

Work Session of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on April 15, 2025 at 6:00 PM, Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

Prior to beginning the meeting, **Mayor Rusty Paul** explained the absence of **Kenneth DeSimone, Police Chief**. The United States attorney general came from Washington D.C. to honor the Sandy Springs Police Department for the largest fentanyl drug bust in the history of Georgia. They brought the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in and more, to ensure that it was a federal prosecution. It is an honor for the attorney general to recognize the City's police department for that specific purpose.

I. Staff Discussion Items

A. 2025-077 Updates from Art Sandy Springs

Cheri Morris, Head of Public Art Initiatives, Art Sandy Springs, presented updates from Art Sandy Springs.

The City has partnered with Art Sandy Springs (ArtSS) for many years to provide indoor and outdoor public art programming. The 2025–2026 Public Art Program presentation includes a review of:

ArtSS - City Initiatives

- **Abernathy Arts Center** - educational programming and management
- **City Gallery** - ongoing quarterly exhibits
- **ArtSS in the Open**
 - 18 sculptures given to the city
 - 20 sculptures purchased by the city
- **City Capital Projects**
 - Veterans Park Sculptures 2023 - 2024
 - Old Riverside Park Natural Playground 2024 - 2026
- **Annual ArtSS Walk / City Springs Collection**

The Abernathy Arts Center was taken over years on a contract with the City of Sandy Springs. It is run at about 90% occupancy and, we are looking forward to the additional classrooms to serve the citizens of Sandy Springs. We hope to see you tomorrow night at the City Gallery for a wonderful show that was just hung. ArtSS in the Open is a broad program that focuses on art in public places and includes gifts for the City, the annual sculpture competition and more. So far, there are eighteen gifts of sculpture to the City and, the City has purchased twenty pieces. City capital projects we completed includes the veterans's memorial sculpture and, we are now working with the Old Riverside Park Natural Playground which is more organic to the environment. Converting the Annual ArtSS Walk into the City Springs Collection will be discussed in the presentation.

Upcoming Capital Projects

- **Mt. Vernon Highway Improvements**
- **PATH400**
- **Hammond Drive Widening**

Per the Art in Public Places Plan, ArtSS is to meet with city leadership each January to discuss upcoming capital projects and how public art can be included in plans and budgets

Transition ArtSS Walk to City Springs Collection

Per Council's request to shift focus and funds from the annual 'ArtSS Walk' sculpture competition to 'The City Springs Collection' interiors program, Art Sandy Springs proposes the following Phase 1 implementation plan to begin fulfilling the City Springs Master Art Plan.

PURPOSE

To identify the portions of the City's March 2019 "City Springs Master Art Plan" to be implemented in Phase I and the methods and resources to be used.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Procurement of Curated Fine Art Collection
for Lobbies & Public Spaces

Donation of Art from Citizens' Collections
and Working Artists

ART CONCEPT

Relate to and enhance the architects' concept for the building.

Reinforce the identity of the City Springs complex and its arts-involved citizens.

Engage the community in a visual arts dialog.

Celebrate the Chattahoochee River within the City with visual metaphors for water, nature, and natural materials.

Deploy colors that include blues, greens, and other natural tones to unify the interior visual experience with nature.

Art Procurement Process for Public Spaces

The City has partnered with Art Sandy Springs to procure art to fulfill both the City Springs Master Art Plan for the interior of City Springs and the Art in Public Places Plan for the City's outdoor public realm.

Each year Art Sandy Springs will curate groupings for various areas of the City Springs building and recommend art to be procured for specific locations within the guidelines of the City Springs Master Art Plan.

Donated Art for Staff Offices and Conference Rooms

The City has partnered with Art Sandy Springs to assist potential donors in navigating the protocol for donating public art to the City.

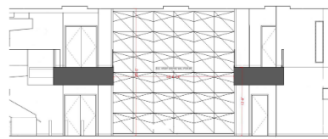
Art Sandy Springs will manage, in concert with City Staff, an outreach program to solicit donations of art from personal collections that are being retired and, from the working artist community in the City.

The City's policy establishes guidelines to ensure a consistent decision-making process related to the acceptance, placement, and long-term maintenance of donations.

Lobby Level



City Hall Feature Wall



ArtSS has procured costing guidance from well-regarded artists in appropriate media for the Feature Wall.

