

**A Common Community Vision
for Greater Lowndes County**



A Common Community Vision for Greater Lowndes County

Prepared by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Valdosta Urbanized Area.

January 2014



www.sgrc.us/transportation

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RESOLUTION FY2014-4
VALDOSTA-LOWNDES
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY COMMITTEE

Resolution to ADOPT the Common Community Vision Report

WHEREAS, in accordance with the U.S. Bureau of the Census officially designated Urbanized Area Boundaries established May 1, 2002 and updated on November 1, 2012 ; and

WHEREAS, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) has been designated by the Governor of Georgia as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Valdosta-Lowndes Urbanized Area in accordance with Federal requirements of Title 23, Section 134 of the United States Code to have a Cooperative, Comprehensive and Continuous transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, the MPO will conduct federally-required transportation planning activities that will improve the transportation system and help coordinate the area's future growth within the area bounded, at a minimum, by the existing Urbanized Area plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS, the MPO is required through the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) to incorporate the planning factors identified in 23 USC 134 (h); and

WHEREAS, the local governments in the State of Georgia are required to develop Community Goals in accordance with O.C.G.A 110-12-1-.03

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization's Policy Committee

Adopts the Greater Lowndes County Common Community Vision Report as the basis for developing goals and performance measures for the 2040 Transportation Plan; and

Encourages local, regional and state governments, departments, authorities, agencies, non-profits, and local businesses to use the Greater Lowndes County Common Community Vision Report as a basis to cooperatively work to implement their own plans, programs and projects for a better community.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee at a meeting held on January 29, 2014.



Jason Davenport, Planner, Lowndes County
Chair, Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization

Background and Introduction

In 2003, the Valdosta and Lowndes County urbanized area surpassed the minimum 50,000 population threshold to become a Metropolitan Planning Area. With this designation came the requirement to form a Metropolitan Planning Organization for the purpose of ensuring that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs be based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (3-C) planning process. The resulting Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making body made up of representatives from the local governments and transportation agencies with authority and responsibility in the metropolitan planning area.

One of the primary responsibilities of an MPO is to develop, and periodically update, a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that fosters (1) mobility and access for people and goods, (2) efficient system performance and preservation, and (3) good quality of life. The Valdosta-Lowndes MPO is required to update its current long range transportation plan (LRTP) by September 2015. The initial phases of this update process began in early 2013.

Prior to the initiation of the update process, it came to the attention of MPO staff that several other community-wide planning efforts would be underway during the same time period (2013 – 2016). These efforts included the update of the Greater Lowndes County Comprehensive Plan and the City of Valdosta Housing Plan update among others. In addition, there are over 20 strategic and comprehensive plans guiding the growth and development of local governments, organizations and agencies. While these local plans cover vastly different subject material, there is a great deal of overlap in the goals, objectives and policies contained in the plans. However, no coordination or consistency has been put into the different plans, even though there are common themes and categories within them all.

Consequently, all 20 plus plans which govern the growth and development of our communities, health organizations, schools, universities, economic development agencies and many other institutions do not follow any common vision or goals. Therefore, staff and local officials felt that part of the update of the LRTP should include the review of local plans, and the development of a common vision which could be utilized to unite all local planning efforts. This common vision became known as the Lowndes/Valdosta Common Community Vision, and involved a thorough and comprehensive review, analysis and public outreach effort to ensure a current, comprehensive and coordinated vision and set of goals for the community were developed.

This document will detail the methodology used to identify the common themes and categories amongst the local plans, the varied and lengthy public involvement processes used to ensure a current and relevant set of goals and vision were developed, and the resulting goals, objectives and vision statement.

Concept and Benefit

The concept behind this endeavor was to identify the common themes that run through the multitude of local growth, development and strategic plans. Once identified, the common themes could be

“...lay out a road map for the community’s future, developed through a very public process involving community leaders and stakeholders...” DCA 110-12-1-.03 (1)

consolidated and shaped into a set of shared, high level goals that would be the basis for a common vision that all local organizations could utilize to guide the growth and development of their mission. These common goals would also fulfill the requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Rules for Comprehensive Planning and the eight Emphasis Areas required for local Long Range

Transportation Plans by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Furthermore, establishing a single set of goals that all local organizations may incorporate into their plans would provide a unified vision to the community. As a result, all those organizations are brought into a common approach to local growth and development. Moving forward under these goals, all organizations work together toward the improvement of the community.

Methodology

As MPO staff began the process, the first step was to identify the organizations and institutions which had an active, adopted plan (a full listing of the plans and organizations is available as an appendix). This included both in-house discussions, contact with local experts and organizations, and feedback provided through the public input process. Once identified, the plans were obtained either electronically via websites or direct contact with the organization.

There were a great number of organizations utilizing a strategic, comprehensive, master or other growth and development plan. The range of plans were diverse, covering areas of health and safety, education, economic development, land use, environment, social justice and housing, to name a few. While the plans covered a great variety of subjects, common themes and categories were, as suspected, present. In order to effectively identify and consolidate the most important themes and categories that were actively being utilized as a guide to the organization or community’s

1. Support economic vitality, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for all users
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for all uses
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system

From the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005)

Figure 1 FHWA Planning Factors

growth and development, staff focused on the goals, objectives and some policies included in each plan.

