

CONTENT LIST

Columbia County's 2025 Growth Management Plan Update	1
Public Participation	1
Steering Committee	1
Community Workshops	2
Stakeholder Interviews	2
Population Profile	2
Trends	2
Key Points	3
Housing Profile	3
Types	3
Key Points	3
Economic Development Profile	4
Regional Perspective	4
Regional Major Economic Sectors	4
County Economic Profile	4
Key Points	4
Natural and Cultural Resource Profile	4
Historic Resources	4
Natural Resources and Constraints	4
Natural Resource Policy	4
Community Facilities Profile	4
Key Points	5
Land Use Profile	5
General Summary	5
Key Points	6
Transportation Profile	6
Overview	6
Steering Committee Issues and Opportunities	7
Contact	7



Court Renovation, Appling

Columbia County's 2025 Growth Management Plan Update

Columbia County completed a thorough growth management plan in the year 2000, called "Forward 2020." This growth management plan created a vision for the future of the county, and reviewed in detail the following topics:

- Population
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Historic Resources
- Natural Resources
- Transportation
- Community Facilities
- Land Use
- Urban Design
- Implementation

One of the key concepts of the plan was organizing future development around a series of nodes, including large town centers, smaller neighborhood centers, and a major commerce center on the I-20 corridor. This organizing concept is called the nodal development concept.

The state of Georgia requires local governments to update their plan every 5 years. Columbia County has taken this opportunity for a growth management plan update to incorporate the latest planning standards from the state.

The latest planning standards emphasize public involvement, an easy-to-understand planning document, and the use of 'character areas' to guide development policy.

Columbia County has also decided to use this plan update as an opportunity to incorporate new information into the plan, and to refine the implementation

strategy of the "Forward 2020" plan. One of the key refinements will be changes to improve the nodal development concept.

The growth management plan update will consist of three elements:

- **Community Assessment**
A survey of the current state of Columbia County.
- **Community Participation**
A program of public involvement and input opportunities to help shape the growth management plan update.
- **Community Agenda**
A plan of policy strategies and implementation actions to realize the County's vision for its future.

Public Participation

The planning process seeks to ensure that the public has an opportunity to provide input, feedback, and suggestions on the ideas and policies related to the growth management plan. Here are some of the ways we are seeking public input to help shape the growth management plan update:

Steering Committee

The Columbia County Growth Management Plan steering committee consists of thirty-two interested stakeholders who were appointed by the Columbia County Board of Commissioners. The steering committee meets monthly to oversee the plan update development process and help shape policy on a fairly detailed level. The steering committee members also serve as liaisons to the broader community

– helping to spread the word of regarding the plan and encourage input from the community. We encourage you to talk with steering committee members about your concerns.

Community Workshops

Two series of community workshops are being held. In the first series, three meetings will be held at locations throughout the county. This first set of workshops will be used to introduce the public to the plan update process, to review the draft Community Assessment (which then will go to the state for review), and to verify that the steering committee has correctly identified the planning priorities of the broader community.

In the second community session, a draft Community Agenda will be presented. The draft Community Agenda will include proposed policies and implementation strategies. The public will have an opportunity to review and provide comments on the policies and implementation strategies that will be developed through the rest of the planning process.

Stakeholder Interviews

A series of 20 one-on-one stakeholder interviews have been conducted. These interviews included Columbia County staff, representatives of the cities of Harlem and Grovetown, elected officials, and members of the business community. The purpose of these interviews is to gain an in-depth perspective on key issues related to the growth management plan update. One-on-one interviews also allow a discussion of sensitive issues which may be difficult to discuss in a committee format. The information and suggestions from these interviews will be incorporated into the growth management plan update.

Website

You can track the progress on the plan update on Columbia County’s website:

<http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/home/index>

From the county’s front page, you can jump to the update using the “Quick Links” feature.

Included on the growth management plan update website are:

- The “Forward 2020” Growth Management Plan
- A list of Steering Committee members
- Steering Committee Agendas, Meeting Minutes, and Presentation
- Draft documents as they become available

Further information about public participation is available in the draft Community Participation Plan, which is available from County staff or from the County website.