- Sculpture
- Collage
- Fiber
- Paintings
- Murals

3rd Floor Conference Level



Phase 1 Locations

Lobby Level 1st FL

Commissioned art for key feature wall at main seating, minimum size 12'w x 16'h, maximum size 24'x25' LA1

Conference Level 3rd FL

Wall art for public areas and conference rooms, 44"w x 30"h: C5,6,9,10,28,29

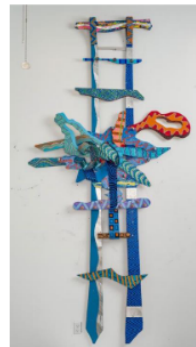
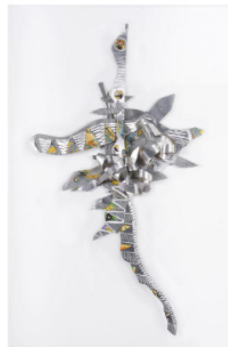
Wall art for public areas and conference rooms, 48"w x 36"h:
C1,2,12,13,14,16,17,19,20

Wall art for public areas and conference rooms, 60"w x 40"h: C4,18

Wall art for public areas and conference rooms, 72"w x 40"h: C3,7,8,11,15

Wall art for meeting rooms, 48"w x 30"h: C21,22,23,24,25,26,27

Representative Images – Wall Sculpture

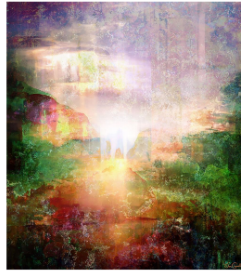


Representative Images – Paintings

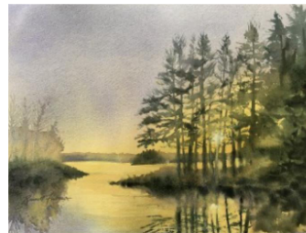
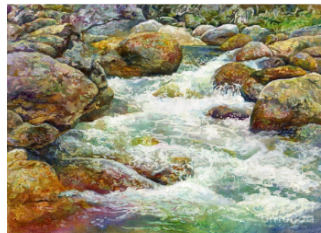
(The City Springs Master Art Plan Calls for Very Abstract Style)



(ArtSS Recommends Celebrating Our City with More Relatable Style)



Representative Images – The River – Contemporary Realism



Representative Images – The Forests



Representative Images – The Trees



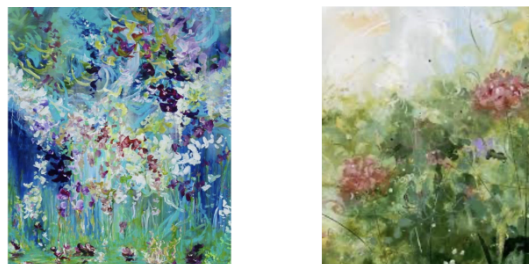
Representative Images – The Wildfire



Representative Images – The Lifestyle



Representative Images – The Gardens



Phase I - Budget

Lobby Feature wall

12' x 16' - \$60,000 - \$150,000

18' x 18' - 24' x 25' - \$75,000 - \$220,000

Interior art for 3rd floor public areas

Avg \$3000 per piece

Donations of art for private offices and city conference rooms

Free

\$25,000 remaining in budget from 2024-2025

\$60,000 requested annual allocation

\$85,000 for 2025-2026

Dina Chumney, Executive Director, Art Sandy Springs and Abernathy Art Center, presented the 20th Anniversary Turtle Walk, a joint project between Art Sandy Springs and the Sandy Springs Society.

Art Sandy Springs and the Sandy Springs Society propose to create a "Turtle Walk" display of Sandy Springs Town Turtles on City Green commemorating both the 20th Anniversary of the City and the fundraising project.

**This exhibit would be held
from mid-June to
early September 2025**



The 20th Anniversary Turtle Walk Details

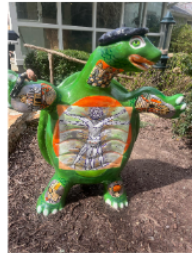
- Ten Turtle sculptures to be installed on concrete bases previously used the Arts Walk sculpture contest, some larger bases will hold two turtles.
- Mid-June through September, taking advantage of the crowds for summer concerts, festivals, special events, and farmers markets.
- Each sculpture's signage will feature the turtle's name, "from the collection of donor name," and a QR code linking to the City's 20th Anniversary webpage with a history of the SSS project and fundraising significance.
- ArtSS and Sandy Springs Society (SSS) donors will share the cost of the installation and de-installation.
- This exhibit would be held in conjunction with a City Gallery student artwork show "What will Sandy Springs look like 20 years in the future?" These pieces would be curated from kids' art activities at Farmers Markets in May and June and from Abernathy Arts Center Summer Camp artwork.
- An artist reception would highlight both exhibits