Approximately twenty-six plans were reviewed. The vast majority of these plans (23 plans) did, in fact, utilize specific goals and objectives to focus their growth and development efforts. While the goals and policies utilized in each plan were concentrated primarily on that organization or document's primary mission or focus area, there was a considerable amount of overlap between focus areas/categories. For example, while the Chamber of Commerce's Strategic Plan focused primarily on economic and business development issues, there were (due to natural overlaps) policies and goals that focused on transportation, quality of life, land use issues, etc. This "natural overlap" occurred within most of the plans reviewed by staff.

The review of existing plans produced more than 1,200 goal and objective statements. Staff were able to consolidate and condense these into 116 statements in 10 different categories. These categories are listed below.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Economic Development | 2. Land Use |
| 3. Education | 4. Natural Resources |
| 5. Health and Safety | 6. Quality of Life |
| 7. Housing | 8. Transportation |
| 9. Intergovernmental Coordination | 10. Utilities and Infrastructure |

Public Involvement

In addition to these goals and objectives, current community input needed to be identified. The 20 plus plans that were reviewed had been developed over many years, and had varying degrees of public involvement. In order to ensure that the goals and objectives brought into the Common Community Vision project were current, and reflected the opinions, values and priorities of the community today, an extensive public outreach effort was undertaken.

MPO staff held three public meetings to solicit general public input on the Common Community Vision. Two of the meetings were held at 6 p.m. in the evening, at a local community center and the regional library facility. A third meeting was held as a Lunch and Learn at the offices of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. At the meetings, staff directed conversations regarding the strengths, weakness, and challenges within the community in each of the ten categories identified above. The public comments were recorded and consolidated with the existing goals and policies which were identified in the plan review process described above. The comments helped focus the recommended goals and objectives on current opportunities, issues and areas that are important to local residents.

In addition to holding the two public meetings, MPO staff reached out to the community to offer workshops, lunch and learn opportunities and presentations for local organizations. Staff traveled to meetings of the Civic Roundtable, Family Connections, the Valdosta North Rotary Club, the TitleTown Toastmaster Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Valdosta Kiwanis Club. Since staff often had only a limited time to solicit comments at these meetings, staff focused the discussions on specific categories that the organization identified as most important.

Throughout the public comment period for the Common Community Vision project, staff elicited comments from the general public via website surveys and social media. On the Valdosta-Lowndes

Metropolitan Planning Organization's Facebook page, staff posed several questions to readers every day. Each week questions would be posted on a specific category. Every day of that week, 2 or 3 questions relating to that category would be posted throughout the day at the highest traffic times. Follow up questions were typically provided for any comments received. In this manner, staff were able to reach hundreds of local and regional residents with over 140 questions, and received several thoughtful comments.

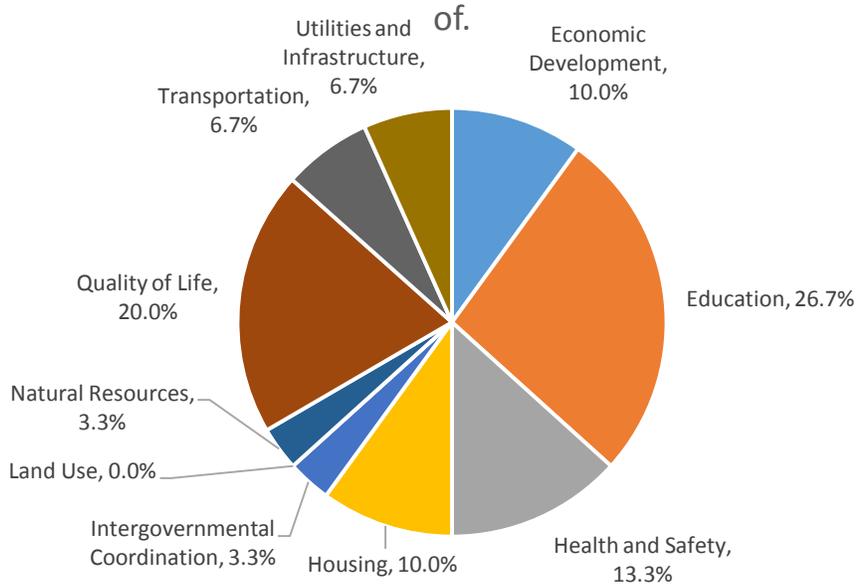
Staff also reached out to the general public via an online survey posted on the MPO's website. The survey asked respondents to identify the category in which the community is the strongest, and the category which the community needs the most improvement. It then went on to ask the respondents to rank the categories, and provide specific areas of strength and needed improvement. The survey was developed through an online survey provider, and ran for the two months of public input (October through November, 2013). While response was relatively low the input received (see charts on next page) were generally in line with the other public comments received.

Another opportunity for public input was developed as a Photo Contest. The contest was open to the public, and involved contestants taking picture of what they loved most about Valdosta and Lowndes County, or what they thought needed the most improvement in the community. The photos were to be posted to the MPO's Facebook page with the hashtag #ILoveValdostaLowndes, or #ChangeValdostaLowndes. While the contest provided a creative way for local residents to provide input on the process in a graphic, nonverbal manner, unfortunately no photos were received.