The Current State of Columbia County

Population Profile

Population Composition

Columbia County: Population by Age			
Category	Year		
	1980	1990	2000
0 – 4 Years Old	3,547	5,404	6,198
5 – 13 Years Old	6,715	11,593	15,498
14 – 17 Years Old	3,272	3,147	4,734
18 – 20 Years Old	2,042	2,789	3,283
21 – 24 Years Old	2,692	3,099	3,221
25 – 34 Years Old	7,704	11,880	11,104
35 – 44 Years Old	5,578	12,713	16,575
45 – 54 Years Old	3,902	7,295	14,128
55 – 64 Years Old	2,644	4,239	7,417
65 and over	2,022	3,872	7,130
	42,098	68,021	91,288

(Source: US Census Bureau, SF1, 2000)

A high proportion of mature adults and school-age children reside in Columbia County.

Like the rest of the Augusta region, relatively few young adults live in the county.

Columbia County: Racial Composition			
Category	Year		
	1980	1990	2000
White alone	83.5%	86.0%	82.7%
Black or African American alone	14.7%	11.0%	11.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.0%	2.3%	3.4%
other race	0.7%	0.4%	2.4%

(Source: US Census Bureau, SF1, 2000)

The predominant race in the county is white. About 10 percent of the county is black, and there is a growing population of Asian and other races.

Columbia County residents on average have a higher income and a higher level of education than the rest of the Augusta region and than the average for the state of Georgia. Columbia County appears to have become the community of choice for most high-income, high education residents in the region.

Median Household Income	
County	2000
Columbia County	55,682
State of Georgia	42,433
Richmond County	33,086
McDuffie County	31,920

(Source: US Census Bureau, SF3, 2000)

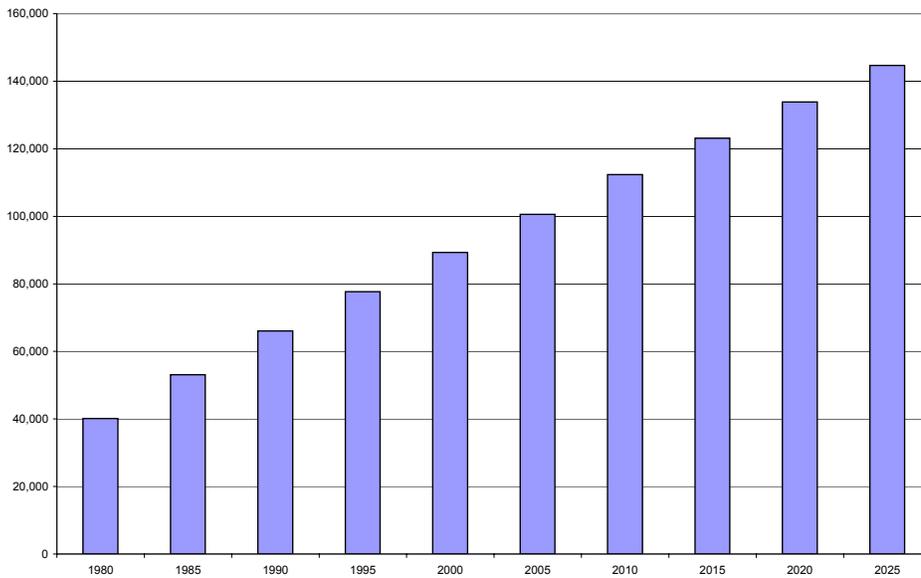
Trends

Columbia County is expected to continue its strong population growth. Over the next twenty years, the population is expected to grow from 100,589 to 144,667 over the next twenty years, and increase of about 44,000 people.



New Residential Development

1980-2025 Growth Trend



Many people who moved to the county as adults have decided to remain, and so Columbia County's senior population is growing. This trend is expected to accelerate over the next 20 years.

Category	Year		
	1980	1990	2000
55 - 64 Years Old	2,644	4,239	7,417
65 and over	2,022	3,872	7,130

(Source: US Census Bureau, SF1, 2000)

Columbia County has become the high-income residence location of choice for most in the Augusta region. The attraction of Columbia County to a high-income, high-education population is expected to continue.

Key Points

In many metropolitan regions in the United States, one quadrant dominates as the high-income residence location of choice. Usually, this results in a higher rate of both residential and commercial development in this quadrant, and this growth tends to occur in a radial (i.e. away from the central city) rather than a balanced (equal growth in all directions) manner. If Columbia County develops along these lines, it should continue to see strong population growth and should see increasing commercial and employment development over the next twenty years. One of the challenges of this radial development pattern is that it may lead to sprawl, traffic congestion, and the loss of open space and rural character.

