



## Implementing Your Comprehensive Plan

**Allison Stewart-Harris, TSW**  
**Yang Chen, Gwinnett County**

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### WHO WE ARE



**Allison Stewart-Harris, AICP**  
Associate  
Principal/Comprehensive  
Planning Nerd at TSW



**Yang Chen**  
Planning Division  
Director  
Gwinnett County



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### WHO IS TSW?




ATLANTA | GA



LEXINGTON | KY



CHATTANOOGA | TN



TULSA | OK




18 Planners  
(14 with AICP  
or Credential)

18 LEED  
Accredited  
Professionals

10 Registered  
Architects

10 Landscape  
Designers

7 Administrative  
Employee



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## PLANNING

- Code
- Comprehensive Plans
- Small Area Plans
- Urban Design
- Historic Preservation
- Transportation



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## AGENDA

- Comp Plan 101
- Start With the End in Mind: A Plan for Your Plan
- An Implementation Comp Plan: Top 5 Do's
- Implementation Case Study: Gwinnett County Unified Plan



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## COMP PLAN 101


Required by the State of Georgia to maintain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status.

Must be a QLG to qualify for:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Water and sewer loans from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA)
- Economic development funding from the OneGeorgia Authority.
- Environmental grants from the Environmental Protection Division of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- A variety of other state programs

Your comprehensive plan must be updated every five years.



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# COMP PLAN 101

**Requirements**

**Four Core Elements**

1. Community Goals

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# COMP PLAN 101

**Requirements**

**Four Core Elements**

1. Community Goals

2. Needs and Opportunities

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# COMP PLAN 101

**Requirements**

**Four Core Elements**

1. Community Goals

2. Needs and Opportunities

3. Community Work Program

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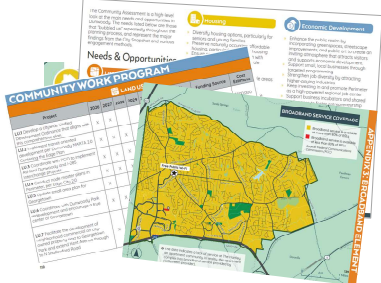
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## COMP PLAN 101

**Requirements**

**Four Core Elements**

1. Community Goals
2. Needs and Opportunities
3. Community Work Program
4. Broadband



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## COMP PLAN 101

**Requirements**

**Additional requirements include the following:**

- Land Use Elements required if you have zoning
- Capital Improvement Program if your community has impact fees
- Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 111 communities must include an Economic Development Element
- Local governments in Metropolitan Planning Organizations must include a Transportation Element
- Entitlement communities under the federal Community Development Block Grant Program must include a Housing Element



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## START WITH THE END IN MIND



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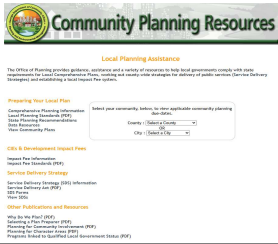
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### START WITH THE END IN MIND

Step 1: Know your due date

Go to:  
<https://apps.dca.ga.gov/dcacomunity/default.aspx>

This is the date by which everything needs to be totally done, dusted, and adopted.





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### A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN



About 2.5 years before your deadline....

Determine your community's Comp Plan needs.

- Was the last comp plan a light update or a full one?
- What resources do we to develop the plan?



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### A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN



#1      #2      #3



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### A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN



**#1 DIY**

Type of Update: ☒ Light ☐ Full

Capacity and Expertise in House?: ☒ Yes ☐ No


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### A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN



**#2 Regional Commission**

Type of Update ☒ Light ☐ Full

Capacity and Expertise in House? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Bags of money? ☐ Yes ☒ No


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### A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN




**#3 Consultant**

Type of Update: ☐ Light ☒ Full

Capacity and Expertise in House?: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Also if you think....

- Your community has experienced a lot of change
- It may be complicated
- You need some political cover


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## A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN

If you decide on a consultant....