Turtle Walk will feature sculptures in pristine condition

- Privately owned sculptures that have been restored
- Private and business-owned sculptures that have been displayed indoors
- Working with artists to "touch up" loaned turtles so they will look their best on display



Soapbox Turtle



Leonardo Terrapini



King & Queen Turtle



Monopoly Turtle

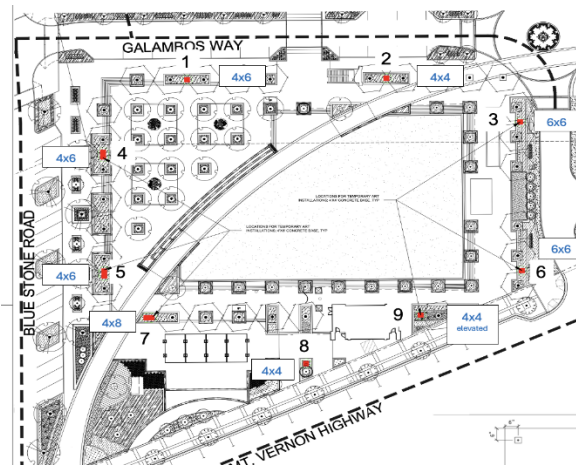


Memuti, The Chieftan



Spring is Busting Turtle

We are proposing to use bases one, two, four, five, seven, eight, and nine which are all currently vacant on City Green and have a wonderful display.



Councilmember Jody Reichel said I love seeing the sculptures outside and am excited about the art coming inside. If the City receives a donation that is grandiose and beautiful, can it be publicly displayed?

Art Sandy Springs Head of Public Art Initiatives Morris said generally yes. For example, a picture of a boat or flowers may not be the same style but, we will move them around so they do not clash with each other.

Councilmember Jody Reichel said there are people in Sandy Springs with beautiful art collections and the City would be lucky to get some of their pieces.

There have been complaints over the years about some of the playground equipment at Abernathy Park being more of a piece of art, than kid friendly. How are you looking at the pieces for Riverside Park?

Art Sandy Spring Morris said it is kid friendly. These pieces started as logs and over the years disintegrate and, may have a splinter and more. Now, companies craft them out of composite material to look like logs and are designed for children to play. This a tot park and the equipment is designed for children ages two to five. We are currently moving pieces around and determining what to buy but, those exact pieces can be shown to Council.

Councilmember Reichel said with the outdoor sculptures, ten were out for a year. How will it be decided which pieces to put?

Art Sandy Spring Morris said that process is in the future. It will be more like the veteran's memorial process where there is a competition, than we commission a piece.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio said prior to inception of the City of Sandy Springs, the turtles project was a highlight. There were some by the library and I even purchased one. The auction was done in 2004 and it would be a shame to lose them as they are a part of the history of Sandy Springs. Not sure how to refurbish these. Has there been an ongoing effort to rehabilitate these? Secondly, there are different places with pictures of old Sandy Springs, for example the Williams-Payne House which has unfortunately gone out. Have you considered doing photo galleries with pictures of old Sandy Springs in the hallways and conference rooms, as there are pictures that date back one hundred years? It is inexpensive to do this and people would be happy for the City to copy them and more. It is important to celebrate the City's history.

Art Sandy Spring Morris said that is the kind of idea we want to work with the City on. For instance, a conference room can be picked and dedicated to historical photographs. We discussed with one artist, if they do a large painting or something else at City Hall, to include pieces of history. There are other ideas. We can be creative and work with the City after the program is approved. Regarding the turtles, ArtSS and SSS have done some refurbishing. Some are a touchup and others must be stripped and started over. We should come together to discuss the cost for refurbishment.

Art Sandy Springs and Abernathy Art Center Executive Director Chumney said it is about \$2500, maybe not to completely repaint the image but, to touchup and restore it.

Art Sandy Spring Morris said about thirty turtles in the public realm need to be refurbished. Not all need work and, it is about \$25,000 to \$50,000 to refurbish the collection.

Councilmember Melissa Mular said for the Phase I Budget, the lobby walls will feature art costing about \$60,000 to \$150,000 and \$75,000 to \$220,000. How does the \$85,000 to be carried forward fit in because that is on the low-end for what you had shown?

