# 2015 Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update

Adopted December 9, 2014



#### **Prepared for:**

Echols County
By
Southern Georgia Regional Commission



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### I. <u>Chapter 110-12-1 Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive</u> Planning

#### 1. Introduction

The 2015 Greater Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update was prepared in accordance with the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

As required by the Local Comprehensive Planning Standards, the 2015 Echols County – Comprehensive Plan Update consists of the following elements:

- Community Goals
- Needs and Opportunities
- Community Work Program
- Economic Development Element
   (as a community included in the Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1 category)

#### 2. Community Involvement

All of the required elements have been developed with extensive opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders throughout the county. The following steps were taken to ensure that this plan reflected the full range of needs and opportunities from the many stakeholders and residents in the county:

The public hearing kicking off the comprehensive plan process was held on July 22, 2014 at the County Commission chambers in Echols County. It was held for the purpose to make any potential stakeholders and residents aware that the comprehensive plan update and review was now under way, to explain the purpose of the update and to encourage residents and other stakeholders to actively participate in the plan update.

#### 3. Identification of Stakeholders

A comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was put together with input from the Development Authority, elected officials, and residents. All sign-up sheets of all the stakeholders is included in this plan in the Appendix.

#### 4. Identification of Participation Techniques

The following participation techniques were utilized during the update process:

Public Hearings – three public hearings: kick-off, transmittal and adoption were conducted Workshops – three separate workshops were conducted to solicit input. All were noticed and open to the public.

Extensive e-mail correspondence with stakeholders

Special Webpage on SGRC website as well as County Website's and FaceBook.

Dissemination of Information in the newspaper

**Fliers** 

#### 5. Conduct Participation Program

A foundational principle utilized by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in all of its planning projects is public and stakeholder participation from and coordination with multiple and diverse interest groups. In order to ensure the broadest buy-in and diversity of input into the comprehensive plan update, all participants were included in the stakeholder group. Outreach to

the public, local governments, chambers of commerce, economic development authorities and other stakeholders and interested parties was accomplished by e-mail correspondence, direct communication, Facebook postings, project website, and updates provided at workshops and other group meetings. Opportunity for public comment was provided at public hearings and city and county commission meetings.

In addition to the two required public hearings, SGRC held a series of three workshops to discuss several elements of the plan. The first workshop was used to review the existing goals, issues and opportunities; and in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis participants updated the list of goals, issues and opportunities to meet current needs. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix along with public hearing notices.

The Report of Accomplishments was developed in the second workshop along with the draft of the updated Community Work Program. The Community Work Program was developed by the participants to include specific action items and projects that would be feasible for the County and the individual communities to implement should funding be available

The third workshop was utilized to update the Land Use Element and Maps as desired by the local governments.

#### 6. Consideration of Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the local governments must review both the Regional Water Plan covering its area and the GDNR Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria as laid out in Chapter 391-3-16 to determine whether any local implementation practices or development regulations need to be adapted to be consistent with both.

#### Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

Echols County is within the area of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan which was adopted in September 2011.



Source: CDM Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

The Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan had identified 13 goals, listed below, to implement its vision of managing water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia's regulated riparian and reasonable use laws to support the state's and regions' economy, to protect public health and natural resources, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens; while preserving the private property rights of Georgia's landowners, and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities.

#### Goals:

- 1. Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, industrial water needs including all agricultural sectors (including agro forestry).
- 2. Manage ground and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.
- 3. Manage the Region's and State's water resources in a manner that preserves and protects private property rights.
- 4. Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human needs, while protecting environmental resources.
- 5. Identify opportunities to optimize existing and future supplies, and water and wastewater infrastructure.
- 6. Promote efficient use and management of surface and groundwater resources to allow for sufficient supplies for current and future generations.
- 7. Protect and manage surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long-term water supplies for the region.
- 8. Protect, maintain and where appropriate and practicable, identify opportunities to enhance water quality and river base flows.
- 9. Protect and maintain regional water dependent recreational opportunities.
- 10. Identify opportunities to manage storm water to improve water quality and quantity.
- 11. Identify and implement cost effective water management strategies.
- 12. Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource service to all citizens in the region.
- 13. Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.

In addition the Regional Water Plan has adopted several Short-Term Water Quantity and Water Quality Management Practices, which the local comprehensive plan should include in order to manage water resources in a sustainable manner through the planning period and beyond:

The most significant issues in the Suwannee-Satilla Region are surface water availability gaps driven by agricultural usage. As such, the majority of water supply management practices are intended to address agricultural surface water use.

Short Term Water Quantity Management Practices (0-10 Years)

- 1. Utilize surface water and groundwater sources within the available resource capacities
- 2. Water conservation

- 3. Data Collection and research to confirm the frequency, duration, severity, and drivers of surface water gaps
- 4. Evaluate and ensure that current and future surface water permit conditions do not contribute to 7Q10 low flow concerns (1 in 10 year 7 day low flow condition
- 5. Encourage sustainable groundwater use as a preferred supply in regions with surface water 7Q10 low flow concerns and adequate groundwater supply
- 6. Identify incentives and a process to sustainably replace a portion of existing agricultural surface water use with groundwater use to address 7Q10 low flow concerns
- 8. Evaluate the potential to use existing storage to address 7Q10 low flow concerns
- 9. Education to reduce surficial aquifer groundwater use impacts to 7Q10 low flow concerns

**Short-Term Water Quality Management Practices (0 – 10 Years):** 

#### 1. Point Sources:

- Support and fund current permitting and waste load allocation process to improve treatment of wastewater and increase treatment capacity
- Data collection and research to confirm discharge volumes and waste concentrations as well as receiving stream flows and chemistry

#### 2. Non-Point Sources:

- Data collection to confirm source of pollutants and causes; encourage storm water ordinances, septic system maintenance, and coordinated planning
- Ensure funding and support for Best Management Practices Programs by local and state programs, including urban/suburban, rural, forestry and agricultural b Best Management Practices

#### 3. Non-point Source Existing Impairments:

- Total maximum daily load listed streams: Improve data on source of pollutant and length of impairment; Identify opportunities to leverage funds and implement non-point source Best Management Practices

