

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

LIBERTY COUNTY

DONALD L. LOVETTE
CHAIRMAN

MARION STEVENS, SR.
DISTRICT 1

JUSTIN L. FRASIER
DISTRICT 2

CONNIE THRIFT
DISTRICT 3

100 MAIN STREET • SUITE 1320
HINESVILLE, GEORGIA 31313
(912) 876-2164



PAT BOWEN
DISTRICT 4

GARY GILLIARD
DISTRICT 5

EDDIE J. WALDEN
DISTRICT 6

JOSEPH W. BROWN
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

April 27, 2015

Camila Knowles, Commissioner
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
60 Executive Park South, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30329-2231

Dear Commissioner Knowles,

On behalf of Liberty County, I am pleased to submit an application seeking PlanFirst designation. Our 2008 *Guiding the Future, Reflecting the Past* Comprehensive Plan served as an opportunity for the public to work with local government officials and staff to cultivate a vision for the development of Liberty County. We believe that in order to progress, we must work with our citizens to establish and achieve our goals.

The guiding principles outlined in the comprehensive plan have established the foundation for us to achieve our goals and objectives strategically. By utilizing the short-term work program as a measuring tool, it has provided us the opportunity to establish long-range goals while considering short-range actions that will aid in the fruition of identified projects. Not only do we utilize the plan to guide growth and infrastructure placement, support zoning decisions, and identify land use patterns; the plan has served as a guide and a starting point in the formation of additional plans.

Thank you for your consideration of Liberty County for the designation of a "PlanFirst Community." Please find enclosed the PlanFirst application and several letters of support. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at (912) 368-7550 or via email at dlovette@libertyregional.org.

Sincerely,

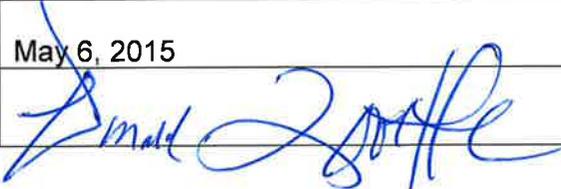

Donald Lovette, Chairman

PlanFirst Program Application - May 15, 2015

Introduction: The Department of Community Affairs' PlanFirst Program rewards local governments that clearly demonstrate success with implementing their local comprehensive plan. To apply for PlanFirst designation, a local government must have Qualified Local Government certification and be current on required reporting to DCA. (To check status of both, please visit <http://www.georgiaplanning.com/planners/planreview/default.asp>).

A multi-agency review panel will evaluate a number of indicators of community success with plan implementation to select communities for this designation. All of these indicators are equally important, but size of the community is taken into consideration in the evaluation so that communities of various sizes are equally competitive for PlanFirst designation.

Instructions: Please answer all the following questions thoroughly, attaching additional pages where necessary, so that the reviewers have sufficient information to measure the success of your comprehensive plan implementation. Supporting documents might include: news articles, legal ads, lists of attendees, letters of support or other evidence of local involvement and commitment to successful plan implementation activities in your community. *Total application length, including supporting information and support letters, must not exceed 20 pages. Text areas will expand as needed.*

Applicant government	Liberty County
Mailing address	100 Main Street Suite 7520
Telephone	912-408-2030
Email	mjones@thelcpc.org
Contact person; title	Melissa A. Jones; Planner II
Application prepared by	Melissa A. Jones
I, the undersigned authorized representative of the applicant, certify that to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is true and correct.	
Name of authorized official signing; title	Donald Lovette, Chairman BOC
Date	May 6, 2015
Signature	

PRE-REQUISITES

A. (1) We have a good track record of maintaining our Qualified Local Government status **and** submitting required reports to DCA, including the current Report of Local Government Finances. (To check status, please visit <http://www.georgiaplanning.com/planners/planreview/default.asp>).

QLG status:	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	no
Local government reports:	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	no

A. (2) We have attained the Minimum Standard for performance as called for in our regional commission's regional comprehensive plan.