- **Get very clear about the scope** and that budget it would take to execute it – recommend talking to consultants for high-level estimates (and advice!), other departments, etc.
- Lobby for a **reality-based budget**
- Plan to release the RFP 2 years ahead of your due date



\$75,000 - \$500,000+





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## A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN



**2 years out**



Identify the key players and start meeting about the plan:

- Elected officials
- Fellow staff
- Community leaders

These are **ALL** people you will need in your corner for getting the plan adopted

**Everyone in this group should feel some authorship/ownership**

**This is essential to implementation later**

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## A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN






**2 years out**

A personal plea....

Identify populations that are historically under-represented and **start building those relationships ahead of time!**



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## A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN



2 years out

### Map out your timeline

- Ideally, you'll want your planning team to have **15-16 months** to complete the work and move through the adoption process
  - Shorter than that can really compress the tasks and short-change engagement
  - Longer than that you begin risking early task's work/deliverables becoming stale and out-of-date



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## A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN

Always keep in mind....

Your elected officials are the most important people in terms of implementation the plan. You will need their buy-in and political will!

**Be sure to involve them at multiple points in the plan:**

- The two required public hearings are not enough





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## A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN

**Plan for at least two rounds of one-on-one or two-on-one interviews:**

- At the beginning to record key needs, opportunities, goals, issues
- Near the end of the first draft to walk them through the plan, how it impacts them/their district, etc.

- Have at least one mid-point check-in at regularly scheduled meeting
- You are required to have an elected official on your steering committee

- Make this decision wisely!





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### AN IMPLEMENTABLE COMP PLAN: TOP 5 DO'S

✓

DO

DO

✗

DON'T

DON'T

✗

DON'T

DON'T

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DO #1

DO KEEP THINGS CONCISE!

- Don't get lost in existing conditions – **focus on the changes/trends and move on**
- Do focus on the **top 3-5 needs and opportunities** and really understanding them
- Don't get too hung up on writing lots of policies, goals, objectives, etc.

Your plan should be **comprehensive in the quality of its thinking and recommendations**...not the quantity of information

GREAT PLANNING IDEA!

**fluffernotter!**

MAKE IT WITHOUT fluff + THE NUTTY ADD-ONS

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DO #2

DO INVEST IN YOUR LAND USE ELEMENT

- Don't just blindly build off your existing land use map/approach - really consider if it's serving your community well or not
- Consider the "stoplight" approach
- Whatever land use approach you choose, make sure your map is parcel-based
- As your planning team creates high-level policy, consider how it can parcel-based

CORE		
Appropriate land uses		
S	LAND USE	CONSIDERATIONS
Appropriate	House-Scale Piers+ Townhouses+ Local Commercial – Light Public/Institutional Parks/Open Space Utilities/Transportation	N/A
Appropriate if approved through SLUP process	Local Commercial – medium Local Commercial – Heavy	Along Corridor Drive only
	Senior/Assisted Living+ Mixed Use+ Multi-unit+ Regional Commercial	N/A
Inappropriate	Large-Lot Residential Small-Lot Residential Cottage Courts	N/A

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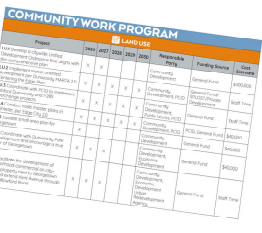
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## DO #3

### DO CREATE A REALITY-BASED COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

- Do be **realistic** about your resources: both budget and staff
- Do be very clear **who "owns" which task** and get their buy-in
- Focus on the **first steps** needed to make progress in addressing your key 3-5 needs and opportunities table!
- If you have items beyond the 5-year horizon that you want to make a note of, put them in a different table!
- Remember: your Community Work Program is the state's account-ability tool...it becomes your future **Report or Accomplishments**.





