

**Georgetown Scott County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
September 27, 2022, Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. Present Committee members were Chase Azevedo, Jack Conner, Joe Pat Covington, Rick Hostetler, Les Jarvis, Kim Menke, Charlie Mifflin, Tom Prather, and Todd Stone. Director Joe Kane, Commission Engineer Ben Krebs, and Planner Elise Ketz were present. Consultant Greg Payne was in attendance via video call.

Economic Leadership Update

Jack Conner introduced Greg Payne, consultant with the Scott County United Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP). Payne updated the ESC on the state of the EDSP and that the deadline for final documents is at the end of October 2022.

Payne commented on the growth patterns for the city of Georgetown. In the past three decades, the growth has been 58% (1990-2000), 61% (2000-2010), and 28% (2010-2020). The growth rate leads to opportunity but also significant challenge while the community and its services respond to the increased demands. Places of a similar size, distribution of land use types, and geographical region are facing significant losses in population and well-paying jobs. The community has a greater toolbox to continue to drive the process up. Payne stated the deliverables for the Comprehensive Plan portion of the EDSP, (1) reviewing the development review process, (2) reviewing ways to improve communication and collaboration as it relates to long range planning between utilities and agencies (GSC Parks, SC Schools, etc.), (3) identifying targeted sites for industrial and commerce/BIT land uses. All components are intended to identify economic development opportunities and areas that need improvement.

Payne commented on the difference between development approaches. He noted that the commercial, retail and office style development are not considered “pioneers”, or drivers that result in growth around it. On the other hand, industrial style development is a “pioneer”, or a type of land use that, once established, drives the development and growth surrounding itself and the larger region. Typical users of a mega site do not partake in infill style development, they instead need the freedom and the space to develop as best suits their needs. If there are not enough choices, industrial development will not occur in the area. When developing, they look at a larger area than a commercial site, and prefer areas with utilities, interstate access and four lane local/accessing road.

Payne spoke on the advantages of having the ability to designate multiple sites for major industrial investment, specifically areas or parcels that are 200 (small), 500 (medium) and/or 1,000 (large) acres. He mentions that, in North Carolina, there are 8 “mega sites”, or land that is undeveloped, +/- 1,000 acres, one or more interstate access points or four lane highway access and utility services already there or sized to support a large industrial development. They offer the quick turnaround, approximately 1 year, that most industrial developers want. He emphasized that there must be a balance between utility and infrastructure resources and population in order for a larger industrial developer to want to come to the area. While there are constraints now, large sites must be planned so that Capital Improvement Plans, regulations, grants, etc. can be pursued with the understanding that a site would

develop. The timeline for the development of infrastructure for a mega site takes 10 years at the least and a clear goal in mind that is difficult to deviate from so that when conditions and staff change over, the goal is still executable.

Payne discussed the land use recommendations for non-industrial properties. He stated that the trends are in favor of mixed use areas with slightly higher density as it is the most efficient use of land resources. This style of development puts individuals in close proximity to Quality of Life (QOL) amenities while also ensuring that they can be served by the most efficient utility and infrastructure plans. This style is preferred by young people, professionals, or empty nesters.

He emphasized the importance of clear communication between offices, private landowners, and community members. It is absolutely essential to maintaining a strong and supportive environment while the land uses change over.

EDSP Related Questions:

Joe Kane asks if the individual mega-sites will be identified as part of the EDSP and if the utilities information will be included as part of the study. Payne responded that they are looking to identify more sites than requested so that options can be made available. Identifying more than one mega-site in one county is challenging. However, for the smaller sites (200 to 500 acres) some will be provided.

Kim Menke asks about the report containing information on current and existing uses and the best practices. Payne stated that the report will include best practices on how to develop, what the market is looking for and can support, and what is realistic.

Conner commented on a conversation regarding recent changes to the local market reducing the available land for industrial use by 20-25% from the data available from the Planning Commission. Payne stated that based on the changes, there will need to be more sites available for development. If there is more land is leaving the market, the community will need to plan for and counteract the land available in order to future demand to be compensated for. While not available in Georgetown-Scott County, there is a market for used industrial buildings that new industries can utilize while resources and costs of construction are high. There are record-low vacancies for industrial lands throughout the US.

