

Guiding the Future...

REFLECTING THE PAST.



Final Draft

Community Participation Plan

Consolidated Comprehensive Plan 2030

Liberty County, Allenhurst, Flemington, Gum Branch,
Hinesville, Midway, Riceboro, Walthourville



May 2008



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I. Introduction

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs requires that qualified local governments, or local governments eligible for grants and assistance, prepare and maintain a comprehensive plan for their communities. The comprehensive plans must consist of three components: the Community Assessment, which provides a picture of the existing conditions within the community; a Community Participation Plan, which outlines the strategies for an inclusive planning process; and the Community Agenda, which sets forth the vision for the community as well as the strategies and recommendations to attain that vision. These elements will be the key elements of the Liberty Consolidated Comprehensive Plan.

1.1 Purpose

The Community Participation Plan describes the processes and procedures that will be employed during the development of the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the members of the public have ample opportunity to provide input. It is critical that the public be integrally involved in the development of the comprehensive plan; the Community Participation Plan is the foundation for the overall planning process.

The vision for the community, as well as the strategies and guiding principles to attain the vision, is developed through input from the public and local stakeholders. Public involvement is a key element of the comprehensive planning process, and opportunities for input will be provided throughout the duration of the plan development.

II. Goals and Objectives

The following section sets forth the goals and objectives of the Community Participation Plan. These goals represent a high-level approach to public involvement activities, while the objectives outline detailed strategies on achieving the goals.

Goal:

Provide opportunities for stakeholders, interested parties and members of the general public to learn about and help shape strategies through an active involvement process that is open, inclusive and accessible to all citizens and their perspectives.

Objectives:

- Provide participation and educational opportunities for all citizens.
- Develop partnerships among the local governments, agencies and community organizations.
- Build trust among all project participants.

Goal:

Provide clear, accurate and understandable information that can be transmitted to citizens and interested parties through a variety of means.

Objectives:

- Use clear and understandable language, as well as graphics, to clearly communicate technical issues as part of the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan.
- Use a variety of media, including websites, fact sheets, and public meeting presentations to disseminate information and data, particularly at key decision points during the comprehensive planning process.
- Identify opportunities to obtain input from a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, including those populations that are traditionally underserved in the planning process.

Goal:

Provide avenues to efficiently receive input from the public, and integrate the input into the development of the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives:

- Monitor the progress of the technical analysis through project team meetings, workshops, public forums and other stakeholder involvement activities to identify issues and concerns.
- Provide documentation of these issues and concerns.
- Provide acknowledgement of input received from stakeholders and the public.

Goal:

Monitor the effectiveness of the planning process and the public involvement process by communicating with and receiving information from stakeholders, citizens, planning partners and the project team.

Objectives:

- Conduct surveys of the participants in planning activities, such as workshops and public meetings, to gauge the effectiveness of the activity formats.
- Solicit feedback from any advisory committees and technical committees on their satisfaction with the input opportunities and participation activities.

III. Stakeholders and Participants

The Consolidated Comprehensive Plan will involve many participants, including community stakeholders and citizens from Liberty County and its municipalities. Because of the varied interests, issues, opportunities and community focuses, an organized approach will be required to efficiently maintain the stakeholder involvement process. The following section describes the overall organization of the stakeholder coordination element of the project as well as the key players that will be involved in the study.

3.1 Key Participants

The key participants in the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan are described in the following section.

- ***Project Advisory Committee (CP84)***

In 2006, the LCPC undertook a comprehensive transportation and land use study for the US 84 corridor in Liberty County, the US 84 Comprehensive Corridor Study. US 84 connects the unincorporated east end of the Liberty County with the Cities of Midway, Flemington, Hinesville, Allenhurst and Walthourville. It is the only major east-west facility in the County. Because of the comprehensive nature of this study, which was undertaken concurrently with the comprehensive planning process, a joint advisory committee was established to provide input into both efforts. This task force, named CP84, includes local elected officials, staff, other interested parties and stakeholders to provide input throughout the process.

- ***Hinesville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (HAMPO) Committees***

Because the Hinesville area is a federally designated planning area, there is a committee structure already in place for transportation planning activities. These committees include elected officials who form the Policy Committee; technical staff from local governments who form the Technical Advisory Committee; and members of the general public who form the Citizens Advisory Committee. The MPO is countywide, and elected officials from each municipality participate. Although the charge of these committees is primarily transportation focused, the HAMPO committees can be utilized in the comprehensive planning process to avoid duplication and additional effort required by committee members.

- ***Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission***

Liberty County and its municipalities are unique among local governments in coastal Georgia in that its planning functions are consolidated into one organization. The County and each municipality have representation in the Planning Commission, which therefore represents the wide variety of interests that exist throughout the

County. The Planning Commission also functions in an advisory committee capacity with regard to the overall planning process.

- ***Stakeholders***

Stakeholders from throughout the County will be invited to participate in public workshops for the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan.

- ***Community Groups***

Community-based organizations with a general interest in community and planning, such as Chambers of Commerce, regional and local development authorities, civic and neighborhood groups, and others agencies, may have an interest in the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan. These groups will have an opportunity to attend public meetings and workshops. Members of the consultant team as well as the LCPC staff will also be available to meet with these organizations if requested.

- ***Elected Officials***

The input and involvement of state and local elected officials is critical in addressing the planning issues which benefit and impact their communities. Elected officials will have multiple opportunities to participate in the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan.

3.2 Stakeholder Coordination and Involvement

Three important principles guide the stakeholder coordination and involvement activities:

- Continuous communication and exchange of key information through the stakeholder coordination and involvement processes are conveyed to the project team for use in the development of the plan.
- The process also provides for direct communications and interaction among the LCPC staff, the consultant team and the committees and groups to minimize any confusion in the overall direction of the project at the policy level.
- Continuous communication is maintained throughout the planning process among the project team, stakeholders, and all parties interested in participating in the plan.

3.2 Stakeholder Identification

The following provides an initial list of stakeholders that will be included in the planning process. As the development of the comprehensive plan proceeds, other stakeholders and interested parties may be identified.

Potential Stakeholders:

4-H	Liberty County Building and Licensing
Allenhurst Mayor and Council	Liberty County Building Maintenance
Agriculture Community	Liberty County Chamber of Commerce
Armstrong Atlantic State University	Liberty Consolidated Planning
Board of Realtors	Commission
Brewton Parker College	Liberty County Development Authority
Business Community	Liberty County Extension Service
Churches	Liberty County Fire Services
Coastal Courier	Liberty County Health Department
Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center	Liberty County Industrial Authority
Community Service Organizations	Liberty County Office of Housing and Redevelopment
Department of Family and Children Services	Liberty County Planning Commission
Flemington Mayor and Council	Liberty County Recreation Department
Fort Stewart, Garrison Commander	Liberty County Road Department
Fort Stewart Director of Public Works	Liberty County School District
Fort Stewart Chief of Master Planning	Liberty County Sheriff's Office
Georgia Department of Labor	Liberty County Tax Assessors Office
Georgia Environmental Protection Division (Regional Office)	Liberty County Tourism Office
Georgia Forestry Commission	Liberty Regional Medical Center
Georgia Medical Center	Liberty-Hinesville Emergency Management Agency
Georgia Recreation and Parks Association	Libraries
Gum Branch Mayor and Council	Local Service Organizations
Gum Branch Fire Department	Media (Local and Regional)
Health Care Agencies and Hospitals	MidCoast Regional Airport
Hinesville Community Development	Midway Mayor and Council
Hinesville Director of Public Works	Midway Police Department
Hinesville Fire Department	MMC Builders Club
Hinesville Inspections Department	Property Owners
Hinesville Mayor, Manager and Council	Residents
Hinesville Military Affairs Committee	Riceboro Fire Department
Hinesville Police Department	Riceboro Mayor and Council
Historic Preservation Commission	Savannah Morning News
Historical Societies	Savannah Technical College
Homebuilders Association	Schools (Private and Public)
Horticulture Community	State Delegates
Keep Liberty County Beautiful	Technical College
Liberty County Department of Human Resources	Tree Commission
Liberty County Board of Commissioners	United Way of the Coastal Empire
Liberty County Board of Education	US Army District Engineer, US Army Corps of Engineers
	Walthourville Mayor and Council

