

FINAL DRAFT

Banks County
Comprehensive Plan 2008-2018

*COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION PROGRAM*



Prepared for:
Banks County
Homer, Georgia

By:

 **MACTEC**

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Introduction

Introduction to the Community Participation Program for unincorporated Banks County and the City of Baldwin

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Participation Program is to ensure that the Banks County Comprehensive Plan Update reflects the full range of the community's values and desires, by involving a diverse spectrum of stakeholders in development of the plan. This broad-based participation will help ensure that the plan is implemented because many are involved in its development and thereby become committed to seeing it through. The Community Participation Program provides a concise schedule to guide the development of the Community Agenda, including planned community participation events or meetings at key points during the process. This document includes three required steps described in the sections below:

- Identification of Stakeholders
- Identification of Participation Techniques
- Schedule for Completion of the Final Plan

Scope

State law requires Banks County to update its Comprehensive Plan by October 31, 2008. As prescribed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the update of the Comprehensive Plan follows the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective May 1, 2005. Banks County adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 1992

CHAPTER
2

Identification of Stakeholders

Outline of the Joint Comprehensive Plan's diverse group of community stakeholders set to be involved in the development of the Community Agenda

Coordination and oversight are very important parts of the overall work effort for this project. This approach, to ensure proper management of the process, includes oversight by the Board of Commissioners (BOC), the Steering Committee and County Administrative Officer and the Mayor and City Council of the City of Baldwin.

Banks County BOC

- Gene Hart, Chairman
- Joe Barefoot
- Rickey Cain

Baldwin City Council

- Mark Reed, Mayor
- Beverly Holcomb
- Ray Holcomb
- Rodney King
- Jeff Murray
- Robert Vohannon

Project Management Team

- Angela Sheppard, Banks County Administrative Officer
- Keith Covington, Banks County Planning & Zoning Director
- Lee Walton, AICP – MACTEC Project Manager
- Marty Sewell, AICP – MACTEC Project Coordinator
- Paige Hatley – MACTEC

Steering Committee

- Melinda Cochran - Citizen Representative selected by BOC member
- Pat Westmoreland - Citizen Representative selected by BOC member
- Milton Pruitt - Citizen Representative selected by BOC member



- Mayor Mark Reed - Citizen Representative for Baldwin
- Clint McCoy – Sherriff representative
- Deidra Moore – Emergency Services Representative
- Steve Reece – Water Director
- Wayne Andrews – Road Superintendent
- Angela Sheppard – Administrative Officer
- Jenni Gailey – County Clerk
- Keith Covington – Code Enforcement Officer
- Philip Cronic – Recreation Department
- Janet Galloway – Senior Center Director
- Chris Erwin – Board of Education Representative
- Bob Waldorf – Representative of Extension Office
- Wayne Abernathy – Development Authority representative
- Shirlene Allen – Environmental representative
- Sherry Ward – Non-profit sector representative
- Bill Ford – Religious community representative
- Helen Hewell – Chamber of Commerce representative
- Keith Segars – Planning Commission member
- Steve Parks – Land Developer representative
- Evelyn Crane – Realtor representative
- Robert Marshburn – Major landowners representatives
- Cal Anthony – Neighborhood or homeowner association representatives
- Kelly Brown – Banks County High School student (FBLA President)

Appointed Boards and Commissions

- Banks County Planning Commission
- Banks County Board of Appeals
- Banks County Recreation Advisory Board

County, City, Regional and State Boards/Organizations, Associations

- City of Alto
- City of Baldwin (participating in Comprehensive Plan Update)
- City of Gillsville
- City of Homer (participating in Comprehensive Plan Update)
- City of Lula
- City of Maysville
- Georgia Mountains RDC



Participation Techniques

Identification of the specific techniques the Comprehensive Plan Update planning process will use to develop the Community Agenda

Banks County and the City of Baldwin will rely heavily on public input during the preparation of the Community Agenda. Techniques described below will include advisory committee meetings, stakeholder committee meetings, presentations to elected officials, interviews, workshops, web site, press releases, an open house and public hearings.