Housing Profile

House Types

The predominant type of housing in Columbia County is single family housing. The second most common type of housing is manufactured homes. There is a small percentage of attached and multifamily housing as well.

Housing Type	2000
Single Units (detached)	77.3%
Single Units (attached)	2.5%
Double Units	1.7%
3 to 9 Units	2.7%
10 to 19 Units	0.6%
20 to 49 Units	0.4%
50 or more Units	1.2%
Mobile Home or Trailer	13.6%
All Other	0.0%

(Source: US Census Bureau, SF1, 2000)

The housing stock is relatively young in age. Most of the housing stock is well-maintained.

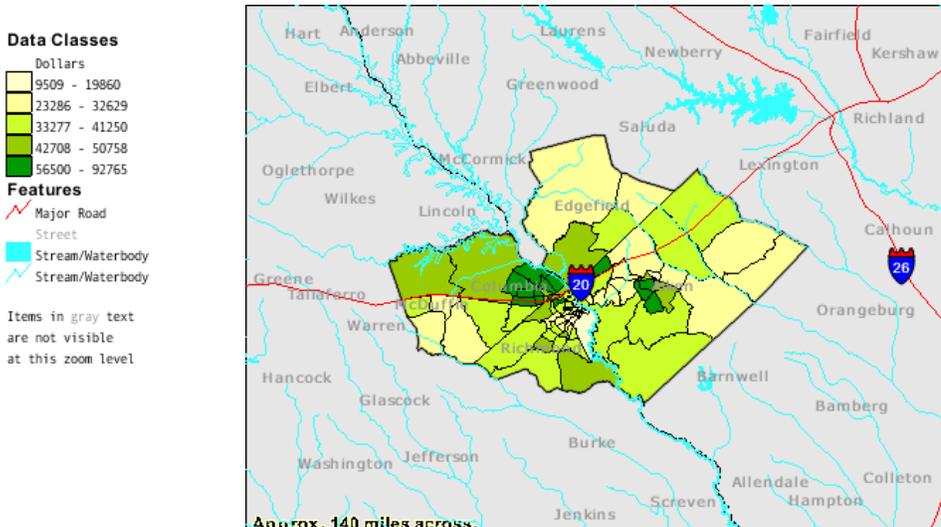
Category	2000
Built 1970 - 1979	6,439
Built 1960 - 1969	2,646
Built 1950 - 1959	961
Built 1940 - 1949	268
Built 1939 or earlier	373

(Source: US Census Bureau, SF3, 2000)

Columbia County's housing is the most expensive in the three-county region (Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie). The expense of housing may have many causes, including high-amenity housing, the quality of the public education system, and restrictions against denser housing development.

Key Points

Rapid housing growth is expected to continue in the county. This new housing development is driven by new population growth. In recent years,



Columbia County has been adding about 1,300 dwelling units per year. Columbia County has limited types of housing to meet the needs of its increasing population. In particular, one person households and empty-nester households may desire housing choices other than single family homes and manufactured homes. The current housing supply does not reflect the current and future need for more diverse housing types. As the senior population increases in Columbia County, the need for senior-friendly housing development will increase.

Housing Types	Percent
Single Family Detached	91%
Townhomes and Duplexes	4%
Multifamily Housing	5%
Household Types	Percent
Families 3+ people	52%
2 person Families	29%
Non-family households	18%

(Source: EDAW Analysis of US Census Bureau data , SF1 2000)

Economic Development Profile

Regional Perspective

Economic development is usually understood from a regional perspective. This is because people often work and shop in different counties than where they live. Also, generally the major resources available for economic development are shared across the region, such as airports, universities, and interstates.

Columbia County is part of the five-county Augusta region, which includes Columbia, Richmond, and McDuffie counties in Georgia and Aiken and Edgefield counties in South Carolina. Most of the economic analysis for the plan includes the five-county region, although the plan also looks at the specifics of economic development within Columbia County.

Regional Economic Sectors

The driving sectors within the Augusta region's economy are government, business services, and manufacturing. These sectors bring in dollars from outside the region and help fuel the rest of the economy which is based on consumption. Government employment in this case includes military, federal government and state government.