Walthourville Fire Department
YMCA of Coastal Georgia
Young Adult Liberty Leaders

IV. Relationship to Other Plans and Initiatives

The Consolidated Comprehensive Plan relates to several other regional and local planning initiatives that have a direct impact on Liberty County. Coordination with these efforts will be a key element in the process. These additional planning initiatives include:

- Coastal Georgia Comprehensive Plan
- Coastal Management Plan (Georgia Department of Natural Resources)
- Coastal Uplands Advisory Group
- Green Growth Guidelines
- EarthCraft Coastal Communities
- Coastal Advisory Council
- Docks and Marinas Advisory Committee
- Ft. Stewart/HHA Joint Land Use Study
- Coastal Georgia Greenway Plan
- Atlantic Heritage Coast
- US 84 Comprehensive Corridor Study
- Gateway Sector Plan
- Regional transportation committees and initiatives

V. Community Participation Techniques

The information below details how the public will be involved in and provide input into the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan, as well as opportunities for public interaction and methods of public partnership on plan implementation.

5.1 Public Education

Often, the public does not understand the planning process or even the need for planning. Public education efforts provide training, instruction and informative experiences to communicate knowledge about the overall planning process and how it relates to the community.

Public Information Meetings

The first public information meeting will provide information about the Draft Community Assessment and Draft Community Participation Plan to citizens and stakeholders. This meeting will include a presentation covering the plan's purpose and general approach for completion; pertinent maps and data displays; interactive exercises; and community surveys. This meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2008 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm at the Midway Civic Center.

A subsequent public information meeting will present the information from the Draft Community Agenda to the public. This meeting will include a presentation covering the

plan's purpose and general approach for completion; pertinent maps and data displays; interactive exercises; and community surveys. This meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2008 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm at the Midway Civic Center.

LCPC Website

The new Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission website (<http://www.thelcpc.org>) will provide information on the activities of the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan as well as documents for the public to review. The site will also announce upcoming public meetings and provide contact information for the project team.

Coastal Courier

Staff will work closely with *Coastal Courier*, the major newspaper in Liberty County, to ensure adequate coverage of all Comprehensive Planning activities. Prior to any community meetings, an announcement will be published in the Coastal Courier. The two scheduled public meetings and two public hearings will also be advertised prior to the meeting date to give citizens sufficient notice.

The Frontline

Staff will work with Fort Stewart's online publication, *The Frontline*, to ensure adequate coverage of all comprehensive planning activities. Prior to any community meeting or hearing, an announcement will be published in the "Briefs" section of *The Frontline*. The public hearings will also be advertised prior to the meeting date to give citizens sufficient notice.

Media Coverage

Staff will ensure area media are well-informed of the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan's activities, including public information meetings and public hearings.

5.2 Public Input

Public Hearings

Public hearings will be held at the monthly Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission meeting. These hearings will be opportunities where the public may comment or provide feedback or testimony on the Plan. Please see the tentative schedule in Section IV.

Community Meetings/Workshops

Community meetings/workshops will be held in each municipality of Liberty County, as well as countywide. These meetings will be opportunities for stakeholders, elected officials and citizens to express their opinions, thoughts, and ideas regarding their community's growth and development.

Annual Countywide Planning Workshop

Liberty County hosts an annual countywide planning workshop; participants include local elected officials from all municipalities; appointed officials; local government staff; and members of the public. This workshop retreat is a valuable opportunity to obtain input from the wide range of interests in the County.

5.3 Public Interaction

Community Preference Surveys

Community Preference Surveys regarding land use and development will be distributed at specific meetings and workshops. Survey results will be used to gather stakeholders' preferences on a variety of development styles and community features.

Stakeholder Interviews

RS&H, in concert with the LCPC staff, will meet with various stakeholder groups to determine what decisions should be made to improve and sustain communities. These meetings will be focused on the needs and ideas of the specific stakeholders.

5.4 Public Partnership

HAMPO Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

The already-established partnership between HAMPO and the general public will serve as the Countywide advisory committee for the Comprehensive Plan. This group represents a cross-section of the community and functions as a public information and involvement committee. The CAC is entrusted with providing input regarding the community's perspective and providing information to the community about transportation policies and issues. There are 15 members of the CAC. HAMPO Policy Committee members from Liberty and Long Counties and each of the municipalities within HAMPO appoint CAC members for two-year terms.

Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission

The Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission is sponsoring and leading the update of the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan. The LCPC is made up of nine individuals appointed by the established Appointment Board, which consists of the chief elected official from each of the eight governing bodies in Liberty County. Planning Commissioners serve three-year terms and have a number of responsibilities. In addition to their role in the Comprehensive Plan, Planning Commissioners meet on a monthly basis to review land use requests including rezoning, special exceptions and other land use and planning related requests. The LCPC provides recommendations to the governing bodies regarding these requests.

V. Tentative Schedule for Plan Completion

Date	Action
January 2006	Establishment of CP84 Task Force
January 2006 – May 2007	US 84 Comprehensive Corridor Study and ongoing meetings of Task Force
January 2006 – April 2008	Ongoing informal and formal meetings with elected officials, City/County councils, and community groups
March 2007	Liberty County Annual Planning Workshop
April 2007 – March 2008	Local Community Workshops
March 2008	Liberty County Annual Planning Workshop
May 13, 2008	Public Information Meeting on the Draft Community Assessment and Draft Participation Plan
May 20, 2008	Public Hearing on the Draft Community Assessment and the Draft Participation Plan, held at the monthly LCPC meeting
June 12, 2008	Public Information Meeting on the Draft Community Agenda
June 17, 2008	Public Hearing on the Draft Community Agenda, held at the monthly LCPC meeting
June 30, 2008	Final Plan Submission to Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Appendix

A.1 2007 Liberty County Planning Workshop

A) Liberty County's Vision for the Future – a consensus of what the community should strive to be:

VISION - To be the premier community in Coastal Georgia in which to live, work and visit because of our rich history, heritage, cultural diversity, unsurpassed quality of life and respect for the environment and natural resources.

B) Policies and Implementation Strategies

1) Transportation: We shall create multimodal networks to support efficient land use, minimize congestion and to facilitate countywide mobility.

- a) Implement a countywide urban and rural transit system
 - o Define funding capital, operating, and maintenance among participating entities.
 - o Work together to initiate public transportation service delivery by July 2008.

2) Facilities and Services: We must provide opportunities for economically providing needed facilities and services, and we will utilize all areas of the water life cycle, including maximizing treatment and reuse of water.

- a) Address lack of water and sewer services.
 - o Develop a water and sewer master plan for Liberty County.
 - o Develop a water re-use plan.
 - o Include exploration of funding options for service delivery.
- b) Encourage the location of development on appropriate sites and or locations that will promote the use of existing facilities and services.
- c) Encourage health professionals to relocate to the area utilizing innovative incentive packages.
- d) Locate health facilities to adequately serve the population, especially in the east end of the county.
- e) Explore innovative ways to conserve capacity of infrastructure and other facilities.

