

**2030 GREATER CHARLTON  
COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN**



**Community Participation  
Program – November 2009**



## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose**

The preparation of the Community Participation Program is an important first step in obtaining citizen participation and involvement in the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the Community Participation Program of Charlton County, and the Cities of Folkston and Homeland Comprehensive Plan is to insure that citizens and other stakeholders are aware of the planning process and are provided opportunities to comment on the local plan, individual plan components, or plan amendments. More importantly, citizens should have the ability to participate actively in the process of defining the community's vision, values, goals, policies, priorities, and implementation strategies.

### **1.2 Requirements**

Charlton County and the Cities of Folkston and Homeland are required by state law to complete its Comprehensive Plan Update by June 30, 2010 in order to maintain its Qualified Local Government Status (QLG). The plan will be prepared in accordance with the Basic Planning Level Local Planning Requirements from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) effective May 1, 2005.

Experience in public involvement has shown that lasting solutions are best identified when all segments of a community; individuals, local officials, educators, and the business and civic communities are brought together in a spirit of cooperation. A collaborative approach to community engagement is not just an opportunity, but also a necessity.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission will guide the citizen participation efforts associated with the Comprehensive Plan. Several meetings will be held to inform and educate the citizens about the project and to solicit their input in the definition of the Plan's vision, values, priorities, goals, objectives and policies.

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

- ❖ Improvement in quality of decisions
- ❖ Increase ease of Implementation
- ❖ Provide greater public knowledge of community goals and objectives
- ❖ Educate and increase public awareness
- ❖ Capture knowledge and preferences of people who live in and support their communities
- ❖ Mobilization of support and acceptance of the plan



**2. IDENTIFICATION OF COMMITTEES AND STAKEHOLDERS**

Stakeholders both create and are affected by change. Participation by stakeholders can help foster community understanding and support for the *Greater Charlton County Comprehensive Plan* document and provide a vested interest in the implementation of the Plan. This list is not all-inclusive and all interested parties are encouraged to actively participate in the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

**2.1 Technical Advisory Committee**

This committee of professional county and city staff will work closely with the Southern Regional RC to provide techniques, tools and strategies needed to inform the citizens regarding the Comprehensive Plan.

- Steve Nance, County Manager, Charlton County
- Leonard Lloyd, City Manager, City of Folkston
- Austin Hickox, Mayor, City of Homeland
- Jessie Crews, Charlton County Athletic Director
- Fred Coley, Development Authority
- Chief Brad Todd, City of Homeland Police Dept
- E.H. Conner, Charlton County Sheriff
- Chief David Kirton, Charlton County Fire Dept
- Julia Shewchuk, SGRC Planning Director
- Amanda Peacock, SGRC Planner
- Angela Wall, SGRC Environmental Planner
- Michael Jacobs, SGRC Historic Preservation Planner

**2.2 Stakeholder & Steering Committee**

The Stakeholder & Steering Committee for the *Greater Charlton County Comprehensive Plan* update consists of County and City representatives and members from business and community organizations to advise review and help shape the overall plan process:

ELECTED OFFICIALS	
Organization/Group/Individual	Organization/Group/Individual
City of Folkston Mayor and Council	
City of Homeland Mayor and Council	
Charlton County Chairman & Commission	

<b>COMMISSIONS/BOARDS/DEPARTMENTS</b>	
<b>Organization/Group/Individual</b>	<b>Organization/Group/Individual</b>
City of Folkston Manager & Clerk	Charlton County Fire Dept
Charlton County Manager & Clerks	City of Homeland Fire Dept
City of Homeland Clerks	Charlton County Board of Education
City of Folkston Police Dept	Charlton County Health Dept
Charlton County Sheriff Dept	Charlton County Tax Commission
City of Homeland Police Dept	Charlton County School Board
Charlton County Hospital Board	Cherokee Georgia
<b>COMMUNITY/BUSINESS GROUPS</b>	
<b>Organization/Group/Individual</b>	<b>Organization/Group/Individual</b>
Toledo Manufacturing Co	Okefenokee Chamber of Commerce
Family Connections	City of Homeland Development Authority
City of Folkston Housing Authority	Charlton Public Library
Charlton County Development Authority	Charlton County Historical Society
Ward Management Services	AJM Packaging Corp.
Harvin Carter & Associates	Adams & Brooks Attorneys
Okefenokee Restaurant	Southeastern Bank
Farm Bureau Insurance	State Farm Insurance
FNB South Bank	Local Churches
Citizens	Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge

**2.3 Other Stakeholders**

Other stakeholders include representatives of various agencies and organizations such as colleges, various schools, media, Faith-based organizations, civic associations, advocacy groups, homeowners associations, and realtors.

Stakeholders will be called upon to assist with the development of the Community Assessment and Community Vision, leading to the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **3. Identification of Participation Techniques**

The *Charlton County Participation Plan* strives to offer numerous and various opportunities for public involvement in the planning process. The following sections describe the selected participation techniques in greater detail.

