City of Buford Comprehensive Plan Update
Community Participation Program

DRAFT

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JORDAN JONES & GOULDING

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I. Introduction

Purpose

The decisions and actions of public officials and government staff affect the day-to-day activities of community members. For this reason, community participation is a critical element of generating an effective Comprehensive Plan that is supported by members of the community. Armed with a clear understanding of the planning process and knowledge of past and projected community trends, a range of community stakeholders can move forward together to address issues and opportunities the community will face. Charting out the process for reaching this shared vision will ensure that both individuals and organized groups have a voice in the shape of their community over the next 20 years. This Community Participation Program (CPP) lays out this plan for actively engaging members of the Buford community throughout the comprehensive planning process.

Scope

The CPP completes a key element of the state planning requirements set forth by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs: the development of the Community Participation Program, outlined in Chapter 110-12-1-.04 of the Local Planning Requirements adopted on May 1, 2005. The plan must include three elements:

1. Identification of Stakeholders
2. Identification of Participation Techniques
3. Schedule for Completion of the Community Agenda

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This plan includes these three elements and other information related to community participation in the Comprehensive Plan.

Core Objectives

Community Participation is much more than informing the public of plans that are already established. The participation process shapes the plans that are being constructed. The true measure of the effectiveness of a public involvement program is not that the public has been informed, but that public input has contributed to making a decision that is feasible and is supported by a large segment of the community.

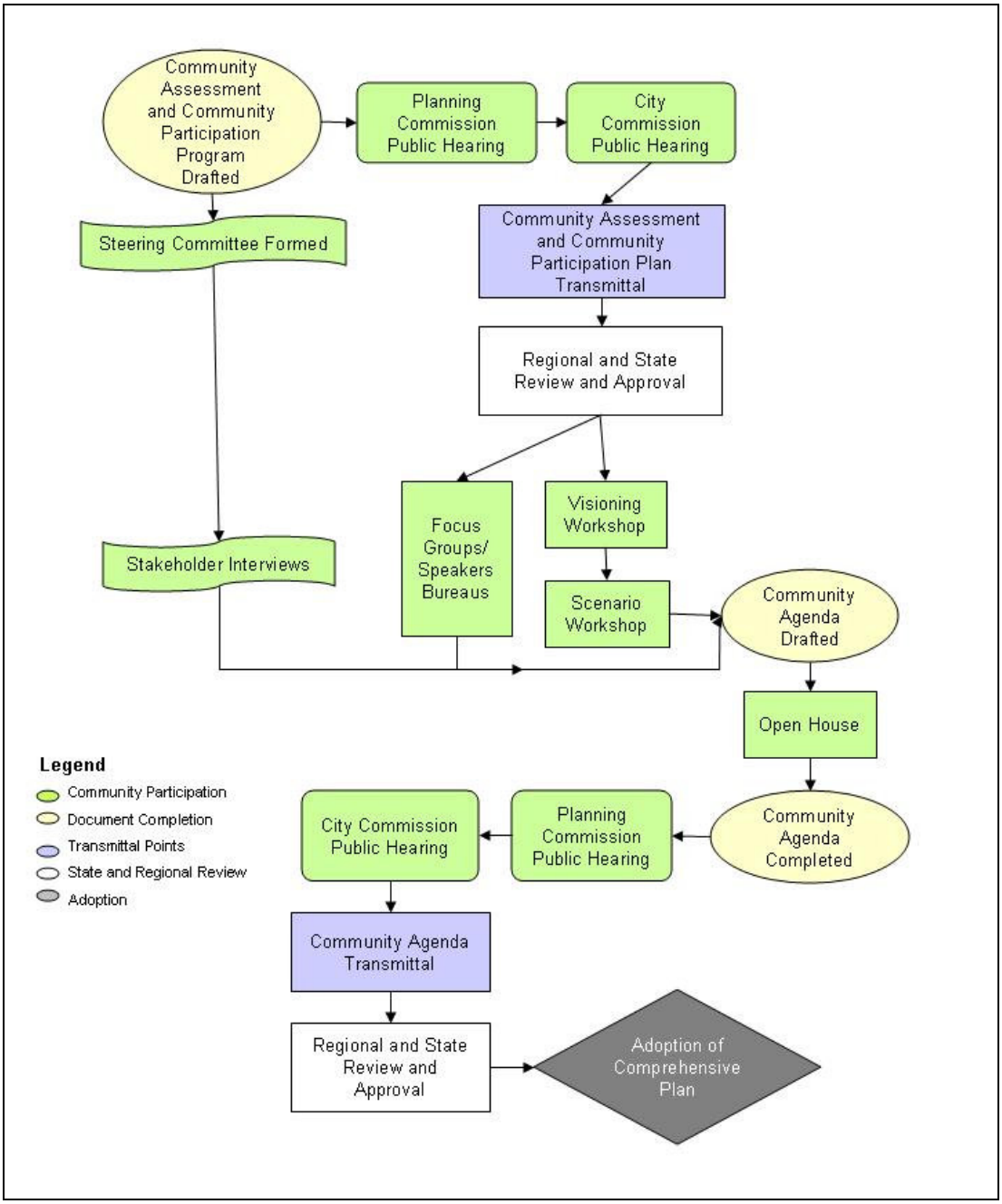
With this philosophy in mind, the core objectives of the CPP are to identify issues of community interest and to engage the community in the planning process and develop a sense or ownership throughout the community for the City's future growth. These goals have played a fundamental role in the development of the Community Participation Program that follows.

