Community Participation Program

for the

2028 Comprehensive Plan

Columbus Consolidated Government

November 2007

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1   Introduction

Communities that have a high level of public involvement during the Comprehensive Planning process will reach a better understanding of the values and desires of community members. Capturing this vision is a critical element to designing a comprehensive plan that meets the needs of the Columbus community. With a clear understanding of what is needed and expected from the community, the most appropriate resources, policies, and programs can be established and pursued by the best means possible. This plan ensures that a cross-section of citizens as well as a diverse group of community stakeholders are actively involved in the process of defining these critical policies and tools for the community's future growth.

1.1   Purpose

The purpose of this Community Participation Program is two-fold:
1. To meet the Local Planning Requirements for the state of Georgia.
2. To establish the stakeholders, participation techniques, and schedule for completion of the Columbus Consolidated Government Community Agenda.

By fully outlining this approach in advance, the most inclusive tactics can be prepared and established by identifying key elements at the start of the planning process.

1.2   Scope

The Community Participation Program discusses three critical elements of the community involvement process: stakeholders, participation techniques, and a schedule for completion of the Community Agenda. These elements are interrelated and the adequate preparation of each will have an impact on the successful implementation of the entire plan:

- Key community stakeholders must be identified and engaged in the planning process to ensure that the participation techniques are effective.
- Similarly, identifying and developing an appropriate timeline with project milestones is necessary to ensuring community involvement and providing for appropriate public participation opportunities.

1.3   Goals

The goals of the Community Participation Program are to outline a community involvement process that is reflective of the community, provides effective input for ensuring the relevancy of the plan, and builds a sense of ownership by the community that will ensure that the plan will be adopted and implemented. The program is centered upon the objective of inclusiveness and effectiveness. Limited time and resources require that an efficient and effective process be established from the start. Within this mind frame, public awareness of plan milestones and opportunities is a foremost concern. As is discussed under participation techniques, creative communications outreach strategies have been developed.

The Community Participation Program is designed to meet the following objectives:
- Identify Stakeholders
- Identify participation techniques
- Inform the community about growth and the planning process
- Begin consensus building to maintain community support for the plan.
- Publicize the project schedule and opportunities for citizen input.

2   Stakeholders

Within the comprehensive planning process, stakeholders are considered those people or organizations that have a vested interest in the future of the community. In fact, stakeholders could be construed to include every member of the Columbus/Muscogee community. Naming all community members would be time-consuming and unnecessary. A compromise is to develop a list of key stakeholders and organizations that, at a minimum, should be involved in the planning process. These community agencies and leaders will provide checks and balances to the planning process and their active involvement and buy-in of the plan will help see-through the eventual implementation the plan.

The following group of stakeholders is amalgamated to list key stakeholders in the community ranging from elected city officials to members of the planning commission and local agencies. Other agencies and individuals will likely be identified through the planning process.

City officials and City management will play an active role in the planning process, particularly during the development of the Community Agenda.

Mayor
Jim Wetherington

Council Districts by Area
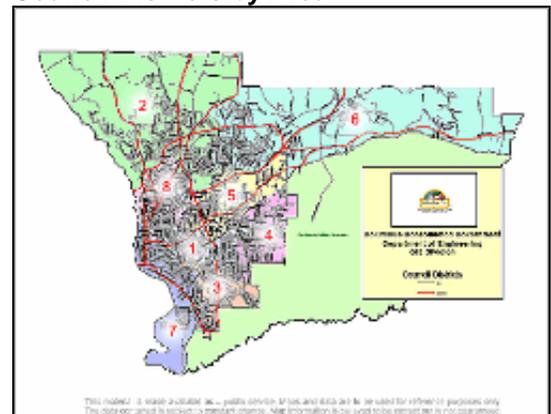
Source: City of Columbus, 2007.

