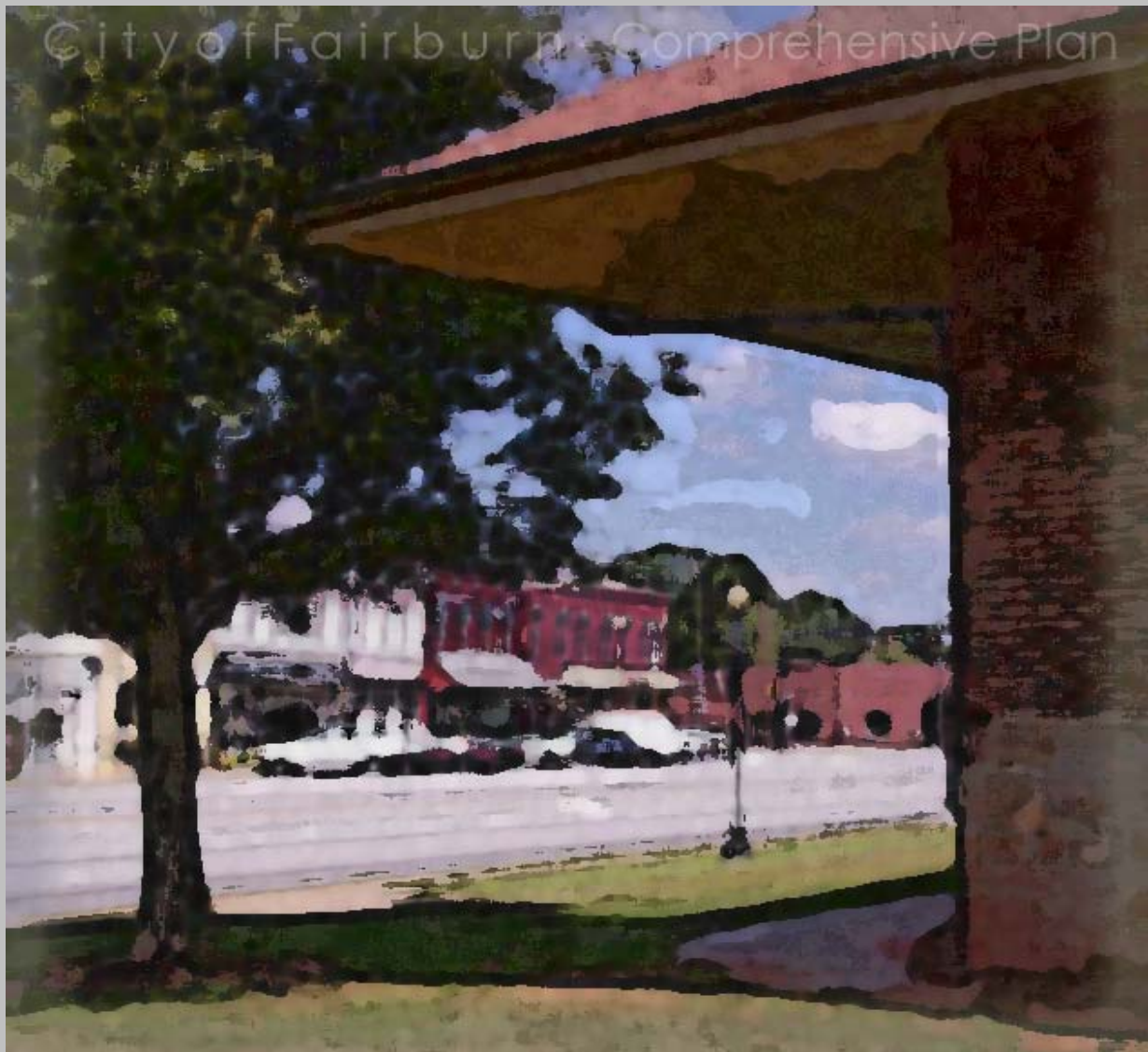


COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

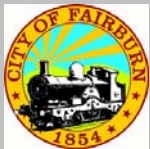


Submitted to:

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

By:

CITY OF FAIRBURN, GEORGIA



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Introduction

The word community can be defined as a population of people living in a common location. There can be a wide variation when it comes to the basic social, professional, economic, and political values of the residents that make up a community. In preparing a Comprehensive Plan, it is important to work with citizens to identify the issues and challenges unique to their community. The Comprehensive Planning process begins with an evaluation of the current strengths and needs of the community followed by a vision for the future. This Community Participation Program is designed to give citizens the opportunity to take part in the planning process in an effort to gain support for proposed programs from the public and to produce a document that best reflects the overall vision for the community. An innovative and comprehensive public involvement program will ensure that the public feels vested in results of the planning process.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) requires that a Community Participation Program be implemented as part of the Comprehensive Planning Process as outlined in the Rules for Comprehensive Planning, Section 110-12-1-.04. The goal for the Program as outlined in Rules is as follows:

“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.”

The DCA also requires that a Plan for the Community Participation Program be developed and submitted to DCA for approval prior to the start of the public involvement process. This document outlines the City’s strategy to develop and implement a public involvement program for the City of Fairburn Comprehensive Plan and is hereby submitted to DCA for approval.

1. Scope

The mission of the Community Participation Program is to provide citizens the opportunity to make their voices heard by taking part in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. An effective community participation program should be designed to educate the public as well as provide an opportunity for citizens to be part of the planning process. The participation strategies outlined in this report have been selected to assure that citizens understand the planning process and that multiple levels of public involvement exist.

To facilitate the development and submittal of the Community Assessment and this document, the Community Participation Plan, two public involvement strategies have already been implemented. A Technical Advisory Committee, the “Project Team,” (PT) was established to provide feedback to the planners and shape the overall planning process. The Project Team included a small number of representatives from the City of Fairburn, the Fairburn Planning Commission, and the business community. Two public meetings were also held, in accordance with the DCA Rules for Comprehensive Planning, to introduce the plan and increase public awareness before the Community Assessment and Community Participation Plan are submitted to the DCA.

Upon approval of the Community Involvement Plan from the DCA, the City will “kick-off” its public involvement program with an Open House. The Open House will give citizens the chance to learn about the plan and express their opinions in an informal setting. Educational material will be available at City Hall, on the website, and on the cable channel to keep the public informed throughout the process. A Stakeholder Committee will be convened to review the draft development strategies, issues and opportunities presented in the Community Assessment. Finally, prior to submittal of the Community Agenda, at the conclusion of the planning process, a third public meeting will be held to present the Agenda to the public.

The following public involvement strategies have been selected by the City as part of the public involvement strategy and are discussed in this report:

- Open House
- Stakeholders Committee
- Community Survey
- Handouts
- Website
- Cable Channel

In most cases, informing and educating the public is not enough. The most successful strategy is one that also gets citizens involved in the decision making process that will shape the future of their community. The City intends to accomplish this goal by providing various levels of public involvement, which have the potential to reach all citizens. A web survey will be administered in order to provide an avenue for the general public to provide input. Citizens that want to take a greater role in the planning process will have the option to participate in community events such as public meetings and the open house. Lastly, the

Stakeholders committee will allow citizen representatives the opportunity to work directly with the PT.

Implementing the tasks outlined in this report will improve the overall quality of the plan by defining the values of the community and working together to accomplish those goals. Additionally, involving the public during the planning stage will help to garner support for the Comprehensive Plan and its eventual implementation.

