

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERIES

PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A GUIDEBOOK FOR CITIZENS
AND LOCAL PLANNERS

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

Anyone involved in preparing, implementing, or using comprehensive plans in Georgia can benefit from this guidebook. However, the guidebook is designed to be most useful to citizen planners, local government staff and officials with little specific training in comprehensive planning, and planners in small cities and towns or rural counties. Larger local governments will more likely have several professional planners to provide planning services that meet local needs on a daily basis, including conducting studies and preparing comprehensive plans. It is the first situation where more help is needed. Many of Georgia's local governments are small and depend on a city or county clerk, city or county manager, building official, or citizen volunteers to prepare comprehensive plans.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION IS PRESENTED?

This guidebook is focused on putting people into the planning process – property owners, business owners, people with particular interests, and everyday citizens. It is one thing to say that a planning process provides opportunity for the public to be involved. It is another thing altogether to reach beyond the “usual players” to include many more members of the community and to do so with tools and techniques that will make the process and the participation meaningful and effective. This information is useful to communities of all sizes because it is a compilation of participation techniques that can be implemented in small, medium, large, and even very large jurisdictions.

Planning for people to be involved in the plan is the purpose of this guidebook. It covers topics such as determining who should be involved, how much involvement is needed, and making meetings successful and effective. Just as there should be a “plan to plan,” there should also be a plan for involvement. “Planning for Community Involvement” provides the information to help create a community participation plan, including a toolbox of techniques. There are so many tools and techniques that it can be difficult to identify them all and even more difficult to decide which to use and how to use them. This section guides the user through these decisions.

PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

COMMUNITY BASED PLANNING

People are not there to be planned for; they are to be worked with...There must be one golden rule – we all need to be involved together – planning and architecture are much too important to be left to the professionals.

Charles, Prince of Wales, 1989

There is in Georgia a strong tradition that the community planning process should be “bottom-up.” “Bottom-up” means that planning begins at the local level, neighborhoods, cities, and counties. These plans are then considered in forming a plan for a region and, ultimately, the entire State. Another way this idea of “bottom-up” planning can be applied is to involve the citizens – the people – in the planning process. True community based planning is not imposed downward by the elected officials or business elite of a community or by out-of-town planning consultants, but rather developed through a process of public involvement where individuals, everyday citizens have an opportunity to provide their input at every level of the planning process.

This section is devoted to explaining the ways that all members of the community – everyday citizens, elected and appointed officials, and the people involved in designing and building developments – can be a meaningful part of the planning process.

THE PEOPLE IN THE PLAN

By far the greatest and most admirable form of wisdom is that needed to plan and beautify cities and human communities.

Socrates

The people in your community provide the wisdom to create a great community. Who are these people? The everyday citizens who live, work, and engage in leisure pursuits are the people most affected by the plan. The elected officials, appointed officials or volunteers on boards and committees are the people who maintain and implement the plan. People own property, own businesses, and participate in the process of developing and building projects in the community. When the people affected by the plan participate in creating the plan, you have a Community Based Plan.

The following section of this guidebook provides details, tools, and techniques to help you create a plan that is community-based.

A ROAD MAP FOR INVOLVEMENT

DCA's *Why Do We Plan?* guidebook describes the importance of a "plan to plan" before starting the decision-making part of the planning process. Likewise, to ensure that the process is community based and affords opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process, a written plan for community participation should be prepared. This written document provides an early opportunity for the planning team – professional staff, consultants, regional commission (RC) staff, volunteers or some combination - to lay out the schedule for all the steps in the process of involving the community in developing the plan and to describe the procedures and techniques that will be used to actively involve anyone and everyone that might be interested in the plan.

By laying out this public or community participation timeline BEFORE the "real" planning process even begins, everyone in the community will be comfortable knowing that important meetings to obtain public input will not be left to "whenever we can get around to it." There is a feeling of trust established that many opportunities will be offered for the public to be involved as the process of preparing the plan moves forward. Another important advantage is that the participation process is a cumulative one. That is, recommendations and input from earlier meetings are carried forward and used as building blocks for the discussions at later meetings.

The community participation plan also describes the various techniques that will be used to involve all segments of the community. If someone is not comfortable standing up at a public meeting or participating in a planning charrette, the schedule will provide for one-on-one stakeholder interviews, on-line and mail-in surveys, or other opportunities for everyone to have their say.

HOW MUCH INVOLVEMENT IS ENOUGH?

We do make a difference – one way or the other.

Stephen Covey

Much like the planning process itself, the level of public involvement and participation is dependent on several factors. The amount and allocation of time, human resources, and budget are certainly important in helping to define how much community participation is feasible. Beyond this, however, the public participation efforts should, more than anything, provide meaningful and real opportunities for anyone in the community affected by the plan to participate in creating the plan.

Successful public involvement is not simply measured by the number of people who attend a meeting or by how many post cards are mailed or by how many residents visited the community's website. The quality of the input and the ways in which the valuable

opinions and concerns are incorporated into the plan will live on long after the meetings are over. This evaluation of success will only be possible after the plan is adopted and only if the citizens who contributed to writing the plan regularly consult and use the plan to improve the quality of life in their community.

As each community is faced with a different set of planning issues and challenges, also each community will need to determine the most appropriate level of public involvement. The number of public meetings, the existence and size of a steering committee, and number of stakeholder interviews are not a standard one-size-fits-all formula.

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

Who are the individuals and groups that need to be specifically targeted for involvement in the planning process? An important way to identify who should be involved in developing the plan is by identifying “stakeholders.” Stakeholders are individuals or groups affected by plan recommendations and policies. They have a specific interest in the development of the plan and the impact of the final plan on the community. Stakeholders include landowners, government agencies, businesses, private individuals, and special interest groups.

Prior to identifying these representatives of agencies and groups, however, it is important to make sure that “every day folks” have an opportunity to be involved. Although an individual citizen may not be a member of a group or have a defined interest, his or her voice is very important in shaping the future of the community.

The people who will prepare the comprehensive plan, whether staff, consultants, volunteers, or some combination are called the planning team. This is the group that will prepare a “plan to plan” for public involvement. There are two primary ways to identify the stakeholders to include in the program.

The first way to organize the program is based on geographic locations throughout the community. In this approach, stakeholders are invited to events or participation activities based on neighborhood, political district, ward, or other geographic unit.

