

DEFINITIONS

A

Accessory Dwelling Unit – A second residential living unit on the same lot as a primary residential unit; which may be attached to the primary residential unit or in a separate structure.

Accessory Use – A use incidental to, and on the same lot as, a principal use, including storage facilities and similar supportive facilities.

Affordable Housing – Inexpensive dwellings affordable to those of modest income.

Alternative Mode – Any means of transportation other than private cars. Examples include walking, bicycling, and public transit.

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) – an estimate of the total number of vehicles that travel on a particular road segment, in both directions, during a typical 24-hour day in a given year.

Aquifer – A water bearing stratum of permeable rock, sand, or gravel.

Assets – Individual, association and organizational skills, talents, gifts, resources and strengths that are shared with the community.

Asset Mapping – A process whereby a community's individual, association and organizational assets are identified and documented for community building uses. A visual map of resources is usually created from the identification process.

B

Back Barrier Island – An island or tract of land, including marsh hammocks, that is located between the landward boundary of the barrier island complexes and the mainland.

Barrier Island Complex – A group of islands or tracts of land which border the ocean.

"Big Box" Retail – Large retail stores of over 35,000 square feet that draw customers from a large area and are typically surrounded by parking lots.

Brownfield – An abandoned, idled or under-used industrial or commercial site where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination, such as groundwater or soil pollution.

Buffer or Buffer Strip -- Landscaped areas, fences, walls, berms, open spaces or any combination of these used to physically separate or screen one land use or piece of property from another. Buffers are commonly used to block noise or light.

Building Envelope. The shape and dimensions (height, width, and depth) of a structure.

Built Environment -- The urban environment consisting of buildings, roads, fixtures, parks, and all other improvements that form the physical character of a city.

C

Capacity -- The potential for sharing assets, resources, gifts and talents. To reach capacity, people and organizations must be willing to share these assets for community building.

Capacity Building – The mobilization of individual and organizational assets from the community and combining those assets with others to achieve community building goals.

Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) -- Chatham County's public transit provider. CAT offers bus, ferry, and paratransit services.

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) -- The joint planning agency for the City of Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County.

Chatham Urban Transportation Study (CUTS) -- The designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Savannah Urbanized Area and all of Chatham County. CUTS is responsible for local transportation planning and project selection.

Charrette -- An intensive design process in which all project stakeholders collaborate at the beginning of a project in order to develop a comprehensive plan or design.

Citizen Participation -- Allows decision-makers to obtain community input and contribution in the planning process. Conventional citizen participation has often been reactive, with an opportunity for public input only after the release of a draft community plan. An increasing number of urban planners and consultants are working to make citizen participation proactive, allowing citizens to provide input and guidance throughout the plan-making process. With proactive participation, citizens are vital contributors who define a community's development vision as well as identify implementation strategies. Among the numerous methods for citizen participation include public meetings and workshops; surveys and polls; focus groups; participation in online forums; interviewing; study circles; design charettes and visual preferences. (EPA)

Community Assessment -- All inclusive information gathering and sharing about the community: needs, resources, gaps, environment, economy, etc.

Community Building -- The process through which people and organizations from throughout the community come together to envision how their ideal community should look and begin to develop plans to mobilize all of the community's resources in order to achieve their visions.

Community Development -- Involves the ways, models and paths that communities, cities and services take to develop geographic communities or communities of interest physically, economically and socially.

Community Water System (CWS) -- Public water systems provide water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances to at least 15 service connections or serves an average of at least 25 people for at least 60 days a year. A public water system that supplies water to the same population year-round.

Comprehensive Plan -- The basic foundation for local planning. A document, or series of documents, it lays out a community's vision, long-term goals and objectives for guiding the future growth of the city. It describes where, how, and in some cases when development will occur, including land use changes and preparation of capital improvement programs. A comprehensive plan (also known as a master or general plan) helps cities reach goals such as the following: economic development (employment); efficient transportation; affordable and adequate housing; community and individual pride; and access to clean air, water and open space.

Congestion Management System (CMS) – A systematic way of monitoring, measuring and diagnosing the causes of congestion on a region's multi-modal transportation system.

