

# Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine Joint Comprehensive Plan Community Participation Plan

## **Purpose**

The preparation of the Community Participation Program is an important first step in obtaining citizen participation and involvement in the Comprehensive Plan. Community participation is an important part of the comprehensive planning process. It is based on the adage “What they plan, they own.” When the planning process achieves diverse public input and involvement, the resulting plan is more likely to be implemented because the community takes pride and ownership in the plan.

The purpose of the Community Participation Program of the Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine Joint 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. Widespread community involvement is crucial to preparing the Community Agenda section of the plan. Camden County Commissioners and the Council Members of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine believe citizens should have the ability to participate actively in the process of defining the community’s vision, values, goals, policies, priorities, and implementation strategies.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan represents Camden County’s and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine’s individual visions, and should reflect a full range of community values and desires developed for the citizens and by the citizens.

## **State Minimum Requirements**

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) sets the standards and procedures for developing local comprehensive plans in order to maintain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status and thus remain eligible for certain state funding and permitting programs. A new set of rules went into effect on May 1, 2005, which emphasizes the involvement of stakeholders and the general public in preparation of plans that include a well–conceived and achievable vision for the future.

The new DCA rules require that a community identify stakeholders and define the techniques by which they will promote widespread community participation, yet leaves the structure and composition of the committees up to the governing bodies.

## Identification of Stakeholders

### *Joint Steering Committee*

Elected officials from Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine determined at the beginning of the process that a community-wide planning effort such as this needed their direct and consistent participation. A Joint Steering Committee was formed to be the guiding body throughout the planning process and resolve any issues that may arise during the process. The Joint Steering Committee first met on March 14, 2006, and has held regular meetings since then. The Committee will continue to meet as often as necessary to monitor the progress of the planning process and provide direction to the consulting team.

Members of the Joint Steering Committee are:

<b>Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine Joint Steering Committee</b>	
David Rainer	2006 Chairman, Camden Co. Commission
Preston Rhodes	2007 Chairman, Camden Co. Commission
Kenneth Smith	Mayor, City of Kingsland
Rowland Eskridge	Mayor, City of St. Marys
W. Burford Clark	Mayor, City of Woodbine
Steve Howard	Camden County Manager
Diana Smith	Camden County Clerk
Gwen Mungin	Kingsland City Manager
Bill Shanahan	St. Marys City Manager
Sandy Rayson	Woodbine City Administrator

### *Local Topic Discussion Groups*

Camden County has a number of active citizens' groups as well as individuals who take a keen interest in how the area grows and is developed. Because of the expressed interest of groups like The Camden Partnership, the Joint Steering Committee chose to involve the public early in the process by forming local topic discussion groups. The role of the topic groups was to thoroughly examine their issue area by meeting as often as necessary during March and April 2006. The minutes of the meetings were transmitted to the consulting team for development of the preliminary issues and opportunities. The information will also be useful to the design of the facilitated public workshops.

Participants in the local topic discussion groups represented a variety of interests and community groups. Those who volunteered their time and talents included:

<b>Economic Development</b>
Rachel Baldwin – Camden Co. Schools Employment Readiness Program
Gary Blount – Asst. Super Camden Co. Schools
Lisa Copeland – Citizen

Chris Daniel – Chamber of Commerce
Steve Fortier – Workforce Development
Bob Noble – Camden Co. Joint Development Authority
Bob North – Brenau University
Carolyn Rock – Historian & Valdosta State University professor
Darlene Roellig – Citizen
Charles Trader – Citizen
Alecia Webb – Valdosta State University

<b>Housing</b>
Pat Clink – Realtor & Kiwanis Club
Angie Eaton – Camden Co. GIS
Tracy Nelson – Citizen
Deborah Reed – Citizen
Loranina Richardson – Citizen
Michael Richardson – Citizen
Nicole Wildes – Habitat for Humanity
Joel Williams – Realtor, Chamber of Commerce