In a second approach, involvement is organized based on interest groups. What are interest groups? Consider the following checklist of suggested stakeholders:

✓ Local elected officials
✓ Local appointed officials and boards, such as the planning commission
✓ Board of Education
✓ Local government planning, engineering, and building inspections staff
✓ Utility authority staff, including water and sewer authorities
✓ Homeowners’ and neighborhood associations
✓ Major landowners
✓ Major employers

✓ Agricultural groups, such as farmers, extension agents and the Farm Bureau
✓ Development community, including builders, engineers, surveyors, land planners, and contractors
✓ Realtors
✓ Chamber of commerce
✓ Industrial development authority
✓ Environmental groups
✓ Health department
✓ Housing agencies
✓ Non-profit groups
✓ Civic, service, and business groups
✓ Churches and faith-based organizations
✓ University and college representatives
✓ Military base representatives
✓ Historic, museum, and heritage groups
✓ Senior citizens' groups and retirement community residents
✓ Youth groups and students

Of course, these methods are not mutually exclusive; there may be significant overlap between them. By way of example, let's consider the chamber of commerce. The chamber of commerce would be identified as a "business" interest group, as the key player in the "Economic Development" analysis, and likely very important in some geographic sections of the community, such as the central business district, industrial park, or any economic opportunity zones..

Once you have decided who needs to be involved, the next question is how much involvement is enough. There is a range of involvement levels. At one end of the range is a program that includes only the "bare-bones" necessities of public involvement. At the other end of the spectrum is a highly interactive, multi-faceted public involvement process that provides for numerous public meetings in a wide range of formats and topics. In practice, most communities in Georgia will likely choose a public involvement process somewhere in between these two extremes. The next section provides an illustrative series of public involvement scenarios as a starting point.

CHOOSING THE DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

Take into account the resources available – people, budget, and time - to decide how much public involvement is appropriate for your community. For a planning process in a smaller community managed primarily by volunteers without professional planners, the level of involvement will often be closer to the "minimum" range. For a large urbanized jurisdiction with a hired team of planning consultants and a lengthy planning process, the activities included in the "maximum" level of involvement are often more feasible and

appropriate. In the latter situation, there are more resources to devote to public involvement. However, a smaller community may see higher rates of participation even with more limited resources to carry out the involvement program.

The table below indicates three degrees of involvement for various participation techniques; low, moderate, and maximum. A low level is appropriate when resources are limited, but some form of meaningful involvement is desirable. Moderate involvement is appropriate where time, money, and staff make it possible to do even more, and a high level is for those situations where there is a high level of interest on the part of the citizens of the community. The relative level of expense and complexity is indicated in the three right columns. Each community should select the activities based on relative expense and complexity to custom design the level of involvement best suited to its needs and available resources.

Activity	Level of Involvement			Relative Expense and Complexity		
	Low	Mod.	High.	Low	Mod.	High
Two (2) Public Hearings	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Stakeholder Interviews	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Kiosk/Lobby Displays	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Technical Advisory Committee	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Community Preferences Meetings	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Website – Information only	✓			✓		
Website – Response Capability (email)	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Website – Interactive with Surveys and Customized Features		✓	✓			✓
Intergovernmental Partnership Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Steering Committee		✓	✓	✓		
Kick-Off Public Information Meeting		✓	✓		✓	
Vision and Implementation Strategies Meetings		✓	✓		✓	
Printed Public Information		✓	✓		✓	

Direct Mail Surveys		✓	✓			✓
Design Charrettes		✓	✓			✓
Media Plan - Press Releases		✓	✓	✓		
Student Program		✓	✓		✓	
E-mail “blast” – Database			✓		✓	
Cable TV Information			✓		✓	
Speakers Bureau			✓		✓	

Brief descriptions follow for of each of the participation techniques that are listed in the table above:

Two (2) Public Hearings – The minimum number of public hearings as established by DCA’s local planning requirements, with one hearing held to launch the planning process and the second hearing to discuss the completed draft plan prior to transmission to the Regional Commission for review.

Stakeholder Interviews – One-on-one interviews with key community leaders using a standardized series of questions, designed to gather more detailed information about stakeholders’ area of expertise.

Kiosk/Lobby Displays – Posting maps, photos, and alternative plans in a prominent location in the city hall, the county courthouse, or the public library. These displays provide information to visitors to view at their leisure and outside of a formal public meeting.

Technical Advisory Committee – A working committee of city or county planners and other key employees from public safety, the board of education, utility authorities, and constitutional officers. As primary “users” of the plan, they have a stake in the outcome of the comprehensive plan.

Community Preference Meetings – An evaluation of a series of visual images categorized by housing types and styles, streetscape appearance, open space, commercial areas, and other design or use types. Participants are asked to state a preference as images showing alternative designs are displayed side by side. Results are tabulated by the planning team for presentation in later meetings.

Website – Information only – A page on the community’s website used for periodic updates on the planning process. Information should include schedules, announcements, draft goals and objectives, preliminary recommendations, and maps.

Website – Response Capability – A page on the community’s website with information and one or more “contact the planning team” buttons to send email to the planners working on the comprehensive plan.

Website – Interactive with Surveys – In addition to providing information on the community’s website, provide interactive feedback opportunities with online surveys, questionnaires, and e-mail.

Intergovernmental Partnership Meetings – “Planning summit” meetings held by the elected officials with groups interested in the comprehensive plan, such as the board of education,

appointed boards and commissions, other city and county government representatives, utility providers, state agencies and departments, and regional planning entities.

Steering Committee – Established to provide feedback, advise the planning team, and shape the overall planning process. The Steering Committee is typically comprised of representatives from local authorities, the business community, key non-profit agencies, and citizen groups.

Kick-Off Public Information Meeting – An event to announce the beginning of the planning process to the citizens and other stakeholders and provide opportunity to view a presentation covering the project purpose and general plan approach. Initial opinion surveys and volunteer sign up forms are available at this meeting.

Vision and Implementation Strategies Meetings – Facilitated meetings to discover the community vision and address the three key planning questions – “What do you have?” “What do you want?” and “How will you get it?”

Printed Public Information – Flyers, newspaper inserts, brochures, or newsletters providing information on the progress of the plan, proposed maps, and announcement of future public meeting opportunities. This information may be mailed, made available at public locations, such as libraries or city hall, or both.

Direct Mail Surveys – A questionnaire soliciting comments, opinions, and community goals via a printed, mail survey sent to a certain number of residents in the community.

Design Charrettes – Highly interactive meetings where attendees work in groups to draw maps, develop goals and policies, and design their community.

Media Plan and Press Releases – A plan to develop a relationship with a local newspaper or other reporter and editor by providing newsworthy information and public meeting notices on a regular basis throughout the planning process.

Student Program – Direct involvement of students from local schools, through such efforts as poster contents, essay contests, appointing high school student representatives to committees, or sponsoring a “city planning” study unit, such as “Box City.” (See the resource list for information about student programs and Box City.)

E-mail “blast” Database – Periodic mass mailings by email to provide important notices and other information. At public meetings, offer the option of attendees providing their email addresses on the sign in sheet. Create a database and send periodic progress e-mails and future meeting announcements to the distribution list.

