



# Bainbridge Comprehensive Plan 2010 - 2030

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

**Adopted**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose**

As stated in the Community Assessment, the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to provide a community with documentation of its vision for the future and a guide for achieving that vision. The purpose of the Community Participation Program (CPP) is to ensure that community vision developed through the City of Bainbridge Comprehensive Plan update process reflects the full range of community values and desires. A multi-faceted participation process can strengthen the Bainbridge community by providing a venue for citizens to work side by side with local leaders and government staff to collaboratively address the issues and opportunities that will shape their future.

### **Scope and Requirements**

The City of Bainbridge is required by state law to complete an updated Comprehensive Plan by October 31, 2010. The Georgia DCA's Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005 provide the state mandated process for creation of the Comprehensive Plan. As proscribed by these procedures, work on the City of Bainbridge Comprehensive Plan update began with the development of the Community Assessment document by the city's selected planning consultants, Robert and Company. The Community Assessment includes an inventory and analysis of the data available on the community. The Community Participation Program (CPP) consists of the program for engaging the public to develop the community vision for the future. The CPP must be submitted for state and regional review prior to conducting the actual public outreach meetings. Finally, the Community Agenda document includes recommended policies addressing identified issues and opportunities as well as an implementation plan for achieving the community's overall vision. These three documents together, the Community Assessment, the Community Participation Program, and the Community Agenda, constitute the comprehensive plan.

Thus, the Community Participation Program represents the middle portion of the state's three-stage planning process. This separation of the data assessment and community vision portions of the plan allows for independent, professional data analysis while focusing public input on the plan's policy recommendations.

The CPP includes three major elements, (1) the identification of stakeholders, (2) the identification of participation techniques, (3) and the schedule for completion of the community agenda. State Planning Recommendations provide resources for suggested stakeholders, participation techniques, as well as sample schedules.

### **Goals**

Public involvement is essential to the success of any planning effort. Plans have a greater likelihood of implementation if they provide solutions that have been developed through the cooperative efforts of all segments of the community – citizens, elected officials, the business community and civic organizations. Community involvement creates benefits for the community through education, as well as through the formation of a product that includes local knowledge and preferences. These important steps in the planning process ensure support and acceptance of the vision and the supporting plan document.

The Community Participation Program for the City of Bainbridge will seek to accomplish the following planning goals:

- ❑ Raise the level of awareness and understanding of planning in the Bainbridge community
- ❑ Provide a process for community input that allows members of the city community to voice their concerns and aspirations in individualized settings and also provide chances for these citizens to come together and collaboratively address growth and development issues that cross municipal boundaries.
- ❑ Engage traditionally underserved communities (minority, low-income, elderly, etc.) in the planning process.
- ❑ Improve the quality of the decisions that are made during the planning process.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for stakeholders to make decisions and create the identity they envision for the Bainbridge community.
- ❑ Increase interest and facilitate ease in the implementation of solutions.
- ❑ Provide tangible evidence that the community created its own vision for the future.

## IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

Coordination and oversight are important parts of the comprehensive planning process. To ensure that the comprehensive plan is truly inclusive of the vision, needs, and desires of all community members, and that the plan adequately addresses the challenges and opportunities that are most important to the community, the involvement of a wide network of individuals is essential. In the public sector, local officials, planning staff and other key department staff from the city must be engaged and provide oversight throughout the planning process. Additionally, the wide network of civic organizations and local businesses in the Bainbridge community must be engaged in the process. Large-scale efforts must be made to distribute meeting notices and information about the plan to the entire community.

### Steering Committee

The first major task of the Steering Committee is to analyze, prioritize and balance community issues and opportunities. The list of preliminary issues and opportunities developed in the Community Assessment will be reviewed and refined by the Steering Committee. Next, discussions will be held in order to establish meaningful goals and policies for the county based on the community's issues and opportunities. The Steering Committee will also be directly involved in formulating land use plans for the city. The committee will help review and refine the preliminary Character Areas Map and Areas of Special Attention Map included within the Community Assessment element of the plan. This will help identify areas of potential land use change and development pressure as well as establish the future vision for each character area. Finally, the Steering Committee will help review and refine the land use recommendations provided in the Future Development Map and Future Development Narrative.