<b>Land Use &amp; Transportation</b>
Jeff Baker – Chamber Board, Camden Partnership
Lee Bernasek – Citizen
Frank Brown – Woodbine Better Hometown Board Member
William Brunson – Public Service Authority Ex. Director
Bill DeLoughy – St. Marys Councilman
John Everet – Citizen
Larry Johnson – St. Marys Councilman
Ginger Lloyd – Woodbine Better Hometown Board Member
Mark McAnaw – Woodbine Councilman
Bob Noble – Camden Co. Joint Development Authority Ex. Director
Fred Myers – Citizen
Walt Natzic – The Camden Partnership
Celenda Perry – Camden Family Connection
Denise Proctor – Woodbine Steering Committee Member
Winton Robbins – Woodbine Downtown Development Authority, Chair
Frank Saffold – Citizen
Jim Wells – Banking, Military Retired
Walt Yourstone – The Camden Partnership, Former Base CO

<b>Natural &amp; Cultural Resources</b>
Jim Bailey – Camden Co. Land Trust
Tara Fields – Gulle Historical Society
Darren Harper – Kingsland Economic Development Director
Carolyn Rock – Historian & Valdosta State University professor
Eloise Bailey Thompson – Historic Commission

<b>Community Facilities &amp; Services</b>
Margaret Bernasek – Citizen
Bill DeLoughy – St. Marys Councilman
Joyce Flenniken – Convention & Visitors Bureau Board

<b>Intergovernmental Coordination</b>
Lisa Copeland – Citizen
Chris Daniel – Chamber of Commerce
Steve Fortier – Citizen
Dave Horner – Citizen
Marty Klumpp – The Camden Partnership
Dave Lovett – Banking
Bob Noble – Camden Co. Joint Development Authority Ex. Director
Celenda Perry – Camden Family Connection
Jim Wells – Banking, Military Retired

**Recent Planning and Community Involvement Efforts**

Fortunately for Camden County, Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine, several significant plans and reports have recently been completed which were extremely useful in preparing the Community Assessment, and will be used to develop the Community Agenda. In 2004, DCA dispatched a Quality Growth Resource Team to Camden County to assist the County and the three Cities in achieving more desirable development patterns. The report addresses appropriate economic development, housing choices, natural resources protection, transportation alternatives, and places heavy emphasis on development strategies for quality growth.

Also, in August of 2004, Camden County contracted with Jordan, Jones & Goulding, Inc. to prepare a *Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)* for all of Camden County, including the three municipalities of Kingsland, St. Mary and Woodbine. Carried out in four phases, the CTP provided an assessment of existing transportation conditions, public comment, project determination and prioritization. The CTP included a five-year short term transportation program as well as a long-range, 20-year transportation plan.

Camden County’s Family Connection sponsored the *Community Three-Year Strategic Plan for Camden Families and Children* in March of 2005. This plan includes input from over 1,400 citizens, providing a forum for the community to express its strengths, weaknesses, concerns, and priorities. This strategic plan is relevant through June 30, 2008.

The Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center completed the *Camden County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* in May 2005. The plan was designed to facilitate and encourage a community where people could bicycle and/or walk safely and conveniently to all desired destinations and to provide alternative transportation options that would be available to all citizens or visitors to Camden County. The *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* considered current conditions; planning, design and safety standards; as well as provided a recommended implementation program.

In October 2005, the *Economic Diversification of Camden County* study prepared for The Camden Partnership and Camden County Public Service Authority by Georgia Institute of Technology was presented. This study provides a detailed account of community identified economic diversification issues and strategic plan recommendations, and captures Camden County's economic diversification situation and future potential. It summarizes the results of interviews conducted with stakeholders and partners; assesses Camden County's economic development performance and programs; identifies business growth opportunities and issues affecting the County's potential for maintaining and enhancing its quality of life; inventories key assets for growth and development; audits current tools in place for managing growth; assesses the current physical and natural resource infrastructure's ability to meet current and future needs; and provides an assessment of the County's workforce development strengths and challenges and key assets for growing the tourism industry.

The Camden County Board of Commissioners directed a *Housing Inventory of Unincorporated Camden County* to be completed by the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center in February 2006. Providing the community with a snapshot of up-to-date housing conditions in the unincorporated areas of the County, the housing inventory highlighted growth rates, the type and condition of housing, as well as identified areas where housing stock was in need of special attention. The study was completed in June of the same year.

