

**JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR PEACH COUNTY AND CITIES OF
BYRON AND FORT VALLEY**

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM – PEACH COUNTY

**Prepared by
The Comprehensive Planning Committee
With Assistance from
The Middle Georgia Regional
Development Center**

September 2006

Community Participation Plan

Introduction

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs requires that comprehensive plans contain a Community Participation section. Concerns and strategies voiced by the public are vital to formulating the third and final section of the Comprehensive Plan: The Community Agenda.



Public input is a valuable part of the planning process. It provides two-way communication between the local government and the community as a whole. It also ensures that the plans will be implemented according to community input because of their sense of ownership and desire for the goals outlined in the plan to be realized.

The citizens of Peach County were eager to contribute to the planning process. Ideas expressed were a reflection of a fast growing, multi-faceted society therefore, the plan will be reflected as such.

The citizen participation portion of the comprehensive plan will outline the following:

- 🍊 Steering Committee and Stakeholder Involvement
- 🍊 Public Participation Techniques
- 🍊 Public Involvement Evaluation
- 🍊 Community Agenda Schedule

Peach County Steering Committee and Stakeholders

The Peach County Steering Committee represented the areas of Byron, Fort Valley, unincorporated Peach County, and Warner Robins (*Appendix A*). A chairperson and vice-chairperson were elected to facilitate the weekly meetings and provide organization to the group. It was job of the steering committee to recommend the format for the three rounds of public meetings that would ensure as much public involvement as possible. The members were utilized for their knowledge of the community and were instrumental in organizing and providing the recommendations that were necessary to complete the Community Agenda portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Peach County Stakeholders consisted of the general public, affected public agencies, private companies, advocacy groups, various institutions, and traditionally underserved communities. The list of stakeholders included:

- Peach County Board of Commissioners
- City of Byron
- City of Fort Valley
- City of Perry
- City of Warner Robins
- Fort Valley Utilities Commission
- Development Authority of Peach County
- Fort Valley Main Street
- Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority
- Byron Main Street
- Fort Valley State University
- Peach County Board of Education
- Peach Regional Medical Center
- Woolfolk Alliance
- Mayor's Housing Task Force
- All who live, work, play, and learn in Peach County

The Stakeholders identified were believed by the Steering Committee to be the most influential in terms of impressing upon the community the importance of their involvement in the planning process.

Public Participation Techniques

Peach County Website

The purpose of the www.planpeach.com website is to inform the public of the upcoming updates of the *2006-2030 Peach County Comprehensive Plan*, and to provide information outlining the progression of the planning process. As the three sections of the plan were completed, they were uploaded to the website for public access and opportunities were provided for comment. The announcement page provided dates, times, locations, and topics of upcoming community meetings. The public also had access to an on-line survey with which to voice their opinions (*Appendix B*).

Public Opinion Survey

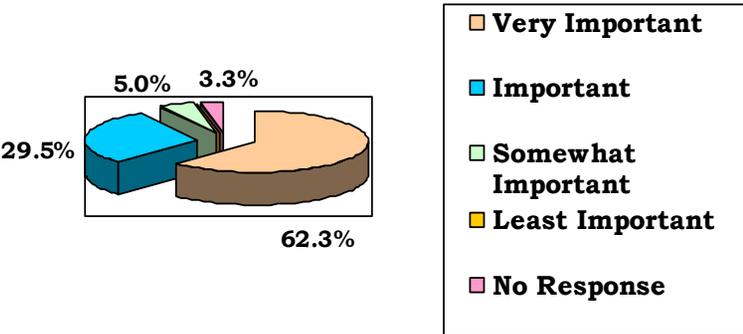
To understand community concerns, opinion surveys were made available at the Byron and Fort Valley City Halls, the Peach County Courthouse, the Byron Welcome Center, and the Troutman House in Fort Valley that houses the Peach County Welcome Center, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Development Authority. They were also distributed during the June Kick-off Community Meetings held in Byron and Fort Valley and were accessible on www.planpeach.com.

