

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

Introduction

The *Community Participation Program* component of The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan is an important part of the prescribed planning process required in the “Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning” as established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. It is required to ensure that the resulting comprehensive plan reflects the full range of community values and desires by involving a diverse spectrum of local stakeholders in the development of the *Community Agenda*. Broad-based participation will likely lead to better understanding, more effective and more committed implementation of the resulting comprehensive plan.

The *Community Participation Program* is intended to supplement, not replace, the two public hearings required by the Local Planning Requirements. The *Community Participation Program* must include three parts: a) the identification of stakeholders; b) the identification of participation techniques; and c) a schedule for completion of the *Community Agenda*.

As noted in the “Introduction,” Appling County and its municipalities have gone beyond these requirements, and have included broad community and stakeholder input in the preparation of the *Community Assessment*. The extensive community and stakeholder involvement will continue and expand in the preparation of the *Community Agenda*.

Identification of Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those agencies, entities, and persons that have a stake in the successful outcome and implementation of the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan. It is important that the entire community is involved and working toward the common strategies for making Appling County and its municipalities a better place to live and work.

The identification of stakeholders for the Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan began early on in the plan preparation process. Representatives of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Development Center met with the Executive Committee representatives of the local governments and discussed the importance of community involvement and broad, diverse representation on the Local Plan Coordination Committee. At this meeting, the “List of Suggested Stakeholders” from DCA’s State Planning Recommendations was provided. The suggested make-up of the Local Plan Coordination Committee as an inclusive list of broad community involvement was discussed at length. This Local Plan Coordination Committee was appointed by the local governments before the community involvement and detailed identification of potential issues and opportunities was initiated. The resulting Local Plan Coordination Committee is detailed below in Table CP-1. The committee make-up, while believed comprehensive and inclusive and while working well, is not completely closed. If the public involvement process identifies another person or entity who or which needs to be included, the local governments will add the needed representative to the existing Local Plan Coordination Committee for additional involvement in the *Community Agenda* preparation.

Table CP-1

Name	Appointed By	Vocation Title	Stakeholder Interest Represented
Jeff Baxley	City of Baxley	City Manager	City Operations, Civic
Vic Brantley	Appling County	Insurance	Business
James Twiggs	Appling County/Baxley	Retired School Administrator	Education
Danita C. Hayes	Appling County	Appling County School System, Progressive Club	Education, Minority, Social
Elvira Russell	Appling County	Involved Citizen	Minority, Social
James Rentz	Appling County	Farmer	Agriculture
M.C. Barlow, Jr.	Appling County	Board of Education Member	Education
Luther Smart	Appling County	County Manager	County Operations
Larry NeSmith	City of Baxley	EMS Director	Health, Minority
George Skipper	City of Baxley	Business	Business, Minority
Charles Kimball	City of Graham	Retired City Clerk	Graham
Robert Wiggins, Jr.	City of Baxley	Entrepreneur	Business
Butch Barfield	City of Baxley	Banking	Business, Chamber, Civic
Gregory B. Hanson	City of Baxley	Appling County School System	Education
Jamie Gardner	City of Baxley	Newspaper	Business, Environmental
Rick Brown	Appling County	Pastor	Social, Civic
H. Virgil Carter	Appling County	Appling County Chairman	County Operations, Education, Agriculture
Steve Rigdon	City of Baxley	Mayor	City Operations, Business, Civic
Pat Webster	City of Surrency	Involved Citizen	Surrency
Mark C. Tomberlin	City of Surrency	Mayor	City Operations, Social (DFCS)
Benny Deloach	Appling County	Sheriff	Law Enforcement
Sheree Floyd	City of Graham	City Clerk	Graham
David Brake	Appling County/Baxley	Health Department Environmental Specialist, Family Connections	Environmental, Civic, Social
Greg Kennedy	City of Baxley	Bank President, Heritage Center	Business, Environmental, Civic
Karen Glenn	Appling County	Chamber of Commerce, Board of Tourism	Economic Development, Civic
Elaine Tuten	Appling County	Altamaha Technical College, Arts Council, Family Connections	Education, Civic, Social
Dale Atkins	Appling County	Development Authority, Real Estate	Economic Development, Housing
Steve Worthington	Appling County	Rayonier	Forestry, Environmental
Dale Spell	Appling County/Baxley	Appling Healthcare System, Family Connections, DFCS	Health Care, Social

