

Spartanburg citywide comprehensive plan begins to take shape

MONDAY, APRIL 26

First public draft of plan expected to be released in the coming weeks



After hundreds of hours of research, interviews with City staff and elected officials, virtual meetings open to all local residents — followed by hours of cataloguing dozens of pieces of citizen insight about the past, present and future of their hometown gleaned through those meetings and surveys — the City and its planning partner are closing in on delivering the draft of a new comprehensive plan, a blueprint for future development.

In the coming weeks, residents will have the opportunity to review and offer feedback for the draft document. Much of that feedback will be incorporated into the final version, which will then need to be reviewed and formally adopted by City Council before serving the city for at least the next decade.

Check out [this article we published last year for a detailed look at what a citywide comprehensive does and why it matters](#) for our city's future, but the short version is that a comprehensive plan (comp plan, for short) "is a document that helps guide the city's growth and development," city Neighborhood Services Director Martin Livingston said. "It helps the city understand exactly what the community wants to see and what the community supports or doesn't support." Cities are required by state law to create a new comp plan every 10 years and update it every five years.

There will be ample opportunity for citizens to review the draft document. The City will make it available online and physical copies will be available at City Hall and community centers and potentially other locations. The public review period is designed to give citizens plenty of time to read and review the document and get their comments back to City staff, who will "take all the input and distill it into comments for us and from that we will create the formal document for the review process for elected officials," explained

Brian Wright, Founding Principal of Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative, the City's Tennessee-based planning firm.

"We just recently had a meeting with local pastors to go through how they can help get the word out to their community and congregations. We're trying to keep the momentum going forward to get as many people to participate as possible."

That has been an imperative since the beginning of the process, Wright said. TPUDC provided both paper surveys that could be mailed and an online tool to glean input. Combined with a multi-day virtual “Planapalooza” event, Wright and his team have been pleased with the Spartanburg community’s interest and engagement.

“It’s been great — I think people have done a good job of participating online and using the web tool as a way to give input,” Wright said. “The virtual planapalooza process was well-attended and exceeded our expectations for participation from minority groups. So that was excellent. You always wish that you could get more people to participate no matter how many you do get. But Spartanburg far surpassed some other communities we’ve done virtual planapalooza for recently.”

The discussions have focused not just on what shape and form Spartanburg’s future development should take, but how to ensure the waves of development to come over the next decade are aligned with the City’s pursuit of racial and social equity.

Those discussions were deep, Wright said, especially pertaining to Downtown Spartanburg. While the city’s central business district has enjoyed a COVID-interrupted renaissance over the past decade, not everyone feels like downtown “is for them,” a theme that came up time and again, Wright said. Without giving away too much, citizens should expect the comp plan to address that.

As TPUDC Director of Implementation Becky Timmons said months ago, ensuring Spartanburg’s new comp plan is based on equity means “making sure that the plan works for everybody regardless of whatever defining characteristics they have, whatever circumstances they have grown up in, whatever neighborhood they live in, whatever their income is, whatever race they are. Making sure they all have the same opportunities, everyone has the same services available, the same access to the same amenities that make Spartanburg special.

“Making sure that everyone can enjoy what makes Spartanburg, Spartanburg.”