2. Project Team (PT)

A technical advisory committee has been established to coordinate project staff, provide feedback to the project managers, and to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan accurately represents the City's vision for the future. The team includes representatives of the various departments/groups:

Project Team (9 members)

- City Manager
- Fairburn Planning Commission
- Zoning Department
- City Council
- Public Works
- Fairburn Development Authority
- Planning Consultants

The PT has met on a regular schedule to oversee the development of the Community Agenda and Community Participation Plan. Please see Appendix A for a copy of meeting summaries. The following list details the early efforts of the PT:

- *Existing Land Use Map*: Fieldwork was conducted to verify the existing land uses. The PT then reviewed the existing Land Use map and made the appropriate updates.
- *Community Character Map*: The PT analyzed the current land use distribution and development patterns and established a vision for the future that is illustrated in the Community Character map.
- *Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA)*: The PT used the existing Land Use and Community Character maps to develop the ARSA map. Areas were identified based on the consistency between current trends in a given area and the future vision for the community.
- *Issues and Opportunities*: The PT reviewed the State Planning Recommendations and created a comprehensive list of issues specific to Fairburn that need to be addressed in order to meet the goals outlined in the plan. A list of opportunities was developed based on the identified issues.
- *Data Assessment*: The data assessment evaluated a variety of demographic trends that need to be considered in the scope of long-term planning. Rapid population growth and a growing elderly population are just two items gathered from this assessment. Other factors analyzed by the PT were income, employment, housing, economic trends, utilities, education, natural resources, and coordination between governments.

The PT will continue to meet throughout the planning process. The initial findings of the PT will be updated and revised based on feedback generated during the public involvement process.

3. Public Hearing

The state minimum standards require that a Public Hearing be held before City Council to inform the public that the planning process for updating the Comprehensive Plan is in progress. The PT presented the Comprehensive Plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission on November 1, 2005 and at the City Council Meeting on November 14, 2005 to inform the City Council and the public about the scope of the plan. Both meetings were open to the public and advertised in accordance with City procedures. Schedules were posted on the City's website and agendas were made publicly available at City Hall before the meetings. Please see Appendix B for copies of the agendas for these meetings. The following items were presented at both Public Hearings.

- Existing Land Use Map
- Community Character Map
- Areas that Require Special Attention Map
- Issues and Opportunities
- Data Assessment
- Quality Community Objectives Assessment
- Public Involvement Strategy
- Project Schedule

The initial public meeting will provide citizens with an opportunity to ask questions and voice any concerns about the proposed strategy for public involvement and plan development. A second Public Hearing will be held prior to final adoption of the Community Agenda.

4. Identification of Public Participation Techniques

4.1 Stakeholder Committee

A great part of the success of the Comprehensive Plan will be dependent on Stakeholder involvement. Effective involvement of key individuals/groups from the community will ensure that the Plan gains community wide support, addresses the issues and concerns of the general population, and is ultimately implemented. The benefits of Stakeholder involvement include:

- Citizens increasingly want to be involved in decisions that affect their community.
- People with different areas of expertise contribute ideas, resulting in a well thought out plan with better solutions.
- Fellow citizens tend to support programs that have Stakeholder involvement.
- By allowing residents, special interest groups, and business leaders to be involved, planners and decision makers have the chance to think “outside the box.”
- Involving “citizen experts” helps facilitate communication.
- Working together provides the opportunity to understand other people’s concerns and issues.
- Stakeholder involvement allows for a more interconnected community.
- Stakeholder support builds program momentum and keeps the project moving forward.
- Stakeholder comments are heard and responded to early in the process, which leads to more effective program implementation and future acceptance.

The Stakeholder process allows individuals to make significant contributions to the planning process. It has been our experience that Stakeholders in a community often agree that government needs to take action to protect them from various perceived risks (health, safety, environmental issues, undesired development patterns, etc.).

It is important that a free flow of information be maintained between the City and the Stakeholders as well as within the Stakeholder Committee. This is important because the people that comprise the Stakeholder Committee live and work within the community, and they will be the best resource to convey the SWMP message. The City should consider that in order to effectively implement the future Comprehensive Plan, the Public Education and Involvement Program must create an awareness of land use, development, and community related issues and opportunities.