<input type="checkbox"/> yes	no
------------------------------	----

For each of the following indicators, fully explain how your community addresses this indicator; identifying specific examples and resulting local successes. (Each indicator will be scored 1, 3 or 5 points, except indicators j. and t. which may score up to 10 points.) Add exhibits and examples as needed to tell your story.

INDICATOR: GOALS

B. The Goals (or Vision) section of our comprehensive plan is supported by the community and its leadership.

Liberty County's vision sets the tone for the comprehensive plan. It is the benchmark by which the guiding policies, principles, and implementation program are formulated. The vision is based on input received from community officials during a series of planning workshops conducted in May 2008, as well as, input received from the public. Liberty County's vision is, "to be the premier community in Coastal Georgia in which to live, work, and visit because of our rich history, heritage, cultural diversity, unsurpassed quality of life, and respect for the environment and natural resources."

C. The Goals are both ambitious and achievable for the community.

The goals set forth in the comprehensive plan supports the overall vision that has been established for the community. An overall guiding policy is established in the implementation program of the plan. Policies are derived from the issues and opportunities outlined from the various stakeholder and public involvement opportunities. The guiding policy has several strategies outlined that will aid in achieving the outlined goals. Approximately, 21% of the items in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Short-Term Work Program have been accomplished. The 2013 update noted that an additional 51% was underway or ongoing at the time. Liberty County projects that are identified as being ongoing or projects that will be supported every year will not be included on the Short Term Work Program in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

D. The Goals steer local decision-making on a continuous basis.

The Liberty County Board of Commissioners utilizes the goals and visioning section on every zoning application, which is the starting point for preliminary plats, special use, conditional use, PUDs, and final plat approval. Every rezoning application goes through a zoning analysis which asks, "Does the proposed use conform to the Liberty County Comprehensive Plan?" The Future Development Map is reviewed to ensure that the new development is compatible with, and supportive of, existing development.

E. Consistent progress is being made at achieving the Goals.

Liberty County continuously works toward achieving the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. At the annual planning retreat, goals are placed in four categories to ensure that adequate time is being spent on each topic. Additional committee and subcommittees are formed to address specified goals.

INDICATOR: LEADERSHIP

F. We have effective planning staff or another suitable arrangement for handling community planning matters.

The Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission handles planning for Liberty County and the seven municipalities. Our staff currently consists of our Executive Director, whom has over 25 years of planning experience. Additional planning staff includes the Zoning Administrator, a Planner I, Planner II, and a Transportation and Engineer Planner. The staff works on short term and long range projects such as: Site Development Review, Comprehensive and Strategic Planning, Long Range Transportation Plans, Land Use Maps, Mobile Home Placement Permitting, and Zoning Applications. The staff attends trainings and workshops throughout the year to stay informed of key planning issues. Staff members are cross trained so they are able to provide a high level of customer service to all customers.

G. We have an active planning commission or similar body to steer local planning decisions.

The Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission has a nine member Planning Commissioner Board that is vital to the success of planning efforts in Liberty County. The Planning Commission meets the third Tuesday of each month. The board is involved in all rezoning applications, special exceptions, conditional uses, site plans, preliminary plats, final plats, and land use maps.

H. We have a regular local plan effectiveness evaluation process (such as annual planning retreats of elected leadership).

An annual planning retreat is held for two days in April, with a mid-year, half-day workshop held in November. The purpose of the retreat is to establish planning

initiatives and detail prioritization. At the mid-year workshop, progress on what has been done to complete the planning initiatives is discussed. Elected officials, key staff from every municipality, and staff from supporting agencies are invited to the retreat and the workshop.

I. All local officials (both elected and appointed) involved in local planning processes have recently attended training in how to use the plan effectively. Please indicate what trainings and the date(s) attended.

UGA Planning and Zoning Workshop	February 20, 2013
GPA Healthy Community Design	October 10, 2013
GPA Planning for Wireless Telecommunications Facilities	October 10, 2013
EPA Green and Complete Streets Strategy	December 10, 2014
EPA Preferred Growth Area Tools	December 11, 2014
GAZA Enforcing the Zoning Code	February 5, 2015
GAZA Are You Ready for Court	February 5, 2015
GAZA How Do You Know Your Code Needs Amending?	February 6, 2015
GAZA Legal and Legislatives Updates	February 6, 2015
CPI Water Resources	February 27, 2015
CPI Comprehensive Planning	February 27-28, 2015

J. Provide up to ten of your best recent examples where the plan steered a key local decision, with pertinent plan references (attach additional sheets as needed).

