



**City of Covington  
2006-2028 Comprehensive Plan Update:  
Community Participation Program**

**September 5, 2006**

*With DCA comments addressed*



# Table of Contents



<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Purpose.....	1
1.2	Scope .....	1
1.3	Requirements for Success .....	1
<b>2</b>	<b>Identification of Stakeholders .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Identification of Participation Techniques .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1	Initial Public Hearings.....	8
3.2	Visioning Workshops.....	8
3.3	Citizen Roundtable.....	9
3.4	Strategic Framework Workshop .....	9
3.5	Public Hearing for Plan Transmittal.....	9
3.6	Project Webpage.....	10
3.7	Outreach .....	10
<b>4</b>	<b>Schedule for Completion of the Community Agenda .....</b>	<b>11</b>

# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 Purpose

One of the best ways to strengthen communities is to create opportunities for citizens to work collaboratively on the challenges that shape their community. Accomplishing this requires political leadership, citizen education, and active involvement. A successful comprehensive plan begins with a process of thinking about and visualizing the future. It is about carrying on a dialogue with the community concerning its vision for evolving and growing. This Community Participation Program was crafted with these principles in mind and establishes a two-way communication between local citizens and their government officials, with the overall goal of better decisions supported by the public.

## 1.2 Scope

The City of Covington (City) is required by state law to update its Comprehensive Plan by February 28, 2008. As prescribed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the update of the Comprehensive Plan will follow the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005.

## 1.3 Requirements for Success

Experience in public involvement has shown that lasting solutions are best identified when all segments of a community – residents, elected officials, educators, the business community, and civic organizations – are brought together in a spirit of cooperation. A collaborative approach to community engagement is not an opportunity, but a necessity. Community engagement and involvement is done for three reasons:

- To educate the public and increase their awareness of community issues.
- To capture the knowledge and preferences of the community residents and leaders.
- To mobilize support and acceptance of the plan.

Communities that prosper do so because people work together to improve the quality of life. An effective public involvement process is the catalyst that citizens need in order to work together in this way. Therefore, public involvement must be much more than simply informing the public about a decision that will be made; it must engage them in the decision-making process itself. Effective public involvement brings people together in a creative process of identifying problems and developing feasible solutions that are supported by a large segment of the community.

Public involvement provides decision-makers with a rich source of information about peoples' values and philosophies. These values and philosophies must be interpreted into meaningful information to guide the project. It is essential to know the community's values to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts of change as well as to evaluate the field of potential solutions. This process is designed to accomplish the following:

- Empower citizens to express the values which create their sense of identity.
- Increase public support of community goals and objectives.

- Improve the quality of public decisions.
- Provide a tangible investment of stakeholders in the implementation of the plan.

## 2 Identification of Stakeholders



Identifying and organizing stakeholders is an essential step to engaging the planning process for this project. Stakeholders will be organized to work effectively throughout the project for three purposes: outreach, coordination, and oversight. A network of community organizations and local companies was identified early in the process to assist in the outreach process. They helped to distribute meeting notices and posters. Ensuring that a full spectrum of community stakeholders is involved in the planning process helps to coordinate the planning process across the many community agencies and organizations that they represent. Finally, stakeholders are an integral part of the project oversight process. A Project Management Team of consultants and key City staff will be formed to direct the process. They will meet periodically with representatives of departments and community organizations and the Covington City Council to review the progress of the study and discuss its work products.

### Project Management Team

Lloyd Kerr - Planning Director, City of Covington  
 Jim Summerbell – (JJG) – Project Manger  
 Charlotte Weber – (JJG) – Public Involvement  
 Jonathan Lewis – (JJG) – Land Use  
 Karen Burkhart-Dick – (Ackerman) – Market Analysis  
 Jennifer Hunter – (Kimley-Horn) - Transportation

### Stakeholder List

Individual/ Organization/ Group	Interviews	Public Meetings	Website	Other
<b>Covington City Council</b>				
Sam Ramsey <i>Mayor</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
John Howard <i>Council Member - Post 1 East</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
Janet Goodman <i>Council Member - Post 1 West</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
Michael Whatley <i>Council Member - Post 2 East</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
Hawnethia Williams <i>Council Member - Post 2 West</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
Roger Tingler <i>Mayor Pro Tem Council Member – Post 3 East</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
Ocie Franklin <i>Council Member – Post 3 West</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings

<b>Individual/ Organization/ Group</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Public Meetings</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Other</b>
Steve Horton <i>City Manager</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
John Grotheer <i>City Clerk</i>		√	√	City Council Meetings
<b>City Boards/Commissions/Departments</b>				
Planning Commission	√	√	√	Public Hearings CRC
Building and Zoning Department		√	√	
Housing Authority		√	√	
Downtown Development Authority		√	√	
Airport Committee		√	√	
Board of Health		√	√	
Recreation Authority		√	√	
Library Board		√	√	
Industrial Development Committee		√	√	
Parking Authority		√	√	
Retirement Committee		√	√	
Tree Preservation Board		√	√	
Sign Ordinance Committee		√	√	
Zoning Board of Appeals		√	√	
Historic Preservation Committee		√	√	
Electric Department		√	√	
Gas Department		√	√	
Engineering Department		√	√	
Water Reclamation Division		√	√	