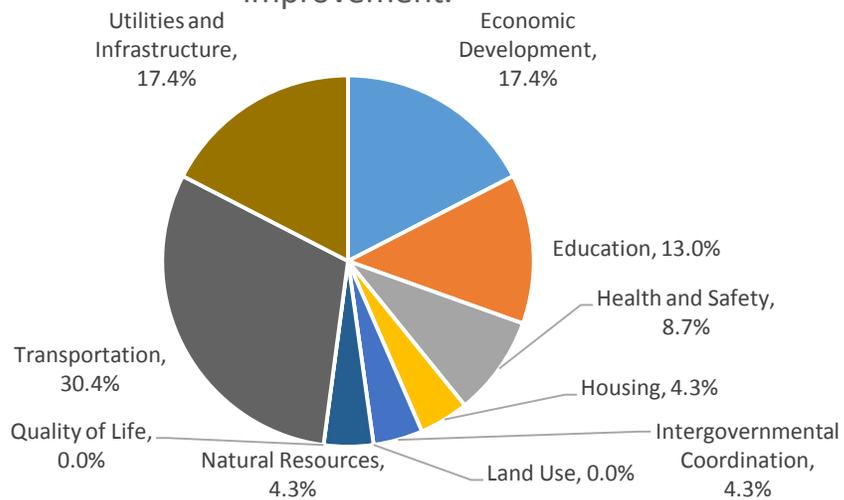
The final phase of the public input process was to reach out to experts in each category for specific review and comment. This was the only group provided data from the original plan review process as part of their comment opportunity.

The experts were selected through an initial internal identification process. Several of the initial selections were then contacted and requested to identify any additional local experts within their category to be included on the panel. The panel was asked to review the over 800 statements been collected from the more than 20 local plans and the public input received. In conjunction with their review, the panel was asked to provide their own expert thoughts on their respective categories, as well as general input on all ten categories. This input was then utilized by staff as it pulled all public input together, and worked to consolidate the plan policies and the public input statements into a vision and goal statements.

Pick 1 of the following 10 categories below which Lowndes County and the local communities are MOST EFFECTIVE at, and which you are most proud of.



Pick 1 of the following 10 categories listed below that Lowndes County and the local communities are LEAST EFFECTIVE at, and which need the most improvement.



Common Categories and Themes

As referenced above, the review of the local strategic, master and comprehensive plans currently being utilized to govern the growth and development of local communities and organizations in the MPO area yielded over 1,200 goals and policies, which staff was able to organize into ten major categories (in bold). Staff also identified themes repeated within individual plans, as well as between different plans. These categories and themes are listed below.

1) Economic Development

- a) Collaboration
- b) Economic Engines (large employers)
- c) Infrastructure (utilities/community facilities)
- d) Land Use/Development
- e) Small Business
- f) Workforce Readiness

2) Education (K-12, Higher Education, Public/Private)

- a) Education (generally)
- b) K-12
- c) Higher Education
- d) Workforce Training

3) Health and Safety (Health, Police, Fire, Emergency Management

- a) Disaster Recovery (mitigate disaster impacts to recover quickly)
- b) Facilities/Infrastructure (utilities/community facilities)
- c) Education/Awareness
- d) Land Use Development
- e) Public Safety (Police/Fire)
- f) Healthy Lifestyles

4) Housing

- a) Affordable Housing
- b) Community Appearance
- c) Housing Program Awareness
- d) Land Use Development

5) Intergovernmental Coordination

- a) Coordination
- b) Engage Stakeholders
- c) Funding
- d) University Relationships

6) Land Use

- a) Coordination
- b) Community Appearance
- c) Conservation
- d) Economic Engines (large employers)
- e) Infrastructure (community facilities)
- f) Land Use Development

g) Engage Stakeholders

7) Natural Resources

- a) Air Quality
- b) Conservation
- c) Education/Awareness
- d) Environmental Quality (generally)
- e) Historic (museums, buildings, etc.)
- f) Land Use Development
- g) Recreation Facilities
- h) Solid Waste

8) Quality of Life (Recreation, Cultural, Historic)

- a) Cultural (music, theater, etc.)
- b) Recreation Facilities
- c) Historic (museums, buildings, etc.)
- d) Recreation Programs

9) Transportation

- a) Airport
- b) Connectivity
- c) Education/Awareness
- d) Land Use Development
- e) Multi-modal (bicycles, pedestrians, trucks, rail, etc.)
- f) Public Transit
- g) Safety/Operations
- h) Engage Stakeholders

10) Utilities/Infrastructure (Water, Sanitary/Storm Sewer, Community Facilities)

- a) Capital Investment
- b) Utility/Facility Location
- c) Land Use Development

It was expected that the identified themes within the categories would overlap. This was indeed the case, as is evident in the list above. For example, Education and Awareness is a theme in several categories, as well as being a separate category. The same goes for Land Use and several other themes and categories. The interconnectedness of even these ten separate categories is thus exemplified. It is important to keep these common threads within the categories to accurately represent the natural connections between categories.

Common Community Vision – Goal Statements

At the end of these thorough review, analysis and public input phases of this project, MPO staff were able to develop the following 19 goal statements. The statements concisely bring together the goals, themes and focus areas of the more than 1,200 statements of the more than 20 local comprehensive, master and strategic plans, as well as the sentiments expressed by the public and local experts throughout the extensive public outreach process. Beneath each goal statement are the general categories associated therewith.

