

# Mayor Michael Caldwell's 2024 State of the City Remarks

Welcome



Welcome to my third State of the City address here at the Woodstock Arts Theatre in downtown Woodstock. Before we begin, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Chairman Robyn Wright and IN WDSTK for making this event possible again this year.

For the first time, Visit Woodstock GA and the Downtown Development Authority are helping sponsor this morning's breakfast as well. Please join me in thanking Chairman Spencer Nix and his team for their support. I also want to extend a special thank you to Woodstock Arts for sharing their venue with us today. We are joined by some Special Guests today as well. I hope you'll join me in welcoming them this morning. Judge Robert Tidwell is here today. We've got the best judge in Georgia. My predecessor, a man who served with honor and distinction in this city for 20 years as a city councilman, and then for 16 years as our longest serving mayor, Mayor Donnie Henriques. Thank you, sir. Of our six council members, we have four with us here this morning. From post one, the post that we are sitting in today, I saw Councilman Warren Johnson is here. Welcome, sir. Thank you. For post two, my family's councilmember, Councilman David Potts. Welcome, sir. Our mayor Pro Tem, Councilman Colin Ake. And for post six Councilman Rob Usher, welcome sir. You know him, you love him. And as I have told you each year, he is the best city manager in the land. We've got Mr. Jeff Moon here with us. And with an unbelievably well-deserved promotion, we have a Deputy City Manager in the city now. Cody Thigpen, thanks.

This is the first I haven't written down what I was going to say about my wife, guys. She is an educator. She's a mother. She's an incredible wife but she has dedicated her time and her passion to expanding the presence of the arts here in the city. When you elected me, when you hired me, you hired a team and I genuinely believe we've got the best first lady that would say I could have ever asked for welcome, wife.

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## Introduction and State of the City

Members of the City Council, City Manager Moon, City Staff, and honored guests, my fellow Woodstockers: The Great American Experiment has always been a local story. The very idea of America was born in the hearts and minds of patriots in taverns scattered across the countryside not so different from the breweries and backyards we love here in our city. The American story is one of a backwoods coalition of colonies reshaping themselves into a global beacon of liberty and opportunity. The American Dream that anyone from any background can achieve anything they set their minds to is instilled in every one of us. It's a magnificent heritage and a perfect backdrop for a City Unexpected.

Council, we serve this city together in a time of great significance. More than any time in our city's history, Woodstock's destiny will be that of our own choosing. In these past two years, together, we have conceived and cut ribbons on generational infrastructure from roads and trails to parks and parking decks. We have designed and broken ground on a brand-new skyline for our city with a best-in-class city center. We have entered into historic agreements and put the contentions of yesterday behind us. We are working with our neighbors, our county, the state, and the region better than ever before. We made the largest investment in both our public safety officers and in our parks and trails in our city's 127-year history. We have accomplished all of this and more while maintaining historically low tax rates and emerging among the only local governments in Georgia that did not raise taxes last year. We stand a success story in a nation divided. While our sister cities see their crime rates rise, their storefronts shutter, and their children flee; we remain among the safest cities in Georgia, the most visited cities in the southeast, and an example for downtown development and placemaking throughout the United States. Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you today to report on the State of our City. I am proud to report that our city today remains financially secure, economically robust, artistically vibrant, and the sought-after home of go-getters and dreamers throughout the region.

### **The state of our city is optimistic, vibrant, and strong.**

We have worked hard to get here. This city unexpected boasts a story unexpected. As we embark on another new year, the world around us remains uncertain. Washington DC continues to pass problems on to the next generation. The macro economy has been unpredictable for nearly half a decade and I am not holding my breath for a predictable, stable Wall Street or Washington anytime soon.

My oldest son is here today. Oliver, stand up and say hello. His sisters are at home, but Oliver is nine years old and he's the kind of old soul that makes me feel behind. I don't know what he will grow up to do or be, but I can tell you that who and what he is makes me unbelievably proud to be his dad.