#### **3.1 Visioning Workshop/Kick-Off Meeting**

A Community Visioning/Kick-Off meeting was held to announce the planning process to the citizens, and stakeholder committee and provide an overview of the Comprehensive Plan's purpose and general approach for completion. The meeting was held on August 11, 2009, at 5:30pm – 7:30pm, at the OERC Building Auditorium, 68 Kingsland Drive, Folkston, GA 31537.

The goals of the workshop were:

- a) To identify the vision for the participants for Greater Charlton County 20 years from now and translate this vision into goals and policies, and;
- b) To identify issues and opportunities facing the area, including strengths and weaknesses, and
- c) To identify development characteristics and boundaries for proposed character areas;
- d) To establish participation and support for each planning area in the development of the joint Comprehensive Plan.

#### **3.2 Initial Public Hearing**

Following several stakeholder meetings, as required under the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, an initial public hearing will be held to announce to the public that the planning process for updating the comprehensive plan is underway and to present the draft Community Participation Program and draft Community Assessment to the public for final comment. The public was informed of the project schedule and adoption hearings and how they can get involved. The public were also given the opportunity to comment on the process, draft documents and their vision for the future. Following the public hearing and including the input from the public and County and city officials, the Community Participation document and Community Assessment will be transmitted to the DCA for their review and comment.

#### **3.3 Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee will provide guidance and feedback throughout the planning process. Meetings will be scheduled at appropriate benchmarks to coincide with project deliverables and in advance of all public meetings.



### **3.4 Stakeholder Interviews**

Stakeholder interviews will be held as appropriate and are intended to identify major issues and to develop a complete understanding of public opinions, comments and concerns. These issues include potential sources of conflict and controversy as well as perceived or real barriers to implementation. Participants in the interviews may include community leaders from various geographic, socio-economic and business sectors of the community who are committed to the success of the Comprehensive Plan. Results of any stakeholder interviews undertaken will be incorporated into the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **3.5 Public Hearing for Plan Transmittal**

The SGRC staff will make a brief presentation of the highlights of the Greater Charlton County Comprehensive Plan at public hearings before the Charlton County Board of County Commission and City officials. The purpose of the public hearings at that time will be to authorize the draft of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan to be sent to DCA for review. All public hearings will be advertised in compliance with adopted guidelines for public notification.

### **3.6 Project Website**

The SGRC will provide a link on its home page to a webpage that will provide information on the progress of the planning process by announcing meeting opportunities, staff contact information, status and drafts for review of the Comprehensive Plan's three components and a dedicated e-mail address for questions and comments. The website can be accessed through [www.sgrc.us/It's](http://www.sgrc.us/It's) only a click away/Comprehensive Plans/Greater Charlton 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update.

### **3.7 Public Information Outreach Plan**

The SGRC will coordinate the development of an effective media plan to publicize the Plan and its progress to all citizens and other stakeholders. The following activities may also be used to inform the media and citizens:

a) Media Coverage

Media outlets such as print, radio and television will be educated about the plan through the use of briefings and media sessions. The development of press releases, stories, columns and interviews will be used to inform the Public.

b) Public Information Materials

Outreach materials will be created and used to help the public understand the comprehensive planning process, distribute information and encourage feedback. The materials will be distributed at public meetings and other geographic locations and may include items such as fact sheets, comment forms surveys, displays, flyers, notices and a mailing distribution data base.



#### 4. SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF THE COMMUNITY AGENDA

The following is a schedule for the completion of the Community Agenda of the 2030 Greater Charlton County Comprehensive Plan.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>OBJECTIVE</b>
August 11, 2009	Kick-Off event with Steering Committee and Stakeholder Group to explain planning process to the community and receive preliminary input
August 11 – September 24, 2009	Community-wide workshops to discuss and prioritize the preliminary Issues and Opportunities list and outline preliminary boundaries for Character Areas & Areas of Special Attention.
August - October, 2009	Processing of public, Steering Committee and Stakeholder input and feedback to Southern Georgia RC to draft CPP and Community Assessment.
November 10, 2009	Final Stakeholder and Public Workshop on CPP and CASS
December 3, 2009	Public Hearing on the draft Community Assessment and CPP and subsequent transmittal to DCA for review.
December – April 2010	Develop Draft Community Agenda through meetings with Stakeholder Committee, Public, and Technical Advisory Committee for feedback and input.
May 1, 2010	Community wide Public Meeting to present Draft community Agenda and receive final comments and revisions
May 15, 2010	2 <sup>nd</sup> Joint Public Hearing to transmit Draft Community Agenda to DCA for review.
May 15- June 15, 2010	DCA Review period
July 31, 2010	Adoption of 2030 Comprehensive Plan by Charlton County and the Cities of Folkston and Homeland.