

# Planning Clayton's Future



Wayne Knuckles/The Clayton Tribune

Julia Brodsky, a planning associate with TSW Planners of Savannah, addresses a packed house at Clayton City Hall Tuesday night.

## City to address future issues with new Master Plan for development

By Wayne Knuckles  
The Clayton Tribune

CLAYTON—The city kicked off the public phase of their plan to create a comprehensive master plan that will serve as a blueprint for future growth Tuesday with a two-hour input session.

Nearly 100 people packed the meeting room at city hall as representatives of TSW, the Savannah

consulting firm hired to spearhead the planning effort, solicited ideas and opinions.

Parking, zoning, pedestrian traffic and future growth are just some of the issues expected to be addressed when the plan is completed.

"We want to know where we are now and where we're going in the future, in a responsible manner that also allows for growth," Mayor

Jordan Green said at the start of the meeting.

He pointed out that the TSW plan is different than the comprehensive plan for the city that the state of Georgia requires that is also currently being compiled.

"That plan is mainly about statistics, but it's not a master plan,"

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Green said. "It doesn't tell us what we need to do, or how things should look. The two go hand in hand, but they are different. Hopefully, they will help us build a sustainable Clayton that everyone can live in and enjoy."

Sarah McColley, a planning associate with TSW, said care should be taken when addressing parking issues in the city.

"Adding a whole lot of parking can sometimes make it harder to walk, because you have farther distances between building and businesses," she said. "The central business district is fairly conducive to a walking environment. Walkability needs to be increased throughout the downtown area. You may be able to widen sidewalks to allow pedestrians to pass each other and also allow for outdoor seating."

McColley noted there's a parking problem for downtown businesses, but said there are a "fair amount" of parking spaces on Main Street and Savannah Street.

"There might be a way to increase on-street parking on additional streets," she said. "On Main Street alone, there are 171 parking spaces. On Savannah Street, there are about 60. You can get a significant amount of parking on the street without having to build a parking lot where another building or business might be located."

McColley said the city should take advantage of the natural resources that are unique to Clayton.

"You have these beautiful mountains in close proximity to outdoor recreation opportunities, which is a great asset to build on," she said. "Make sure they're accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. And social spaces invite people to linger downtown, so how could we capitalize on that?"

Tom Walsh, principal partner in TSW, said the firm will be reviewing existing city zoning ordinances in the near future.

"We're going to recommend that you enhance or make the code work for downtown, so that if somebody comes along and develops something, they have to follow these

rules," Walsh said. "I see a lot of loopholes in your code right now. We want to strengthen the code."

He said the role of his firm in the planning process will be to make recommendations, but not dictate how Clayton should develop.

"We encourage participation from citizens, developers and property owners," he said. "The master plan is a road map. It outlines how the community will look in 5-10 years. It's not just a plan you pull out of a drawer and read. We want it to be implantable."

The remainder of the two-hour meeting was spent in TSW staff members engaging those who attended Tuesday's meeting about different aspects of city planning.

They plan to return June 18 for a 3-day design workshop and walking tour.

Citizens are encouraged to visit the city's website for a link to a survey where they can answer questions about the ways in which downtown is utilized.

TSW hopes to have the final plan ready for council approval by mid-September.