4.1.1 Selecting the Stakeholders Committee

The key Stakeholders are typically comprised of representatives from the general public, residents, professionals, business and industry leaders, church and civic leaders, media representatives, special interest groups, City staff and elected officials.

It is important that the Stakeholder group consist of a diverse assortment of local representatives with different perspectives on the issue. The initial focus of the public involvement strategy will include the involvement of key Stakeholders that possess a high degree of trust and credibility with their fellow citizens. These Stakeholders will represent a broad range of backgrounds from business leaders to church leaders to neighborhood groups to developers. Fairburn has identified the following Stakeholder groups to be represented in this process:

- Project Team Members
- City Council
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Church Leader
- Environmental Advocacy Group
- Business/Economic Development Representative
- School Representative (Landmark Christian Academy)
- Industrial Representative

In the selection of Stakeholders, the City will make an effort to recognize and be cognizant of what the general public's perception typically entails. The selected group of Stakeholders should be chosen such that their diversity ensures that the final Comprehensive Plan reflects the goals and objectives of the various communities within the City. The key to success will be achieving a consensus among the group on the future vision for the City of Fairburn. Once this is accomplished, this diverse group of Stakeholders should be able to "get the word out" to their fellow citizens and business associates that the Comprehensive Plan will be beneficial to the citizens of Fairburn and the future of their community.

4.1.2 Stakeholder Meeting Strategy

The Stakeholder Committee will be scheduled to meet four times throughout the planning process to review progress and provide feedback to the PT. The following is a proposed list of topics to be discussed at each Stakeholder meeting.

- *Meeting 1 – Visioning.* At this meeting Stakeholders will participate in an informal visioning exercise, where they will be asked to share their thoughts on the objectives and goals of the planning process in the City of Fairburn. The original community from the previous Comprehensive Plan as well as the City's motto will be evaluated by the Group as they relate to the issues identified in the Community Assessment. Finally a brainstorming session will be held to finalize a new "Community Vision" for the Comprehensive Plan Update.

- *Meeting 2 – Development Patterns and Strategies.* At the second meeting Stakeholders will be asked to take a closer look at the current land use, proposed Character Areas, and Areas Requiring Special Attention. Community and Stakeholder feedback is essential to developing Character Areas that mirror the existing conditions within Fairburn. The PT will take this opportunity to ensure that all unique neighborhoods within the City have been identified, and that the characteristics that exemplify those areas have been accurately described. The PT will also work with Stakeholders to review all maps and descriptions to ensure that they correspond to identified issues and the Community Vision.
- *Meeting 3 – Issues and Opportunities and Quality Community Objectives.* Stakeholder input on Issues, Opportunities and the DCA’s Quality Community Objectives, as they relate to the City of Fairburn is essential if they are to reflect the thoughts and experience of the Community. Stakeholders will be asked to review the Issues, Opportunities and Quality Community Objectives presented in the Community Assessment. The Stakeholder Group will then revise, add, or edit these items to reflect the consensus of the group. Issues and opportunities identified here will ultimately affect the Short-Term Work Program, and it is essential that City resources are directed to issues prioritized by the Community.
- *Meeting 4 – Review and Consensus.* This meeting will be utilized to finish goals set forth in the three meeting descriptions above. Additionally, this time will be used to review and reach consensus on the recommendations of the group related to Community Vision, Development Patterns, Issues, Opportunities, and Quality Community Objectives.

The PT will provide “read ahead” material to the Stakeholder Committee prior to each meeting. Experience has shown that supplying “read ahead” material leads to more productive meetings by allowing the Stakeholders to review the information in advance. Stakeholder meetings will be held in an informal but professional manner to create an environment that will facilitate participation and to show due respect to the participants who are donating their time. Meetings will be held after work hours and will be limited to a maximum of two hours per meeting. If more meetings are required to meet the goals set above, the Stakeholder Committee will be asked for an additional commitment.

