

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

Tybee Island Master Plan



Submitted to:
Georgia Department of Community Affairs

By:
City of Tybee Island, Georgia

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Introduction

The word community can be defined as a population of people living in a common location. There can be a wide variation when it comes to the basic social, professional, economic, and political values of the residents that make up a community. In preparing a Comprehensive Plan, it is important to work with citizens to identify the issues and challenges unique to their community. The comprehensive planning process begins with an evaluation of the current strengths and needs of the community followed by a vision for the future. This Community Participation Program is designed to give citizens the opportunity to take part in the planning process in an effort to gain support for proposed programs from the public and to produce a document that best reflects the overall vision for the community. An innovative and comprehensive public involvement program will ensure that the public feels vested in results of the planning process.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) requires that a Community Participation Program be implemented as part of the Comprehensive Planning Process as outlined in the Rules for Comprehensive Planning, Section 110-12-1-.04. The goal for the Program as outlined in Rules is as follows:

“The purpose of the Community Participation Program is to ensure that the local comprehensive plan reflects the full range of community values and desires, by involving a diverse spectrum of stakeholders in development of the Community Agenda. This broad-based participation in developing the Community Agenda will also help ensure that it will be implemented, because many in the community are involved in its development and thereby become committed to seeing it through.”

The DCA also requires that a plan for the Community Participation Program be developed and submitted to DCA for approval prior to the start of the public involvement process. This document outlines the City’s strategy to develop and implement a public involvement program for the City of Tybee Island Master Plan and is hereby submitted to DCA for approval.

1. Scope

The mission of the Community Participation Plan is to provide citizens the opportunity to make their voices heard by taking part in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. An effective community participation program should be designed to educate the public as well as provide an opportunity for citizens to be part of the planning process. The participation strategies outlined in this report have been selected to assure that citizens understand the planning process and that multiple opportunities for public involvement exist.

To facilitate the development and submittal of the Community Assessment and this document (the Community Participation Plan), two public involvement strategies have already been implemented. A technical advisory committee, the “Project Team,” was established to provide feedback to the planners and shape the overall planning process. The Project Team included a small number of representatives from the City of Tybee Island, City Council, and the business community. Two public meetings were also held, in accordance with the DCA Rules for Comprehensive Planning, to introduce the Plan and increase public awareness before the Community Assessment and Community Participation Plan are submitted to the DCA.

Upon approval of the Community Participation Plan from the DCA, the City will “kick-off” its public involvement program with an Open House. The Open House will give citizens the chance to learn about the Plan and express their opinions in an informal setting. Educational material will be available at City Hall, on the website, and on the cable channel to keep the public informed throughout the process. A Stakeholder Committee will be convened to review the draft development strategies, and the issues and opportunities presented in the Community Assessment. Finally, prior to submittal of the Community Agenda, at the conclusion of the planning process, a third public meeting will be held to present the Agenda to the public.

The following public involvement strategies have been selected by the City as part of the public involvement strategy and are discussed in this report:

- Open House
- Stakeholders Committee
- Community Survey
- Handouts
- Website
- Cable Channel

In most cases, informing and educating the public is not enough. The most successful strategy is one that also gets citizens involved in the decision making process that will shape the future of their community. The City intends to accomplish this goal by providing various levels of public involvement, which have the potential to reach all citizens. A web survey will be administered in order to provide an avenue for the general public to provide input. Citizens that want to take a greater role in the planning process will have the option to participate in community events such as public meetings and the Open House. Lastly, the Stakeholders Committee will allow citizen representatives the opportunity to work directly with the Project Team.

Implementing the tasks outlined in this report will improve the overall quality of the Plan by defining the values of the community and working together to accomplish those goals. Additionally, involving the public during the planning stage will help to garner support for the Comprehensive Plan and its eventual implementation.

2. Project Team

A technical advisory committee has been established to gather technical information, provide feedback to the project managers, and to ensure that the Master Plan accurately represents the City's vision for the future. The team includes representatives from various City departments, the City Council, and community groups, as listed below:

Project Team (11 members)

- City Manager
- Community Development Director
- Finance Director
- City Council
- City Planning Commission
- Economic Development Committee
- Tybee Historical Society
- Tybee Neighbors
- Tybee Board of Realtors
- Tybee Arts Commission
- Tybee Beautification

The Project Team has met on a regular schedule to oversee the development of the Community Assessment and Community Participation Plan. Please see Appendix A for a copy of meeting summaries. The following list details the early efforts of the Project Team:

- *Existing Land Use Map:* Fieldwork was conducted to verify the existing land uses. The Project Team then reviewed the existing Land Use map and made the appropriate updates.
- *Community Character Map:* The Project Team analyzed the current land use distribution and development patterns and established a vision for the future that is illustrated in the Community Character map.
- *Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA):* The Project Team used the existing Land Use and Community Character maps to develop the ARSA map. Areas were identified based on the consistency between current trends in a given area and the future vision for the community.
- *Issues and Opportunities:* The Project Team reviewed the State Planning Recommendations and created a comprehensive list of issues specific to Tybee Island that need to be addressed in order to meet the goals outlined in the Plan. A list of opportunities was developed based on the identified issues.
- *Data Assessment:* The data assessment evaluated a variety of demographic trends that need to be considered in the scope of long-term planning. Population growth, a growing elderly population, and increasing property values are just a few items gathered from this assessment. Other factors analyzed by the Project Team were income, employment, housing, economic trends, utilities, education, natural resources, and coordination between governments.