3) Land Use: We will promote efficient use of land through well-designed, pedestrian friendly development patterns incorporating a mix of uses and an efficient and creative use of the land.

- a) Coordinate infrastructure planning.

- Integrate plans from various entities to ensure a coordinated program for the provision of infrastructure.
- b) Develop a land use map that reflects the coordinated infrastructure planning and uses agreed upon smart growth principle.

4) Natural Resources: We will preserve marshlands from encroachment by development; preserve quality of air and water through reuse and the promotion of clean industries; preserve and promote public access to water; and obtain land for preservation of public access.

- a) Protect greenspace within the County.
 - Define the greenspace that must be protected.
 - Include undevelopable land in the greenspace inventory.
- b) Use a greenspace bank for developers to obtain higher densities in suitable locations.
- c) Develop a greenspace master plan.
- d) Develop balances between salt marshes and developed areas.
- e) Work with DNR on marsh buffers.

5) Housing: We will encourage policies that create housing opportunities so that all citizens can live and work within the community.

- a) Increase high end housing to encourage high wage earners that work in Liberty County to reside in Liberty County.
- b) Start and continue dialogue with developers both within and outside of the county as to the need for high end housing.

6) Historic and Cultural Resources: We will seek to enhance, protect and conserve our historic and cultural resources.

- a) Provide a performing arts center.
 - Work with the school board to provide such a facility.
- b) Expand the existing library system, and include library projects in SPLOST.
- c) Promote Liberty County through gateways focused on I-95 interchanges.
- d) Select a designated entity to lead the promotional efforts.
- e) Continue development of historic regulations for the County.
- f) Work with policy makers to address legislative and regulatory constraints on funding, and explore funding opportunities.

7) Intergovernmental Coordination: We will seek to ensure that all governmental entities in our County are seamless and transparent, and provide the services we need efficiently and economically.

- a) Develop more uniform and coordinated ordinances.
- b) Establish a bi-annual executive meeting to share, review, comprehensive plans, goals and results.

- c) Explore pros and cons of further consolidation of services.
- d) Establish a formal communication policy between local governments, school boards, and authorities and assign responsibility (LCPC).
- e) Create a collaborative planning and transparent decision-making process.

A.2 2008 Liberty County Planning Workshop

A) Liberty County's Vision for the Future – a consensus of what the community should strive to be:

VISION - To be the premier community in Coastal Georgia in which to live, work and visit because of our rich history, heritage, cultural diversity, unsurpassed quality of life and respect for the environment and natural resources.

B) Discussion Items

1) Transportation

- a) Hinesville Bypass – it is very needed, but where will the money come from? It could be funded by a new regional revenue source being discussed by the State Legislature. Liberty and Long Counties should take the lead on this initiative.
- b) Connect the new transit system (in Hinesville and Flemington) to an upcoming regional rural transit system. Consider expanding the new transit system throughout Liberty County.
- c) How will new transit be funded? Ideas include more taxes and new taxes for businesses.
- d) Need to consider access to transit from subdivisions and neighborhoods
- e) Focus transit onto routes with the highest predicted ridership.
- f) Consider role of transit in emergency evacuation planning.
- g) We need park and ride lots that are visible and safe for people to leave their cars. Suggested locations are: Holton's at Midway; SR 196 at U.S. 84; Walthourville area; SR 196 at Airport Road; and between Hinesville and Flemington. Also, park and ride lots to the Target Distribution Center.
- h) Islands Highway needs to be improved; specifically, expansion of the two-lane bridge at I-95 and SR 84.
- i) Need additional funding for roads not included in TIP or LRTP.
- j) Need more attention and funding for bicycle and pedestrian systems, especially for right-of-way acquisition. Connect these from neighborhoods to stores, restaurants, etc.
- k) Truck traffic will increase as more people move to Liberty County.
- l) Sidewalks should be included in all new developments, and along the US 84 corridor. Improve the crossings on US 84. Consider creating a path network around the "Triangle" (Gen. Stewart and Screven Drives, and US 84).
- m) There is a problem justifying sidewalks due to their low usage.
- n) Question – are sidewalks are the responsibility of the municipalities, or Liberty County?
- o) The growth of Ft. Stewart will impact the transportation system, particularly Frank Cochran Drive and the roads that lead to the gates. The new transit

systems will help the bottlenecks; we need to coordinate with Ft. Stewart on the scheduling of buses in and out of the gates.

- p) Airport Road needs street lighting; it is up to local governments to work with Georgia Power.
- q) We also need improvements for Frank Cochran Drive, 15th Street, Airport Road, U.S. 84, and the Memorial Drive Realignment.
- r) Liberty County handles street maintenance for the unincorporated area and for all the municipalities, except Hinesville. Hinesville handles this function for the City as well as in some small areas outside the City. The current arrangement works well, except for a fairness issue. Citizens of Hinesville do not think it is fair for them to pay for services in areas that are not contributing financially. This function needs a new funding source to help Hinesville and Liberty County.
- s) Ft. Stewart is working on emergency response services, including a new police substation. It is creating mutual aid agreements with the County's EMS system.
- t) The RDC is working on a regional Coastal Greenway program which should be coordinated with local bike systems.
- u) There are maintenance problems (related to cleaning ditches) because of getting access to private property.
- v) We need to work on the missing gaps with partnerships with other jurisdictions, such as Long County.
- w) Our SPLOST program will generate about \$ 45 million with most of it going to things other than transportation. Should be allocate more to transportation?
- x) There is a Rails-to-Trails project from Riceboro to Woodbine being planned
- y) A survey was recently done on Ft. Stewart and it indicated that people wanted more recreational paths for walking. Also need recreational paths along rural roads.
- z) Islands Highway near Tradeport needs to be widened with turning lanes.
- aa) Consider impact fees for transportation, as well as for other services (recreation, schools, etc.), through an impact fee study. Any impact fees need to be Countywide.

2) Economic Development

- a) Need to raise the high school graduation rate in Liberty County
- b) Need to offer programs for kids "in the middle", not just for gifted students or troubled kids.
- c) Support the School Board's Career Academy program that gives students internships; support health care internships.
- d) Savannah Tech is working with the community to identify training needs; we need to tell them our work force development needs.
- e) Target is having difficult filling their vacant positions. They are experiencing problems because many applicants do not pass drug tests.
- f) Employers should look at innovative ways to attract/keep employees. Liberty County works on a special program with the School Board to develop paramedics.

- g) The Liberty County Development Authority is advertising for a Workforce Development Coordinator to be the focus of looking at issues and opportunities in Liberty County. This person could also be a point of contact for employers wanting to get assistance.
- h) Get parents more involved in youth development; support the Parent University, focus on elementary students, work with kids at churches, support job coaches and graduation coaches.
- i) Support the “Work First” Program – sponsored by GA Power and state funds. Partnership with Savannah Tech to create work opportunities for young people.
- j) Need to increase the work ethic of youth
- k) Re-establish the summer work program; impediments are lack of funding (due to the slow economy) and additional costs for liability insurance. Work with Ft. Stewart for summer job opportunities.
- l) We are not getting local people to apply for jobs and stay with them. We are getting military dependents who may work for a few months, then return “home” to another community.
- m) Not enough qualified local people for skilled job demands
- n) Focus on marketing strategies, on what makes the County special. We need more promotion of Liberty County. Some programs are underway now, including the Sister Cities Program with cities in China (partnering with Savannah and Brunswick).
- o) “Liberty County” magazine is a good idea. Perhaps the Development Authority can take the lead on this.
- p) Vocational training is needed in masonry, welding, sheet metal fabrication, and plumbing for Liberty County.
- q) There is a \$ 1 billion construction program planned for Ft. Stewart that is coming up. People with construction skills will be needed for this effort.
- r) Need more apprentice-level local employees is very difficult in Liberty County.
- s) Too many job applicants fail the drug test
- t) Create a program for employers to talk with students directly about jobs; coordinate with Savannah Tech.
- u) Savannah Tech is willing to put counselors in schools to assist. Savannah Tech also will do customer service training.
- v) In workforce development efforts, we tend to focus on the large employers, like Target. However, there are also workforce needs and opportunities with small companies who would be willing to help. We need a mechanism to work with those, too.
- w) We should work with the Department of Labor to focus and redirect older workers into some of these areas with job opportunities.
- x) Liberty County is no longer just a place for small independent businesses.
- y) Through the National Restaurant Association, there is a program to train and certify food service workers (to increase their skills from fast food restaurants to quality restaurants).