City Council Members
District 1, Jerry "Pops" Barnes
District 2, Glenn Davis
District 3, Julius Hunter, Jr.
District 4, Evelyn Turner-Pugh
District 5, Mike Baker
District 6, R. Gary Allen
District 7, Evelyn "Mimi" Woodson
District 8, C.E. "Red" McDaniel
District 9 At Large, Wayne Anthony
District 10 At Large, Berry "Skip" Henderson

City Management
City Manager, Isaiah Hugley
Deputy City Manager, Lisa Goodwin
Deputy City Manager, David Arrington

Columbus Consolidated Government Department Heads
Accounting Division, Jody Davis
Airport, Mark Oropeza
City Attorney's Office, Clifton Fay
City Manager's Office, Isaiah Hugley
Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau, Peter Bowden
Community Reinvestment, Joe Riddle
Convention and Trade Center, Larry Campbell
Emergency Management, Riley Land
Engineering, Donna Newman

Facilities Maintenance, Jerry Chandler
Finance, Pamela Hodge
Fire Department, Jeff Meyer
Human Resource, Tom Barron
Inspections and Code Enforcement, Bill Duck
Keep Columbus Beautiful Commission, Gloria Weston-Smart
Metra Transit, Lisa Goodwin
Natural Resources, Tracy Hall
Parks & Recreation, Tracy Hall
Stormwater Management, Michael Burgess

The Planning Advisory Commission, the Board of Zoning Adjustment, and the Graphics Commission will provide institutional knowledge that reflects recent planning concerns and proposals.

Planning Advisory Commission
Derrick Shields, Chairperson
Shep Mullin, Vice Chairperson
Chris Henson
Jose Alexander
Brad Dodds
Karl Douglass
Bob Crane
Scott Boyce (Alternate)
Michael Eddings (Alternate)

Board of Zoning Adjustment
James Maniace, Chairman
John Haytas
John Behal
Paul Love
James Bubutiev

Graphics Commission Members
Leslie Thompson, Chairman
Kenneth Golonka, Vice-Chairman
James Bender
Elizabeth Navarro
William Palmer
Loy Wilson
Richard Machinski

Through support and leadership, the Project Management Team will bring together multiple voices and ensure that the plan reflects the joint voice of the community.

Project Management Team
Columbus Planning Director, Rick Jones
Columbus Planning Division Chief, Will Johnson
Project Manager, Gary Cornell (JJG)
Project Advisor, Joe Johnson (JJG)
Deputy Project Manager and Land Use, Jim Summerbell (JJG)
Community Facilities Planning, Marilyn Hall (Hall Consulting, Inc.)
Public Outreach, Charlotte Weber (JJG)
Market Analysis, Karen Dick (Ackerman & Co.)
Transportation, Grady Smith (JJG)
GIS, Philip Adams (JJG)
BRAC Coordination, Duke Doubleday (Ackerman & Co.)

The Technical Review Committee and Citizens Stakeholder Committee will provide oversight and guidance to the project, securing the plan's overall viability.

Technical Review Committee
Rick Jones, Director of Planning
Donna Newman, Dir. Engineering Dept.
Joe Riddle, Dir. Community Reinvestment
John Phillips, Superintendent MCSD
Lynda Temples. Transportation Planner
Mike Gaymon, President & CEO, Chamber of Commerce
Michael Burgess, Division Chief, Storm Water (Engineering Dept.)
Pamela Hodge, Finance Director, Columbus
Ron Hamlett, Traffic Engineer (Division Chief?)
Saundra Hunter, METRA Asst. Director
Tom Queen, GDOT District 3
Tony Adams, Director, Parks/Recreation
Tracy Hall, Planner (Parks and Recreation)
Will Johnson, Planning Division Chief
Gary Cornell, JJG
Jim Summerbell, JJG
Charlotte Weber, JJG

Citizens Stakeholder Committee
Richard Bishop, President & CEO - UPtown Columbus
Peter Bowden, Director - Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau
Frank Brown, President - Columbus State University
Karl Douglass, Chairman - Columbus South, Inc.
Tom Flournoy, President and Chief Operating Officer - Flournoy Development Company
Michael Gaymon, President & CEO - Columbus Chamber of Commerce
Mattie Hall
Susan Lawhorne - Historic Columbus Foundation