Longer Term (20 – 40 years) water quantity and quality management practices include:

- Improve infiltration and management of wetlands
- Evaluate incentive based programs to manage, increase and restore wastewater and storm water returns
- Identify potential/feasibility of a multi-purpose reservoir
- Identify feasibility of regional inter-basin transfer
- Continue wastewater and storm water master planning

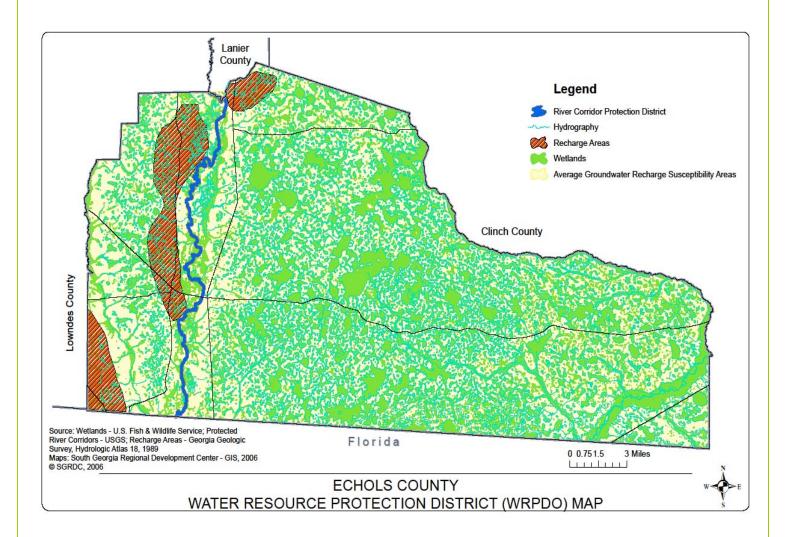
#### Chapter 391-3-16, Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria

The Environmental Planning Criteria that are part of the Minimum Planning Standards deal specifically with the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors and mountains, the latter not quite applicable in this region. These criteria were developed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as mandated in Part V of the Georgia Planning Act and in the Mountains and River Corridor Protection Act.

The criteria require that local governments shall identify existing and future water supply watersheds and adopt a water supply watershed protection plan for their jurisdiction.

Some uses may be grandfathered such as land uses existing prior to the adoption of a watershed plan, mining activities permitted by DNR, certain utilities placements, special forestry or agricultural services.

The Environmental guidelines also spell out criteria for the delineation of small and large water supply watersheds, for the protection of groundwater recharge areas, for the protection of wetlands, and for the protection of river corridors which shall be incorporated into this comprehensive plan and addressed specifically and in more detail through local ordinances and land development code regulations.



#### **II. PLAN ELEMENTS**

#### 1. Community Goals

The purpose of the Community Goals Element is to lay out a road map for Echols County's future; to generate local buy-in to the plan and to ensure that the plan is implemented. The Goals as listed below were developed in the 2010 Partial Update through several community workshops. These Goals were reviewed individually by all participants during the first workshop of this 2015 comprehensive plan update and deemed to still be applicable to Echols County. Therefore no changes were made.

Goal 1: Identify, conserve, and protect the broad range of cultural resources in Echols County.

Goal 2: Foster meaningful business and employment opportunities sufficient to establish a sound and balanced economy in which average per capita and employment levels are matriculating towards the levels of the state and nation.

<u>Goal 3:</u> Ensure that all residents within Echols County have access to quality and affordable housing.

Goal 4: Establish and maintain conservation and protection of natural areas, where those areas would be endangered by development. These areas include, but are not limited to, floodplains, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, protected river corridors, and forested hardwood areas, and areas where Georgia and Federally Endangered species and habitat exist.

Goal 5: Protect and enhance the value of existing development areas; promote development and redevelopment within urbanized areas; create and enhance stable neighborhoods; and maintain accessible open space for future land use opportunities.

Goal 6: Develop and maintain public services and facilities to accommodate existing development and to encourage future sustainable growth in areas where community facilities and services are provided at adequate capacities.

#### 2. Needs and Opportunities

The initial Needs and Opportunities as shown in this Section were developed and identified in the 2010 Update for Echols County. For this comprehensive plan update, the issues and opportunities were reviewed in the first of three workshops. Each of the previous issues and opportunities were reviewed and discussed by the participants, and then either deleted, amended or retained as deemed applicable to Echols County. This was done utilizing a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and trends (SWOT) analysis with stakeholders and residents, experiences by stakeholders and residents, analysis of statistical data and information, and review and revision as applicable of the issues and opportunities. Each of the following needs and opportunities is addressed by corresponding implementation measures in the Community Work Program.

#### Resource Conservation - Cultural Resources

#### Issues

- ❖ The Court House needs a new kitchen and new bathrooms. This is a public health issue as the bathrooms lack capacity, which causes malfunctioning when serving large crowds.
- ❖ There are not enough properties listed and recognized as historical so many are lost, and not preserved.

#### **Opportunities**

❖ The Historic Society is active and can provide valuable resources, through knowledge and information.

Identify historic unique places and events to encourage visitors and tourism and to further the camera ready program.

#### **Economic Development**

#### Issues

- There are not enough restaurants in the County, which causes loss of income and sales tax because residents and visitors leave the community to eat.
- ❖ There is a lack of retail in the county; as a result, residents drive to Valdosta for shopping.
- The intersection of GA 94 and US Highway 129 needs to be upgraded by renovating buildings and landscaping in order to attract more businesses.
- Commercial sales taxes are lost to Lowndes County due to lack of businesses in Echols County.

#### **Opportunities**

- The tree stock throughout the County is worth well over 100 million dollars and the Pine Tree industry is thriving; this can be utilized to create more business opportunities for the County such as fuel pellet industry and potential sawmills.
- The school system is a major employer for the County. The school is also a State recognized school for highest APR could be used as an attraction for new residents and businesses
- The County is a prime location for a recycling hub that can service the counties surrounding Echols.
- Become a Camera Ready Community to attract more visitors and businesses.
- Update the County website to raise awareness and promote the county.