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## DO #4

### DO KEEP YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS CLOSE

- If your elected officials are not planning-savvy, consider doing a **training** before the comp plan process starts
- Do consider having each elected official appoint someone to the Steering Committee
- Do make sure **they really understand how the comp plan can really be a powerful tool for them**
- Do **keep them in the loop** throughout the process as much as possible
- Do make sure that if you're doing your plan during an **election year**, new officials are brought up to speed quickly
- Do **provide individualized attention** throughout – beginning and end in particular





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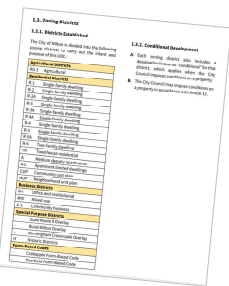
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## DO #5

### DO COMMIT TO UPDATING YOUR CODE IMMEDIATELY

- Your code is the most powerful implementation tool you have – if you don't update it to align with your comp plan, you are negating that entire planning process





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## EASY, RIGHT?

LET'S SEE HOW GWINNETT COUNTY IS DOING IT!



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## Gwinnett County Unified Plan Implementation



**Gwinnett**  
Department of Planning and Development



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## Fast Facts about Gwinnett County



Atlanta Magazine



- Created in 1818
- 30 miles north of Atlanta
- 437 square miles\*
- 1 million population
- 17 municipalities

\*294 square miles (unincorporated)



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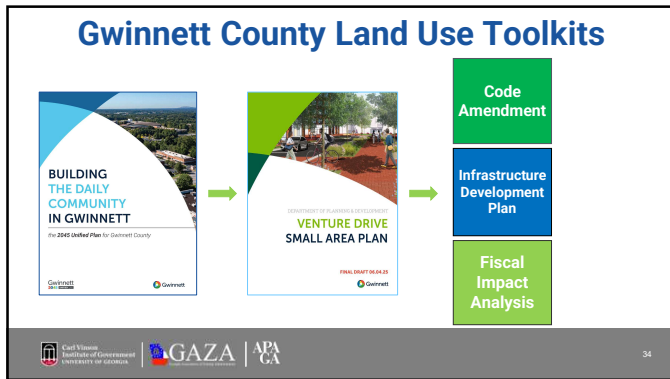
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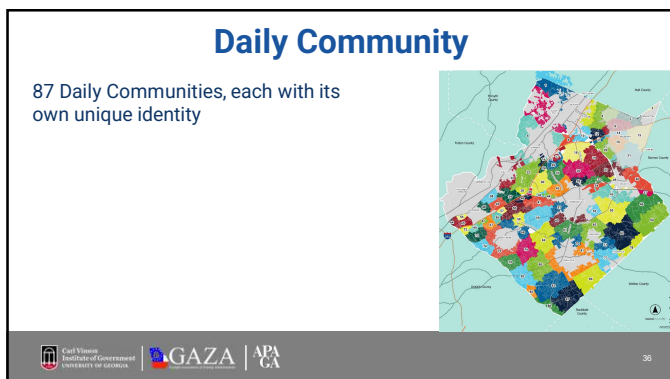
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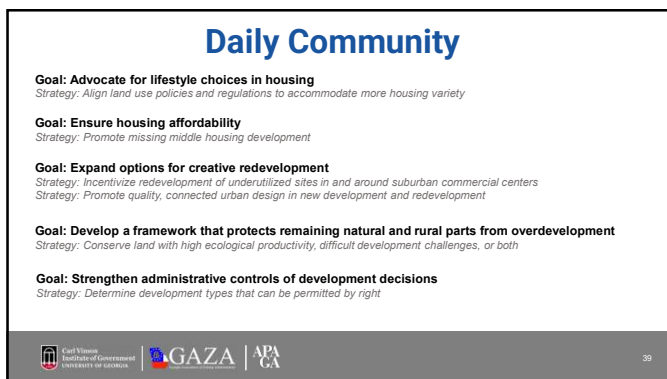
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## Code Amendment

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## Code Amendment – Residential

