

**INTRODUCTION**

As a document that reflects the shared vision, goals and objectives of an entire community, a comprehensive plan must be based on extensive public involvement. Only through the input of local leaders and the general public can any comprehensive plan be embraced as the community’s guide to long-term health and sustainability. The level of community ownership of a comprehensive plan is tied directly to the degree of public input that is incorporated into the planning effort. Only by conducting a comprehensive planning process that creates this public sense of ownership will the community make a conscious decision to work toward its implementation. Without active citizen involvement, it is unlikely that a comprehensive plan will do more than sit forgotten on a shelf. A comprehensive plan that is based on public input, however, will continue to serve as a dynamic policy guide that benefits the community well into the future.

The *Community Participation Program* ensures that public input is incorporated into the comprehensive planning process for Rayle, Tignall, Washington and Wilkes County. To obtain this input, stakeholders are targeted to focus attention to key issues and opportunities that must be addressed through the creation of Washington-Wilkes’ joint *Community Agenda*; and, to provide an understanding of priorities in advance of the *Agenda* preparation. Through workshops, the general public will refine and revise community issues and opportunities. The general public will also generate the ideas that will ultimately form the implementation policies of the *Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan*.

**STAKEHOLDERS**

**Planning/Advisory Committee**

The *Community Participation Program* proposes the continued use of a planning/advisory committee appointed by local officials. The Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee will meet intermittently to provide direction to *Community Agenda* preparation based on input received through public workshops and surveys.

The Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee was actually formed soon after *Community Assessment* data collection was initiated. The Advisory Committee is composed of a broad cross-section of community leaders including citizens and local officials. As with any data collection effort, a plan preparer must take into account quantitative and qualitative information. The support of the Advisory Committee during the data collection effort was essential – both in fulfilling many primary data requests; and, in providing the necessary feedback to better understand statistical information.

**Figure 11-A: Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee**

Name	Organization
Anderson, Sr., Ed	Wilkes County
Brown, Kyle	Wilkes Co. Zoning Board
Cravens, David	McDonalds
Danner, Debbie	City of Washington
Eaton, Pamela LG	Washington City Council
Echols, Norman	City of Rayle
Eskew, Mike	City of Washington
Gammon, Richard	Town of Tignall
Gorman, Tom	Washington
Hardy, Donna	Washington-Wilkes Ch. Of Com.
Howard, John	Regions Bank
Huyck, Jr., Albert W.	Tignall City Council
Jackson, Charles	Citizen
Lee, Divenski	Wilkes County
McLendon, IV, Toombs	Citizen
Moore, Sam	Wilkes County Chairman
Sisson, Mike	Wilkes County Sheriff
Stover, Jerry	Wilkes County
Tyler, David	Wilkes County



**Additional Stakeholder Identification**

With the assistance of the Advisory Committee during the *Community Assessment* process, additional stakeholders have been identified. During preparation of the *Community Agenda*, it will be important to offer stakeholder organizations and individuals the opportunity to provide feedback and direction through a variety of options. In addition to the general public participation techniques proposed in this document, many other community stakeholders may be individually contacted and offered additional input opportunities. Stakeholder groups and organizations initially identified with the assistance of the Advisory Committee include the following:

<b>Figure 11-B: Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan Stakeholders</b>	
Athens Technical College	Washington Housing Authority
The Clark's Hill Partnership	Washington Planning Commission
CSRA Business Lending Corporation	Washington-Wilkes Payroll Development Authority
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce
Georgia Department of Transportation	Wilkes County Adult Learning Center
Georgia Power	Wilkes County Board of Education
Georgia Woodlands Railroad (Omni-Tracks)	Wilkes County Community Partnership
Mary Willis Library	Wilkes County Sheriff's Office
MEAG Power	Wilkes County Zoning Board
Rayle EMC	Wilkes Transit
Washington Historic Preservation Commission	Wills Memorial Hospital

Many of the stakeholder groups identified in **Figure 11-B** have already assisted in the planning process through the provision of information necessary to complete the Community Assessment portion of the plan. In addition to the interests already identified in **Figure 11-B** – and prior to any public open houses - the Advisory Committee will be asked to again review the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' *State Planning Recommendations (Stakeholders)* to determine which other applicable stakeholder groups should be afforded the opportunity for more personalized participation in the remaining planning process. Solicitation of additional stakeholder comment is addressed in the "Stakeholder Participation" subsection within this Chapter.

**PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES**

**Planning/Advisory Committee Meetings**

*Community Assessment*

Meetings of the Advisory Committee began in late 2006. The initial committee meeting focused on a description of the comprehensive planning process and the importance of a comprehensive plan in establishing long-term community policy. Committee members also provided initial input on issues and opportunities facing Rayle, Tignall, Washington and Wilkes County. Subsequent committee meetings focused on presentations and discussions that revolved around data sets and information that are required in order to adhere to the "Supporting Analysis of Data and Information" section of the "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning."



