

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT: 2016 Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan

DATE OF MEETING: October 11<sup>th</sup> 2016

BUDGET IMPACT:

FUNDING SOURCE:

Annual     SPLOST     Capital     N/A

Regular Meeting (x)  
Work Session (x)  
Recommendation (x)  
Policy/Discussion ( )  
Report ( )

ACTION REQUESTED ON:

2016 Greater Lowndes County Comprehensive Plan  
Adoption Consideration

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HISTORY, FACTS AND ISSUES:

The main purposes of the comprehensive plan are communication and guidance. The communication aspects of the plan help communicate both the current conditions and the potential future conditions of the community. The information in the plan on current conditions takes the form of a photograph or snapshot of the community while the potential future conditions takes the form of a broader painting or sketch. Shifting to the purpose related to guidance, at its foundation the comprehensive plan and its role in guiding the community is as a recommending document. That being said those recommendations do have tethers to requirements. Brass tacks of the requirements that have been increasing in recent years are most commonly reflected in a framework of how staff evaluates various information that is decided upon by elected officials such as rezoning cases, telecommunication cases, and text amendments. Beyond those elected official decisions, the most common second set of requirements are normally found in the pursuit of various grants. It is now more common for grant criteria to include an analysis of the compressive plan with relation to the project or service being pursued. In the lightest form of analysis the grant may ask a question about consistency with the comprehensive plan. In a heavier form the grant may be looking for a specific listing of the project or service being pursued.

For the better part of the last year staff at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC)<sup>1</sup>, has worked on updated drafts of the Comprehensive Plan for each of the Greater Lowndes local governments. In addition to SGRC staff, input on the plan has been obtained from local government staff, elected officials, community organizations, and members of the public. This request represents official LCBOC consideration of the 2016 Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan. Pending LCBOC direction and adoption, this plan is still able to be changed through official LCBOC consideration. For future reference, typical Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) schedules set the next required updates to the plan in 2021 and 2026. It should also be noted that while the plan has been prepared jointly by the SGRC each individual local government is responsible for the adoption of their own Comprehensive Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> The plans dominant authors at the SGRC have been Ariel Godwin (Planning), Julia Shewchuk (Planning), Michael Rivera (GIS), and Corey Hull (Transportation).

Overall, the two major changes to the plan since its last series of updates<sup>2</sup> are the following:

1. DCA Rules. DCA has completed major revisions to the rules governing comprehensive plan preparation. Overall, the current rules are less stringent and give more freedom to the local governments to determine how detailed or intensive their plan should be. Additionally, the rules also now further highlight the state’s initiatives on water planning<sup>3</sup> and environmental protection<sup>4</sup>.
2. Previous plans have been more focused on land use. The current draft still has a land use element with the important Character Area or Future Development Map. However, staff has focused on letting this plan try to represent issues that go beyond land use in an attempt to better represent the community. For example staff has made efforts to ensure that the community’s recent attention to animal welfare and sinkholes are represented.

Concerning public input, the two required VDT notices have been published and the public hearings were previously held in January and June of this year. In addition to the two required public hearings, a range of two to seven extra public hearings have either taken place or are scheduled to take place, and an additional seven public workshops have been held to help with the preparation of various plan elements. Communications about these various extra hearings, meetings, and the availability of the plan related information was made through multiple e-mails to an e-mail list of 350+ individuals/organizations. The last public hearing was held by the GLPC during their September regular meeting. No one spoke during the public hearing portion and ultimately the GLPC recommended for the plans approval by an 8-0 vote. Additionally, please remember that this document is still eligible for changes and, should the LCBOC so choose to request additional time to review the plan, the LCBOC could table this request to the October 25<sup>th</sup> meeting and still meet the current DCA deadline of October 31<sup>st</sup>.

OPTIONS:

1. Approve
2. Approve with Conditions
3. Table
4. Deny

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Option #1 Approve and Authorize the Chairman to Sign the Attached Resolution

DIVISION: Planning

County Planner: Jason Davenport 

  
County Manager

Action by the Board: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup> The major updates to the Comprehensive Plan in the last 10 years are as follows: 2006 Updates (Overall Plan), 2009 Updates (Future Development Map, Character Areas, & Goals and Policies), 2011 Updates (Report of Accomplishments (ROA) and Short-term Work Program (STWP)).

<sup>3</sup> Information about the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water plan may be found here: <http://www.suwanneesatilla.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Protected environmental resources for Lowndes County currently include: Wetlands, Groundwater Recharge Areas, River Corridors, and Water Supply Watersheds.