But I spend a lot of time thinking about that future lately. As we consider our next generation, what will be the state of their city? Objectively today's young workers are making more money than their parents did at their age, and they are objectively poorer than their parents were at their age. The dogma that every American generation will be better off than the one before is coming into question. Our city can't solve every issue facing America today, but we've never been one to shy away from a challenge. From the largest police pay increase in our city's history, to the largest parks investment in a century, to impossible growth boundary agreements, our city continues to solve the problems we face with record-breaking success. Let today be the moment that we promise to one another that we will build a city recommitted to the premise that

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our children should inherit more from us, not less. We owe it to them. We owe it to you, Oliver. Now let's get it done.

Last year, my administration laid out three main priorities for the coming years. We would continue to enhance our quality of life with the expansion of our parks and trails systems, we would focus on recruiting high-paying jobs and businesses, and we would concentrate our development efforts toward making American homeownership accessible for more of our citizens. We made more progress in the last year on parks and trails expansions in Woodstock than any single year in our history.

## PRIORITY: Parks and Trails Expansion



*Slide: Rendering of the future Little River Park*

Nearly a decade ago our Council acquired and assembled more than 100 acres of land stretching from Trickum Road, winding along both shores of Little River down to the Woodlands neighborhood on Highway 92. This expansive natural area more than doubled the amount of Woodstock-owned green space, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the City Council adopted plans to develop the space into a newly envisioned Little River Park. Little River Park will include miles of paved, boardwalk and natural trails, playgrounds, pavilions, fishing, outdoor learning space, greenspace, disc golf, hiking trails, a park office, visitor center and will tie into our master trail system. This is a best-in-class park offering unlike anything existing north of the perimeter today.

Just two years ago, it was simply in the concept stage. As the adage goes, vision without funding is hallucination, and for a time the dream of this park felt like just a dream. In 2022 the Council dedicated \$8 million from our upcoming SPLOST to complete phase one of three of the park, and in last year's State of the City I told you that we would ensure that the "Little River Park Coming Soon" signs posted on Trickum Road would actually mean soon. We came to you,

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the voters, with a referendum to issue bonds to make a \$24 million investment in the completion of this park and the expansion of trails throughout the entirety of the city.

This referendum represented the largest single investment in Woodstock's parks in our city's history. Woodstock's voters approved the measure with an 87% majority, the largest majority I have ever seen for a referendum of any kind in this state. On the same day, another major suburban city here in the metro Atlanta area saw its voters reject a parks bond referendum. Our citizens were clear: the completion of this park and the expansion of our trails is a central priority for Woodstock.



*Slide: Rendering of the future Little River Park playground*

I am proud to report that just two years into this mission, we have all the necessary funding allocated to take Little River Park to completion. The project is in the design and engineering stage now and we project completion of the project before the end of my first term.

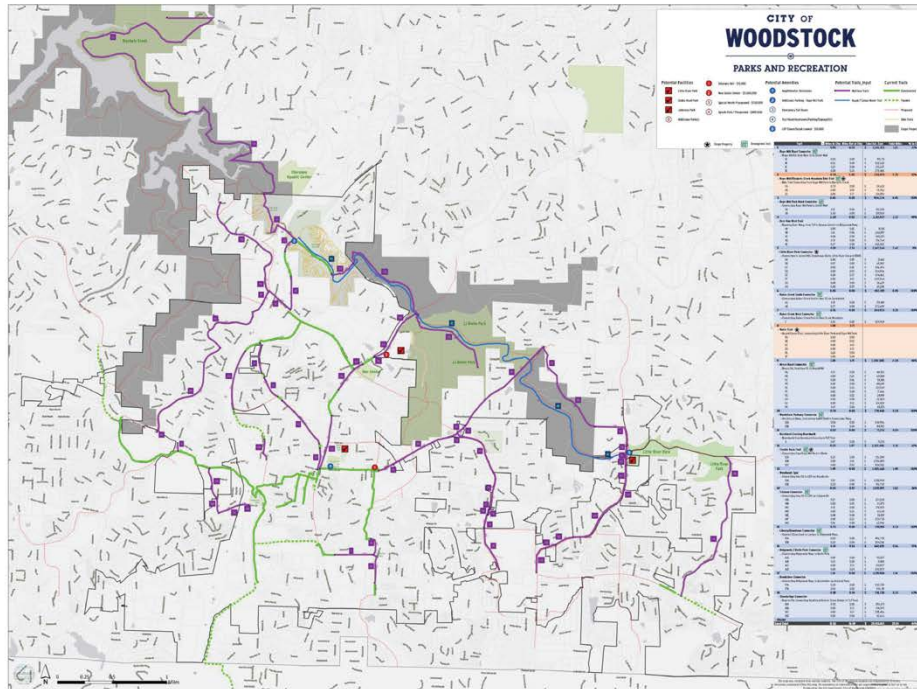
On behalf of the generations of Woodstock and all those across north Georgia who will benefit from this incredible asset, thank you.

