

Introduction

Purpose

The comprehensive planning process, at its inception and culmination, is a vision for the future. The ultimate aim of the process is to develop a strong community. In order to achieve that objective, a meaningful comprehensive planning process must solicit and integrate the input of community citizens, government officials, and staff. The result will be a well-balanced comprehensive plan addressing the issues of today, the opportunities of tomorrow, and outlining the steps necessary to bring about positive change over the next twenty (20) years. The Clay County Joint Community Participation Program was designed with these goals in mind. The intent of the Clay County Joint Community Participation Program is to encourage as much public participation, open dialogue and communication as possible; seeking to build consensus among Clay County residents that will result in better government decisions and greater community agreement with those decisions.

State Comprehensive Planning Requirements

Clay County, the Town of Bluffton, and the City of Fort Gaines are required by state law to complete their Comprehensive Plan Update by June 30, 2008. The Joint Comprehensive 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.

Requirements for Creating a Successful Comprehensive Plan

Successful communities create a vision, agree upon a course of action to achieve the vision, and take the steps necessary to implement the vision.

The major challenge in developing a successful plan and thus a successful community for Clay County, the Town of Bluffton, and the City of Fort Gaines is convincing the citizens that the Joint Comprehensive Plan belongs to each and every resident and that broad-based public participation is essential to an effective planning process. Only a give and take process seeking local opinion and knowledge on planning issues can insure that the finished plan represents a balance of community interests. This will create community consensus (a Vision) regarding future development policies and practices.

Citizen Participation

Identification of Stakeholders

The following is a list of Clay County Joint Comprehensive Plan Stakeholders. The list has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Commissioners, the Fort Gaines City Council, the Bluffton City Council, and the Fort Gaines-Clay County Planning and Zoning Commission.

Clay County Board of Commissioners

Gerald Von Anderson, III, Chairman
Willie McCoy, Vice Chair
Walt Killingsworth, Commissioner
David Shivers, Commissioner
Barry Waters, Commissioner
Pamela Ward, County Administrator
Teresa Smith, County Clerk
Roger Shivers, Sheriff
Bobby Dupree, Public Works
William Mills, Attorney

Bluffton Town Council

Albert Hubbard, Mayor
Deloris Redding, Councilor
Aldene Lee, Councilor
Roland Tomlinson, Councilor
Lee Hubbard, Councilor
Gail Hubbard, Town Clerk
Public Works
Attorney

Fort Gaines City Council

David Wetherby, Mayor
Samuel Johnson, Mayor Pro-Tem
Steven Martin, Councilor
James Daniels, Councilor
Jesse Baker, Councilor
Shirley Christian, Councilor
Marion Lindsey, City Clerk
Sonny Davis, Chief of Police
Public Works
Tommy Coleman, Attorney

Fort Gaines Historic Society

All Members

Fort Gaines-Clay County Planning and Zoning Commission

Bill Kenyon, Chairman
Sylvia Dowding
Teresa Smith
Ken Standley

Clay County Economic Development Committee

All Members
Contact: Ken Penuel, Chairman

Developers/Builders

Chattahoochee Land Management Co.

Clay County Board of Education

All Board Members
Contact: Dr. Grady Miles,
Superintendent of Education

Clay County Department of Family and Children Services

Contact: Libby Neves

Clay County Family Connections

All Members
Contact: Leata Gleaton

Clay County Agricultural Extension Office

All Members
Contact: _____

Clay County Department of Health and Environmental Services

All Board Members

Contact: Russ Ferguson, Environmental Health Specialist

Clay County Library

All Board Members

Contact: Jean Turn, Librarian

Major Landowners

Southwest Georgia Housing Authority

Contact: Walter Maddox

Congressman Sanford Bishop

Contact: Elaine Gillespie

GA Department of Labor – Vocational Rehabilitation

Contact: _____

US Department of Agriculture (Regional Office)

Contact: _____

Cuthbert Southern Tribune

Contact: _____

Citizen Notification

Various media will be used to get citizens involved in the planning process. Civic leaders and civic groups as well as churches will be contacted to assist in getting the word out regarding citizen involvement opportunities. Press releases, posters, announcements at public meetings and flyers attached to utility bills will be used to notify the public about upcoming meetings and to generate public interest.