Conservation Easement -- A voluntary restriction placed by a landowner on the use of his or her property. Used to protect resources such as historic structures, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, natural areas, scenic views or open spaces. The landowner retains title to the property, and the easement is donated to a qualified conservation organization, such as a land trust, or a government agency.

Context Sensitive Design (CSD) -- A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to the design of transportation corridors (highways in particular), in which stakeholders (from local officials and citizens to state interests) work together to balance objectives of mobility with those of safety, community aesthetics and environmental protection. It also emphasizes involving community stakeholders in the management and maintenance of transportation corridors. CSD shifts the emphasis from the street or the road and toward the way in which the street or road connects to the community, and makes the community a more economically stable, safe and productive. (Federal Highway Administration)

D

Demography -- The study of the size and composition of the human population.

Density -- The average number of families, persons or housing units per unit of land. Usually density is expressed "per acre". Gross density includes the area necessary for streets, schools and parks. Net density does not include land area for public facilities.

Diversity -- A balanced mix of people within a community with regard to income, race, ethnicity, age, and household characteristics.

E

Easement -- Access rights to a portion of a property for which the owner gives up his or her rights of development (such as a power line easement to a utility company).

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) -- Involves using, conserving and enhancing a community's resources in order to maintain the ecological processes on which life depends while increasing the total quality of life, now and in the future.

Environmental Impact Assessment -- A detailed examination of the potential effects of proposed public works, used to inform government decision making.

Environmental Racism -- The placing of a disproportionate number of hazardous facilities in areas populated primarily by poor people and people of color.

Estuary -- A narrow, semi-enclosed coastal body of water which has a free connection with the open sea at least intermittently and within which the salinity of the water is measurably different from the salinity in the open ocean.

F

Façade -- The exterior walls of a building that can be seen by the public.

Facilitator -- A person or group who supports another person or group by assisting them in discovering, developing and realizing their own direction, goals and outcomes.

Functional Classification -- A transportation classification system that describes a road's role in the roadway system. The functional classification system in Georgia is based on population density (rural or urban) and describes roads as various types of arterials, collectors, and local streets.

G

GDOT -- Georgia Department of Transportation

Gentrification -- The process whereby relatively affluent homebuyers, renters, and investors move into a neighborhood thus increasing property values, rents, or taxes

resulting in an involuntary displacement of long-term residents and business owners, the loss of neighborhood diversity, or a change in the overall character of that neighborhood.

Geographic Information System (GIS) -- A computer mapping system that produces multiple "layers" (coverages) of graphic information about a community or region. For example, one layer might show the parcels, another layer might show areas zoned for commercial uses, another layer might show school sites, etc. It can be used for analysis and decision-making, and is composed of maps, databases and point information.

Grayfield -- A blighted area that is ready for redevelopment. The main difference between a grayfield and a brownfield is that a grayfield does not have substantial groundwater or soil pollution.

H

Hammock, or Marsh Hammock -- A small land mass or back barrier island/tract of land located between the landward boundary of the barrier island complexes and the mainland.

Historic District -- An area or group of areas designated by a local agency as having aesthetic, architectural, historical, cultural or archaeological significance that is worthy of protection and enhancement.

Household -- Either:

1. A group of two or more related or unrelated people who usually reside in the same dwelling, who regard themselves as a household, and who make common provision for food or other essentials for living or;
2. A person who makes provision for his/her own food and other essentials for living, without combining with any other person to form part of a multi-person household.

Household Size -- The number of persons per household in any given area.

Hydromorphic Functionality -- The action of being able to routinely develop a soil that tends to suppress aerobic factors (usually in the presence of excess water).

I

Inclusionary Zoning -- Inclusionary zoning requires that some portion of every new housing development beyond a given threshold size (e.g., 40 units) is offered at a price that will be affordable to low income residents. The specifics of inclusionary zoning programs differ across jurisdictions. Programs typically ask or require developers to contribute to a community's affordable housing stock in exchange for development rights or zoning variances. Some programs are mandatory, while others provide incentives. Some involve cash contributions to an affordable housing fund, while others involve the construction of affordable units within the

development. Some waive regulatory requirements, such as parking space, or reimburse impact fees for developments.

