

**Joint Habersham County & Municipalities
2029 Comprehensive Plan Update:
Community Participation Program**

**Revised
April 30, 2007**



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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

One of the best ways to strengthen communities is to create opportunities for citizens to work collaboratively on the challenges that shape their community. Accomplishing this requires political leadership, citizen education, and active involvement. A successful comprehensive plan begins with a process of thinking about and visualizing the future. It is about carrying on a dialogue with the community concerning its vision for evolving and growing. This Community Participation Program was crafted with these principles in mind and establishes a two-way communication between local citizens and their government officials, with the overall goal of better decisions supported by the public.

This Community Participation Program will outline the public involvement process, schedule and stakeholder groups who will be involved in the plan updates for the participating local governments. The Community Participation Program will have the following objectives:

- Educate the public concerning the process and schedule for updating the Comprehensive Plan
- Develop an orderly and timely schedule of community participation efforts
- Develop outreach methods to engage broad-based community participation
- Identify stakeholder groups and methods for involving them
- Inform the community about expected growth
- Identify issues of community interest related to future growth
- Build and maintain community support for the plan.

1.2 Scope

Habersham County and its participating municipalities including Alto, Cornelia, Clarkesville, Demorest, and Mt. Airy, are required by state law to update their Comprehensive Plan by October 2009. As prescribed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the update of the Comprehensive Plan will follow the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005.

1.3 Requirements for Success

Experience in public involvement has shown that lasting solutions are best identified when all segments of a community – residents, elected officials, educators, the business community, and civic organizations – are brought together in a spirit of cooperation. A collaborative approach to community engagement is not an opportunity, but a necessity. Community engagement and involvement is done for three reasons:

- To educate the public and increase their awareness of community issues.
- To capture the knowledge and preferences of the community residents and leaders.
- To mobilize support and acceptance of the plan.

Communities that prosper do so because people work together to improve the quality of life. An effective public involvement process is the catalyst that citizens need in order to work together in this way. Therefore, public involvement must be much more than simply informing the public about a decision that will be made; it must engage them in the decision-making process itself. Effective public involvement brings people together in a creative process of identifying problems and developing feasible solutions that are supported by a large segment of the community.

Public involvement provides decision-makers with a rich source of information about peoples' values and philosophies. These values and philosophies must be interpreted into meaningful information to guide the project. It is essential to know the community's values to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts of change as well as to evaluate the field of potential solutions. This process is designed to accomplish the following:

- Empower citizens to express the values which create their sense of identity.
- Increase public support of community goals and objectives.
- Improve the quality of public decisions.
- Provide a tangible investment of stakeholders in the implementation of the plan.

2 Identification of Stakeholders

Identifying and organizing stakeholders is an essential step to engaging the planning process for this project. Stakeholders will be organized to work effectively throughout the project for three purposes: outreach, coordination, and oversight. A network of community organizations and local companies will be identified early in the process to assist in the outreach process. They helped to distribute meeting notices and posters. Ensuring that a full spectrum of community stakeholders is involved in the planning process helps to coordinate the planning process across the many community agencies and organizations that they represent. Finally, stakeholders are an integral part of the project oversight process.

A Multi-jurisdictional Advisory Committee was established and is comprised of representative staff and officials from the participating local governments in Habersham County and others designated by these entities. The committee's primary responsibilities include reviewing and commenting on draft documents, discussing next steps, and ensuring good communication with public officials and citizens of the participating local governments. The committee will meet up to 5 times throughout the process.

Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee (MJAC)

Gary Cornell – (JJG) – Project Advisor

Megan Will – (JJG) – Deputy Project Manger

Tom Braswell, Habersham County – Building Department Director& Interim Planning Director