The surveys asked questions concerning population, land use, the economy, housing, historic and cultural areas, preservation of natural areas, public services, and intergovernmental relationships (*Figure 1*).

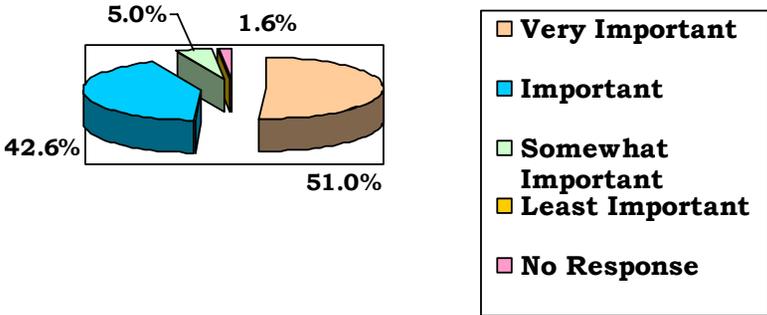
Peach County Survey Results

(Figure 1)

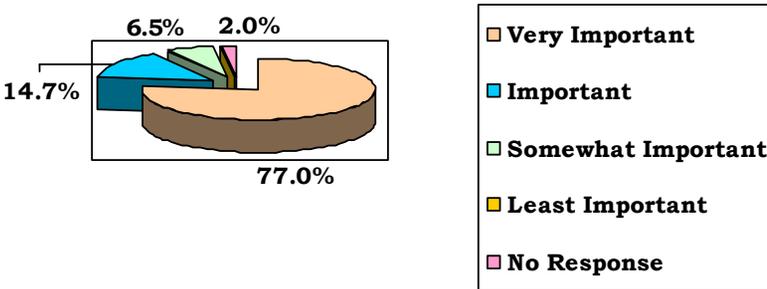
Address Population Growth and Decline



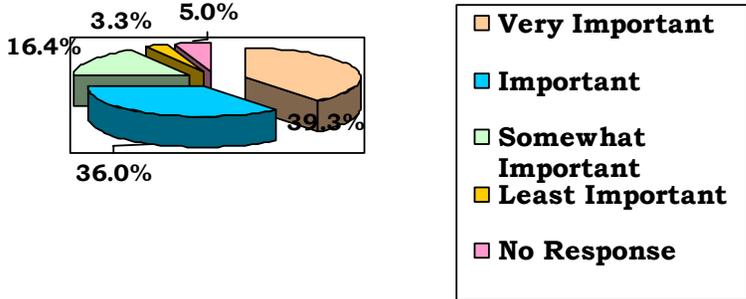
Establish Industrial Corridors



Introduce Technical Skills to Area Workforce



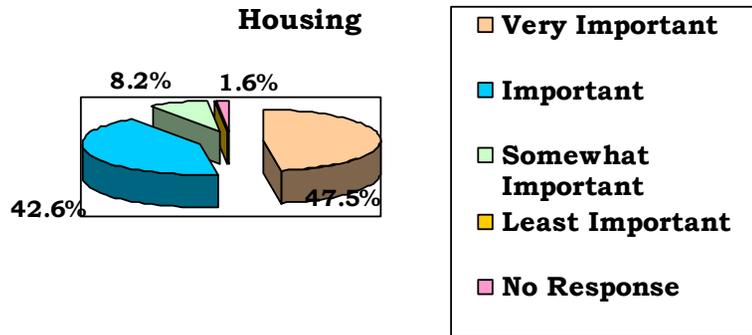
Establish More Retail Centers



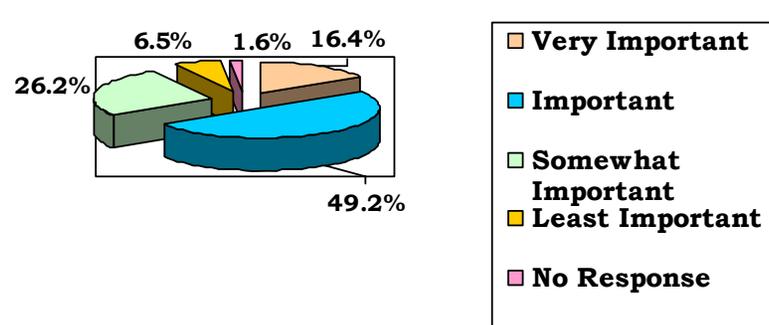
Survey (Cont')