Infill Development -- New residential development that occurs in established areas of the city or suburb, including vacant or underutilized lands. Infill can occur on long-time vacant lots or on pieces of land with dilapidated buildings, or can involve changing the land use of a property from a less to a more intensive one—from a parking lot to an office building. Among the variables in the definitions of infill development are whether the property must be surrounded by existing development or just within existing urban boundaries, whether infill projects must have a higher density than surrounding properties, and whether individual infill projects must be mixed use.

Infrastructure -- Describes public and quasi-public utilities and facilities such as roads, bridges, sewers and sewer plants, water lines, power lines, fire stations, etc. necessary to the functioning of an urban area.

Intermodal Transportation Systems – The mass transportation of freight or passengers, usually over long distances, and via more than one mode of transportation. The Port of Savannah, where freight is transferred between ships, trains and trucks, is an example of an intermodal transportation facility.

L

Landfill -- A disposal area where garbage is piled up and eventually covered with dirt and topsoil.

Land Use -- The manner in which land is used or occupied. See Volume I, Chapter 5 for definitions of land use categories.

Level of Service (LOS) – An indicator of a transportation facility’s overall operating efficiency. LOS categories range from A to F, with A representing free-flowing traffic conditions and F representing highly congested, stop-and-go traffic.

Low Impact Development (LID). Development with building and site designs that minimize environmental impacts through multiple, often natural systems rather than single, engineered systems. The term most often applied to stormwater management.

M

Marsh -- A tract of low-lying, soft, wet land commonly covered partially or wholly with water. It is usually found in a transition zone between land and water with grassy vegetation throughout.

Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) -- See “Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission”.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) -- A regional transportation planning agency charged by federal and state law to conduct comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous transportation planning. MPO's are required for all urbanized areas with populations exceeding 50,000.

Moratorium -- Legislative action that prevents a federal agency from taking a specific action or implementing a specific law.

Multi-Family -- A building that is designed to house more than one family. Examples include duplexes, condominiums and apartment buildings.

N

New Urbanism -- A set of site and building design principles that promote positive human interaction, create comfortable pedestrian and bicycle environments, and minimize land and resource consumption. (See www.cnu.org.)

Non-Community Water System – a non-community water system can fall into one of two categories. The first is a Non-Transient Non-Community Water System (NTNCWS): This is a public water system that regularly supplies water to at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year, but not year-round. Some examples are schools, factories, office buildings, and hospitals which have their own water systems.

The second category is a Transient Non-Community Water System (TNCWS): A public water system that provides water in a place such as a gas station or campground where people do not remain for long periods of time.

P

Public Realm -- Publicly owned or publicly accessible places, such as streetscapes, public parks, public facilities, and the pedestrian environment.

Public Transportation - various forms of shared-ride services, including buses, vans, trolleys, and subways, which are intended for conveying the public.

Q

Quality of Life -- Those aspects of the economic, social and physical environment that make a community a desirable place in which to live or do business. Quality of life factors include those such as climate and natural features, access to schools, housing, employment opportunities, medical facilities, cultural and recreational amenities, and public services.

R

Redevelopment -- The conversion of a building or project from an old use to a new one.

Riparian Buffer -- Corridors of natural vegetation along rivers, streams, creeks, salt water marshes, lakes and ponds that cross a property boundary. Buffers are capable of protecting the adjacent waterways by providing a transition zone between upland development and adjoining surface waters that then offer a variety of environmental, aesthetic, and economic benefits.

Right-Of-Way - The easement dedicated to a municipal use on either side of a publicly-owned street.

Risk Assessment -- Methods used to quantify risks to human health and the environment.

S

Setback -- Required by zoning, the minimum distance that must be maintained between two structures or between a structure and property lines.

