



# PlanFirst

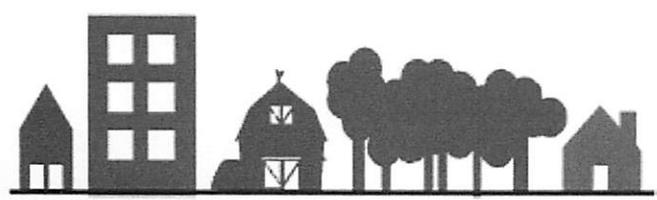
**Introduction:** *The Department of Community Affairs' PlanFirst Program rewards local governments that clearly demonstrate success with implementing their local comprehensive plan. To apply for PlanFirst designation, a local government must have Qualified Local Government certification and be current on required reporting to DCA (to check status for both, please visit <http://www.georgiaplanning.com/planners/planreview/default.asp>). To be selected for PlanFirst designation, a multi-agency review panel will evaluate a number of indicators of community success with plan implementation. All of these indicators are equally important, but size of the community is taken into consideration in the evaluation so that communities of various sizes are equally competitive for PlanFirst designation.*

**Instructions:** *Please answer all the following questions, attaching additional pages where necessary. Attach letters of support or other evidence of local commitment to successfully participate in this program if selected. Total application length, including support letters, must not exceed 20 pages.*

- 1. Applicant Government Johnson County Board of Commissioners
- 2. Address P.O. Box 269, Wrightsville, GA 31096
- 3. Contact Person Guy Singletary, County Administrator
- 4. Telephone 478-864-3388
- 5. E-mail gsingletary@johnsonco.org
- 6. Application prepared by Heart of Georgia Altamaha RC

*I, the undersigned authorized representative of the applicant, certify that to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is true and correct.*

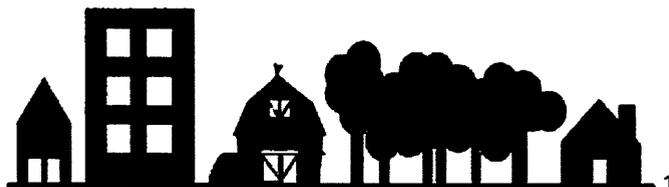
- 7. Official Signature *James L McAfee*
- 8. Date *5-14-14*
- 9. Name (please print) *JAMES L MCAFEE JR*
- 10. Title *Chairman Johnson County Board of Commissioners*



APPLICATION

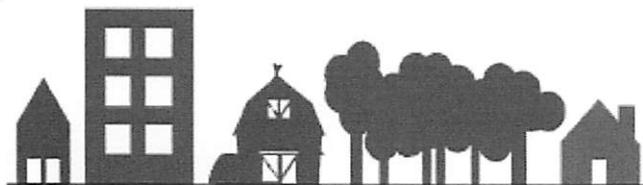
11. For each of the following indicators, briefly explain how your community addresses this indicator and identify specific examples and resulting local successes. (Each indicator will be scored 1, 3, or 5 points, except indicators 11 j. and 11 t. which may score up to 10 points)

