

ENVISIONING STATESBORO'S FUTURE

CITY OF STATESBORO COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

Community Participation Program

August 2008



LOTT  BARBER

RS&H

CITY OF STATESBORO

Comprehensive Master Plan

Community Participation Program

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Statesboro Comprehensive Plan is intended to reflect the goals, values, and vision of the community as a whole. In order to achieve this, it is critical for the public to be involved in the creation of their community plan and to have a sense of ownership in the plan. Citizens who are engaged throughout the planning process are more likely to be involved in the implementation of the plan, and to champion elements of the plan which they themselves helped to create. The public can be the champions of the plan over time, thus helping to ensure that it remains at the forefront of the decision-making process, even as elected officials may change.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) sets the standards and procedures for developing local comprehensive plans. The City of Statesboro Comprehensive Plan will be prepared according to the Advanced Planning Level Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, or “Local Planning Requirements” (effective May 1, 2005). The City will use the participation techniques described in this document, which corresponds with the public participation schedule based on the DCA re-certification deadline of June 30, 2009. The general schedule for completion of the comprehensive plan appears at the end of this participation program.

The comprehensive planning process is directed by the City of Statesboro Planning Department with plan development services provided by the consultant team of Lott + Barber and Reynolds, Smith, & Hills, Inc.



The purpose of the Community Participation Program is to ensure that the local comprehensive plan reflects the full range of community values and desires, by involving a diverse spectrum of stakeholders in development of the Community Agenda. This broad-based participation in developing the Community Agenda will also help ensure that it will be implemented, because many in the community are involved in its development and thereby become committed to seeing it through.

- Georgia Department of
Community Affairs

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objects are proposed for the Community Participation Plan. The goals are high level expressions of the approach to public involvement activities and the objectives provide more detailed strategies on achieving the identified goals.



Goal _____

Provide opportunities for stakeholders, interested parties and members of the general public to learn about and help shape strategies through an active involvement process that is open, inclusive and accessible to all citizens and their perspectives.

Objectives:

- Provide participation and educational opportunities for any citizen.
- Develop partnerships among the local governments, agencies and community organizations.
- Build trust among all project participants.

Goal _____

Provide clear, accurate and understandable information that can be transmitted to citizens and interested parties through a variety of means

Objectives:

- Use clear and understandable language, as well as graphics to clearly communicate technical issues.
- Use a variety of media, including websites, fact sheets, and public meeting presentations to disseminate information and data, particularly at key decision points during the process.
- Identify opportunities to obtain input from a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, including those populations that are traditionally underserved in the planning process.

Goal _____

Provide avenues to efficiently receive input from the public and to integrate the input into the development of the plan

Objectives:

- Monitor the progress of the technical analysis through project team meetings, workshops, public forums and other stakeholder involvement activities to identify issues and concerns.
- Provide documentation of these issues and concerns.
- Provide acknowledgement of input received from stakeholders.

Goal _____

Monitor the effectiveness of the planning process and the public involvement process through communicating and receiving information among stakeholders, citizens, planning partners and the project team.

Objectives:

- Conduct questionnaires of participants in activities, such as workshops, to gauge the effectiveness of the format
- Solicit feedback from the advisory committees and any technical committees on their satisfaction with the input opportunities and activities

IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

Comprehensive community input depends on the inclusion of stakeholders from a diverse cross-section of the community. In order to guide the comprehensive planning process and include the stakeholders, City Council has appointed a Steering Committee to guide the planning process.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of individuals who represent diverse stakeholder groups in the community. In addition to guiding the comprehensive planning process, the Steering Committee will be responsible for informing their constituencies about opportunities to become involved and gathering input and feedback.

Establishment of the Steering Committee

In order to maximize diversity on the steering committee and provide equal opportunity for any member of the community to participate on the Steering Committee, the City of Statesboro solicited for applications to serve on the steering committee. Notice of this opportunity was provided through the city's website and also distributed to every business and household in the city through utility bill inserts. Specific stakeholder groups represented on this committee include:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| ▪ Citizen representation, including middle-class, low income, and minority neighborhoods | ▪ Real estate |
| ▪ Education (K – 12) | ▪ Media |
| ▪ Development community | ▪ Economic development |
| ▪ Georgia Southern University | ▪ Non-profit organizations |
| | ▪ Business community |
| | ▪ Agricultural community |

Steering Committee

Julius Abraham
Mike Backus
Pearl Brown
Jamey Cartee
Teresa Concannon
Wendell Hagins
Faye K. Hunter
Karen W. Lavender
Jan Moore
Clint Nessmith
Wesley Parker
Dan Pratt
Lewis Stewart
Sharon Tracy
Craig Tremble

Goals of the Steering Committee

The goals of the Steering Committee are to:

- Involve all segments of the community in the planning process;
- Generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community;
- Provide input for the Community Agenda,; and
- Engage the interest of citizens in implementing the plan.