Art Sandy Spring Morris said there are some promising things on the low end. For instance, with a wall sculpture, the wall has to be opened up and put a structure behind it, stand it on the ground, or hang it from the ceiling. A fine mural goes on sheetrock and would be gorgeous in the bottom end of that range. When the new budget year starts, we will be thirteen months from the next \$60,000. Council may decide to take

the \$25,000, this coming and next year's \$60,000, and install the piece fifteen months from now. This can be figured out through the committee.

Councilmember Mular said it is also fine to move away from the hard abstract.

Councilmember John Paulson said the turtle walk is a great idea, but not spending \$2,500 times thirty to rehab them. More thought about this is needed. We can change artists every six weeks but, we are talking about permanent decisions. Let us not rush into doing that. There must be a process where we and the community discuss to get to a consensus, as with the veterans committee. Also, it is interesting that there are people who would donate their art to the City. Maybe we can go the community and ask if anyone is interested.

Art Sandy Spring Morris said the gifts for the City have not been in place and, we have not been aggressive about that. We have discussed this with the Communications Department and, also putting together a group to meet with garden clubs, working artists in Sandy Springs and more, to tell them about the program, ask them to participate and, a tax receipt for the gift can be provided.

Councilmember Paulson said those paths are fine with me. Just want to take time before deciding on something permanent.

Art Sandy Spring Morris said it will be like how we work together on the veteran's memorial.

Councilmember Andy Bauman said thank you ArtSS and SSS for the work you do in delivering art and contributions. This enriches the City and calls for Public Private Partnerships (PPP). The City can be a stakeholder but, must work with the community as we have been doing for these projects. My interest in public art increases, the more public it is. I have been adamant that the wall should be done but, that can be a rotating place for student and local art and, displaying all sorts of community art that is inclusive and diverse. As for the conference level floor, if we can be convinced it's public and, I know we have done that. These issue is with sameness with the sculptures. My interest is in the projects that are throughout the City. We will go through the budget and I am supportive of this and to leverage private dollars to match, or other ways. We need to spread the art around the City so it can be enjoyed throughout. What is the status of the art center?

Eden Freeman, City Manager, said there were issues with the contractor. This will be brought back to Council for discussion the second meeting in May.

Councilmember Bauman asked when should it have been originally?

City Manager Freeman said it should have been completed by the end June, but there have been issues.

Councilmember Bauman said I have had questions about that. The economic viability requires more classroom. The City should not be restoring private turtles.

Art Sandy Spring Morris said if the City wants the ones you own, then yes, and if there was a group ask of people to donate.

Councilmember Bauman said I support the City having a stake in public art. With these projects, we need to embed the infrastructure and have a plan. We must look at the budget. There is a policy that can be discussed, because we already did, about including budget allocation towards the public aesthetic of it. There is a lot happening in the City now as it relates to projects such as traffic calming. This is a great presentation for us to take next month into the budget discussions. My interest in this is high, but it lowers the more insular it is. It increases for me the more it is out in the City for all to see. I am less interested with the third floor of this building, beyond things that would be donated. There are beautiful photos in the City's performing arts area and, I do not know this cost anything other than the picture and production

of it. Let us be creative in how we outfit these less public areas and, utilize precious tax dollars for the areas we get the biggest impact.

Art Sandy Spring Morris said we have talked a lot about the smaller program. The big opportunity for Sandy Springs to be on the map of public art is these capital projects, and making sure when they are started, we are making room in the budget. There can be murals, platforms for sculpture to come, mosaics, and interesting benches. That is where you will see big impact imbedded in capital budgets, rather than reaching into the operating budget to do it. We are focused on kicking that off in a big way and getting into the opportunities that might be there.

Mayor Paul thanked ArtSS for the presentation. The arts is an important of my life and I want to ensure we still have the opportunity to incorporate art into all of the City's public spaces wherever we can. The genesis of our sculpture program is when we went to Israel and saw a beautiful, white stone carved and, communities were having sculpture contests and, I thought we need to do something like that in Sandy Springs. We have made a lot of progress over the last few years and, glad and thankful for all the work and thinking that has gone into this. I am looking forward to the resurrection of the turtles.

Art Sandy Spring Morris said there were comments about sameness of the pieces. When the program was conceived, the bases were put around City Springs and, there are under trees. We were directed that the trees had to be a certain height and measurement. They are all of that modest scale because they have to fit under the trees.

B. 2025-078 City Council Retreat SWOT Analysis

Eden Freeman, City Manager, presented the City Council Retreat SWOT Analysis.