- z) We need to create a Construction Industry Trade Council to partner with the School Board, Savannah Tech, and the construction industry in Liberty County.
- aa) We need better ways for kids to learn about all types of jobs and industries.
- bb) We need to find out which services that people are leaving Liberty County for (i.e. health care, shopping, etc.)
- cc) Our priority should be developing our workforce. The technical schools, public schools, and Chamber of Commerce should be partnering.
- dd) Need to improve work ethic with interview skills, student internships, and dress codes.
- ee) The Chamber just received the “Entrepreneur-Friendly” designation and will be doing a survey soon about schools, training, etc.
- ff) Liberty County is working with the Chamber to apply for the Governor’s Work Ready Initiative this year. It tests people for jobs and certifies employers. It also focuses on raising the high school graduation rate. It is designed to bring the leadership of communities together (i.e. School Board, Chamber, etc.). This program is expected to attract new businesses and industry to Liberty County.
- gg) Georgia Power needs trained workers for the Liberty County area.
- hh) We need to find incentives to keep workers in jobs longer in Liberty County.
- ii) We are losing workers “in the middle” (not young and not old).
- jj) Savannah Tech operated a very successful Warehouse/Distribution Training Program. Seven of the 12 students graduated; however, it is difficult to identify/locate students for this program.
- kk) There are deficiencies in skills. About 30-35% of high school students entering college need learning support services.
- ll) Our top priority should be to maximize our potential for economic development at our I-95 interchanges. We need more retail in these areas, more quality restaurants, and possibly some hotels. We also need a chain grocery in this area.
- mm) We need an organization to take the lead to approach national companies to locate in Liberty County. National companies have a “profile” for their business and the demographics for Hinesville/Liberty County do not tell the complete story. We need to talk more about the benefits of the County (i.e. consolidated planning, etc.). The LCPC is doing a Sector Plan for the area now. We need to take the plan and package it to “sell” the area.
- nn) We need an organization to take the lead to approach national companies to locate in Liberty County. National companies have a “profile” for their business and the demographics for Hinesville/Liberty County do not tell the complete story. We need to talk more about the benefits of the County (i.e. consolidated planning, etc.). The LCPC is doing a Sector Plan for the area now. We need to take the plan and package it to “sell” the area.
- oo) The County, Chamber, and Development Authority are all about what is “good” for Liberty County, but the development community will recruit on their own. We need to find the development that is good for Liberty County.

- pp) Liberty County is getting close to being able to be “choosy” about development.
- qq) The Chamber has been designated as “Entrepreneur-Friendly”. This has resources attached to it.
- rr) The Work Force Ready Program is very important and will attract the right type of development. The program will certify workers and employers and will help with raising the number of high school graduates in Liberty County.
- ss) The County is finishing up its Master Fire Plan which will be critical to attracting large businesses.
- tt) The Development Authority is advertising for a Workforce Development Coordinator.
- uu) Should the LCPC be reviewing its staffing needs? We keep giving it more responsibilities? Do they have the resources they need to do all that we are giving them? Do they have enough structure to accomplish what the public wants?
- vv) The Regional Bank has had good success with summer jobs. People starting in these jobs have continued on as permanent employees.
- ww) The problem with summer jobs is that the employee may not get enough depth of training to be qualified.
- xx) There are problems with hiring young people due to additional liability.
- yy) The Chamber is working on a countywide customer service training program. Employers should help with this too to reinforce it. This would help businesses understand how their company is perceived. “Everyone is a concierge.”
- zz) Market Liberty County by improving government web pages; the Convention and Visitors Bureau is launching a new website.
- aaa) Improve the appearance of Liberty County, particularly through residential code enforcement, in order to bring more visitors.

3) Planning and Engineering

- a) Subdivision Ordinances need to be consistent across the County and enforced
- b) LCPC is a very valuable entity; gives us focus in planning for Liberty County.
- c) Hinesville and Liberty County handle the code enforcement, building inspection, flood hazard, and soil erosion responsibilities similar to street maintenance responsibilities. Again, a fairness or “double taxation” issue exists due to citizens of Hinesville or the County paying for services in areas that do not financially contribute to them. Lack of funding at the city level is the reason for this.
- d) There have been communications problems in the past between the development community and LCPC. The same rules need to be in place for everyone.
- e) In building inspection and code enforcement, there needs to be more consistency and communication.
- f) We are doing well in soil erosion/flood hazard mitigation and we are working to improve in these areas.
- g) The planning, zoning, and engineering departments are working well.

- h) The County (including Fire Department and Animal Control) and City work on code enforcement, but we may be understaffed in this area.

4) Water, Wastewater & Stormwater

- a) Need to maintain local control of systems, either through a co-op; a consolidated Liberty County Water and Sewer Authority; or a “Council of Governments” type of group. The elected authority option could allow the County to bond and incur debt to develop the systems.
- b) Develop a working committee to explore options for providing quality water service (healthy water) to unincorporated Liberty County.
- c) Need to show strong local management of water system, so that the State will not have an opportunity or need to manage the local water resources.
- d) Local municipalities are concerned about the cost of tapping into the public water system; but it is cheaper to tap into the public water system than to dig a new well.
- e) Support the Coastal Georgia Comp Plan’s recommendation to encourage the reduction of septic systems
- f) The County Health Department will play a role in testing wells and water for contamination.
- g) The LCPC should develop a local ordinance regarding stormwater infrastructure and system.

5) Natural and Recreational Resources

- a) Explore public access to salt and freshwater for fishing and recreation
- b) Identify available greenspaces and look for opportunities to acquire them.
- c) The Army Community Trust is working with the City of Hinesville, Ft. Stewart, and the County to undertake a greenspace inventory which will be coordinated with other recreational planning efforts and the Recreation Board.
- d) Consider land banking, whereby local governments can acquire properties (from willing sellers, liens, etc.) to be used for preservation or public purposes.
- e) Coordinate planning for natural and recreational resources through the LCPC.

6) Historic and Cultural Resources

- a) Need more organization of historic resources in Liberty County; the new Convention and Visitors Bureau need a knowledge base of what to promote in Liberty County.
- b) Coordinate planning for historic resources through the LCPC.

7) Intergovernmental Coordination

- a) Need better coordination of municipal services, with funding issues taken into consideration.
- b) Emergency management is working well, but needs better communication on incidents. Also needs to regularly test disaster plans.