The Steering Committee will meet monthly for approximately six months during the public outreach process and the formulation of the Community Agenda. In addition to attending monthly meetings, the members of the Steering Committee will receive notice of all public meetings and presentations during the planning process and will be invited to attend and help promote the planning process with the citizens of the city.

### Steering Committee Members

The Steering Committee convened to assist in the preparation of the City of Bainbridge Comprehensive Plan update is intended to represent a wide spectrum of stakeholders and interest groups throughout the city. First, members of the Steering Committee included staff from the city's Community Development and Planning Department staff. These participants served as both members of the Steering Committee and liaisons to the city's planning consultants, Robert and Company. In addition each city council member will be asked to provide the names of two individuals to be asked to serve on the Steering Committee.

The following list of individuals and organizations will be asked to participate in the Bainbridge Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. Once the list of Steering Committee members is finalized, the Community Participation Plan will be updated to reflect the participating members.

- ❑ City Council Member
- ❑ Six City Division Directors
- ❑ Chairman of Planning Commission
- ❑ Chairman of Historic Preservation Commission

- ❑ Chairman of Downtown Development Authority
- ❑ Bainbridge Memorial Hospital
- ❑ Housing Authority
- ❑ Industrial Development Authority Chairman
- ❑ Agriculture Community Representative
- ❑ City Engineer Consultant
- ❑ Local Real Estate Developer
- ❑ Chamber of Commerce President
- ❑ Convention & Visitors Bureau Chairman
- ❑ Board of Education Representative
- ❑ Bainbridge College Representative
- ❑ Bainbridge Advocacy Individual Network (BAIN)
- ❑ Southwest Georgia Regional Library Director
- ❑ Minority Community Leaders

## **PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES**

Several strategies for achieving broad and meaningful public outreach will be applied when choosing the specific participation techniques for the Bainbridge Comprehensive Plan Update. First, the participation techniques will strive for diverse participation through multiple outreach formats. For example, an array of advertising methods for meetings and workshops will be employed in order to reach a broad audience. Next, participation techniques will strive for accessibility in order to ensure that public outreach materials are readily understood by lay persons and that diverse interest groups have the opportunity to participate. The public outreach process must also feature transparency so that planning decisions are valid and representative of community desires. In order to keep the public engaged in the planning process, each participation technique will strive to incorporate interactive elements whereby participants give input and provide feedback to prepared planning materials. This interactive approach must include follow-through so that participants can see the results of earlier workshops. Thus, attendees will receive feedback through e-mail updates on the results of meetings and future planning sessions. Finally, the results of each participation technique will be documented and included within the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Public Information and Communication Techniques**

#### Kickoff Meeting

The initial kickoff meeting will provide the public with an overview of the Comprehensive Planning process. This is especially important because of the three-stage planning process mandated by DCA standards. An overview will be provided of each of the three documents of the Comprehensive Plan, the Community Assessment, the Community Participation Program, and the Community Agenda. The public will be informed of the general purpose, functions, and content of the Comprehensive Plan. Next, a brief presentation of the major findings of the Community Assessment Data Analysis will be provided. The preliminary land use analysis conducted in the Community Assessment will also be presented in order to explain the character areas land use planning process. Finally, a schedule for outreach activities will be provided in order to encourage attendees to participate in future planning sessions.

#### Open House

Following the completion of the Community Agenda document an open house format public meeting will be held. The open house will begin with a presentation of the major recommendations of the Community Agenda, including the Future Development Map and implementation policies. While a formal PowerPoint presentation will be included as a portion of the meeting, the open house will also allow the public to view prepared maps and browse summary materials. This open format allows the public to view proposed maps up close and ask informal questions to planners staffing the session. Thus, the open house will cover several hours and allow participants to view materials and provide comments at their own pace.