Cable TV Information – Work with the local cable television provider to provide public service announcements or a 30-minute cable show describing the planning process and opportunities for public involvement.

Speakers Bureau – The planning team – staff, consultants and volunteers – offers to make an introductory presentation on the planning process to civic clubs, business groups and schools.

CONSIDER THESE COMMITTEES

A community is like a ship: everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.

Henrik Ibsen

As the planning process and community vision move forward, it is not always possible to communicate every intermediate product, benchmark, or draft document at a public meeting. Likewise, it may not be feasible to inform and involve the elected officials of the community at the completion of each individual task or subtask of the planning process. To bridge this potential information and reporting gap between the planning team and ultimate users of the completed planning document, two important committees should be appointed, the Technical Advisory Committee (staff) and the Steering Committee (stakeholders).

In smaller communities where the planning process may have a limited budget and rely on volunteers rather than professional planning staff or consultants, appointing formal committees may not be practical. Committees require invitations, agendas, minutes, meeting locations, and other forms of “care and maintenance” that simply may be beyond the resources of the community. Even so, special consideration should be made to coordinate the planning process with some of the likely members of these committees, perhaps through one-on-one meetings, or through the use of brief written reports and few meetings.

THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Another strategy to encourage and support community based planning is the formation of a Steering Committee. This group should be nominated by and appointed during a meeting of the city council or board of commissioners to establish the important role of the Steering Committee in guiding the planning process. The Steering Committee is charged with providing feedback, advising the consultant planning team, and shaping the overall planning process. The committee should hold regularly scheduled meetings, perhaps every month. The Steering Committee can be any size, but 7 to 15 members are the most workable. It should be comprised of representatives from local authorities, the business community, key non-profit agencies, and citizens groups. Commonly meeting in advance of major public meetings, the Steering Committee has the ability to assist with keeping the project on schedule, review the preliminary findings, provide a “reality check” to the staff and planning team, and to serve as a political barometer for plan recommendations.

The Steering Committee also provides a great opportunity to involve the local entities whose efforts need to be coordinated with the comprehensive plan. Examples include the board of education, other boards and authorities, city and county government representatives, elected officials and utility providers. In many cases, state departments and regional entities are more than willing to participate on a Steering Committee, bringing a broad perspective of planning activities from nearby jurisdictions.

THE STAFF TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

When a consultant or outside group is preparing the plan, it is important to maintain close coordination with the staff of the local government. This is also true if the planning team is made up of volunteers or a combination of consultant, staff, and volunteers. The staff is an important source of information and coordination during the planning process. It is also important to maintain coordination between a county and the municipalities within the county during the planning process.

One good idea is to establish a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of city and county planners and other key employees or representatives from public safety, the board of education, utility authorities, and constitutional officers. As primary “users” of the plan, they have a stake in the outcome of the comprehensive plan. The TAC could meet monthly with the planning team for project updates, progress reports, and coordination of the schedule. Another important role of the TAC is to serve as a liaison between the planning team and the agencies they represent. Members of the TAC are important sources of information crucial to the planning process.

SPECIAL PURPOSE SUBCOMMITTEES

In the course of the planning process, topics are likely to arise that could best be addressed by an ad hoc or special purpose subcommittee. These subcommittees might be organized to meet only once or twice to deal with one specific topic in a concentrated effort. The topic could be based on a single issue such as affordable housing, involving a group of stakeholders interested in insuring that the plan includes adequate provision for housing for low- and moderate-income residents. Another subcommittee might address one specific geographic area of the community, such as development in the vicinity of an environmentally sensitive stream. Subcommittees can be formed for any important topic, but should not be overused, especially in small communities where the pool of volunteers to serve on committees is small.

Special purpose subcommittees are also an effective way of dealing with “hot topics” or key issues. As an alternative to the Steering Committee getting bogged down on one issue, referring these topics to a subcommittee insures that the overall planning process moves forward and that the “hot topic” receives special attention and consideration by those most knowledgeable about the issue.

DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Whatever failures I have known, whatever errors I have committed,
whatever follies I have witnessed in private and public life have been
the consequence of action without thought.

Bernard Baruch

Perhaps nothing will undermine the success of the public involvement program more quickly than being poorly prepared for the events, meetings, hearings, presentations, and other public program activities in the process. You can be sure that effective meetings do not happen by accident. Just as the planning process starts with the “plan to plan” and the public involvement program starts with a written plan, so, too, must you plan carefully for the events that occur throughout the process. Details do make a significant difference.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS DON'T JUST HAPPEN

What kind of meeting should we hold?

At a minimum, there will be two public hearings held in the process of developing the plan. Many local governments will choose at least a low level of public involvement, which means additional committee meetings and public meetings. It is important to think about the purpose of these meeting. The format must be matched to the purpose. What do you want to accomplish?

- 1) *Provide information.* In this meeting, the primary purpose is for the planning team to tell the participants facts and provide information. The room should be set up for viewing slides, video, PowerPoint, or display boards. Handouts should be plentiful. Careful attention to lighting and sound will help ensure a successful meeting.
- 2) *Solicit information and opinions.* This is an interactive meeting, where the planning team will provide information or ask questions and participants will complete survey forms, ask questions, or verbally provide feedback to the team. The room should be set for two purposes: to view information and provide a comfortable setting for audience members to speak or provide written responses. Tables should be arranged to allow people to easily view displays and also to interact with others at the table.
- 3) *Cooperative problem solving.* When physical design is an issue, a charrette should be held to allow participants to engage in mapping, drawing, or other activities to design the physical spaces and buildings that make up the community. The room should have all of the equipment and materials necessary to allow such design activities to take place. This includes base maps, drawing materials, and resource documents.

Other problem solving events may focus on goal setting, consensus building, or choosing among several courses of action. A workshop is the most appropriate meeting format for

problem solving. The room should be arranged to allow presentations, possible small group interaction, and feedback by individuals and the entire group of participants.

4) *Public hearings.* A hearing is a formal meeting of the elected body where the public may comment or provide testimony on the matter presented for voting. This is used at the beginning of the planning process to inform citizens of the purpose and scope of the planning effort and to solicit their ideas and concerns that may be addressed in the plan. Another public hearing is held once the plan is completed, for approval of the plan for transmittal to the Regional Commission for review. The chambers of the elected body are best for the public hearing.

5) *Open house.* It is often desirable to have an event where participants may drop in at their convenience and stay as little or as long as they wish. The purpose is to allow the public to view maps, photographs, or charts; receive information such as flyers, brochures, or fact sheets; and provide responses to printed survey forms. Sign-up sheets allow participants to select a degree of involvement for further activities. This is particularly effective as a “kick-off” meeting, for neighborhood gatherings, and at the end of the process prior to adoption public hearings. Large spaces, tables, and a few chairs are essential to allow people to move about freely, sit when tired, and have access to all of the information available.