- c) Emergency medical services needs more available personnel, better coordination with fire services (requires a full time position), education for citizens, new staff at all locations, and Countywide service.
- d) Police services need to better coordinate within the County and need better cooperation with School Board. Should implement a Drug Court.
- e) Need more recreational opportunities and expanded services for youth, as there are a lot of youth within the County. Need more local festivals, a Civic Center/Conference Center, and a campaign and study committee to determine if citizens want these services.
- f) Solid waste services needs more resources for enforcement; more education on proper waste disposal; and more emphasis on recycling.
- g) Animal control needs more facilities, more coordination with Ft. Stewart regarding abandoned pets, and more enforcement of leash laws.
- h) The Azalea Street project is very positive; similar projects should be done in other areas of the County.
- i) Housing rehabilitation should expand throughout the County. Need a program for historic preservation. Need better coordination of building codes between Liberty County and municipalities.
- j) Mental health services will be more needed as more soldiers return to Ft. Stewart. Need to expand facilities and services. Law enforcement training is needed as a part of this.
- k) Need a Domestic Violence Center
- l) Need a green building program
- m) Need to increase public awareness of handicapped accessibility issues

A.3 Community Workshop – City of Flemington

The following information presents a summary of the discussion held at a series of Community Workshops held in early 2008.

A) Flemington’s Vision for the Future – a consensus of what the community should strive to be:

VISION - To be a City which promotes a wholesome, progressive environment, reflecting the traditional values of our heritage while embracing a dynamic vision of our future.

B) Community “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats” (SWOT) – a discussion and identification of community SWOTs

a) Strengths

- Proximity to Fort Stewart and the new joint airfield at Mid Coast
- Historical feel, quality of life
- Good “quality of life”
- Fraser properties future development

b) Weaknesses

- No central place or focal point, nor identifiable City center
- No city welcome center
- Dependant on Hinesville for utilities and some street maintenance
- Limited staff resources in Flemington
- SPLOST is for capital improvements only, not for maintenance
- Revenues centered around hotel tax
- Too close to Fort Stewart

c) Opportunities

- US 84 corridor recommendations will help to identify Flemington
- Roundabout recommended as a part of US 84 improvements would provide a “sense of place” to travelers
- Installation of special City signs are a good opportunity for information
- Historic church is an identifiable landmark
- Opportunity for visual distinction and different landscapes
- Create a cultural center or welcome center
- Opportunity for a tea and lunch establishment
- Capitalize on the history of the City
- Opportunity for hotels
- WAAF or the MidCoast Regional Airport

d) Threats

- Proximity to Fort Stewart
- Widening of Old Sunbury Road, if the Loop is not constructed soon
- Hinesville controls water and sewer taps, which could limit desired growth opportunities
- Development of the Fraser plan may create a new center near the city limits and compete with any attempt to create a center around or near the current City Hall

C) Community Issues – a consensus of the major issues that Flemington should address in the future

1) Economic Development

- Taxing issues
- Should Flemington start to levy property taxes? The City expects to levy property tax to supplement funding at some point in the future.
- How to fund new infrastructure improvements

2) Infrastructure

- Maintenance of streets, sidewalks and roads
- Water and sewer systems' infrastructure maintenance and capital costs
- Replacement of existing infrastructure
- Utility tap-in fees
- Drainage issues; as growth happens, septic tanks should be limited.
- Water and sewer service rates in Flemington are 1.5 times the rate charged to Hinesville residents
- For maintaining meters, lines, and services – the question is, should the City enter into the water and sewer business, or should the City continue to buy services from Hinesville?
- Service delivery – Countywide fire dept., sewer authority, etc.
- Ensure that our ordinances require that development provide and build infrastructure.
- Impact fees may be required to provide future services.

3) Growth Management

- Proper regulation on new development

4) Government Services

- Flemington's provision of fire protection - one idea is to institute a City property tax or fee to fund fire protection services.
- At one point in time, Flemington will need to address the issue of becoming a fully fledged independent city.
- Trash pick-up
- User fees for select services

- Economy of scale with service delivery –a Countywide authority may be the best method for implementation.
- Hotel tax to pay for transit

D) Guiding Principles – statements of principles or policies that the City of Flemington will follow to address each issue and achieve the vision

- 1) Require every new development to tie into the water and sewer system.

E) Implementation Strategies – specific strategies that will be enacted to implement the guiding principles

- 1) Prison labor
- 2) Use tourism revenue to hire a landscaping company

A.4 Community Workshops – City of Gum Branch

The following information presents a summary of the discussion held at a series of Community Workshops held in early 2008.

A) Gum Branch’s Vision for the Future – a consensus of what the community should strive to be:

VISION - To remain a rural community, preserving and protecting our unique cultural heritage and life style, while encouraging quality growth that will enhance and maintain our sense of community.

B) Community “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats” (SWOT) – a discussion and identification of community SWOTs

a) Strengths

- Strong local community base and familiarity with one another
- Strong cultural heritage
- Infrastructure (water and sewer) will be in place adjacent to Gum Branch, and Hinesville has the potential for capacity expansion into our area.
- Beautiful, scenic rural community, especially along SR 196
- Potential exists in the undeveloped areas
- Potential to extend boundaries through annexation
- Proximity to Independence and the City of Hinesville
- Good soil and higher elevations than most of the County

b) Weaknesses

- Gum Branch appears vacant with no defined center.
- No local revenue stream
- Cannot retain younger population; it is difficult for smaller cities to retain skilled, talented youth.
- Goods and services are too far away.
- Utilities are nearby, but the Gum Branch area is not included in the coverage.

b) Opportunities

- Proximity to Independence and the City of Hinesville
- Create a small rural business center in Gum Branch. This will spur economic growth and provide jobs for local residents.
- Opportunities along SR 196
- The City has a good fire department with a favorable ISO rating; Gum Branch should keep this certification current.
- Establish rural minifarms, instead of losing agriculture to outside communities.
- Sales taxes from the new businesses

- Need to create events to bring people in – this will generate interest in the Gum Branch community.

d) Threats

- Widening of SR 196
- Independence and the City of Hinesville services, as well as development along Dairy Road and other locations in Independence, may impact the rural character of the area.
- No growth in the City; new residents are necessary for growing business opportunities.

C) Guiding Principles – statements of principles or policies that the City of Gum Branch will follow to address each issue and achieve the vision

- a) Village Center: To create a village center that provides the opportunities for residents, workers and visitors to obtain services and goods.
- b) Infrastructure: Continue to remain a rural community with services provided by each individual. However, should individual property owners desire water and sewer services from the City of Hinesville; that should be explored.
- c) Cultural and Historic: Establish a civic center within Gum Branch that will provide a community gathering place for residents and visitors.
- d) Growth Management: Encourage lower density development in keeping with the historic patterns of small village type development and rural communities
- e) Government Services: Provide quality service to all our citizens while maintain our rural character.

D) Implementation Strategies – specific strategies that will be enacted to implement the guiding principles

1) Village Center

- a) Develop a plan to create a village center and work with local businesses to locate small shops and stores in the village center.

2) Infrastructure

- a) Explore opportunities for water and sewer service from the City of Hinesville as requested.

3) Cultural and Historic Resources

- a) Promote and support local and cultural events and festivals.

4) Growth Management

- a) Consider the creation overlay districts along SR 196 in Gum Branch.
- b) Hold design charettes with local citizens to provide input into overlays and design standards.

5) Government Services

- a) Carefully pursue either annexation of, or the creation and adoption of a joint master land use development plan with Liberty County, of the areas north and west that include Dairy Road and south toward Rye Patch Road.
- b) Hold periodic Town hall meetings – state of community sessions to gain input on issues.
- c) Locally approve the “Service Delivery” area for water and sewer that may be provided by the City of Hinesville.