In October 2006, the Camden County Solid Waste Authority completed an update of their Solid Waste Management Plan. This plan addressed the five core planning elements specified by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Solid Waste Management, as revised in 2004. These elements include waste reduction, collection, disposal, land limitation, as well as education and public involvement.

In collaboration with the Georgia Department of Transportation, the *Rails to Trails Feasibility Study, Kingsland to Riceboro* was another planning initiative completed by the Coastal Georgia Regional

Development Center for Camden County. Completed in June 2007, the *Rails to Trails Feasibility Study* considered the possibility of implementing a multi-use path or trail way along the abandoned railroad corridor in Camden, Glynn, McIntosh and Liberty Counties. The study included a needs assessment; public input; an analysis of property ownership and existing conditions; cost estimates; social environmental and economic impacts; as well as an implementation strategy, including design maintenance and operation of the proposed trail.

**List of Participation Techniques**

Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine with assistance from the consulting team will guide the citizen participation and coordination efforts associated with the development of the joint comprehensive plan.

The Community Participation Program tasks are derived from the essential need to educate the public and media regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan and ensure a broad participatory base. A specific emphasis on the views of all segments of the community will also include representation from the low and moderate income and minority populations identified in the planning process. The following tasks will aid the planning, assessment, evaluation, and implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan.

<b>Participation Technique</b>	<b>Included in CP Program</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Steering Committee	Yes	Local governments decided that a Steering Committee would be formed to guide the comp plan process from beginning to end.
Technical Advisory Committee	No	The Steering Committee decided to forego the formal appointment of a Technical Advisory Committee. The Steering Committee and staff will be reviewing all draft materials before they are presented to the public, and will by default serve as an ad hoc Technical Advisory Committee.
Stakeholder Interviews	No	The recently completed Camden County Economic Diversification study conducted by Georgia Tech provides a wealth of timely information to serve this purpose.
Stakeholder Meetings	No	The topic discussion workshops explained in detail below served this purpose.
Kiosk/Lobby Displays	Yes	There are a number of busy “lobby” type places that would be effective locations to set up a special display for the planning process. Each jurisdiction will determine the best place and the presentation style.

<b>Participation Technique</b>	<b>Included in CP Program</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Design Charrettes	No	Each jurisdiction collaborated with DCA and the Quality Growth Partnership to host a Quality Growth Resource Team in September 2004. A charrette would be duplicating that effort. In October 2007, the City of Woodbine completed a Master Plan that is heavily design related.
Public Workshops and Visioning Sessions	Yes	Beginning in September 2007, public workshops were held in each jurisdiction to: 1) define their vision; 2) finalize issues and opportunities; 3) refine the character area map and the future development map; and 4) develop policies for the Community Agenda.
Local topic discussion workshops	Yes	A series of topic discussion meetings were held in March and April 2006 to build consensus through open, inclusive, and interactive forums. These topic meetings were facilitated by city staff and volunteers for the county meetings. The notes from the meetings will be used as information sources for the Community Agenda and to design the content for the public workshops.
Intergovernmental Partnership meetings	Possibly	There are no specialized multi-government “planning summits” or similar type meetings scheduled as a part of this process; however, the local governments are open to considering such meetings after the facilitated citizen participation sessions if needed to complete the Community Agenda.
Kick-off Information Meeting	Yes	A kick-off informational meeting for each jurisdiction was held to provide a general introduction of the planning process to the public, as well as presenting the draft Community Assessment and Community Participation Program.
Printed Public Information	Yes	Executive summaries and other printed materials and relevant handouts will be used as appropriate throughout the planning process.
Public Hearings	Yes	Two public hearings in each jurisdiction are planned as required.
Surveys	No	Deemed not cost effective for this process.
Press Releases, Media Contacts	Yes	At key intervals throughout the planning process, press releases will be prepared and distributed to various forms of local media.
Website – Information only	Yes	Camden County and the Cities will post relevant information to their respective websites.