4.2 Community Survey

In an effort to increase public involvement, the PT will develop a community survey to gain feedback from citizens. The community survey is an effective tool as it is available to a large population at a minimal cost for the City and a minimal time commitment to the participants. The survey will be posted on the City website and will contain questions on a wide range of community related topics. The City is also exploring the option of a photographic survey. This would include showing pictures of different development patterns and asking citizens to rate them.

The results of the surveys will be tabulated and examined by the PT. Based on the results, the PT will incorporate the main issues and concerns of the citizens into the development of the future vision.

4.3 Open House

Community meetings or “open houses” are one of the best and most commonly utilized approaches to facilitate public education and involvement. Typically, the public is invited to meet with City staff and the City’s representatives. At these meetings, the various issues will be presented in an informal manner in order to answer questions and gather feedback on the direction of the planning process. The City may also consider conducting concurrent meetings with neighborhood associations, civic groups and business related coalitions (such as Rotary) in an effort to share information about the Comprehensive Plan and to garner additional perspective on the issues from other local citizens.

The City will host an Open House to introduce the *Community Assessment* to the public at the beginning of the Community Participation Program. The Open House will be held at the recently refurbished “Annex” building and will allow for informal interaction between the citizens and members of the PT. Citizens will be able to view map displays and have one-on-one discussions with PT members about specific elements of the plan. Handouts, comment cards, and other information will be distributed in an effort to educate the public and get feedback. The City will advertise the event by issuing a press release local newspaper, posting it on the website and cable channel, and providing information on the Open House at City Hall.

4.4 Public Information

In addition to the strategies identified above, the City will produce handouts to update citizens about the content and progress of the Comprehensive Planning process. The City will utilize the following Public Information techniques:

- *Media Kit (Press Package)*. A packet of information will be provided to the press containing all of the information/facts to write an article (or a series of several articles) on the Comprehensive Plan. A City contact name and phone number will also be included.
- *Informational Brochure(s)*. These brochures and/or fact sheets will be simple and straightforward in order to explain the Comprehensive Planning process and what it is designed to accomplish. The brochures will provide common questions and answers and will be written using language that is not overly technical. There may be more than one brochure to explain various aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. The brochures will be made available at City Hall and will be distributed at public meetings.

- *Local Cable TV.* Public service announcements (PSAs) are an excellent way of getting information out to the public. The PSAs will provide information on the status and content of the Comprehensive Plan. Important milestone dates will be advertised as appropriate on the cable access channel.
- *Websites.* Websites are a great method of getting information out to a large group of people. A section or link added to the City’s website for the Comprehensive Program will allow for quick immediate information for the general public. The webpage may include information on the program, a question and answer portion, contact information, and a link to e-mail any questions or concerns. This website address will be listed in all materials designed for the program. The website also provides an opportunity to catalog appropriate public documents and make them available to the public through use of downloadable PDF files.

4.5 Public Involvement Schedule

Public Involvement Tasks	2006											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
APPROVAL OF STRATEGY FROM DCA	★											
OPEN HOUSE	★											
STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE	[Blue horizontal bar spanning Jan to May]											
Select Stakeholders and Read Ahead Packet	[Blue horizontal bar spanning Jan to May]											
Meeting 1: Visioning		★										
Meeting 2: Development Patterns			★									
Meeting 3: Issues, Opportunities, and QCOs				★								
Meeting 4: Consensus					★							
SURVEY	[Blue horizontal bar spanning Feb to May]											
PUBLIC INFORMATION	[Blue horizontal bar spanning Jan to Aug]											
Media Press Kit	★											
Informational Brochures												
Cable Access Channel												
Website												
FINAL PUBLIC MEETING									★			

Appendix A
Project Team Meeting Summaries

Appendix B
Public Meeting Agendas