It is anticipated that the Steering Committee will meet approximately eight times during the process. The first meeting will primary allow the committee members to meet one another, provide information to them about their role in the process, and present highlights of the Community Assessment. Subsequent meetings will be much more interactive to develop the Community Agenda. Specific issues to be addressed include:

- Community Vision
- Quality Community Objectives
- Issues & Opportunities
- Character Areas
- Future Land Use
- Implementation Strategies

Each member of the Steering Committee receives a project notebook with background materials and resources. In advance of each meeting, the Steering Committee receives information for preparation of the upcoming meeting and additional resources as needed. Over time, this project notebook can serve as a resource to the committee members in recapping the planning process.

Stakeholder Interviews

To increase the level of stakeholder input beyond the Steering Committee, interviews with prominent community leaders will also be conducted. The purpose of the interviews will be to begin the identification of issues and opportunities from various perspectives, learn more about existing plans and initiatives relevant to the comprehensive plan, and engage these community leaders early in the planning process.

Interviews were held with representatives of the following stakeholder groups:

- Statesboro – Bulloch Chamber of Commerce
- Development Authority of Bulloch County
- Homebuilders Association of Statesboro
- Georgia Southern University
- Bulloch County Board of Commissioners
- Downtown Statesboro Development Authority and Main Street Statesboro
- Bulloch County Board of Education

IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

Public participation can be maximized through the utilization of multiple outreach methods. This section outlines the participation techniques to be incorporated to reach the community, provide accurate information, and receive public input.

Public Workshops

A series of three community workshops are planned throughout the process to receive input and feedback throughout the development of the plan. The workshops will **maximize public input through interactive discussions and hands-on activities**. The workshops are anticipated to focus on the following topics:

The initial public workshop will provide a brief orientation about the comprehensive Plan. However, the focus will be on hands-on activities to engage the public and encourage them to really think about what the vision is for their community and defining community goals. They will also be asked what obstacles exist to achieving that vision as well as the opportunities that exist which can be strengthened.

The second workshop will build on the efforts of the Steering and Technical Advisory Committees. Participants will review and comment on a draft vision statement, with all comments recorded and for potential inclusion into the vision. Participants will also be encouraged to carefully examine development patterns and thoughtfully describe their preferred future vision for development.

The third workshop will present a draft of the Community Agenda, particularly implementation measures, to the public. Workshop participants will then have the opportunity to discuss the recommendations in more detail with project team members in an open-house format. Participants will be encouraged to submit any comments and suggestions.

*Public Workshop One –
Visioning & Community
Goals*

*Public Workshop Two –
Future Development Map*

*Public Workshop Three –
Introducing the
Community Agenda &
Implementation Strategies*

City Council Workshops

Up to three workshops will be held with City Council members. These workshops will consist of presentations by the project team and discussions regarding the broader significance of the planning process and the importance of the comprehensive plan to the community. One of the goals of these workshops will be to ensure that elected officials are engaged in the planning process and will champion the plan during its early implementation. These workshops will be held to coincide roughly with the Public Workshops.

Surveys

Community surveys provide an opportunity to reach a wide segment of the population for general information. Surveys can be a very useful tool for getting a general sense of what is important to residents. A citizen survey will be developed early in the development of the Community Agenda. This survey will be posted on a third-party website and distributed through the city's newsletter and/or utility bills.

Communications & Outreach

- *E-newsletters* – A database of interested parties will be maintained and updated throughout the planning process. Announcements regarding the comprehensive plan and participation opportunities will be sent via e-mail to the interested parties list.
- *City newsletters* – The city publishes a quarterly newsletter which is distributed to all residents. Articles about the comprehensive plan and announcements of upcoming events will be included during the planning process.
- *Utility bill inserts* – Notification of public involvement opportunities may be distributed to all Statesboro residents through their monthly utility bill. This method provides outreach through a comprehensive list which reaches all residents of the city.