Participation Technique	Included in CPP?	Explanation
Website – Response capability (email)	Yes	Each jurisdiction is capable of receiving feedback from the public via email, and will designate a staff person to manage and monitor the input.
Website – Interactive with survey	No	This technique was not considered due to cost.
Email “blast”	Yes	Email addresses will be compiled as part of the stakeholders contact information, and meeting notices will be sent out by email as appropriate. However, there will be no spam-like blasts of email used to promote this planning process.
Cable TV information	Yes	The local cable TV provider is capable of broadcasting public meeting announcements on the local/bulletin board channel.
Community Preference survey	No	This has been deemed too costly and has essentially been done through past community planning efforts.
School Program (students)	No	No specific school program has been identified.
Speakers Bureau	Yes	As specific requests from local groups who want a speaker to address this topic, efforts will be made to secure one.

*Public Workshops*

A series of three community workshops are planned to receive input and feedback throughout the Agenda development process. The workshops are anticipated to focus on the following topics.

*Workshop No. 1 – Vision and Refinement of Community Issues and Opportunities (September 2007).* This workshop will provide an overview of the state planning goals and preliminary draft of Coastal Comprehensive Plan guidelines. It will provide an opportunity for participants to express their vision for their community, and discuss issues and opportunities for their jurisdiction. Workshop No. 1 will also give participants the opportunity to draft policies and Short-Term Work Program activities to address refined issues and opportunities.

*Workshop No. 2 – Refinement of Vision, Issues and Opportunities, Policies, and Short-Term Work Program (October 2007).* This workshop will continue the work started in Workshop No. 1. This workshop will review the vision begun in Workshop No. 1. Participants will continue to discuss issues and opportunities for their jurisdiction. Workshop No. 2 will continue to give participants opportunity to draft policies and Short-Term Work Program activities.

*Workshop No. 3 – Develop Future Land Use Map, and Review Implementation Policies and Short-Term Work Program Items (January 2008).* The third workshop will allow participants to review the results of the previous public workshop and express their opinions about the proposed implementation policies. The primary focus will be on defining and creating the Future Development Map.

**Schedule for Completion of the Community Agenda**

Because of the Coastal Comprehensive Planning process initiated by Governor Sonny Perdue via an Executive Order signed in February 2005, the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center initiated a



request to DCA to extend the recertification deadlines for the six coastal counties – Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, and McIntosh.

In March 2006, the DCA agreed to extend the recertification deadline for the local Comprehensive Plans until October 2008. This extension allows the coastal counties – all of which initiated comprehensive plan updates in 2005 or 2006 – to monitor the Coastal Comprehensive Plan process, and respond in their local plans to any forthcoming directives and recommendations. Once the Coastal Comprehensive Plan is complete, Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine will assess the implications and incorporate the necessary policies into the Community Agenda. The Agenda will be submitted to DCA no later than June 30, 2008, and possibly even earlier.

The following timeline depicts Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine Joint Comprehensive Plan preparation process, the specific participation techniques and when they are expected occur, and the preparation and adoption process of the Community Agenda component.

<b>Camden County and the Cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine Joint Comprehensive Plan Tasks</b>	Mar. – April 2006	May – Jan. 2007	Feb. 2007	Mar. 2007	April 2007	May 2007	Jun – Aug. 2007	Sept./Oct. 2007	Sep - Nov. 2007	Jan. 2008	Feb. – April 2008	May – July 2008	
Joint Steering Committee meetings								<b>DCA Coastal Comp. Plan</b>					
Local Topic Discussion Workshops													
CGRDC Staff prepare Com. Assessment & Com. Participation Plan													
Submit Com. Assessment & Com. Participation Plan to Steering Com. for local review													
First Public Meetings/Com. Assess. Presented													
Public Hearings/Pass Resolutions													
Submit Com. Assessment & Com. Participation to DCA													
Public Workshop #1 – Define Vision – Finalize Issues/Opportunities													
Public Workshop #2 – Future Development Map and Defining Narrative													
Public Workshop #3 – Finalize Policies													
Lobby Displays/Kiosks & Press Releases													
Information on Websites													
Second Public Meeting/Com. Agenda Presented													
Public Hearings/Pass Resolutions													
Community Agenda submitted to DCA													
Local Governments Adoption													
Public Notice of Comm. Agenda Availability													

*The timeline for submission of the Community Agenda may be accelerated upon completion of the Coastal Comprehensive Plan, but will be not later than June 30, 2008.*