Smart Growth -- A perspective, a method, and a goal for managing the growth of a community. It is a perspective that focuses on the long-term implications of growth and how it may affect the community, instead of viewing growth as an end in itself. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies the following 10 principles of smart growth:

1. Mix Land Uses
2. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design
3. Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
4. Create Walkable Neighborhoods
5. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
6. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty, and Critical Environmental Areas
7. Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
8. Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
9. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair, and Cost Effective
10. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decisions

Sprawl -- The process in which the spread of development across the landscape far outpaces population growth. The landscape sprawl creates has four dimensions: a population that is widely dispersed in low-density development; rigidly separated homes, shops, and workplaces; a network of roads marked by huge blocks and poor access; and a lack of well-defined, thriving activity centers, such as downtowns and town centers. Most of the other features usually associated with sprawl -- the lack of transportation choices, relative uniformity of housing options or the difficulty of walking -- are a result of these conditions. (Smart Growth America)

State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) – A document maintained by GDOT that lists all programmed transportation improvements in the state that will utilize federal funds. The STIP is an agglomeration of the TIPs (Transportation Improvements Programs) that are produced locally by the state’s various MPOs.

Stakeholders – People who are interested in, affected by or could possibly affect activities and outcomes related to a particular project.

Streetscape — The space between the buildings on either side of a street that defines its character. The elements of a streetscape include building frontage/facade; landscaping (trees, yards, bushes, plantings, etc.); sidewalks; street paving; street furniture (benches, kiosks, trash receptacles, fountains, etc); signs; awnings; street lighting.

Stormwater – Discharges generated by precipitation and runoff from land, pavements, building rooftops and other surfaces. Storm water runoff has the capabilities to accumulate pollutants such as oil and grease, chemicals, nutrients, metals, and bacteria as it travels across land.

Subdivision – The process whereby a parcel of land is divided into two or more parcels or alternatively multiple parcels are consolidate into one or more plans.

Sustainability – A concept and strategy by which communities seek economic development approaches that also benefit the local environment and quality of life. For a community to be truly sustainable, it must adopt a three-pronged approach that considers economic, environmental and cultural resources. Sustainable development provides a framework under which communities can use resources efficiently, create efficient infrastructures, protect and enhance the quality of life, and create new businesses to strengthen their economies. A sustainable community is achieved by a long-term and integrated approach to developing and achieving a healthy community by addressing economic, environmental, and social issues. Fostering a strong sense of community and building partnerships and consensus among key stakeholders are also important elements.

Sustainable Development – Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

T

TMDL – A calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards, and an allocation of that amount to the pollutant's sources.

Toxic Waste – Garbage or waste that can injure, poison or harm living things, and is sometimes life-threatening.

Traffic Calming – Refers to the use of street design techniques (such as curb extensions, traffic circles and speed humps) for slowing and controlling the flow of automobile traffic.

Transit – See public transportation.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) – A mixed-use community within walking distance of a transit stop that mixes residential, retail, office, open space and public uses in a way that makes it convenient to travel on foot or by public transportation instead of by car.

Transportation – Any means of conveying goods and people.

Transportation Planning – The system of improving the efficiency of the transportation network in order to enhance human access to goods and services.

U

Urban Areas – Generally characterized by moderate and higher density residential development (for example, 5 or more dwelling units per acre), commercial and industrial development.

Urban Growth Boundary – An Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is a mapped line that separates land on which development will be concentrated from land on which development will be discouraged or prohibited. Facilities and services necessary for urban development are typically located within the boundary, while service extensions outside the boundary are restricted.

Urban Planning – The system of managing and directing city growth.

Utilities – Companies (usually power distributors) permitted by a government agency to provide important public services (such as energy or water) to a region. As utilities are provided with a local monopoly, their prices are regulated by the permitting government agency.

W

Waste – Garbage, trash.

Water Quality – The level of purity of water; the safety or purity of drinking water.

Watershed – A region or area over which water flows into a particular lake, reservoir, stream, or river.

Wetland – Land where saturation with water is the dominant factor determining the nature of soil development and the types of plant and animal communities living in the soil and on its surface.

X

Xeriscape – A step-wise approach to water efficient landscaping that conserves water and protects the environment. The seven principles upon which Xeriscape landscaping is based are:

proper planning and design, soil analysis and improvement, appropriate plant selection, practical turf areas, efficient irrigation, use of mulches and appropriate maintenance.

Z

Zoning – Local codes regulating the use and development of property. The zoning ordinance divides the city or county into land use districts or "zones", represented on zoning maps, and specifies the allowable uses within each of those zones. It establishes development standards for each zone, such as minimum lot size, maximum height of structures, building setbacks, and yard size.