6) *Conduct committee business.* This is less formal than a public hearing, but should be consistently structured to conduct business. It will include presentations, feedback, consensus building, and possibly voting on future courses of action. Conference-style rooms work well for these meetings.

The fundamental issue for the planning team is the decision about the purpose, selecting a format that meets the purpose, and attending to the details described below. Your meeting may have overlapping purposes; in which case you should combine some of the above meeting formats to achieve your specific goal.

Presentation materials are important.

Think about the following points when designing presentation materials and preparing the materials for use at a meeting:

1) Slides and PowerPoint presentations should be clear and have simple formats for ease of reading and understanding the information. Do not put too much information on each slide. Especially do not use complex charts, graphs, or maps that cannot be read as part of a slide program. Use another presentation format for such materials.

2) Flip charts should be used only for small groups, as the written material cannot be clearly seen from a great distance. When previously prepared material is presented on display boards or flip charts follow the same guidelines as for slides. Do not put too much information on each page or board. Simplify the information, especially maps.

3) It is probably best to have maps mounted on a wall for people to view before and after a meeting. It is often difficult to print maps large enough to be seen from a great distance.

Consider breaking the geographic area into smaller units, so that the area can be “blown up” large enough to see clearly. Simplify the information so that the maps are not too “busy” to understand.

4) Charts, graphs, maps, tables, and summaries of data are good as handouts. Again, information should be simplified and summarized for presentations. Those people who want the details can sign up for copies of the background reports or other more detailed data.

5) All presentation material should indicate the source of the information and have a date. This makes it easy for the reader to keep track when more up to date information is provided and to follow up when more information is needed.

Think about the meeting format and the presentation materials as a package deal. The presentation materials that you choose should match the meeting format in terms of degree of formality and purpose of the meeting. The meeting format and the materials together present a complete event for participants. A good format with poor materials is not a good meeting. A poor format with good materials is not a good meeting. Effective meetings will not just happen. Attention to proper format, good materials, and the following details will enhance the planning process.

SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS RESULT FROM ATTENTION TO DETAIL

The format for the meeting has been decided. The planning team is ready to welcome the public. How do you ensure that the meeting will be an interactive, successful exchange of ideas, comments, and suggestions? By incorporating a series of details - each planned and prepared in advance - the planning team and volunteers will be better equipped to deliver an organized and professional meeting. These details are described in this section; sample forms and documents are provided in the Appendix.

Arriving at the meeting

See the section “A Toolbox of Techniques - Getting the Word Out,” which suggests ways to provide advance notice of public meetings. Once the public arrives at the meeting location, there should be clear directional signs pointing the way to the meeting room. These signs can be placed at the roadway to suggest where to park and also posted on the building entrance to guide attendees into the meeting room. Volunteers and staff should also periodically check the parking area and outside the building for those folks who may be in the right place but unsure of the exact location.

Staffing the meeting

Well before the meeting starts, the planning team should hold a strategy session to assign tasks and responsibilities for the smooth operation of the public meeting. The number of staff and volunteers depends on the expected attendance at the meeting. Encourage a team approach with a mix of local government staff, volunteers, and consultants. One person should be designated as the lead person for the meeting, providing

a central point of contact for any issues that may arise during the course of the meeting. If the format calls for breakout group exercises, each group needs at least one facilitator and ideally one “scribe” or note-taker. During the meeting, it is important that staff be located strategically around the room to answer questions, replenish supplies, and monitor the volume and view of the presentations.

All staff should be available to welcome the attendees near the front entrance of the meeting room. A table should be set up at the main entrance with one or two staff to assist with the process of signing in, writing name tags, passing out agendas, and other administrative matters. This table also serves as the “headquarters” of the meeting and should be staffed throughout the meeting to provide directions to the restrooms and assistance to folks who arrive late or leave early.

Sign-in sheets

As mentioned above, several important activities take place at the meeting headquarters table. The first activity is the invitation for all attendees to sign in. Provide a form with spaces for name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and affiliation or organization. The sign-in sheet should identify the date of the meeting or hearing, the place, and the time. This sign-in process records the attendance at the meeting and the geographic areas represented. It also enables the planning team to develop a database of contact names and information for sending future meeting notices and planning project updates.

It is a good idea to have two or more sets of sign in sheets on clipboards to allow several people all arriving at the same time to sign in and get into the meeting room without a backup.

Name tags

To keep everyone on a level playing field during the meeting, name tags are an important public meeting detail. After folks are greeted at the door and sign in, their next step at the headquarters table should be to write their name on their own name tag. Members of the planning team, elected officials, staff, volunteers, and the public all should have the same style of name tag. They serve as a great icebreaker for neighbors to meet each other and also help the planning team to call folks by their names helping to make them feel a part of the meeting. The name tags can be effective with simple, inexpensive adhesive labels or the packaged “Hello my name is” style tags.

Agenda

Every meeting should have an agenda. The agenda contains the list of the topics, the order in which such topics will be discussed, and may also include guidelines for the conduct of the meeting, the availability of equipment or devices to meet special needs (hearing devices, for example). It is a good idea to have a standard agenda format, which is followed every time. This standardized format makes it easy to follow, keeps everyone on topic, and also helps ensure that no items are inadvertently omitted.

Well-run meetings occur because of good preparation. Whether the agenda is prepared by staff, volunteers, or by the planning team, it should be available in advance of the meeting to the public. In addition to a list of topics, the agenda should also identify the date of the meeting or hearing, the place, and the time. Include the names of the speakers since the audience will likely associate the person speaking or facilitating with the topic being discussed. There must be enough copies available for the audience. Depending on the community, consider the need for providing the agenda in languages other than English. Finally, avoid jargon, acronyms, or other special terms that are not readily understood by the public.

In preparing an agenda, always respect the attendee's time by limiting the duration of the meeting. Establish reasonable time limits for individual comments (for longer presentations, encourage the speaker to fill out a comment form as described below), clearly state the time that the meeting will end and stick to it, and offer to stay after the meeting, if necessary, to discuss a specific point with an individual or small group.

Comment forms

Not everyone is comfortable speaking in a public meeting format. Even though people have made the effort to attend the meeting, those that do not speak up in public do not get their views heard. Providing comment forms at the beginning of the meeting is a strategy to make sure these ideas are captured and considered in the planning process. The form could have a list of plan issues to check off or rank in importance. There could be a few open-ended questions to encourage a longer response. Finally, the form could simply provide space for any comment that attendees wish to make. The forms may be collected at the end of the meeting or provide the option of mailing or faxing the forms back, allowing more time for addressing the issues. When designing the comment forms, it is important to include contact information for the planning team, and a mailing address or fax number to send comments after the meeting.

