

# Community Participation Program

Prepared as an Element of the  
**Joint Comprehensive Plan 2030**  
for  
**Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals,  
Watkinsville and Oconee County,  
Georgia**

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# **Community Participation Program**

## ■ **Introduction**

In order for a jurisdiction to maintain their Qualified Local Government status (that is, to remain eligible for a wide range of State grants, assistance and permitting programs), a Comprehensive Plans must be updated from time-to-time—in the case of Oconee County and its cities, by the end of August 2007. This current update is characterized by the State as the ‘tenth-year update,’ which, because of the significant changes that have occurred in Oconee County over the past decade, coupled with the adoption of new planning standards by the State, requires a complete reevaluation, reorganization and rewrite of the Plan elements.

Planning requirements for the preparation and adoption of Comprehensive Plans are adopted by the State’s Board of Community Affairs pursuant to the Georgia Planning Act, and administered and supplemented by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The most recently applicable planning standards took effect May 1, 2005. These new standards have reorganized the plan into three parts: The Community Participation Program, the Community Assessment, and the Community Agenda.

The first part of the comprehensive plan is the Community Participation Program that is adopted by all parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan Tenth-Year Update. The Community Public Participation Program describes the strategy for ensuring adequate public and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.

The Community Participation Program forms the underlying foundation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan through the development of a community-based vision and the creation of guiding principles. The formation of goals, objectives, policies and strategies within the framework of the guiding principles will be developed through the planning process to achieve this vision within the Plan. Effective citizen involvement in a comprehensive plan can be achieved through the efforts of a dedicated group of citizens and staff, and informative outreach to the public at large. Because the Plan deals with long-range issues, it will be important for the process to be productive, thought provoking, and interesting to maintain the involvement of a diverse citizenry. The citizens must feel that their participation is making a difference and is a good use of their time in order to keep them active throughout the process.

## ■ **Objectives of the Program**

Three objectives are important in a community participation program:

- The process must promote legitimate opportunities for the public to be actively involved in shaping the Joint Comprehensive Plan;
- The process should be designed to build community consensus and ownership in the Joint Comprehensive Plan, so it is not perceived as a Plan written by a few people in a closed process; and
- The process must also provide information to people who are interested in knowing what is going on, but choose not to actively participate.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the citizen involvement effort will be continuous throughout the planning process. The County and its Cities recognize the importance of using a public participation process as a way to build consensus in the Plan and in building a constituency for the Joint Comprehensive Plan. There will be many times over the years when the Plan will be tested and attempts will be made to deviate from, or ignore, the Plan. It will be difficult for elected officials to maintain the integrity of a Plan unless there is a constituency that will help to defend it.

## ■ Elements of the Program

The community Participation Program establishes a deliberative approach in which all interested parties, as well as the general public, will be fully involved through a series of public participation opportunities resulting in adoption of the Community Agenda – the “Plan” portion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan.

In a nutshell, the public participation effort includes the following:

- Conduct a joint organizational meeting with elected officials and staff of all participating jurisdictions (Oconee County, Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals, Watkinsville) to finalize the schedule and the public participation approach, and to discuss overriding issues, goals and desires.
- Prior to the Joint Officials Workshop above, meet informally with each jurisdiction separately to review specific issues, policies and land use patterns.
- Create a Stakeholders committee comprised of representatives of major interest groups in the county. Designate key staff members to participate in support of the Committee, including Planning, Public Works, Utilities and Economic Development.
- Hold the first of two required DCA public hearings as the kick-off to the planning process. This meeting will be advertised on the Web, and the media will be notified.
- A series of four Joint Officials Workshops to review issues, policy and milestones in the planning process will be held during the planning process.
- A series of five topic-related workshops with the Stakeholders’ Committee to review the Plan in detail, resolve problems and identify policy issues requiring direction from the Joint Official.
- A Public Forum midway through the process to gather input from the public at large on issues, vision and land use patterns.
- Release of a Public Review Draft of the Community Agenda to the general public and posting to the website for general public review and comment.
- A second public forum for review of the draft Community Agenda.
- Hold a legally advertised Public Hearing to transmit the final Draft Community Agenda to NEGRDC/DCA for review.