Little River Park and the Parks Bond were by no means our only major accomplishments toward my parks and trails objective this year. For any of you and the thousands of others who enjoy the Noonday Creek Trail running from Reformation Brewery down to Highway 92, you may know that the City, Cherokee County, and Cobb County have been working for nine years to connect that trail from 92 down to Cobb's Noonday Park, which will connect us into the Silver Comet Trail. For those unfamiliar, that would mean you could walk or ride a bike from downtown Woodstock to Alabama without ever leaving the trail system.

Just before Christmas GDOT granted final approvals and our three jurisdictions put shovels in the ground. This project is no longer a concept. Construction is underway and our first step

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toward becoming the regional trail hub for north Georgia is complete. That trail extension into Cobb County is being built as we speak and is projected to be completed by early 2026.



*Slide: Parks and Recreation Map*

In addition to this trail segment, we now have the funding dedicated and are allocating resources to more trails like the Rubens Creek South and West Connectors, Neese Road, Arnold Mill Road and Little River Park connectors which will tie the eastern portion of our city into the system, a new water trail, and the long awaited Buckhead Crossing Boardwalk which will tie Deer Run into the city and county's trail systems.

We remain committed to delivering a best-in-class quality of life in Woodstock with world-class park offerings and by establishing the new epicenter of north Georgia's trail system. All trails will lead to Woodstock.

Let's thank our Parks and Recreation Director Mr. Brian Borden for his team's hard work getting us to this point, and for the hard work to come in getting these projects across the finish line.

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Slide: Audience at the Rick Springfield concert in 2023

Our Parks and Recreation team does so much for us. Thanks in many ways to their efforts, this city presents some of the best outdoor events and concert offerings in the region. If you haven't joined us for our Summer Concert Series yet, you're missing out. With more than 14,000 people in attendance at just one of our shows last year, this is a city that doesn't miss a party. And for the moment I know many of you come to this speech for, I'm excited to announce our 2024 lineup for the first time publicly:

A collage of promotional images for the Woodstock Summer Concert Series. The top left features the series logo: "WOODSTOCK Summer CONCERT SERIES" with a stylized sun and a blue key graphic. Below the logo are five individual promotional images for the 2024 lineup:

- MAY 11TH NIGHT RANGER**: A band performing on stage with a large red "NIGHT RANGER" sign in the background.
- JUNE 8TH GUARDIANS OF THE JUKEBOX W/ BLACK LION REGGAE**: A group of five performers on stage.
- JULY 13TH TONIC W/ THE VERVE PIPE**: Three men standing on stage.
- AUGUST 10TH WHO'S BAD**: A woman in a pink outfit and a man in a black jacket performing on stage.
- SEPTEMBER 14TH EDDIE MONTGOMERY W/ ACROSS THE WIDE**: Eddie Montgomery wearing a black hat and a patterned shirt.

