

## Chapter 8: Intergovernmental Coordination

The Intergovernmental Coordination element provides local governments an opportunity to inventory existing intergovernmental coordination mechanisms and processes with other local governments and governmental entities that can have profound impacts on the success of implementing the local government's comprehensive plan. The purpose of this element is to assess the adequacy and suitability of existing coordination mechanisms to serve the current and future needs of the community and articulate goals and formulate a strategy for effective implementation of community policies and objectives that, in many cases, involve multiple governmental entities.

### Inventory of Existing Conditions

#### Adjacent Local Governments

Elbert County and the cities of Bowman and Elberton prepared and adopted a joint comprehensive plan in 1993. The county and cities are continuing the tradition of cooperating in planning efforts by completing the present plan as a jointly developed and adopted plan.

Elbert County and the cities of Bowman and Elberton have adopted a verified Service Delivery Strategy. The strategy includes a land use dispute resolution process consisting of three levels of consultation on proposed annexations and land use changes within governments' zones of influence. First, notification is required of any proposed annexation or change of land use within the zone of influence. If a government takes issue with the proposed action, it first pursues informal negotiation with its partner. Third, if that process fails to produce a satisfactory result, the government may invoke a formal mediation process.

The Service Delivery Strategy identifies several formal agreements between governments. Cooperation in carrying out these agreements is generally managed at the staff level on a day-to-day basis.

- A mutual aid agreement between Elberton and Elbert County for assistance with fighting fires.
- A contractual agreement for law enforcement between the City of Bowman and the Elbert County Sheriff's office.
- An agreement for building inspection and fire safety inspection in the unincorporated county by the Elberton code enforcement staff.
- An agreement between Elbert County and the City of Elberton to provide emergency housing of prisoners in the county's jail in the event of overflow at the city facility.
- An agreement for the City of Elberton to provide certain recyclable materials recovery and processing for recyclables collected by the county.

The Service Delivery Strategy calls for a joint countywide recreation program including both cities. However, that arrangement is not being implemented and the SDS will be amended accordingly.

The City of Elberton has a contractual agreement with the U.S. Government to provide water storage sufficient to supply the city with a specific maximum withdrawal (see Community Facilities Element).

Elbert County is a member of the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority, created under the Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority Act. The Authority membership includes ten counties. The Authority on behalf of its member counties and all the cities within them, under a general contract, carries out solid waste planning. The Authority may conduct special planning studies, facility construction, and other solid waste activities under specific supplemental contracts with its member counties.

The county and the cities are participating in a joint thoroughfares plan with a private consultant.

## **Sheriff**

There is a formal agreement between the City of Elberton and the Sheriff to house city prisoners at the county jail in emergencies.

The City of Bowman has contracted with the Sheriff's office to provide police services in Bowman.

## **Other**

There are no formal agreements, policies, or procedures for coordination among the local governments, the superior or probate courts, or the tax assessor's office.

## **Utilities**

There are three providers of electricity in Elbert County: Hart Electric Membership Corporation, Georgia Power, and the City of Elberton (a member of the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia). Although informal communication occurs among these entities, there is no formal process for coordinating activities. There are no formal procedures in place for coordination between any of the electric utilities and any of the local governments.

## **School Board**

The Elbert County school system provides space for county offices in an old middle school while the county provided the grading for construction of the new middle school. The school system also shares facilities with the county recreation program, providing its basketball facilities in return for access to the recreation department's soccer and other outdoor fields. The City of Elberton cooperates with the school system to provide apprenticeship programs for students in video production and Internet services.

## **Development Authorities**

The State of Georgia gave authorization to Elbert County to establish the Lake Russell Development Authority, which is comprised of a seven-member board. The development board was created to study the land and market feasibility of future development around Lake Russell. Future development options include building a marina, golf course and a conference center around the lake. This authority is not currently active.

The Development Authority for Elbert County, Elberton, and Bowman was formed to issue tax-exempt industrial revenue bonds for companies that wish to build an industrial facility. Efforts are concentrated on the Elberton Industrial Park.

