

Work Session of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on January 17, 2023, following the PFA Meeting. Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

I. Staff Discussion Items

Mayor Rusty Paul called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

A. 2023-010 Perimeter Cities Entrepreneurship & Innovation Strategy

Caroline Davis, Economic Development Manager, presented a recommendation to discuss a Perimeter Cities Entrepreneurship & Innovation Strategic Plan initiative.

In Spring 2022, the City of Dunwoody worked with Boyette Strategic Advisors to produce an Entrepreneurship & Innovation (E&I) Strategy that focuses largely on growing the Perimeter Center area of Dunwoody solely. When Economic Development staff from both Dunwoody and Sandy Springs met to discuss the results of the strategic plan, they determined the goals and work items are largely in line with the existing Sandy Springs Strategic Economic Development Plan ("SEDP"), but are more detailed and consider current market realities, whereas most of the work for the SEDP was completed prior to understanding the impact of Covid-19 on the business community. Economic Development staff from both cities determined the best way to serve the entirety of the bustling Perimeter Center and other business districts of the cities would be to work collaboratively on the goals of the E&I Strategic Plan. Staff from both cities, with the support of leadership, re-engaged Boyette Strategic Advisors to prepare an update to the original plan to incorporate Sandy Springs and the goals of the SEDP. Boyette Strategic Advisors has worked with Economic Development staff from Sandy Springs and Dunwoody to prepare a draft of the Perimeter Cities Entrepreneurship & Innovation Strategy. The consultant and staff are seeking feedback on the draft recommendations prior to final adoption which is intended to come before City Council at the February 7th meeting. The E&I Strategic Plan includes an initial three (3) year implementation timeline. Participation in this plan update would (1) align with the goals of the SEDP to work collaboratively with partner organizations on programs and service delivery, (2) provide a targeted work plan that addresses how to scale up services that support entrepreneurs and small businesses and ultimately create new businesses and jobs in the city, and (3) demonstrate to the business community the City's commitment to investing in the growth and resiliency of a healthy and growing business community. The financial impact will vary for each item in the recommendations. Further discussion and specific requests would occur during the annual budgeting cycle.

Tracy Sharp, Boyette Strategic Advisors, Consultant, presented information about the Joint Entrepreneurship & Innovation Strategy.

The process to develop the joint Economic Development Strategy for Dunwoody and Sandy Springs included input from a core team, including representatives from economic development groups and a strategic planning workshop. A draft was given to the project team and an Implementation/Action Plan was developed. This was done in a 2-3 month period. To attract high-growth, high-impact, startup technology companies and entrepreneurs, there should be access to supportive programs, low-cost space, and funding, in addition to addressing the needs of other small business entrepreneurs. The overarching goal of this strategy is to develop a joint thriving entrepreneurial and innovative ecosystem in Dunwoody and Sandy Springs. These six goals will allow us to accomplish the overarching goal and most will occur simultaneously over an estimated 3-year period:

Goal 1: Develop a support program for innovation/technology entrepreneurs

Goal 2: Attract an accelerator facility

Goal 3: Plan for innovation/tech district to support startups over time

Goal 4: Increase access to angel & venture capital

Goal 5: Develop joint marketing effort around "the perimeter" and entrepreneurial efforts

Goal 6: Develop a support program for other small business entrepreneurs, including underserved businesses

The next steps are to refine the goals and recommendations for both Sandy Springs and Dunwoody. The final Strategic Plan will be presented on February 7th along with the Implementation Action plan.

Mayor Rusty Paul inquired about the budget. Who is responsible for making this happen? Were the resources of the two communities were considered to execute this plan.

Consultant Sharp said this will come from the Implementation/Action Plan.

Economic Development Manager Davis noted specific items related to the proposed project would come before the Mayor and City Council in the normal budget request cycle to vet with other City goals. The draft report will be provided with a budget for different line items comparing year 1 and year 2.

Mayor Paul asked was the Chamber engaged to learn from their experience on successes and failures.

Economic Development Manager Davis replied yes. Partnering on specific goals and tactics was discussed, especially as related to close collaboration on Goal 6 in supporting traditional small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Mayor Paul asked did Staff consult with the Sandy Springs and Fulton County Development Authority on available resources.

Economic Development Manager Davis replied no, but the team did speak with Fulton County's Economic Development Agency.

Councilmember Jody Reichel asked is the proposed project similar to Atlanta Tech Village (ATV). Is something like this normally run by a government entity or private businesses?

Economic Development Manager Davis replied there are similar elements. Metro Atlanta's innovation ecosystem is vast and growing. The intention is not to duplicate what has already been done. This project is looking for a value-add in Perimeter that does not exist. Over 100,000 jobs are based in the perimeter area with 150,000 residents combined between the two cities. We want to capitalize on talent to start and grow businesses and create high-quality jobs. When the team discussed the project with some staff of the ATV, the ATV staff did not feel resources were duplicative. People want these services local in their community.

Consultant Sharp noted the City of Alpharetta is a good example. The program began at the City level but funding started coming from corporate partners and other ways for long-term. A successful example to model for structure and funding.

Councilmember Reichel asked if venture capital firms were contacted for their input.

Economic Development Manager Caroline Davis replied conversations have not happened recently but the team did speak with an interested firm over a year ago. They think residents have opportunities to

participate in venture and angel capital.