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We'll open the season on May 11th with heavy-hitting rock legends Night Ranger whose anthems "Sister Christian," "(You Can Still) Rock In America," and "Don't Tell Me You Love Me" will electrify downtown Woodstock in this stop on their 40th anniversary tour. The fun continues on June 8th when local sensation Guardians of the Jukebox takes the stage with Black Lion Reggae. Tonic will be joined by fellow post-grunge icons The Verve Pipe at the July 13th concert. In August, Who's Bad's power-packed performance of Michael Jackson's catalog will ignite the crowd in the Northside Hospital-Cherokee Amphitheater on August 10th. Finally on September 14th, Eddie Montgomery of country duo Montgomery Gentry is sure to show Woodstock a good time. Thank you to our private sector partners for helping us deliver this incredible offering another year. This lineup is sure to be another record-breaking success.

## Infrastructure



*Slide: Towne Lake Pkwy/Mill Street roundabout*

Our city continues to rank among the most visited downtown destinations in the southeastern United States. Having been named - just in the last year - among WalletHub's Best Small Cities in America, Southern Living's Prettiest Small Towns in Georgia, and HOMEiA's 10 Best Places to Live in Georgia 2024 - Woodstock continues to attract people looking for an incredible place to live and raise a family from all around the nation. In 1990, our city had roughly 4,500 residents. Today, we stand just shy of 40,000 Woodstockers and rank the 20th largest city in Georgia.

Multiplying our population by ten times in the last three decades has certainly come with its set of challenges, but let's remember: problems with issues like traffic and parking are only present in places that people want to be. Our city today stands as a thriving community filled with life. So many other cities in our state and nation question their futures while their populations steadily

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decline. We will not try to solve congestion issues by closing the door behind us. Instead, we will continue to invest in our infrastructure while building a thriving City that welcomes those who enjoy our sense of community, our shared values, and our vision for the future.

In my first State of the City Address, I showed off Assistant City Manager Rob Hogan and his hard work on establishing our city's first-ever Citywide Comprehensive Transportation Plan. That plan changed our city's trajectory on infrastructure planning and execution and it continues to place us leaps and bounds ahead of sister jurisdictions. Then in last year's speech, I shared the time Mr. Hogan and I spent together meeting with GDOT and working toward major infrastructure projects like the Ridgewalk Diverging Diamond Interchange at I-575, which I'm proud to say is underway with a projected completion in 2026, and Neese Road improvements which are well underway. We discussed how close we were at that time to realizing his completed vision on the Hub Transformation project downtown which included the new Towne Lake Parkway roundabout and two-way traffic on Mill Street. We completed the project by converting Mill Street to two-way traffic in May of last year, and if you had listened to our friends from out of town on Cherokee Connect for the week leading up to the change you would have thought I had burned the city to the ground. It was impressive how quickly that died down though when people started to experience Main Street after the conversion. It turns out, Mr. Hogan and our engineers knew what they were doing. Traffic has dramatically improved on seven major arteries downtown, and the congestion that used to be caused by forcing visitors to make a double left turn on Main Street and Towne Lake Parkway to get back to the interstate is now a problem of the past.

These are just a few of the ways that Mr. Hogan's thought leadership has transformed our city for the better over his impressive career in Woodstock, which is why with his retirement in December, the City Council saw fit to announce the naming of the Robby Lee Hogan Pedestrian Plaza.



*Slide: Pedestrian plaza rendering*



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Among the largest remaining causes of traffic in downtown Woodstock are the large number of pedestrians crossing Main Street at multiple intersections - some of which are timed, some of which are lit, some of which are frogger-style free-for-alls. We are designing a conversion of the Elm Street corridor to a pedestrian plaza which will align with our primary crosswalk on Main Street. Once complete, we will divert crossings to this central location.



*Slide: Pedestrian plaza rendering*

This will create a significantly more pedestrian-safe and friendly experience on Main Street while simultaneously creating a more efficient, less-white-knuckled driving experience through the center of our town. It is only fitting that a project that will improve both the traffic flow and the quality of life for those enjoying our downtown would be named for Mr. Hogan. He has more than earned it.

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PRIORITY: Commercial Diversity



*Slide: Rendering of Woodstock City Center*

We have continued to make progress on my second major priority of building a stronger commercial base and recruiting new, high-paying jobs into our city as well. Our City Center development represents a major investment in both our city's infrastructure and the next generation of our city's economy.