This SWOT analysis was conducted during the annual retreat held on February 6, 2025. The purpose of the analysis was to identify key Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats facing the City, in order to guide future planning and decision-making. During the retreat, Council members and key city staff participated in a facilitated session to evaluate the City's current standing and future prospects. Each councilmember was given five post-it notes for each area and, five votes for the items, to identify five strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Council was then asked to go back and identify items that were considered priorities.

The following key points summarize the results of the analysis:

Strengths

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	Score
Staff								
Staff Stability, Best in Class First Responders, Employees and Police and Fire, Professional Staff and CM, Staff, Strong Management and Staff, City Management								1
Financial Management								
Conservative Financial Planning and Management, Fiscal Responsibility, Financial Resources to Support City Priorities, Financial Resources and Resource Management, Financially Healthy								.86
Public Safety								
Public Safety, Great Public Safety Staff								.57
Business Community and Local Economy								
Business Community and Nonprofit Organizations, Strength of Local Economy, Economic Environment								.57
Elected Officials								
Great Leadership and Vision, National Elected Leadership								.43
Location								
Chattahoochee River, Proximity to Atlanta, Geographic Location Within Metro Atlanta								.43
Neighborhoods								
Healthcare Hub								.29
Engaged Population								
Community Engagement and Participation								.29
Established Processes								
Our Two Major Facilities Being New and Transformative								.14
Performing Arts Center and City Green								.14
Plans for the Future and Focuses on Meeting Community Needs								
Varied Tax Base Offsets Downtown in Specific Areas/Markets								.14
Seen as Leading City in Region and State								
Culture								.14
Wonderfully Supportive Citizenry (So Far)								.14

Councilmember Andy Bauman said this is for public consumption and it is appreciated. The details are important. It was said staff and public safety were overlapping and one through six plus M represents the districts and the mayor. Everyone had their own issues, but public safety is the City's greatest strength. It is concerning that much of this is looped together and tied to individuals, because there is a lot of subjectivity in how the categories were grouped and put together. This is the first SWAT analysis I have done in this form. The themes are valuable, but I would caution people to look at this and, not draw individual conclusions. The agenda memo said it would guide our work plan and I take issue with that. What should guide our work plan is the retreat and the substantive conversation. For example, you said we were not told that our votes on our own ones were not going to be counted. I am excited to see this but, there was a lot of subjectivity in how this was put together. This is not science.

City Manager Freeman said it is not meant to be a scientific analysis.

Councilmember Bauman said staff and public safety are at the top of my list. I do not know how that plays into that. Best in-class first responders is staff. I do not want to receive calls that I do not value public safety, which I do, and is at the top of my list.

Councilmember Jody Reichel said I agree. Also, I have never done a SWAT analysis. I did not know it was going to be this big project. The City is financially managed well, and it bothers me that I am not listed.

Councilmember Bauman said I first saw this at the retreat on the agenda. You need to go back to how you got from what we did, to how you got to this. I take issue with this. I want the themes. I took issue with the memo, which you said was going to guide our work plan from that. We spent thirteen hours in the retreat in discussions. This is great as a first effort but, is being overrepresented.

City Manager Freeman said as we go through the presentation, you will see proposed work plan items which everyone may be supportive of, as they tie back to Council's adopted priorities. The goal of this was to show that there is consistency in what is viewed as the strength.

Councilmember Bauman asked do you acknowledge the way this is represented could lead to misunderstanding from people who do not understand the process, or what we went through to do it? This is so data definitive.

City Manager Freeman said I do not see this a data definitive. I acknowledge that if you have not done one before, we could do a better job. We will revisit this to see what new themes may emerge from it at next year's Council retreat.

Councilmember Bauman said this was interesting, well intended, and I enjoyed the process but, I caution the public to take this with a grain of salt. My comments may apply throughout and I wanted to note this upfront.

City Manager Freeman said this was meant to capture what the conversation was during this exercise at the City Council Retreat. The four themes viewed by Council as strengths, as a City, are City Staff, Financial Management, Public Safety, and Business Community and Local Economy.