Carmen Lopez.
Dorothy McDaniel, Executive Director - TreesColumbus Inc.
Steve Melton, President - Columbus Bank and Trust
Eddie Obleton, Chief Student Service Officer - Muscogee County School District
Allen Page, Reverend - Holsey Chapel C.M.E
Virginia Peebles, Director - Coalition for Sound Growth
Howard Pendleton, Director - Job Training Division
John Phillips, Superintendent - Muscogee County School District
Carlos Romero, Director of American English Program - Center for International Education
Otis Scarborough, President - The Woodruff Company
Pam Siddall, Publisher - Ledger-Enquirer
Phillip Thayer, Owner - Thayer Properties
Teresa Tomlinson, Executive Director - Midtown Columbus, Inc
Billy Turner, President - Columbus Water Works
Sam Wellborn, Board Member - Georgia Department of Transportation
Len Williams, Executive Director - Housing Authority of Columbus
Walter Wojdakowski, General - Ft. Benning

Community agencies, partners, and groups will provide unique perspectives on particular aspects of the plan and help broadcast public involvement information to the community.

Significant Partners
Fort Benning
Muscogee County School District
Valley Partnership
Lower Chattahoochee Regional Development Center
Columbus Chamber of Commerce
Area religious institutes
Muscogee County School District

Area Agencies, Commissions, and Authorities
Arts Authority of Columbus
Building Authority of Columbus
Columbus, Georgia Convention & Trade Center Authority
Community Service Board, Mental Health, Mental retardation & Abuse Board
Development Authority of Columbus
Downtown Development Authority
Emergency Management Advisory Board
Family and Children Services Board
Board of Health
Hospital Authority of Columbus
Housing Authority of Columbus
Industrial and Port Development Commission
Columbus Airport Commission
Keep Columbus Beautiful
Land Bank Authority
Medical Center Hospital Authority

Recreation Advisory Board
Columbus Youth Advisory Council
Historic Columbus Foundation
Historic and Architectural Review Boar
Commission on International Relations and Cultural Liaison
South Columbus, Gallops, and Edgewood Senior Centers
Mayor's Commission on Diversity
Mayor's Commission on Economy/Efficiency/Community Service
Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities
Uptown Façade Board
Board of Water Commissioners
Neighborhood associations

Major employees will provide a voice for their employees and help lay the foundation for a public-private partnership for carrying out the plan.

Major Employers
American Family Life Assurance Company (Aflac)
St. Francis Hospital Inc.
The Medical Center Inc.
Total System Services Inc.
Wellpoint Inc.
L & S Services LLC
Synovus Financial Corporation
Logans Roadhouse Inc.
Columbus State University
Swift Textiles LLC
TSYS
Columbus Regional Healthcare
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia
Pezold Management

3 Participation Techniques

The participation techniques outlined below are jointly designed to create a community involvement program that logically builds upon itself from the first stakeholder interview to the last public hearing. These techniques will create community awareness, excitement, and support for the Comprehensive Plan. The major elements that will complete a full circle of the successful participation are project oversight, public hearings, interactive community meetings, and communication outreach strategies.

3.1 Project Oversight

The Project Management Team, identified in the previous section, will coordinate all elements of the planning process. Steps will be taken to ensure that the planning process led by this team reflects the community's needs and desires. As an element to this continuity, a list of key stakeholders and points of contact are being identified early in the planning process. Stakeholder interviews will occur to direct the focus of community meetings. In addition to these efforts, a Citizen Stakeholders Committee and Technical Review Committee will be formed to help guide the process.

3.1.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Up to 25 key stakeholders in the community will be interviewed in order to gain a better understanding of various factors that will either influence or help guide the planning process: the community's leadership, the roles of local agencies civic groups, and business organization, and the issues of local importance that will influence public policy. Data gathered from these stakeholder interviews will be reflected in the surveys/questionnaires administered to the community as well as the focus of discussions at community meetings.

In addition, these interviews will help acquaint active community members with the planning process and with opportunities for involvement. This awareness will have a snowball effect as interviewees share their knowledge with their network, abetting in the process of creating a community-wide air of excitement and awareness regarding Comprehensive Plan.