### Added New Zoning Districts:

- **R-IF:** Infill development
- **LRR:** Low-rise multifamily
- **MRR:** Mid-rise multifamily

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## Code Amendment – Residential

### Expanded Housing Types:

- Added **new housing types:** cottage court, triplex, fourplex, and multiplex
- Allowed **accessory dwelling** and **live/work** in more districts
- Allowed **multifamily** as a permitted use in the O-I zoning district



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### Code Amendment – Residential (ADU)

STAND-ALONE DETACHED      ADU OVER A GARAGE

ATTACHED ADU      BASEMENT ADU

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### Code Amendment – Residential (ADU)

	Previous UDO	Current UDO
Number of Zoning Districts allowed in	7 Zoning Districts	11 Zoning Districts
Heated Floor Area	Between 400 and 800 sq. ft.	Not to exceed 50% of the primary dwelling
Types	Detached only	Detached, Attached or Within
Location	Rear Yard only	Side or Rear Yard (detached)
Number of Occupancy	No more than two (2) persons (including minor children)	No Requirements
Number of Bedrooms	No more than two (2) bedrooms	No Requirements
Window Location/ Screening	Windows not to be directly opposite windows of a principal dwelling on an abutting lot unless screened	No Requirements
Setback	Vary per zoning district	More flexible (5 or 10 feet)

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### Code Amendment – Residential

**Added Flexibility:**

- Removed **minimum heated floor area**
- Removed **minimum unit size and bedroom mix** for multifamily

	RA-200	R-LL	R-100	R-75	R-60	R-SR	R-TH	R-IF	LRR	MRR	HRR	OSC	TND	MU-N	MU-C	MUR
SFD	P	P	P	P	P		P	P				P	P	P		
Cottage Court				C	C			C					C	C		
Duplex							C	C	C				C	C		
Triplex								C	C					C		
Fourplex								C	C					C		
Multiplex								C	C					C		
Townhouse							C	C					C	C		
Multifamily									C	C	C			C	C	C
Live Work							C	C	C	C	C			C	C	C
ADU	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				C	C	C		

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### Code Amendment – Mixed-Use

- Removed **Minimum Parking**
- Removed or Reduced **Minimum Project Area**
- Increased Maximum **Floor Area Ratio (FAR)** and **Height**
  - MU-N:** 1 FAR, 60 feet
  - MU-C:** 2 FAR, 75 feet
- Added **FAR Bonus** for Affordability and other Amenities
  - 10% Set-Aside for 60-120% AMI Households:** +0.5 FAR
  - 10% Set-Aside for 30-60% AMI Households:** +1.0 FAR



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### Code Amendment – Design Form

- Removed or Reduced**
  - Minimum Lot Size
  - Lot Frontage Requirements
  - Minimum Lot Width
  - Setback (0 for commercial/office)
  - Minimum Parking

- Added**
  - Maximum Parking
  - Electric Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
  - Requirement for usable open space in residential and mixed-use development
  - Requirement for inter-parcel access



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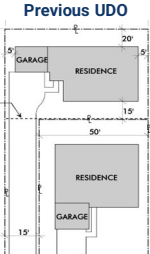
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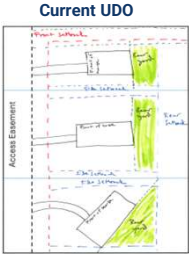
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### Code Amendment – Design Form (Frontage)

Previous UDO



Current UDO





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## Code Amendment – Administration

- Expanded the scope of **Administrative Variances**
- Expanded the scope of **variations** granted by Director

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## Small Area Plans (SAPs) and Overlays

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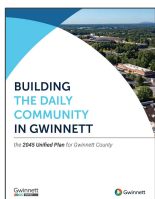
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## Gwinnett County Land Use Toolkits



