

Synopsis of Revised Changes to DCA's Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning

Draft rules at http://www.dca.ga.gov/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/regional_planning.asp

The Georgia Planning Act (O.C.G.A. 50-8-1, et seq.) , passed by the General Assembly in 1989, charged the Georgia Department of Community Affairs with administering the State's local and regional comprehensive planning programs. That legislation assigned DCA the responsibility of creating and maintaining administrative rules to govern the day-to-day conduct of the programs created in the Act.

In 2014, DCA adopted revised Minimum Standards for Local Comprehensive Planning to adapt to the changing needs of Georgia's communities. These rules have been in effect now for three years. The current regional planning standards are nearly identical to the previous local comprehensive planning standards and it was always the intent to update and modify the regional planning standards to mirror changes made to the local comprehensive planning standards.

In the spring of 2017, DCA worked with the regional commissions to update the regional planning requirements. The goals were similar to the goals achieved in revising the local planning standards including:

- **SIMPLICITY & COST REDUCTION**
Simplifying the planning process and reducing its cost
- **CONTINUITY**
Ensuring that plans have enduring value and are implementable over time.
- **COORDINATION**
Communicating between local governments and state agencies about regional priorities and shared concerns and allocating resources accordingly.

What follows is a brief overview of the proposed regulatory changes resulting from DCA's work with the regional commissions.

Synopsis of Revised Changes to DCA's Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning

Draft rules at http://www.dca.ga.gov/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/regional_planning.asp

PROPOSED REVISIONS	PAGE
<p>Chapter 110-12-6-.01 The "Purpose" section is a preface to the main body of the Rules. It provides an introduction to the rules and general information about the regional planning program. The proposed revisions more clearly articulate the statewide benefits of regional planning.</p>	1-2
<p>Chapter 110-12-6-.02 The rules currently at 110-12-6-.02, "Overview of Planning Requirements" provide a basic overview of the current two-phase/three-document planning process. The revisions propose a comprehensive rewrite of this section. They include compression of the planning process into a single-phase/single-document process.</p>	2-4
<p>(1) Required Plan Elements / Components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Plan Elements" or "Plan Components" required for all commissions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Summary, • Regional Goals, • Needs & Opportunities, • Implementation Program, • SWOT Analysis, • Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives, • Data and Mapping Supplement, and • Stakeholder Involvement Report 	2-3
<p>(2) Consideration of Regional and Statewide Plan The regional commission will ensure consistency between its regional plan and other statewide and regional plans.</p>	3
<p>(3) Review of the Regional Plan Reference to the review schedule covered in detail in 110-12-6-.06.</p>	3
<p>(4-5) Alternative Regional and Additional Local Planning Requirements These two sections are in the current rules but were moved to this section for efficiency.</p>	3
<p>Chapter 110-12-6-.03 This one section, Plan Elements, replaces what was previously found at 110-12-6-.03 – 110-12-6.04 and 110-12-6-.05. The previous rules called for two documents, the Regional Assessment and Regional Stakeholder Involvement Program to be completed, submitted for review, approved by DCA. Following that approval a third document called the Regional Agenda was to be assembled (based upon the previous two documents) and subsequently submitted for review, approved by DCA, and adopted by resolution of the regional commission.</p>	4-10

Synopsis of Revised Changes to DCA's Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning

Draft rules at http://www.dca.ga.gov/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/regional_planning.asp

