



PlanFirst Program RENEWAL Application - Due May 15, 2026

Introduction: The Department of Community Affairs' PlanFirst program recognizes local governments that clearly demonstrate success with implementing their Local Comprehensive Plan. In order to apply for PlanFirst designation, a local government must have participated in at least two Local Comprehensive Plan update cycles, have Qualified Local Government certification and be current on required reporting to DCA. *Before you begin the application process, you must inquire with the Office of Planning at planning@dca.ga.gov regarding your historic performance status and prerequisites by April 15th.* Simply email, "I'm checking on the eligibility for PlanFirst for my community of (XXXXX)." to planning@dca.ga.gov

A multi-agency review panel will evaluate a number of indicators of community success with plan implementation to select communities for this designation. All of these indicators are equally important, but size of the community is taken into consideration in the evaluation so that communities of various sizes are equally competitive for PlanFirst designation.

Instructions: Please answer all the following questions thoroughly. Attach additional pages where necessary, so that the reviewers have sufficient information to measure the success of your Local Comprehensive Plan implementation. Supporting documents might include news articles, legal ads, lists of attendees, letters of support or other evidence of local involvement and commitment to successful plan implementation activities in your community. *Total application length, including supporting information and support letters, must not exceed 18 pages. Text areas will expand as needed.* Please send your application as one document, not to exceed 18 pages. Please do not send separate files.

Note: This application should only be used by governments applying for re-designation. Those jurisdictions applying for PlanFirst designation for the first time should use the application available at <https://dca.georgia.gov/community-assistance/coordinated-planning/local-planning/planfirst>

Applicant government	
Mailing address	
Telephone	
Email	
Contact person; title	
Application prepared by	
I, the undersigned authorized representative of the applicant, certify that to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is true and correct.	
Name of authorized official signing	
Title of authorized official signing	
Date	
Signature	

PREREQUISITES
(to be filled out and determined by DCA staff only)

1. Applicant has participated in at least two Local Comprehensive Plan update cycles.
Yes No

2. Applicant has a consistent record of maintaining their Qualified Local Government status **and** submitting required reports associated with their QLG status to DCA, including the current Report of Local Government Finances. *(Within ten years, applicant cannot lose status more than twice and/or not more than four weeks collectively).*
Yes No

3. The Applicant has attained the Minimum Standard for performance as called for in their Regional Commission's Regional Comprehensive Plan.
Yes No

4. The Work Programs included in the Local Comprehensive Plans consist primarily of specific action items that make it clear exactly what the community intends to do to implement their Local Comprehensive Plan.
Yes No

5. The Applicant is consistently among the top performing local governments within the state for implementation of projects listed in your Local Comprehensive Plan's Community Work Program.
Yes No