Work Session of the City of Sandy Springs City Council
Studio Theatre, Sandy Springs City Hall and Broadcast Via Live Webinar and Teleconference
April 15, 2025 at 6:00 PM
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Weaknesses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	Score
Redevelopment Challenges								1
Roswell Road Corridor Path Work of Businesses and Types of Buildings, Growth Limitations, Lack of Development Aging Structures, Lack of New Development Opportunities - Roswell Road								
Project Length								.71
Challenges in Bringing Projects to Fruition in Timely Manner, Things Take Too Long (still)								
Traffic and Congestion								.57
Lack of Flexibility								.43
Bureaucratic Mindset in Some Departments, Flexibility, Risk Aversion - Lack of Willingness to Attempt Bold Ideas - Strict Adherence to Process Without Flexibility, Always the Potential to Become More Rigid and Less Flexible								
Not Tapping More of the Extraordinary Talent Available to Us in Sandy Springs								.43
Complexity of Rules and Procedures For Average Citizen								.29
Need a Better Concerts on the Green Lineup								.29
Limited Recreational Facilities								.29
Above Ground Power Transmission Towers on Roswell Road								.29
Community Connection and Lack of Sandy Springs Identity Among Major Companies								.14
Limited or Lack of Broadbased Tax Base								.14
285 and 400								.14
Overstaffing City Government								.14
Keeping the City in Check - Not All Things to Everyone								.14
Not Enough Parking at City Springs								.14
Lack of Interpersonal Connecting in Commercial Corridors								.14
Lack of History (Center with Info)								.14
Not Using Our Revenue for More Resident Opportunities								.14
STP - Same Ten People - Finding a Way to Get More People Engaged in Major Decisions and Leadership								.14
Sustainability								.14
Does Not Focus as Much on Sustainability as We Should, Need a Better Recycling Facility								

Opportunities

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	Score
Redevelopment								.86
Redevelop the North End, City Springs 2, North End Redevelopment and Shopping Centers, Redevelop Aging Property, Smart Redevelopment Will Make Community Stronger, City Springs Phase 2 and Related Downtown Development, Redevelopment of Trees, Mature Commercial Properties, Redevelopment of Obsolete Commercial Properties								
Technology and Efficiency								.86
Using Technology to Improve the Service We Provide to the Public, Become More Efficient as We Utilize Technology, Take Advantage of Automation and AI to Increase City Staff Efficiency and Customer Service								
Building the City Staff of Tomorrow								.57
Emerging New Leadership for the Next Generations - Bench Strength								
Economic Development								.57
Stronger Business Community If We Engage Them, Continue Attracting Fortune 50/100/500 Companies, Capitalize on Corporate Growth Relocation and Expansion, Build Better Reputation Among Big Employers, Building on a More Robust Small Business Environment								
Update Fire Services to State-of-the-Art Facilities - Training								.29
Provide Increased Recreational Opportunities to Public								.14
Continue Growth and Conservation Nature of Use of City Assets								.14
Attracting an NHL Team								.14
More Density								.14
Engaging a Broader Group of Stakeholder for Community Events								.14
Leveraging Debt: Revenue Bond Parking Deck, Park Bond								.14
Regional Cooperation vs Legacy Battles with Fulton and City of Atlanta								.14
More Frequently Leverage Specific Skills on Council and in the Community to Solve Problems								.14
Forge New Non-profit and Leverage Existing Non-profit to Advance Opportunities and to Mitigate Threats and Weaknesses								.14
Upgrading our City Amenities on Parks and Trails								.14
Enhanced Transportation Infrastructure to Accommodate Growth								.14
Better Communicate How Great We are as a City								.14

Threats

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	Score
Housing and Neighborhoods								.86
Affordability of Living in Sandy Springs for Younger Generations, Too Many Apartments and Not Enough Single-Family Housing, Too Many Big Expensive Houses as Population Ages Out, No One Will Buy Them, Different Types of Housing and Affordability to Support Old and Young Residents Needs, Breakdown of Neighborhood Cohesion								
Financial								.57
Excess Desires by Public - Financial Overreach, Inflation and the Cost of Delivering Basic Services, Loss of Financial Discipline, Extended Economic Recession								
Water Reliability								.57
Getting Our Own Water System Without Knowing the Costs, Water Reliability?								
Public Apathy								.43
Apathy Going Forward by Public								
Office Space								.29
Trends in Office Market, Emptying Office Space								
A Major Incident that Transforms the City Negatively (Major Weather Event, Shooting, etc)								.29
Aging Infrastructure - Especially Center								.29
City's Reputation in Development Community								.29
Climate Change - City Assets and Staff Involvement								.29
Destruction of Trees for Advancement of Trails/Path/Conservation?								.29
Increasing probability of failure of Storm Water Facilities (City and Residential)								.29
Loss of Key Leadership Staff								.29
School Closures								.29
Always Possible that Future Elected Leaders will Redirect City's Focus Inefficiently								.14
Council Overpromising the Public								.14
Principles. Now That 20 Years Have Passed, Many Residents Here Now Do Not Understand Why Sandy Springs Was Founded								.14
Lack of Imagination and Bold Thinking								.14
Polarization in the Larger World Filtering into Sandy Springs								.14
Unsustainable Population Growth that we do Not prepare for - Metro Area								.14
World Goes to Hell								.14
The State Usurping our Authority								.14

These priorities were adopted after the retreat and are being used currently to craft what we are working on for the first FY26 budget workshop on May 6, 2025.