1. Liberty County and the seven municipalities are going through a three year planning process that will provide an update to the Joint Comprehensive Plan, Long Range Transportation Plan, and the Transportation Improvement Plan. The initiative to update all three plans simultaneously is referenced as Forward 40. *As the County continues to attract new residents, there should be better planning and control of growth and development. (Community Assessment, Potential Issues and Opportunities, Land Use and Development, Issues)*
2. Liberty County received Work Ready designation an, effort spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce. *Develop program to work with both large and small employers on workforce development. (Short Term Work Program, Economic Development, Item 5)*
3. The Coastal Healthcare Alliance was formed in 2012. The organization was established to develop a sustainable program to continuously improve responsiveness of the local health care delivery system of the civilian and military population. *Coordinate and enhance mental health care capabilities, particularly with the military presence. (Short Term Work Program, Intergovernmental Coordination, Health Care, Item 6)*
Support regional Three Ring Health Consortium. (Short Term Work Program, Intergovernmental Coordination, Health Care, Item 5)
4. *Public transportation was made available to citizens in unincorporated Liberty County through the Coastal Regional Coach service. *Connect anticipated local fixed route bus system with rural bus service. (Short Term Work Program, Transportation, Item 9)*

5. *The first edition of *Liberty* was published in 2012; a magazine published on a quarterly basis. *Publish a Liberty County Magazine that appropriately markets the County and its resources. (Short Term Work Program, Economic Development, Item 6)*
6. Development of the Liberty Regional Water Resources Committee. *Convene a council to explore opportunities for a water plan and the allocation of resources. (Short Term Work Program, Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Item 6)*
7. Creation of the Liberty County Cultural and Historic Association. *Explore funding opportunities and strategies for historic resources. (Short Term Work Program, Historic and Cultural Resources, Item 3)*
8. The County implementation Gateway Sector Design Guidelines. *Initiate the development of the Gateway Corridor based upon the recommendations of the Gateway Sector Plan study. (Midway, Short Term Work Program, Land Use and Area Planning, Item 6) Implement Gateway Sector Design Guidelines. (Liberty County, Short Term Work Program, Land Use and Development, Item 5)*
9. Install a public water system in the County along the Holmestown Road and Screven Fork Road area. *Address lack of water and sewer services. (Facilities and Services, Guiding Policy, Strategies) Coordinate infrastructure planning by integrating plans from various entities to ensure a coordinated program for the provision of infrastructure. (Land Use and Development, Guiding Principle, Strategies)*
10. The County updated its Zoning Ordinance in 2012. *The County also has the opportunity to enforce current zoning codes and subdivision regulations to improve blight, dilapidated structures, and other aesthetically displeasing characteristics of the community. (Issues and Opportunities, Land Use and Development, Opportunities)*

INDICATOR: PARTICIPATION

- K. Our comprehensive plan was prepared with multiple community input opportunities.

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan was a joint jurisdictional plan, with meetings held around the county to capture as much information as possible. A US 84-Comp Plan Task Force (CP-84) was formed to receive public input on the Comprehensive Plan and the US 84 Transportation Study. The task force met nine times during the process. There were a total of five public meetings held, two focused on the Comprehensive Plan only and three focused on both projects. In addition, the 2007 and 2008 annual Planning Retreats both focused on the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The 2007 retreat (7/25 – 7/28/2007) focused on:

- Vision development
- Character area identification
- Identification of issues
- Identification of opportunities
- Identification of priorities
- Development of implementation strategies

The 2008 retreat (3/25 – 3/28/2008) focused on:

- Overview of growth in the county
- Review of the draft land use plan
- Development of service delivery strategies
 - Water, wastewater and sewer
 - Transportation engineering and planning
 - Economic Development
 - Community Resources
 - Land Use
 - Housing

Information was presented to citizens and the Liberty County Board of Commissioners during bi-monthly Commission meetings. The required two public hearings were also held prior to the adoption of the plan, which provided citizens with another chance to provide their input.