6. The Applicant has either a zoning ordinance or other district-based development regulations.
Yes No

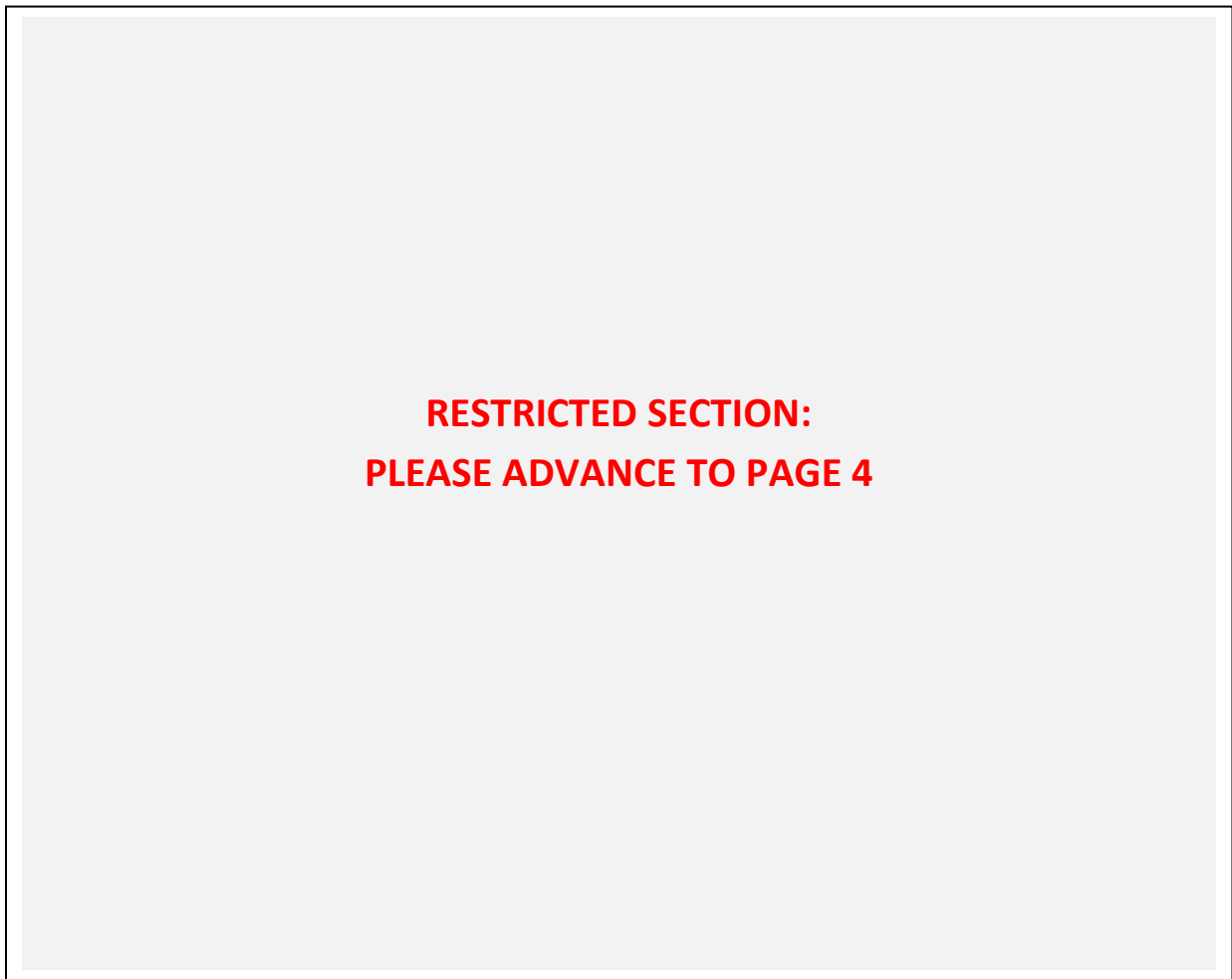
7. When was the community designated into the PlanFirst program?

Circle all that apply: 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024

Additional instructions for filling out the application: There are five major indicators listed in the application. They are:

1. **Goals:** The Goals Element details the over-arching concepts envisioned in the Local Comprehensive Plan and carried out in the action and implementation elements of the Plan.
2. **Leadership:** Leadership guides the Local Comprehensive Planning process and they also ensure that the plan is implemented by guiding day-to-day decision making.
3. **Participation:** Each element of the Local Comprehensive Plan must be prepared with opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders and the general public, ensuring that the plan reflects community needs and values.
4. **Implementation:** Your Local Comprehensive Plan should lay out specific activities that the community plans to undertake following adoption.
5. **Impact:** In accordance with the PlanFirst Memorandum of Agreement, the PlanFirst designation should positively impact your community, educate your leaders and citizens as well as further assist with implementing your comprehensive plan as you strive for excellence.

Answer the indicators below. Each indicator will be scored based on a scale from 0-5 points, except indicator G, which may score up to 10 points. Add exhibits, examples, and photographs as needed to tell your story. Do not exceed 18 pages. **FONT SIZE MUST BE 11 POINTS. Do not manipulate questions font, size, or margins. Answers must begin on page 4.**



INDICATOR: GOALS

Responses in this section should draw upon information in the Goals Element of your current and previous comprehensive plan (updates).

A. Since your initial PlanFirst designation, demonstrate how your Goals and Vision Element continues to push your community to strive for planning excellence. In particular, focus your response on your local leadership’s work towards ambitious goals. For example, show how goals continue to influence decisions made by local leadership, and how community organizations and other partners continue to support goals stated in your Local Comprehensive Plan. Give examples of how your local leadership and your community supports and endorses your goals.

INDICATOR: LEADERSHIP

Some of your responses in this section should draw upon information in the Goals Element, Needs and Opportunities Element, and Community Work Program element of your current and previous comprehensive plan (updates).

