

**Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Office of Planning and Quality Growth**

***Requirements for a Partial Update  
To the  
Local Government Comprehensive Plan  
March 2007***

***Purpose***

The purpose of the Partial Update to the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a document for use as a policy guide for local governments in the interim period between Comprehensive Plan Updates. Partial Updates should:

- generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community;
- engage the interest of citizens in implementing the plan; and
- Provide a guide to everyday decision-making for use by local government officials and other community leaders.

When implemented, the resulting plan will help the community address critical issues and opportunities during the interim, transitional period between Comprehensive Plan Updates resulting from a shift in the statewide Comprehensive Plan Recertification Schedule.

***Required Components***

**For local governments updating comprehensive plans prepared under the 2004 and prior Minimum Planning Standards a partial update will require:**

1. **A Quality Community Objectives (QCO) assessment**
  - a. Evaluate the community's current policies, activities, and development patterns for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives (see section 110-12-1-.06(3) of the Local Planning Requirements). An assessment tool useful for this purpose is provided on the Department's website. Use this analysis to identify issues and opportunities for adapting local activities, development patterns and implementation practices to the Quality Community Objectives applicable to your community.
2. **An analysis of Areas Requiring Special Attention**
  - a. Evaluate the existing land use patterns and trends within the jurisdiction of the local government (including areas that are likely to be annexed within the planning period) to identify any areas requiring special attention, including:
    - i. Areas of significant natural or cultural resources, particularly where these are likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development
    - ii. Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur

- iii. Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation
    - iv. Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness (including strip commercial corridors)
    - v. Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated
    - vi. Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites)
    - vii. Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole.
  - b. Indicate the identified Areas Requiring Special Attention on a map of the community.
- 3. **Identification of Issues and Opportunities** resulting from the QCO assessment and analysis of Areas Requiring Special Attention. Each of these issues or opportunities must be followed up with corresponding implementation measures in the Implementation Program.
- 4. **An updated Implementation Program** with revisions as necessary to address the additional Issues and Opportunities identified above. The updated Implementation Program should include:
  - a. A **Short Term Work Program (required)** that identifies specific implementation actions the local government, or other entities, intends to take during the interim planning period. This program should include any ordinances, administrative systems (such as site plan review, design review, etc.), community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to implement the plan. The Short Term Work Program must include the following information for each listed activity:
    - i. Brief description of the activity
    - ii. Timeframe for undertaking the activity
    - iii. Responsible party for implementing the activity
    - iv. Estimated cost (if any) of implementing the activity
    - v. Funding source(s), if applicable
  - b. **Long-Term and Ongoing Activities (optional):** Identify specific long-term or ongoing implementation activities to be undertaken beyond the interim planning period.
  - c. **Policies (required):** Include any policies the local government will adopt to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with addressing the identified Issues and Opportunities. Refer to recommended policies listed in the State Planning Recommendations for suggestions.
  - d. **A Report of Accomplishments (required)** that must identify the current status of each activity in the previous STWP. At a minimum, local governments must indicate activities that:

- Have been completed;
- Are currently underway (including a projected completion date);
- Have been postponed (explaining why); or
- Have not been accomplished and are no longer activities the local government intends to undertake (explaining why).

**For local governments updating comprehensive plans prepared under the 2005 Local Planning Requirements (current requirements) a partial update will require:**

- An evaluation of the plan and the government’s progress with implementation of its plan (a Report of Accomplishments)
- An updated QCO Assessment indicating the local government's progress toward achieving the Quality Community Objectives identified as “pursued” in each character area in the Community Agenda
- An updated STWP with revisions as necessary to address issues and opportunities identified above.
- A Report of Accomplishments that must identify the current status of each activity in the previous STWP. At a minimum, local governments must indicate activities that:
  - Have been completed;
  - Are currently underway (including a projected completion date);
  - Have been postponed (explaining why); or
  - Have not been accomplished and are no longer activities the local government intends to undertake (explaining why).

***Procedural Requirements***

1. **Transmittal and Review of the Partial Update.** Upon completion, the local government must submit its Partial Update to the regional development center for review. The update must be completed well in advance of the local government’s recertification date, in order to allow adequate time for review prior to adoption.
  - a. **Required Public Hearing.** The required public hearing must be held once the draft Partial Update has been made available for public review, but prior to its transmittal to the regional development center. The purpose of this hearing is to brief the community on the identified issues and opportunities (based on the QCO analysis and the identified Areas Requiring Special Attention) that will be addressed through the updated Implementation Program, allow the community an opportunity to comment, and notify the community of when these plan components will be transmitted to the regional development center. Once public comments have been addressed, the Partial Update must be transmitted to the regional development center by resolution of the governing body.
  - b. **Completeness Check.** The regional development center shall determine whether the Partial Update is complete, within seven days of receipt. A Partial Update that does not meet the standard for completeness (as determined by the Department) shall be deemed incomplete and shall not be accepted for further review by the regional development center or be forwarded to the Department for review. The regional development center

shall notify the local government of its findings regarding the completeness of the submittal and identify items that must be submitted, if any, prior to further processing. The regional development center shall forward a complete submittal to the Department immediately upon making the completeness finding.