Handouts

One strategy to reduce the amount of time spent on presentations as well as to reinforce information critical to the topics to be discussed at the meeting is to distribute handouts. Clear, easy to read handouts provide just enough information to introduce the topics, but not so much as to result in participants spending the entire meeting reading long passages of text. Handouts may contain planning data, summary points, or checklist of key issues. If maps are distributed, they should be at a scale that is meaningful with clear dimensions, scale, points of reference and directions, including a north arrow. As with the wording of the agenda, avoid jargon, acronyms, or other special terms that are not readily understood by the public. Handouts not only convey information during the meeting but also provide a "take away" item for attendees to keep as a record of the meeting.

Food

Providing food at a public meeting can help to achieve several important meeting objectives. Depending on budget considerations and the length of the meeting, the food can be simple snack items - cookies and drinks - or could involve a box lunch or catered meal.

The time spent around the food table provides a great opportunity for informal discussions between the planning team and residents. Also, a jolt of energy at a strategic break point can help keep the participants fresh and engaged in the meeting. Food is also a kind of reward for the public attending a meeting, particularly a longer meeting.

Meeting supplies

Make sure that there are supplies of pencils, pens, markers (in several colors), white board markers, note pads, easels, tape, and any other items that participants may need during the meeting. Depending on the room configuration, these items are usually placed on the tables or in the chairs. You should have an ample supply of all materials. Also consider a supply box with useful items, such as a stapler, paper clips, tacks or push pins, folders, and large manila envelopes. These materials can help staff organize materials and meet unexpected requests.

WHERE SHOULD WE MEET?

There is an old saying in the real estate business that the three most important factors in land development are “location, location, and location.” Where to hold a public participation meeting may be thought of in the very same way. Wherever possible try to hold community planning activities physically in the area being planned. This makes it much easier for everyone to bridge the gap from planning concepts to the reality of the area or neighborhood where they live, work, and play. Some suggested sites include schools, community centers, senior centers, libraries, and churches. With advance notice, most of these facilities can accommodate a large public meeting, at little or no cost.

A common solution is to hold the meeting in city hall chambers or the county courthouse. While these buildings are usually centrally located, there may be a feeling of intimidation for some in attending a meeting in such an imposing, governmental setting. Public meetings held to discuss planning and community vision seek to engage the public in their opinions – positive and negative. Some attendees may feel less comfortable expressing their views in the formal chambers where the elected officials make policy and enact ordinances. If a public meeting must be held at the government building, try to hold the meeting in a large conference room or other less formal room. Public meetings and workshops tend to be more informal than an official council meeting; brainstorming, group interaction, and creativity will be enhanced in a more informal setting.

ROOM SET UP

The meeting room should be comfortable, well lighted, have sufficient seating, and be arranged in such a manner as to encourage participation by all parties. While it is sometimes difficult to predict exactly how many folks will show up for a particular meeting, the planning team should determine the likely attendance and plan accordingly. There are many options for configuring the seats in the room, from classroom-style, to theatre-style, to chairs at tables, to no seats at all for an open house meeting. In fact, some meetings may first have a presentation in theatre style seating, followed by small group exercises at tables

set up in another section of the meeting room. Plan adequate time prior to the meeting to arrange or rearrange the room to the configuration most appropriate for the meeting. Don't assume that someone else arranged the room as you requested.

Establish a focal point or front of the room. As everyone enters the room, it should be clear where the facilitator or presenter will stand. That way, folks who might not hear or see as clearly, will be able to reserve a seat near the front. (Conversely, those attendees who hope to "hide out" in the back of the room also know where to sit!). This focal point is where the graphics, whether flip charts or high-tech computer projection, will originate. Attention to room lighting will dictate location of presentation screens, flip charts, and boards. Consider the room lighting by paying attention to location and brilliance of light fixtures as well as windows. When there is a choice of meeting spaces, choose a space where the lighting can be controlled. Bright light on a projection screen makes it impossible to see the images. Dim light in the audience makes it difficult to take notes. It may not be possible to strike a balance to meet all needs, but advance attention to this detail will help minimize the problem.

Make every effort to place flip charts and boards in a spot that all members of the audience can see. Remember, the purpose of the graphics is to support or illustrate the verbal presentation. Consider the location of support posts, columns, and other features that block views. If overhead projectors are used, the projector must be placed to avoid blocking audience views of the board and the screen. This is especially problematic when a person must place transparencies on the glass, which means that the person may also block views. It is particularly difficult for a presenter to handle the projector, transparencies, and make the presentation. Careful attention to the room arrangement and placement of an overhead projector will minimize any interference with views by the projector and its operator.

Increasingly, computer-aided presentations are used in meetings and hearings. The computer and associated projector can often be operated by remote control. The equipment itself is smaller than most overhead projectors. However, placement is still an important issue. Often the presenter needs to be able to see the computer screen rather than the projection screen. As with other graphics and graphic devices, careful attention in advance will ensure minimal disruption due to the equipment.

Furthermore, it is important to consider electrical outlets and extension cords to provide power for computers and projection equipment. It may be difficult to ensure an appropriate location to meet viewer needs while still ensuring adequate power. Extension cords can pose a safety hazard. All of these things should be considered when setting up the room.

A member of the planning team should be assigned as the note-taker to record the meeting. Flip charts with markers are a good way to summarize the discussions, but more detailed notes should also be captured. In some cases, the public meeting could be audio recorded, although this is usually reserved for more formal meetings. As mentioned earlier, public meetings and workshops tend to be more informal than an official hearing or council meeting; the presence of recording equipment may have a stifling affect on the level of participation. The main purpose for keeping minutes of the public meeting is to record and

document the results of the meeting, making a special note of next steps and follow up activities.

GOOD MEETINGS NEED GOOD LEADERSHIP

Several factors should be considered to ensure that good leadership results in a good meeting. The role of the meeting leader is to facilitate the meeting, manage the time so that all agenda topics are covered and the meeting ends on time, introduce speakers, field questions, and recognize audience members who wish to speak. Good humor, high energy, belief in the importance of participation, and a commitment to a well-run meeting all contribute to successful leadership.

A meeting should have a beginning, middle, and an end. Although this seems obvious, who has not attended a meeting that seemingly would never end? An important responsibility of the facilitator is to lead the meeting, setting the tone at the beginning, and maintaining order and timeliness until the end. This means that all items on the agenda are addressed, in order, and that items are moved to conclusion.