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
a. We have a good track record with maintaining our Qualified Local Government status and submitting required reports to DCA.	Our community has never had a significant loss of QLG status, and maintains a good track record. Our current plan, From Wiggle and Twist to Hospitality and Opportunity, was the first comprehensive plan approved in the state under the new DCA planning standards.
<b>Goals</b>	
b. The Goals (or Vision) section of our comprehensive plan is supported by the community and its leadership	Our comprehensive plan was developed with broad-based community input with special emphasis to develop a pragmatic, but visionary plan which the entire community would embrace and help implement. The community wishes to protect its rural character, conserve its fields and forests, improve its infrastructure, attract new residents and jobs, utilize its heritage, and grow tourism. (Continued on attached sheet.)
c. The Goals are both ambitious and achievable for the community	We truly believe our comprehensive plan is comprised of visionary, but achievable, goals and aspirations which will make a difference. (Continued on attached sheet.)
d. The Goals steer local decision-making on a continuous basis	The Johnson County Comprehensive Plan is being utilized on a continuous basis to guide local decision-making and improve the community. (Continued on attached sheet.)
e. Consistent progress is being made at achieving the Goals	Steady progress is being made at implementing the community's comprehensive plan and improving the community as a whole. (Continued on attached sheet.)
<b>Leadership</b>	
f. We have effective planning staff or another suitable arrangement for handling community planning matters	While there is no local planning staff, Johnson County and its municipalities rely heavily on the Heart of Georgia Altamaha RC for advice and assistance. As far as plan implementation, Johnson County relies on "plan by committee." (Continued on attached sheet.)
g. We have an active planning commission or similar body to steer local planning decisions	There is no formal local planning commission other than the zoning board for the City of Wrightsville; however, because of the small size of the county, responsible parties for planning and implementation all know each other and regularly communicate, at least on an informal basis. (Continued on attached sheet.)
h. We have a regular local plan effectiveness evaluation process (such as annual planning retreats of elected leadership)	Plan evaluation and effectiveness is regularly monitored by the County Administrator and his project spreadsheet and through his regular reporting to the County Commissioners and other stakeholders. (Continued on attached sheet.)  
i. All local officials (both elected and appointed) involved in local planning processes have recently	Local officials have not attended any training strictly related to planning. The County Commission members have all attended the annual elected official's training offered by ACCG. The County Administrator has attended a specific class on regional cooperation in planning.



APPLICATION

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
attended training in how to use the plan effectively. Please indicate what trainings and the date(s) attended.	
j. Provide up to ten of your best recent examples where the plan steered a key local decision	1. Renovation of the Wrightsville and Tennille Depot. 2. Completion of a feasibility study on a new County Administrative Annex and selection and purchase of a downtown building to renovate for this purpose. (Continued on attached sheet.)
<b>Participation</b>	
k. Our comprehensive plan was prepared with multiple community input opportunities	It was a priority of the Johnson County local governments to utilize the new DCA Planning Standards to develop a broad-based community plan. (Continued on attached sheet.)
l. The community input received during plan preparation influenced the content of the plan	As discussed earlier, community input and stakeholder involvement were central focal points in the County's new comprehensive plan development. This community input and influence are evident throughout the plan. (Continued on attached sheet.)
m. Our steering committee that guided development of the plan included local leaders and elected officials	Yes, as noted earlier, the Johnson County Comprehensive Plan involved all local leaders and elected officials from throughout the community.
n. We have an active, ongoing, outreach process for soliciting input on planning matters from a broad spectrum of the community, including non-traditional populations, and the resulting input is listened to by community leaders	Community input is both sought and listened to by the Johnson County Board of Commissioners through both formal and informal means. Formally, the County offers a public comment period and opportunity at County Commission meetings through simple sign-up. While this comment period is limited to five minutes per individual, any citizen has the opportunity to formally put an issue or item on the County Commission meeting agenda if the issue or item requires more lengthy discussion or formal vote. The County Commission also holds budget hearings and work sessions on specific issues which are advertised to the public in advance. The County Commission has in the past held town hall meetings in individual districts and does so as needed. (Continued on attached sheet.)
o. We have active advocates for plan implementation (such as activist citizens, organizations or neighborhood groups) that are listened to by community leaders	For its size, Johnson County has a number of formal organizations and clubs which advocate for community improvement. These organizations, both formally and informally, have the ear of the Johnson County Board of Commissioners and other leaders. As discussed earlier, the local Chamber of Commerce/Development Authority is working closely with the County Commission to implement the comprehensive plan. This is aided by the close working relationship and liaison activities of the Johnson County Administrator and the County's Economic Development Director. (Continued on attached sheet.)
<b>Implementation</b>	
p. The Work Program section of our comprehensive plan consists primarily of	The Community Work Program of the new Johnson County Joint Comprehensive Plan was developed with specific implementation action items as a focus. The County's work program is limited to four pages of very specific items consistent with, and supportive of, the identified Community Vision and the addressing of