The Project Team will continue to meet throughout the planning process. The initial findings of the Project Team will be updated and revised based on feedback generated during the public involvement process.

3. Public Hearing

The state minimum standards require that a Public Hearing be held before City Council to inform the public regarding the status of the Master Plan and to adopt a resolution to submit the Community Assessment and Community Participation Plan to the DCA. The Project Team presented the Community Assessment and Community Participation Plan to the City of Tybee Island Planning and Zoning Commission on February 20, 2007 and at the City of Tybee Island Council on February 22nd. Both meetings were open to the public and advertised in accordance with City procedures. Schedules were posted on the City's website and agendas were made publicly available at City Hall before the meetings. Please see Appendix B for copies of the agendas for these meetings. The following items were presented at both Public Hearings.

- Existing Land Use Map
- Community Character Map
- Areas that Require Special Attention Map
- Issues and Opportunities
- Data Assessment
- Quality Community Objectives Assessment
- Public Involvement Strategy
- Project Schedule

The initial public meetings will provide citizens with an opportunity to ask questions and voice any concerns about the proposed strategy for public involvement and plan development. Another round of Public Hearings will be held prior to final adoption of the Community Agenda.

4. Identification of Public Participation Techniques

4.1 Stakeholder Committee

A great part of the success of the Comprehensive Plan will be dependent on Stakeholder involvement. Effective involvement of key individuals/groups from the community will ensure that the Plan gains community wide support, addresses the issues and concerns of the general population, and is ultimately implemented. The benefits of Stakeholder involvement include:

- Citizens increasingly desire to be involved in decisions that affect their community.
- People with different areas of expertise contribute ideas, resulting in a well thought out plan with better solutions.
- Fellow citizens tend to support programs that have Stakeholder involvement.
- By allowing residents, special interest groups, and business leaders to be involved, planners and decision makers have the chance to think “outside the box.”
- Involving “citizen experts” helps facilitate communication.
- Working together provides the opportunity to understand other people’s concerns and issues.
- Stakeholder involvement allows for a more interconnected community.
- Stakeholder support builds program momentum and keeps the project moving forward.
- Stakeholder comments are heard and responded to early in the process, which leads to more effective program implementation and future acceptance.

The Stakeholder process allows individuals to make significant contributions to the planning process. It has been our experience that Stakeholders in a community often agree that government needs to take action to protect them from various perceived risks (health, safety, environmental issues, undesired development patterns, etc.).

It is important that a free flow of information be maintained between the City and the Stakeholders as well as within the Stakeholder Committee. This is important because the people that comprise the Stakeholder Committee live and work within the community, and they will be the best resource to convey the Plan’s message. The City should consider that in order to effectively implement the future Comprehensive Plan, the Community Participation Program must create an awareness of land use, development, and community related issues and opportunities.

4.1.1 Selecting the Stakeholders Committee

The key Stakeholders are typically comprised of representatives from the general public, residents, professionals, business and industry leaders, church and civic leaders, media representatives, special interest groups, City staff and elected officials.

It is important that the Stakeholder group consist of a diverse assortment of local representatives with different perspectives on the issue. The initial focus of the Community Participation Program will include the involvement of key Stakeholders that possess a high degree of trust and credibility with their fellow citizens. These Stakeholders will represent a broad range of backgrounds from business leaders to church leaders to neighborhood groups to developers. Tybee Island has identified the following Stakeholder groups to be included in this process:

- Project Team Members
- City Council
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Environmental Advocacy Groups
- Business/Economic Development Representatives
- Homeowners Associations
- Tybee Arts Commission
- Tybee Historical Society
- Tybee Board of Realtors
- Interested Citizens

In the selection of Stakeholders, the City will make an effort to recognize and be cognizant of what the general public's perception typically entails. The selected group of Stakeholders should be chosen such that their diversity ensures that the City's Comprehensive Plan reflects the goals and objectives of the various communities within the City. The key to success will be achieving a consensus among the group on the future vision for the City of Tybee Island. Once this is accomplished, this diverse group of Stakeholders should be able to "get the word out" to their fellow citizens and business associates that the Comprehensive Plan will be beneficial to the citizens of Tybee Island and the future of their community.