3.1.2 Technical Review Committee

The Technical Review Committee will work closely with the project team throughout the planning process. This group, consisting of local government department heads and leaders (identified in Section 2), will take on an important oversight role. This role involves meeting on a regular basis with project staff to identify appropriate strategies and potential conflicts during the planning process based upon their day-to-day work. This technique will ensure that the final result – the Community Agenda – is both realistic and achievable. The committee will review draft documents, assist in the enumeration of issues and opportunities, and provide guidance to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan is addressing critical community needs.

3.1.3 Citizens Stakeholder Committee

This committee will include key stakeholders that are representative of the various planning areas (see Figure 1: Proposed Planning Areas Map) and provide a cross-section of community members. Stakeholders serving on this committee have been identified in the previous section. The Citizens Stakeholder Committee (CSC) will meet approximately once per quarter throughout the planning process to be briefed on the status planning process and provide input on critical issues.

The CSC will be asked to take on three major roles:

1. Review and provide feedback on draft documents before they go to the Planning Commission and City Council.
2. Attend and help facilitate community meetings by providing a voice during group discussions and encouraging fellow community members to express their opinions.
3. Assure that the plan is reflective of community wants and desires by helping resolve conflicting issues related to the Agenda and plan recommendations.

The CSC will play an important role in community participation

These responsibilities require the CSC members to wear multiple hats, acting as a reviewer, leader, and facilitator throughout the process. CSC members will add continuity to the public meetings and serve as purveyors of the plan to their fellow community members.

3.2   Public Hearings

Three public hearings will be held during the planning process, leading to the final adoption of the Community Assessment, Community Participation Program, and Community Agenda. These hearings will occur at City chambers and are open to the public. After the first and second hearings, documents will be submitted to the DCA and LCRDC. The Agenda will be adopted after the final public hearing.

Figure 3-1. Public Hearings

Initial Public Hearing	Second Public Hearing	Final Public Hearing
The purpose of the first public hearing is to transmit the Community Assessment and Community Participation Program to the Lower Chattahoochee Regional Development Center (LCRDC) and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). This hearing will be the first opportunity for the public to comment on the Comprehensive Plan.	The purpose of the second hearing is to transmit the Community Agenda to the LCRDC and the DCA. The hearing will occur once all visioning exercises are complete. The floor will be open for public comment.	The purpose of the final public hearing is to adopt the Comprehensive Plan. This adoption will occur after the review and approval of the Agenda document. By the LCRDC and DCA

3.3 Tools

The following are distinctive tools that will help ensure that valuable and useful information is collected and communicated during the planning process.

3.3.1 Keypad Voting. The keypad is a unique and valuable tool at public meetings. Wireless keypads are distributed to participants with specific questions asked. The results show instantly within a PowerPoint presentation. The Activity allows all voices to be heard, not just the few who often dominate conversation. Keypad voting will be used at all Visioning Workshops and at other meetings as deemed appropriate. This technique is largely used to demonstrate majority preferences towards land use decisions but can also help clarify other policy questions that would traditional be answered through surveys/questionnaires.

3.3.2 Maps. Maps are a required element in the Comprehensive Plan documents and will play a vital role in public meetings. Maps provide community members with a better understanding of the spatial relationship with the issues and opportunities that will address. Maps will be actively used during the visioning process. The Future Development Map and Future Land Use Map will be utilized at Open Houses to give a graphical depiction of the community's vision.

3.3.3 Comment Forms. Community members will be able to communicate directly with the comprehensive planning team during all stages of the visioning and Agenda drafting process. This access will occur in the form of an online comment form. With all draft documents and meeting presentations available on the web, people can virtually attend a public meeting and immediately respond via the online comment form. This tool will help ensure that all voices of the community are able to be heard. Meeting attendees will also have the opportunity to comment directly with project staff during outbreak groups and during one-on-one discussions.

3.3.4 Survey/Questionnaires. Surveys and questionnaires will be used to gauge the public opinion on various issues and opportunities that face the community. Closed and open-ended questions will serve as important source for qualitative and quantitative data. This data will help prioritize policies and strategies during the drafting of the community Agenda. All surveys/questionnaires will be available online in addition to the public meetings.