APPLICATION

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
specific action items that make it clear exactly what we intend to do to implement the plan	Community Issues and Opportunities.
q. Our Work Program action items clearly address local needs or Goals identified in the plan	Yes, as noted above, the Community Work Program of the Johnson County Joint Comprehensive Plan contains items consistent with infrastructure improvements, economic development and tourism with a historic preservation emphasis, and other specific improvements which advance the County, while retaining its historic, rural character. (Continued on attached sheet.)
r. We have a good track record of accomplishing most of the action items included in past plan Work Programs	Yes, over one-half of the items on the previous Johnson County Short Term Work Program Report of Accomplishments were reported as completed or underway. Even those items reported as not yet accomplished or delayed have actually been worked on indirectly or are ongoing. Lack of funding, or limitations with funding, have affected the feasibility of other identified items.(Continued on attached sheet.)
s. Our local capital budget is consistent with, and is designed to implement, the comprehensive plan	While technically there is no specific budget labeled as a "capital budget," capital items are budgeted specifically within the General Fund and other funds. For example, the Wrightsville and Tennille Depot is accounted for through specific line items, both revenues and expenses. (Continued on attached sheet.)
t. Provide up to ten best of your best recent examples of important projects carried out as a result of the plan	1. Wrightsville and Tennille Depot 2. County Administrative Annex (Cook Building) 3. Courthouse renovation 4. EMS facility and operations (Continued on attached sheet.)

Print Form

Once application is completed, print, scan with *Official Signature* and <mailto:Adriane.wood@dca.ga.gov>

*Please answer all of the above questions in the application. You may attach additional documents including letters of support, images, or other evidence of local commitment in this program when sending the application. Total application length, including support letters, must not exceed 20 pages.*



## **Johnson County Plan First Application**

### **11 b. continued**

Even the plan's title was chosen carefully to stimulate and encourage interest and implementation. It was designed to both reference Johnson County's heritage and its future aspirations. Every segment of the community was involved in developing our comprehensive plan. These included representatives from both the cities of Kite and Wrightsville, as well as the City of Adrian, which officially plans with Emanuel County; the Chamber of Commerce/Development Authority; Senior Citizens Center; Cooperative Extension; Recreation Department; Emergency Management; Public Works, fire departments, tax assessor and commissioner, and others. Even unprecedented public involvement was realized at the required public hearings and other input. Our comprehensive plan is a true community guide, both locally developed and supported.

### **11 c. continued**

Maybe this is best stated in the last paragraph of our plan's "Introduction and Executive Summary" which states, "It is realized that to overcome challenges and to make a difference will take time and much effort, but it is felt this plan is pragmatic and practical in outlining a course and roadmap for steps and actions which can be achieved and which will move the community forward."

### **11 d. continued**

The County Administrator uses the plan as a guide to budgeting investment, an agenda for weekly department head meetings, and for project justification. The County Administrator also has a spreadsheet reporting system of plan action items which forms the basis of project tracking and reporting to the Board of Commissioners. Because the County Administrator is also the County liaison and advisor to the Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority, the plan is also an agenda and guide for those organizations. The plan further serves as a focus of communication and informal discussions between the County and the municipalities.

### **11 e. continued**

The County Administrator notes that most of the community's major accomplishments have occurred in the last five years due, in part, to the energy and impetus of a new Board of Commissioners and a new County Administrator. Most of these accomplishments have been guided by the comprehensive plan. Even less than one year after completion of the new comprehensive plan, significant progress is being made in implementing the new plan. Some examples include recent renovations of the Wrightsville and Tennille (Wiggle and Twist) Railroad Depot and the selection of a downtown building as a new County Administrative Annex, which is nearing rehabilitation.

# **Johnson County PlanFirst Application**

## **11 f. continued**

The plan and its action items are being carried out through the active involvement and integrated cooperation of the County Administrator and the County's department heads. Since all were involved with development of the plan and its goals and implementation strategies, all have intimate knowledge of the plan's guide to action. In effect, the ones who developed the plan are carrying out the plan.

## **11 g. continued**

This is enhanced because of the prominent roles, including liaison, of the County Administrator. Intergovernmental cooperation and planning implementation and success are greatly facilitated by these arrangements.