L. The community input received during plan preparation influenced the content of the plan.

The comments made during the planning process aided in determining the level of importance of some of the proposed goals and objectives. There were approximately 148 comments made at the 2007 and 2008 Liberty County planning workshops. More than 90% of the comments made were listed as objectives in the short term work program. Several of the comments were repetitive or could be listed in conjunction with a previous item. It was important to stress to the community that the plan was more than a state mandated plan but rather one that served as the blueprint for development in the County.

M. Our steering committee that guided development of the plan included local leaders and elected officials.

A Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and the general public served as the county-wide advisory committee for the Comprehensive Plan. The committee consists of members from each one of the eight jurisdictions; the breakdown of which is determined by the size of the jurisdiction. Each representative has to be nominated by the local Council and Mayor. Elected officials have input in the appointment of approximately 17 members on the committee. There are additional members on the committee who serve in leadership positions with various organizations in Liberty County.

N. We have an active, ongoing, outreach process for soliciting input on planning matters from a broad spectrum of the community, including non-traditional populations, and the resulting input is listened to by community leaders.

Yes. The public is involved in every aspect of planning through the Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission. Public participation is sought for the everyday process, such as zoning or site development, as well as, long-term planning such as Long Range Transportation Plans, Comprehensive Plans, and Land Use Development Maps, etc. In preparation of the 2008, *Guiding the Future Reflecting the Past*, the two required public hearings were held and advertised to attract citizen input. There were a total of three joint county-wide meetings that were held when a significant amount of the plan was

completed for additional review. Additionally, meetings were held in all eight jurisdictions, to allow residents a chance to discuss the plan with the Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission staff, as well as, their elected officials. To attract coverage from neighboring communities, information about the plan was included on the websites of the jurisdictions that had the capability, as well as, coverage in the local newspaper the *Coastal Courier*, and Fort Stewart's online publication, *The Frontline*. To gather one-on-one, hands on information, community preference surveys and stakeholder interviews were completed. All of the information was compiled and included in the Community Participation Plan of the Comprehensive Plan. Some of the citizens that were involved in the process now serve on planning related committees.

O. We have active advocates for plan implementation (such as activist citizens, organizations or neighborhood groups) that are listened to by community leaders.

We had, and continue to have, advocates for the *Guiding the Future Reflecting the Past* Comprehensive Plan. The unique methods of developing this plan included the continuous outreach to citizens to encourage participation. This resulted in support from several civic organizations that had not previously participated in the planning process.

INDICATOR: IMPLEMENTATION

P. The Work Program section of our comprehensive plan consists primarily of specific action items that make it clear exactly what we intend to do to implement the plan.

Yes. Our Short Term Work Program does make it very clear that the items identified are ones 4040which we plan to implement within the next five years. We intend on making some changes to the way we identify proposed work activities. Any item that will continue on an ongoing basis will no longer be identified unless it is a new project with an implementation year that falls within the next five years. On our existing plan we have included the responsible parties and cost, where applicable, so that we can project our highest level of success with each particular item.

Q. Our Work Program action items clearly address local needs or goals identified in the plan.

The majority of the work program action items identified are items listed in the Issues and Opportunities section of the Comprehensive Plan. Some of the items are direct statements from the list or items that are related to the subject. Additional items were identified in the Character Area and Community Plan components. Some action items have been developed after the annual planning retreat, which is good for the community because the retreat is the time in which we measure our level of success.

R. We have a good track record of accomplishing most of the action items included in past plan Work Programs.

Approximately, 21% of the items in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Short-Term Work Program have been accomplished. The 2013 update noted that an additional 51% was underway or ongoing at the time. Liberty County projects that are identified as being ongoing or projects that will be supported every year will not be included on the Short Term Work Program in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. We want our Short-Term Work

Program to be a true reflection of the hard work that is being done locally to improve our community.