#### **Development Patterns - Housing**

#### Issues

- The quality of housing stock has been degraded due to a few illegal /non-permitted mobile homes parks that have created blighted areas.
- There is no public assisted housing in the County and there is a lack of affordable stick built housing such as apartments and/or condos for the elderly and the low-to-moderate income.
- Subdivisions are near capacity, so another subdivision is needed
- Building Codes need to be adhered to as a safety issue houses are not maintained

#### **Opportunities**

- Echols County has become a "bedroom community" for Lowndes County, which will contribute to local tax base.
- Develop an incentive program to keep properties maintained and sound.

#### Resource Conservation - Natural Resources

#### Issues

- There is no enforcement of regulations for taxes on timber which results in lost revenue for the County because there is no way to confirm the removal of timber. The cost-profit ratio for enforcement doesn't make it feasible to enforce taxation.
- Protection of the wetlands is a concern because natural filters are removed which endangers the water quality in Echols County. No enforcement ability impacts groundwater recharge areas.
- ❖ No enforcement of Part V Environmental Ordinances

#### **Opportunities**

- The Pine Tree industry thrives in Echols County and creates employment and tax value by replenishing of the trees.
- The Alapaha River flows north to south on the west side of the County and has 1 boat ramp with a second under construction. This information needs to be placed in the State Tourism Brochure as one of the cleanest rivers to attract visitors.
- The Suwannee River, Grand Bay Creek, Alapahoochee River, and Toms Creek could possibly be utilized a lot for recreational and/or tourist uses.

There is a large hunting area in the eastern portion of the County and private hunting camps like Wolf Bay, Cowhouse and May Day which attracts a lot of visitors from Florida.

#### **Development Patterns - Land Use**

#### Issues

- The Planning & Zoning Board is no longer active, so land use issues are not addressed.
- There are no zoning or subdivision regulations.
- ❖ The lack of multi-family apartments and condos has resulted in the creation of dilapidated manufactured/ mobile home parks, due to lack of code.

#### **Opportunities**

Two-thirds of the subdivisions are built out; therefore there is an opportunity to increase the amount of residential uses with apartments and townhouses, which are affordable.

#### **Community Facilities and Services**

#### Issues

- The water supply is too low and the water is pumped through old infrastructure (terracotta pipes), which generates the need for a new water system.
- Echols' water service is privately owned by the Water Authority. Therefore government grants cannot be applied for to improve water services for Echols County citizens.
- There is a need for more recreational opportunities for the youth.
- There are no sewer lines.
- There are too many dirt roads, and non-porous paving is too costly for the County.
- ❖ The volunteer fire services need funding for updated equipment.
- ❖ The County ISO Rating is too high, due to lack of volunteers for, the fire station on J. Frank Culpepper Rd. resulting in unmanned station.

#### **Opportunities**

- The public boat ramp located on the Alapaha River is valuable and could be better used as an asset to the community. The addition of the second boat ramp could create a loop to attract more tourists.
- The new school site makes the previous site available for other public uses.
- Utilize CDBG grants to address water issues.
- Create a public/private partnership between the Water Authority and the County Commission to address water issues, and research the feasibility of adding a sewer system.

#### 3. Analysis of Data and Information

Reviewing the household data (US Census Quick Facts) shows that the majority of households are family households (77.4%) with 22.6% non-family households, 16.7% are households with people living alone, with almost half of those (7.5%) are over 65. This indicates that even though the majority of housing and infrastructure should be geared towards families, 4.4% of all households are over 65 with very different housing needs and service needs. Care should be taken to evaluate and incorporate the interests and needs of the entire population.

Reviewing the educational attainment data shows that the majority of residents in Echols County have a high school degree and some college, but no higher education 5.5% have an associate's degree, 4.3% have a bachelor's degree and 3.2% have a graduate or professional degree. In order to improve the economic development status within the county, additional efforts should be undertaken to raise the educational level of the residents (including professional and vocational training) to raise income levels, quality of life, and attract jobs to the area.

In May 2014, the U.S. unemployment rate stood at 6.1 percent according to the Department of Labor Statistics. The State of Georgia is slightly over I percentage point higher at 7.5% unemployment rate and Echols County showed a 6.0% unemployment rate for the same time frame. The average household income is \$27,933 for Echols County, compared with \$49,604 for Georgia and \$52,000 for the U.S. (Source: Georgia Labor Market Explorer – Labor Market Services – Area Profile – Summary). Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining, Construction, and Wholesale Trade, are the top three employers in the Echols County, all sectors with lower salaries for the majority of their employees. The low average salary also reflects the large portion of the residents without a higher education. Research and studies have shown repeatedly that higher wages and employment are a result of better education. In order to attract higher paying jobs, Echols County must address the issue of education in the community and increase high school and college graduation rates. Along with this issue, Echols County must develop incentives to attract companies to the area then that will employ these graduates and develop incentives to keep these residents in the County. Currently the mean travel time to work is 25 minutes (US Census Quick Facts), which indicates that many residents of Echols County work in Lowndes County and its Cities.

Currently Echols County has 1,592 housing units, of which 16.3% are vacant. The majority are single family residences and 51.1% are mobile homes. Only 17.6% of the housing stock has been constructed since 2000 and about 63.9% are renter occupied. These numbers are derived from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5 – Year Estimates. A recommendation for Echols County would be to undertake a housing survey to specifically identify those units that are vacant, the reasons for the vacancies and the condition of the older housing stock in general. This could serve as a basis for increased rehabilitation efforts and grants to improve the housing stock and decrease the vacancy rate in Echols County.

#### 4. Analysis of policies, activities etc. for Consistency with Quality Community Objectives

#### **DCA Quality Community Objectives:**

#### 1. Economic Prosperity

Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

#### 2. Resource Management

Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.

#### 3. Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

#### 4. Local Preparedness

Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

#### 5. Sense of Place

Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

#### 6. Regional Cooperation

Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

#### 7. Housing Options

Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community

#### 8. Transportation Options

Address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments; or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.

#### 9. Educational Opportunities

Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; instituting programs to improve local graduation rates; expanding vocational education programs; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.