County Economic Profile

Within Columbia County, the largest employers are retail, construction, and local government. All of these types of employment are driven by the size of the population or population growth. A high proportion (29%) of the workforce in Columbia County is self-employed. This may indicate an unusually strong economic climate for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Employment Sector	Number of Jobs	Percent of Employment
Retail trade	4,620	13.6%
Construction	3,764	11.1%
Local government	3,123	9.2%
Manufacturing	3,031	8.9%
Other services, except public administration	2,584	7.6%

(Source: Bureau of Economics Analysis, CA25N - Total full-time and part-time employment by industry, 2002)

Columbia County has a low unemployment rate relative to the state of Georgia. The latest unemployment figures from the Georgia Department of Labor (March 2005) has Columbia County's unemployment rate at 4.3%, compared with a 5.0% rate for Georgia overall.

Key Points

Residential growth will likely be the driver of employment growth in the county. As the population grows, employment linked to population size will grow. Also, business owners and executives may decide to locate or relocate their businesses closer to their residence. So as a residential community of choice, Columbia County is likely to attract a growing employment base over the next twenty years.

Regionally, the major economic sectors are shrinking or growing slowly. The region may experience below-average economic growth over the next 20 years. However, Columbia County is likely to out-perform the region as a whole.

Many of the expanding employment sectors in the county are low wage sectors. This may create a mismatch between Columbia County's relatively expensive housing and its lower paying jobs. The likely result is that many of the new low wage jobs will go to residents of other counties. The effects of this imbalance will include increased stress on the County road network.

Natural and Cultural Resource Profile

Historic Resources

Columbia County has a significant number of historic sites and buildings. A historic resource survey was completed in 1990, but a new one is recommended. Currently no organization is overseeing the inventory and preservation of historic buildings, so the county is making little progress towards preserving its historic heritage.

The City of Harlem has completed a historic resource survey and is in the process of nominating its central core as a National Register Historic District.

Two other particular sites of interest as historic sites are Appling and Stallings Island.

Natural Resources and Constraints

Columbia County has a unique and valued set of natural resources. Clark Hills Lake and the Savannah River serve as both natural habitats and recreation areas. Heggie's Rock is one of just a few granite outcroppings in the state of Georgia, presenting a unique habitat with several endangered species. Columbia County is covered with rolling pine forest, some of which is used for timberland.

Some of the poor drainage soils in the county mean that rural residential development must be low density for the use of septic tanks. Also a significant portion of the county lies in flood plain and so is not appropriate for development.

Key Points

Columbia County has a strong tree protection ordinance that can help preserve the county's valued tree cover, help prevent erosion, and help minimize stormwater runoff.

Columbia County has a well-planned Greenspace Program. The Greenspace program serves to promote environmental as well as recreational goals for the county. The Greenspace Program was completed in 2000 and prioritizes the following areas for protection as greenspace:

- Savannah River Conservation Area & Greenway
- Floodplain Greenways
- Martinez-Evans Open Space
- Conservation Area (Groundwater Recharge)
- Historic/Natural Resources

Columbia County has a river corridor protection plan for the Savannah River corridor.

Columbia County does not have regulations in place to protect watersheds and groundwater recharge areas.

These regulations are required by the state of Georgia and should be made a high priority.

Columbia County does not have policies in place to preserve forestry or agricultural land uses. These land uses may decrease substantially as the county continues to develop.



Community Facilities Profile

Columbia County citizens benefit from the following community facilities and services:

- Columbia County Sheriff's Office
- Four fire and emergency service stations
- Three public health clinics
- Four hospitals (all located in Richmond County)
- One senior center
- Eleven county parks
- Three community centers
- Sixteen elementary schools
- Seven middle schools
- Four high schools
- Three libraries, one including a performing arts facility
- Two water treatment plants
- Four wastewater treatment plants
- A stormwater management program
- County courts and justice center

Key Points

In most cases, the community facilities provided are adequate to meet current public needs.

