Recruiting for a Planning & Development Director
The City of Winder is located in central Barrow County and is an outdoor enthusiast’s dream destination. With 18 miles of hiking and biking trails, a 260-acre lake for swimming, fishing and boating and a wooded disc golf course, it’s easy to spend an entire weekend in the park. In addition, Winder has an 18 hole golf course for citizens to enjoy.

Winder has changed so much in a short amount of time. Once known as “The Work Clothing Capital of the World”, now Old Town Winder is becoming a new mecca for millennials. Downtown Winder is thriving with new restaurants and family friendly attractions. The casual sophistication of Winder is drawing young families into residential neighborhoods. Winder was recently listed in the top 15 of growth cities in the state of Georgia.

Opportunity and innovation are two words that describe education in Barrow County. With diverse offerings of public schools, private academies and higher education opportunities, students find the right program to meet their individual needs.

Barrow County schools is one of the fastest growing school systems in the Southeast. The system’s growth has not distracted from one of the guiding principles of education – creating innovative programs that foster greater learning and better student outcomes. Innovation is a hallmark of the school system. Over the last decade it has deployed cutting edge technology, as well as incorporated arts and science to give teachers new methods for teaching.

Other attractions and points of interest include The Chimneys Golf Course, Winder-Barrow History Museum and the Colleen O. Williams Theatre and Cultural Arts Center. The City has a vibrant and charming downtown with a variety of shopping and dining options. One of a kind boutiques, home décor shops, and book stores are among the shopping selections.
About the Government

The City of Winder is a full-service municipality that operates under a Council/Administrator form of government. The Mayor and Council set the policies, enact ordinances, approve appropriations and develop the overall vision, which is then carried out under the City Administrator’s direction. The Mayor is elected at-large; the six member Council is elected with a combination of at-large and single member wards.

The position of City Administrator is appointed by the mayor and council. The City Administrator is responsible for directing the daily operations of all city departments, and works closely with the Mayor and Council to ensure the vision of the City of Winder's elected officials is realized. The Planning and Development Director reports to the City Administrator. The Winder Planning Board consists of seven members appointed by the Mayor and Council. The primary role of the Planning Board is advisory in nature, but the board is a vital part of the planning process of the city. In general, the Winder Planning Board's responsibilities are to hold public hearings, make recommendations to the Mayor and Council on zoning matters, and make recommendations concerning other matters coming before that body.
About the Position:

The City of Winder Planning Department is tasked with the responsibility of administering the City of Winder’s Zoning and Development Regulations. The department maintains a zoning map of all zoning categories within the city, and answers all zoning and development questions from developers, the general public and other government employees.

The Planning and Development Director will be required to function with a high degree of independence, utilize sound professional judgement, and demonstrate planning and organizational skills to establish and manage priorities, programs, and staff. The Planning and Development Director shall be committed to the mission, vision, and values of the City and demonstrate ethical conduct, community stewardship, individual initiative, and responsive service. This position is responsible for all city planning and development services and activities, including land development, comprehensive long and short term planning, and recommends and administers planning activities, ordinance development, policies, and procedures. Duties include, but are not limited to the following:

- Provides information to the public regarding zoning and land use regulations, permitting processes, site requirements, subdivision platting, and other development requirements/processes.
- Explains planning and permitting processes and regulations to citizens, property owners, realtors, consultants, developers, and the general public; this includes zoning changes, plats, site plans, variances, conditional use permits, rezones, annexations and all other planning and permitting processes.
- Directs and coordinates requests for assistance from other departments, government agencies, and private organizations.
- Directs and oversees the coordination of the department budget.
- Prepares various technical reports and recommendations regarding department matters to the Mayor and Council, Planning Board, City Administrator, and other government agencies and stakeholders.
- Acts as City representative on behalf of the Mayor and Council on local, state, and regional matters related to planning, land use, development, and related matters.
- Represents the City on technical issues for the Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Department of Transportation, and other planning agencies and related matters.
- Prepares grant applications and various alternate funding mechanisms in the area of planning, development, and zoning projects.
- Selects, supervises, and evaluates Department personnel; oversees employee relations and grievances and oversees supervisory training and staff development programs.
- Develops “non-traditional” technical and planning procedures and operations in pursuit of efficient use of public funds.
- Reviews applications for zoning permits, site plans, subdivision plats, annexations, rezoning, variances, and other development plans, ensuring conformance with City regulations and provides comments and recommendations.
The Ideal Candidate

The new Planning and Development Director will be able to demonstrate effective performance through clear, concise communication; collaboration; proper allocation and utilization of resources; sound decision-making; personal accountability; and responsibility.