2025 City Council Retreat

- February 5, 2025 – City staff proposed potential priorities for City Council to review and consider for the 2025 calendar year
- Presented priorities align with Council's defined strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
 - Leverages strengths and enhances performance
 - Addresses and minimizes weaknesses to reduce impact
 - Capitalizes on opportunities to drive growth and success
 - Mitigates and manages threats to minimize risk
- February 18, 2025 – City Council adopted the 2025 City Priorities
- March 2025 – workplan was created to fill gaps between the 2025 SWOT analysis and the 2025 Adopted Priorities

Councilmember Bauman asked what it does it mean that in March 2025, the workplan was created to fill gaps between the 2025 SWOT analysis and the 2025 Adopted Priorities? Was Council involved with this?

City Manager Freeman said the workplan is what we work on as part of our budget to help fill in the items that are being included, as an enhancement or request in the budget. This is a staff exercise to lead towards a workplan used to develop the recommended budget that will be discussed in three weeks.

Councilmember Bauman asked to what extent was the SWAT analysis used in this item?

City Manager Freeman said that will be discussed next. This is a preview of what you will see as requested enhancements in the FY26 budget, that address both the priorities and things that rose up as part of the SWAT analysis, to be addressed or, continue to strengthen.

Proposed Additional Workplan Items

- Strengths
 - Staff – continue to provide best in region compensation and enhance employee engagement (communication)
 - Financial Management – continue conservative budgeting practices
 - Public Safety – invest in resources and facilities to enhance delivery of high-quality services
- Weaknesses
 - Redevelopment – develop and implement tools to encourage redevelopment of aging properties
 - Project Length - Implement streamlined processes where applicable and appropriate
- Opportunities
 - Technology and Efficiency - Centralized data platform to collect, analyze, and utilize data for decision making and resource management
 - Future Leadership - Internal mentorship program
 - Economic Development – Expand engagement with business community
- Threats
 - Apathy – Expand community engagement including strengthen or expand current SSCLA (youth programming); Recognize active community members
 - Housing – Begin work on 10-Year Update to Comprehensive Plan

Councilmember Melissa Mular said this is a bold first step. Not sure Council has ever gone through something like this. There were things that could have been explained and done a differently. Not sure how much of that would have changed the outcome. What is here is directionally correct. Most of the things we are continuing and we are going to enhance. There are some things that maybe when we get through the budget, we take some step backs but, in general it is directionally correct. It is a learning experience, and next time it will go differently. There are some observations when I went through this information. There were two shared items that were between the weaknesses and the opportunities and, they were focusing on redevelopment and economic development. In the first twenty years, we focused on getting control of our land uses that occurred with Fulton County, building and starting the activization of the city center, beginning to replace our much needed public safety facilities, which had good success, including the recent opening of the police and municipal court headquarters. We have also done a lot to invest in the community through the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) and capital programs and, providing customer service to our residents. What this exercise shows is that we are ready to look at redevelopment and the overall economic development. Now it is time to see what else we can do to accelerate those efforts and, do we have the right incentive tools in place and partnerships to do that. There are things we discussed last year, for instance a small facade grant program. Maybe we can do something like that, or other things, and hopefully come together and figure that out. City staff continues a very high focus. We want to attract and keep the best, keep them well trained, and provide the technology and tools to do their job and serve the residents. I was surprised about was the public apathy because, folks in District 3 generally are not apathetic. We should be careful in how we address that because there are three different types of audiences. You have people who are apathetic, as captured here, people that are uninterested, and people that are disinterested. Those are different segments of the population and, there are different strategies that you use to get those people on board. You just do not focus on those that are apathetic. Those are the people that feel disengaged, disenfranchised, and indifferent from people who are uninterested and lack engagement, or any enthusiasm, from those that are disinterested, just because they are more neutral and biased. Anyone who has ever been to one of the City's public information meetings knows that when it is outside your front door, you are going to show up because, you feel threatened or you are concerned. Once those concerns and threats have been reduced or removed, people go back into the other categories. We must ensure that we focus on addressing all of them and, whatever actions we take. This does not have to be discussed now but, apathy was surprising. I am not saying we do not have it but, we also have some different types of segments we need to address.

