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Greetings to the Residents of Powder Springs,

Public discussion and debate are the heart and soul of our democracy and help to achieve a productive outcome that serves the City of Powder Springs and its citizens. So let me share with you information that is currently available regarding downtown redevelopment.

First, after many years of discussion among Council and City leaders and setbacks due to the economic recession and other factors, the development of our downtown remains a concept that requires careful evaluation and vetting to create appropriate development and growth in Powder Springs. There is still much to do to move this idea from concept to action, but we are working on it.

The recent workshop held by the City staff and consultants on February 7, 2017 was part of the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update process. It is important to note that the Comprehensive Plan and the Livable Center Initiative (LCI) plan are two separate plans, each with a different purpose.

- The Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year policy document that evaluates current conditions citywide, projects future trends, and then establishes goals, objectives and programs to achieve those goals. This long-term plan also guides decisions about zoning and development, which in turn help to shape more focused development initiatives across our City, including the downtown initiative.
- An LCI plan specifically guides the improvement of existing town centers like our downtown, and major corridors like Sailors Parkway where our linear park is located. Therefore, the City's LCI plan falls under the Comprehensive Plan's broad goal for citywide development, but the LCI plan focuses in greater detail on the redevelopment of our downtown.

The agenda and format of the February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting were set as a Comprehensive Plan work session to be facilitated by staff. This meeting was not scheduled for the purpose of holding a public forum about downtown redevelopment. Rather, the intent was to focus on the Comprehensive Plan, which covers many topics like transportation, historic resources, public facilities, natural resources, to name a few. At the end of the session, participants were to break into table groups to give feedback by mapping their ideas for potential commercial, retail and residential locations within the City. Questions could be attached to the maps, and staff planned to rotate from table to table to invite and answer questions.

We will continue to listen to the concerns and input from our citizens, as we work to propose the best possible options for achieving the long-standing goal of downtown redevelopment. **Therefore, we will hold a public meeting from 7:30 – 9:30 pm on February 20<sup>th</sup> following the regularly scheduled Council meeting to receive your comments and questions about this goal. The meetings will be held in the Municipal Court facility to accommodate more attendees. Those wishing to speak at either meeting may sign up between 6:30 and 7:00 pm before the meetings begin.** Additionally, I will be happy to meet with residents and business owners at any time about this matter, and invite you to call my office to schedule a time to meet.

The following Questions and Answers are provided to address some questions. I hope this information will reduce your concerns and provide an accurate, balanced basis for productive discussion and future debate of this important matter to our City.

Sincerely,

Al Thurman, Mayor of Powder Springs



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### **Questions and Answers**

#### **Why did the original February 7<sup>th</sup> agenda say “Open Forum” and the flyer say “Let your voices be heard” if the format was a workshop?**

Workshops generally don't have an open forum in the format, so it is understandable that the agenda text caused confusion, and we will do a better job of proofreading meeting materials in the future. This staff-led workshop was not an advertised Council hearing. This workshop anticipated a smaller group of participants, and provided for public input and questions during the mapping activity and staff rotation from table to table. Instead, what occurred was a town-hall type of meeting, with multiple speakers about a topic that was not on the agenda and reserved for decision-makers.

#### **Why wasn't the Mayor or City Manager in attendance at the meeting on February 7?**

This meeting was planned as a workshop and the Mayor usually attends some but not all workshop meetings. On this day, the Mayor was actually in attendance until he had to leave to attend a prior obligation at Tapp Middle School. The City Manager attends most of her staff-led workshops or community meetings but given her flu-like illness and input from staff, the City Manager decided not to attend for her personal health and in consideration of those attending.

#### **Will the City take my property?**

The City has no plans to exercise eminent domain and can only do so for a public project. However, the City may consider locating public projects on private properties, if the owner is a willing seller.

#### **Will downtown redevelopment wipe out my neighborhood?**

No option wipes out a neighborhood, and there is no displacement or demolition of historic structures. The City is reviewing several redevelopment concepts to ensure the best outcome for all parties. The initial concept would depend on the voluntary sale of 5 houses on Atlanta Street and Lewis Road. The most recent concept being considered focuses on the existing town square. Since adoption of the final LCI recommendations, the City has continued to review additional concepts for redevelopment. For example, after hearing the concerns expressed by residents on Atlanta Street about the proximity of the development to their individual properties, the City and its Downtown Development Authority (DDA) have been evaluating other downtown options and weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each.

#### **I'm hearing comments that the City is not financially sound. Is this true?**

The City has a sound financial position, with 6 months of operating reserves, sufficiently above the state-required 2-months of reserves.

#### **What is the cost to complete the LCI scenario? How will the public investment be paid?**

The public investment for a public amenity could be \$3-5 million – maybe more, maybe less depending on what an amenity includes and where it would be located. We review estimates as part of the process of comparing one concept to another to determine what is possible for the City to implement. But since we are reviewing several concepts, which are still open for input and change, it is too early to know the final investment amount. The public investment could be paid with SPLOST recreational dollars, general funds, grant funds, loans, LCI implementation dollars, etc. Until we have a location and design for the public amenity, we will be unable to determine the final investment amount and the best sources of funding.

#### **Has the City contracted with a developer to develop the LCI Plan?**

No, the City has not contracted with a developer to develop the LCI plan.