One of the most important impacts of community participation will be evident once execution of the Comprehensive Plan begins. Implementation will be most effective when diverse members of the community not only support but are the plan's chief champions. To create this sense of ownership, community input and sentiment must be reflected in the plan. By doing so, the process will accomplish the following:

- Improve the quality of decisions
- Increase ease of implementation
- Provide greater public understanding of community goals and objectives
- Provide tangible evidence that the community created its own identity

Creating an effective community input program begins by identifying integral players to involve in that process, which is discussed in Section II.

Community Participation Elements of Planning Process



II. Stakeholders

Stakeholders are defined as those individuals and groups that have a "stake" or investment in the community. The group of relevant stakeholders ranges from an individual resident of the community to groups and civic organizations, major employers, and the local planning commission. The following list identifies a comprehensive group of stakeholders in the City of Buford.

Elected Officials
Commission Chairman, Phillip Beard
Vice Chairman, L. Chris Burge
Commissioner, Mrs. Michael Y. Smith

Project Management Team
City Manager, Bryan Kerlin
City Clerk/Planning Director, Kim C. Wolfe
Planning Assistant, Rhonda N. Cunningham
Project Manager, Jim Summerbell (JJG)
Assistant Project Manager, Jonathan Webster (JJG)
Public Involvement Lead, Charlotte Weber (JJG)

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Comprehensive Plan, Steering Committee Members
James Reed
Robert Perkins
Max Samples
Hubert Higgins
Harley Bennett
Russell Phillips
Allison Miller
Mary Alice Beard

City Boards/Committees/Departments
Planning Commission
Finance Department
Inspection Department
Planning and Zoning Department
Recreation Department
Sanitation Department
Sewer Department
Street Department
Water Department

Civic Organizations
Buford Business Alliance
Gwinnett Hospital Assistance Foundation
Kiwanis Club of North Gwinnett
Gwinnett County Historical Society
Greater Buford Athletic Association
Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Center
Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce\
Hall County Chamber of Commerce
Gwinnett Public Library

Other Government Entities
Gwinnett County Government
Hall County Government
Atlanta Regional Commission
State of Georgia Agencies and Departments
Hall Area Transit
Gwinnett County Transit

Other General Community Groups
Banks
Business Owners
Churches
Developers
Ethnic and minority groups
Media
Planning Commission
Business owners
Developers
Neighborhood Associations
Media (including Gwinnett Daily Post, Gainesville Times, Gwinnett Business Journal and Atlanta Journal Constitution)
Buford City Schools

III. Participation Techniques

A variety of participation techniques will be utilized to ensure that public involvement extends into all aspects of the community. The critical elements of these participation techniques are project administration and oversight, communication channels, and public meetings.

Project Administration and Oversight

Project administration and oversight will play an integral role in the completion of the Buford Comprehensive Plan Update. The Project Management Team and the Steering Committee, as well as City Officials and staff, will lead these efforts. They are discussed in more detail below.

Project Management Team

The successful execution and completion of the community involvement segment requires strong leadership and guidance. The Project Management Team (PMT) will carry out this role throughout the implementation of the public participation process and subsequent development of the Community Agenda. Members of the PMT include key Consultant and Client staff. The PMT will meet up to 15 times throughout this time period to manage project tasks and responsibilities.