Working Committees and Key Stakeholder Input

Board of Commissioners and City Council

The MACTEC Team will make presentations to the Banks County Board of Commissioners (BOC) and Baldwin City Council at critical points during the planning process. Officials will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide other feedback throughout the planning process.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is charged with providing feedback, advising the MACTEC Team, and shaping the overall planning process. The Steering Committee was selected by the BOC with assistance from the County Administrative Officer. Members include a mix of elected or appointed County officials, key property owners, neighborhood leaders, Chamber of Commerce and other economic development professionals, community service providers, areas residents and others with some stake in the future development of the County and region (see list in Chapter 2). Steering Committee members who are also County staff members will serve as an important source of information and coordination during the planning process. As primary “users” of the plan, they have a stake in the outcome of the comprehensive plan. The committee will hold scheduled meetings at key points during the development of the Community Agenda. Commonly meeting in advance of major public meetings, the Steering Committee has the ability to assist with keeping the project on schedule, review the preliminary data and findings, provide a “reality check” to the staff and planning team, and to serve as a political barometer for plan recommendations.

General Public Meetings

Kickoff Meeting

The purpose of the Kickoff Meeting is to announce the beginning of the planning process to the citizens and other stakeholders and provide an opportunity to view a presentation covering the project purpose and general plan approach. Initial opinion surveys and volunteer sign up forms are available at this meeting.

Visioning Workshops

Banks County will conduct two phases of visioning workshops during the development of the plan. The first visioning workshop is a facilitated meeting to discover the community vision and address the three key planning questions – “What do you have?” “What do you want?” and “How will you get it?” These are highly interactive meetings where attendees work in groups to draw maps, develop goals and policies, and design their community. The MACTEC Team will use the input from the workshop to finalize the issues and opportunities, character areas and to define a community vision. An evaluation of a series of visual images categorized by housing types and styles, streetscape appearance, open space, commercial areas, and other design or use types. Participants are asked to state a preference as images showing alternative designs are displayed side by side. Results are tabulated by the planning team for presentation in later meetings.

The second workshop focuses on the community framework and will take place following the first workshop. The workshop will include a presentation of the information gathered during the visioning workshop, including recommendations for addressing the issues and opportunities. The MACTEC Team will facilitate exercises with the participants intended to fine tune the community vision, including a discussion of the draft Future Development Map. The framework workshop provides the opportunity to specifically discuss key areas of the County where more specific implementation plans are warranted to ensure long-range implementation of the community vision. The MACTEC Team will use the input from the workshop to prepare a final draft of the issues and opportunities, character areas and community vision and to begin exploring specific strategies designed to implement the community vision.

Open House

The open house will take place following the framework workshop in advance of the Transmittal Public Hearing for the Community Agenda. Participants will view the Community Agenda, including the Future Development Map and implementation plan, prepared for the County and will also have the opportunity to offer comments that may result in changes to the plan. The open house format allows participants to drop in at their convenience and stay as little or as long as they wish.

Public Hearing

Public Hearings will be held in two rounds during the planning process at the Banks County BOC and participating municipalities City Council meetings. The first round of public hearings will announce to the public that the planning process for updating the comprehensive plan is underway. The second round of public hearings will brief the community on the contents of the Community Agenda. The following paragraphs describe the two public meetings in greater detail.

Public Hearing 1: Transmittal of Community Assessment/Community Participation Program

Public Hearings will take place at regularly-scheduled BOC/City Council meetings. The public hearings will inform the public of the Community Participation Program, including the project schedule and how the community can get involved as outlined in this document. The public hearing also provides the community an opportunity to comment on the draft Community Assessment. The Community Assessment highlights the issues and opportunities that will be taken into consideration in developing the Community Agenda.



Following the public hearings, and based on input from the public and County officials, the Community Assessment, Analysis of Supporting Data, and Community Participation Program documents will be transmitted to the RDC for review and comment.

Public Hearing 2: Transmittal of the Community Agenda

The MACTEC team will present the Community Agenda before the BOC/City Councils at public hearings following the Open House meeting. The hearings provide an opportunity for residents to make final suggestions, additions, or revisions and to be informed of when the Community Agenda will be submitted to the RDC for review. Following the public hearings, and based on input from the public and County officials, the Community Agenda will be transmitted to the GMRDC for review and comment.