In summary, it is the aspiration of the Greater Lowndes County (includes Valdosta, Hahira, Lake Park, Dasher, and Remerton) community to:

1. Promote and support our vital regional economic engines in collaboration with public and private sector partners.
 - Economic Development
2. Provide coordinated, affordable and accessible workforce training opportunities for all that are interested in furthering their technical career skills through public and private resources and partnerships that provides for a 21st Century workforce.
 - Economic Development, Education
3. Develop basic transportation and utility infrastructure (roads, public transit, water, sanitary and storm sewers, power, telecommunications, etc.) that promotes economic development and private sector investment.
 - Economic Development, Land Use, Transportation, Utilities & Infrastructure, Natural Resources
4. Support communitywide partnerships that encourage entrepreneurship and small business development for positive economic growth and self-sufficiency.
 - Economic Development, Land Use
5. Maintain a fully funded and coordinated regional economic development strategy that promotes public/private partnerships and readiness for globally competitive high-wage, high-skill jobs.
 - Economic Development, Education, Intergovernmental Coordination
6. Develop and support appropriate education programs in local schools that ensure students are ready for further education either at a university, technical college or on-the-job training which meet the needs of local employers in a 21st Century workforce.
 - Economic Development, Education
7. Promote healthy eating and active lifestyles throughout the community.
 - Health & Safety, Education, Transportation
8. Continue to provide high-quality, locally-based, low-cost healthcare to a growing regional population in Southern Georgia.
 - Health & Safety
9. Develop coordinated, highly-trained, emergency and disaster response teams to plan for and respond to emergencies, in order to make our community more resilient to the impacts of disaster.
 - Health & Safety, Intergovernmental Coordination

10. Implement land use and development management techniques that promote conservation of natural resources and mitigate impacts to wet-land areas, while providing incentives to mitigate the impacts from existing development on conservation and wet-land areas.
 - Health & Safety, Intergovernmental Coordination, Land Use
11. Provide housing throughout the community that is safe, affordable and accessible to all income levels.
 - Housing, Land Use
12. Develop regional leadership in local government that promotes transparency, citizen engagement, and coordinated delivery of government services.
 - Intergovernmental Coordination
13. Develop land use management and community development policies that promote natural resource conservation, aesthetic urban design, access to community infrastructure and amenities, and balances private development rights.
 - Land Use, Natural Resources, Intergovernmental Coordination, Housing, Economic Development
14. Promote recycling and renewable energy and resource efforts throughout the community through education on the impact and benefits of recycling and energy conservation and the use of renewable resources (ex; solar/wind power, water conservation, etc.).
 - Natural Resources, Intergovernmental Coordination, Land Use, Quality of Life
15. Develop high-quality recreational facilities and programs to improve the local quality of life, and promote an active, healthy lifestyle and the conservation of natural resources.
 - Natural Resources, Quality of Life, Land Use, Intergovernmental Coordination
16. Provide well maintained, efficient, quality public utility infrastructure (water, storm water, and sewer) that meets the needs of a growing community, and is not harmful to human health or negatively impacts the natural environment.
 - Utilities and Infrastructure, Natural Resources, Quality of Life, Intergovernmental Coordination
17. Develop public/private partnerships to preserve historic buildings and our community's cultural resources, such as theater, music, and arts programs.
 - Quality of Life, Intergovernmental Coordination
18. Provide regional connectivity to global economic opportunities through an efficient, safe, accessible, and affordable multi-modal transportation system.
 - Transportation, Quality of Life, Intergovernmental Coordination, Economic Development

Common Community Vision

The Common Community Vision was developed using the aspirational goals listed above. While the vision is meant to provide the community with a direction to proceed, it provides little direction on how to get there. In an effort to link the vision more closely with the goals, a mission statement was also developed for each of the ten categories. These mission statements are available for review as an appendix. Staff used the website www.wordle.net to help identify key themes of the goals and the input from the public. This website develops word clouds that show some words in larger sizes if they appear more often in a block of text. The same process was used to develop the vision statement.

COMMON COMMUNITY VISION

A resilient community where partnerships and coordination promote regional success in economic development, education, infrastructure, and a high quality of life.

The purpose of a Common Community Vision is for the local governments and agencies to implement their own mission as it relates to the vision and aspirational goals identified here. Knowing that each organization has a different mission, it will be up to all to work collaboratively to reach the goals the community sets for itself. For instance, the Valdosta-Lowndes MPO is a transportation planning organization that can have little impact on housing policy or cultural resources. However, transportation can greatly influence economic development, land use and safety. Ultimately, it will be the responsibility of community and organization leaders to take their part of the Common Community Vision and implement it.

It is recommended that each local government and other local organizations review this Common Community Vision and their own plans and policies to determine how they can best work to achieve this Vision. The review should result in the organization selecting which goals it can have an impact on, and can cooperatively implement throughout the community. Local organizations and governments are encouraged to modify and change these goals as needed to better fit the mission of the agency and to implement positive changes in the community.

The Valdosta-Lowndes MPO, as a regional decision-making body that provides a forum for regional discussion of various topics, will formally adopt this Common Community Vision as a guiding document for local organizations to strive to achieve.

Appendix

Below is a listing of the plans and documents the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization began the Common Community Vision analysis, the plans are listed according to the agency responsible for the plan.

