

GREATER TIFT COUNTY 2028 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Community Participation Program

Tift County and the Cities of Omega, Tifton and Ty Ty



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Prepared by the
South Georgia
Regional Development Center

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The preparation and implementation of the Community Participation Program (CPP) is an important first step to involve the citizens in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the CPP is to ensure that the citizens of Tift County and its municipalities are aware of the planning process and have sufficient opportunity to review and comment on the Comprehensive Plan. The CPP also creates a dialogue between citizens, businesses, owners, other stakeholders and elected officials and with this two-way communication opens the way for a unified vision for Tift County and its municipalities that will be supported by the public.

1.2 Requirements for Success

Pursuant to the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Chapter 110-12-01 (Local Planning Requirements), Greater Tift County has to update its Comprehensive Plan by June 30, 2008, in order to maintain its Qualified Local Government Status (QLG).

The Community Participation Program (CPP), as prescribed by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), will follow the intent of the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005.

The South Georgia Regional Development Center (South Georgia RDC) will guide the citizen participation efforts associated with the Comprehensive Plan. A series of meetings will be held to inform and educate the citizens about the project and to solicit their input in the definition of the Plan's vision, values, priorities, goals, objectives and policies. The meetings will be held for the unincorporated area of Tift County and the Cities of Tifton, Omega and Ty Ty.

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, the County is also undertaking other planning efforts such as the Comprehensive Transportation Master Plan, the Comprehensive Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and the City of Tifton/Tift County Unified Land Development Code and Ordinance update. Under a separate contract, the Genesis Group is completing the Transportation Master Plan for Tift County. As transportation planning is an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan, data and analysis will be shared and incorporated into the Plan. The same applies to the Comprehensive Environmental Management Plan which was just completed in June 2007 and to the Unified Land Development Code update by the Gail Easley Company. Public input and data from each project will be mutually shared.

The South Georgia RDC will also solicit input from other groups within the County, including, but not limited to the Zoning Advisory Board, appropriate City and County staff, Greater Tift County Planning Commission, City Councils, County Commissioners, and the Environmental Management Advocacy Group (EMAG).

The following principles will guide the successful implementation of this Community Participation Program and the development of the Comprehensive Plan:

- 1) The public has a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives;
- 2) The public is involved as early as possible in the community participation and decision-making process in order to build trust;
- 3) The involvement of those potentially affected is sought and participants are encouraged to assist in defining how they participate;

- 4) Participants are provided with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way;
- 5) Education and participation are directly combined whenever possible; and
- 6) The needs and concerns of the public are listened to and their input is integrated into the outcome.

2. IDENTIFICATION OF COMMITTEES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are those who effect and/or are affected by the development and implementation of the Greater Tift County Comprehensive Plan. The following is a list of stakeholders whose involvement will be beneficial to the development of the Plan. This list is not all-inclusive and all interested parties are encouraged to actively participate in the development the Comprehensive Plan.

2.1 Technical Advisory Committee

This is the professional city and county staff selected to work closely with the South Georgia RDC to provide techniques, tools and strategies needed to inform the citizens regarding the Comprehensive Plan.

Technical Advisory Committee Membership

- Larry Riner, City of TiftOn
- Yolanda Baker, City Clerk, City of Omega
- Sherry Boyett, City Clerk, City of Ty Ty
- Russ Dorman, Tifton/Tift County Utilities
- Gail Easley, Consultants for the Tifton/Tift County Unified Land Development Code Update
- Angela Wall - South Georgia RDC Environmental Planner
- Sherry Davidson – South Georgia RDC Community Development Director
- Sheriff Gary Vowell
- Police Chief Jim Smith
- Fire Chief Mike Flippo - Fire/EMS
- Richard Burr – Roads and Public Works – Tift County
- Cal Carpenter – Public Works/Solid Waste – City of Tifton
- Carl Fortson – Planning & Zoning Tift County
- Brian Tankersly – County Extension
- Jason Jordan, Special Projects Manager Tift County

2.2 Steering Committee

As part of the “Signature Community Designation”, the Environmental Management Advocacy Group (EMAG) was designated as the Steering Committee for the Greater Tift County Comprehensive Plan update. It consists of County and City representatives and members from business and community organizations to advise, review and help shape the overall plan process.