Additional Information Gathering Techniques

Stakeholder Interviews

During the development of the plan, the MACTEC Team will conduct one-on-one interviews with key community leaders using a standardized series of questions designed to gather detailed information about the County's future. Interviews will take place in person and by telephone. The interviews, usually between 30 minutes to an hour in duration, are designed to gather more detailed information about a particular area of expertise. The stakeholders are representatives of the various organizations, such as representatives from fire and police departments, neighborhood homeowners' associations, faith-based organizations, civic associations, advocacy groups, realtors, conservationists, housing, hospital and transportation authorities and others. The information collected during the stakeholder interview assists in the development of the goals, objectives, and strategies for the comprehensive planning process.

Issues/Opportunities Questionnaire

An Issues/Opportunities questionnaire will be distributed to those who attended the Kickoff meeting in order to solicit comments, seek opinions, and begin to identify community goals. The MACTEC Team and County staff will meet with the local newspaper and request that each include in multiple editions a copy of a printed questionnaire that residents can clip, complete and submit to the County for consideration in the planning process. The survey provides an opportunity for stakeholders to provide the MACTEC Team related to the issues and opportunities the County faces. Questionnaires will also be made available for distribution at key County facilities.

In addition, questionnaires can be printed and mailed to a representative sample of residents in the community or sent with a regular mailing by the County and other utilities (such as a water bill). Questionnaires may be made available at an information table in County Courthouse/Administration Building and other locations in the County. Digital copies can be made available to the public on the County website as well.

Public Relations Strategies

Press Releases

Press releases will be prepared and distributed to the newspaper and radio stations that serve the Banks County area. The press releases will be used to announce public meetings and the posting of documents for public review. Press releases will include contact information for Banks County Administration office.

Cable TV Information

Banks County will work with the local cable television provider, to include on the government information channels announcements of the public meetings and locations to view posted documents for public review.

Web Site

The Banks County Administration Office will post the various parts of the plan as it progresses on the Banks County website for public review at appropriate points throughout the planning process. Browsers will be able to download the documents in PDF format and will be provided with contact information in order to submit comments by traditional mail, by e-mail, or by telephone. The Banks County and Baldwin website addresses are as follows:

- <http://www.co.banks.ga.us/>
- <http://www.thecityofbaldwin.com/>

E-mail "blast" Database

Periodic mass mailings by email to provide important notices and other information are also a tool for distributing information. At public meetings, attendees can provide their e-mail addresses on the sign in sheet. Periodic progress e-mails and future meeting announcements can then be sent to the distribution list.

Other Methods

Beyond the use of newspapers and the Internet for notification, there are many other alternatives for getting the word out. The following can be used during this planning process:

- Newsletters of community groups and neighborhood associations are a great way to target information of interest in a particular geographic area or to specific interest groups.
- Announcement flyers could be printed and then posted – with permission – in high traffic areas such as libraries, shopping areas, schools, and colleges.
- Information Display can be set up in the lobby of Courthouse/Administration Building that includes a display of photographs, maps, and planning features for all visitors to the building to visit.

CHAPTER
4

Schedule for the Completion of the Plan

Outline of the schedule proposed for preparation, review and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Community Agenda

The full proposed schedule for completion of the Plan is shown below.

- PM Meeting/BOC Update Presentation – 11/28/07
- Steering Committee Meeting 1 - 1/21/08
- Steering Committee Meeting 2 – 2/21
- Community Assessment/Community Participation Program Presentation and Transmittal Resolution Public Hearing – 2/26 (BOC) and 3/24 (Baldwin Mayor & Council)
- GMRDC/DCA Review of Community Assessment/Community Participation Program – 2/28 – 4/5
- Public Meeting 1 – Kick Off – 3/13
- Public Meeting 2 – Visioning Workshops – 3/25, 4/15 and TBA (Baldwin specific meeting is TBA)
- Steering Committee Meeting 3 – 5/8
- Steering Committee Meeting 4 – 5/28
- Public Meeting 4 – Open House and Celebration – 6/10
- Community Agenda Presentation and Transmittal Resolution Public Hearing – 7/8 and 7/14
- GMRDC/DCA Review of Community Agenda – 7/16 – 9/21
- Plan Adoption – 10/13 and 10/14