Councilmember Reichel asked what Dunwoody's council impression was if presented to.

Consultant Sharp advised the project was presented to the Dunwoody Mayor and City Council in January 2022.

Economic Development Manager Davis said the City of Dunwoody has budgeted \$200,000 in the current fiscal year for Year 1 implementation.

Councilmember John Paulson said this is similar to a Chamber of Commerce initiative. Why does the government want to get involved? The Chamber should be, or be a partner with cities, opposed to cities telling businesses how to do this. There is a Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce.

Economic Development Manager Davis said the Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce is listed as partners in the Implementation Plan. Staff is seeking the City's support before socializing the project with other local partners. The project was initiated by City Council of Dunwoody.

Councilmember Paulson said this is a Chamber of Commerce function and not a function of government. More homework is needed. Staff should speak with other potential partners.

Economic Development Manager Davis said Staff can provide a map of current innovation ecosystem and current metro Atlanta facilities.

Councilmember Melody Kelley asked if there was anything specific regarding access to low-cost space or any challenges.

Consultant Sharp replied there are already facilities in Dunwoody and Sandy Springs with a typical amount. There are other entities doing this in metro Atlanta, but the cities want those companies to grow and locate in Sandy Springs and Dunwoody. Facilities and support should be located here so companies come here. This allows for the economic teams to attract companies and start-ups that will hopefully locate and grow here.

Mayor Paul asked for an inventory of angel and venture capital in Sandy Springs. In his experience, companies may start here, but if the venture capitalist is located out of state, businesses move where they are for additional funding. His main concern is that businesses created locally will create wealth in other communities. Businesses in Alpharetta will last as long as the money they need stays there. How do you prevent that from happening?

Consultant Sharp replied you cannot prevent that but hopefully they will keep a presence here if they get angel and venture funding.

Mayor Paul stated this was a frustration when he served on the state economic board. What bandwidth does the City have to make this successful? There needs to be a solid plan of how to succeed. We cannot drill dry holes with tax payer dollars and must know how to cement them here. I would rather invest in local entrepreneurs. This is one of the different economic strategies and need to see what else is out there.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio said the biggest thing is to identify pools of money. It is concerning that no venture capitalist were spoken to as they are necessary for the plans to work. These conversations must happen.

Mayor Paul said Silicon Valley has major car and financial companies there. They bid on getting access to that idea. It's a complex process. There are major corporations here but they have offices in Silicon Valley and other locations. They must be offered something they cannot get there to get them to invest here.

Economic Development Manager Davis said she would do the homework and present in two weeks.

B. **2023-011** Request for Mayor and City Council Consideration of an Application to the Walk Friendly Communities Program

Catherine Mercier-Baggett, Sustainability Manager, presented a request for Mayor and City Council consideration of an application to the Walk Friendly Communities Program.

"Walk Friendly Communities" ("WFC") is a national recognition program developed to encourage towns and cities across the U.S. to establish or recommit to a high priority for supporting safer walking environments. The WFC program recognizes communities that are working to improve a wide range of conditions related to walking, including safety, mobility, access, and comfort. The cities of Roswell and Atlanta received the designation at bronze level, and Decatur has a gold rating. The Walk Friendly recognition will allow the City to demonstrate its dedication to connectivity, pedestrian safety, and overall sustainability. The application includes questions on planning for walkability, adapting infrastructure for disabled users, roadway design, land development regulations, and public transit. It will also allow the City to receive credit for Measure 50 of the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Green Communities program.

Councilmember Melody Kelley asked if the ADA Transition Plan is publicly available. Can it be shared with the Council?

Sustainability Manager Mercier-Baggett said it is an internal document and may not be available on the website. The ADA Transition Plan is an action plan on how the City plans on upgrading all of its infrastructure so that it is ADA compliant.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio asked if there is a cost to the City to get this certification?

Sustainability Manager Mercier-Baggett said there is no fee associated with this program.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if the safety elements of this had been taken into account. For example, it is reported that electric bikes catch on fire regularly.

Sustainability Manager Mercier-Baggett said that is not an issue that I am familiar with, but can research it.

Mayor Rusty Paul asked how this is implemented.

Sustainability Manager Mercier-Baggett replied the beauty of this program is that there is no additional work to be done. The City will report its current programs and initiatives that meet the program requirements.

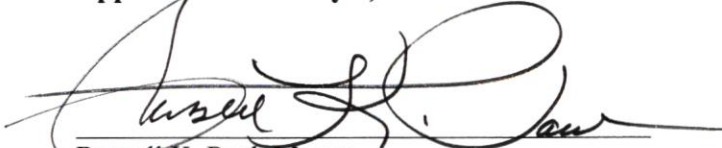
Mayor Rusty Paul advised there was a consensus to move with the certification application.

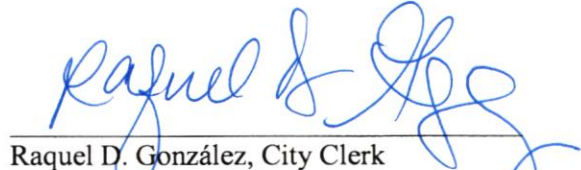
II. City Council Discussion Items

There were no City Council discussion items.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Approved: February 7, 2023



Russell K. Paul, Mayor

Raquel D. González, City Clerk