Steve Hashimoto – City of Clarksville – MJAC Deputy Chairperson

Lynne Dockery – Habersham County

Ed Sealover – Habersham County

Audrey Turner – City of Alto

Lisa Turner – City of Alto

Richard Monroe – City of Clarksville

Jeff Barron – City of Cornelia

Perry Hendrix – City of Demorest

Juanita Crumley – City of Demorest

Ed Nichols – Habersham County Chamber of Commerce

Judy Forbes – Habersham County Board of Education

Charlie Miller – Habersham County Development Authority

Darrell Lovell – Homebuilders Association

Stakeholder List

Individual/ Organization/ Group	Interviews	Public Meetings	Other
County Commissioners			
Commissioner District 1 – Jim B. Butterworth – 2007 Chairperson		✓	
Commissioner District 2 – Charles Miller		✓	
Commissioner District 3 – Gerald Dunham		✓	
Commissioner District 4 – Dr. Rick Austin 2007 Vice-Chairperson		✓	
Commissioner District 5 – Douglas Vermilya		✓	
County Manager – Ed Sealover		✓	
County Boards/Commissions/Departments			
Tom Braswell – Building Director and Interim Planning Director		✓	
Habersham County Board of Education – Kathy Tart, Margie Holbrook, Wesley Tarylor	✓	✓	
Judy Forbes – Superintendent of Schools		✓	
Planning and Zoning Commission		✓	
Public Works – Terry Purcell		✓	
Sheriff – DeRay Fincher		✓	
Chief Deputy – David Sessa	✓	✓	
Fire Chief – Tim Berry	✓	✓	
Recreation Department – Terry Lannon	✓	✓	
Clarksville-Habersham Library – Martha Richardson		✓	
Economic Development		✓	
EMA - Barry Church – <i>Director</i>		✓	
County Clerk – Janeann Allison		✓	
Finance Officer – Jason Tinsley		✓	
Building Department		✓	
Information Technology		✓	
Habersham County Industrial Development Authority – Charlie Miller	✓	✓	
Parks and Recreation / Fulbright Aquatic Center		✓	
Planning Department		✓	
Road Department		✓	
Sanitary Landfill		✓	
Senior Center		✓	

Individual/ Organization/ Group	Interviews	Public Meetings	Other
Tax Commissioner		✓	
Tax Assessor		✓	
Water Department – Betty Lathan, Water Distribution Manager	✓	✓	
Les Smith Memorial Fairgrounds		✓	
Town of Alto			
Mayor – Audrey Turner		✓	
Town Council – Phil Lomax (Mayor Pro-Tem)		✓	
Town Council - Gary Terrell		✓	
Town Council – Cathy Armour		✓	
Town Council – Margaret Beaupre		✓	
Town Clerk – Penny Rogers		✓	
Finance Officer – Lisa Turner		✓	
Town Attorney – James Acrey		✓	
Police Chief – Robin Krockum		✓	
Fire Chief (shared with Baldwin)	✓	✓	
Public Works Superintendent – Wiley Cook		✓	
Licensed Water Operator – Donald Wade		✓	
City of Clarkesville			
Mayor – Terry Greene, M.D.		✓	
City Council – Bobby Webb		✓	
City Council – Wally Wenn		✓	
City Council – Joyce Wilbanks		✓	
City Council – Franklin Brown		✓	
City Council – Brad Lewallen		✓	
City Manager – Richard Monroe	✓	✓	
Utility Clerk – Jane Childs		✓	
Planning and Development – Steve Hashimoto	✓	✓	
City Attorney – Janney Sanders		✓	
Municipal Court Judge – Winslow “Wink” Verdery		✓	
Municipal Court Clerk – Elaine Waller		✓	
City Clerk – Elizabeth Kemp		✓	
Public Utilities – Tim Durham		✓	
Public Works		✓	
Police Chief – Brad Barrett	✓	✓	
Fire Chief – Tony Wright	✓	✓	
Clarkesville Business Association – John Lundsford		✓	
Clarkesville Housing		✓	

Individual/ Organization/ Group	Interviews	Public Meetings	Other
City of Demorest			
Mayor - Malcolm Hunnicutt		✓	
Juanita Crumley		✓	
City Council – Perry Hendrix		✓	
City Council – John Popham Jr.		✓	
City Council – Paul Skelton		✓	
City Council – Grady Tench		✓	
Planning and Zoning – Larry Shedd		✓	
Public Works – Charlie McGugan		✓	
Fire Chief – Danny Still	✓	✓	
Police Chief – Gregg Ellingson		✓	
City Attorney – David Burroughs		✓	
City of Cornelia			
Mayor – Don A Higgins		✓	
Commissioner Ward 1 – Wes Dodd		✓	
Commissioner Ward 2 – Brenda Garcia		✓	
Commissioner Ward 3 – Margaret Ballard		✓	
Commissioner Ward 4 - Tony Cook		✓	
Planning Board – J.W. Kennedy, Chairperson		✓	
Board of Adjustments – Janice Griggs, Chairperson		✓	
City Manager – Donald Anderson		✓	
City Planner – Jeff Barron	✓	✓	
City Clerk – Janie Henderson		✓	
Human Resource – Diane Feorino		✓	
Police Chief – Rick Darby	✓	✓	
Fire Chief – Frankie Smith (shared with Mt. Airy)	✓	✓	
Public Works – David Levin		✓	
Wastewater Plant – Andy Pilgrim		✓	
Water Treatment – Keith Ethridge		✓	
Water/Sewer – Richard Burton		✓	
Buildings and Grounds – Mona Painter		✓	
Better Hometown – Andrea Harper, Manager	✓	✓	
Downtown Business Association – Cathy McLean, and Millie Stephens		✓	
Downtown Development Authority – Mike Armstrong		✓	
Town of Mt. Airy			
Mayor – Gary Morris		✓	
Mayor Pro-Tem – Mike McCoy		✓	