4.1.2 Stakeholder Meeting Strategy

The Stakeholder Committee will be scheduled to meet four times throughout the planning process to review progress and provide feedback to the Project Team. The following is a proposed list of topics to be discussed at each Stakeholder meeting.

- Meeting 1 – Visioning
- Meeting 2 – Development Patterns and Strategies
- Meeting 3 – Issues and Opportunities and Quality Community Objectives
- Meeting 4 – Review and Consensus

The Project Team will provide “read ahead” material to the Stakeholder Committee prior to each meeting. Experience has shown that supplying “read ahead” material leads to more productive meetings by allowing the Stakeholders to review the information in advance. Stakeholder meetings will be held in an informal but professional manner to create an environment that will facilitate participation and to show due respect to the participants who are donating their time. Meetings will be held after work hours and will be limited to a maximum of two hours per meeting. If more meetings are required to meet the goals set above, the Stakeholder Committee will be asked for an additional commitment.

4.2 Community Survey

In an effort to increase public involvement, the Project Team will develop a community survey to gain feedback from citizens. The community survey is an effective tool as it is available to a large population at a minimal cost for the City and a minimal time commitment to the participants. A digital survey will be posted on the City website and hard copy surveys will be available at City Hall and at the Open House. The survey will contain questions on a wide range of community related topics. The City is also exploring the option of a photographic survey. This would include showing pictures of different development patterns and asking citizens to rate them.

The results of the surveys will be tabulated and examined by the Project Team. Based on the results, the Project Team will incorporate the main issues and concerns of the citizens into the development of the future vision.

4.3 Open House

Community meetings or “open houses” are one of the best and most commonly utilized approaches to facilitate public education and involvement. Typically, the public is invited to meet with City staff and the City’s representatives. At these meetings, the various issues will be presented in an informal manner such that citizens will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the direction of the planning process.

The City will host an Open House to introduce the Community Assessment to the public at the beginning of the Community Participation Program. The Open House will be held at City Hall and will allow for informal interaction between the citizens and members of the Project Team. Citizens will be able to view map displays and have one-on-one discussions with Project Team members about specific elements of the Plan. Handouts, the community survey, comment cards, and other information will be distributed in an effort to educate the public and get feedback. The City will advertise the event by issuing a press release through the local newspaper, posting information on the website and cable channel, and providing information about the Open House at City Hall.

4.4 Public Information & Outreach

In addition to the strategies identified above, the City will produce handouts to update citizens about the content and progress of the comprehensive planning process. The City will also ensure that all community participation opportunities are well publicized, so that all residents and property owners in the City of Tybee Island have an opportunity to provide input. The City will utilize the following Public Information techniques:

- *Media Kit (Press Package).* A packet of information will be provided to the press containing information/facts to write an article (or a series of several articles) on the Comprehensive Plan. This press release will also contain information on the Stakeholder Committee, Open House, and Community Survey. A City contact name and phone number will also be included.
- *General Mail-Out.* The City of Tybee Island will perform one mass mailing to all Tybee Island property owners. The mailing will consist of a post card that lists all of the public involvement opportunities and dates, and will list the web link for taking the Community Survey.
- *Utility Bill Information.* The City of Tybee Island will include information on the Community Survey and other public involvement/information opportunities in two utility billings. This task will be performed at the beginning of the community participation program to encourage residents of the City to get involved in the process and will be repeated towards the end of the program to give residents a “last chance” to participate.
- *Informational Handouts(s).* These handouts and/or fact sheets will be simple and straightforward in order to explain the Comprehensive Planning process and what it is designed to accomplish. There may be more than one handout to explain various aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. The brochures will be made available at City Hall and will be distributed at public meetings.
- *Local Cable TV.* Public service information/announcements (PSAs) are an excellent way of getting information out to the public. The PSA will provide information on the status and dates of the Community Participation Program. Important milestone dates will be advertised as appropriate on the cable access channel.
- *Websites.* Websites are a great method of getting information out to a large group of people. A section or link will be added to the City’s website for the Comprehensive Plan that will allow for quick immediate information for the general public. The webpage will include information on the program, dates for public meetings, the community survey, and a link to e-mail any questions or concerns. This website address will be listed in all materials designed for the program. The website also provides an opportunity to catalog appropriate public documents and make them available to the public through use of downloadable PDF files.

4.5 Public Involvement Schedule

Public Involvement Tasks	2007											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Approval of Strategy from DCA												
Open House												
Stakeholder Committee												
Select Stakeholders and Read Ahead Packet												
Meeting 1: Visioning												
Meeting 2: Development Patterns												
Meeting 3: Issues, Opportunities, & QCOs												
Meeting 4: Consensus												
Survey												
Public Information												
Media Press Kit												
General Mail-Out												
Utility Bill Information												
Informational Brochures												
Cable Access Channel												
Website												
Final Public Meeting												

Appendix A
Project Team Meeting Summaries

Appendix B
Public Meeting Agendas