Bonnie Sayles, Chair	Historic Preservation Committee
Joe Lewis	City of Tifton
Roosevelt Russel	City of Tifton
Grady Thompson	Tift County
Charlotte Bedell	Tift County
Patti Beasley	City of Ty Ty
Earnest Harris	City of Omega
Syd Blackmarr	Tifton Heritage Foundation
Jack Perry	Tifton/Tift County Chamber of Commerce
Shawn Utley	Moultrie Tech
Duncan McClusky	UGA/USDA-ARS
Doug Waid	Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College

Louise Hetzel
Mary Leidner
Tim Strickland
Kim Ezekiel
Jonathan Jones
Harold Harper
Steve Rigdon
Angie Hunt
Beth Lewis
Gerald Branch
Katie Davis
Pat Robinson

Garden Clubs
USDA-NRCS
Citizen at Large
Tift County Schools
Citizen at Large
Citizen at Large
Citizen at Large

2.3 Stakeholder Groups

The stakeholder groups consist of representatives of various agencies and organizations such as the colleges, various schools, media, Faith-based organizations, civic associations, advocacy groups, homeowners associations, realtors and the Chamber of Commerce.

The stakeholder groups will be called upon to assist with the development of the Community Assessment and Community Vision, leading to the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Presently there are over 50 names of people that have expressed interest and are receiving regular updates and invitations to the stakeholder meetings.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

The goal of the Community Participation Plan is to educate the public and media on the Comprehensive Plan process and content. In order to achieve broad participation, all segments of the population will be included. The following provides an overview on the public participation process and how it will be implemented.

3.1 Preliminary Visioning Workshops/Kick-off Meetings

A series of five Preliminary Community Visioning/Kick-off meetings will be held to announce the planning process to the citizens, stakeholders and steering committee and provide an overview of the Comprehensive Plan’s purpose and general approach for completion. Community Preference Surveys will also be available at these meetings. The meetings are proposed to be held at:

Steering Committee	Tift County	City of Omega	City of Ty Ty	City of Tifton
November 19, 2007 9 – 11 a.m. City of Tifton Business Development Center	December 3, 2007 5 – 7 p.m. Charles Kent Administrative Building, City of Tifton	December 4, 2007 5 – 7 p.m. City of Omega City Hall	December 10, 2007 5-7 p.m. City of Ty Ty City Hall	December 11, 2007 5-7 p.m. City of Tifton Council Chambers

The goals of these workshops are:

- a) to identify development characteristics and boundaries for proposed character areas;
- b) to identify issues and opportunities facing the area, including strengths and weaknesses;
- c) to identify the vision of the participants for Greater Tift County 20 years from now and translate those into goals and objectives; and
- d) to establish participation and support for each planning area in the development of the joint Comprehensive Plan.

Following the guidelines of the DCA’s Local Planning Requirements, these workshops would normally not take place until after approval of the Community Participation Plan; however to meet the data and information needs of the Comprehensive Plan and to include the CEMP and the Master Transportation Plan, these workshops will be held early.

3.2 Initial Public Hearing

Following the series of initial public meetings, as required by the State Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, a special joint public hearing before the Tift County Board of County Commissioners/City Councils will be held to announce that the planning for the update of the Greater Tift County Comprehensive Plan is underway. South Georgia RDC staff will make a brief presentation to outline the schedule and any further public involvement opportunities. At this meeting, the public will have final opportunity to comment on the draft Community Participation Program and the draft Community Assessment. Previous input and public involvement opportunities through the stakeholder meetings will have been held prior to

this public hearing. Following the public hearing and including the input from the public and County and City officials, the Community Participation document and Community Assessment will be transmitted to the DCA for their review and comment. Tift County and the Cities of Tifton, Omega and Ty Ty will advertise all public hearings in compliance with adopted guidelines for public notification.

3.3 Monthly Staff/Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

Meetings will be held as necessary, but at a minimum on a monthly basis, to maintain desired timelines, benchmarks and overall progress of the plan update.

3.4 Steering Committee Meetings

The Steering Committee will provide continued guidance and feedback throughout the Comprehensive Plan's update process. Committee members will also be used for stakeholder interviews in the Community Assessment and Community Agenda development. Meetings will be scheduled at regular intervals to ensure review and buy-in of deliverables and in advance of and as a follow-up to public meetings and hearings.

3.5 Stakeholder Interviews

The Stakeholder interviews are intended to identify major issues and to develop a complete understanding of public opinions, comments and concerns. These issues include potential sources of conflict and controversy as well as perceived or real barriers to implementation. The members of the Steering Committee are appropriate to serve as stakeholders for the interviews as they are community leaders from various geographic, socio-economic and business sectors of the community who are committed to the success of the Comprehensive Plan. The results of the stakeholder interviews will be incorporated into the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

3.6. Public Kick-off "Follow-Up" Meeting

The South Georgia RDC will hold a Public Kick-off "Follow-up" meeting on January 7, 2008, to share the results of the Visioning/Kick-off meetings, the stakeholder interviews and other public input and discuss the potential goals, objectives and policies based on the information gathered.