Individual/ Organization/ Group	Interviews	Public Meetings	Other
Council Member – Brenda Kinsey		✓	
Council Member – W. Ray McAllister		✓	
Council Member – Bobby Ayers		✓	
Council Member – Telford Loudermilk		✓	
Planning & Zoning		✓	
Chief of Police	✓	✓	
City Manager		✓	
Assistant City Manager – Ann Darden		✓	
Town Clerk – Ann Darden		✓	
Historical Consultant – Sue Smith		✓	
Civic Association – Annette Ayers		✓	
Amos & Company Accountants		✓	
Attorney – John Dickerson		✓	
Community Groups/Organizations/Other Groups			
Citizens of Habersham County		✓	
Citizens of the City of Alto		✓	
Citizens of the City of Clarkesville		✓	
Citizens of the City of Cornelia		✓	
Citizens of the City of Demorest		✓	
Citizens of the City of Mt. Airy		✓	
Citizens of the City of Tallulah Falls		✓	
Citizens of the City of Baldwin		✓	
Habersham Chamber of Commerce Contact - Ed Nichols	✓	✓	
Neighborhood Associations		✓	
Habersham County Smart Growth Coalition		✓	
Northeast Georgia Housing Authority & Cornelia Housing Authority – H.L. Brantley – Executive Director	✓	✓	
Habersham Homeless Ministries – Jo Ann Kennedy – Director	✓	✓	
Assisted Living Facilities		✓	
Habersham Medical Center		✓	
Habersham Historical Society		✓	
Places of Worship		✓	
Civic Groups		✓	

Individual/ Organization/ Group	Interviews	Public Meetings	Other
Lions Club		✓	
Kiwanis		✓	
Rotary		✓	
VFW		✓	
Chattahoochee National Forest - <i>Chattooga Ranger District</i>		✓	
Habersham County Farm Bureau		✓	
Tallulah Gorge State Park		✓	
Soque River Watershed Association		✓	
Habersham Private Schools - <i>Central Heights Christian School</i> - <i>Tallulah Falls School</i>		✓	
Piedmont College		✓	
North Georgia Technical College		✓	
Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)		✓	* Consulting Party
Georgia Regional Transit Authority (GRTA)		✓	* Consulting Party
Industrial Groups - <i>Habersham County Industrial Development Authority</i> - <i>Banks/Habersham Joint Development Authority</i> - <i>Fieldale Farms</i>		✓	
Developers		✓	
Homebuilders Association of Habersham County - Karen Melain		✓	
The Northeast Georgian – Rob Moore		✓	
W.C.O.N (radio)		✓	

3 Identification of Participation Techniques

3.1 Initial Public Hearings

As required under the state Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, public hearings before the Habersham County Board of Commissioners and elected officials of the participating municipalities will be held in May 2007 to transmit the draft Community Assessment and the Community Participation Program to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center (GMRDC) for regional and state review. The public hearings will provide an opportunity for educating the public about the scope, goals, and schedule of the project so that they can see how they can get involved. The public also will be given the opportunity to comment on the process and their vision for the future of the County and its municipalities.

3.2 Public Kick-off Meeting

A Public Kick-off Meeting will be held tentatively in mid summer 2007, to provide an overview of the purpose, process and schedule for the vision and Community Agenda for the County and its municipalities. The Kick-off meeting will provide a summary of the findings of the Community Assessment and a preview of the Visioning Workshops that will be held in each participating community.

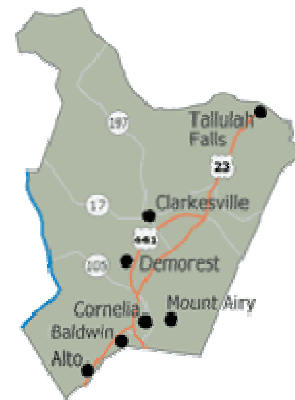
3.3 Visioning Workshops

Visioning Workshops will be held throughout the County and in the participating municipalities in late summer 2007.

These workshops will address each of the planning areas (unincorporated Habersham County, Cities of Alto, Cornelia, Clarkesville, Demorest, and Mt. Airy). A variety of locations and dates will give residents several opportunities to give their input on the future of Habersham and its communities.

Each session will incorporate a variety of interactive activities such as the following:

- Brainstorming discussion of issues and opportunities facing the community.
- Discussion of community goals and the values that should shape growth and development.
- Identification of strengths and weaknesses of the community.
- A citizen survey to ascertain public preferences regarding future growth.
- Stakeholder preferences for community character, aesthetics, and design.