The facilitator sets the tone of the meeting. The tone set by the facilitator will affect the orderliness of the meeting. This means that the facilitator should convey a sense of professionalism, order, and appropriate attitude, thus providing an example for the public to also participate appropriately and maintain order. The facilitator should not be weak or unfocused in the conduct of the meeting. On the other hand, the facilitator should not be too strong or intimidating. Continue to strive to be upbeat and positive, fair and courteous. It is always good to convey an attitude of working with the public rather than talking down to the audience. After all, the meeting is being held to discuss the future of their community.

The facilitator should make sure everyone has a chance to be heard, while still maintaining a timely meeting through enforcing time limits. During presentations, it may be necessary to maintain the tone by quickly quelling outbursts, personal attacks, or other rude behavior. Establish reasonable time limits for individual comments (for longer presentations, encourage the speaker to fill out a comment form as described earlier), clearly state the time that the meeting will end and stick to it, and offer to stay after the meeting, if necessary, to discuss a specific point with an individual or small group.

These tips for effective meeting management will help encourage the public to remain engaged in the planning process, fully participate in the discussions, and leave the meeting with a feeling that their views have truly been heard.

A TOOLBOX OF TECHNIQUES

It's not the plan that's important, it's the planning.

Dr. Gramme Edwards

You have made decisions about level of involvement, types of meetings, presentation materials, meeting organization and leadership. Now you need specific information about the tools and techniques that work well in each of your meetings, accomplish the purpose of the meeting, and engage the members of the public who have given up their time to participate. This toolbox includes techniques for interviews, working with small groups in a meeting, getting information out to the public and special purpose events, such as planning festivals and design charrettes.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

One-on-one interviews with key community leaders enable a greater exchange of information than would occur at a public meeting. The interviews, usually between 30 minutes to an hour in duration, are designed to gather more detailed information about a particular area of expertise. Starting with a standardized series of questions (see sample in Appendix), the interviewer should make sure the main issues are covered, but should be comfortable in varying the order of questions.

The stakeholders are representatives of the various organizations, such as representatives from fire and police departments, neighborhood homeowners' associations, faith-based organizations, civic associations, advocacy groups, realtors, conservationists, housing, hospital and transportation authorities and others. The information collected during the stakeholder interview assists in the development of the goals, objectives, and strategies for the comprehensive planning process.

As a courtesy, it is good practice to type the results of the interview and send a copy of the notes to the person interviewed. This gives them a chance to make sure all of the points discussed were understood and documented properly.

CONSENSUS BUILDING IN SMALL GROUPS

You need effective methods to help people with different views work together in a small group. Small groups may be formed to address a particular issue or problem and work toward a solution that will be acceptable to all. Consensus means that the group members can accept the decision, abide by the decision, and support the decision, even if it isn't the first choice for each member. It is not a matter of "majority rules." There is no voting per se. It may be difficult to reach consensus, since it often means continuing to search for solutions until all in the group can agree – or at least cease to disagree.

Several methods are available for building consensus. After brainstorming ideas and some initial discussion of the alternatives, an exercise is used to determine “votes” for the views of the members of the group. Color sticky dots placed on a map or on a chart could be used, with the highest concentration of dots indicating the collective view. Ranking ideas on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “strongly disagree” and 10 being “strongly agree,” is one popular way to determine an overall ranking of an idea. Another option is a vote on priorities with each participant allowed, say, three votes, to be used as they see fit. This allows a participant to place more emphasis on strongly held positions. Even though there is an aspect of voting in these processes, the final outcome must be a consensus of the group. There are no minority opinions. Sometimes one participant will simply state that he or she cannot support any of the most likely outcomes of the discussion. That person may withdraw from the final step in determining consensus, so that the remaining group will be in agreement.

Whichever method is used to determine the individual views, the facilitator should moderate a discussion on the results of the “votes” to arrive at an agreed upon opinion of the group, representing the consensus.

COGNITIVE MAPPING

A cognitive map, or mental map, is a map drawn by a person to record geographically his or her memories, ideas, and perspectives of a particular place. Cognitive mapping is a planning tool also used to determine desired future development. Since cognitive maps are based on individual’s preferences and opinions, there are no “right” or “wrong” maps. Cognitive maps are used to identify geographic areas of a community that people like, dislike, frequently visit, feel are important, travel through regularly, feel safe, and so on.

At the workshop, participants are provided base maps of the community. On one map, folks are asked to create an “Attitude Map” to express their ideas about what areas of the community are attractive and unattractive. These maps may also indicate important local travel routes and places that have special meaning (i.e. natural areas, business districts, residential neighborhoods).

On a second map, the participants outline those areas where they would like to see new commercial/industrial development, new residential development, new recreation areas, protected open space, and other features. This is a “Futures Map.”

A Composite Map is then prepared that will show consistent patterns and ideas represented on the individual maps prepared by participants. Depending on the number of participants, this exercise may be completed individually, or in groups of two or three people. More people will make it difficult to reach agreement on the items that should be depicted on a map.

The information gained from the cognitive maps will be very useful when developing the future land use plan map for the comprehensive plan.

INVOLVEMENT WITHOUT MEETINGS

The planning team may solicit comments, seek opinions, and begin to identify community goals by using surveys of residents in the community. Survey questions could be printed and mailed to a representative sample of residents in the community, included as an insert in the newspaper, sent with a regular mailing by the jurisdiction (such as a water bill), or administered by telephone. Questionnaires may be available at an information table in city hall, the county courthouse, or an information kiosk at a mall.

Another way to distribute the questionnaires and receive responses is through the local government Website. As discussed earlier, with the increased accessibility to the Internet, citizens are better able to provide interactive feedback via online surveys and email responses. The convenience and potential for an instant acknowledgement provided through a link on a website encourages the public to contribute written comments on the components of the plan as it is prepared as well as to provide information at the beginning of the process.

COMMUNITY PLANNING FESTIVALS

There are several reasons to hold a festival, many points in the process where a festival would be effective, and different types of festivals. A festival at the beginning of the process can serve to “kick-off” the process and/or create a vision to guide the process. At a milestone during the process, the festival is a good way to celebrate the success and prepare for the remainder of the process. Exercises and small group processes, together with an unveiling of work to date, can generate excitement. At the end, a city-wide celebration brings everyone together who may have participated or watched from afar.

One excellent tool for a festival is the “Box City” program. In this event, participants have boxes to design as different types of buildings – homes, stores, offices, community centers, plants, and more – together with a base with natural features (water bodies, hills, etc.) also in three-dimensions. Through group discussions and consensus building, decisions are made about where to place roads, sewage plants, landfills, neighborhoods, shopping, and all of the components of a city. As participants plan and build a city, they learn about land uses, compatibility, consensus-building, and the difficult trade-offs involved in planning their community. Planning becomes real rather than theoretical. (See the section on “more information” for a Website with details about Box City and other programs.)