3.4 Interactive Community Meetings

Community meetings are the most important element of Community Participation Plan implementation. The use of appropriate communications techniques, including the website, press releases, and other items, will ensure that a broad cross-section of community members are present and actively engaged in each of the community meetings. The core goal is to obtain a broad base of input from the community that will, in turn, translate into policies, strategies, and vision for the future, to include in the Community Agenda.

3.4.1 Visioning Workshops

Over the course of two months in early 2008, six visioning workshops will be held in various neighborhoods in Columbus (see Figure 1: Proposed Planning Area Map). The purpose of these meetings is to introduce the community planning process to the community and to begin discussions on the community's vision for the future. These workshops will give each area an opportunity to discuss unique local issues and establish a vision for land use and community development decisions that will contribute to formation of the of the citywide vision of the Comprehensive Plan update.

PowerPoint presentations will play an important role in meetings

Likely Tools: PowerPoint presentation, community preference survey using keypad voting, small discussion groups, survey/questionnaire

3.4.2 Strategic Framework Workshop

One Strategic Framework Workshop will occur in March 2008 to present results from Visioning Workshop and to build upon the vision that started to formulate at those meetings. This workshop will have a narrower scope, focusing upon key development patterns in the city and how to address current land use patterns and policies (including zoning) to meet the needs of the community. The workshop will focus upon specific strategies and policies to meet the community's vision.

Outbreak groups and maps will help participants articulate ideas

Likely Tools: PowerPoint presentation, small discussion groups, survey/questionnaire, mapping activity

Figure 3-2: Proposed Planning Area Map
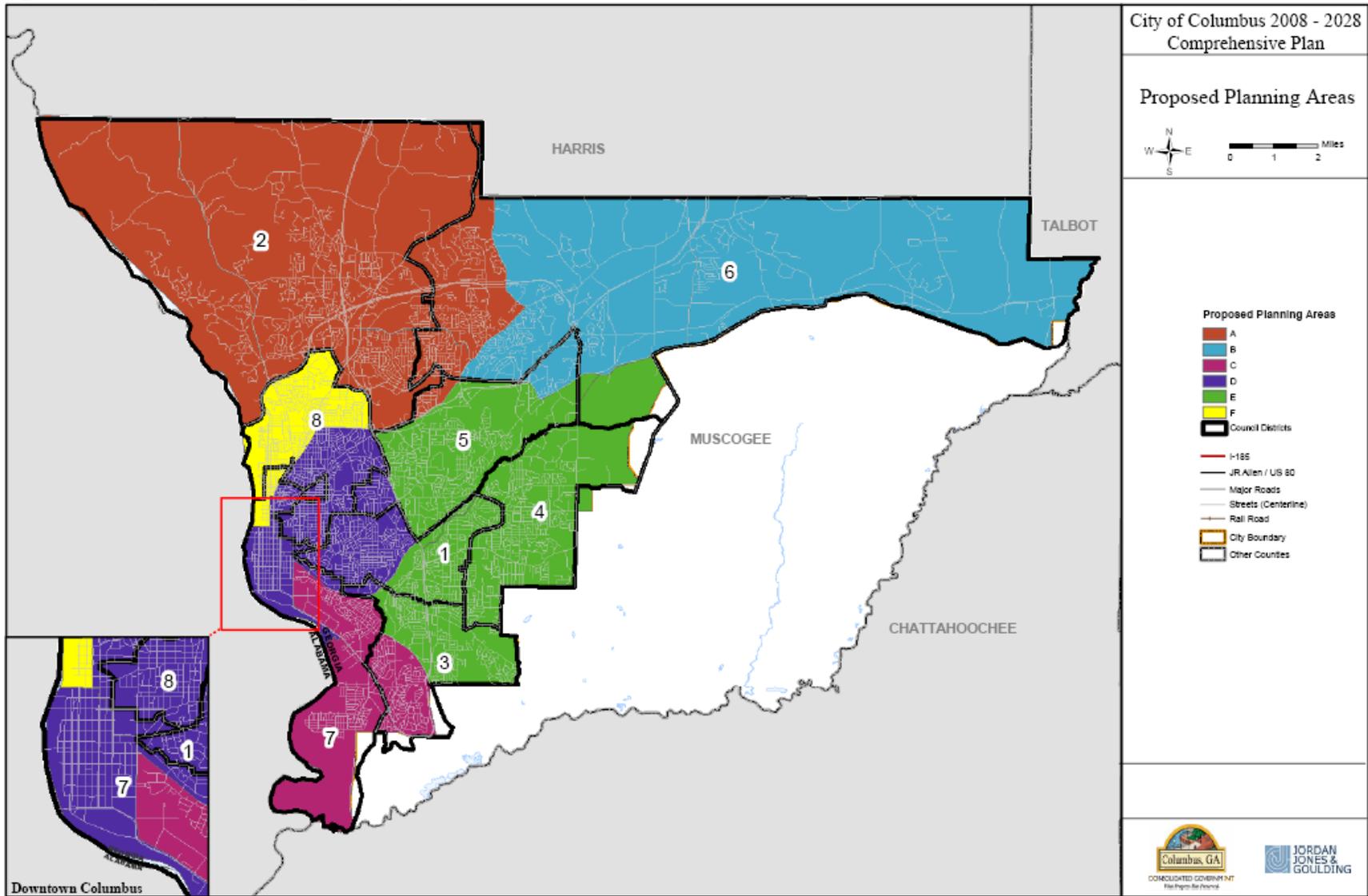
3.4.3 Open Houses

