

**City of Peachtree City
Retreat Report
Location: City of Suwanee - City Hall
Date: July 30th – 31st, 2024**

Retreat Attendees:

Kim Learnard	Mayor, At-Large Member
Suzanne Brown	At-Large Member
Frank Destadio	Mayor Pro Tem, At-Large Member
Clinton Holland	At-Large Member
Laura Johnson	At-Large Member
Justin Strickland	Interim City Manager
Yasmin Julio	Interim Assistant City Manager
Hannah Thomas	Executive Assistant
Martha Barksdale	Recording Secretary

PLANNED RETREAT AGENDA

Day 1

8:30 am – 9:00 am

Breakfast

9:00 am – 9:30 am

Welcome from the City of Suwanee Team

9:30 am – 9:50 am

Ice Breaker – Penny for Your Thoughts

9:50 am – 10:15 am

Role of the Council and Staff

10:15 am – 10:30 am

BREAK

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Role of the Council and Staff (contd.)

- What Council Wants from Staff
- What Staff Wants from the Council

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

LUNCH

01:00 pm – 03:00 pm

SWOT Analysis

03:00 pm – 03:15 pm

BREAK

03:15 pm – 05:00 pm

SWOT Analysis (contd.)

5:00 pm

Adjourn

Day 2

8:30 am – 9:00 am

Breakfast

9:00 am – 10:15 am

Revisit the SWOT Analysis

10:15am – 10:30 am

BREAK

PLANNED RETREAT AGENDA (Contd.)

10:30 am – 12:00 pm	5 Pillars Update
12:00 pm – 01:00 pm	LUNCH
01:00 pm – 02:00 pm	Open Forum
02:00 pm – 02:15 pm	BREAK
02:15 pm – 04:00 pm	Open Forum (contd.)
4:00 pm	Adjourn

This Retreat Report captures the highlights of the meeting and is not completed with the intent to capture all conversations or occurrences.

Retreat Day 1

The City of Peachtree City's retreat began with welcome remarks from the host local host, the City of Suwanee's City Manager, Marty Allen, and, the Economic Development Director/Assistant City Manager, Denise Brinson. They provided a brief history of the City of Suwanee's growth and the major projects accomplished over the last decade.

RETREAT OPEN DISCUSSION

To accommodate the Council's will, the agenda was adjusted to allow the Council to begin the first day's activities by having Open Discussions for matters of importance and interest. The Council opened the floor for discussion and covered topics including budgetary concerns, a splash pad, a playground, dredging of Lake Peachtree, traffic patterns in and around Peachtree City, personnel matters (an Arborist), a need to review the Comprehensive Plan, and finally the need to develop a Strategic Plan. The conversations were productive and robust.

The items below were of specific focus and for which the Council shared amicable support :

Annexation – The Council would like to look at growth opportunities that could be explored through the advent of annexation. Concerns were raised concerning neighboring jurisdictions, resources, and potential opportunities for growth within the City. The staff has been instructed to provide information for potential land and annexation opportunities.

Agriculture (Backyard Chickens – Hens only) – The Council (in response to citizen inquiry), discussed the possibility of allowing citizens to raise chickens. They declared that they would likely support such an initiative. Staff was asked to provide additional information related to ordinances and land use.

Senior Property Tax Homestead Exemption – A robust discussion ensued to determine the cost to the City of Peachtree City to adjust the Homestead Exemption for seniors within the City Limits. Since by first estimation, the cost to the City appears to be reasonable, the Council declared that they would likely support this initiative. Additional information was requested from staff to determine the actual cost based on the potential participation of the population.

Golf Cart Connectivity – The City’s map for Golf Paths was explored, to have a closer look at the potential for connecting golf cart paths across the City. The Council requested additional information from staff to determine the feasibility of the most efficient ways to extend pathways for connectivity in the City. The staff will now move to discuss the request with the State Department of Transportation (DOT).

Proposed New Approach to Council Meetings: A work session is now being considered for the Council’s schedule, to ensure enough time to discuss “hot button” issues thoroughly, and to avoid long meetings. This is to encourage efficient use of time during regularly scheduled council sessions. Staff to provide additional information, regarding the possible changes needed to the City’s Ordinance or policies if necessary.

Comprehensive Plan – After an extensive discussion about the plans for growth, economic development, and other initiatives, the team (Council and staff), agreed that working with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) would be the best course of action to pursue, instead of hiring a consultant. Given the expertise and experience of the ARC, the City of Peachtree City would benefit greatly from the cost savings and ARC’s expertise.

Role of the Council – The Facilitator took a brief moment to share insights on the role of the Council and the synergy needed in working with the administrative team, led by the City Manager. She expressed the importance of maintaining the policy responsibility as the Council and maintaining a strong relationship with the administrative staff to avoid managing the staff. The task to the council and staff was to share “what both groups would like from each other.”