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*Slide: Rendering of Woodstock City Center*

In April, we finally broke ground on this generational opportunity, and with the help of our private sector partners, we are well underway. We have completed the extension of Chambers Street to Arnold Mill Road and cut the ribbon on Depot Square, a brand-new public gathering space between the new development and our historic Freight Depot.



*Slide: Depot Square*

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In the heart of a project that brings tens of thousands of square feet of new office, new restaurants, new retail, a new hotel, conference space and a six-floor parking deck with more than six hundred spaces, it feels fitting that we would position a new community space between our city's oldest and newest structures. Our 1897 charter set the freight depot as the legal center of our city. Depot Square sits between our city's historic center and our newest, skyline defining ambitions.

The foundational structure is being laid for the public parking deck and the remainder of the private development now. The project is projected to complete with hotel construction wrapping up in just a few short years, the majority of the restaurants, retail and office completing in late 2025, and the parking deck is slated to open before the end of this calendar year.



Slide: Business Revenues

As we continue recruiting new employers into our city, it has been so exciting to see the interest in our city center's office space. The majority of the space has already been spoken for, and that part of the development hasn't even started.

Our economy is growing like never before. Our city's business revenues have grown from \$2.2 billion in 2017 to \$3.7 billion in 2022 and we issued 419 new business licenses last year, up from 350 in 2022. Our city is continuing to attract new business, which will continue to allow us to build a community that truly lives where we live. Our state was named the Best State in which to do Business for a record-breaking tenth year in a row. We're intent on making certain that Woodstock's business, entrepreneurial and commercial health is just as robust and exciting as the rest of our culture.

Take it from me. Most of you know that I own a business right here in the heart of downtown. We do work for companies all around the world, and I can tell you from experience that a life where you can walk to work is one you'll want to lead. Without a doubt, it's the life your employees want to lead. They live, or want to live, here. If you're one of the many Woodstockers

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who own a business in a county south of here because that was the place to be two decades ago, give me a shot. Coffee's on me. This is where you want to be.



*Slide: Mayor with other Officers and Executive Director of Atlanta Regional Commission*

## ARC

For the past two years, the Mayors of Cherokee County have elected me to represent our county on the Atlanta Regional Commission. The ARC represents 5.1 million people across 11 counties, allocating billions of dollars toward services spanning infrastructure, planning, senior services, homeland security and more. This year, my colleagues elected Mayor Andre Dickens of Atlanta the Chairman of the ARC, and I am very grateful that he and my colleagues have appointed me to serve as the Vice Chairman of the Commission. This is the first time that a Mayor from Cherokee County has served in this role and it represents the growing voice that Woodstock and Cherokee County have in shaping the future of metro Atlanta and Georgia. Our CEO Anna Roach who joined us here for my State of the City last year has set forward the vision of One GREAT Region, and I am excited to get to work with my colleagues to cement Woodstock's place in that future.

## Public Safety

### Police

Every year the ARC conducts the Metro Atlanta Speaks survey. The study is conducted with Kennesaw State and this year asked 21 questions of 4,852 citizens across metro Atlanta. For the second year in a row, respondents stated that the biggest challenge facing our region today

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is crime. As crime rates have spiked in cities across the nation over the past several years, the simple truth is that our neighbors still do not feel as safe as they did several years before.



*Slide: Woodstock Police Officers*

In Woodstock though, we continue to see our crime rates decline. From 2010 to 2020, our city saw population increase from 23,000 to more than 35,000. In the same time period we saw a reduction in crime by 45%. Our city sits just shy of 40,000 residents now, and in the last year, we saw another 1.5% reduction in our crime rate. Despite the national pattern, and even as Woodstock becomes one of the most visited downtown destinations in Georgia, our city continues to be safe, well-patrolled and free from fear.

We owe this to the men and women of the Woodstock Police Department who under the leadership of Chief Robert Jones and his command staff continue to keep our families safe each and every day. Please help me thank Woodstock's Finest for their service to our city.

