August 25, 2005

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM
CITY OF FLOWERY BRANCH, GEORGIA
Population: 1,994 (Census, July 1, 2004)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Defined

"Community Participation Program" means the portion of the comprehensive plan that describes the local government's program for insuring meaningful public and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.

Objective

Meaningful involvement of stakeholders and the general public in preparation of the comprehensive plan. The community participation program describes the City of Flowery Branch's strategy for insuring meaningful public and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the Community Agenda portion of the comprehensive plan.

Review Process

The community participation program is submitted along with the Community Assessment to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center (RDC) for review, after holding a first public hearing. Within seven (7) days of receipt, the RDC will determine whether the Community Participation Program meets or does not meet the standard of completeness as determined by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Upon determination of completeness, the RDC transmits the participation program to DCA. DCA will review the program for its adequacy in identifying specific mechanisms to ensure meaningful involvement of the community in the development of the Community Agenda. DCA will transmit a complete report of its findings and recommendations for addressing such findings to the RDC for inclusion in its Report of Findings and Recommendations.

Publication of the Approved Program and Community Assessment

Once reviewed, the Community Participation Program and Community Assessment must be publicized by the local government for public information. This requirement may be met by providing notice in a local newspaper of general circulation identifying where complete copies of the Community Assessment and Community Participation Program may be reviewed.

List of Stakeholders

Defined broadly, a stakeholder is anyone who has a stake in an outcome of the comprehensive planning process. The public participation program contemplates interviewing certain identified stakeholders. Primarily, we are interested in providing "one-on-one" time with anyone who believes it would be advantageous for them to do so, or those who are not comfortable voicing their opinions or concerns in a more public forum.

The Mayor and City Council are stakeholders not only because they represent the citizens of Flowery Branch, but because they have the authority to adopt (or not adopt) the comprehensive plan. For this reason, the city's consultant anticipates providing one-on-one time with individual

city council members and the mayor if they would like independent input in the development of the community agenda.

In addition to the Mayor and City Council, owners of large properties in the city have an especially important stake in the outcomes of the comprehensive planning process. Owners of tracts of 20-25 acres and more are all potential stakeholders.

Identification of Participation Techniques

During the process of preparing a work scope, the consultants considered various community participation techniques. With input from the city staff and Mayor and City Council, the work scope was written to meet the city's specific needs for public involvement while also considering budget limitations. The following techniques were considered and as applicable included in the Community Participation Program.

### Community Participation Techniques Considered

Participation Technique	Included in the Participation Program?	Explanation
Stakeholder interviews	Yes	Consultant will interview
Kiosk/Lobby displays	Yes	City staff to arrange
Technical advisory committee	No	City staff serves function
Steering committee	Yes	City requested committee (3 meetings are budgeted)
Visioning workshops	Yes	3 meetings are budgeted
Intergovernmental partnerships	No	Address through planning
Kick-off information meeting	No	Not budgeted
Printed public information	Yes	As appropriate
Direct mail surveys	Yes	City staff to arrange
Media press releases	Yes	Consultant will prepare
Website – information only	Yes	City staff to arrange
Website – interactive	Yes	City staff to arrange
E-mail "blast" database	Yes	City staff to arrange
Cable TV information	Yes	Channel 22 (Charter Cable advertisement will run 7 times per day)
Speaker's bureau	No	Not needed (small town)

Flowery Branch's City Planner and the Mayor and City Council, with consultant assistance and after considering budget limitations, have selected the following techniques to be used locally for involving stakeholders in the process of developing the Community Agenda.

1. Stakeholder interviews. Obtain list of identified stakeholders; interview by phone or in-person all identified stakeholders. This task has a limited budget and it should be limited to 10-12 persons plus the Mayor and City Council. Each stakeholder will be given a time period (20-30 minutes) to describe their concerns or suggestions which will be noted and made a part of the record, then considered during the development of the community agenda.

2. <u>Steering committee</u>. The City will appoint a steering committee (Committee members to be determined by the City Council). The primary role of the steering committee is to ensure that all viewpoints are systematically represented in the process and to debate and reconcile differences between proposed policies when they are in conflict with one another. The consultant has budgeted to attend at least three (3) steering committee meetings (anticipated to be on a monthly basis or as agreed upon by the committee and the consultant). Additional meetings of the steering committee may be achieved by moving budget from another category to that task. City council members are not prevented from serving on the steering committee, and it is desirable to have some representation by city council on the steering committee. Stakeholders can also be appointed to the steering committee. A tentative meeting schedule is identified on page 4. The purpose of the first meeting will be to ensure that steering committee members fully understand the process and the significance of the tasks to be accomplished, so that they can discuss the upcoming visioning workshops and participation strategies with other residents and interested individuals. The second steering committee meeting would be held following the three visioning workshops, to hear a presentation of the results and recommendations of the planning consulting team, discuss the outcomes, debate policy, reconcile conflicts, and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council.