#### Public Hearings

Per Georgia DCA requirements, three formal public hearings will be held at different stages of the planning process. First, a public hearing will be held following the completion of the Community Assessment and Community Participation Program documents. This hearing will formally transmit the first two documents of the Comprehensive Plan to DCA and the Southwest Georgia Regional

Commission for review. The second public hearing will be held following the completion of the Community Agenda document. This meeting will also serve as formal procedure for transmission of the Community Agenda document for DCA review. The final public hearing will be held following the issuance of the DCA report of findings on the Community Agenda. This final public hearing will adopt the Comprehensive Plan as the guide for community development in the City of Bainbridge. As required by law, each public hearing will be advertised in the local newspaper as a means of informing the public.

#### Project Websites

Web-based resources will be utilized as a means of disseminating information on the comprehensive plan and gathering public input. The City of Bainbridge website [<http://www.bainbridgecity.com/site/>] will be used as the primary information resource for the Comprehensive Plan. Meeting schedules and draft documents will be posted on the city website along with a link to the online survey. In addition, a social networking website will be created for the Comprehensive Plan on Facebook.com. This social networking resource will allow participants to receive updates on meeting schedules and post comments on the planning process.

#### E-Mail Updates

E-mail updates will be utilized throughout the planning process in order to inform participants of meetings and distribute draft documents. Sign-in sheets at each public workshop will collect the e-mail addresses of interested participants. Each of these participants will then receive ongoing e-mail updates on the comprehensive planning process.

#### Lobby Display and Handouts

A lobby display will be created for the Bainbridge Community Development Department offices including posters of key maps as well as a handout summary of the future development map and land use categories.

### **Public Input Techniques**

#### Issues and Opportunities Workshop

The Issues and Opportunities Workshop will incorporate brainstorming techniques and SWOT analysis in order to identify some of the most important issues facing the community as well as opportunities for improvement. A controlled discussion will be lead by a moderator with a note-taker transcribing each community issue/opportunity on a large note pad. The input gathered at this meeting will be used to refine and supplement the initial list of issues and opportunities included in the Community Assessment. First, participants will be asked to identify important community strengths that should be preserved. Second, participants will be asked to identify community weaknesses that need to be addressed. Third, participants will be asked to identify opportunities for community improvement. Finally, participants will be asked to identify threats to the city that must be addressed.

#### Vision Survey

The community vision survey serves as another means of refining the list of community issues and opportunities developed in the Community Assessment and the initial issues and opportunities workshop. The vision survey will ask the public to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a



series of key issues and opportunities statements. The vision survey will also include some open-ended questions that allow the public to add their own issue statements that may not have been included within the list provided. The survey will also provide an opportunity for respondents to comment on the planning process itself and survey.

The community vision survey will be administered in both paper and online versions. Online versions will be transmitted via e-mail links to participants at the issues and opportunities workshop. A link to the online survey will also be placed on the city's website. Paper versions of the survey will be made available at public meetings as well as at the Community Development Department offices. Results of the survey will be appended to the final submittal of the Comprehensive Plan.

#### Design Charrette

In order to obtain direct citizen input on desired land use patterns in the city, a community design charrette will be conducted. Charrette exercises are hands-on workshops where participants are invited to mark up maps with desired land use patterns. Blank maps of the county will be provided including "base" features such as roads, rivers, city limits, parcel lines, and parks. In order to make the exercise accessible to the general public, a generalized group of land use categories will be created, similar to the character area categories. A workshop packet will be provided with a description of these generalized "character areas" along with permitted land uses, and illustrative photos. Color coded stickers will be printed featuring pictures of the representative land uses included in the workshop packet. The use of stickers is intended to overcome the reluctance of some participants with limited drawing skills. In addition, magic markers will be provided corresponding to the colors of each character area category. Markers allow for more detailed delineation of linear features and large planning areas.

**SCHEDULE**

Task	Sept 2009	Oct 2009	Nov 2009	Dec 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	Mar 2010	Apr 2010	May 2010	Jun 2010	Jul 2010	Aug 2010
Public Hearings												
DCA / SWGRC Review												
Public Kickoff Meeting												
Project Website												
Steering Committee Meetings												
Issues and Opportunities Workshop												
Vision Survey												
Design Charrette												
Open House												