Upon completion of a draft Community Agenda, three Open House workshops will be held in various locations around the City. Each meeting will include a public presentation of the draft population and employment forecasts, the Future Development Map, the Future Land Use Map, and draft policies for each element of the plan. A summary document will be available for meeting attendees, providing an overview of recommendations for the City over the next 20 years. These meetings will occur in June 2008 and will precede the transmittal hearing for the Agenda. The Open

Maps help visualize the community's vision for the future

Houses will have an interactive, one-on-one format with participants having access to project staff to address specific concerns or questions. Maps will also play an integral role in the meeting, giving a graphic presentation of the community's vision as well as issues and concerns the community will face. This meeting will be final opportunity for community members to add their comments and contribute to edits to the Community Agenda before submittal.

Likely tools: PowerPoint presentation, maps, summary Agenda handouts, comment forms, one-on-one interaction with staff

3.5   Communications Outreach Strategies

The plan's ability to engage the community in the planning process begins with an effective communications strategy. Good communication channels will ensure that the greatest percentage of the community is aware of major milestones and events in the process. The following strategies are intended to complement each other and best reach out to segments of the community.

3.5.1 Website

The website will serve as the main data portal for community members throughout the planning process. The website will reflect up-to-date information regarding public meetings (including dates, times, and locations) and other opportunities for public involvement. All surveys/questionnaires will be available online for those who are unable to attend meetings. All Community Assessment draft documents will be posted on the website as they are approved and reviewed by staff. The project website will be linked to the City of Columbus homepage to increase community awareness of the website and the plan. The region's library system, the Chattahoochee Valley Regional Library System, will help accommodate those who do not have private access to the Internet. The library system has over 300 computers equipped with Internet access for public use.

3.5.2 Flyers/Newsletters

A series of flyers and newsletters will be created at key times to publicize upcoming community meetings, summarize input received, and discuss key issues addressed in the planning process. Flyers regarding public meetings will be drafted and distributed in both hard and electronic copies. These copies will be available at City Hall as well as other strategic locations identified by the project

team. Some potential locations for flyers include local churches, participating businesses, and civic buildings.

3.5.3 Progress Reports

Community members will likely enter the planning process during various stages of the plan's development. To help bring citizens up to speed, monthly progress reports for the Comprehensive Plan will be available for community members throughout the duration of the project. These progress reports will help community members become educated and stay informed of relevant planning activities and reports. These brief reports will provide a summary of what has been completed that month and action items for the upcoming month. Progress reports will be available at the project website.

