

CITY OF AUSTELL



Community Participation Program 2006

Submitted To
Atlanta Regional Commission
July 2006

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In an effort to create opportunities for citizens to work collaboratively on the challenges that shape their community the City of Austell has developed this Community Participation Program. Accomplishing this requires political leadership, citizen's education and active involvement. A successful comprehensive plan begins with the process of thinking about and visualizing the future and discussing how the community prepares itself for evolving and growing. The overall goal of this effort is better decision-making with enhanced public consensus.

Scope

The City of Austell is required by state law to complete its Comprehensive Plan Update by June 30, 2007. The plan will be prepared in accordance with the Advanced Planning Level Local Planning Requirements from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), effective May 1, 2005.

Measure of Success

Experience in public involvement has shown that lasting solutions are best identified when all segments of a community – individuals, 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:

- 1) To educate and increase public awareness
- 2) To capture the knowledge and preferences of the people who live in and support the communities
- 3) To mobilize support and acceptance of the plan

The measure of effectiveness of a community participation program is not that the public has been informed, but that public input has contributed to making a decision that is feasible and is supported by a large segment of the community. It is essential to know the community's perspectives and values to facilitate positive impacts, as well as to narrow the field of alternative solutions. This process is designed to improve the quality of decisions, increase ease of implementation, provide greater public understanding of community goals and objectives, and provide tangible evidence that the community created its own identity.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

Austell Mayor and City Council
Austell Business Association
Austell Planning and Zoning Board (Steering Committee)
Austell Industrial Development Authority
Austell Downtown Development Authority
Austell City Department Heads (Technical Committee)
Austell Gas Company
Austell Historical Society
Board of Realtors
Chattahoochee Technical College
Cobb County Chamber of Commerce
Cobb County Economic Development Department
Cobb County Public Safety
Cobb County Health Services
Cobb Historical Society
Cobb County Public Library System
Cobb County Public School System
Cobb Senior Services
Cobb County Transportation Department
Cobb-Marietta Water Authority
Cobb Water System
Georgia Power
Greystone Power
Homebuilder's Association
Homeowner's Association
Local Business Owners/Operators
Local Civic Clubs
Local Churches
Local Financial Institutions
Local Hospitals
Major Employers
Norfolk-Southern RR
Neighborhood Associations

III. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

The City of Austell has selected a variety of community participation techniques based on budget, schedule target audience and knowledge of the community. The following reflect the participation techniques that have been used during the assessment process or will be used during preparation of the community agenda.

CITY OF AUSTELL, GEORGIA COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

Participation Technique	Description	City of Austell Utilization
Kick-Off Public Information Meeting	An event to announce the planning Process to citizens and other Stakeholders and to receive a Presentation covering the project Purpose and general plan approach.	September 2006 subsequent to Community Assessment and Community Participation Program review and approval.
Printed Public Information	Flyers, brochures or newsletters providing information on the progress of the Plan and announcement of future public meetings.	The City and its consultant will periodically prepare and provide copies of program progress and future meetings at public facilities such as City Hall, Library, Senior Center, etc. Beginning September 2006.
Website Information Only	A page on the City's website used for periodic updates on the planning process.	Beginning August 2006 meeting schedules for the Comprehensive Plan process and draft summaries of key information will be posted on the City's website.
Public Hearings	A hearing is a formal meeting where the public may comment on the matters presented for voting.	The City will hold a public hearing on June 26, 2006 to submit the Community Assessment and Community Participation Program. The City will hold a second public hearing in February 2007 to submit the Community Agenda Plan for review.
Website – Response Capability	Availability on the community's website to send emails to the City staff (Technical Committee) working on the Comprehensive Plan.	Beginning September 2006 an e-mail contact to appropriate City staff working on the Plan will be available.
Website – Interactive With Surveys	In addition to providing information on the community's website, provide interactive feedback opportunities with on-line survey.	The City will post a citizen's survey regarding the Comprehensive Plan on its website beginning in September 2006. It will also be available in print at public facilities.
Technical Advisory Committee	A working committee of City employees. As primary "users" of the Plan, they have a stake in the outcome of the Plan.	The City's Technical Committee will consist of all Department Directors. Other staff, consultants, etc. may be called on as necessary. The Committee will be particularly active during the Assessment process and available throughout Plan preparation.
Steering Committee	Established to provide feedback, advise the planning team, and shape the overall planning process. The Steering Committee is typically comprised of representatives of local authorities, the business community, citizens groups, etc.	The Austell Planning Commission will serve as the City's Steering Committee for the Comprehensive Plan process. The stakeholder group will attend meetings and broadening the representative base.
Stakeholder Interviews	One-on-one interviews with the stakeholder members designed to gather more detail information about stakeholder areas of expertise.	In August and September 2006 the City's consultant will conduct one-on-one interviews with the stakeholder members to ensure their respective areas of expertise are available to the Plan process.
Intergovernmental Partnership Meetings	Meetings with groups interested in the Comprehensive Plan such as Board of Education, authorities, City-County government representatives, state/regional agencies.	The City will meet with intergovernmental partners as appropriate to successfully complete the Plan. In particular the City will coordinate with Cobb County which is preparing the county-wide transportation plan.

IV. SCHEDULE

CITY OF AUSTELL, GEORGIA SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Month 2006-2007	Tasks – Community Participation Activities *
February 2006	Identification of Community Participation Techniques. Determination of membership for Technical Committee and Steering Committee. Identification of key stakeholders.
March, April, May 2006	Develop Community Assessment and Community Participation Program. Technical Committee to meet monthly.
June, July 2006	First public hearing by City (June 26); submit Community Assessment and Community Participation Program for review; review period for certification of completion; review period for Community Assessment and Community Participation Program.
August/September 2006	Revisions to Community Assessment and Community Participation Programs if necessary; Open-House Kick-Off Meeting; first-steering committee meeting; on-line survey launch. Preliminary work on Community Agenda; printed information available; stakeholder surveys begin.
October 2006 – February 2007	Prepare Community Agenda. Steering Committee meetings as follows: Meeting 1. Visioning Meeting 2. Development Patterns Meeting 3. Issues and Opportunities Meeting 4. Consensus
February 2007	Open-House presentation on Community Agenda. Public Hearing number 2. Mayor and Council vote to submit Plan for ARC review. (120 days prior to recertification date.)
Spring 2007	DCA/ARC review. Revisions as necessary.
June 2007	City to adopt final Comprehensive Plan. (Plan recertification date June 30, 2007.)

* Dates, times and locations within the period will be established by the City and posted on the website, at public buildings and via press release.