#### 10. Community Health

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled; instituting programs to improve public safety; promoting programs that foster better health and fitness; or otherwise providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.

#### 5. Community Policies

#### **Cultural Resources**

Goal 1: To encourage the protection and conservation of the rich historic heritage and broad range of cultural resources in Echols County.

#### **Issues & Policies**

<u>Issue</u>: There are not enough properties listed and recognized as historical so many are lost and not preserved.

Policy 1.1: Supporting creating an inventory of National Register eligible sites with County staff and members of the Historical Society.

Issue: The Court House needs a new kitchen and new bathrooms.

Policy 1.2: Encourage applying for CDBG grants for Courthouse and other aged government buildings repair.

#### **Economic Development**

Goal 2: Foster meaningful business and employment opportunities sufficient to establish a sound and balanced economy in which average per capita and employment levels are matriculating towards the levels of the state and nation

#### **Issues & Policies**

<u>Issue:</u> There are not enough restaurants in the County which cause loss of income and sales tax because residents and or visitors leave the County to eat.

Issue: There is a lack of retail in the county; as a result, residents drive to Valdosta for shopping.

Policy 2.1: Private sector economic investments should be encouraged and fostered through the availability of financial and technical assistance.

<u>Issue:</u> The intersection of GA 94 and US Highway 129 needs to be upgraded by renovating buildings and landscaping in order to attract more businesses.

Policy 2.2: Encourage pursuing a Transportation Enhancement Grant or Gateway Grant, from GDOT for the improvement of GA 94 and US Highway 129.

<u>Issue: Commercial sales taxes are lost to Lowndes County due to the lack of businesses in Echols County.</u>

- Policy 2.3: Consider the establishment of a small Chamber of Commerce that can attract businesses to Echols County.
- Policy 2.4: Encourage coordination between potential developers, the County Commission, and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, in an effort to utilize specific programs and financing mechanisms that will create local businesses and in result expand the County's commercial tax base.

#### **Housing**

**Goal 3:** Ensure that all residents within Greater Echols County have access to quality and affordable housing.

#### Issues & Policies

<u>Issue:</u> The quality of housing stock has been degraded due to a few illegal/non-permitted mobile homes parks that have created blighted areas.

Policy 3.1: The County is encouraged to adopt and enforce land development regulations that can revitalize blighted areas throughout the County.

Issue: There is no public assisted housing in the County and there is a lack of affordable stick built housing such as apartments and/or condos for the elderly and low-to-moderate income.

Policy 3.2: Consider utilizing Federal and State programs that offer low interest loans and tax reduction incentives for the development of affordable housing; including both single and multiple family developments.

<u>Issue:</u> Subdivisions are near capacity, so another subdivision is needed.

Policy 3.3: Encourage the improvement of water services, fire protection, police enforcement, and recreational activities, in an effort to make Echols County more attractive to residents from outside of the County.

<u>Issue:</u> Building Codes need to be kept up as a safety issue-houses are not maintained.

Policy 3.4: Encourage compliance with applicable building codes.

#### **Natural Resources**

Goal 4:

Establish and maintain the conservation and protection measures for natural areas, where those areas would be endangered by development. These areas include, but are not limited to, floodplains, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, protected river corridors, forested hardwood areas and areas where Georgia and Federally Endangered species and habitat exist.

#### **Issues & Policies**

<u>Issue:</u> There is limited enforcement of regulations for taxes on timber which results in lost revenue for the county because there is no way to check or prove. The cost-profit ratio for enforcement doesn't make it feasible to enforce taxation

Policy 4.1: Consider the pursuit of Federal and State grant opportunities with the assistance of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to fund the hiring of additional staff to monitor the timber industry.

<u>Issue: Protection of the wetlands is a concern because the natural filters are removed which endangers the water quality in Echols County. No enforcement impacts groundwater recharge areas.</u>

<u>Issue: No enforcement of Part V Environmental Ordinances.</u>

Policy 4.2: Consider the creation of land development regulations that will promote Conservation Subdivisions and Best Management Practices for business developments to prevent development form polluting or exhausting the natural replenishment cycles of the water bodies throughout the County.

#### **Land Use**

**Goal 5:** 

Protect and enhance the value of existing development areas; promote development and redevelopment within urbanized areas; create and enhance stable neighborhoods; and maintain accessible open space for future land use opportunities.

#### **Issues & Policies**

Issue: The Planning & Zoning Board is no longer active, so land use issues are not addressed.

Issue: There are no zoning or subdivision regulations.

Policy 5.1: Consider re-establishing a Planning Commission that can coordinate with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission for the creation of Land Development regulations.

<u>Issue:</u> The lack of Multi-family land uses have resulted in the creation of dilapidated manufactured/mobile home parks, because of no enforcement and no places to move to.

Policy 5.2: Identify areas throughout the County that can support the development of multi-family land uses and consider designating these areas specifically for medium and high density residential land uses on a future land use map.

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#### **Community Facilities and Services**

Goal 6:

Develop and maintain public services and facilities to accommodate existing development and to encourage future sustainable growth in areas where community facilities and services are provided at adequate capacities.

#### Issues & Policies

<u>Issue</u>: The water supply is too low and is pumped through old infrastructure (terracotta pipes), which increases the need for a new water system.

<u>Issue: Echols County's water service is privately owned by the Water Authority. Therefore government grants cannot be applied for to improve water services for Echols County citizens.</u>

Policy 6.1: Consider providing water services through the County instead of by a private entity so that government grants can be applied for to improve the water supply and storage capability.

Issue: There is a need for more recreational opportunities for the youth.

Policy 6.2: Consider recreational programs suitable for recreational facilities that could foster the interest in the development of competitive sports organizations for children.

Issue: There are no sewer lines.

Policy 6.3: Consider the establishment of a committee to research the feasibility of providing county owned sewer services for Statenville.

Issue: There are too many dirt roads, and non-porous paving is too costly for the County

Policy 6.4: Encourage the pursuit of road improvement funds that are available through Federal and State programs.

Issue: The volunteer fire services need funding for updated equipment.