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

1. Regional Comprehensive Plan
2. Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
3. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
4. Moody Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study Phase I & II

Lowndes County Emergency Management Agency

5. Lowndes County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization

6. Valdosta-Lowndes Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
7. Valdosta-Lowndes MPO 2035 Transportation Plan

Suwanee-Satilla Regional Water Council

8. Suwanee-Satilla Water Development and Conservation Plan

Valdosta State University

9. Valdosta State University Master Plan

Wiregrass Georgia Technical College

10. Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Strategic Master Plan

Georgia Department of Transportation

11. Statewide Transportation Plan
12. Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan
13. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Plan

Lowndes County, Cities of Valdosta, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Dasher

14. Greater Lowndes County Comprehensive Plan
15. Lowndes County Solid Waste Management Plan

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

16. Georgia Department of Natural Resources Strategic Plan
17. Georgia Outdoor Recreation Plan
18. State of Georgia Water Plan

Central Valdosta Development Authority

19. Downtown Valdosta Master Plan

Georgia Department of Economic Development

20. State of Georgia FY2014 Strategic Marketing Plan

Valdosta Regional Airport

21. Airport Master Plan

Valdosta City Schools

22. City of Valdosta Schools Strategic Plan

Lowndes County Schools

23. Lowndes County Schools System Improvement Plan

South Georgia Medical Center

24. Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Plan

Valdosta Housing Authority

25. Valdosta Housing Authority 5 Year Action Plan
26. City of Valdosta Section 3 Policy
27. City of Valdosta Section 3 Plan

Mission Statements

In an effort to link the vision more closely with the goals, a mission statement was also developed for each of the ten categories. Staff used the website www.wordle.net to help identify key themes of the goals and the input from the public. This website develops word clouds that show some words in larger sizes if they appear more often in a block of text.

Economic Development

- Through community partnerships and coordination support workforce training, education, and small business development to meet the needs of an expanding local economy.

Education

- Through advanced training and community support prepare students for high-skilled, high-wage careers.

Health & Safety

- Utilizing local community resources, provide a high quality of life that promotes a safe, healthy, active lifestyle.

Housing

- Through community programs and private development support affordable housing options that revitalize, family-friendly neighborhoods.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- With public and private partnerships and better communication and collaboration work to improve the community.

Land Use

- Protect community resources through efficient and compatible uses of land that promote opportunities for investment and growth.

Natural Resources

- Promote and protect natural resources and opportunities for recreation through public access and conservation.

Quality of Life

- Develop and promote with the many cultural and recreational amenities and events available throughout the community through partnerships and collaboration.

Transportation

- Encourage reliable funding of a safe and efficient, regional transportation system that includes public transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, highways, railroads, and airports.

Utilities & Infrastructure

- Improve and expand public and private utility infrastructure to meet the existing and future needs of the community.

Combined Aspirational Goals/Statements

The follow list includes the aspirational goals previously included in the Common Community Vision document as well as strategies and implementation statements identified through the public involvement process that further define the goal. It is the intent for agencies and organizations to build on these goals and statements to carry out their own targeted mission.

1. Promote and support our vital regional economic engines in collaboration with public and private sector partners.
 - a. Advertise and promote regional economic engines (education, medical, military) that create a solid base for future economic resiliency and expansion.
 - b. Continue to market the region as a hub for retail economic activity, thereby supporting other economic development and a higher quality of life for our residents.
2. Provide coordinated, affordable and accessible workforce training opportunities for all that are interested in furthering their technical career skills through public and private resources and partnerships that provides for a 21st Century workforce.
 - a. Promote awareness and use of workforce skills centers and local agencies to target job training programs to low- and moderate-income persons.
 - b. Develop a career academy or jobs corps program for young adults that develops basic life skills, work-ready skills, and prepares high school graduates for a career (not requiring a university degree).
 - c. Host workshops for individuals (including high school students) on basic job preparedness skills (interviewing, application/resume development, networking, stress and financial management, etc.).
 - d. Cultivate collaboration and coordination methods that the private sector, local government agencies and non-profit groups may utilize to provide employment opportunities to citizens with all types of disabilities.
 - e. Utilize public/private partnerships to encourage adult education programs at Wiregrass Georgia Technical College that increase employment in high-skilled, high-wage jobs.
 - i. Expand and develop adult education programs and resources in partnership with the private sector, local government agencies and non-profit groups that help military veterans and their families find employment opportunities.
 - f. Increase awareness of technical college programs that provide certified workforce training and credentialing that promote a high-skilled local workforce.
3. Develop basic transportation and utility infrastructure (roads, public transit, water, sanitary and storm sewers, power, telecommunications, etc.) that promotes economic development and private sector investment.
 - a. Maintain and upgrade transportation and utility infrastructure to support and encourage growth in identified areas.
 - i. Develop affordable broadband telecommunications infrastructure to meet the needs of advanced technologies industries and to promote a higher quality of life for residents at home and at work.
4. Support communitywide partnerships that encourage entrepreneurship and small business development for positive economic growth and self-sufficiency.