Encourage Rehabilitation and Infill

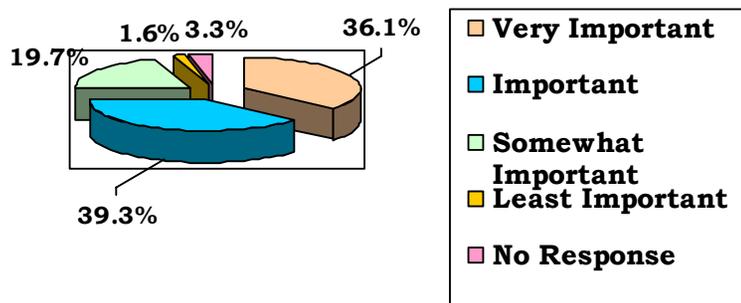
Housing



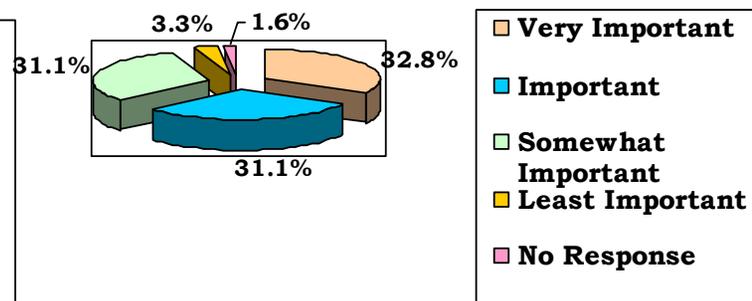
Establish Fine Arts and Cultural Facilities



Preserve Agricultural Lands

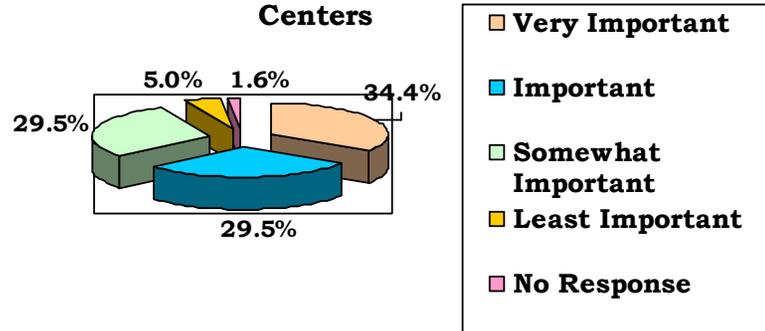


Protect Wildlife

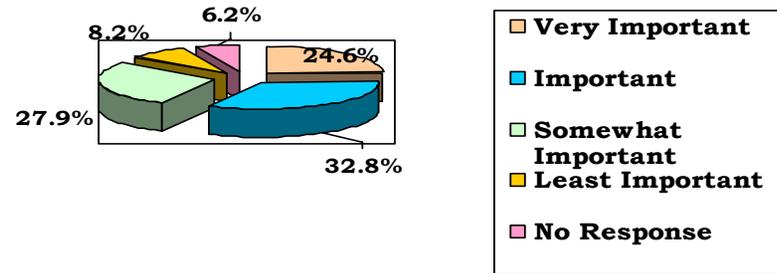


Survey (Cont')