<u>Issue:</u> The County ISO Rating is too high because of lack of volunteers for fire station on J. Culpepper Rd which results in unmanned stations.

Policy 6.5: Consider providing professional fire protection services through the County.

Policy 6.6: Encourage the County to pursue FEMA Grants with the assistance of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in an effort to improve the services provided by the Volunteer Fire Department.

#### 6. Community Work Program

# ECHOLS COUNTY FIVE-YEAR SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM UPDATE REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS (2011 - 2015)

PROJECTS	Estimated Cost / Resp.	ROA	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15
PLANNING							
Annually re-evaluate the Echols County Short-Term Work Program	(Cost N/A) County Commission/Sheriff Office/Volunteer Fire/School Board/Historical Society/Extension Services Office	Delete, policy	*	*	*	*	*
Participate in all updates to the 2025 Echols County Comprehensive Plan	(Cost TBD) County Commission/Sheriff Office/Volunteer Fire/School Board/Historical Society/Extension Services Office	Delete, policy	*	*	*	*	*
Evaluate the advantages/disadvantages to increase the number of county commission board members from 3 to 5	\$2,000 Co. Commission/Ga General Assembly	Completed	*	*	*		
Re-instate the Echols County Planning Commission to implement the Comprehensive Plan	\$2,500/y County Commission	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*
Investigate the formation of a sanitary sewer district and prepare preliminary engineering plans to service the Statenville Area.	\$2,500 County Commission/Industrial Dev. Authority	Complete, Determined not to be financially feasible	*	*	*		
Establish a more accurate program to monitor timber harvested and sold in Echols County for Timber Tax purposes	(Cost N/A) County Commission	Completed	*	*	*	*	*
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION							
NONE							
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES				_			
Continue to participate with the Echols County Historical	\$500/y County Commission	Delete policy	*	*	*	*	*

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PROJECTS	Estimated Cost / Resp.	ROA	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15
Society							
Seek grants and provide technical assistance to Echols County Historical Society with the development of the museum of local history	\$500/y County Commission	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	
Conduct a county historic resources inventory	\$5,000 County Commission/Historical Society	Completed	*	*	*		
HOUSING							
Establish a housing rehabilitation program for dilapidated areas throughout the County.	(Cost N/A) County Commission /SGRC	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*
Revitalize single family housing that can be used for affordable housing.	(Cost N/A) County Commission/SGRC	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*
Pursue funding to support the financing for the development of apartments and duplexes.	(Cost N/A) County Commission/SGRC	Delete No interest from public	*	*	*	*	*
Make credit counseling available for all potential home buyers.	(Cost TBD) County Commission/SGRC	Delete not financially feasible and no interest from residents	*	*	*	*	*
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
Create an Industrial Development Authority to serve as the public catalyst with taxing powers for economic development	(Cost N/A) County Commission	In process					
Investigate the purchase of a public industrial park	\$15-25,000 County Commission	Ongoing	*	*	*		
Develop a public industrial park with infrastructure (roads, water, sanitary sewer, etc.)	\$300,000 County /Industrial Dev. Authority	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*

PROJECTS	Estimated Cost / Resp.	ROA	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15
Continue to recruit for new industries to place in the industrial park	(Cost N/A) County /Industrial Dev. Authority	Ongoing Combine with project below about existing industries	*	*	*	*	*
Continue to research financial incentives to further develop and expand existing industries in the county	(Cost N/A) County /Industrial Dev. Authority	Ongoing Combine with above project	*	*	*	*	*
LAND USE							
Continue to enforce the eight mandatory state construction codes	Fee based / County Commission	Delete not a project	*	*	*	*	*
Prepare and adopt a land development regulations, which assists in implementing the Echols County Comprehensive Use Plan	\$5,000 County /SGRC	Ongoing	*	*			
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES							
Fund the needs for volunteer fire services (Expand the Sheriff office,) Purchase one deputy car, Hire 2 new deputies, upgrade communication devices)	(\$400,000) County Commission / SGRC	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*
Fund the needs for volunteer fire services (Air packs, Class A pump upgrade, fire service training, communication devices, one fire truck)	(\$497,000) County Commission / SGRC	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*
Pursue funding for the upgrading of the intersection at GA 94 and US Highway 129	(\$50, 000) County / SGRC/ GDOT	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*
Install a new kitchen and 2 new bathrooms in the Court House	\$15,000 County Commission	Postponed until 2019	*	*	*		
Purchase a 12 passenger van for the Extension Services Office to transport children in the 4-H Program to educational trips and recreational activities.	\$30,000 County Commission	Complete	*	*	*		
Repair roof leaks, windows, and drainage problems for the Extension Services Office	\$4,000 County Commission	Completed	*	*			
Seek grant funds to construct a paved walking trail at Recreation Dept.	\$12,500 County Commission / School Board	Ongoing	*	*	*	*	*
Pave Coggins Farm Road and add shoulders to J. Frank Culpepper Road	\$7M County Commission / GDOT	Ongoing, Culpepper Road is complete	*	*	*	*	*
Prepare preliminary engineering plans and cost	\$1,000,000 County /Industrial Dev.	Ongoing	*	*			

PROJECTS	Estimated Cost / Resp.	ROA	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15
estimates for a sanitary sewer collection/treatment system for the Statenville area, County school, and new industrial park	Authority						
Create construction plans for a new office building for commissioners	(Cost TBD) County Commission	Delete deemed unnecessary		*	*		
Apply to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for a fire truck pumper and equipment	\$215,000 County Commission	Ongoing					