S. Our local capital budget is consistent with, and is designed to implement, the comprehensive plan.

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) #5 budget is consistent with key items that are listed in the Short-Term Work Program. Additionally, some items have been developed by using general funds and are not reflected on the capital budget. The collection period summary for SPLOST # 5 is included with this application. SPLOST # 6 is being considered at this time and the proposed items that have been identified are designed to implement the work plan.

T. Provide up to ten of your best recent examples of important projects carried out as a result of the plan, with the specific plan references (attach additional sheets as needed).

1. *Renovation of the Historic Liberty County Courthouse. Several county offices are now located in the courthouse including, Liberty County Extension Office, Voters Registration/Elections, Liberty County Coroner, Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission, and Juvenile Court. (*Five Year Short Term Work Program, SPLOST Projects*)
2. *New Liberty Regional Medical Center Expansion. *The Liberty Regional Medical Center is in need of expansion for additional services. (Potential Issues and Opportunities, 3.6 Community Facilities and Services)*
3. Liberty County and its municipalities were selected as a 2015 GICH Community. *The lack of diver housing overall: quality affordable, address dilapidated housing stock, housing for specific demographic groups, such as senior citizens, low-income families, and the disabled. (Potential Issues and Opportunities, 3.3 Housing)*
4. *New Liberty County Department of Family and Children Services. (*Five Year Short Term Work Program, SPLOST Projects*)
5. *Re-adaptive use of the former Liberty County Elementary School, currently the Liberty County East Government Complex. *Re-use existing vacant or under-utilized structures to accommodate new community facilities. (Development Patterns)*
6. New Live Oak Library. *Expand the existing library system, and include library projects in SPLOST. (Issues and Opportunities, Implementation Program, Historic and Cultural Resources, Guiding Policy, Strategies)*
7. Creation of a new Land Use Map Update. *Develop a land use map that reflects the coordinated infrastructure planning and the uses agreed upon smart growth principle. (Future Character Area, Implementation Program, Land Use and Development, Guiding Policy, Strategies)*
8. Widening of Islands Highway, east of I-95 to east of Old Sunbury Road. *Islands Highway Widening-East of I-95 to east of Old Sunbury Road. (Short Term Work Program, Transportation, Item 3)*
9. *New Liberty County Justice Center (*Five Year Short Term Work Program, SPLOST Projects*)
10. *Liberty County Annex Renovations (*Five Year Short Term Work Program, SPLOST Projects*)

Please attach additional sheets as needed to tell your story. Application should not exceed 20 pages. Application may be electronically transmitted or printed, scanned and emailed to adriane.wood@dca.ga.gov . For more information, contact Adriane Wood.