<p>The proposed draft standards call for a single document to be completed and submitted as a consolidated unit (the "Regional Plan") for review, DCA approval, and subsequent regional commission adoption. Some items from the current rules have parallels in the proposed amendments while others have been eliminated entirely.</p> <p>This section provides very general guidance about the specific elements contained in the regional plan:</p>	
<p>(1) Executive Summary This element provides a brief overview of the entire planning documents summarizing the essential parts including: stakeholder involvement summary, regional goal summary, and summary of key regional commission priority needs and opportunities and actions to be pursued.</p>	4
<p>(2) Regional Goals The regional commission will choose all of the following FOUR methods to articulate the region's goals for the future: List of Regional Goals, Regional Policies (previously called Guiding Principles), Regional Development Maps, and Areas Requiring Special Attention and Defining Narrative.</p>	4-6
<p>(3) Regional Needs and Opportunities The regional commission will compile a regionally agreed upon list of specific issues (positive and negative) upon which the region determines that it will take action, moving forward. Resources used to prepare this list and engage stakeholders include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of Quality Community Objectives, • Analysis of Data and Information, and • Areas Requiring Special Attention 	6-7
<p>(a) SWOT Analysis (or similar) This section will require the regional commission to conduct a SWOT analysis with regional stakeholders and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the region.</p>	7
<p>(b) Analysis of Quality Community Objectives This section will require the regional commission to evaluate current policies, activities and development patterns in the region for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives found in 110-12-6-.04.</p>	7
<p>(c) Analysis of Data and Information This section will require the regional commission to check for needs and opportunities by evaluating data and information required in section 110-12-6-.05.</p>	7
<p>(4) Areas Requiring Special Attention This section will require the regional commission to consider high priority areas such as threatened resources, areas of rapid development and areas in need of redevelopment as a need or opportunity.</p>	7

Synopsis of Revised Changes to DCA's Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning

Draft rules at http://www.dca.ga.gov/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/regional_planning.asp

<p>(4) Implementation Program This element will include the overall strategy for achieving the regional vision and for addressing the regional commission key regional priorities. This element will include defining local government performance standards and preparing a regional work program that lays out the detailed list of projects the commission intends to initiate to advance key regional priorities in the five-year planning period. It calls for a description of the specific activity, strategy, actions, timeframe for implementation, partners to help implement, and estimated cost (if any).</p>	7
<p>(5) Appendices Elements to be included as appendices to ensure a concise, user-friendly document. These elements will contain the results of the analysis conducted as part of preparing the list of Regional Needs and Opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT Analysis (or similar), • Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives, • Data and Mapping Supplement, and • Stakeholder Involvement Report – [This section of the rules also contain the results of the stakeholder involvement process. This section of the rules also identifies the minimum requirements for stakeholder involvement and required documentation in the report.] 	8-10
<p>Chapter 110-12-6-.04 Previously 110-12-6-.06. The “State Planning Goals and Objectives” section of the proposed amendments lists the statewide goals and objectives and focuses primarily on the planning process rather than the plan document.</p> <p>The quality community objectives was deleted in its entirety and replaced with the current list.</p>	10-12
<p>Chapter 110-12-6-.05 Previously 110-12-6-.07. The “Data and Mapping Specifications” section has not been significantly modified other than minor revisions necessary to maintain consistency with other sections of the amendments.</p>	12-15
<p>Chapter 110-12-6-.06 Previously 110-12-3-.08. The “Procedures” section of the proposed amendments focuses primarily on the planning process rather than the plan document.</p> <p>This section was significantly streamlined from the previous requirements by applying the single-phase/single-document approach to the process. Under the previous requirements, the Regional Assessment and Regional Stakeholder Involvement Program were produced and processed before the Regional Agenda was subsequently produced and processed. The proposed amendments condense the process and the document into one step.</p> <p>The process included in the proposed amendments eliminates all steps associated with the previous Regional Assessment and Stakeholder Involvement Program submittals. Instead, it is based wholly on the steps previously associated with the Regional Agenda</p>	15-19



Synopsis of Revised Changes to DCA's Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning

Draft rules at http://www.dca.ga.gov/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/regional_planning.asp

<p>process from public hearings to adoption by the local government. The review time has also been reduced from 60 days to 45 days.</p> <p>The process and content associated with the annual plan update has been modified to reduce burden on the regional commission and contain components more meaningful and useful to both DCA and the regional commission.</p>	
<p>Chapter 110-12-6-.07 Previously 110-12-6-.09. The "Definitions" section has not been significantly modified other than minor revisions necessary to maintain consistency with other sections of the amendments.</p>	19-21