

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2009-2029**  
**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**  
  
**for**  
  
**THE TOWN OF NEWBORN**

Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center  
Planning Department



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## **1. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 Purpose**

One of the best ways to strengthen communities is to create opportunities for citizens to work collaboratively on the challenges and opportunities that shape their hometown. Accomplishing this requires political leadership, citizen education, and active involvement. A successful comprehensive plan relies on a process of thinking about and visualizing a desired future. It is about establishing and carrying on a dialogue within 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 line of communication between residents and their government officials, with the overall goal of quality decisions supported by the public.

### **1.2 Scope**

The Town of Newborn is required by Georgia law to complete its Comprehensive Plan Update by June 30, 2009. The plan will be prepared in accordance with the Advanced Planning Level Local Planning Requirements from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA; Chapter 110-12-1), 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 – individuals, 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. Involvement and engagement of the community is done for three reasons:

- Educate the public and increase awareness
- Capture the knowledge and preferences of the people who live in and support the community
- Mobilize support for and acceptance of the plan

The measure of effectiveness of a public involvement program is not how well the public has been informed, but to what degree its input has contributed to making decisions that are feasible and are supported by a large segment of the community and its elected officials.

Public comment and sentiment are a rich source of information about peoples' values and philosophies. These tenets must be interpreted into meaningful information to guide the project. It is essential to know the community's values to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential impacts as well as narrow the field of possible solutions. This process is designed to accomplish the following:

- Maximize the quality of decision-making
- Increase ease of implementation
- Provide greater public understanding and ownership of community goals and objectives
- Provide tangible evidence that the community has created its own identity

## **2. IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS**

Coordination and oversight are critical parts of the overall work effort for this project. In addition, a network of community groups, agencies, and individuals will be identified early in the process.

### **2.1 Government & Education**

Elected Officials of The Town of Newborn and Newton County  
Town of Newborn Planning & Zoning  
Town of Newborn staff  
Newton County Board of Education

### **2.2 Civic and Religious Groups**

Church groups and leadership  
(Other community groups as found in the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' suggested participation list do not exist in this small town.)

Finally, notices of meetings and other activities will be included in all water bills as part of a broad public outreach effort.

### **3. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES**

#### **3.1 Initial Public Hearing**

A public hearing to present the draft Community Participation Program and draft Community Assessment to the public is scheduled for March 31, 2009.

#### **3.2 Community Input & Visioning**

Meetings will be held for the Town of Newborn during March, April, and May. Participants will be led through a series of exercises to create a vision and refine the issues and opportunities identified in the Community Assessment.

The end product of the Community Visioning Meetings will be an illustration and description of a desired community, as expressed in the following terms:

- Strengths and weaknesses of quality of life for the Town
- Opportunities and threats that could affect the quality of life in Newborn over the next 20 years
- Quality of life that the stakeholders and participants in the workshops envision for the Town 20 years from now
- Factors of change and major decisions that will be required to move the Town from where it is today to where participants would like it to be
- Benchmarks, or measurable indicators, of quality of life that will be used to evaluate success over the course of the planning horizon

Additionally, mailed, telephoned, faxed, and emailed comments will be accepted throughout the planning process.

#### **3.3 Adoption Process**

The Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center (RDC) will present the draft Community Agenda at a public hearing before transmittal from the Town to the RDC for regional and state review. After the RDC and DCA review the Community Agenda, the final draft will be presented to the Council and the public for adoption at a regular local government meeting. The tentative date for these transmittal hearings is May with final adoption in June.

#### **3.4 Outreach**

Varieties of techniques will be used to disseminate pertinent information to participants. Civic leaders, churches, and educational groups will assist in notifying the public regarding participation opportunities through press releases, fliers, and other information pertaining to the project. Additionally, the RDC will work with the local newspaper, the Covington News, to see that details on the planning process are periodically published as well as a reminder that information concerning the plan and draft documents will be posted to the Northeast Georgia Planning web site ([www.negplanning.org](http://www.negplanning.org)).

#### 4. SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF THE COMMUNITY AGENDA

The graphic below shows the schedule for completion of the Comprehensive Plan Update. Major upcoming milestones in this schedule include:

**Community Input Meetings - March-May 2009**

Components of three meetings will address the following areas: Issues and Opportunities

- Goals
- Policies
- Short Term Work Program

**Community Visioning Meetings - March-April 2009**

Two public meetings will address the visioning process, requesting direction on:

- Community Vision
- Future Development Map
- Character Areas for Future Development (for Defining Narrative)

**Community Survey - April 2009**

Residents will be presented with an online survey to gauge their preferences on various planning areas

**Public Hearing for Transmittal of the Community Agenda to RDC - May 2009**

A public hearing consistent with DCA regulations will be held in May 2009

**Adoption of the Community Agenda - July 2009**

The Town Council will transmit the Agenda to the RDC and DCA in June for July adoption

**Time-line for Completion**

	March	April	May	June	July
Community Input Meetings					
Community Visioning Meetings					
Public Hearing					
Review of Community Agenda					
Adopt Community Agenda					