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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

One of the best ways to strengthen communities is to create opportunities for citizens to work collaboratively on the challenges that shape their community. Accomplishing this requires political leadership, citizen education, and active involvement. A successful comprehensive plan begins with a process of thinking about and visualizing the future. It is about carrying on a dialogue with the community concerning its vision for evolving and growing. This Community Participation Program was crafted with these principles in mind and established a two-way communication between local citizens and their government officials, with the overall goal of better decisions supported by the public. This document was prepared as part of the update of the Bulloch County Comprehensive Plan. This plan includes Bulloch County, Brooklet, Portal and Register.

1.2 Scope

Bulloch County, Brooklet, Portal and Register are required by state law to complete its Comprehensive Plan update by June 30, 2009. As prescribed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Comprehensive Plan will be created following the intent of the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005.

1.3 Requirements for 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:

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

Communities that prosper do so because people work together to improve the quality of life that they want to sustain. The measure of effectiveness of a public involvement 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.

Public comment and sentiment are a rich source of information about peoples' values and philosophies. These values and philosophies must be interpreted into meaningful information to guide the project. It is essential to know the community's values to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts as well as narrow the field of alternative solutions. This process is designed to accomplish the following:



- Improve the quality of decisions
- Increase ease of implementation
- Provide greater public understanding of community goals and objectives
- Provide tangible evidence that the community created its own identity



2 Identification of Stakeholders

Coordination and oversight are very important parts of the overall work effort for this project. The approach, to ensure proper management of the process, includes oversight by the Bulloch County Board of Commissioner, the City Councils of Brooklet, Portal and Register, Planning and Zoning Commissions in each jurisdiction, and the Steering Committee. In addition, a network of community organization and local companies was identified early in the process for distribution of meeting notices as part of a broad public outreach effort.

Bulloch County Board of Commissioners

- Garrett Nevil, Chair
- George Jackson, District 1A
- Anthony Simmons, District 1B
- Jan Tankersley, District 2A
- Walter Gibson, District 2B
- Roy Thompson, District 2C
- Robert Rushing, District 2D

Town of Brooklet Mayor and City Council

- Joe Grooms, Mayor
- Sylvia Prosser, Council Member
- William Hendrix, Council Member
- Randy Newman, Council Member
- Annette Wilson, Council Member
- Russell Davis, Council Member

Town of Portal Mayor and City Council

- Larry Motes, Mayor
- Mira Barrett, Council Member
- Keith Brown, Council Member
- Jerry Lanigan, Council Member
- Jennifer Yates, Council Member
- Walton Newton, Council Member

Town of Register Mayor and City Council

- Katie O'Grady, Mayor
- Harold Deloach, Council Member
- Betsy McGriff, Council Member
- Ryan Pilz, Council Member
- Laurie Pitts, Council Member
- Lisa Ryles, Council Member



Appointed Boards and Commissions

- Bulloch County Planning and Zoning Commission
- Town of Brooklet Planning and Zoning Commission
- Town of Portal Planning and Zoning Commission
- Town of Register Planning and Zoning Commission

Community Advisory Committee

- Coast Georgia Regional Development Center (CGRDC) staff member
- Other committee nominees (two appointees representing each municipality and one resident per county commission seat)

Project Management Team

- Tom Couch, County Manager

Bulloch County Municipalities

- Town of Brooklet
- Town of Portal
- Town of Register
- City of Statesboro

Bulloch County, City, Regional, and State Boards / Organizations

- Georgia Forestry Commission
- Bulloch County Board of Education
- Ogeechee Technical College
- Georgia Southern University
- Board of Realtors
- Development Authority of Bulloch County
- Statesboro-Bulloch County Chamber of Commerce
- Statesboro Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Home Builders Association of Statesboro
- Georgia Department of Transportation



3 Participation Techniques

Bulloch County will rely heavily on public input during the preparation of the Community Agenda. Techniques described below will include Community Advisory Committee meetings, Stakeholder Committee meetings, presentations to elected officials, interviews, workshops, Web sites, press releases, an Open House, and public hearings.

3.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will be selected by the County with assistance from the cities. Members may include a mix of elected or appointed city or County officials, key property owners, city and county officials, neighborhood leaders, chamber and other economic development professionals, community service providers, area residents, representatives from the CGRDC, and others with some stake in the future development of the County. The Community Advisory Committee will meet throughout the planning process to complement input received at the community workshops and to provide guidance to the consultant team as they clarify the various components of the plan.

The Steering Committee plays a joint role in preparation of the Comprehensive Plan and the Bulloch County Multi-Modal Transportation Plan. The two plans are going on simultaneously. A joint committee will ensure that coordination on all levels occurs throughout the process of creating both plans.

3.2 Community Leader Interviews

During the development of the Community Agenda, the consultant team will conduct one-on-one interviews with key community leaders using a standardized series of questions designed to gather detailed information about the County's future. Interviews will take place in person and by telephone.

3.3 Kickoff Meeting

A kickoff meeting was held in October of 2008 for the Bulloch County Comprehensive Plan Update.

3.4 Issues/Opportunities Questionnaire

An Issues/Opportunities questionnaire was distributed to those who attended the kickoff meeting in October 2008. The survey will give stakeholders an opportunity to provide the consultant team feedback related to the issues and opportunities the County and its municipalities face. Some questionnaires were collected at the meeting, while others will be mailed to the consultant team. Additionally, the consultant team has developed a web survey for



collecting responses online. Responses will be incorporated into the *Community Agenda's* Issues and Opportunities chapter.