DECIDING ABOUT PHYSICAL DESIGN

Design Charrette

A charrette is a highly interactive meeting where participants work in groups to draw maps, develop planning goals and policies, and design their community. The focus of a charrette is physical design of one or several neighborhoods and not policies or strategies. Ranging in duration from one to several days, a charrette is a meeting format which

involves all the various interest groups, allows interim feedback on the working plans, and most importantly, results in an end product that represents a consensus view of all participants. Facilitation by qualified planners and design professionals is important to the timely progress of this format of workshop. The charrette process itself often involves a series of steps including site visits, vision exercises, preliminary plans, input and feedback on the preliminary plans, refinements of plans, more feedback and discussion, leading to eventual consensus and adoption of the plans or policies by the group.

Community Preference Surveys

The participants in preference surveys evaluate a series of visual images categorized by development types and styles, housing types and styles, streetscape appearance, open space, commercial areas, etc. These images are usually a mix of photographs from the community and several images from other communities. This helps expand the choices beyond what is already in the community. It may also introduce some innovative planning techniques to the participants. The participants choose one image from a pair of images that feature different design solutions to one aspect of the community, such as roads with landscaped medians or roads with no median at all. The participants mark their preferences on a score sheet. Planning team members compile the rankings from all of the score sheets and report the overall preference of the group. This tool is focused on physical features, such as building placement and height, landscaping, design of signs, density, open space, and more. It guides the planning team in preparing goals, policies, and strategies to achieve the designs most preferred by the group.

Community Visioning

Visioning is a process by which participants imagine their future community. It must be shared and represent what the community should become. The end result of a visioning process is a formal statement that describes the future community.

A visioning process may include charrettes, preference surveys, questionnaires, and festivals designed around a program such as “Box City.” The essential feature of visioning is the focus on questions about what people treasure, what people want to change, and what the future community should be.

A visioning process can focus on creating scenarios to describe different future communities and then selecting among the scenarios. This works well with large numbers of participants that are divided into smaller groups to focus on different scenarios.

Another way to approach visioning is to start with brainstorming sessions following by consensus-building activities to narrow the lists of value statements (what people treasure) and reach agreement on what should be changed. The final step is the focus on what people want the community to become, again determined through consensus-building exercises.

The planning team should spend time determining the approach to be used, crafting questions, and planning the meetings or festivals where visioning will be carried out.

Photographic Journals

As the saying goes, “A picture is worth 1,000 words.” Photographic surveys or journals are an effective way to help establish goals and priorities for a community. Citizens can be asked to take photographs depicting places in their own community that they cherish, places in other communities that they want to be like, and places in their own community that they want to change. The planning team can lead groups of the public, or provide the photos in advance, to identify places, development types and styles and landscapes. These photos should depict those features that folks like and would prefer be retained as well as those features that are negative or should be removed over time. Once the photos are assembled, they should be sorted and arranged into groups, establishing community preferences. The selected photos could be mounted on a board or table based on similar themes. After the exercise, the summary results are presented and used to develop the goals and objectives for the plan.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

No matter how well-planned and well-organized you think the meetings are, beware of the falling into the trap of “Build it and they will come.” If the community is not aware of the planning process and not reminded in many ways about the meetings, chances are attendance at the meetings will suffer. Remember to give careful thought to how the planning team will provide adequate advance notice of the meetings to the public.

Minimum notice requirements are often not enough. Meeting minimum requirements involves placing a notice in the legal advertisements section of the newspaper. Many citizens do not make a regular habit of seeking out these legal advertisements. Therefore, it is important to do more so that the public will learn about meetings, events, and the availability of information. A wide range of strategies is available to the planning team. Depending on budget and resource availability, several of these methods could be used throughout the project.

Learn the names of local reporters and regularly supply them with news and facts for articles throughout the planning process. Journalists are always looking for newsworthy items about the local community. A word of caution: news is more than announcing an event. Include information about invited speakers or a hot topic to be discussed.

If the newspaper is the main format to let the public know about upcoming meetings, consider a display advertisement. If the budget allows, seek professional assistance in designing the advertisement. At least use techniques such as a border around text, designed to set the advertisement off from articles and formal legal notices. Placement is important. The advertising department of the newspaper will assist you in deciding where to place the ad to increase the likelihood that it will be seen by your intended audience.

In just the last couple of years, access to and even daily use of the Internet has become widespread. Most local governments in Georgia have their own website providing directory information for department contacts, meeting agendas and minutes, listings of special events, and more. Recognizing that the Internet has become a popular way to provide

information to the public, consider dedicating a section of the local government website to the planning process. The planning team will be able to distribute information and draft reports, conduct on-line surveys, display photographs, and share land use maps. Instant feedback provided through an e-mail link on the website encourages the public to contribute written comments on the components of the plan.

Beyond the use of newspapers and the Internet for notification, there are many other alternatives for getting the word out. Newsletters of community groups and neighborhood associations are a great way to target information of interest in a particular geographic area or to specific interest groups. One word of caution is to respect very early deadlines for printing of newsletters, which can be as much as a month earlier than the date of distribution. Announcement flyers could be printed and then posted – with permission – in high traffic areas such as libraries, shopping areas, schools, and colleges.

Most city halls and county courthouses feature a lobby area, central gathering area, or reception area. One way to put this space to good use is to set up a display of photographs, maps, and planning features for all visitors to the building to visit. That way, when a citizen comes to renew a drivers' license, pay a permit fee, or seek information, there is an opportunity to learn about the comprehensive plan and the planning process. This same approach can be used to feature information in displays at libraries, other civic buildings, or a shopping center.

When the budget is available to support additional notifications, there are several approaches to consider. Special printed newspaper inserts have been used to present an overview of the planning process and to provide planning-related information in a tabloid format. These inserts should be well-designed, colorful, and easy to read.

Another way to reach a large number of households is through a program or announcement on the cable television government or local access channel. This may involve significant video production costs, but once developed, the program can be repeated at different times and on different days. Many cable companies will run public service announcements.

Consider creating a dedicated telephone line with a recorded message and a menu of options for citizens to record their own messages about planning issues.

School teachers and students represent a great resource for generating interest in the community and the how the planning process works. The planning team can provide planning process information for a government or civics lesson for use at any grade level. The local government can sponsor a poster contest to generate student interest and participation. Poster contests work at every grade level. Consider essay contests for middle and high school students. One benefit to introducing students to planning is that they carry the message home to their parents, thus getting them interested as well.

An effective strategy is to take the message to the public through presentations at meetings and civic events. A speaker's bureau comprised of the planning team – government staff, consultants, and volunteers – offers introductory presentations on the planning process to civic clubs, business groups, neighborhood associations, and schools.

