

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

Introduction

The “Community Participation Program” component of The Treutlen County/Soperton 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,” Treutlen County and Soperton 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 Treutlen County/Soperton Joint Comprehensive Plan. It is important that the entire community is involved and working toward the common strategies for making Treutlen County and Soperton a better place to live and work.

The identification of stakeholders for the Treutlen County/Soperton 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 two 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	Representing
William Baker	Treutlen County	County Commissioner
Bill Barrett	Treutlen County	Retired Georgia Forestry Commission
Hugh Beasley	Treutlen County	County Commissioner
Carol Crowe	Treutlen County	Retired Extension Agent
Richard Dennard	Treutlen County	Pharmacist
Chuck Ellington	Treutlen County	School Superintendent
Jim L. Gillis, Jr.	Treutlen County	Retired County Commissioner
Becky Griner	Treutlen County	Farm Bureau – Soperton Office
Phillip Jennings	Treutlen County	Turf Farmer
George L. McLendon	Treutlen County	County Commission Chairman

Sylvia Norris	Treutlen County	County Clerk
Heath Paradice	Treutlen County	Extension Agent
Pam Synder	Treutlen County	Curriculum Director of Schools
Kim Thompson	Treutlen County	Pine Country RC&D
Gary Walden	Treutlen County	Retired Superintendent of Schools
Ruthie Mae Ashley	City of Soperton	Retired Board of Commissioners
David Avery	City of Soperton	Middle/High School Principal
Jimmy Gillis	City of Soperton	Vice-President, Bank of Soperton
Royce Fowler	City of Soperton	Business Owner
Christine Harris	City of Soperton	Retired Chief Registrar
Becky Hooks	City of Soperton	City Clerk
Denise Johnson	City of Soperton	Judicial Alternative Services
John Lee	City of Soperton	Retired Treutlen Development Authority
Sara McCleary	City of Soperton	Director, Soperton Housing Authority
Kirk McLeod	City of Soperton	Business Owner
Bobby Joe Moxley	City of Soperton	Retired DOT; City Council
L.G. Strickland	City of Soperton	Retired Masonry
Andy Thompson	City of Soperton	Treutlen County Development Authority
Johnny Ward	City of Soperton	Director of Operations, City of Soperton

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. The Treutlen County Public Library will also be utilized. Internet publication was considered, but deemed not a suitable or appropriate venue in Treutlen County, but publication on the regional RDC website may be utilized in any event. 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 May 24, 2006. A required public notice on the availability of the approved Community Assessment and Community Participation Program will be published in *The Soperton News* after DCA approval. Other legal requirements to be met will be an advertised formal public hearing on the draft *Community Agenda* anticipated in late summer, 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 (fall 2006).

Schedule for Completion of the *Community Agenda*

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

2006

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Staff Community Assessment Preparation	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Local Plan Coord. Comm. Meetings on Community Assessment			■	■	■							
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> (Informal)						■	■					
Local Plan Coord. Comm. Meetings on <i>Community Agenda</i> (Formal)									■			
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												■