With 57 sworn officer roles in our city, when I came into office we had a record 15 open officer vacancies. Across the country, departments were finding it more and more difficult to recruit new officers, and our department's vacancies exceeded 26% in 2022. Left unaddressed, this critical shortage would have had dire consequences on our city's safe atmosphere. I want to take another opportunity to thank our Council for stepping up last year with a record-setting 26% starting pay increase for Woodstock Police Officers, and I am thrilled to announce that in addition to showing our care for our brave officers, the move had its desired effect. Our department is fully staffed and at full force for the first time in more than ten years. Congratulations, Chief and department. We're proud of you and grateful for you.

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## Fire

During last year's address, you helped me recognize and celebrate three decades of outstanding service by our now-retired Fire Chief Dave Soumas. Chief Soumas largely defined our modern fire department through the course of his career, and it was critically important that we found a leader who could follow his exemplary record of service.



*Slide: Woodstock Fire Chief Shane Dobson*

Chief Shane Dobson joined us in April from the Roswell Fire Department with an impressive 30+ year career firefighting in departments across metro Atlanta. He has served as a Deputy Chief in both Roswell and Dekalb County and began his career as a firefighter right here in the City of Woodstock in 1993. He has already had a tremendous impact here in our department, and I am so excited that we were able to bring back a hometown original to lead Woodstock's Bravest. Chief, Welcome!

During his first nine months here as Woodstock's Fire Chief, he has worked with Council to completely restructure the department. This included an overhaul of the ranking system and the establishment of new job descriptions for every employee to better align with industry standards as well as the creation of a new Community Risk Reduction Division. The Department also underwent an ISO evaluation and maintained our ISO Rating of 1. This fire score ranks how prepared your fire department is to respond when needed, and with more than 50,000 departments nationwide graded by ISO there are only about 450 departments with the best rating of 1. That places Woodstock in the top 1% of fire departments in the nation, better prepared than ever before to protect our citizens. Please join me in thanking the truly elite men and women of the Woodstock Fire Department.

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## PRIORITY: American Home Ownership



*Slide: Townhomes in Woodstock*

The third priority of my administration has been making the American dream of home ownership available to more of our citizens. As we look forward to the state of our city for the next generation, we look back to find the success factors that gave our nation the largest middle class in world history. With housing prices skyrocketing, interest rates at generational highs, and a housing inventory more limited than ever, we are watching the erosion of the bedrock of our middle class.

For the past three generations, every level of government - federal, state, and local - has joined the private sector to make home ownership a fundamental public policy priority. Why? Because wealth is rarely built on salary alone. Wealth is built with appreciating assets - the very cornerstone of capitalism itself. Here in the United States, we made a family's home the universally accessible appreciating asset. It became the model by which any family could build generational wealth and leave the next generation better off than themselves. The model worked, it built the largest middle class in the world, and in the same 75-year time period we saw the longest period of geopolitical stability in modern history. When average Americans are building wealth for themselves, we see political stability, and American stability is good for the world. Today, that is under threat, and it must be a priority for every jurisdiction.

As we discussed at the beginning: our young professionals are objectively making more money than their parents did at their age. They are objectively poorer than their parents were. Despite their parents' insistence that they should have saved like they did, that just isn't true. The largest differentiator in most cases is when they bought a home. This is why the ownership / rentership ratio continues to be a priority focus for our city. If we want to build a financially sustainable city and nation, we need to build financially stable people.



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We will do that here in Woodstock by ensuring the development that comes into our city concentrates on product that builds wealth for the families that live in it. Although starter homes in a city like Woodstock may not come with two-acre plots and white picket fences, a young professional or a new family in a condo or townhome that they own is much more likely to see a financially independent and healthy future than those who are forced to rent. In our city, we will care less about how many walls a home shares than who owns the home. Is it building wealth for Woodstock families or is it shipping Woodstock families' wealth away? We will continue to build the economic engine that built modern America, and in doing so we will leave our next generation better prepared to meet tomorrow.