- a. Provide business development services, for entrepreneurs and small businesses through existing services at the Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce S.E.E.D.S. Resource Center.
 - i. Develop marketing and awareness campaigns for existing support services for entrepreneurs and small business development.
 - 1. Develop and streamline a transparent process for getting a business started in Lowndes County and Valdosta utilizing websites and existing resources like the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce S.E.E.D.S. Resource Center, the Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center, the local planning and zoning offices, and other local agencies and partners.
 - ii. Encourage entrepreneurs and small business owners to utilize existing and planned free or low-cost services like: training, mentoring, business incubators, Enterprise and Opportunity Zones, tax incentives, etc.
 - 1. Develop and advertise competitive community incentives that expands manufacturing and industrial development in the region.
 - 2. Promote existing services and programs to low-income and minority entrepreneurs (especially the growing Hispanic population) and small business owners that can help business development and expansion efforts.
 - iii. Develop greater access to capital financial resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses to create new (and expand existing) businesses in the region.
 - b. Develop partnerships among local government and non-profit business groups to start a small business incubator.
5. Maintain a fully funded and coordinated regional economic development strategy that promotes public/private partnerships and readiness for globally competitive high-wage, high-skill jobs.
 - a. Develop a regional marketing effort to highlight available land parcels available for development and re-development.
6. Develop and support appropriate education programs in local schools that ensure students are ready for further education either at a university, technical college or on-the-job training which meet the needs of local employers in a 21st Century workforce.
 - a. Support the provision of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education courses for students in local schools, colleges and universities that desire to pursue a degree in a locally viable industry cluster.
 - b. Utilize public/private partnerships to develop a skilled workforce with positive ethics, life skills, and professionalism, thereby creating meaningful employment opportunities.
 - c. Develop public/private partnerships to keep highly-skilled and locally educated college students living and working in the region after graduation.
 - d. Increase the number of local students who complete high school and are eligible to obtain a certificate/degree from a technical college, college or university.
 - i. Expand community partnerships (ex: Great Promise Partnership, Metro Talent Connection, etc.) that encourage higher standards for high school students preparing them for careers.

1. Develop mentoring programs with students and businesses to help students understand how getting an education is important to life-long success and to reduce the dropout rates and to provide strong community leadership examples for young students.
 - ii. Continue the collaboration of educational institutions and Moody Air Force Base to provide educational opportunities for military servicemen and their families.
 - e. Provide a fully funded education system that provides state-of-the-art facilities and technologies, and the human resources and capital to encourage students to exceed standards and goals set by the State of Georgia and accreditation organizations.
 - i. Promote, develop and fund community-based scholarships to encourage local high school students to attend institutions of higher education, and obtain advanced training and education.
 - ii. Provide quality, state-of-the-art educational facilities and programs for students at all levels to learn in the best environment possible.
 - iii. Fully fund Pre-K programs in order to start students on the path to a quality education by building a foundation of basic life and work skills.
 - iv. Develop curriculum locally that exceeds State and accreditation standards, and encourages students to excel towards quality careers available in the community.
 - v. Fully fund and support local teachers and educators who provide quality education through enhanced recognition programs.
 - vi. Continue to develop and offer life-long learning opportunities for adults who need to learn new skills or new technologies as careers and job skills change.
 - f. Develop distance learning opportunities at all education levels that can expand the teaching methods of local school offerings.
 - g. Promote soft skills and life skills training through the local educational system so that high school graduates are ready for both higher education and/or to enter the workforce.
 - i. Continue to expand and promote dual enrollment programs (ex: Valdosta Early College Academy) for high school students to attend technical college and university courses.
 - ii. Expand partnerships between local schools, technical colleges and the private sector to increase funding for workforce training and job placement programs for high school students and adults.
 1. Develop expanded dual enrollment curriculums that teach skills to prepare students for a career in high-technology industries that show potential for expansion (ex: green technologies, alternative energy, etc.).
7. Promote healthy eating and active lifestyles throughout the community.
 - a. Encourage local schools, restaurants, businesses, etc., to stock and market locally grown produce and goods.
 - b. Actively promote our natural and agricultural resources for growing crops and foodstuffs for sale in local and regional markets.

- i. Develop and actively promote eco-tourism, agri-tourism and local/regional-historical/heritage tourism to draw visitors to Southern Georgia
 - c. Actively promote education in agriculturally driven jobs at our local high schools, technical colleges and universities to promote high-skilled, higher-paying jobs for local graduates.
 - d. Implement the urban design principles of livable communities (ex: sidewalks, bike lanes/paths, etc.) to promote an active, healthy lifestyle
 - i. Improve walkability of urban and suburban neighborhoods by constructing sidewalks on all designated arterial and collector streets leading to large activity centers
 - ii. Build and promote a network of bicycle lanes/multi-use paths that enhances non-motorized transportation and promotes healthy, active lifestyles and a high quality of life
 - e. Overcome poor awareness and a lack of information of health and safety programs through new marketing and education outreach strategies throughout the entire community
 - f. Raise awareness of healthy food choices and options provided throughout the community
 - i. Promote and provide incentives to local businesses that offer locally sourced, healthier food choices to customers
 - ii. Encourage schools to choose locally sourced healthy food options that promote a well-balanced diet
- 8. Continue to provide high-quality, locally-based, low-cost healthcare to a growing regional population in Southern Georgia.
 - a. Continue to expand access to local health specialists through incentives or the use of tele-health technologies
 - i. Implement school-based health clinics for use by both students and the public to increase access to affordable healthcare
 - ii. Continue to expand the offerings of local medical facilities that treat trauma and other specialized healthcare techniques
 - b. Develop local financial and capital resources to help individuals with mental and developmental disabilities
- 9. Develop coordinated, highly-trained, emergency and disaster response teams to plan for and respond to emergencies, in order to make our community more resilient to the impacts of disaster.
 - a. Increase public awareness of potential emergencies and disaster response procedures through advanced education, training, and real-time information dissemination during an emergency
 - i. Increase usage of emergency warning and notification systems (ex: NOAA weather radios, Code Red Emergency Notification Systems, Emergency Alert System, etc.)
 - ii. Continue public education and training programs (like CERT) on resources available for natural disasters and safety precautions to take at home and in the workplace