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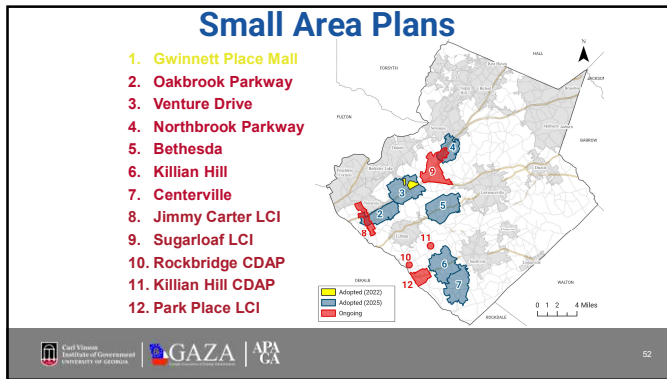
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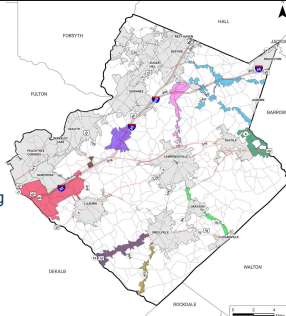
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[illegible]

- Tie development outcomes to small area planning
- Provide development and design standards
- Remove administrative barriers by streamlining the permitting process and removing risk factors

[illegible]

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# Transects in Gwinnett

One **form-based overlay** framework that could apply to the entire County

The diagram illustrates eight land use transects, each with a label and a corresponding illustration below it:

- T1 NATURAL ZONE:** Illustration shows a natural landscape with trees and a river.
- T2 RURAL ZONE:** Illustration shows a rural landscape with scattered houses and fields.
- T3 SUB-URBAN ZONE:** Illustration shows a suburban landscape with houses and a road.
- T4 GENERAL URBAN ZONE:** Illustration shows a general urban landscape with a mix of building types.
- T5 URBAN CORE ZONE:** Illustration shows a dense urban core with tall buildings.
- T6 URBAN CORE ZONE:** Illustration shows a dense urban core with tall buildings.
- SD SPECIAL DISTRICT:** Illustration shows a special district with a mix of building types.

A green arrow points from the T5 URBAN CORE ZONE illustration to a row of colorful buildings, indicating a transition or a specific application of the framework.

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Institute of Government  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

GAZA  
Geometric Area Zoning Analysis

APA  
AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

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# Transects Framework

House Bill 1405

Level 1    Level 2    Level 3    Level 4    Level 5    Level 6

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
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### Overlay Components

- Override Base Zoning Districts and Zoning Conditions
- Use by Rights (apartments, live/work, etc.)
- Intensity Range (FAR)
- Built-to-line/zone/width
- Architectural Characteristics
- Placemaking and Open Space



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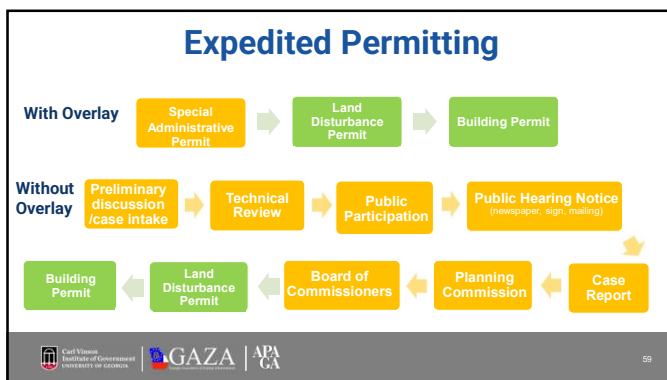
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### Expedited Permitting

- The Director may grant variations from any of the standards set forth in this UDO except for use or lot size if:
  - The strict adherence to a provision creates a **hardship** due to topographical or site conditions, or
  - The applicant proposes a solution which does not circumvent the **purpose and intent** of this UDO

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## Infrastructure

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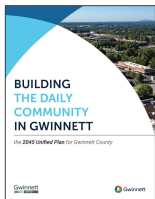
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## Gwinnett County Land Use Toolkits



