



2018 ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

- 1. Does the Comprehensive Plan effectively do anything, or is it another government document that sits on a shelf once completed?**

The Comprehensive Plan is an active document used by the local government to establish, amend, or remove initiatives implemented over the next ten years. The “plan” sets a course for local government goals and policies, as well as how to accomplish them. Though the Comprehensive Plan itself may not immediately change any procedures, laws, or programs, it does signal an intent to do so, and provides clarity and justification as those ideas are tackled over time.

- 2. Isn't Envision Athens already considered a “Comprehensive Plan”?**

While the two plans (Envision Athens, Comprehensive Plan) are strikingly similar in their respective approaches to address the future of Athens-Clarke County, Envision Athens is a community-wide, multi-institutional partnership; whereas the Comprehensive Plan is a state requirement. The Comprehensive Plan aims to rely on many of the findings from Envision Athens, since both strategize a course of action for the next 20 years. Though there are no set criteria for which Envision Athens must follow, it is anticipated to answer many of the mandated elements found in the minimum standards for local comprehensive planning. Thus, the two plans have the potential for interchangeable content.

- 3. Do you have to be an Athens-Clarke County citizen and/or property owner to participate in the Comprehensive Plan?**

No. All are welcome to participate. Whether you live, work, study, or simply visit Athens-Clarke County, we want your input. Not every resident owns a home, not every citizen works in the county, and we realize this. Athens-Clarke County functions as a regional center for Northeast Georgia, and so it is important to seek ideas from students, visitors, and those who conduct business in here. Doing so will allow us to address all possible challenges in the future.

4. How will the Comprehensive Plan have a real-life impact on programs and services throughout Athens-Clarke County?

The Comprehensive Plan provides a foundational layout for the local government to look toward when offering programs, services, or establishing law. Changes do not happen just by completion and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan though. As a guide, this document highlights agreed upon community ideas the steps needed to accomplish them. As time progresses, it is up to the assigned parties, typically the local government, to put actions into place.

5. Are ideas put forth in the Comprehensive Plan binding upon the local government? What about other institutions like universities, schools, hospitals, etc.?

To some extent, the State of Georgia requires local governments to adhere to their respective Comprehensive Plans. Although it is difficult to hold the local government accountable for achieving goals, addressing needs, and seizing opportunities, the Community Work Program of the Comprehensive Plan is something the local government must answer for. Actions placed in the list of work items may or may not be completed, but the State does require an update as to the status of each action. Perhaps the best description of the Comprehensive Plan is that it is something the community strives for. Like all things, sometimes time, funding, and even a change in direction can influence whether the entire plan is a success.

6. Did Athens-Clarke County hire a consultant to work on the Comprehensive Plan?

No. The Athens-Clarke County 2018 Comprehensive Plan is being conducted “in-house” by the Planning Department staff. Though previous comprehensive plans have been done in coordination with a consultant, the decision was made to produce this plan using community-familiar planners. That said, Envision Athens is being driven by a professional consultant and much of the data, research, and findings of that document will be shared with planners from Athens-Clarke County.

7. Why is there a set timeline to complete the Comprehensive Plan?

Every ten years, local governments across Georgia are required to update their comprehensive plans. Athens-Clarke County last completed its Comprehensive Plan in July 2008, so our next deadline is July 2018. The proposed completion timeline represents an effort to carefully allow public input, research, plan development, and proper review. Furthermore, it has always been the intent to coincide with the completion of Envision Athens in order to study and bring forth applicable ideas into the make of the Comprehensive Plan.