3.7 Public Hearing for Plan Transmittal

The South Georgia RDC staff will make a brief presentation of the highlights of the Greater Tift County Comprehensive Plan at a special joint public hearing before the Tift County Board of County Commission and City Officials. The purpose of the special joint public hearing will be to authorize the draft of the 2028 Comprehensive Plan to be sent to DCA for review. All public hearings will be advertised in compliance with adopted guidelines for public notification.

3.8 Project Website

The South Georgia RDC will have a special link on its home page to a webpage that will provide information on the progress of the planning process. Additional links to the webpage will be available through the Tift County and the City of Tifton. This site will provide information on the Comprehensive Plan's three components including status and drafts for review. The site will also

announce meeting opportunities for citizen involvement, provide contact information for staff, and will provide a dedicated e-mail address for questions and comments.

3.9 Public Information Outreach Plan

The South Georgia RDC will coordinate the development of an effective media plan to publicize the Plan and its progress to the citizens and other stakeholders. The following activities may also be used to inform the media and the citizens:

a) **Media Coverage**

Media outlets such as print, radio and television will be educated about the plan through the use of briefings and media sessions. The development of press releases, stories, columns and interviews will be used to inform the Public.

b) **Public Information Materials**

Outreach materials will be created and used to help the public understand the comprehensive planning process, distribute information and encourage feedback. The materials will be distributed at public meetings and other geographic locations and may include items such as fact sheets, comment forms, surveys, displays, flyers, notices and a mailing distribution data base.

4. OTHER COMMUNITY INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

Three major planning activities have recently occurred or are occurring in Greater Tift County, each of which included opportunities for citizen input. In an effort to ensure the Comprehensive Plan addresses previously mentioned concerns and issues, the South Georgia RDC will review the results of the citizen input received during the following planning activities.

a) **Tifton/Tift County Comprehensive Environmental Management Plan**

During the development of the Comprehensive Environmental Management Plan, community meetings were organized throughout the area to solicit input. Results of these community meetings will be considered in preparation of the Community Agenda, for the development of the character areas and the issues and opportunities.

b) **Master Transportation Plan**

Carter Burgess is in the process of developing a Master Transportation Plan. Any public feedback and input on the Master Transportation Plan and the results of the study will be incorporated into the Greater Tift County Comprehensive Plan to further define the issues and opportunities as well as to clarify the goals, objectives and policies and to ensure consistency between all planning efforts.

c) **Unified Land Development Code**

The City of Tifton and Tift County jointly are in the process of updating the Ordinances and creating a Unified Land Development Code, which would create a one stop shop for the citizens of Tift County. Any public feedback and input on the Unified Land Development Code Update and the results of the study will be incorporated into the Greater Tift County Comprehensive Plan to further define the issues and opportunities as well as to clarify the goals, objectives and policies and to ensure consistency between all planning efforts.

5 . SCHEDULE FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE COMMUNITY AGENDA

The following is a schedule for the completion of the Community Agenda of the 2028 Greater Tift County Comprehensive Plan. For future updates to the completion schedule visit the Greater Tift County 2028 webpage on the South Georgia RDC website (www.sgrdc.com) or on the Tift County (www.tiftcounty.org) or City of Tifton (www.tifton.net) websites or call the South Georgia RDC at 229.333.5277.

DATE	OBJECTIVE
November 19, 2007	1 st Public Workshop (Kick-off Event) with Steering Committee and expanded Stakeholder Group to explain planning process to the community and receive preliminary input
December 3 – 11, 2007	Community-wide workshops to discuss and prioritize the preliminary Issues and Opportunities list and outline preliminary boundaries for Character Areas
December 12, 2007	Presentation of community input to Steering Committee & expanded Stakeholder Group
December 2007 – January 2008	Processing of public, Steering Committee and Stakeholder input by South Georgia RDC to draft CPP and Community Assessment
January 2008	Meetings with Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Stakeholders for continuous input and feedback on the CPP and Community Assessment
March 3, 2008	1 st Joint Public Hearing on the draft Community Assessment and Public Participation Program and subsequent transmittal to DCA for review
February - April, 2008	Develop Draft Community Agenda and continuous meetings with Steering Committee, Stakeholders and Technical Advisory Committee for feedback and input
April, 2008	Community wide Public Meeting to present Draft Community Agenda and receive final comments and revisions.
April 30, 2008	2 nd Special Joint Public Hearing to transmit Draft Community Agenda to DCA for review
June 30, 2008	Adoption of 2030 Comprehensive Plan by Tift County, Tifton, Omega and Ty Ty