Examples of Plan Implementation



Liberty County Historic Courthouse



Liberty Regional Medical Center Expansion



Liberty County Department of Family and Children Services



Liberty County East Government Complex



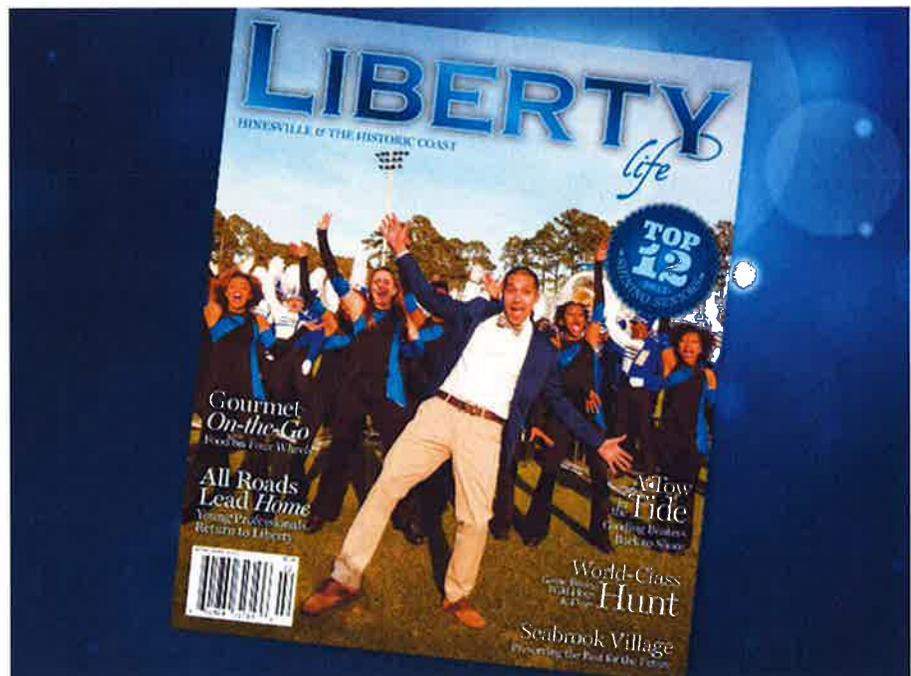
Liberty County Justice Center



Liberty County Annex



Coastal Regional Coaches "Rural Transportation"



Liberty Magazine, a quarterly publication



• Grow Community •

April 28, 2015

Camila Knowles, Commissioner
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
60 Executive Park South, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30329-2231

Dear Commissioner Knowles:

On behalf of the Liberty County Development Authority (LCDA), I am writing to support Liberty County's PlanFirst Program application.

Liberty County and its seven municipalities are fortunate to have the Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission as a unifying force in the development and implementation of Liberty County's Comprehensive Plan.

As the LCDA enhances the infrastructure of its business parks and plans for future industrial growth as a result of business attraction and expansion, we feel that inclusion in the PlanFirst Program would strengthen the community's efforts.

Among our successful Comprehensive Plan initiatives is the Liberty College and Career Academy, which works closely with the Liberty County Manufacturing Collaboration (LCMC). The LCMC offers paid apprenticeships with four area manufacturers to recent high-school graduates who are enrolled in a specialized Savannah Technical College Associate of Applied Science program. The collaborative effort is expected to grow in future years and is anticipated to build a pipeline of manufacturing employees who will enjoy lucrative industrial careers near home.

Future Comprehensive Plan pursuits that will make our community more attractive to new industries include participation in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) and retail expansion through creative assistance such as low-interest loans.

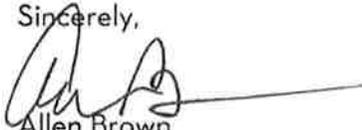
The PlanFirst Program's ability to offer bonus points for DCA programs such as the Employment Incentive Program and the access to Georgia Environmental Finance Authority loans at reduced rates would enhance our efforts to accomplish the goals stated above.

We are grateful for the good work done by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and thank you for your leadership of the department.

(Page 2 of 2)

Should you have any questions about the Liberty County Development Authority's support of this application, please contact our CEO Ronald E. Tolley at ron.tolley@lcda.com or 912-368-3356.

Sincerely,



Allen Brown
Chairman



April 24, 2015

Camila Knowles, Commissioner
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
60 Executive Park South, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30329-2231

Dear Commissioner Knowles,

The CRC is pleased to support Liberty County and Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission's (LCPC) application for the PlanFirst Program sponsored by Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

The LCPC is critical to the success of planning in Liberty County. Local government decisions directly impact the sustainability of the county. As such implementation of their comprehensive plans is a significant responsibility and a key factor in the county's success. This requires a commitment from the LCPC in proactive planning, the right set of planning tools, and decision makers who understand the impacts of land use and infrastructure decisions.

The staff of LCPC advocate for policies that encourage investment throughout the county. They have successfully formed relationships and these relationships are leveraged for communication, coordination, and ultimately the successful implementation of the Liberty County Comprehensive Plan.

LCPC encourages stakeholders to learn about county issues, the depth and diversity of county assets through community engagement, annual retreats, and one-on-one meetings.

The PlanFirst Program recognizes communities that demonstrate implementation of their local Comprehensive Plan. Liberty County and the LCPC successfully perform and achieve outstanding results with actions items in their Comprehensive Plan that are supported by the community and its leaders.

If the CRC can provide addition information in support of Liberty County and Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission's application, please contact me at lmcclenning@crc.ga.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lupita McClenning".

Lupita McClenning
Director of Planning & Government Services