E) Other Noteworthy Items

Gum Branch’s overall goal is to remain a predominately rural community with some civic amenities and services at some point in the future.

A.5 Community Workshops – City of Hinesville

The following information presents a summary of the discussion held at a series of Community Workshops held in early 2008.

A) Hinesville’s Vision for the Future – a consensus of what the community should strive to be:

VISION - To be the “southern living” community of choice in Coastal Georgia for a day or a lifetime.

B) Community Issues – a consensus of the major issues that Hinesville should address in the future

1) Transportation

- Traffic Flow
- Lack of both urban and rural public transportation
- Hinesville Bypass
- Funding and funding sources
- Future Planning
- Regional Coordination
- Passenger rail connection from Midway to Savannah
- In-depth signalization study
- State-of-the-art access management for the County’s rural areas
- Improved mobility for all citizens, especially for health care related issues

2) Facilities and Services

- Provision and service delivery of potable water
- Increase of sewer facilities
- Increase in and improvement of healthcare facilities
- Lack of a civic center
- Increase the number of quality and specialty shopping and restaurants
- Increase the number of regional parks and marinas
- Expand the existing hospital
- Provide for a more equal distribution of healthcare related services
- Provide for more public libraries
- Coordinate growth with the provision of public facilities and services

3) Land Use

- Lack of development controls
- Lack of design requirements
- Lack of regulation enforcement
- Reduce the number of blighted areas
- Stormwater planning and abatement
- Preservation of greenspace

- Lack of planning for future schools
- Growth occurring at a rate faster than can be planned for
- Lack of smart growth principles

4) Housing

- Increased need for senior housing with amenities appropriate to that housing group
- Lack of senior assisted and special needs housing
- Lack of amenities for persons who are mobility challenged
- Need for more housing diversity with regard to income levels
- Need to increase tax base by producing more upper income housing
- Need to identify school locations to support proposed residential development
- Consider transit in the design and development of residential developments

5) Historic and Cultural Resources

- Lack of cultural venues
- Lack of funding and regulatory tools for identification and preservation
- Shorten the time it takes to identify and protect these resources
- Increase the strength of regulations that preserve the City's heritage
- Lack luster marketing of historic resources and heritage
- Promote the Cultural and Historic Resource Committee as the entity charged with leading this effort
- Inadequate documentation of historic African-American sites
- Inadequate documentation of undocumented historic cemeteries

6) Natural Resources

- Need for a cohesive water cycle regulation and protection
- Deplorable litter problem
- Need more parklands
- Poor greenspace regulations
- Less than adequate protection of virgin forests and live oaks

7) Economic Development

- Need for a corporate image
- Need for water access to promote tourism
- Civic and performing arts center
- Need to increase skilled workforce
- Upper scale retail and restaurants
- Need to reverse the overall perception of the region
- Inadequate transportation infrastructure
- Inadequate per capita income
- Increase in gang activity

C) Guiding Principles – statements of principles or policies that the City of Hinesville will follow to address each issue and achieve the vision

- 1) Mixed Use Town Center: Create a mixed use town center in downtown Hinesville.
- 2) Downtown Beautification: Promote redevelopment and beautification in the downtown area.
- 3) Greenspace/Conservation: Promote greenspace and environmentally responsible development.
- 4) Economic Development: Expand the existing base of retail goods and services to the broadest practical extent.
- 5) Housing: Encourage a diverse housing inventory which meets housing demands for all socio-economic groups.
- 6) Facilities and Services: Promote access to full service healthcare to all.
- 7) Land Use and Development: Promote infill development.
- 8) Quality of Life: Promote a cleaner, safer community.
- 9) Tourism: Promote Hinesville as a destination city.

D) Implementation Strategies – specific strategies that will be enacted to implement the guiding principles

1) Mixed Use Town Center

- a) Actively recruit restaurants and retail developments in the downtown area.
- b) Support DDA efforts, including those to develop a plan and recommend priorities for land assembly and acquisition

2) Downtown Beautification

- a) Market the incentive package that is already in place.
- b) Target the existing stakeholders that are already in the downtown area.
- c) Educate the real estate and development community of the financial incentives available.

3) Greenspace/Conservation

- a) Develop and implement a greenspace plan.
- b) Require future residential developments to set aside useable, open community greenspace.
- c) Adopt and incorporate our current development standard regulations (the State Smart Growth guidelines).

4) Housing

- a) Adopt a moratorium on rezoning any property below R-2 unless the developer guarantees, through zoning and/or restrictive covenants, that larger than minimum- sized houses will be built.
- b) Use the housing authority or create our own non-profit to be approved by DCA.
- c) Develop a revolving loan program for down payment assistance.

5) Facilities and Services

- a) Support diversity.
- b) Support the Liberty County Planning Board to develop a combined health care plan and articulate the plan.

6) Land Use and Development

- a) Target specific areas to bring them up to standards (stormwater, sidewalks, streets, etc.).
- b) Allow flexibility in development standards while maintaining the character of the neighborhood.
- c) Consider establishing a Community Input Character Review Development Committee (for zoning and planned developments).

7) Quality of Life

- a) Develop a plan for the expansion of police, fire dept., and EMS services.
- b) Encourage a neighborhood-based policing strategy and visual police presence throughout our City.
- c) Involve and engage the corporate business community into the solution of the problem.
- d) Write a Single Family Ordinance to define a single family.
- e) Hire additional Code Enforcement Officer(s).
- f) Promote a Yard of the Month program.
- g) Implement the Frank Cochran Corridor landscape plan.

8) Tourism

- a) Promote and encourage the business community to interact with the public in customer service.
- b) Market our community; hire a Public Information Director.
- c) Develop a plan with the Chamber of Commerce and the DDA to create a Downtown Business Roundtable.
- d) Consider creating a City of Hinesville Development Authority (in addition to the DDA).

A.6 Community Workshops – City of Riceboro

The following information presents a summary of the discussion held at a series of Community Workshops held in early 2008.

A) Riceboro’s Vision for the Future – a consensus of what the community should strive to be:

VISION - To be a vibrant “City of Pride” that preserves, enhances and protects and provides a gateway to our rich and diverse cultural and historical backgrounds, while encouraging, but managing, quality growth that conveys a “sense of community” for all people that work, visit or reside with us.

B) Community “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats” (SWOT) – a discussion and identification of community SWOTs

a) Strengths

- Strong community base and familiarity with one another
- There is infrastructure in place and the potential for capacity expansion at a low cost.
- Beautiful, scenic rural community, especially along SR 119 and with regards to the tree canopy
- Potential exists in the undeveloped area.
- Prime geographic location and proximity to major transportation corridors (i.e., I-95, seaports, railroads)
- There is the potential to extend the City boundaries through annexation, along with water and sewer services.
- Proximity to the marshes and rivers
- The City can annex land to I-95, so that development constructed off the interstate highway will benefit Riceboro.
- There are cultural and historical ties to the past; the City is the gateway to Gullah Geechee sites and culture.
- National Heritage Gullah Geechee corridor
- Riceboro festival
- One landowner owns a great deal of land in the City

b) Weaknesses

- Riceboro looks too vacant and spread out.
- There is no revenue stream in the City; there could be a revenue stream for commercial and residential tax bases. Currently, the County administers taxes.
- There is one large land owner, and the land is at the mercy of that particular land owner. None of the landowners live outside the City limits.
- The Interstate company is located outside of the City, and it does not want to relocate within the City because of taxes. Although some residents

have been employed at Interstate, the company and the City have a strained relationship. The City should engage Interstate more, to see how both parties could benefit from one another.