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Steering Committee

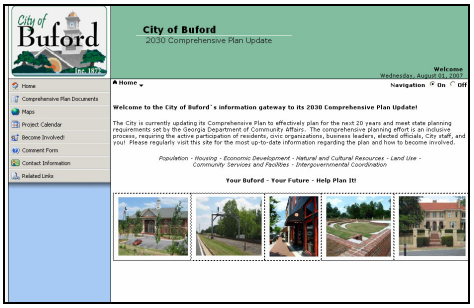
A Steering Committee of up to 12 members will play a prominent role in guiding the public involvement process and refining elements of the Community Agenda. The committee will be appointed by the City Commission and the City staff. The Steering Committee will be established early in the planning process to play a lead role in the plan. This role includes reaching out to fellow community members to ignite their interest and active involvement in the plan.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews are a fundamental element of this plan. These interviews are being completed in conjunction with the final edits and updates to the Community Assessment. Feedback and comments received from these interviews will help guide the development of the community survey and further articulate a list of issues and opportunities laid out in the Community Assessment.

Communication Channels

Pragmatic and effective communication methods will ensure that community members are aware of relevant events and have access to key Comprehensive Plan materials. Effective communication will ensure that an open dialogue occurs between the PMT, Steering Committee, City officials and staff, and vested community members



Website

A project website will be established to serve as an open forum for the community throughout the planning process. The website will be linked to the City of Buford's website, providing easy access for citizens. Regular updates to the website will provide community members with the most recent information regarding the planning process. Maps, materials from public meetings, and general guidance regarding the process will be available as deemed appropriate. In addition, viewers will be able to find contact information for the project leaders, ensuring that an open window for public feedback is available at all times.

Media

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The media will play an important role in disseminating information about the public involvement process and the resulting documents. Local newspapers will be the primary point of contact for spreading the word. Press releases will provide basic information to these sources. These press releases will be drafted prior to public meetings to inform the public of meeting dates, times, and locations, and to provide an update on the community input process. Press releases will be available at the website.

Survey/Questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires will be used to gather information from participants at the various public input events, including the Visioning Workshop, Scenario Workshop, and Open House. These surveys/questionnaires will contain both closed and open-ended questions to help target information to both extract information related to specific community concerns and to help identify those concerns that may not have arisen during the development of the Community Assessment stakeholder interviews. Interactive questionnaires also will be available on the project website.

Flyers

Flyers will be utilized to inform community members of the Visioning Workshop, Scenario Workshop, and Open House. The flyers will be disseminated through members of the community steering committee, will be presented at special speakers' bureaus, and will be available at various community organizations as well as on the website. The stakeholder list will be referenced to identify additional channels to through which to distribute information.

Public Meetings

Public meetings will be held to solidify the major issues and opportunities in Buford and to generate support and understanding for strategies and policies to implement the community's vision. Public meetings allow for interaction between the project management team and members of the community. The events described below will help build consensus for the city's future among the community as well as generate excitement about the plan.

Initial Public Hearing

In summer 2007, an initial public hearing will be held before the Planning Commission and then before the City Commission to present the draft Community Participation Program (CPP). The public will have an opportunity to comment on the draft CPP at the public hearing as well as through the project website. Following the public hearing, the document will be submitted for review and comment from the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and DCA.

Techniques:
Presentation to Commissions
Draft Document available at meeting and on website
Comment period

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Visioning Workshop

The visioning workshop will play a critical role in the public participation process. The workshop will summarize the Community Assessment, informing attendees of existing conditions in Buford. This presentation will help orient meeting attendees to baseline community issues and opportunities as a mechanism to facilitate discussions on what the future might entail. A particular focus will be given to character areas. A variety of participation techniques will be utilized at the meeting to help identify community goals and values as well as a vision for each character areas and the city as a whole. Keypad voting will play a special role, allowing for on-the-spot voting and instant results, which will build consensus by showing residents' the community's overall preferences.

Techniques:
PowerPoint Presentation
Breakout Sessions
Mapping Exercise
Community Preference Survey
Keypad Voting
Questionnaire

Focus Groups/Speakers Bureaus

Specialized groups in the City play an integral role in the community's future. To help reach out to these collective bodies, up to four focus groups or speakers bureaus will help held during the public input phase of the project. These events will act as an opportunity for local groups to learn more about the planning project and offer input on the future of their City.

Techniques:
PowerPoint Presentation
Group Discussion
Surveys/Questionnaires

Scenario Workshop

A second workshop will be held to further extrapolate information from the public, building upon ideas discussed during the Visioning Workshop. The Scenario Workshop will allow the public to comment upon three unique development scenarios that could unfold in Buford. The community will have the opportunity to comment on these scenarios and present ideas and perspectives that will contribute to the final draft of the Plan.

Techniques:
PowerPoint Presentation
Breakout Session
Mapping Exercise
Surveys

Open House

An Open House will be held upon the completion of the Community Agenda. The Open House will serve as one of the final opportunities for the public to learn about the Comprehensive Plan and provide input regarding the Community Agenda recommendations and strategies. The meeting will take on an interactive format, allowing for one-on-one communication between project staff and community members. The Open House will provide community members with an opportunity to ask specific questions regarding the plan and its implications for the community. The Open House will include an overview of the Comprehensive Plan with a narrowed focus on the Community Agenda.