## ■ Detailed Community Participation Program

### **Countywide Kick-Off Meeting (First Required Public Hearing)**

A Kickoff Meeting will be held in February 2007 at the beginning of the Planning Process to “unveil” the Community Assessment and the Comprehensive Planning Process. This public hearing will be a joint public hearing for the unincorporated portion of the county, the City of Bishop, the City of Watkinsville, the City of Bogart, and the City of North High Shoals, and will be legally advertised. This meeting is intended primarily to inform the public about the process, share highlights of the Community Assessment and outline the public participation opportunities. This meeting will be structured to be educational and informational.

### **Joint Official Workshops**

An initial organizational meetings and a series of four workshops will be held at key decision points during the comprehensive planning process. Joint Officials will be given project updates and will be asked to participate in making key decisions, develop policy and make final decisions on Stakeholder Committee input regarding the comprehensive plan. The Joint Officials Workshop will be open to all members of the County Board of Commissioners, Bogart City Council and Mayor, Watkinsville City Council and Mayor, Bishop City Council and Mayor, and North High Shoals City Council and Mayor.

The first and second Official Joint Officials Workshops will focus on primary policy issues facing the county and cities, results from previous public participation and the vision for the future. The Initial Joint Organizational Meeting will focus on establishment of the Joint Officials Workshop structure, finalize the approach to community participation and discuss issues of common interest. A major point of this meeting will be the development of a Stakeholders Committee to participate in the plan. The Joint Officials will make decisions affecting the county as a whole. Appropriate decisions affecting only the incorporated area or only a city, such as future land use, will be made by the appropriate government body.

Workshops will be scheduled at key planning milestones to review and discuss input from the Stakeholders Committee meetings and the Public Forums.

- December 2006—Organizational meeting of the elected officials to discuss Goals & Objectives, available data, and existing plans and to organize the Stakeholder Committee, finalize the CPP, and review the draft Community Assessment.
- February 2007—meet with each City Council and the Board of Commissioners individually to discuss specific issues, policies and land use patterns.
- March 2007—Joint Officials Workshop to review current progress, including guiding principles, the vision, goals and objectives and the Land Demand Analysis. Finalized list of Issues
- May 2007—Joint Officials Workshop to review character areas, initial future development map and recommendations from the Stakeholders Committee.
- July 2007—Joint Officials Workshop to review final stakeholder committee recommendations, land development strategies and implementation measures, and Future Development Map.

## Stakeholders' Committee

The new DCA standards require the development of a Vision and Guiding Principles that form the basis for each plan element, land use patterns and eventually concrete goals, objectives and policies to implement the Plan. To accomplish this efficiently and effectively, a Stakeholders Committee will be formed, consisting of a cross section of residents, businesses, and other interests. A stakeholder group of various interest groups from the county and cities will be appointed by the Joint Officials to form the backbone of the public involvement process. This Committee will be all-inclusive with regard to groups—both organized and in general—that have an interest in the future development of the county and its cities. It is envisioned that this group of 15 to 25 individuals would represent advocates and interests from the county and cities.

The purpose of the Stakeholders Committee will be to assist in the preparation of the Draft Community Agenda through their collective and individual concerns and issues, and to make recommendations to the Joint Officials Workshop for final decisions and direction.

### *Identification of Stakeholders*

At the initial organizational meeting of the Joint Officials, the consultant, staff and Joint Officials will work to develop an inclusive stakeholder committee that would guide the preparation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan. A list of potential representation on this committee for appointment could include:

- Residents—resident participants will be chosen from established residential neighborhood organizations, and from areas that are newly developing. Residential selection will include both new and long-term residents.
- Business Community—business participation may include long-term business residents and newcomers. Small businesses, newly developing business, and established businesses should be represented. The Watkinsville Downtown Business Association and the Chamber of Commerce will be specifically represented.
- Development and Investment Community—a subcategory of the business community is the development and investment community that is actively working in Oconee County. This group may include commercial developers, residential developers, homebuilders, real estate agents and brokers, and banking.
- Special Interests—this group includes special interest representation in such areas as the environment, historic preservation, the Board of Education, and public infrastructure development. This group also includes representation from the planning commission.