*Community Agenda*

Advisory Committee meetings will continue during the preparation of the *Community Agenda* portion of the *Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan*. The committee will retain their role as a focus group – helping to translate community input into measurable goals and priorities. The committee will also assist in the initial development of *Plan* implementation strategies. Finally, the committee will serve as the primary vehicle for soliciting public participation in the *Community Agenda* process. It will be the Advisory Committee’s responsibility to educate residents on the need to participate in the planning process; and, to inform the community of upcoming opportunities to participate. As advisory committee members actively participate in many overlapping organizations throughout the community, they will be particularly responsible for ensure that other key stakeholder groups are actively involved in the formation of the *Community Agenda*. The number and frequency of Advisory Committee meetings during the *Community Agenda* process is illustrated in the comprehensive plan schedule within this document; but, is subject to change based on public input.

**Public Workshops**

At least 3 public workshops will be held for the general public during preparation of the *Community Agenda* and will be conducted by the CSRA Regional Development Center (RDC). While at least the initial public workshop will include a formal presentation, the second and third *Community Agenda* workshops will either be held in an open house or a facilitated meeting format. A determination of the specific format to be used at the second and third workshops will be made only after the initial workshop and will be based largely on anticipated attendance levels. Smaller anticipated attendance would more likely result in an open house workshop format where members of the public who attend at any point during an identified block of time can stay for the period of time they feel comfortable with. Open house workshops for smaller anticipated groups would also provide individual staff members with the opportunity to speak one-on-one with attendees. Should it become apparent at the beginning of a given workshop that a larger group is assembling (even at an open house it is common for most attendees to arrive in the first 30 minutes), staff will have the media and materials on-hand to quickly adjust the workshop format to begin with a facilitated public input session. Fortunately, there are adequate venues in Washington-Wilkes to simultaneously prepare for either type of meeting format.

The first workshop will focus on an overview of the comprehensive planning process, the importance of a comprehensive plan, and the review of initial issues and opportunities related to all topics addressed in the *Community Assessment* except for the transportation and land use components. For each preliminary issue and opportunity, attendees may complete a survey form that allows them to rank the information presented in order of priority. The surveys will also allow attendees to suggest revisions and options to the preliminary recommendations that are being presented. Project staff will be available throughout to answer questions and provide clarification. All information will be compiled and utilized to revise community goals and objectives.

At the second workshop there will be a focus on the transportation and land use elements of the *Plan*. An explanation of the concept of “character areas” and their role in the comprehensive planning process will be provided.

At the third workshop participants will focus on suggesting and prioritizing implementation policies. An additional workshop may be scheduled at any time during the *Community Agenda* process if planners determine that more focus needs to be given to a particular topic.

### **Stakeholder Participation**

Many of the stakeholder groups identified herein were contacted for input during preparation of the *Community Assessment*. As previously suggested, stakeholder groups will have the opportunity to provide input on the draft *Community Assessment* document. Stakeholder groups expressing interest will have the opportunity to participate in individual interviews and attend *Community Agenda* public workshops. All interested stakeholders not already represented on the Advisory Committee will be subject to also receive mailings and e-mail updates typically sent only to the Advisory Committee – including updated drafts of *Community Agenda* components.

### **Advertisement**

Community Agenda activities will be advertised within the local newspaper. Upcoming meetings will be posted in City Halls/Wilkes County Courthouse and announced at city council/county commission meetings. In addition to the posting of draft comprehensive planning documents to the CSRA RDC website, the Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce and (Wilkes County) *News-Reporter* will be asked to host the draft documents on their websites. Updates on newly posted documents and upcoming public workshops will be sent via e-mail to initial workshop participants who provide personal contact information.

As with the list of stakeholders recommended by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Advisory Committee will be asked to review the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' *State Planning Recommendations (Recommended Community Participation Techniques)* to determine which other applicable public input and advertisement methods should be incorporated into the remaining planning process.

### **Public Hearings**

Public hearings will be held in accordance with the "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning."

## **COMMUNITY AGENDA SCHEDULE**

An overall project schedule for preparation of the *Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan* was approved by the Advisory Committee at their initial meetings in late 2006. The *Community Agenda* schedule has been subsequently revised and is included herein. The *Community Agenda* portion of the *Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan* will be prepared in a manner roughly consistent with the schedule located on Page 5. Dates are approximate and may be revised due to changing circumstances. The number of Advisory Committee meetings and public workshops illustrated on the schedule is a minimum and may increase.

# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan Project Schedule (Community Agenda)

Task	Community Agenda												
	Sep, 2008	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan, 2009	Feb.	March	April	May	June, 2009			
Planning/ Advisory Committee meetings.	X												
Community Agenda public workshops.				X									
Community Assessment/ Participation Program DCA/RDC review period.	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Community Agenda draft report presentation by RDC							X						
Community Agenda transmitted by local governments.								X					
Community Agenda DCA/RDC review period.								X	X	X	X	X	
Community Agenda Final product adopted by local governments.													X

