

Introduction

Purpose

Public participation is essential for all community based planning efforts. Those who are directly impacted by local government decisions must have opportunities to voice opinions and concerns regarding county policies, strategies and implementation measures as they move forward in the public realm. A vision for the county's future involves dialogue between citizens and landowners, local government staff and officials, the business community and a host of special interest groups. It is through a diversity of perspectives that a concise and inclusive plan may be developed that reflects the values and interests of the community as a whole. Ultimately, it is through a joint commitment to an agreed upon vision and strategic implementation process that community success can be achieved. The purpose of the Community Participation Program is to outline the steps that Oglethorpe County will take to ensure community members have defined methods for public participation throughout the Comprehensive Plan update process necessary to fulfill state planning requirements.

Objectives

The objectives for the participation program include the following:

- The program must offer and encourage opportunities for the public to become actively involved during the update process
- The program must provide information throughout the update process to any interested party regardless of their level of participation
- The program should promote consensus through active dialogue and incorporation of community concerns as components of the Comprehensive Plan are developed and move through public processes

Community Involvement

Identification of Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals, groups or institutions that are vested in the future of the county. Stakeholders are indispensable to the public planning process since they will be affected by the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations and represent a fundamental aspect of the coordination and management required to complete the update. The following list is representative as additional stakeholders may be identified and incorporated into the participation process as the update progresses.

Oglethorpe County Board of Commissioners

Chairman, Jay Paul
District 1, Phil Sanders
District 2, Andy Saxon
District 3, David Clark
District 4, Will Brown
District 5, Tracy Norman

Oglethorpe County Zoning Board

1 Jeff Sharp
2 Janet Hill
3 Jimmy Shealy
4 Morgan Robinson
5 Robert Drew

Oglethorpe County Economic Development Authority

- 1 Joyce Sniff
- 2 Bill Cabaniss
- 3 Jeff Welch
- 4 Fred Gretsches
- 5 Dink NeSmith
- 6 John Robertson
- 7 Randy Bramlett
- 8 Will Brown

County Staff

Director of Planning and Development
County Clerk
Director of Finance
Director of Public Works
Director of Emergency Medical Services
Director of E-911 Communications
Director of Emergency Management Agency
Director of Parks and Recreation
Director of Senior Services
Sheriff

Oglethorpe County Elected & Appointed Boards

Board of Education
Board of Health
Board of Elections
Board of Tax Assessors
Library Board of Trustees

Municipalities

City of Arnoldsville
City of Lexington - DDA, Historic Preservation
City of Crawford
City of Maxeys
City of Winterville

Neighbor jurisdictions

Madison County
Elbert County
Wilkes County
Taliaferro County
Greene County
Oconee County
Clarke County

Regional Organizations & Institutions

Regional Commission
SWCC

RC&D
EPD

Major Employers within the county, otherwise not listed

Poultry
Granite
Forestry
Horticulture (Select Trees, Goodness Grows, Wolfskin Growers, James Greenhouses)
Centurion
GGP
J&J
Bells
OCA
Farm Bureau
ECHO
Banks (Commercial/Pinnacle)

Utilities

Tri-County
Rayle EMC
Jackson EMC
Georgia Power
AT&T
Windstream
Charter
MSW Landfill
C&D Landfill
Municipal water/sewer

Community Groups & Organizations

Cattleman's Association
Churches
Rotary
Legion
Historic Oglethorpe
Homeowners Associations
Firefly
Chamber of Commerce
Extension Service Coordinator
NRCS District Conservationist
Watson Mill (DNR)
Student Groups
National Forest Service
Leadership Oglethorpe
Family Connection/DEFACS

Community Health

Medlink

Physicians' Groups
Pharmacy

Identification of Participation Techniques

Oglethorpe County will include the following components as part of the participation program:

- Steering Committee
- First state-required public hearing and public information meeting
- Public outreach
- Re-use existing surveys to assess change over time
- Stakeholder surveys
- Public Surveys
- Intergovernmental Meetings
- Zoning Board review
- Second state-required public hearing
- Transmittal and review

Steering Committee/Project Management Team

The committee shall be composed of five representatives. The committee shall meet three times as the Plan is being developed to provide procedural feedback and advisement. The steering committee will also function as the project management team with routine electronic and voice communication throughout the update process. This function provides continuous feedback about progress toward final adoption, adequacy of public input, quality of product, set corrections to the process, and make suggestions for improvement. The steering committee members are expected to be active ambassadors in the community, encouraging input. Members include:

- One representative from the Oglethorpe County Board of Commissioners, Tracy Norman
- One representative from the Oglethorpe County Zoning Board, Janet Hill
- One representative from the Oglethorpe County Economic Development Authority, Joyce Sniff
- Director of Planning and Development, Ashley Peterson
- other County staff, Josh Hawkins

Kick-off Public Information Meeting/First Public Hearing

This will be an initial public hearing to announce the update of the Comprehensive Plan update. The focus of this meeting will include an overview of the purpose and process of comprehensive planning, a general presentation of the currently adopted plan, and an outline of public participation opportunities during the update process.

Public Outreach

- Website - Informative, Input
 - Showcase currently adopted Plan
 - Publish participation program for public review
 - House the link to the public survey in order to collect input
 - Publish draft of new Plan for public review
- Speaker - Informative
 - Convey information, solicit input
 - Specific to civic organizations
- Press Release - Informative
 - Advertising public hearings
 - Advertising surveys
- Student Groups - Informative, Input, Interactive
 - Involving youth organizations (FFA, Youth Leadership Oglethorpe, etc.)

- Social Media - Informative
 - Using posts to garner interest and solicit input

Re-use Existing Surveys

This will be to identify changes in opinions, attitudes, and beliefs over time.

Stakeholder Surveys

These surveys will be a more in-depth look into the stakeholders' specific areas of interest.

Public Surveys

These surveys will be more generalized in nature. They will include scaled questions, ranking questions, and short answer explanations.

Intergovernmental Visions & Goals Meeting(s)

This will be a public meeting involving the Board of Commissioners, the Economic Development Authority, and the Zoning Board. The goal of this meeting will be to establish a common set of visions and goals, identify community needs and opportunities, and foster intergovernmental cooperation.

Second Public Hearing

This will be an opportunity for the public to comment on a draft of the Plan before transmittal. This will be held on the same night as a Zoning Board Meeting in order to get feedback from the Zoning Board, as well.