3. <u>Visioning workshops</u>. Consultant will conduct three (3) visioning workshops, which will be designed to gain meaningful participation and input from interested persons. Specific exercises will be designed to gain input, including interactive discussion, mapping exercises, or questionnaires, as may be appropriate given the participants involved. All members who serve on the steering committee should also plan to participate in the visioning workshops, and stakeholders should also plan to attend.

4. <u>Media press releases</u>. Consultant will prepare press releases at strategic intervals for distribution by project manager.

5. <u>E-mail distribution of materials</u>. Consultant can be assigned this task or project manager can disseminate. Everyone who has an interest in the process and provides their e-mail address will be kept informed of the progress on developing the plan, meeting dates, and opportunities to comment. The city through prior comprehensive planning efforts developed a significant list of interested persons which will be used as a starting point in developing the list. All stakeholders, steering committee members, the media, and elected officials will be included on the e-mail distribution list.

6. <u>Public displays</u>. The City's project manager will arrange. It is envisioned that fact sheets, brochures, and/or graphic materials may be displayed at City Hall or in other public places where that can be arranged.

7. <u>Handling of comments received</u>. All comments will be directed to James Riker, City Planner. All comments will be consolidated for further consideration by the city's planning consultants.

Visioning Process
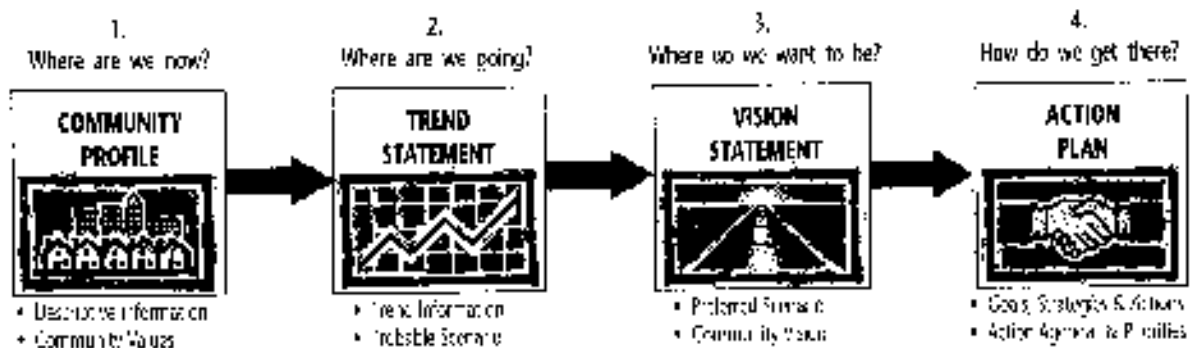
Source: Oregon Visions Project. 1993. *A Guide to Community Visioning: Hands-on Information for Local Communities.*

Schedule for Completion of the Comprehensive Plan

Month and Date (2005)	Task
May 2-15	Develop Community Participation program
May 2-30	Develop stakeholder list (City)
July 28	Briefing of Mayor and City Council
July 29 – August 10	Public Review Period – Community Participation Program
August 10	1st Steering Committee Meeting
August 25	1st Public Hearing by Mayor and City Council
July 28 – August 11	Revise participation program if necessary
August 11 - September 27	Implement Community Participation Program: Stakeholder Interviews
August 1 – Sept.27	Prepare Community Agenda (plan portion)
September 20	1st Visioning Session
September 21	2nd Visioning Session
September 26	2nd Steering Committee Meeting
September 27	3rd Visioning Session
November 9	3rd Steering Committee Meeting
November 30	2nd Public Hearing by Mayor and City Council

References

Georgia Department of Community Affairs. (December 15, 2004 Working Copy). *Community-Based Planning: Guidebook for Citizens and Local Planners.*

Oregon Visions Project. 1993. *A Guide to Community Visioning: Hands-on Information for Local Communities.* Salem, OR: Oregon Chapter, American Planning Association.