<b>Individual/ Organization/ Group</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Public Meetings</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Other</b>
Planning Department	√	√	√	PMT
Street Department		√	√	
Cable TV		√	√	
Solid Waste Management	√	√	√	
Water and Sewer Maintenance		√	√	
Fire Department	√	√	√	
Police Department	√	√	√	
Covington Fibernet		√	√	
Main Street Program		√	√	
Public Works and Utilities		√	√	
Recycling Center	√	√	√	
Sanitation		√	√	
Atlanta Regional Commission		√	√	* Consulting Party
Department of Community Affairs		√	√	* Consulting Party
Newton County Commission		√	√	* Consulting Party
City of Porterdale		√	√	* Consulting Party
City of Newborn		√	√	* Consulting Party
City of Oxford		√	√	* Consulting Party
City of Mansfield		√	√	* Consulting Party
Newton County Planning and Development		√	√	* Consulting Party
<b>Community Groups/Organizations/Other Groups</b>				
Citizens of Covington	√	√	√	

Individual/ Organization/ Group	Interviews	Public Meetings	Website	Other
Citizens of Newton County	√	√	√	
The Center: Facilitating Community Preservation and Planning		√	√	
Smart Growth Newton		√	√	
The Newton County Historical Society		√	√	
The Covington Newton Chamber of Commerce		√	√	
Newton Council for Quality Growth		√	√	
Neighborhood Associations		√	√	
Assisted Living Facilities		√	√	
Newton County Senior Center		√	√	
Washington Street Community Center		√	√	
Places of Worship		√	√	
Civic Groups		√	√	
Lions Club		√	√	
Kiwanis		√	√	
Rotary		√	√	
Arnold Fund		√	√	
Georgia Wildlife Federation		√	√	
Board of Education		√	√	
Colleges/University		√	√	
Business Groups		√	√	
Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)		√	√	* Consulting Party
Georgia Regional Transit Authority (GRTA)		√	√	* Consulting Party

<b>Individual/ Organization/ Group</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Public Meetings</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Other</b>
Industrial Groups		√	√	
Developers		√	√	
Homebuilders Associations		√	√	
The Newton Citizen		√	√	
The Covington News		√	√	
Library		√	√	
MUTANTS – Multi-use Trail Group		√	√	

## 3 Identification of Participation Techniques



### 3.1 Initial Public Hearings

As required under the state Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, a public hearing before the Covington City Council will be held in December 2005 to transmit the draft Community Assessment and the Community Participation Program to the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center (NEGRDC) for regional and state review. The public hearing will provide an opportunity for educating the public about the scope, goals, and schedule of the project so that they can see how they can get involved. The public also will be given the opportunity to comment on the process and their vision for the future of the City. Meetings will be held with the Planning Commission on December 13, 2005, and with the Mayor and City Council on December 19, 2005.

### 3.2 Visioning Workshops

A total of three Visioning Workshops will be held within the City in March and April 2006. The City will be divided into three planning areas to facilitate a more meaningful visioning process. A separate workshop will be held in each of the planning areas. The visioning process for each planning area will be organized around the theme of “Preserve, Change, Create, or Connect.” The planning process for each planning area will follow three steps:

1. Identify what the community wants to preserve, change, create, or connect.
2. Establish a vision.
3. Outline two or three alternative scenarios for future development.

The end product of each Visioning Workshop will be a narrative description for each plan area expressed in the following terms:

- Strengths and weakness of the quality of life in each planning area.
- The role of each planning area in the City as a whole.
- The opportunities and threats that confront the quality of life in the planning area over the next 20 years.
- The quality of life that the stakeholders and participants in the workshop envision for the planning area 20 years from now.
- The factors of change and big decisions that will be required to change the planning area from what it is today to what participants want it to be.
- Benchmarks, or measurable indicators, of quality of life that will be used to indicate success in the future.

The meetings are anticipated to be held within the City limits.

A variety of locations and dates will give residents several opportunities to give their input on the future of Covington. Dates for the Visioning Workshops are March 14, March 28, and April 11, 2006. The number of meetings scheduled is for the convenience of the citizens.

### **3.3 Citizen Roundtable**

A Citizen Roundtable Committee (CRC) will be comprised of no more than 12 members, not including City staff. The CRC will convene four times throughout the life of the project. The Committee will participate in the development of the plan and will serve as a key player in the public participation effort.

The CRC will meet prior to the first Visioning Workshop to review project goals and objectives, project schedule, and participant expectations about the project. This will provide an opportunity for the panel to meet the consultant team and express their individual interests in the project and for the community. The additional meetings will review feedback received from public outreach efforts and will focus on creating a Citywide vision for the community, based on the interests of each planning area.