Tom Prather asked about the success of regional sites in North Carolina, and how far away they are from large cities. He was specifically interested in how these areas that are outside of a traditional service area require urban level services and how the local infrastructure and community is going to provide said services. He asked for reasoning as to why these circumstances occur. Payne stated that the approach is not explicitly by design. He noted that there are challenges with accumulating the appropriately sized parcels needed for industrial growth within an existing urban area and that it is often more practical and logistically sound to look outside of already developed urban areas. Closer to city underdeveloped lands are in smaller parcels which means that you need to work with more individuals than the underdeveloped lands of the same acreage outside of a city. No matter the circumstances, Payne emphasized that there must be defined roads or plans for roads that can support an industrial

development. He commented that the city should consider investing in infrastructure that would allow for greater capacity and resources so that mega sites of all distances from the existing urban core can be supported

Mifflin commented on how the scope of the consultant is constrained by the size of the county. Moving 20 miles west or east is outside of the county and moving 20 miles north takes us into inopportune land conditions. Payne agrees that the areas for development are limited. Roads and topography in North Scott County are not an appropriate size for what a mega site would require. Moving south would make it too close to Lexington and is prime farmland. Existing development and constraints are ruling out a lot of options.

Kane asks if a recommendation on a strategy that the county or city can undertake to review mega-sites independent of a consultant. Payne stated that it is outside of the scope. He stated that there will be information on what infrastructure should be prioritized and how to start the land collection process. Increasing the number of landowners in an area makes the process incredibly hard.

Kim Menke referenced the state process for industrial site development. There is a regional group for the project/process that can be an asset to help in identification. He references and recommends reviewing the industrial land development process for Madison County and the state office. Prather agreed, including that there are good mega-sites in the region that are not within Scott County.

Joe Pat Covington stated that the challenges offer opportunities. Many other counties do not have the benefit of a pro-development community nor two major interstates within the boundary. We have to maximize opportunities resources available to best serve the community. Payne stated it is essential to reserve the capacity and resources to serve multiple sites that are small or medium (200 or 500, respectively) as opposed to one large site (1,000) Having variety allows for multiple natural expansion areas should an industrial employer set up show and later require expansion. Having a variety of sizes also means that the county can cater to the interests of (1) current industrial employers looking for expansion or start-up industrial employers looking for starter locations and (2) brand new industrial employers looking to construct a full industrial campus of their own.

Future Land Use (FLU) and Urban Service Boundary (USB) Proposal and Process Discussion

Kane introduced the proposed short term FLU map. He discussed the process for how Staff approached the review. The intent is for the draft to be presented for endorsement at the November 22, 2022 ESC meeting. It will be advertised in the News-Graphic and online for public comment and review. He stated that citizens can apply to be with the USB and the applications will be brought to the ESC for review and recommendation at the October 25, 2022 meeting.

He discussed what staff concluded the bypass and community sentiment was. Comments were entertained and aligned with the staff plans for FLU mapping and summarized below.

- Mega site anticipated at the North Bypass and US-25, likely south of the intersection

- No development beyond the greenbelt, nor along key rural corridors (US-62 Paynes Depot, Ironworks, US-25/Lexington Road).
- A radius be applied around the bypass loop, either 1,500 feet or ¼ mile depending, that would restrict the growth to the areas where services and infrastructure is already planned for.
- Amend the greenbelt to be more consistent, which would add more potential developable land along the southside.
- Recommendation for USB is to include the Stonehedge community and the school sites in the short term but consider alternatives in the long term.
- Using FLU Industrial as a backbone for future development in an area.
- Considering development further along US-460 east but need to consider service area capacity.

Goals & Objectives

Kane presented the final version of the Goals & Objectives (G&Os). An endorsement is required prior to taking it to public hearing with the Planning Commission.

Motion Menke, seconded by Stone to endorse the G&Os and to bring them to the Planning Commission. Motion passes unanimously.

Additional & Concluding Comments

Kane addressed next steps. He stated that the FLU maps and draft policies will be presented at the October 25, 2022 meeting. Kane reiterated that the ESC meetings would remain on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

There being no further business, the Meeting was adjourned by Kane at 5:45pm.