

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Community Assessment

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan is the official document that guides the future of Augusta-Richmond County. It spells out a coordinated, long-term planning program for the city. The plan, when completed, will lay out a desired future for the city and guide how that future will be achieved. The Comprehensive Plan is being updated in accordance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning effective on May 1, 2005 and administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

This document is the Community Assessment component of the Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia Comprehensive Plan. The Community Assessment is one of three principal components of the Comprehensive Plan. The other two are the Community Participation Program and the Community Agenda

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPONENTS

1. **Community Assessment** – consists of an objective and professional assessment of data and information about the community.
2. **Community Participation Program** – describes the city’s strategy for ensuring adequate public and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the Community Agenda.
3. **Community Agenda** – includes a community vision for the future development of the city, a list of issues and opportunities identified for future action and an implementation program for achieving the vision.

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs, *Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning*, May 1, 2005

The Community Assessment is the starting point for the development of the entire Comprehensive Plan. The Community Assessment does this by answering the question, “Where are we as a community?” The Community Assessment analyzes existing conditions and trends in the city and identifies the preliminary issues and opportunities to be considered in developing the Community Agenda component of the Comprehensive Plan. The Community Assessment includes separate chapters on existing conditions and trends in the areas of population, housing, economic development, transportation, community facilities and services, cultural resources, natural resources and greenspace, land use and intergovernmental coordination. The document also includes an assessment of the city’s adherence to the State Quality Community Objectives.

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THE PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Compiling the Community Assessment is part of a four-step process to develop and implement the Augusta-Richmond County Comprehensive Plan. (See following text box). Public and stakeholder input and involvement are critical to every step in the process.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. Identify and analyze problems and needs; Identify preliminary issues and opportunities
2. Develop vision for the future of the city; Evaluate alternative solutions (e.g. activities, projects, initiatives) to address needs and issues
3. Select solutions that will help achieve vision and adopt appropriate goals, objectives, strategies and projects
4. Implement goals, objectives, strategies and projects

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Community Assessment is not based solely on the analysis of data about the city. It also reflects the input received to date from the general public and various stakeholders. The Community Participation Program, the second component of the Comprehensive Plan, includes more specific information about the tools and techniques used to obtain community input and the complete schedule for completing the Comprehensive Plan.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following tables summarize the preliminary issues and opportunities included in the Community Assessment part of the Augusta-Richmond County Plan update. The issues and opportunities come from several sources including verbal comments made during public meetings, written surveys completed by the general public and other stakeholders, the analysis of existing development patterns, demographic data and other information about the city.

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POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Projected low population growth rate over next 20 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stress low cost of living in Augusta <input type="checkbox"/> Stress presence of high-quality medical facilities, care and programs <input type="checkbox"/> Stress the city's wide range of educational, recreational and cultural programs and services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Near-term decline in the school-age population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increase number of young families <input type="checkbox"/> Retain more young adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increase in the number of one and two-person households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Promote construction of housing for smaller households
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increase in the number of older adults and the elderly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in facilities and services that are attractive to retirees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increase in education levels for the resident population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in improvements to education facilities and services that facilitate life-long learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> :Lower than average median household and per capita income levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attract jobs that pay higher than average wages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Higher than average poverty levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in programs and services that empower poverty-level households to become self-sufficient

HOUSING	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Need for more affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> New housing construction by private developers / homebuilders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Need to stabilize and revitalize housing stock in older neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Housing rehabilitation and new construction by non-profit organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Providing housing for the homeless and other special-needs populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement projects and programs in the City's Homeless Assistance Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of dilapidated and boarded-up housing in several neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Code enforcement by the city in neighborhoods with high concentrations of vacant / dilapidated housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of vacant lots in many neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to implement land bank program <input type="checkbox"/> Offer incentives to private builders to construct new houses on vacant lots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide housing in a mix of styles, sizes and price ranges throughout the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement financial assistance programs to assist low and moderate-income homeowners, renters and first-

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HOUSING	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
	time homebuyers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Need for incentives for developers to invest in older neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Target financial and technical assistance programs to developers to provide affordable housing ❑ City financing of inner-city revitalization projects and programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Increase marketing of homes and neighborhoods, especially those located in south Augusta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Work with Board of Realtors on a marketing program

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Need for more shopping / retail and entertainment options, especially in east and south Augusta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ More direct marketing of the community to retailers and developers ❑ Expanding missions at Fort Gordon ❑ Expansion of medical education, research and care facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Continued diversification of the economic and employment base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Market existing industrial sites and office parks ❑ Targeted marketing of the city to businesses and investors in the following industry groups: life sciences, customer service, aviation and military
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Retain and expand existing businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Augusta Corporate Park – attract business and industry to the park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Local unemployment rate is higher than state and U.S. averages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Job training programs and financial incentives for business investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Adaptive reuse of older commercial centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Implement redevelopment strategy for former Regency Mall and surrounding area ❑ Implement recommendations in the Corridor & Gateway Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Downtown revitalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Private investment in downtown businesses ❑ Adaptive reuse of historic structures for downtown housing and pending construction of new condominium units ❑ Construction of Trade, Entertainment and Exhibit Center ❑ Pending update of the Downtown