- c. **Notification of Interested Parties.** Once the regional development center has determined that the Partial Update is complete, it shall immediately notify any interested parties of the availability of the submittal for review and comment, providing the name of the local government, the general nature of the submittal and a deadline by which comments must be received. At a minimum, interested parties shall include:
  - i. Local governments inside or outside the regional development center's region that are contiguous to the submitting local government, and other local governments that are likely to be affected by the Partial Update
  - ii. Any local authorities, special districts, or other entities identified in evaluating intergovernmental coordination mechanisms and processes (if applicable)
  - iii. Regional development centers that are contiguous to the local government or that are likely to be affected by the Partial Update
  - iv. Affected state agencies (including the Department of Transportation, the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, etc.) and the Department.
- d. **Regional Hearing:** Within 25 days after certification of the completeness of the Partial Update the regional development center may (at its sole discretion) conduct a hearing at which any local government, regional development center or other local, regional, or state agency may present its views on the Community Agenda. The rules for conducting such hearings must be adopted by the board of directors of the regional development center and approved by the Department.
- e. **Regional Development Center Review:** The regional development center shall review the Partial Update for potential conflicts with plans of neighboring jurisdictions, opportunities for inter-jurisdictional/regional solutions to common issues, and consistency with the adopted Regional Agenda for the regional development center's region.
- f. **Department Review:** The Department shall review the Partial Update for compliance with the planning requirements. This review may result in identification of deficiencies that must be satisfactorily resolved by the community in order for the Community Agenda to be found "in compliance" with the planning requirements. The Department may also offer advisory comments for improving the Partial Update for consideration by the local government. The Department's findings and recommendations resulting from its review, including advisory comments, shall be transmitted to the regional development center for inclusion in the final report within 35 days after certification of the completeness of the Partial Update.

- g. **Final Report of Findings and Recommendations:** Within 40 days after certification of the completeness of the Partial Update, the regional development center must transmit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the local government and to the Department. The report must include:
  - i. Comments submitted by interested parties that reviewed the Partial Update and (if applicable) a summary of the regional review hearing, detailing any significant issues raised at the hearing
  - ii. The regional development center's findings from its Intergovernmental and Consistency review of the Partial Update and its recommendations for addressing such findings
  - iii. A copy of the Department's findings and recommendations resulting from its review of the Partial Update.
- h. **Petition for Reconsideration:** Within ten days after the regional development center's findings and recommendations are made public, a submitting local government that disagrees with the recommendations may petition the regional development center for a "reconsideration hearing." This hearing shall be scheduled and held by the regional development center within 15 days after receipt of such a request. Within 10 days after the reconsideration hearing, the Department and the regional development center shall either continue or modify the original findings and recommendations and provide written notice of the decision to the submitting local government.
- i. **Conflict Mediation:** Informal or formal mediation of conflicts relating to the Partial Update may be initiated in accordance with the Rules for Mediation of Inter-jurisdictional Conflicts adopted by the Board of Community Affairs.
- j. **Adoption of the Partial Update.** Once the Partial Update has been found by the Department to be in compliance with the planning requirements, the governing body may adopt the Partial Update with or without any recommendations for improvement included in the Final Report of Findings and Recommendations. However, in no event shall a local government take any official action to adopt a Partial Update prepared in accordance with the planning requirements until 60 days after the Partial Update has been certified by the regional development center as complete. If the local government has petitioned for reconsideration, this mandatory review period shall be 90 days. In order to maintain Qualified Local Government certification, the local government must adopt the approved Partial Update prior to its recertification date, but in no case later than one year after completion of the mandatory review period for the Partial Update.
- k. **Notification of Local Adoption:** Within seven days of local adoption of a Partial Update that has been found by the Department to comply with planning requirements, the local government shall notify the regional development center in writing. Within seven days of receipt of this written notice, the regional development center shall notify the Department that

the Partial Update found in compliance with planning requirements has been adopted by the local government.

1. **Qualified Local Government Certification:** Once the Department has been notified by the regional development center that a local government has adopted a Partial Update that complies with the planning requirements, the Department may issue a letter certifying this local government as a Qualified Local Government. Qualified Local Government certification shall automatically expire approximately five years from the previous recertification date, unless otherwise specified. To retain Qualified Local Government certification, a local government must remain in compliance with the requirements outlined in these planning requirements and O.C.G.A. 50-8-2(a)(18).
- m. **Publicizing the Partial Update.** Once adopted by the local government, the availability of the Partial Update must be publicized by the local government for public information. This requirement may be met by providing notice in a local newspaper of general circulation identifying where a complete copy of the Partial Update may be reviewed.