These presentations should be about 15 to 20 minutes in length. Advance preparation and a good script will ensure that speakers focus on points of interest to the group. Handouts or flyers provide contact information and an overview of the process.

Whichever forms of public notification are selected for a particular community, remember to always include a contact person with a phone number and e-mail address on the notice. The reader of the notice may have questions, desire more information, or may simply want to speak with someone about the planning process.

HOW DID WE DO?

The process is not complete until you assess the effectiveness of community involvement process. Revisit the Public Involvement Plan and ask some key questions: Did we do what we said we would do? What worked particularly well? What should we have done differently? How will we amend the involvement plan for future planning efforts?

Look for proof that the planning team listened to people who took the time to participate. Though not every suggestion can be included, suggestions can be included on lists for future planning programs.

Planning is an ongoing process. The end of one process is really the beginning of the next process. A plan is frequently referred to as a living document, one which is revisited as the community experiences growth and identifies new challenges and opportunities. Be sure you continue to learn from each experience, maintain the good will established with the public, and ensure that the people are in the plan.

APPENDIX

SAMPLE PARTICIPATION DOCUMENTS

Sample Membership of Steering Committee

Commission/Council District	
• Chairman	Two appointees
• District 1	Two appointees
• District 2	Two appointees
• District 3	Two appointees
• District 4	Two appointees
Planning Commission	Two appointees
Board of Education	Superintendent or one representative
Neighborhood Associations	Two members
Major Employers	Two members
Agricultural	One member
Building and Development Firms	Two members
Engineering & Land Planning Firms	Two members
Chamber of Commerce	One member
Development Authority	One member
Environmental Organizations	One member
Non-Profit Organizations	One member
Senior Citizens, Retirement Community	One member

Sample List of Stakeholders to Interview

<u>City/County Staff</u>
• City/County Administrator
• Public Works Director
• City/County Engineer
• Zoning Administrator
• Utilities Department/Water and Sewer Superintendent
• Health Department Official
<u>Development Community</u>
• Residential Developers or Builders
• Commercial Developers or Builders
• Civil Engineering Firms, specializing in land development
• Surveyors
• Land Planners
• Environmental Scientists
• Major Landowners
<u>Other Groups</u>
• Planning Commission, chairman and other members
• Board of Education, superintendent and key staff
• Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff
• Chamber of Commerce
• Development Authority
• Housing Authority
• Regional Commission, executive director and staff planners
• Agricultural groups, such as Extension Service, Farm Bureau
• State University representative
• Military Base representative

Sample Stakeholder Interview Questions

CITY/COUNTY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

<Date of Interview>

1. List three (3) specific planning concepts or policies that work well and should be retained as we revise the comprehensive plan.

2. Identify the three (3) most critical problems with the current planning policies and implementation procedures.

3. If you could identify one (1) thing that is missing from the comprehensive plan in order to achieve the kind of community you want, what would you add?

4. Please list any other information you think is helpful as we revise the comprehensive plan.

Sample Newspaper Advertisement for Public Input Meeting

<CITY/COUNTY> COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
KICK-OFF MEETING

<Date>

<Time>.

<Location>

You are invited to participate in planning process for the future of City/County.

This planning process will ensure quality growth, assist City/County to prioritize expenditure of funds and coordinate future development efforts. The plan will focus on population, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, community facilities, land use, intergovernmental coordination, and transportation. It is anticipated that a draft will be ready for public comment in <month> of this year.

This is your opportunity to share ideas, voice concerns, and describe your vision for City/County over the next ten years. In addition, the <planning staff> will be present to introduce the planning process and highlight the main issues that the Steering Committee has identified.

City/County encourages all interested parties to take part in this process. The Kick-Off meeting will take place on <date and time>. It will be held in the <location and address>.

Citizens who are unable to attend but would like to provide comments regarding the plan can contact Polly Planner, Planning Director, by phone at (555) 555-1000 or by e-mail at email@georgiacounty.net. Comments can also be mailed to Ms. Planner's attention at P.O. Box 200, Alpha, Georgia 30000.

**City/County Comprehensive Plan
Public Input Meeting**
<Date and Time>
<Location>

You are invited to participate in planning process for the future of City/County.

This is your opportunity to share ideas, voice concerns, and describe your vision for City/County over the next ten years. In addition, the planning staff will be present to introduce the planning process and highlight the main issues that the Steering Committee has identified.

City/County encourages all interested parties to take part in this process. The KickOff meeting will take place on <date and time>. It will be held in the <location and address>.

Contact Polly Planner, Planning Director, by phone at (555) 555-1000 or by e-mail at email@georgiacommunity.net. Comments can also be mailed to Ms. Planner's attention at P.O. Box 200, Alpha, Georgia 30000.

Georgia City/County
P.O. Box 200
Alpha, Georgia 30000

USA

Resident
444 Maple Street
Alpha, Georgia 30000

Sample Public Input Meeting Agenda

CITY/COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

<Date>

<Time>

AGENDA

- I. Welcome and Introductions

- II. Discussion of Project Schedule and Planning Process

- III. Discussion of Future Community Input Opportunities

- IV. Discussion of Community Character
 - a. Small Group Exercise
 - b. Small Group Reports

- V. Public Comments

- VI. Next Steps

- VII. Adjourn

Thank You!

Planning Team Contact Information:

Name

Address

Phone

E-mail

Sample Community Vision Comment Form

CITY/COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
PUBLIC MEETING

<Date>

What are the things you like most about this community?

What things would you change in this community?

What would you like this community to be like in 10 years?

Thank You!

Planning Team Contact Information:

Name

Address

Phone

E-mail

Sample Planning Topics Comment Form

CITY/COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
PUBLIC INPUT MEETING
<Date>

Step 1: Please place the number 1 through 8 in each box to rank each planning topic in order of **importance to you**.

Step 2: Write your specific issues and suggestions for each topic in the space provided.

Land use

Neighborhood revitalization

Downtown

Safety

Community Facilities (Water, etc.)

Transportation

Education

Environmental Protection

Planning Team Contact Information:

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail

Sample Public Involvement Newsletter



GET INVOLVED NEWSLETTER

Headlines:

Latest Progress:

Next Public Meetings:

Planning Schedule:

Consultant/Planning Team Contact Information:

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail

Sample Community Participation Summary Report Outline

PROGRESS REPORT #2

<Date OR Date Range>

Community participation milestones accomplished

✓ Item

✓ Item

✓ Item

Items anticipated for next progress report

✓ Item

✓ Item

✓ Item

Status of overall community participation process

✓ Percent Complete

✓ Item

✓ Item

Outstanding issues that need to be addressed

✓ Item

✓ Item

✓ Item