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	Development Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Attracting / expanding business investment in inner-city neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Enterprise Zone Program incentives ❑ Tax Allocation District ❑ Implementation of the projects in the 3rd Level Canal Study ❑ Kroc Center Project

TRANSPORTATION	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ High percentage of all trips by automobile. Three-quarters of workers drive to work alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Encourage use of alternative modes of transportation, use of public transportation, telecommuting, flexible work schedules and carpooling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Facilities for pedestrians and bikers are limited, especially in suburban and rural parts of the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Implement projects in the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2003) ❑ Install sidewalks on collectors and arterials to connect neighborhoods ❑ Make sidewalks mandatory in new subdivisions ❑ Participate in the Safe Routes to School Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Public expressed a desire for an increase in the level and frequency of public transportation service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Update Transit Development Plan for Augusta Public Transit ❑ Consider / implement alternative sources of financing for public transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Evidence of congestion on some major roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Implement components of an Intelligent Transportation System to make more efficient use of existing roads and freeways
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Limited funding for road improvement projects and public transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Explore / implement alternative financing options for transportation projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Impact of car and truck emissions on air quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Take proactive steps to implement air quality initiatives under the auspices of the CSRA Air Quality Alliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Integrate freight transportation needs into regional transportation planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Complete Regional Freight Transportation Plan and implement recommendations

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COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Address space needs for general government administration, judicial system and public safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing renovations to Municipal Building <input type="checkbox"/> Pending construction of new judicial center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve stormwater drainage to reduce flooding on streets, sidewalks and private property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Program improvements to stormwater drainage systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Providing adequate public education facilities. Improving the perception of the Richmond County school system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement Phase III School Improvement Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Providing public water and sewer service to meet projected needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement water and sewer improvement projects outlined in the Water & Sewerage Revenue Bonds, Series 2004, Engineer's Report, November 2004.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Providing adequate solid waste collection and disposal services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement improvement projects in the updated Solid Waste Management Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide expanded park and recreation facilities to meet projected demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement projects included in Recreation Department's master plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Financing of desired community facility improvement projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Extension of the special purpose local option sales tax
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make all public facilities accessible to the handicapped and disabled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of City's ADA Plan

CULTURAL RESOURCES	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Updating and consolidating the local historic resource surveys that are 20-30 years old. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation Fund grants for survey, nomination and planning projects <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia Historic Resource Survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stabilize and protect resources that are threatened by neglect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia Heritage Grant Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Update the Augusta-Richmond County Historic Preservation Plan (ca. 1991) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation Fund grants for survey, nomination and planning projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Technical support for Augusta Historic Preservation Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Training sponsored by the Georgia Alliance of Preservation Commissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Financial assistance for preservation and adaptive reuse of historic properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Tax Incentives Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia Preferential Property Tax Assessment Program <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia Income Tax Credit Program

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND GREENSPACE	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<input type="checkbox"/> Protection of water quality and quantity	<input type="checkbox"/> Implement structural and non-structural best management practices to protect water quality
<input type="checkbox"/> Protection of air quality	<input type="checkbox"/> CSRA Clean Air Alliance
<input type="checkbox"/> Prevent soil erosion	<input type="checkbox"/> Education and training about best management practices <input type="checkbox"/> Enforcement of soil erosion and sediment control ordinance
<input type="checkbox"/> Preserve additional open space	<input type="checkbox"/> Continue to implement the Community Greenspace Program with assistance from the CSRA Land Trust and others <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage development of more conservation subdivisions

LAND USE	
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<input type="checkbox"/> Sprawl pattern of development	<input type="checkbox"/> Promote more infill development <input type="checkbox"/> Confine commercial development to major intersections <input type="checkbox"/> Promote more mixed-use development <input type="checkbox"/> Explore alternatives to conventional development patterns
<input type="checkbox"/> Protection of neighborhood integrity	<input type="checkbox"/> Update neighborhood plans and / or complete small area studies <input type="checkbox"/> Amend development regulations as appropriate to buffer neighborhoods from other land uses
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve community appearance / gateways	<input type="checkbox"/> Gateway enhancements <input type="checkbox"/> Explore overlay district design guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/> Redevelopment of CBD and inner-city neighborhoods	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify opportunities for infill and redevelopment projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Some parts of the city lack a readily identifiable “sense of place”	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify appropriate areas for implementing town center or similar concept