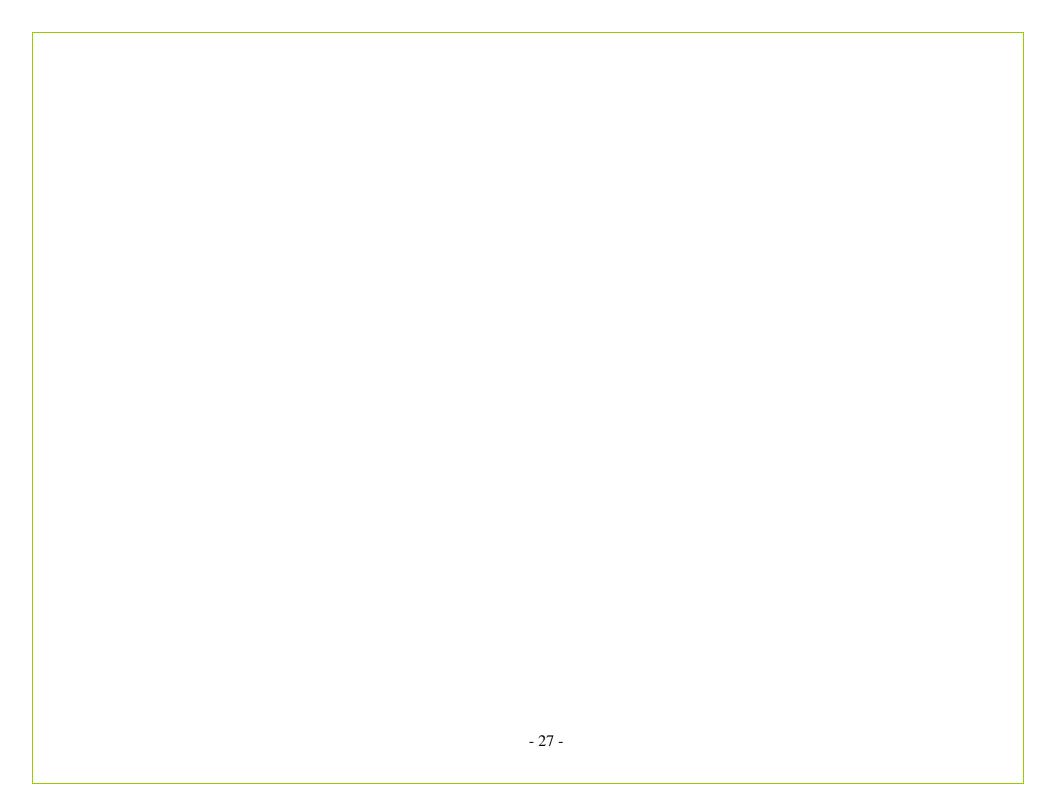
#### 3. Community Work Program

# ECHOLS COUNTY FIVE-YEAR SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM UPDATE (2016 - 2020)

	Goal	Estimated	Funding					
PROJECTS		Cost / Resp.		FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
PLANNING								
Re-instate the Echols County Planning Commission to implement the Comprehensive Plan	1	\$2,500/y BOCC	General Fund				Х	
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES								
Seek grants and provide technical assistance to Echols County Historical Society with the development of the museum of local history	1	\$500/y BOCC	General Fund	х	Х	х	X	х
Use completed historical resource inventory to preserve properties and use to encourage visitors and tourism to further the camera ready program.	1	\$1,500/y BOCC	General Fund	х	х	Х	х	х
Hire a code officer to enforce environmental ordinances	3,4	\$15,000/y BOCC	General Fund, available grants			X	X	
HOUSING								
Develop a list of potential grants and funding sources for financing a housing rehabilitation program.	3	(Cost \$100) BOCC	General Fund	X	X	x		
Establish a housing rehabilitation program for dilapidated areas throughout the County.	3	(Cost 2,500) BOCC	General Fund				X	х
Revitalize single family housing that can be used for affordable housing through available grants and housing programs.	3	(Cost \$500,000) BOCC	CHIP, CDBG, Enterprise Zone		X	X		
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT								
Create an Industrial Development Authority to serve as the public catalyst for economic development	2	(Cost \$2,500) BOCC	General Fund		X	Х	Х	
Identify available land to purchase for a public industrial park	2	\$1,000 BOCC	General Fund	X	X			

PROJECTS	Goal	Estimated Cost / Resp.	Funding	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
Develop a public industrial park with infrastructure (roads, water, sanitary sewer, etc.)	2	\$500,000 BOCC /Industrial Dev. Authority	EIP, One Georgia and USDA Grants				х	х
Recruit new industries to place in the industrial park, and further develop and expand existing industries through financial incentives and designation of industrial park as an Opportunity Zone.	2	(Cost \$5,000) BOCC /Industrial Dev. Authority	General Fund	х	х	x	X	х
Continue to pursue all applicable grants, loans, and technical assistance that will help enhance the community and foster economic development, including CDBG grants.	2	(Cost \$5,000) BOCC/Industrial Dev. Authority	General Fund	х	х	х	X	х
Become a Camera Ready Community to attract visitors and businesses	2	\$5,000 BOCC	General Fund	X	Х	X	X	X
Update the County website to raise awareness and promote the County	2	\$10,000 BOCC	General Fund	X	Х	Х	Х	X
LAND USE								
Prepare and adopt a land development regulations, which assists in implementing the Echols County Comprehensive Plan, revitalizes blighted areas, and regulates subdivisions and mobile home parks.	3,4,5	(Cost \$5,000) BOCC/SGRC	General Funds	х	x	х	х	х
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES								
Hire 2 new deputies as needed.	6	(\$60,000) BOCC	COPS Hiring Grant			X	Х	х
Upgrade police communication devices on as need basis.	6	\$15,000 - \$20,0000 BOCC	JAG Grants, General Fund	х	х	Х		
Purchase for volunteer fire services (Air packs, fire service training, communication devices, Class A Pumper, one fire truck) on an as needed basis.	6	(\$497,000) BOCC / SGRC	AFG Grant	х	х	х	х	х
Pursue funding for the upgrading of the intersection at GA 94 and State Route 135 by renovating buildings and landscaping in order to attract more businesses.	3,6	(\$50, 000) BOCC / SGRC	GDOT		х	x	х	х
Install a new kitchen and 2 new bathrooms in the Court House	1,6	(\$50,000) BOCC	General Fund,				X	