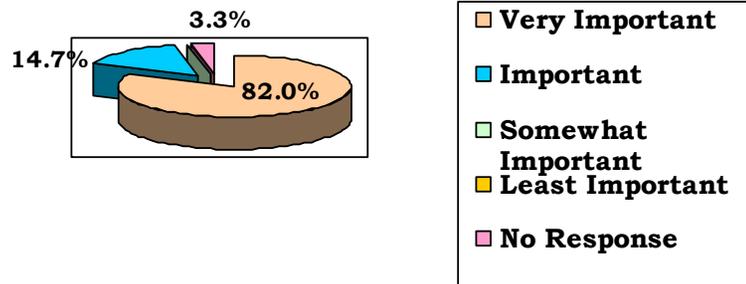
Establish Pedestrian Friendly Activity Centers



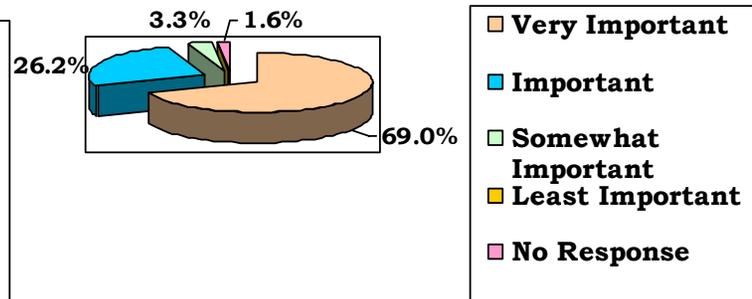
Bike/Ped Connection to Residential, Commercial, and Public Facilities



Enhance Role and Quality of Schools



Implement an Overall Shared Community Vision



Sixty-one surveys and ten comment cards were returned. Opinions were provided by citizens who have lived in Peach County their entire lives and by those who have made the county their home for only a few years. Individuals who only work in the area indicated that the future of Peach County was just as important to them and completed the surveys as well.

Comment Cards

Comment Cards were also distributed throughout Peach County as an additional public opinion tool (*Appendix C*). The cards were also available at the Byron and Fort Valley City Halls, the Peach County Courthouse, the Byron Welcome Center, and the Troutman House in Fort Valley that contains the Peach County Welcome Center, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Development Authority.

Advertisements

The *Fort Valley Leader Tribune* and the *Byron Newsletter* media outlets were utilized to advertise the public meetings that were held in June and September. The meetings were also posted on the Peach County main website and www.planpeach.com which was created specifically to relay information concerning the Peach County Comprehensive Plan.

The steering committee advertised the September round of public meetings by mailing announcements to participants of the June meetings, area stakeholders, and survey respondents. The announcements were also made available at the Byron and Thomas public libraries, the Peach County Courthouse, Byron and Fort Valley City Halls, Byron and Fort Valley Welcome Centers, and the Byron and Peach County Planning and Zoning Offices. (*Appendix D*) The public hearing held in September was posted in the Fort Valley Leader Tribune and announced at the September community meetings.

Community Meetings

Three community meetings were held throughout the comprehensive planning process. The Kick-off meetings was held on June 27, 2006 in Byron and June 29, 2006 in Fort Valley. There were a total of 120 participants, 60 people each attended the Byron and Fort Valley Meetings. The June meetings used a presentation format. The purpose was to provide background information for Peach County and to explain the comprehensive planning process. The participants had the opportunity to state the aspects of Peach County that were causes for concern and the characteristics that gave them a sense of pride.



The second round of community meetings was held on September 5, 2006 in Fort Valley and September 7, 2006 in Byron. Using an open house format, participants were able to discuss the issues and opportunities identified in the Community Assessment portion of the planning process. Subsequently, attendees were provided copies of the narrative and map portions of the Community Assessment for review and comment. Issues addressed by the community were considered and incorporated into the Community Assessment as appropriate.