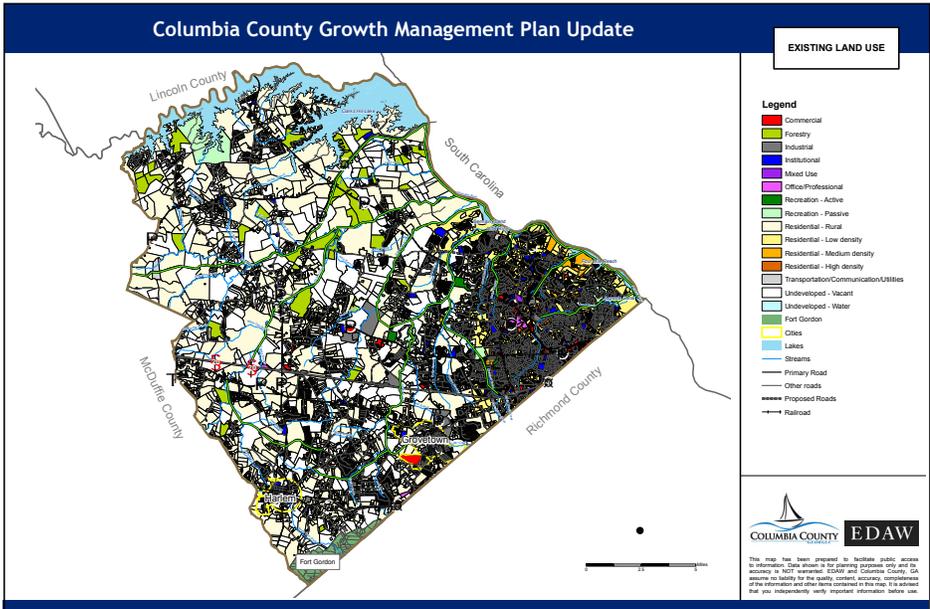
However, all of these community facilities need proactive management plans in order to accommodate future population growth.

The Recreation Department is notable for having a master plan to govern its planned future expansion.

Public schools are one area where the county is clearly having difficulty keeping up with the population growth. Most of the public schools use trailer facilities and an extensive renovation and expansion plan is underway. Most of the new public school construction is funded by a 1 percent Special Local Option Sales Tax approved by voters in March of 2005. Providing adequate facilities for projected population growth should be a priority of the county.

As the senior community in Columbia County grows, there will be increasing demand for senior services and expanded, conveniently located medical services.

Sewer and water services are an essential part of Columbia County's growth management. Sewer and water service extensions, when provided, should be directed by the Growth Management Plan.



Land Use Profile

General Summary

A significant portion of Columbia County is not developed or developed at very low densities. These lands may be forests, agricultural lands, or rural residential. The lands that are developed are primarily single family homes in a low density pattern. Commercial land uses are concentrated in the Evans-Martinez area. Commercial land uses are increasingly taking on a linear, strip commercial pattern, especially along Washington Road, North Belair Road, and Fury's Ferry Road. Industrial land uses are concentrated in the Horizon South Industrial Park by I-20, with some along Columbia Road in some in the Evans Town Center area.

Key Points

Evans town center has not quite developed as a traditional town center with mixed use, street definition, small block length, and the pedestrian orientation. The Marshall Square development will introduce some of these elements. A redevelopment plan was recently created for the Martinez area that would enhance both livability and property values if implemented.

The conversion of undeveloped lands into single family subdivisions has been the most rapid kind of land use change in recent years. This trend is expected to continue, although increasing pressure for various types of commercial development is expected. Growth of commercial development has encroached on residential neighborhoods in some areas and has created some land use incompatibility issues, such as traffic, *Transportation Congestion Map*
 Source: Columbia County Long Range Transportation Plan, TEI Engineers & Planners

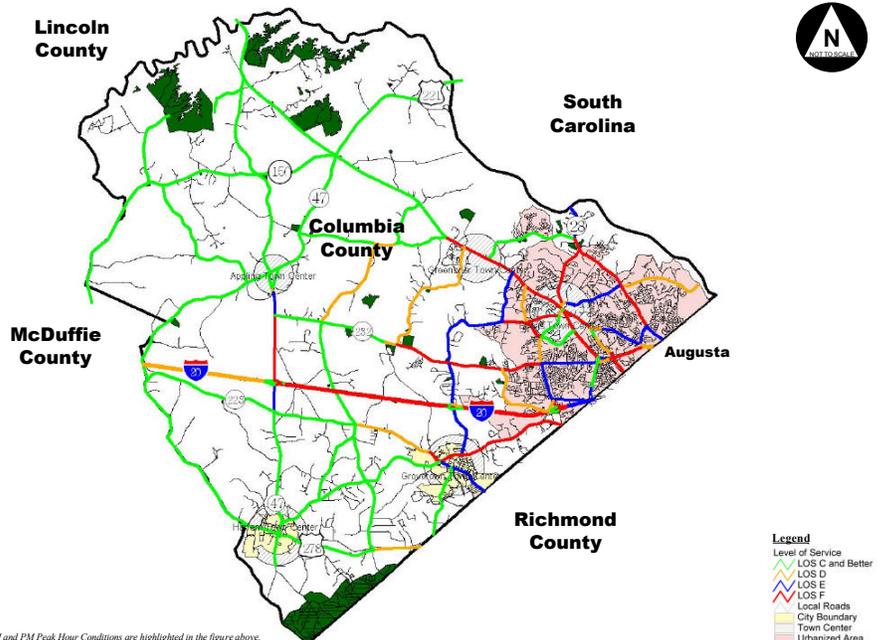
noise and lighting.