The agenda continued with the Council expressing “**What the Council Wants from Staff**” and conversely, “**What the Staff Wants from the Council.**”

What the Council and Staff Wants From Each Other – The team (council and staff) shared the following:

What the Staff Wants from Council	What the Council Wants from Staff
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The Council participated in a **SWOT Analysis**, by sharing the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats** identified in the City’s Operations. Below are the items identified:

Strengths	Weaknesses
○ SPLOST ○ Master-planned community x2	○ Pickleball venues ○ Traffic challenges

○ Path system x2 ○ Great staff x4 ○ Parks/recreation x2 ○ Active community x2 ○ Public safety x2 ○ Lifestyle ○ Award-winning in many areas ○ Many take pride in living in PTC ○ Response to citizens ○ Engaged citizens who want to be involved x2 ○ Financial strength ○ Creative future growth ideas (pickleball, performing arts) ○ Infrastructure ○ Friendliness of community ○ Strict and enforced ordinances	○ Aging infrastructure and housing stock x3 ○ [Crossed out?:] Project completion speed and ability to change priorities quickly ○ Council needs to learn to trust staff to do their jobs ○ Council relations in general could use improvement ○ We tend to look backward not forward (ex: “I don’t want anything to change”) ○ Available developable land ○ Lean staffing ○ Relationship with Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) ○ Underground infrastructure ○ Sewer vs Septic (Wastewater Mgt.) ○ Too many citizens complaining about items already discussed ○ Newspaper reporters without facts getting #1- [referencing item directly above] (citizens) really hot
Opportunities	Threats
○ Creation of a strategic plan will chart our way forward ○ The city manager spends plenty of time assisting council members who need assistance ○ Excellent working relationship with city manager as long as he understands my concerns ○ Creative professionals ○ Acres ○ Rec master plan/updates x2 ○ Five strategic pillars ○ Border expansion ○ Transportation improvement ○ Industrial tax base growth	○ Crime ○ Path Safety ○ Local “citizen”.com newspaper and the opinions found therein. Bullying and lies, are a poor reflection of our city ○ Mistrust among council members; subversion ○ Disunity of council ○ Long-term knowledge; “institutional knowledge” ○ STR issues ○ Economy/Inflation ○ Becoming stagnant ○ Fayetteville, Newnan, Trilith

○ Pickleball venue ○ Built out of city boundary study ○ Changes in revenue sources ○ Police complex EOC ○ More dynamic projects ○ More residents connected to paths	○ Changes in revenue sources ○ Scaling back services ○ Not investing in the city ○ Arguing on the dais among the council members ○ A lack of trust among council members
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Note: x2 means this item was mentioned several times by participants

At the end of Day 1, the team provided a Reflection on the day's activity, expressing positive feedback and being focused and energized for Day 2.

Retreat Day 2

Day Two began with the continuation of the SWOT Analysis. The Council was asked to pick one major issue of concern that must be addressed effectively, to manage the City's future growth.

There were six issues identified, from the SWOT Analysis that the Council and Staff determined were important to the future of the City of Peachtree City. Based on the team's response, these issues must be addressed and mitigated as the team moves forward.

- Not investing in our city (**T**)
- Becoming stagnant (**T**)
- *Disunity* of the council (**T**)
- Create a strategic plan (**O**)
- Available developable land (**W**)
- Aging Infrastructure (**W**)

The council agreed that a Strategic Plan would be a great way to address the issues mentioned, among other big-picture priorities that can be analyzed for future development and growth.

Five Pillars Update

Previous to the City of Peachtree City's retreat, the team (Council and staff) determined Five Pillars guide the City's strategic vision. They are:

- A Safe, Family-Friendly Community
- An Active, Healthy Community
- An Attractive Community

- A Thriving, Resilient Business Community
- A City Organization that is Innovative, High-Performing and Sustainable

The City Manager provided a list of projects and initiatives to the team. The team then thoroughly discussed current and future projects that are being undertaken, as well as projects to be considered. Council expressed items to be removed from the “Pillars” list, to ensure the proper allocation of

City of Peachtree City’s Strategic Priorities		
What	Who	When
Replace Sidewalk with Path	Council/Staff & GDOT	August 9 th , 2024
Path Connectivity	TAG --> Approved	Sept 24
Annexation	City Manager & City Attorney	Oct 24
Senior Property Tax Exemption	Staff & City Attorney	Final pkt 12/24 --> delegation Referendum vote 11/25
Develop a Strategic Plan Select a Consultant	Assistant City Manager	Jan 25
Backyard Chickens (Hens Only)	City Manager/Planning Director	Jan 25
5-Year Comprehensive Plan Update	ARC	2026

resources and response to the urgency of need.

Below are the Strategic Priorities identified by the Council as being important for the enhancement, and improvement of the City of Peachtree City.

Council Retreat Reflections

- The Peachtree City Council and staff shared personal thoughts and observations from their time together for two productive days of Retreat. Overall the feedback was positive and the Council appeared pleased with the progress made during the retreat.

Other

- Evaluation of retreat was completed at the end of Day 2. Each member provided feedback about meetings as well as the effectiveness of the Facilitator
- Tentative schedule for 2025 retreat: (Time to be determined)