Media

A comprehensive media list will be maintained for the distribution of press releases to announce significant events, such as public workshops and hearings. Involvement of the media can be an important resource for those unable to attend meetings or participate in other public outreach events. Formal interviews and media inquiries will be directed to the City of Statesboro planning staff or other appropriate city officials. Information will be distributed to the media through press releases to encourage the most accurate reporting of information.

Specific media to be targeted include the *Statesboro Herald*, as the major news provider in the community, as well as the *Savannah Morning News*.

Public Hearings

A minimum of two public hearings will be held in accordance with DCA planning requirements. One hearing will be held before the submittal of the Community Assessment and Public Participation Plan. The second hearing will be held before the submittal of the Community Agenda.

Project Website

A section of the city's website is dedicated to the comprehensive planning process and is easily accessible through a link on the main home page (www.sboronet.net). This is an effective tool to readily provide information to stakeholders and citizens, and is a very cost effective means to provide draft documents for feedback and review to as broad an audience as possible. Documents, surveys, and news about the process will be provided on a regular basis.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Planning Department website. The page title is "Comprehensive Plan". The main content area includes an introductory paragraph, an overview, and a list of key components: Community Assessment, Community Participation Program, and Community Agenda. A sidebar on the left contains navigation links for various planning topics. The footer provides contact information for the Planning Department.

Planning Department

Home | Area Information | Mayor & Council | City Manager's Office | Departments | News | Related Links
 Department Overview | Media Release | Public Activities | Contact Us

Comprehensive Plan

It is an exciting time for the City of Statesboro! We are embarking on the development of our comprehensive plan, which will create a community vision for the next twenty years and provide a road map for how to work together to achieve our vision. The plan will be developed through a very public process involving community leaders, stakeholders, and citizens.

Overview
 The Comprehensive Plan is developed in accordance with rules and guidelines established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). There are three primary components of the plan:

- Community Assessment** – This part of the comprehensive plan is an objective and professional assessment of data and information about the community, which includes a list of potential issues and opportunities, analysis of existing development patterns, evaluation of current policies, and analysis of data and information. This section is a concise and informative report used to inform the decision making process.
- Community Participation Program** – This section describes the strategies to be used during the planning process to ensure adequate public and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.
- Community Agenda** – This is the most important component of the plan, for it includes the community's vision for the future as well as its strategy for achieving this vision. It includes three major components:
 - A community vision for the future physical development of the community, expressed in the form of a map indicating unique character areas;
 - A list of issues and opportunities identified by the community for future action; and,
 - An implementation program, including policies and action items, for achieving the community's vision for the future and addressing the identified issues and opportunities.

You may also visit the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) website for further information on comprehensive planning.

Get Involved!
 The City will be holding public workshops throughout the process to seek citizen input. Dates, times, and locations will be announced later. As the plan is developed, information and draft plan material will also be posted on the city's website for review and comment. Finally, you can also receive information and updates by email. Just send an email to planning@statesboroga.net with the subject "comp plan email list" to stay up-to-date on all the latest. Your email address will be kept strictly confidential.

More Information
 For more information about plan, please check the following links:

- [News & Current Events – Steering Committee](#)
- [Schedule](#)
- [Drafts](#)
- [Project Team & Contact Information](#)

This site will be updated periodically throughout the comprehensive planning process; please check back for updates, links and further information.

50 East Main Street | Post Office Box 348 | Statesboro, Georgia 30459
 Telephone: (912) 764-0668 | Fax: (912) 764-4691
 E-Mail: planning@statesboroga.net

The website for the City of Statesboro is well-organized to provide easy access to current information and will be updated throughout the planning process.

SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF THE COMMUNITY AGENDA

	2008							2009					
	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Community Vision													
Steering Committee Meeting	◆												
Community Survey													
Public Workshop			◆										
Issues & Opportunities													
Steering Committee Meeting		◆											
Council Workshop		◆											
Public Workshop			◆										
Future Development Map & Defining Narrative													
Steering Committee Meeting			◆										
Council Workshop			◆										
Public Workshop				◆									
Steering Committee Meeting				◆									
Implementation Program													
Steering Committee Meeting					◆								
Council Workshop					◆								
Public Workshop						◆							
Steering Committee Meeting						◆							
Review & Approval													
Public Hearing							◆						
Pass Resolution								◆					
Submit Plan to CGRDC								◆					
State Review													
Adoption by City Council													◆