10. Implement land use and development management techniques that promote conservation of natural resources and mitigate impacts to wet-land areas, while providing incentives to mitigate the impacts from existing development on conservation and wet-land areas.
 - a. Utilize new technologies and mapping capabilities to mitigate development impacts to designated conservation and wet-land areas, and minimize loss of property and life during natural disasters.
 - i. Evaluate and implement flood mitigation measures and techniques to protect existing development and public facilities from future significant flooding events.
 - ii. Develop leadership in regional storm water mitigation efforts to raise awareness of the potential impacts of flooding events across multiple jurisdictions.
 - iii. Utilize and provide incentives for innovative and visually attractive site design techniques that promote on-site storm water retention/detention and reduce stormwater runoff.
11. Provide housing throughout the community that is safe, affordable and accessible to all income levels.
 - a. Provide marketing targeted to developers and the home building industry regarding public/private incentive programs and innovative design and construction techniques (ex: land banking, green infrastructure, etc.) that adequately meet the affordable housing needs of the community.
 - i. Develop educational and awareness programs on energy efficiency programs and green infrastructure that can be implemented by residents and business owners to reduce housing and construction costs.
 1. Develop incentives and financing programs that promote the implementation of energy efficient building improvement and construction.
 - b. Fully fund, and raise awareness of, public, non-profit and private homeowner assistance programs that can assist local residents with meeting basic housing needs, problems and issues (ex: financial assistance, utility assistance, maintenance assistance, grants/loans, etc.).
 - i. Analyze the impediments to affordable and accessible housing, and Implement programs to address those impediments and barriers.
 - ii. Coordinate agencies and programs to become a regional leader in collaboration for local, regional and state housing programs.
12. Develop regional leadership in local government that promotes transparency, citizen engagement, and coordinated delivery of government services.
 - a. Actively lead, pursue and participate in cross-jurisdictional coordination and collaboration efforts to develop solutions to regional problems.
 - i. Regularly coordinate meetings of local and regional stakeholders to facilitate discussion and information dissemination.
 1. Better involve local businesses as stakeholders in the decision making process and to promote public/private partnerships.
 - ii. Develop local and regional partnerships to share data and services that can promote business development and transparency in local government.

1. Develop a streamlined, open and/or consolidated approach for land use and business development amongst the local government agencies.
 - b. Enhance regional marketing, education and awareness materials and media to promote local community assets to residents, businesses and visitors.
 - i. Enhance local government accessibility by increasing information availability on websites and through mobile apps and web-based services.
 1. Enhance the accessibility of information about how local tax dollars are spent, communicating complex narratives in new ways to better illustrate local services and needs.
 2. Develop partnerships with local social service agencies and businesses to make information (ex: flyers, newsletters, other information) available for public dissemination.
 3. Develop leadership in public/private partnerships to implement community marketing and promotion of events, cultural and historic resources, and public news and information; and improving the availability of community information.
 - ii. Increase local government communication and marketing of programs and services to residents and businesses.
 - iii. Encourage local colleges and universities to increase internal and external communications to increase public awareness of on campus and community activities and resources.
 - c. Actively support enhanced services and facilities at the South Georgia Regional Library.
13. Develop land use management and community development policies that promote natural resource conservation, aesthetic urban design, access to community infrastructure and amenities, and balances private development rights.
- a. Ensure growth occurs in a planned and orderly fashion through the implementation of the adopted Comprehensive Plan and efficient use of infrastructure, transportation and land use.
 - i. Promote development that is connected to existing infrastructure and transportation resources within the designated Urban Service Area, and that reduces impacts on natural resources (including existing agricultural land).
 1. Promote development around existing neighborhood activity centers and small town centers (ex: Clyattville, Naylor, etc.) to provide services and business opportunities to these smaller communities.
 2. Inform and encourage developers about the types of development sought in the community (ex: mixed-use development, active adult housing, more natural site design, open space, transportation access, etc.).
 - ii. Promote community pride through enhanced and incentivized design guidelines and requirements for an aesthetically pleasing community (ex: façade programs, underground power lines, improved gateways, more street trees, etc.).
 1. Proactively implement existing plans for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (ex: bike lanes, multi-use paths, sidewalks) to promote a

- healthy, active lifestyle and multi-modal transportation options throughout the community.
2. Proactively engage and encourage landowners to maintain properties to high community standards.
- iii. Inform and educate the public on local land use planning and community development programs, including more stakeholder engagement and transparency in land use decisions.
 1. Promote community engagement through empowering local residents (ex: advisory councils) to impact neighborhood development decisions.
 - b. Implement local land development regulations (zoning codes) equitably across the community.
 - i. Amend local ordinances, and/or improve the development process to be easier for developers and property owners to maximize the use of land.
 - c. Promote compatible development near community economic engines (universities, hospitals, military) that support and enhance the missions of these large land uses.
 - i. Actively promote our economic engines (universities, hospitals, military) as a source of jobs, and resources for entrepreneurship and business development.
 - ii. Implement the recommended land use policies and building standards of the Moody Activity Zone to promote a high quality of life in the Zone and the surrounding areas that will promote the creation of more high paying jobs and community pride in our local military facilities.
 - d. Actively protect and manage natural habitats, designated conservation areas, and cultural and natural resources from impacts of growth and development.
 - i. Improve and increase access, education and awareness of growth impacts to natural and conservation areas.
 1. Provide incentives to the development community to protect and design for aesthetically pleasing natural and greenspace areas to promote conservation and recreation near where people live and work.
 2. Utilize GIS and web-based marketing tools to improve access to information about community parks, recreation, natural areas, and conservation efforts.
 - ii. Continue to implement best management practices for agricultural land uses that reduce stormwater and agricultural waste runoff into local streams and rivers.
 - e. Develop and implement strategies and incentives to promote development that is mixed-use conserves natural resources, and promotes innovative building technologies and methods (ex: green technologies and methods) which supports vibrant centers for culture, government, entertainment, retail and residential diversity.
 - i. Encourage and incentivize growth throughout the entire community to allow people to work and shop near their place of residence.
 - ii. Develop and promote innovative incentive packages (ex: land banking, tax incentives, etc.) and public/private partnerships that increase development in designated revitalization areas.