B. Since your initial PlanFirst designation, how have you assessed your staffing arrangements (local staff or contracted relationship) and planning processes to ensure that they continue to move the community towards the goals it set for itself and the local comprehensive plan? Focus on any changes that might positively augment your ability to implement your comprehensive plan. Explain why (using examples) your current arrangement works for your local government. If there were no changes, please provide a reason (examples) as to why no changes were necessary.

C. Since your initial PlanFirst designation, demonstrate how your planning Commission or similar body has steered local planning decisions. Include examples of decisions or actions by the planning Commission or similar body that were driven primarily by the Local Comprehensive Plan. Include comprehensive plan references and page numbers.

D. Within the table below, list local elected and appointed officials (not including hired or contracted staff) involved in local planning processes, who have recently (within the last 3 years) attended training on how to use the Local Comprehensive Plan effectively. These trainings may include those from DCA’s Community Planning Institute, the Georgia Academy, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Regional Commission, GAZA, GMA or ACCG or other professional organizations that specifically address land use or planning topics. Add more rows and an explanation if necessary.

Elected/Appointed Official, Name & Title	Course Name	Agency Sponsoring the Event	Dates

E. DCA encourages the coordination of local comprehensive planning and implementation. Since your initial PlanFirst designation, discuss ongoing or new collaborative efforts to achieve shared Goals, Needs and Opportunities, and/or projects listed in your Community Work Program that have been identified in your Local Comprehensive Plan. Partners may include but are not limited to: neighboring communities (municipal and county governments), The Chamber of Commerce, Regional Commission, or Development Authority. Include references and page numbers, to be used as documentation, from your current or previous Local Comprehensive Plan. You may also attach letters of support from your partnering organizations, providing specific examples of collaborative efforts.

INDICATOR: PARTICIPATION

Responses in this section should draw upon information in the Goals Element, Needs and Opportunities Element, and Community Work Program element of your current and previous comprehensive plan/updates.

F. Describe your work to continue to actively involve your community in the effort to implement and, if applicable, update your Local Comprehensive Plan. Provide specific details about your efforts to engage hard to reach populations, and underrepresented groups and voices. You may provide information and/or documentation that illustrates your community involvement. Examples include: photos, agendas, sign-in sheets, survey results, and other meeting materials.

INDICATOR: IMPLEMENTATION

Responses in this section should draw upon information in the Community Work Program, Goals Element, and the Needs and Opportunities Element of your current and previous comprehensive plan/updates.

G. Provide five examples of projects you have implemented since your initial PlanFirst designation that are moving your community towards effectively achieving its Goals and addressing its Needs and Opportunities. You may include Success Stories you've submitted to DCA. You may also include photographs, newspaper articles or other exhibits to elaborate on these examples. Include comprehensive plan references and page numbers.

INDICATOR: IMPACT

Demonstrate how the PF designation has made a positive impact in your community and how the incentives have positively affected your community.

H. Has anyone in your community taken advantage of the two free registration opportunities to attend the Community Planning Institute (CPI)? If so who, when, and where? What was gained from attending CPI?

I. Since your initial PlanFirst designation, has your community applied for any of the PlanFirst incentives? Those incentives include: the HUD Community Block Grant program (CDBG), the Employment Incentive Program (EIP), the Redevelopment Fund Program (RDF), the Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund Program (DDRLF), Community HOME Investment Program

(CHIP), Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), and/or the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) state loans. Please list within the table below. Add more rows and an explanation if necessary.

Program	Project	Year Applied	Comp Plan Page Reference	Did you receive the award? Y/N	Award Amount Received

J. Since your initial PlanFirst designation, give three examples how you and your leadership have publicly promoted the Local Comprehensive Plan fostering local access to the Plan by making it generally available to your community. (In addition, if your Local Comprehensive Plan is on your community’s website, please provide the website URL.)

K. Discuss several examples of the efforts/successes you’ve achieved in the past three years, in meeting the excellence performance standards in your Regional Commission’s Regional plan. Examples are specific ordinances, programs, or requirements your Regional Commission has established, and for local governments to implement, that will assist in realizing the Regional vision. You can reach out to your Regional Commission to find this information. Include comprehensive plan references and page numbers if applicable.

Please attach additional sheets as needed to tell your story. Your application must not exceed 18 pages. Your application should be saved/scanned as a PDF document and emailed to planning@dca.ga.gov no later than May 15, 2026. For more information, contact us at planning@dca.ga.gov.