Last year I asked for your help in this endeavor by reaching out to your state legislators to ask them not to ban local governments from permitting housing products differently in their jurisdictions. I personally spent time with colleagues from the Georgia Municipal Association last year speaking to legislators and testifying in my old stomping grounds at the capitol to House Committees on the legislation. The bills did not move forward last year, and this year's product has brought local governments to the table to help craft affordability measures rather than taking a one size fits all approach. To each of you who helped in that endeavor, I thank you. Mayor Pro Tem Ake and I both serve on the GMA Board of Directors now and will continue to work to be sure Woodstock's voice is heard throughout the state on issues like this. I also served on the ARC's Local Leadership Housing Action Committee - or for the worst acronym of the day - LLHAC - to develop new policy concepts for affordability in housing for our region.

Purchasing a home is hard. It should be hard. We should like that it's hard. Pride comes in achievement. But it must be achievable, and here in Woodstock we will continue to endeavor with our private sector partners to make it so. As our parents and grandparents did for us, we owe it to this generation.

## Low Taxes/Credit Ratings



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Our city is well positioned to address major issues that truly matter. From infrastructure and parks to jobs and housing, we can step up in moments that matter because our city remains fiscally responsible and financially stable. After years of fiscally prudent public policy from our City Council and city management, Woodstock remained the only local government that I am aware of in the entire state of Georgia not to raise your property taxes in 2023. While maintaining historically low tax rates, our city has more than doubled our unassigned general fund balance in the last two years. That's our savings. Obviously, these are stellar fiscal outcomes, but in December we saw a truly extraordinary win when both Moody's and S&P increased Woodstock's credit rating to Aa1 and AA+. According to the credit agencies, improving economic metrics, sustained reserve levels, and an improving debt profile were just a few of the positive indicators that make the financial world bullish on Woodstock. Our city now sits just one level shy of having a perfect credit rating, which represents real savings for our taxpayers and exemplifies excellent financial stewardship. To our Council, our city leadership, and our CFO Mr. Ron Shelby: Thank you for building a strong financial foundation upon which we can do the work of our citizens!

## Mission Statement



*Slide: Downtown Woodstock*

Our city leadership just returned from our annual retreat this week. During several days of policy discussions and spending time with the incredible men and women who have built this incredible place, our recently promoted Deputy City Manager Coty Thigpen led the group of elected officials and staff leadership in an exercise to redefine our city's mission and vision statements. After a few days of exploring what makes Woodstock Woodstock and why our team, residents and business owners are so motivated to make it better each and every day, we ended with this.

Our city's mission: We are building a city that feels like home.

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Whether you crave that safe feeling that comes with letting your five year old run a few steps ahead of you on the sidewalk in a town where you know that any of your neighbors would help them brush off a scraped knee, or the comfort of a song you remember streaming out of your favorite restaurant, or just the feeling under your feet of the grass on the elm street green where your friends were married in a small ceremony, your favorite new band played to a sold out show and your church sang silent night over their candles; Woodstock ranks among the largest cities in Georgia and still delivers that know-it-when-you-feel-it feeling of home. Our vision is to boldly pursue what's next to build a thriving community.



Slide: What's next?

What's next? Our city is a challenger brand. We are Alpharetta's Hot Cousin and the arts capital of north Georgia. We're the railroad stop from the 1800's and now the largest city in Georgia's 7th largest county. We will raise up best-in-class parks and cutting-edge infrastructure to ensure the quality of life in Woodstock remains unrivaled. We will call on dreamers and job creators from across our region to build their businesses here. We will engage the largest wealth generating mechanism in human history - home ownership - to create a strong future and a financially free people. We will be a city that does not stop at reflecting on the state of *our* city but leans forward to imagine the state of *our children's* city. We will relentlessly, boldly pursue what's next in the story of our home.

This incredible narrative began long before us, and it will undoubtedly live beyond us. The decisions we make and the stories we tell will shape this place for those who come after, and our bold, collaborative, authentic City Unexpected will surely rise to the challenge.

As we claim our wins and look to the future, there is but one question we ask: **What's next?**