	Goal	Estimated Cost / Post	Funding	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY
PROJECTS		Cost / Resp.		16	17	18	19	20
Seek grant funds to construct a paved walking trail at Recreation Dept.	6	(Cost \$1,000) BOCC	DNR Grant			х	х	х
Pave and maintain Coggins Farm Road.	6	(Cost TBD) BOCC	LMIG, General Fund	X	X	X	X	х
Prepare preliminary engineering plans and cost estimates for a sanitary sewer collection/treatment system for the Statenville area, County School, and possible new industrial park.	6	\$1,000,000 County /Industrial Dev. Authority	General Fund, CDBG			X	X	X
Improve Road Department Shop and purchase new equipment: 2 graders, 1 side cutter, 1 dump truck	6	(Cost \$500,000) BOCC	General Fund ,GEFA		x	x	х	х
Apply to the AFG for a fire truck pumper and equipment	6	\$215,000 BOCC/SGRC	AFG Grant		X	X	X	х
Research and review ways the community can improve its fire protection services and its ISO rating, and implement those measures.	6	(Cost \$7,500) BOCC	General Fund	х	х	х		
Investigate potential funding sources to assist the community improve its water utilities services.	6	(Cost \$5,000) BOCC	General Fund	X				
Expand the existing Board of Commissioners building to add office and storage space.	6	\$50,000 BOCC	General Fund					Х
Improve the intersections of Spur Road and Highway 94 and Highway 129.	2	(Cost \$250,000) GDOT, BOCC	LMIG, General Fund		х	х	х	
Create a committee to research the feasibility of providing sewer services through the County for Statenville.	6	(Cost \$3,000) BOCC	General Fund			X	X	X
Establish recreational programs for youth	6	(Cost \$7,500) BOCC	General Fund		X			
Create a public/private partnership between the water authority and the County Commission to address water issues, and enable the County to apply for CDBG grants to improve water supply and storage capability.	6	Cost \$8,500) BOCC	General Fund	X				



#### 7. Economic Development Element

The September 2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission under a grant from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration is hereby incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan to serve as the Economic Development Element for Echols County.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The SGRC CEDS analyzed the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, a regional plan of action, and the investment priorities and funding sources.

As a performance-based plan, this CEDS plays a critical role in adapting to global economic conditions by fully utilizing the region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents by attracting the private investment that creates jobs. The SGRC CEDS is a regionally-owned strategy that is the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with regional public and private sector participation. This plan sets forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the Southern Georgia region and clearly defines the measures of success.

The Southern Georgia CEDS gives an overview of the region briefly describing geography, population, economy, labor and workforce development and use, education, transportation access, environment, and regional resources. It reviews the state of the Regional Economy and provides a list of achievable Goals and Objectives for the region, a Plan of Action to ensure success, and Performance Measures used to evaluate the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's successful development and implementation of the 2013-2018 CEDS. Implementation of the goals identified in this plan is significant to the economic future of the SGRC District.

Policies, issues and opportunities, and Short-term Work Program implementation strategies located in the current Comprehensive Plans for each of our 18 county region were used extensively to develop the CEDS Goals and Objectives, Vital Projects and Problems and Opportunities.

Included below are goals and objectives from the CEDS which are aligned with the current economic development goals of Echols County:

#### Goal:

Improve/upgrade the educational levels and labor force skills within the region.

#### Objective:

Develop and support community based efforts to address improved educational levels and labor force skills.

#### **Objective:**

Support the continued improvement of the educational system in addressing educational/skills improvement and ensure WIA coordination.

#### <u>Goal:</u>

A well trained workforce, professional, technical and skilled, capable of accommodating new industry and maintaining existing industry.

#### Objective:

Improve educational attainment by reducing high school drop-out rates.

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#### Goal:

Public services and facilities adequate to accommodate existing and future growth.

#### Objective:

Industrial Parks/properties with all necessary infrastructure and transportation links, to attract new and expanding businesses and industries to the region.

#### Objective:

Availability of speculatively built and other buildings to attract new and expanding businesses and industries in the region.

#### Objective:

Availability of adequate financing and/or financial incentives to attract new and expanding businesses and industries to the region.

#### Goal:

Maintenance and improvement of existing and future housing and the elimination of the region's substandard housing conditions.

#### Objective:

Assist local governments with the development of a Building Inspection Program.

#### Objective:

Encourage local governments to participate in CHIP, CDBG, and USDA housing programs.

#### Objective:

Work with local governments to develop ordinances for manufactured home usage and placement.

#### Goal:

Provide affordable housing options for low-to-moderate income persons.

#### Objective:

Develop homebuyer programs for low-to-moderate income persons

#### Goal:

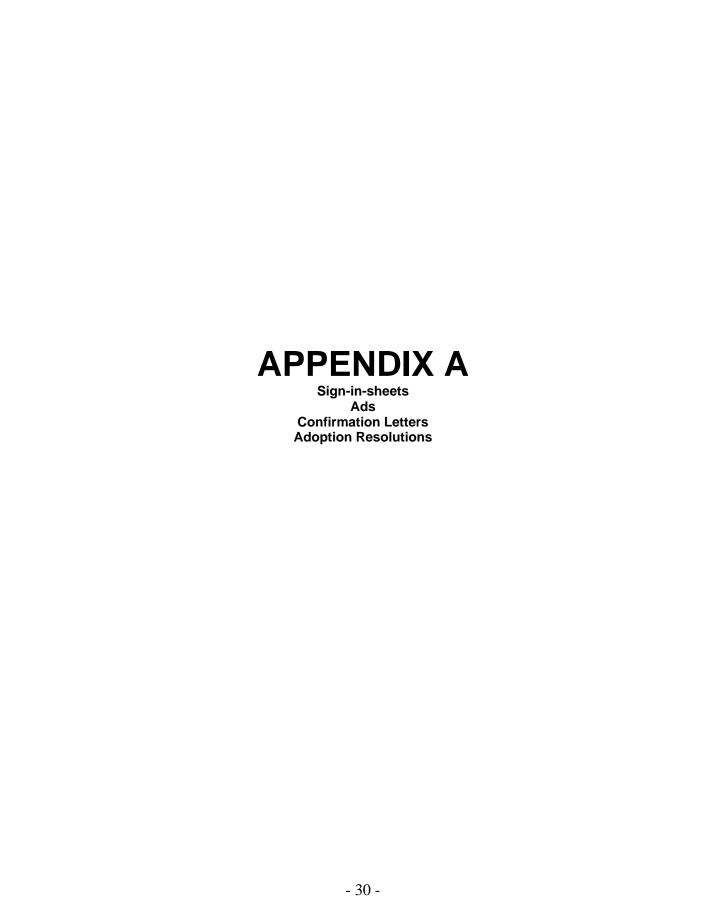
Conservation, maintenance and improvement of existing/future housing and neighborhoods, and the elimination of substandard housing conditions in the region.