The City of Elberton has a downtown development authority. Although its board was originally appointed by the city council, it is now self-perpetuating, i.e. the board members appoint replacements for vacancies.

The City of Elberton has a housing authority whose board of directors is appointed by the city council.

There is a local hospital authority that was created before 1965. Its board of directors is self-appointing.

The county board of health oversees the county health department. Some members serve ex-officio and individual county commissioners appoint some. The county and city governments cooperate closely on a professional level on the issuance of various permits, including food service, septic tanks, and others. The health department and the hospital authority have contracts for the hospital to provide several services, including emergency preparedness for bio-terrorism events and indigent care. The hospital authority also has mutual aid contracts with virtually every hospital in the state. It also has a cooperative agreement with the school system to use a school building for its wellness center in return for free use by school system employees. The hospital is also a clinical training site for Athens Tech, the Medical College of Georgia, and participates in an apprentice program for high schools students studying health occupations.

## **State Programs**

### **Appalachian Regional Commission**

Elbert County is a member of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a development agency of the U.S. government, operated in all or part of thirteen states under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Commission's mission is to mitigate the obstacles to social and economic development inherent in the Appalachian terrain and to promote economic development in the region. Participation in ARC makes Elbert County eligible to receive economic development grants. The local liaison for ARC is the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center in Athens, Georgia.

## **Assessment**

### **Land Use**

No land use conflicts were identified during plan development. The county does not implement zoning or any other land use restrictions; therefore, there are few opportunities for land use conflicts between the county and either of the cities. No land use conflicts have been identified with any adjacent counties.

Neither Elberton nor Bowman has a policy of expansion via annexation. A conflict resolution process is in place via the county service delivery strategy. It is deemed satisfactory, although it has not been used to date.

### **Identified Needs**

The City of Bowman does not have a backup supply for its water system, nor does it have readily apparent alternatives should demand out-pace its supply. The neighboring counties of Franklin, Madison, and Oglethorpe have limited water supply options. Elbert County has not identified growth centers dense enough or rapidly growing enough to warrant investigation into a public water supply of its own. The City of Elberton has a substantial water withdrawal capacity from Lake Russell and an on-going agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for water withdrawal and storage. Therefore, the City of Elberton, Madison County, and the City of Royston have identified a mutual need for exploring possible regional water supply strategies.

### **Adequacy of Existing Coordination Mechanisms**

The existing Service Delivery Strategy adopted by the county and the two cities has been found for the most part to be satisfactory. The recreation services strategy needs to be revised as part of this planning process to recognize changes in the relationship between Elbert County and the City of Elberton.

Other regional and intra-county coordination mechanisms, organizations, and relationships are judged to be adequate and to provide sufficient sharing of information and planning among the governments of Elbert County, its neighbors, and regional organizations with which it is affiliated. With the exception of the initiative in planning potential multi-jurisdictional solutions for water supply and thoroughfares, there were no planned facilities, programs, goals, or implementation strategies identified in the development of this plan that are judged to require additional coordination mechanisms or to have impacts on other jurisdictions requiring new coordination mechanisms.

## **Needs**

- Continue joint comprehensive planning approach to ensure a common basis is maintained for planning by all local governments and quasi-governmental agencies.
- Continue existing coordination through agreements and procedures already established.

- Cooperative approach to water supply in the Broad River Basin. (Bowman, Elberton)
- Coordination to ensure maximum benefit from tourism-related projects.

## **Vision**

Establish formal relationship among governments and quasi-governmental entities within and outside Elbert County when necessary to eliminate duplication of services, minimize costs, and create opportunities for cooperation. Continue informal cooperation at both the policy and staff levels for the same purpose.

## **Goals**

- Maintain existing inter-governmental coordination mechanisms within the county and among partners in regional organizations.
- Investigate the potential for a regional or multi-jurisdictional approach to water supply in the Broad River Basin.
- Maximize the benefit from tourism-related activities identified in this plan by coordinated efforts by Elbert County, Bowman, Elberton, and appropriate state agencies.