3.5.4 Press Releases

Up to four press releases will be drafted for use by the CCG to inform the public on the planning process, meetings, and plan recommendations. Press releases with be coordinated with City staff to announce major meetings and upcoming public hearings. These press releases will be available to media groups in the community. Major media outlets in the Columbus include the following:

1. Columbus Ledger-Enquirer
2. Columbus Times
3. Phoenix City News
4. Tri-County Journal
5. The Bayonet
6. The Courier Newspaper/Eco Latino

3.5.4 Government Access Channel

The CCG's Government Access Channel will air public service clips regarding the community involvement in the Comprehensive Plan, including live broadcasts of selected public meetings. These clips will help reach community members who are unable to attend public meetings due to limited resources, time constraints, and/or limited mobility.

4 Schedule for Completion of the Comprehensive Plan

The following is a tentative schedule for the completion of the Columbus Consolidated Government Comprehensive Plan Update. The plan is tentative and subject to change, although the goal is to adopt the Comprehensive Plan in October 2008.

Figure 4-1: Tentative Schedule for Completion of Columbus Comprehensive Plan Update

Task Schedule	2007							2008										
MONTHS	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Tasks																		
1-Kick-off Meeting	x																	
2-Community Participation Program																		
3-Community Assessment																		
4-Transmittal Public Hearing						x												
5-Prepare Community Agenda																		
5.1-Community Visioning Workshops								6	x									
5.2-Strategic Framework Workshop										x								
5.3-Prepare Future Land Use Map																		
5.4-Conduct Open Houses (3)													3x					
5.5-Conduct Action Planning Workshop																		
6-Transmittal and Adoption Process														x			x	
Citizen Stakeholder Committee					x			x			x		x					
Technical Review Committee		x			x			x			x	x	x	x				

x = Meeting or Workshop

Figure 4-2: Project Milestones

Date	Event
June 14, 2007	Kick Off Meeting
June 21, 2007	First Press Release (announcing the project and the website)
July 17, 2007	Technical Review Committee Meeting #1 (2-3:30)
Aug. 10, 2007	Draft Community Participation Program for Staff Review
Sept. 21, 2007	Draft Community Assessment / Tech. Appendix for Staff Review
Oct. 16, 2007	Technical Review Committee Meeting #2 (2pm)
Oct. 16, 2007	Citizen Stakeholder Meeting #1 (4-6) unless changed by CSC
Nov. 27, 2007	Transmittal to City Council - Public Hearing
Jan. 10, 2008	Technical Review Committee Meeting #3 (2pm)
Jan. 10, 2008	Citizen Stakeholder Meeting #2 (4-6pm)
Jan. 22 – Feb 5, 2008	Visioning Workshops (6)
March 27, 2008	Strategic Framework Workshop
April 22, 2008	Technical Review Committee Meeting #4
April 22, 2008	Citizen Stakeholder Meeting #3
April 29, 2008	Draft Future Development Map
May 20, 2008	Technical Review Committee Meeting #5
May 29, 2008	Draft Future Land Use Map
June 9, 2008	Draft Community Agenda for Review
June 17, 2008	Technical Review Committee Meeting #6
June 17, 2008	Citizen Stakeholder Committee #4
June 23, 24, 26, 2008	Open Houses (3)
July 2, 2008	Draft Short Term Work Program for Review
July 8, 2008	Action Planning Workshop
July 8, 2008	Technical Review Committee Meeting #7
July 16, 2008	City Council Transmittal Hearing for Community Agenda (PAC)
July 29, 2008	Alternate. date for City Council Transmittal of Agenda
August 5, 2008	Transmittal Hearing for Community Agenda (Council)
Oct. 2008	Prepare Draft Final Plan
Oct. 2008	Adoption Hearings
Oct. 2008	Final Deliverables

Assumes

Council Meetings – *Tuesdays (1st Tuesday 5:30pm, 2nd and 3rd Tuesday 9am, 4th Tuesday - work session)*
Planning Advisory Committee – *(1st and 3rd Wednesday 9am meetings)*