- iii. Utilize designated revitalization areas to promote private investment in downtown and commercial corridor areas.
 - iv. Coordinate economic development and land use planning efforts to encourage development in designated revitalization areas.
 - v. Implement changes to local development regulations that encourages and incentivizes energy efficient design, material and energy sources in new construction and remodeling projects.
 - vi. Develop public/private financing partnerships for the redevelopment of existing buildings for affordable housing, small businesses, or other uses.
14. Promote recycling and renewable energy and resource efforts throughout the community through education on the impact and benefits of recycling and energy conservation and the use of renewable resources (ex; solar/wind power, water conservation, etc.).
- a. Encourage and promote enhanced local recycling efforts through waste reduction initiatives and incentives.
 - b. Integrate plans for the protection and management of the quality, quantity and availability of local groundwater resources into local development plans.
 - i. Continue to invest in capital improvements to municipal water systems that provide high quality, contaminate-free water resources for residents and economic development purposes.
 - c. Implement programs and incentives for the use of alternative fuel technologies and power sources for use in building design and operation, as well as transportation.
15. Develop high-quality recreational facilities and programs to improve the local quality of life, and promote an active, healthy lifestyle and the conservation of natural resources.
- a. Continue to develop and improve recreational facilities to offer high quality facilities that promote an active lifestyle for all ages (ex: soccer fields, multi-use paths, greenway trails, boat landings on rivers, public swimming pools, basketball courts, roller-skating rink, passive parks amenities, etc.).
 - i. Promote community awareness and implement public/private partnerships to better utilize local rivers, lakes and natural/conservation areas for public recreation and educational activities.
16. Provide well maintained, efficient, quality public utility infrastructure (water, storm water, and sewer) that meets the needs of a growing community, and is not harmful to human health or negatively impacts the natural environment.
- a. Upgrade and implement planned improvements to the wastewater treatment systems throughout the community, and continue to maintain and implement upgrades as needed and appropriate for a growing community.
 - i. Develop solutions and implement best management practices to prevent and reduce stormwater and flooding impacts to public and private improvements and to prevent pollution of the natural environment and conservation areas.
17. Develop public/private partnerships to preserve historic buildings and our community's cultural resources, such as theater, music, and arts programs.
- a. Improve education and awareness of our community's rich cultural and historic resources, and encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of local buildings and

sites that are beneficial to both the public and private sector entrepreneurship and economic development.

- i. Improve education and awareness of local cultural resources through web-based tools, print media, etc.
 - b. Develop opportunities to highlight and promote our rich diversity of low-cost, high-quality cultural offerings (arts, theater, music, festivals, First Fridays, Farm Days, etc.) to all populations.
 - i. Seek and develop opportunities to start a regional science museum with local schools, colleges and universities that expands on the offering of the local educational programs.
 - ii. Expand community and neighborhood-based after-school programs for younger children that are targeted to low-income and traditionally underserved populations.
 - iii. Expand faith-based initiatives and partnerships that enhance local cultural resources and provide quality family friendly events and community resources.
 - c. Fully fund improvements to expand community facilities (ex: civic auditorium, conference center, library, parks, etc.) and venues where cultural resources are being offered to a broad population.
 - i. Forge public/private partnerships to provide some funding for local parks and recreation facility improvements and programs.
18. Provide regional connectivity to global economic opportunities through an efficient, safe, accessible, and affordable multi-modal transportation system.
 - a. Implement a fully funded, efficient, accessible, affordable public transit system for the Valdosta Urban Area that meets the needs of residents and businesses.
 - b. Promote our location on I-75 and proximity to seaports in Savannah, Brunswick, Jacksonville, etc. as reasons why the community is a prime location for the development of transportation and logistics companies.
 - i. Promote proximity to I-75 as a strength for economic development for companies that are dependent on a transient client base or need access to national transportation corridors that are reliable and efficient.
 - ii. Develop highway and transportation system connectivity to I-75 and other major transportation corridors that improves access for transportation dependent economic development efforts.
 - iii. Develop public/private and institutional partnerships that will support the development and funding of a public transportation system to get riders to jobs and educational opportunities.
 - c. Continue to develop resources at the Valdosta Regional Airport that will fully utilize available infrastructure and resources, including enhanced cargo operations, additional commercial services and general aviation services.
 - d. Improve transportation safety throughout the community through capital improvements (ex: intersection improvements, sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic operations, etc.) and public education campaigns (ex: bicycle safety, pedestrian safety, etc.) for all ages.
 - e. Plan for and develop efficient east-west connectivity through the urban areas.

- f. Maintain and expand (where appropriate) road rights-of-way to improve community visual appeal and provide for locations for safe bicycling and walking along busy roadway corridors.