Councilmember John Paulson said from my business career, these are some of my observations. These tend to be subjective but, there is an adage that when you are successful, you tend to party, and when you fail, you tend to ponder. The City has great successes, for example the opening of the police headquarters this weekend. In terms of pondering, my focus is on two things. One is if we are reaching out to the community effectively. You have discussed some of that here and I want to expand that to ensure we continue to be a communicative organization. Internally, Staff should feel rewarded and encouraged to contribute, participate, grow, and be effective. Also, we should consider external opportunities so that we are better serving our community. Let us continue to develop this and have specific workplans that can be recommended for discussion.

Mayor Rusty Paul said I want to address apathy. These tend to be a top of mind reaction to whatever is going on in your environment at the time. Apathy is too strong of a word. When the City started and was not a government, there was Art Sandy Springs and Heritage Sandy Springs for instance, and other different community groups that were quasi-governmental entities that did things a government normally would do that citizens had to do for themselves. Over the last twenty years, there has been more reliance on the City to do a lot of things that were expected to be done. We have lost that community engagement from a volunteer point of view. It is not apathy but, a shift and focus away from we must do this because

there is no other option. Now there is an option for the City. It is more about losing that sense of community engagement that was necessary in the pre-municipalization and, we have lost of that.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio said they were referred to as shadow government because we did not have a government. Once becoming a City and people saw how it was functioning, they were happy with how it turned out. It is better than anybody hoped.

Mayor Paul said agreed. The sense that was trying to be captured was the loss of those kinds of institutions that were such an integral part of this community for so long. That was the sentiment that was trying to be expressed.

Councilmember Bauman said I agree with **Councilmember Mular** that this is directionally relevant but, does not supplant the thirteen hours of the retreat we had in the adopted priorities. On the issue of apathy, I do not see our citizens as apathetic. The engagement I see is the problem from the City side with the citizens. We need to be out in the community and meeting people where they are. If the community is apathetic, that is on the City. Looking forward to discussing these items in the budget.

Councilmember Melody Kelley said I agree with everyone. Also echoing **Councilmember Bauman's** for the public to please take this process with a grain of salt. I would like to see this become normalized, refined, tweaked, and more. What I appreciate about the exercise is that it was one of the first times where I felt our creativity was stimulated synchronously and I enjoyed it. **City Manager Freeman**, thank you for giving Council the opportunity. How many of the stickers did we have for each area?

City Manager Freeman said you had five you could write each of your items and, five sticker dots.

Councilmember Kelley said I want to ensure the public is clear.

Councilmember Mular said the total is five plus five dots so each councilmember would have a total of ten. That was not quite explained.

Councilmember Kelley said if there are places where you do not see check marks, it could have to do with having a limited number of votes that we could place as well. Another positive to me was doing a deep dive. Thank you **Councilmember Mular** for making this an Excel file. It also reflects the variety of ideas here. We discussed public safety, power infrastructure, and more issues. Regarding the work plan, your suggestion around housing, which is to lump it in with the comprehensive plan, is not enough. By lumping it in with all of the amazing things that we are going to talk about, to guide us over the next decade, lumping it in is likely to produce the same results. I would like to see us do more.

City Manager Freeman said we are looking to include the housing needs assessment as a requested enhancement and, this changed drastically since done in 2020.

Councilmember Kelley said something tangibly more can come out of our comprehensive planning exercise around housing, for instance a strategic or action plan. Different cities do different things.

Councilmember Reichel asked is this the start of Council discussing the Comprehensive Plan? What is the process going forward?

City Manager Freeman said the kickoff of that will be included in the FY26 budget. It will take us at least a year to update the Comp Plan but, that will not kickoff with actual meetings and, the public information work until January. Council will be provided an update on the timeline.

Councilmember Reichel asked who is involved with the Comprehensive Plan? Who picks those people that are going to be part of that?

City Manager Freeman said Mayor and Council pick the steering group to be part of that. On the Staff side, **Kristin Byars Smith, Assistant City Manager**, will lead the effort as when it was done ten years ago.

Councilmember Reichel asked is it this body or, the next Mayor and Council?

City Manager Freeman said the next Mayor and Council.

Councilmember Mular said back to housing. When we discuss the Next Ten and, go forward with that, will that also include, not just updating the plans, but also talking about, or engaging with public private partnerships or private organizations? Also, the employers in Sandy Springs with be brought into the fold?

City Manager Freeman said yes. You will see a surprising cost when we discuss this in three weeks.

II. City Council Discussion Items

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.