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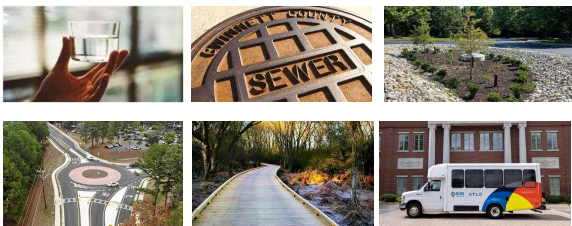
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## Infrastructure Development Plan



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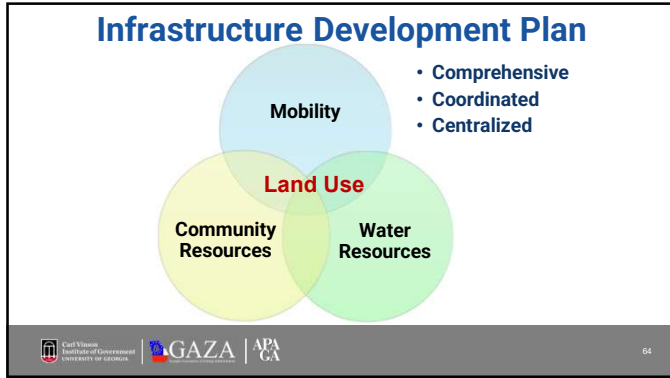
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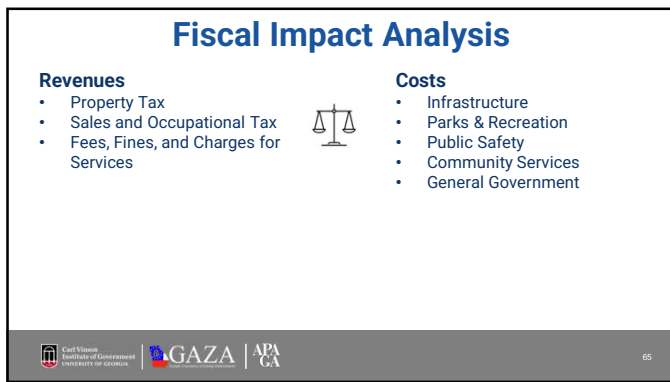
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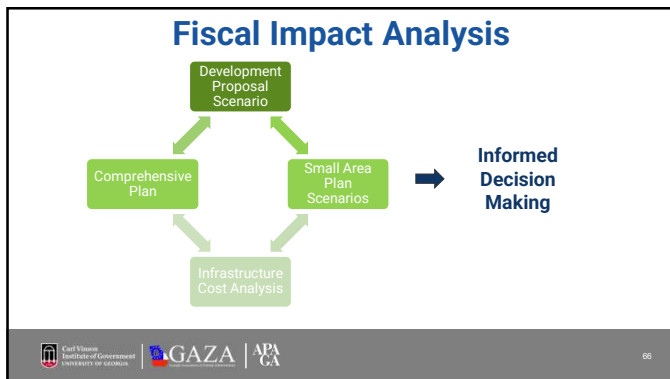
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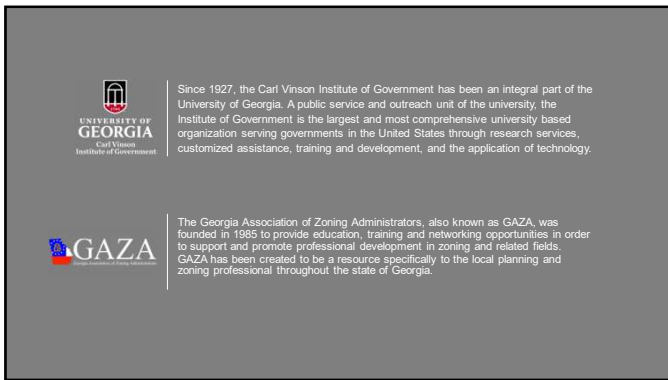
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