- **General Public/Citizens**
- **Homeowner Associations**
- **Planning Commission**
- **Board of Education**
- **Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations**
- **Developers, Home Builders**
- **Public Infrastructure Development: Roads, Water and Sewer, Public Safety**
- **Community Leaders**
- **Transportation and Land Use Committee**
- **Recreation and cultural Affairs Committee**
- **Environmental Interests**
- **Historical Interests**

Five meetings will be held during this process as follows:

- February 2007—Initial start up meeting to focus on organization, goals & objectives, development of a vision statement and concentration on issues, strengths and weaknesses of the community, and a review of the Community Assessment and related issues.
- March 2007—Vision, guiding principles, policies and initial character areas.
- April 2007---Review implementation strategies and land use patterns, visions and character areas.
- June 2006—Wrap Up and development of Final Public Review Draft of the Community Agenda.

Although primary activities will specifically involve the Stakeholder Committee, all meetings will be advertised on the web site and open to the general public.

Meeting results will be documented and presented to the BOC and City Councils by staff at regularly scheduled public briefings.

### **Public Forums**

There will be two public forums to assist in the development of the Community Agenda. These meetings will focus on both countywide and local land use issues. These meetings will be open to anyone who wishes to attend. Unlike the kick-off public hearing, which is intended to educate and inform these workshops are intended to solicit input in a structured manner.

The purpose of the first public forum will be to inform citizens of the current progress, of the findings of the initial Community Assessment and estimated land demand, and to solicit input on the critical issues facing the County and its cities. Comments will be received in oral and written form. This meeting will be held in May.

The second Public Forum will be to present the Draft Community Agenda. This meeting will be conducted in an educational format and input will be solicited through a question and answer session at the end of the presentation. Comments will be received in oral and written form. The primary objective will be to give the citizens an opportunity to comment on specific issues in the draft before it is submitted to the local officials and regional development center. This meeting will be held in July.

### **Countywide Second Public Hearing**

The Second Public Hearing will be held in late July 2007, prior to transmittal of the Final Draft Community Agenda to the RDC and DCA for review. This public hearing will be a joint public hearing for the unincorporated portion of the county, the City of Bishop, the City of Watkinville, the City of Bogart, and the City of North High Shoals and will be legally advertised. This meeting will begin with a brief presentation of the results of the planning process, major issues facing the County and its Cities and a summary of the Future Development Plan Map. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive comments from citizens and to discuss any final changes with the elected officials at the meeting. Following this meeting, and the addition of public comments, each jurisdiction will adopt a Resolution authorizing the transmission of the Community Agenda for state review.



## Other Public Involvement Opportunities

The County and its Cities will strive to utilize other public advertising opportunities to keep the general public informed during this process, and to involve as many citizens in the process as possible. This may include having press coverage at Joint Officials Meetings and/or Stakeholder Committee Meetings, utilizing the County and Cities’ web sites to include meeting dates and document information, as it is available. An Oconee County web page will be continually updated throughout the planning process. All documents distributed at meetings and community events will be included on the web page, including such items as draft maps, the planning process, schedules, frequently asked questions, related links and an interactive page where the public would have an opportunity to provide comments and suggestions.

## ■ Conclusion



This effort is intended to provide opportunities for the citizens of Oconee County and its Cities to participate meaningfully in the development of the update to the Joint Comprehensive Plan. As the process unfolds, the process will be reviewed periodically and revisions may be made to assure that this intent is realized.


## ■ Citizen Participation Program

Following is a milestone schedule of how we proposed to proceed with this plan:

**10TH YEAR JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**  
**Unincorporated Oconee County, Bishop, Watkinsville, Bogart and North High Shoals**  
**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SCHEDULE**

	2006				2007						
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct
<b>Organizational Workshop for elected officials</b>	7										
<b>Final Community Assessment</b>											
<b>Individual City Workshops, Unincorporated County</b>			TBA								
<b>Joint Officials Workshop</b>				1		3		12			
<b>Appoint Stakeholders</b>		30									
<b>PH for Assessment Transmittal</b>			27								
<b>Stakeholder Committee Meetings</b>			22	22		17	21				
<b>Draft Community Agenda</b>											
<b>Citizen's Issue Forums</b>						15		17			
Final Public Review Community Agenda Draft											
<b>Public Hearing-Transmittal</b>								31			
NEGRDC/DCA Review											
<b>Public Hearing-Adoption</b>											2

Public Hearing (meet advertisement req.)   
 Elected Officials Workshop 

Stakeholder Meetings   
 Public Forums 