c) Opportunities

- Gullah Geechee culture
- Significance of SR 119 as a historic by-way
- East Coast Greenway (a national bike route) is coming into the area.
- Trailhead located in Riceboro
- Eco-tourism
- Proximity to I-95 and the opportunity to annex land close to I-95
- Tourism opportunities regarding historic, cultural, and natural resources.
- The Leconte-Woodmanston and its two-mile trail and accompanying chapel generate tourism.
- Downtown Riceboro can be strengthened by expanding retail, hotel, and bed & breakfast establishments, and building off of historic and cultural resources.
- The City can serve as a small business incubator center. There are economic growth opportunities to provide jobs/opportunities to local people. It can emulate “the egg” training and small business startup (from New Orleans). The City can provide startup assistance for small businesses. Faith-based organizations can also benefit from the assistance. The City can establish a community center to capitalize on the increased traffic in the area. Businesses may be built off of the cultural heritage of the area.
- Tour program and tour guides to tell the City’s story, as well as buses, lodging and food establishments, a new museum, and a trailhead related to the area’s culture
- Riceboro is the gateway to the Gullah Geechee culture
- Market the existing resources such as the Midway Museum, Dorchester School, sites related to the Civil Rights Movement, National Landmarks, Fort Morris, Fort Stewart, and the fact that two signers of the Declaration of Independence are from Liberty County. In addition, the Sierra Club founder has ties to the area.
- Build off of the historical gateway concept in downtown Riceboro. A box plant and small stores once existed, but these have now left the community. The slow pace of traffic in this area is an opportunity.
- There is an opportunity to put an island along the US 17 corridor.
- Village and cottage industry (tourism based, sandwich shops, bookstore, St. Simons)
- Create an overlay area to build upon the village atmosphere and architecture that reflects the history of the area.
- Strengthen the City’s relationship with the Interstate company
- The City has a good fire department; keep its favorable ISO rating current.

- To bring the industrial community into the city, partnerships can be struck so that those industries want to become involved in the City as good corporate partners. Use these relationships to build an escape route on Peter King Road and participate in other emergency preparedness activities.
- Establish rural minifarms, instead of losing agriculture to outside communities.
- Sales taxes from the new businesses
- Need to create events to bring people in and generate demand.
- Cannot retain younger population; it is difficult for smaller cities to retain skilled, talented youth.
- Services are too far away.
- Utilities are in the City, but some areas are not in the coverage.

d) Threats

- Widening of US 17
- There are already chemical companies here; don't want the City to look too urban.
- Development could destroy the rural character of the area.
- There is the threat of chemicals that could be released into the air.
- Maintenance of rural character
- Industry may buy developable land in one primary land area, in the developable area of Riceboro.
- Trailers and trailer parks coming into the community.
- Chemtall could buy all the land they want and control the development of the land.
- There is a strained relationship between the primary landowner in the area and the City; there is an issue regarding whether the City or the County has the authority to permit the construction of a tower.
- Needs to be better communication between local governments and departments. The City needs to be aware when an application is given to the LCPC; there should be greater feedback between the agencies.
- There is no growth in the City; it used to have two to three grocery stores, a movie theatre, and a hardware store. Need an increased resident base to draw more businesses, such as a grocery store.
- Health care facilities are lacking.
- The former school is not active anymore, and there are no vibrant educational facilities.
- No library in the City

C) Guiding Principles – statements of principles or policies that the City of Riceboro will follow to address each issue and achieve the vision

- 1) Town Center: To restore a vibrant town center that provides the opportunities for workers, visitors, and residents to obtain services and goods.

- 2) Infrastructure: Provide city water and sewer services to all residents of the City of Riceboro, and carefully expand services to the north, east, and south to serve those contiguous areas such as Hampton Island and the areas along I-95, as well as the south Newport interchange area.
- 3) Cultural and Historic: Re-establish the relationship of the town to its natural resource based economy and its rich history as a cultural center for the community and a gateway for the Geechee region.
- 4) Growth Management: Encourage lower density development in keeping with the historic patterns of small village type development and rural communities.
- 5) Government Services: Provide quality service to all citizens of Riceboro.

D) Implementation Strategies – specific strategies that will be enacted to implement the guiding principles

1) Town Center

- a) Create a public – private partnership with existing industries to promote and encourage development in the town center.

2) Infrastructure

- a) Explore grant opportunities for water and sewer expansion.

3) Cultural and Historic

- a) Support, enhance and coordinate with Leconte-Woodmanston site educational programs.
- b) Promote and support historic and cultural events and festivals.

4) Growth Management

- a) Create an overlay district(s) in Riceboro.
- b) Explore student assistance to help in architecture design standards.
- c) Hold Design charrette(s) to provide input into overlays and design standards.
- d) Basic aesthetic standards for housing (housing codes).

5) Government Services

- a) Pursue annexation of the area of US 17/I-95.
- b) Hold periodic Town hall meetings – state of community sessions to gain input on issues.
- c) Re-establish an elementary school in the area.
- d) The City of Riceboro, Interstate and Chemtall should combine to provide services to employees and residents outside of the boundaries of the two industries.

The Cities of Allenhurst, Walthourville, and Midway participated in the 2007 and 2008 Liberty County Planning Workshops, and their input was noted. In addition, representatives from these Cities have met informally with the LCPC and have provided valuable input regarding the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan. The information collected and analyzed for Midway in the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan was based

on the Historic Midway Master Plan, which was developed through a series of workshops and public meetings. In addition, a variety of other studies were referenced for analysis of the above-named Cities, as well as all municipalities, in the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan; these include the US 84 Comprehensive Corridor Study and the Coastal Georgia Comprehensive Plan.

A.7 Public Information Meeting – May 13, 2008

A Public Information Meeting was held on May 13, 2008 at the Midway Civic Center to give the public the opportunity to review the Draft Community Assessment and the Draft Participation Plan.

Meeting Format

There were five “stations” for the meeting attendees to visit:

- 1) *Overview Presentation:* In PowerPoint format, attendees viewed a looping presentation that gave a general overview of the Comprehensive Plan, a sample of the information in the Community Assessment and Participation Plan, and key dates for upcoming Comprehensive Plan activities.
- 2) *Maps:* A series of large maps was available for public viewing; these included a map of Future Character Areas as well as maps displaying agricultural land, wetlands, population 65 and older, and an existing land use map. These represented a sample of the maps available in the full Community Assessment document.
- 3) *Poster Exercise:* At this station, attendees were given the opportunity to provide feedback on four questions regarding the community:
 - a) What are the strengths of our community?
 - b) What are the needs of our community?
 - c) What aspects of the community should be preserved?
 - d) What are the critical issues facing our community?
- 4) *Community Choices Survey:* Attendees participated in a visual preference survey for the community; a PowerPoint presentation presented a series of 80 images, and attendees were asked to rate the images according to how desirable they were to the viewers. A rating of 1 corresponded to least desirable, while a rating of 8 corresponded to most desirable.
- 5) *Guiding the Future Survey:* Attendees were asked to take a written survey asking whether they agreed, disagreed, or were unsure regarding a series of statements on what the community values, existing conditions in the community, and the needs of the community.

Results of the Poster Exercise

Below is a summary of comments received during the Poster Exercise at the Public Information Meeting.

- 1) What Are the Needs of our Community?
 - More recreational opportunities
 - Identification of the cultural and historic landmarks in the County
 - Road improvements / maintenance
 - Pave streets in residential areas
 - More street lighting
 - Improve appearance of landscapes and main corridors, such as through Midway
 - For the elderly, provide more housing assistance and transit options

- Expansion of wastewater plant
- A state university in Liberty County
- More services, such as grocery stores, farmers markets, etc.