Citizen Involvement Strategy

Public Hearings

The State of Georgia rules and regulations for Local Comprehensive Planning require that two (2) public hearings be held in association with the development of a Comprehensive Plan. The first public hearing will be held to inform the public that the planning process is underway and to go over the draft Community Assessment and Public Participation Program. The public hearing is scheduled for January _____, 2007 at the Clay County Courthouse. The public hearing attendees will be briefed on the plan's timeline (Kick-Off / Vision Meeting, Final Review Meeting and the Final Public Hearing Meeting) and how they can help the planning process. Attendees will also be given an opportunity to comment on the Public Participation Plan and Community Assessment.

Kick- Off Meeting

A meeting to establish a general Vision for Clay County is scheduled for February _____, 2007 at _____ (time) at the _____ (location). Attendees will be briefed on what a Vision Statement is, how to create a good Vision Statement and given examples. Once the review is over facilitators will lead participants through a vision creation process. The meeting has three (3) primary goals:

1. Verify Community Issues and Identify any Changes
2. Create a Vision
3. Identify Strategies for Success

In order to achieve the above goals, a S.W.O.T. Analysis conducted June – September, 2006 will be verified and amended, Issues and Opportunities over the planning period will be discussed, quality of life issues reviewed, major steps necessary to achieve desired results discussed and what measures can be taken to identify future success.

Future Development / Character Area Map Design Meeting

The Future Development / Character Area Map Design Meeting is tentatively scheduled for March _____, 2007 at the _____ (location). The meeting will start with a review of the general Vision Statement developed previously. Next will be the review of the draft Character Area Map identified in the Community Assessment. The majority of the meeting time will be used to modify the draft Character Areas based on participant input.

Final Review Meeting

A Final Review Meeting is tentatively scheduled for May ____, 2007 for two (2) hours at the _____ (location). The purpose of the meeting will be to allow citizens to review and comment on the Community Agenda. All draft documents and maps will be available for review. Staff will be positioned at various stations to take comments. Displays, comment cards, handouts, and other information materials will be distributed. Formal written comments, collected at the conclusion of the meeting, will be summarized and responded to in a timely manner.

Adoption Process

The draft Community Agenda will be presented during regularly scheduled meetings of the Bluffton Town Council, Clay County Board of Commissioners, and Fort Gaines City Council before transmittal to the Lower Chattahoochee Regional Development Center (RDC) for regional and state review. After the RDC and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs review the Community Agenda, the final draft will be presented to the Bluffton Town Council, Clay County Board of Commissioners, and Fort Gaines City Council at regularly scheduled meetings. Public comment will be received at those hearings. The scheduled date for this transmittal hearing is _____ (date) at _____ (time).

Schedule of Completion of the Community Agenda

The graphic below shows the schedule for completion of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Major upcoming milestones in this schedule include:

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|---|--------------------|
| First Public Hearing | February 2007 |
| Submission of Community Assessment to DCA..... | February 2007 |
| Submission of Community Participation Program to DCA..... | February 2007 |
| Kick-Off / Vision Meeting for Community Participation | February 2007 |
| Future Development / Character Area Map Design Meeting..... | March – April 2007 |
| Final Review Meeting | May – June 2007 |
| Second/Final Public Hearing | July 2007 |
| Transmittal of the Community Agenda to RDC/ DCA..... | August 2007 |
| Submission of Community Agenda to DCA..... | August 2007 |
| Adoption of the Community Agenda..... | November 2007 |

* All dates are Tentative and subject to change.

| | Jun 06- Nov 06 | Dec-06 | Jan-07 | Feb-07 | Mar-07 | Apr-07 | May-07 | Jun-07 | Jul-07 | Aug-07 | Sep-07 | Oct-07 | Nov-07 |
|--|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Development of Community Assessment | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Development of Community Participation Program | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First Public Hearing | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Development of Community Agenda | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kick-Off / Vision Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Future Development / Character Area Map Design Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Final Review Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Second / Final Public Hearing | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hearing to Transmit Community Agenda to RDC & DCA | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Submission to DCA | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adoption | | | | | | | | | | | | | |