3.5 Community Workshops

Bulloch County will conduct two phases of community workshops during the development of the *Community Agenda*. Visioning workshops will make up phase one. A Framework workshop makes up phase two. Each phase is briefly described below.

Visioning Workshops

Visioning workshops will be held for each of the cities as well as a county-wide focused workshop. The workshops will be held in Brooklet, Portal, Register, and Statesboro and take place in early November of 2008. These meetings will focus specifically on the subarea served by the meeting location while also including countywide planning policies. Sites will likely include public schools, city halls, and other community building meeting spaces that can accommodate the meeting format. The various locations and dates will give County residents several opportunities to offer input on the future of Bulloch County. The consultants will use the input from the workshop to finalize the issues and opportunities, character areas, and define a community vision.

Countywide Framework Workshop

A Countywide Framework workshop will take place following the Visioning workshops in Statesboro in December 2008. The workshop will bring together each subarea and will be organized so that each subarea is addressed, allowing participants representing each area an opportunity to provide input. The consultants will use the input from the workshop to prepare a final draft of the issues and opportunities, character areas and community vision, and to begin exploring specific strategies designed to implement the community vision.

3.6 Open House

The Open House, to be held in Statesboro in February 2009, will take place following the Framework workshop. The Open House will bring together all of the subareas for an Open House and final plan presentation. Participants will view the plans prepared for the County and will have the opportunity to offer comments that may result in changes to the plan prior to the transmittal public hearing.

3.7 Elected Officials Briefings

The consultant will make presentations to the elected officials of the towns and County as needed. The first occurred at a regularly scheduled BOC meeting. The second occurs prior to the public hearings for the *Community Agenda*. Officials will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback prior to returning to their respective jurisdictions and holding public hearings.



3.8 Public Hearings

Public Hearings will be held in two rounds during the planning process at the Bulloch County BOC annex and at the city councils of Brooklet, Portal and Register. The first round of public hearings will announce to the public that the planning process for updating the comprehensive plan is underway. The second round of public hearings will brief the community on the contents of the Community Agenda. The following paragraphs describe the two public meetings in greater detail.

Public Hearing 1: Transmittal of Community Assessment and Community Participation Program

Public Hearings will take place at the Bulloch County BOC annex and at the municipalities' regularly scheduled council meetings. The public hearing will inform the public of the plan's project schedule and how they can get involved as outlined in this document. The public hearing also provides the community an opportunity to comment on the draft Community Assessment. The Community Assessment highlights the issues and opportunities that will be taken into consideration in developing the Community Agenda.

Following the public hearings, and based on input from the public and County officials, the Community Assessment, Analysis of Support Data, and Community Participation Program documents will be transmitted to the CGRDC for review and comment.

Public Hearing 2: Transmittal of the Community Agenda

The consultant will present the Community Agenda before the BOC at the public hearing following the Open House meeting. Public hearings for the city councils of each municipality will occur at regularly-scheduled meetings during the same general time period. The hearings provide an opportunity for residents to make final suggestions, additions, or revisions and to be informed of when the Community Agenda will be submitted to the CGRDC for review.

Following the public hearings, and based on input from the public and County officials, the Community Agenda will be transmitted to the CGRDC for review and comment.

3.9 Web Site

The Bulloch County Manager's office will post the Community Assessment, Analysis of Supporting Data, Community Participation Program, and the Community Agenda on the Bulloch County Web site for public review at various points throughout the planning process. Browsers will be able to download documents in PDF format and will be provided with contact information in order to submit comments by traditional mail, by e-mail, or by telephone. The Bulloch County Web site address is as follows: <http://www.bullochcounty.net>

3.10 Media Strategies

Press releases will be prepared and distributed to the newspaper, radio, and television stations that serve the Bulloch County area. The press releases will be used to announce public meetings and the posting of documents for public review. Press releases will include contact information for the Bulloch County Manager's office.



In addition to press releases, Bulloch County will work with the local cable television provider, to include announcements of the public meetings and locations to view posted documents for public review on the government information channel. Bulloch County and each municipality will also use utility bill announcements and other tools at their disposal.

3.11 Coordination with the Transportation Plan

The proposed schedule for completion of the Community Agenda has been coordinated with the Bulloch County Joint Transportation Plan, which is being developed concurrently with the comprehensive plan update. The Visioning and Framework workshops will provide opportunities for public input on both planning efforts. The Stakeholders and Committee Advisory Committee and advisory committee meetings also will address both efforts.

3.12 Schedule for Completion of the Community Agenda

The full proposed schedule for completion of the Community Agenda is shown below.

- **Public Hearing I** – Transmittal for the Community Assessment/Community Participation Plan at the Bulloch County BOC meetings and city council meetings – November 2008
- **Countywide Public Kickoff Meeting** – October 30, 2008
- **Visioning Workshops**
 - Brooklet area – November 10, 2008
 - Portal area – November 10, 2008
 - Register area – November 11, 2008
 - Statesboro area – November 11, 2008
- **Countywide Framework Workshop** – December 15, 2009
- **Countywide Open House and Celebration** – February 16, 2009
- **Public Hearing II** – Transmittal Resolution for the Community Agenda held for the Bulloch County BOC and city council meetings – March 2009
- **Plan Adoption** - June 2009 (dependent upon the adoption process and procedures required by Bulloch County and each municipality)