The results of the Visioning Workshops will be incorporated into the Community Agenda and will include the following content:

- Strengths and weaknesses of the quality of life in each planning area (participating municipalities and unincorporated County).
- The role of each planning area in Habersham County.
- The quality of life that the participants in the workshop envision for the planning area 20 years from now.
- The opportunities and issues that will confront the community over the next 20 years.
- Boundaries and development characteristics of character areas that will guide the preparation of the Future Development Map.

3.4 Citizen Survey

Citizen surveys and questionnaires are important tools used to both supplement public meetings and to reach additional citizens to ask specific questions and to gather opinions on the future direction of the County or municipality. Surveys can be as short as one or two questions on the website, or can be lengthy and ask a variety of questions.

3.5 Public Open House

An Open House will be conducted to present the recommendations and implementation program included in the draft Community Agendas. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for fall 2007. The meeting will present results for each jurisdiction included in the plan.

The meeting format will include an informal period where participants may discuss recommendations with consultants and staff and members of the MJAC as well as a formal presentation and question and answer period. Formal written comments, collected at the conclusion of the Open House, will be summarized and responded to in a timely manner.

3.6 Public Hearing for Plan Transmittal

The consultant will present the 2029 Comprehensive Plan public hearings before the Habersham County Board of Commissioners and by the respective City Councils of the participating cities. The public will have a period of two weeks to comment on the plan before it is transmitted to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center for review.

The public will have several options to comment on the draft plan. The draft document will be posted on the County's webpage for the public's review. Draft hardcopies of the document will be available for review at the County Courthouse, at each of the participating City Halls, and at the Habersham Library. Citizens will be encouraged to submit their comments to their respective City or the County. All comments will be compiled and addressed by the consultant, the MJAC, and County and cities staff. The tentative dates for these transmittal hearings are late fall 2007.

3.7 Project Webpage

JJG will send the County information to be uploaded to the County's website. The webpage address is <http://www.co.habersham.ga.us>. The consultant will send documents, approved by the County and participating City staff, in Adobe PDF format, to be uploaded periodically throughout the project.

3.8 Outreach

Varieties of techniques will be used to get the information out to participants. Consultants and staff will use press releases, posters, and other information pertaining to the project to help get the word out. Many of the identified stakeholder groups including The Chamber of Commerce, Better Hometown, and Downtown Business Association, Clarkesville Business Association and the Soque River Watershed Association for example may have contact lists that could be utilized to supply a network of outlets for distribution of meeting notices and posters.

4 Schedule for Completion of the Community Agenda

On the following page is a graphic that shows the schedule for completion of the Comprehensive Plan Update. Major upcoming milestones in this schedule include:

Initial Public Hearings

May2007

Public Kick-off Meeting

Mid Summer2007

Six Visioning Workshops

Late Summer2007

Open House

Fall2007

Public Hearing for Transmittal of the Community Agenda

Late Fall2007

Adoption of the Community Agenda

December (tentative).....2007

Habersham County & Cities Comprehensive Plan - Project Schedule

Ref #	Task	2006				2007												2008				
		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
1.0	Project Kick-Off																					
1.1	Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee Kick-off Meeting																					
1.2	Data Collection and GIS Template Set-Up																					
2.0	Prepare Community Assessment (CA)																					
2.1	Identification of Issues and Opportunities																					
2.2	Analysis of Supporting Data and Information																					
2.3	Analysis of Existing Development Patterns																					
2.4	Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives																					
2.5	Review and Revision of CA																					
3.0	Prepare Community Participation Program (CPP)																					
4.0	CA and CPP Transmittal & Agency Review																					
4.1	Public Hearings for Transmittal																					
4.2	Transmittal of CA & CPP																					
4.3	Regional and State Review and Response																					
5.0	Prepare Community Agenda																					
5.1	Public Kick-Off Meeting																					
5.2	Community Visioning Workshops																					
5.2a	Summary of Community Workshops																					
5.3	Draft Community Agendas																					
5.3a	Community Vision																					
5.3b	List of Final Opportunities and Issues																					
5.3c	Future Development Map																					
5.3d	Future Development Narrative																					
5.3e	Implementation Program																					
5.3f	Recommended Goals and Policies																					
5.3g	STWP																					
5.4	Open House																					
6.0	Prepare for Plan Adoption																					
6.1	Community Agenda Public Hearings for Transmittal																					
6.2	Community Agenda Transmittal and Agency Review																					
6.3	Presentation of Final Comprehensive Plan to Habersham County BOC																					
6.3a	Adoption of Comprehensive Plan by County and Participating Cities																					
7.0	Final Deliverables																					
7.1	"Last Minute" Revisions based on DCA, GMRDC, and Local Gov't Comments																					
7.2	Final Comprehensive Plan Submitted for Reproduction Approval																					
7.3	Final Plan Delivered																					

Comprehensive Plan Update Deadline 10/31/2009