The new Director will have a thorough understanding and knowledge of planning, zoning, and land use principles, including the interpretation and implementation of laws, codes, rules, and regulations.

In addition, the Director should be skilled in providing positive, solutions-oriented, and effective customer service and promoting a culture of teamwork by treating coworkers, stakeholders, and applicants with respect and dignity and engaging in open dialogue with diverse voices.

Candidate Qualifications

• Bachelor’s degree in planning, public or business administration, urban policy, civil engineering or a closely related field, with a Master's degree preferred
• A minimum of five (5) years of progressively responsible planning experiencing including administration and/or zoning; or equivalent training, education, and/or experience is required
• Three years of Supervisory experience is preferred.
• AICP certification preferred or the ability to obtain certification within two years.
Challenges & Opportunities:

The new Planning and Development Director will be expected to provide leadership and/or significant input to the following planning issues:

- The Director should establish short/long range goals and articulate a vision for the Department that gives priority to a new level of strategic planning while continuing to serve the public’s need for permit and license issuance. The vision should include the expectation that Department staff will provide quality customer service that values helping customers get to “yes” when possible and work in a manner that demonstrates transparency to the elected officials and the public they serve.

- The City’s Comprehensive Plan needs to be reviewed and enhanced to be more focused on the unique needs of Winder without losing the value of its connection to community planning with Barrow County. The Director will be tasked to work with the Mayor & Council, Winder’s management team, and local stakeholders to ensure the plan is the foundation for the community’s response to growth pressures related to increased population and future annexations. The plan should clearly incorporate the City’s infrastructure, utility, and financial plans as critical components for all future development decisions.

- The Director should research proven best practices in other communities to evaluate Winder’s Plan Review process and implement changes that will ensure efficiency, quality customer service, and enhanced use of technology.

- The City is expected to receive an initial draft of its Greenway/Trails Plan in March and has recently contracted with a consulting firm to develop its first Downtown Master Plan. The Director will play a major role in helping to refine and implement these plans by working with elected officials, Downtown Development Authority, City Economic Development staff, and stakeholders.

- Although the City is a part of the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing, it has not been actively addressing housing issues through the program or using other housing tools that may be available to the City. The Director will be tasked with assessing housing needs and developing recommendations for meeting those identified needs.

- Currently Winder is not using Tax Allocation Districts, Community Improvement Districts, or Enterprise Zones. The Director will be expected to evaluate Winder’s use of these development tools and work with Economic Development staff along with the DDA to make recommendations to the Mayor & Council for their implementation if appropriate.
Challenges and Opportunities Continued:

- The new Director will have the opportunity to redirect the Department, which is minimally staffed and has been primarily permit issuance and plan process oriented, into a department whose major focus will be strategic planning. The Mayor, Council, and City Administrator are supportive of providing the resources necessary to transition the department to this next level of service and vision. The Director will be encouraged to be a self-starter and provide objective recommendations that encourage visionary development decisions that support the identity, character, and important values of the Winder community.

- The new Director will need to develop a professional supportive working relationship with the Planning Commission and Mayor & Council that helps them fully understand their unique roles in the planning and development process, ensures their compliance with statutory and ordinance planning requirements, and provides objective accurate information to assist their decision making.
Compensation & Benefits:

The expected starting salary range for this position is between $80,000 – 95,000 (depending on qualifications of the selected candidate), with a comprehensive benefits package, including health, dental and vision insurance options. City provides employer paid short-term disability, long-term disability, and basic life insurance. The retirement plan is a 457 deferred compensation plan and defined contribution plan to which the City contributes 3% of eligible pay and matches employee contributions up to 3%. The City has generous paid time off programs and offers a Wellness and Employee Assistance Program. Relocation expenses negotiable.

How To Apply:

Interested candidates must submit by email a cover letter, resume, at least five job related references and salary history no later than March 8, 2021 to: Lisa Ward, Senior Vice President, The Mercer Group, Inc., at lisaward912@gmail.com. Any questions please call 706-983-9326. Interviews are expected to be conducted the first week of April 2021.

The Mercer Group, Inc.

W. Alan Reddish, Senior Vice President
107 Indigo Lane, Athens, Ga. 30606
Cell: 706-614-4961