### **3.4 Strategic Framework Workshop**

The Strategic Framework Workshop is scheduled for May 9, 2006, after the three Visioning Workshops, to create goals, objectives, and policies in keeping with the City's vision statement. This will establish the framework for the recommendations and implementation strategies, work programs, and action plans. At the Strategic Framework Workshop, participants will assist in the creation of a Strategic Framework Plan that:

- Reviews the implications of possible future scenarios in terms of quality of life defined in the City's vision statement.
- Refines the forecasts of population, households, employment, and land use change and identifies the preferred options for each issue area that were discussed in the workshop into a desired future scenario.
- Creates and prioritizes a set of goals, objectives, and policies to achieve the vision and desired future scenario.

The end product of this meeting will be a desired future scenario and a Strategic Framework Plan consisting of a first draft of goals, objectives, and policies for the update of the Comprehensive Plan. The Strategic Framework Plan is structured to address each issue raised in the vision and sets forth a set of strategy options that can be developed with the statements of needs, goals, objectives, and policies for the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

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

The consultant will present the 2028 Comprehensive Plan at a public hearing before the City Council. An announcement of the public hearings will be posted on the website and advertised through available email databases. The public will have a period of two weeks to comment on the plan before it is transmitted to the NEGRDC for review.

The public will have several options to comment on the draft plan. The draft document will be posted on the webpage for the public's review. A comment form is available on the website and

any comments will come directly to the consultant and will be forwarded to City staff. Draft hardcopies of the document will be available for review at City Hall and at the Floyd Street Library. Citizens will be encouraged to submit their comments to the City. All comments will be compiled and addressed by the consultant and City staff. The tentative dates for these transmittal hearings are November 2006.

### **3.6 Project Webpage**

JJG will host a website to be linked to the City's web address. The webpage address is through the Covington website at <http://www.cityofcovington.org/>. The consultant will send documents, approved by the City, in Adobe PDF format, to be uploaded periodically throughout the project. The webpage also will have contact information for the consultant team.

### **3.7 Outreach**

Varieties of techniques were used to get the information out to participants. Space on the City website was used to display press releases, posters, and other information pertaining to the project. The Center, the Chamber of Commerce, and Smart Growth Newton have contact lists that will be utilized to supply a network of outlets for distribution of meeting notices and posters. The Center submits articles on a bi-weekly basis to the Newton Citizen, the local newspaper, and will assist in outreach efforts for public participation.

## 4 Schedule for Completion of the Community Agenda



On the following page is a graphic that shows the schedule for completion of the Comprehensive Plan Update. Major upcoming milestones in this schedule include:

### Initial Public Hearings

December 13 (Planning Commission).....	2005
December 19 (Mayor/City Council).....	2005

### Three Visioning Workshops

March 14.....	2006
March 28.....	2006
April 11.....	2006

Strategic Framework Workshop (May 9)..... 2006

Public Hearing for Transmittal of the Community Agenda – Planning Commission & Mayor/City Council (tentative dates December) ..... 2006

Adoption of the Community Agenda (February/March) ..... 2007

# Covington Comprehensive Plan Update Schedule

Ref. #	Task	Month																				
		May-05	Jun-05	Jul-05	Aug-05	Sep-05	Oct-05	Nov-05	Dec-05	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06	Jul-06	Aug-06	Sep-06	Oct-06	Nov-06	Dec-06	Jan-07
<b>Community Assessment</b>																						
1.1	Data Gathering Meeting	█																				
1.2	Build GIS Foundations (TAZ and Plan Areas)	█		△																		
1.3	Real Estate and Market Trends Analysis	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█													
1.4	Fiscal Impact Assessment																					
1.5	Buildout Analysis and Plan Area Summaries																					
1.6	Draft Community Assessment (CA)		█	█	█	█	█	█	█													
1.7	Staff review of the CA and revisions					█	█	█	█													
<b>Public Involvement</b>																						
2.1	Draft Community Participation Program (CPP)																					
2.2	Staff review of CPP																					
2.3	Initial Public Hearings to transmit CA and CPP																					
2.4	RDC and DCA review of CA and CPP																					
2.5	Citizen Roundtable (CR) Meetings (x 4)																					
2.6	Visioning Workshop Preparation																					
2.7	Visioning Workshops (x 3)																					
2.8	Scenario Development																					
2.9	Strategic Framework Workshop																					
<b>Community Agenda</b>																						
3.1	Crafting of the Community Vision (FLU Map)																					
3.2	Issues and Opportunities Analysis																					
3.3	Preparation of Short Term Work Program																					
3.4	Draft Community Agenda																					
3.5	Staff and CR Review of Community Agenda																					
3.6	Public Hearings for Transmittal of the Plan																					
<b>Adoption</b>																						
4.1	RDC and DCA review of the Plan																					
4.2	Plan Adoption																					
4.3	Final printing and delivery																					

☆ Public Meetings  
 △ Transportation Plan Coordination