Community Participation Techniques

State planning recommendations for possible community participation techniques were jointly reviewed by the RDC and the involved local governments. Based on RDC staff experience, Dooly County training, and local government confirmation, the primary means of community participation chosen were the Technical Advisory Committee (Executive Committee), the Steering Committee (Local Plan Coordination Committee), and follow-up public validation through various means.

As noted earlier, the Local Plan Coordination Committee was designed to provide a broad-based, diverse, and inclusive involvement from a wide-ranging spectrum of stakeholders. This Local Plan Coordination Committee has already been extensively involved in the delineation of potential issues and opportunities and recommended character areas. They will be even more involved in the preparation of the *Community Agenda* from community visioning, to prioritizing issues/opportunities, to evaluating and selecting alternatives for implementation. Hands-on interactive techniques for involvement of committee members have been and will be employed. These have included a modified TOPS (Treasures/Opportunities) exercise at their first meeting, additional issue/opportunities exercises at subsequent meetings, and drawing character maps of their county at another meeting. Members are also encouraged to be liaisons and seek further input from their represented constituencies.

Public validation of committee results and solicitation of further input will be sought through stakeholder interviews, public hearings, other public meetings, and publication of draft results. Key stakeholders have already been interviewed outside the committee in one-on-one meetings to solicit data, ideas, and opinions on the *Community Assessment*. Follow-up contacts for the *Community Agenda* will also be employed. This allows for even wider input free of immediate peer scrutiny or damper. Only the one required public hearing on completion of the draft *Community Assessment* has been held thus far, but it confirmed and validated the process as no new ideas resulted, and the scope and depth of identification of issues/opportunities was complimented. At least one public meeting on community visioning in addition to the required public hearing on the draft *Community Agenda* is planned. A community survey was made

available at the initial public meeting, and a wider distribution may be attempted. Printed copies of the draft *Community Assessment* were made available through the local governments and Local Plan Coordination Committee members. Internet publication, both locally and on the regional RDC website will likely be utilized. The planned participation techniques are not exclusive, and additional techniques could be employed if the planning process develops and reveals a beneficial need.

The required public hearing on the draft *Community Assessment* and *Community Participation Program* was properly advertised and was held August 21, 2006. A required public notice on the availability of the approved *Community Assessment* and *Community Participation Program* will be published in *The Baxley News-Banner* after DCA approval. Other legal requirements to be met will be an advertised formal public hearing on the draft *Community Agenda* anticipated in early spring, and the public notice on the availability of the adopted plan (including the *Community Agenda*) after the *Community Agenda* is approved by DCA and it is formally adopted by the local governments (Late Spring, 2007).

Schedule for Completion of the *Community Agenda*

The following timeline depicts The Appling County Joint Comprehensive Plan preparation process, including the preparation and adoption of the *Community Agenda* component.

Task	2006												2007				
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Staff <i>Community Assessment</i> Preparation/ Finalization	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Local Plan Coord. Comm. Meetings on <i>Community Assessment</i>		■	■	■	■	■	■										
Public Hearing on Comm. Assessment/Comm. Participation Program					■												
Local Government Approval of Comm. Assessment/Comm. Participation Program Submittal							■										
Comm. Assessment/Comm. Part. Program Review											■	■					
Public Notice of Comm. Assessment/Comm. Part. Program												■					
Local Plan Coord. Comm. Meetings on <i>Community Agenda</i>												■	■				
Community Visioning Public Meeting													■				
Public Hearing on <i>Community Agenda</i>													■	■			
Local Government Approval of Comm. Agenda Submittal														■			
Comm. Agenda Review													■	■	■	■	
Local Government Adoption																■	
Public Notice of Comm. Agenda Availability																■	