Public Involvement Evaluation

The public meetings that were held in June each had 60 participants. It was determined that wide public interest, the advertising methods, and refreshments provided at the meetings resulted in adequate public attendance. In an attempt to further increase attendance, the committee distributed announcements to meeting and survey participants who provided information to establish additional contact, as well as circulate information to general public.

Of the 61 surveys that were returned to the steering committee, seven citizens utilized the on-line survey, which may be indicative of people not being comfortable replying to surveys by internet, the publicity regarding the website was inadequate, or many persons in the community were unconcerned with the planning process.

Community Agenda Schedule

	2006										2007		
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Public Participation													
Formulate Steering Committee													
Identify Community Stakeholders													
Elect Steering Committee Chairperson													
Kick-off Community Meetings													
Open House Meetings													
www.planpeach.com updates													
Formulate Public Participation Strategies													
Surveys and Comment Cards -- Distribute by hand and post on website													
Community Agenda													
Creation of Future Land Use Map													
Define Vision for Character Areas													
Establish Implementation Program													
Analysis of Issues and Opportunities													
Prepare Short Term Work Program													
Public Hearings													
Adoption of Transmittal Resolutions													
Regional Development Center Review													
Georgia Department of Community Affairs Review Process (Due Oct 31, 2006)													

Appendix

Appendix A

Steering Committee Members

Member	Representative
Rich Bennett	Peach County
Rickey Blalock	Peach County
Debbie Brown	Byron
Jeff Ervin	Byron
Jesse Fountain	Warner Robins
Jesse Hall	Byron
Joan Hayes	Byron
Marcia Johnson	Peach County
Loraine Khoury	Fort Valley
Mike Lucas	Peach County
Martha McAfee	Fort Valley
Billy McDaniel	Byron
Betty Sims	Byron
Charles Sims	Peach County
Gilda Stanbery	Fort Valley
Florine Statham	Fort Valley
Jessica Swecker	Warner Robins
Para Vinson	Byron
Wilton Walton	Peach County
Sandra Walker	Byron

**Appendix B
Peach County Survey**

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone/Email: _____
How long have you lived in Peach County? _____

Please rate the importance of each topic:

Demographics

1. Address population growth and decline throughout Peach County

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Land Use

2. Establish Industrial Corridors

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Economic Development

3. Introduce Technical Skills to Area Workforce

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

4. Establish More Retail Centers

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Housing

5. Encourage Rehabilitation and Infill Housing in Older Neighborhoods

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Historic and Cultural Resources

6. Establish Fine Art and Cultural Facilities in Downtown Centers

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Natural Resources

7. Preserve Agricultural Lands

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

8. Protect Wildlife

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Transportation

9. Establish Pedestrian Friendly Activity Centers for Downtown Areas

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

10. Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection to Residential, Commercial, and Public Facilities

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Community Facilities and Services

11. Enhance the Role and Quality of Schools within the Community

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Intergovernmental Coordination

12. Implement an Overall Shared Community Vision

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Least Important

Further Comments:

Surveys may be returned to the City of Byron Planning and Zoning Office, the Byron Better Hometown Office, the Peach County Board of Commissioners Office, or the City of Fort Valley Office.

Appendix C

Request for Comments

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone/Email: _____

What do you see as the most pressing issue(s) our community faces today?

What issue(s) poses the most serious challenge in terms of our future?

Further Comments

To find out more about the planning process and how to participate, please call (478) 825-5986

Appendix D

Peach County Community Meetings



The Peach County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee would like to announce the September round of public meetings, where participants will have an opportunity to view the Community Assessment and Community Participation portions of the Comprehensive Plan. Hot dogs and drinks will be served at both meetings.

September 5, 2006
Peach County Courthouse
Public Meeting Room
Fort Valley, GA
6:00

September 7, 2006
Byron Municipal Complex
202 Moseley Road
Byron, GA
6:00 pm

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR IF SPECIAL ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, PLEASE CALL LORAINÉ KHOURY,
825-5986; RICH BENNETT, 825-2535; OR JOAN HAYES, 956-5555