Techniques:
PowerPoint Presentation
Mapping
Comment Forms
One-on-One Question Answer

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Public Hearings

Before the Comprehensive Plan can be adopted officially, it must first be reviewed by the ARC and the DCA. Two public hearings will be held to present the Community Agenda, one before the Planning Commission and the other before the City Commission. The purpose of the public hearings will be to authorize the draft Community Agenda to be sent forward for review by the ARC and the DCA. A brief presentation will be prepared of the highlights from the Community Agenda.

Techniques:
PowerPoint Presentation
Maps
Comment period

IV. Schedule for Completion of the Community Agenda

The Community Agenda is scheduled to be completed and adopted in August 2008. Below is a tentative list of scheduled meetings as well as a tentative timeline for completing different aspects of the plan. Major tasks include Projection Initiation and Administration, Preparation of Community Assessment, Community Assessment and Community Participation Program preparation and transmittal, Community Visioning and Participation, completion of the Draft Community Agenda, and the Adoption Process.

Project Milestones

Date	Event
May 24, 2007	Kick Off Meeting
June 12, 2007	Steering Committee Meeting 6pm
July 24, 2007	PMT Meeting 10am
Aug. 13, 2007	Transmittal of CPP to City Commission – Public Hearing
Sept. 6, 2007	PMT Meeting 10am
Sept. 13, 2007	Steering Committee Meeting 6pm
Oct. 11, 2007	Visioning Workshop (6pm-8pm)
Nov. 1, 2007	PMT Meeting 10am
Nov. 8, 2007	Steering Committee Meeting (6pm)
Jan. 8, 2008	PMT Meeting 10am
Jan. 17, 2008	Scenario Workshop (6pm-8pm)
Feb. 21, 2008	PMT Meeting 10am
Feb. 28, 2008	Steering Committee Meeting (6pm)
March 27, 2008	PMT Meeting 10am
April 10, 2008	Steering Committee Meeting
April 15, 2008	PMT Meeting (10am)
April 24, 2008	Open House (6pm-8pm)
May 15, 2008	PMT Meeting (10am)
June 2, 2008	Transmittal of Community Agenda to City Commission – Public Hearing
Aug. 2008	PMT Meeting
Aug. 2008	Prepare Draft Final Plan
Sept. 2008	Adoption Hearings
Sept. 2008	Final Deliverables

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Railroad Tracks in Buford

City of Buford - Project Schedule

Month		2007								2008									
Ref #	Task	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
1.0	**Project Initiation and Administration**	★		★		★		★		★	★	★	★	★			★		
2.0	**Prepare Community Assessment**																		
2.1	Identification of Issues and Opportunities (12 interviews)																		
2.2	Analysis of Supporting Data and Information																		
2.4	Analysis of Existing Development Patterns																		
2.5	Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives																		
2.6	Review and Revision of Community Assessment (CA)*																		
	Summary Document of Community Assessment																		
3.0	**Prepare Community Participation Program (CPP)**																		
4.0	**CA and CPP Transmittal and Agency Review**																		
4.1	Planning Commission Public Hearing																		
4.2	City Commission Public Hearing																		
4.3	Transmittal of CPP																		
4.4	Regional and State Review and Response																		
5.0	**Community Visioning and Participation**																		
5.1	Steering Committee (SC)		★			★		★			★		★						
5.2	Visioning Workshop																		
5.3	Focus Groups/Speakers Bureaus																		
5.4	Scenario Workshop																		
5.5	Open House																		
5.6	Outreach Tools																		
6.0	**Draft Community Agenda**																		
6.1	Community Vision																		
6.2	List of Final Opportunities and Issues																		
6.3	Future Development Map																		
6.4	Future Development Narrative																		
6.5	Future Land Use Plan Map																		
6.6	Implementation Program																		
6.7	Recommended Goals and Policies																		
6.8	Short-Term Work Program																		
6.9	Draft Document Production																		
6.10	Open House (same as 5.5)																		
6.11	Summary of Comments and Revisions to Documents																		
7.0	**Adoption Process**																		
7.1A	Planning Commission Public Hearing																		
7.1B	City Commission Public Hearing																		
7.1C	Transmittal of Community Agenda																		
7.2	Regional and State Review and Response																		
7.3	Adoption																		
7.4	Preparation of Final Deliverables																		
	DCA Deadline for Comprehensive Plan Update Adoption 2.28.09																		

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★ **Project Management Team (PMT) Meetings**
★ **Steering Committee**