2) What Are the Strengths of our Community?

- Historic significance and attractions
- Tourism opportunities
- Minimal traffic problems
- Increasing number of job availability for residents
- A close-knitted community where people know each other

3) Which Aspects of the Community Should Be Preserved?

- Historic properties
- Rural character and greenspace
- A small town, cooperative atmosphere
- Interactive and group concern for the community and residents

4) What Are the Critical Issues Facing our Community?

- Impending growth
- Traffic issues; need for more transportation options
- Increasing crime
- Provision of “essential services”, such as efficient emergency services
- Opportunities for youth recreation
- Inadequate supply of jobs vs. demand for jobs
- Need more skilled workers to boost economic development
- Poor community image

Results of the Community Choices Survey

As mentioned above, the meeting attendees participated in the Community Choices Survey, a visual preference survey for the community. Five laptop computers were set up with the looping presentation, and participants rated a series of 80 images from 1 to 8, or least desirable to most desirable.

Of the 80 images, 26 received an average rating of 6.0 or higher. Of these 26 images, the most highly rated image received a score of 7.6. The second most highly rated image received a score of 7.1. The third most highly rated image received a score of 7.0.



Rating: 7.6



Rating: 7.1



Rating: 7.0

Two images scored received an average score below 3.0, indicating that these were the least desirable images for the community. The image with the lowest rating received an average score of 1.7. The image with the second lowest rating received an average score of 2.9.



Rating: 1.7



Rating: 2.9

The results of the Community Choices Survey indicate that Liberty County residents value the community's natural resources and more rural lifestyle. In addition, residents

take pride in their surroundings, and find dilapidated structures, which are present in some areas of the County, undesirable. These results also suggest that the typical suburban development pattern of large parking lots and strip malls is displeasing to residents, indicating that residents may be more interested in pedestrian-scaled village types of retail development.

Attendance and Feedback

According to the sign-in sheet, 13 people attended the Public Information Meeting. It is possible, however, that some attendees bypassed the sign-in table, and that there was greater attendance than is recorded.

Feedback received from some of the attendees indicated that the meeting was advertised through publications and notices with meeting times from 4:00 to 6:00 pm, but neglected to mention that the meeting was an open house; thus, those who couldn't arrive at the meeting by 4:00 pm assumed that to arrive afterwards, they would be "late" for the meeting. This factor may have reduced attendance.

The people who did attend the meeting, however, provided valuable feedback on the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan, and enjoyed the Public Information Meeting. According to a Meeting Evaluation form that most attendees completed, attendees found the meeting to be informative and enjoyed the layout and information presented at the stations. They indicated that the interactive meeting format was much more enjoyable than a one-sided presentation or lecture. The variety of stations allowed attendees to study the elements of the information at their own pace, and speak one-on-one with staff regarding questions and comments.

Photos



Overview Presentation



Maps Display



Poster Exercise



Community Choices Survey

A.8 Public Information Meeting – June 12, 2008

A Public Information Meeting was held on June 12, 2008 at the Midway Civic Center to give the public the opportunity to review the information in the Draft Community Agenda.

Meeting Format

There were twelve “stations” for the meeting attendees to visit:

- 1) *Feedback Received from Previous Public Meeting:* At this station, attendees could learn about the feedback received at the previous Public Information Meeting, particularly regarding the results of the Poster Exercise, the Community Choices Survey, and the Guiding the Future Survey. A summary of the exercises and surveys were displayed on large posters.
- 2) *Overview Presentation:* In PowerPoint format, attendees viewed a looping presentation that gave a general overview of the Comprehensive Plan, a sample of the information in the Community Agenda, and key dates for upcoming Comprehensive Plan activities.
- 3) *Information for Each Municipality:* The third through the tenth stations featured information developed for the municipalities in the Community Agenda, in a large poster format. Each station displayed information for one municipality (Liberty County, Allenhurst, Flemington, Gum Branch, Hinesville, Midway, Riceboro, and Walthourville). The information displayed included the Future Development Map, Issues and Opportunities, Short Term Work Program, and Long Term Goals and Initiatives. There was also a flip chart at each station so that the public could write any comments about the information displayed. Each station also featured a Land Use Exercise. Participants placed different colored stickers, each representing different land uses, on the Future Development Map to indicate what future land uses they would like to see in their area of interest. Using different-colored stickers that represented a variety of land uses. This exercise helped the LCPC gain insight into the types of land uses desired by the community and will serve as input for a Future Land Use Map.
- 4) *Liberty County Maps:* At the eleventh station were large maps of Existing Land Use, Zoning, and Aerial Photography with Developments for attendees to view. These were plotted by the LCPC.
- 5) *Documents for Review:* At the last station, attendees could view the Draft Comprehensive Plan, including the Community Agenda, Community Participation Plan, and Community Agenda, on one of four laptop computers. There was also a form for the public to request a CD of these documents mailed to them. In addition, a flip chart with General Comments was placed at this station so that attendees could comment on general aspects of the Comprehensive Plan or the planning process.

Feedback Received

Below is a summary of comments received, if any, from each municipality's station.

A) Liberty County

- Issue: Water service for all houses in the County, including houses in existing communities

B) City of Riceboro

- Establish a program to assist in continually improving personal residences and historic residences.

C) City of Midway

- Litter is an issue – need pride and ownership in the community.
- Midway needs a theme and center to the City.

Attendance and Feedback

Based on the feedback regarding the meeting notices and advertisements from the first meeting, this public meeting was advertised as an open house. The local newspaper also wrote an article regarding the upcoming meeting. According to the sign-in sheet, 5 people attended the Public Information Meeting. The low rate of attendance may be attributed to many factors, including:

- The summer months typically see lower attendance at public meetings, as families may be on vacation.
- The LCPC has done an excellent job engaging the local governments and public in the planning process, such through retreats, workshops, other involvement efforts, and informal discussions. Because of this extensive input throughout the process, there is a very high confidence level regarding the plan results.

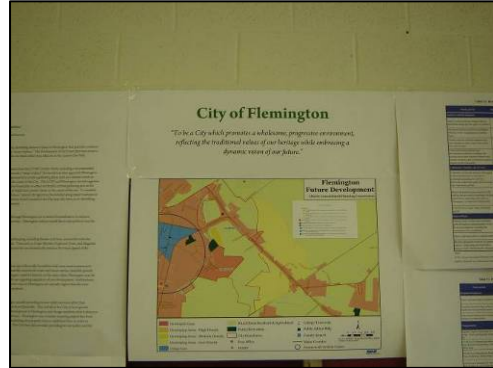
According to a Meeting Evaluation form that most attendees completed, attendees found the meeting to be informative. They enjoyed the displays presented and indicated that the staff was very helpful in answering questions. Attendees liked the format of the meeting and the ability to absorb the information presented at their own pace.

Following the meeting, the posted information remained in the Midway Civic Center for residents and interested parties to view. It is anticipated that the information will be available through the middle of July.

Photos



City of Midway Station



City of Flemington Station



City of Hinesville Station



Liberty County Maps

A.9 Public Hearings – May 20, 2008 & June 17, 2008

A public hearing was held at the monthly LCPC meeting on May 20, 2008 to receive input on the information presented in the Draft Community Assessment and Draft Community Participation Plan. No comments were received.

A second public hearing was held at the monthly LCPC meeting on June 17, 2008 to receive input on the information presented in the Draft Community Agenda. No official comments were received, but LCPC Chairman Don Hartley commended the project team for doing an excellent job in the development of the Consolidated Comprehensive Plan and in the opportunities provided for public input.