrade older multi-family structures and increase the rate of ownership.

Workforce/Affordable Housing

- ❑ The increase in high-end housing in the City of Smyrna may create affordability issues for low income residents and seniors.
- ❑ Our community does not have a Workforce Housing Master Plan.
- ❑ The incentives and barriers to maintenance and/or development of affordable/workforce housing in the community have not been inventoried.

Housing & Land Use Interaction

- ❑ Our community does not have an inventory of vacant properties, properties owned by the city or other government agencies, and tax delinquent properties suitable for infill development.

Natural & Cultural Resources

Resource Awareness

- ❑ The community's historic, and cultural resources worthy of protection have not been identified—there is no inventory of resources.
- ❑ Community resources have not been mapped or compared to areas of future development.
- ❑ There are erosion, sedimentation, and storm water runoff problems.

Implementation/Enforcement

- ❑ Our community has not developed means of protecting significant resources.
- ❑ Our community's resources do not play a significant role in decision-making.

- Tree Protection should be implemented in sited development planning.
- Adequate landscaping and buffering should be provided between developments.

Facilities and Services

Fiscal

- The city's park system could be expanded with linkages to bicycle/pedestrian trails.
- South Smyrna lacks adequate parks and recreational opportunities
- The city should consider the relative costs of community services in development planning in order to maintain an adequate tax base.
- The future costs of providing services should be considered for all major developments.
- The impacts on schools and educational facilities should be considered in development permitting.

Land Use

Development Process

- Our community's land use/development regulations and Future Land Use map do not match.
- The development regulations for the community are not illustrated where appropriate.
- Design guidelines are needed in order to maintain aesthetics and provide a unified architectural style along key corridors.
- There are subjective aspects to development regulations that leave too much discretion in the hands of staff.
- There is no expedited plan approval process for quality growth projects.

Transportation

Current & future conditions

- Our community's current transportation systems contribute to pollution, and waste energy.
- Our community's current transportation systems limit people's choices.
- There is little connectivity between pedestrian, bike, transit, and road facilities.
- The community's roadway designs are not sensitive to roadway uses or local concerns.
- Citizens are experiencing increasing commute times and distances--more people driving longer distances in traffic to reach home, school, shopping, or work.
- Our community does not have an effective public transportation system that is appealing as an alternative to driving.
- Transit services should be coordinated with regional transit agencies.
- There is little or no flexibility to adjust the design or operation of roadways in case of future changed conditions.
- Our community's subdivision regulations do not allow or require new subdivision streets to connect to existing streets to connect to future subdivision developments.

- ❑ Inter-parcel connections between individual developments, where compatible, are encouraged in the community.
- ❑ Our community has many streets where traffic travels at inappropriate speeds, making pedestrian activity unsafe and unappealing.
- ❑ Our community right-of-way pavement standards do not allow for flexible street widths to accommodate different usage patterns or to promote walkability.
- ❑ Our community's major corridors suffer from congestion, clutter, signage and sprawl.
- ❑ Our community does not have any incentive-based programs that encourage walking, biking, or car-pooling or sustainable transportation choices.

Parking

- ❑ The community does not offer a variety of potential parking solutions, including alternate, attended, shared, paid parking locations, such as industrial areas (off hrs. and weekends), church and school lots, etc. or alternative parking arrangements for commercial development.

Alternatives/Amenities

- ❑ Our community has few alternatives to using a car to get places and eliminating traffic congestion.
- ❑ There is an imbalance between auto-dependent transportation projects and alternative transportation projects.
- ❑ Community streets, pedestrian paths, and bike paths do not contribute to a system of fully-connected and interesting routes to all destinations.
- ❑ Community streets, pedestrian paths and bike paths do not encourage pedestrian and bicycle use by being small and spatially defined by buildings, trees and lighting; and by discouraging high speed traffic.
- ❑ Housing, jobs, daily needs and other activities are not within easy walking distance of one another in the community.
- ❑ There is a lack of activities located within easy walking distance of transit stops.