#### Objective:

All cities and counties should be encouraged to establish and maintain an annual housing condition inventory; and adopt or revise and update building and housing codes, using applicable state or national models.

#### Objective:

All substandard housing units, which are inventoried and suited for rehabilitation, should be scheduled for rehabilitation in a manner consistent with the local comprehensive plan.



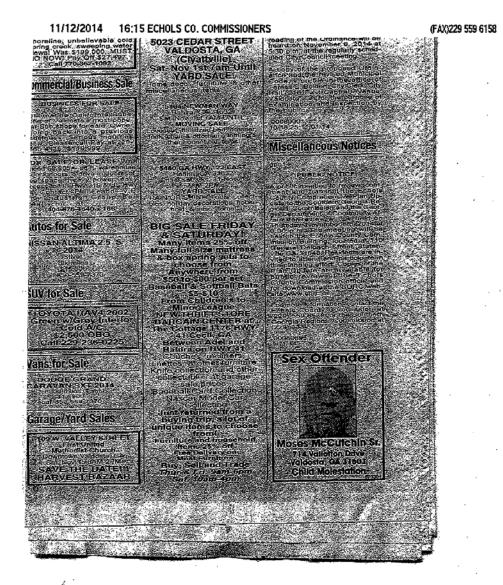
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Saturday, December 6, 2014

#### Miscellaneous Notices

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

A public meeting to adopt the Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update will be held on Monday December 8th 2014 at 9:00 a.m. The meeting Will be held at the Echols County Commission Office, located at 110 General Deloach Street, Statenville GA 31648 Residents are invited to attend and participate in the planning effort. Copies of the Plan Update are available for public review at the Echols County Commission office, and for download at the SGRC website www.sgrc.us

For more information, contact the Echols County Commission at (229) 559-6538, or the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at (229) 333-5277

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#### Sex Offender

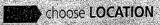


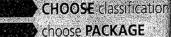
David Lee Roberts 6314 Pine Lake Circle **Child Molestation** 

## PLACE YOU

ONLINE AND PRINT







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Austin L. Herndon 5619 Railroad Avenue Valdosta, GA Eriminal Attempt to commit Child Molestating

#### Sex Offender



Michael R. Mullis 5000 Garshagen Rd. Valdosta, GA Aggravated Child Molestation



# NEED TO

CONTACT VALD

Robert Davis, Chairman 235 Whippoorwill Ln. Lake Park, GA. 31636

Bobby Walker, Commissioner 135 Loblolly Ln. Statenville, GA. 31648



Jim Carter, Vice-Chairman 390 Hickory Grove Rd. Lake Park, GA. 31636

William Holland, County Attorney PO Box 5437 Valdosta, GA. 31603 (229)242-7562

Brenda Stalvey, County Clerk/Administrator
110 General DeLoach St., PO Box 190
Statenville, GA. 31648
(229)559-6538/Fax (229)559-6158
Email: ecboc@yahoo.com
www.echolscountygeorgia.com

November 06, 2014

Southern Georgia Regional Commission 327 W. Savannah Avenue Valdosta, GA 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Echols County has completed an update of its comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan(s) covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Davis, Chairman

**Echols County Consolidated Government** 

Enc.

"Carrot Capital of the South"

#### ECHOLS COUNTY

#### RESOLUTION TO ADOPT 2015 ECHOLS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

WHEREAS, Echols County has completed the 2015 Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update.

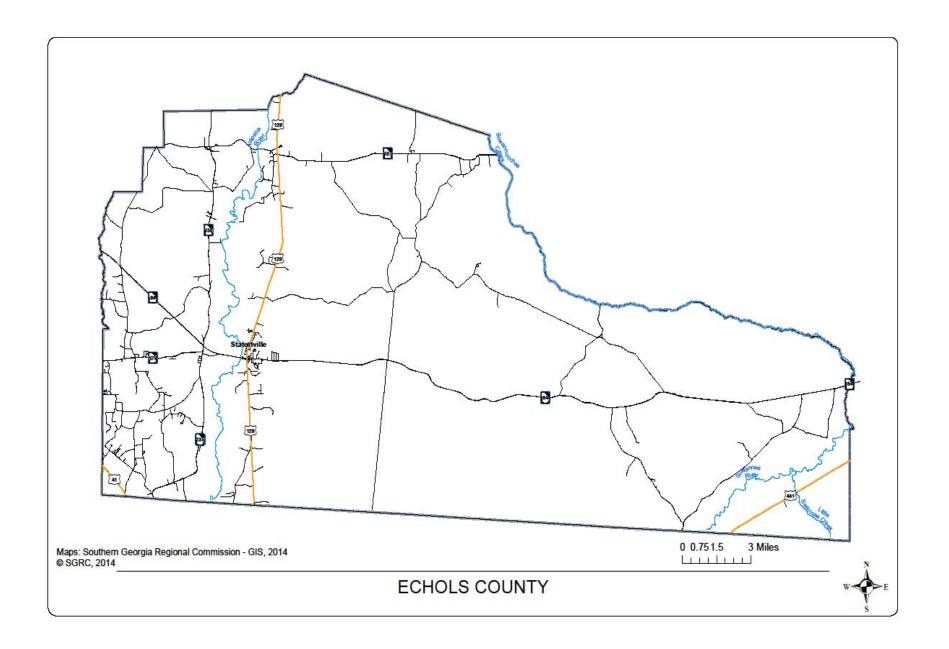
WHEREAS, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that Echols County does hereby adopt the 2015 Echols County Comprehensive Plan Update.

Adopted this 12-9-14-

Robert Davis, Chairman Echols County Commission

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12/18/2014