Transportation Profile

Overview

The Columbia County 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan was recently completed and adopted in 2004. This plan developed a list of recommended transportation improvements based upon a systematic process of evaluating current conditions, transportation modeling, and strategy screening to determine appropriate transportation improvement strategies.

Most of the projects proposed are road widenings, usually increasing the number of lanes from two to four. Ramp improvements and the widening of Interstate 20 are proposed as well. The extension of William Few Parkway is intended to provide additional north-south connectivity through the county. The transportation plan forecasts significant increases in congestion, particularly along east-west corridors, including I-20, and around the Evans Town Center area. This forecast indicates the congestion that would take place if the recom-



Note: AM and PM Peak Hour Conditions are highlighted in the figure above.



Figure No: 6.2.3.1
 Page No: 64

Long Term Peak Hour
 Deficient Segments
 Columbia County 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan

mended transportation improvement projects were not implemented.

As the transportation improvement projects are implemented, they will mitigate some of the forecast congestion.

Key Points

Additional congestion is forecast, but some of it will be mitigated by the proposed transportation projects. Most of the proposed transportation projects are road widenings from two lanes to four lanes.

The transportation plan strongly recommends improved land use arrangements, such as location of jobs closer to housing, mixed uses, and denser housing near job and shopping locations. These land use changes can also help to mitigate congestion.

Major bike projects along North Belair Road and Old Evans Road are proposed in the transportation plan.

Steering Committee Issues and Opportunities Overview

An issues and opportunities survey was provided to all steering committee members. Each member was asked to rank the importance of each issue between 1 (least important) and 5 (most important).

The following table presents the top ten issues and their total scores (Max score of 115)

Rank	Issue	Category	Score
1	Finding the right place for multifamily housing, industrial, and commercial development.	Land Use	109
2	Mitigating traffic congestion.	Transportation	108
3	Dealing with the lack of capacity in the school system in the developed areas.	Community Facilities	104
4	Protect water resources and sensitive lands.	Natural Resources	103
5	Guiding development into a nodal land use pattern to discourage sprawl.	Urban Design	102
6	Diversifying and sustaining the economic base of the county.	Economics	101
7	Designing standards for higher-density housing.	Housing	100
8	Preserving existing single family neighborhoods.	Land Use	99
9	Getting the maximum benefit out of limited transportation funding.	Transportation	97
10	Dealing with population growth – expected to grow to +/- 150,000 people by 2030.	Population	95

The top five priorities identified by the steering committee are:

1. Locating and creating an appropriate mix of residential and non-residential uses.
2. Managing current and projected traffic volumes and congestion.
3. Planning school facility needs around projected population growth and locations.
4. Protect the county’s natural resources.
5. Discourage sprawl using a nodal development technique.



Riverwood New Housing



Surrey Center

Next Steps – Community Input

As a member of the Columbia County community you can help further this

REMEMBER!
You can contact either a Columbia County planner or the consultant, EDAW, for more information about the plan:

discussion on issues and opportunities.

Once the input is compiled from the public on issues, a series of policy proposals will be updated or new policies recommended to address the issues identified. These proposed policies will be further developed in cooperation with the steering committee, and later brought to the public for consideration in mid September.

Contact Information

Columbia County
Robin Bechtel, Planner
rbechtel@columbiacountyga.gov
706.312.7176
Planning and Development
630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Bldg A
PO Box 498
Evans, Georgia 30809

EDAW
Fredalyn M. Frasier
frasierf@edaw.com
404.870.5339
817 West Peachtree Street NW
Suite 770
Atlanta Georgia 30308