## **11 h. continued**

During the new plan's development, the community chartered a bus to Atlanta and conducted an Economic Development Retreat with local banks, the Board of Education, the Chamber and Development Authority, the County Commission, the county's municipalities, and the county's state representatives and state senator. The locals also met with Georgia Power and the Georgia Department of Economic Development to express local goals and needs. The Georgia Department of Economic Development noted that they believed that it was the first time in history for Johnson County officials to meet with State economic development professionals in Atlanta. The community plans to conduct similar retreats on an annual basis. A local version may also be planned.

## **11 j. continued**

3. Selection of architects for the renovation of the National Register-listed historic Johnson County Courthouse, as well as rehabilitation to working order of the courthouse clock.

4. The Johnson County Board of Commissioners assuming operations of EMS and constructing a new local facility for the service, as well as purchase of two new ambulances and equipment.

5. Construction of a new road department facility and the continuous upgrade of the department's equipment.

6. Construction of three new fire stations since 2012.

7. Improvement of solid waste management within the county, including the 2011 establishment of the County's first recycling program and the improvement of green box collection by establishment of a semi-manned, fenced convenience center with a compactor and other upgraded equipment.

## Johnson County PlanFirst Application

8. Establishment of a local code enforcement program, including hiring a full-time code enforcement officer.

9. Community hiring of a part-time Economic Development Director, the first in county history.

10. The emphasis on historic preservation as outlined in the comprehensive plan and evidenced by the planned courthouse renovation and hiring of historic preservation architects, the planned rehabilitation of a downtown building for the County Annex, consulting with historic preservation architects on the National Register-listed Grice Inn, and the County Administrator's exploration of interest (through social media) in development of a Herschel Walker Museum.

### **11 k. continued**

They established a steering committee called The Johnson County Joint Comprehensive Plan Coordination Committee of all local stakeholders who could be envisioned. The Coordination Committee was involved in development of all facets of the new comprehensive plan, and had numerous opportunities to help develop, review, and revise all plan components. The general public was encouraged through unique wording of public hearing notices to participate and provide input. Even the plan's title was generated through community input.

### **11 l. continued**

The title of the plan (*From Wiggle and Twist to Hospitality and Opportunity*), the idea of a Herschel Walker/UGA Museum, and the extraordinary involvement of all Johnson County Department Heads and Constitutional Officers are specific evidence of the community input and its influence in the plan's content.

### **11 n. continued**

Topics of community-wide concern have warranted community-wide town hall meetings, such as the ones held about the renovation of the Wrightsville and Tennille Railroad Depot and the public hearings during the comprehensive plan's development. Informally, community input is obtained because of the small size of the community and its limited public gathering places. This informal input is also aided by the fact that each Commissioner only represents about 2,000 citizens and knows most of them as neighbors, friends, or colleagues or other acquaintances. People keep in touch in a small rural community through many means, including social media. All of this generates community input and influence.

### **11 o. continued**

Civic clubs, especially the local Rotary Club, are very active and involved in community development and advancement. Most community leaders are actually members of the Rotary Club. Johnson County has a unique community organization, the Association of Housing and Economic Development, chaired by a retired local school principal, which attends most County meetings, and works closely with the County to advance the community. Other local organizations which have the ear of community leaders, include the Johnson County Historical

## **Johnson County PlanFirst Application**

Society (owners of the Grice Inn), and the Doc Kemp School Alumni Association (an historic African-American school).

### **11 q. continued**

All of this was expressed in the comprehensive plan's Community Vision and implementation strategies.

### **11 r. continued**

Slow, but steady progress is being made in accomplishing community goals and achieving consistent implementation of the comprehensive plan. Several items in the new comprehensive plan are already being worked on and nearing achievement, including the Wrightsville and Tennille Depot improvements, the Johnson County Recreation Department Park upgrades, utilization of the Cook Building as the County Courthouse Administrative Annex, and road improvements under T-SPLOST.

### **11 s. continued**

This process is enhanced by the Project Accounting Program and Spreadsheet maintained by the County Administrator and regularly reported to the Board of County Commissioners. In effect, this project accounting system serves as a capital budget, even if not called so.

### **11 t. continued**

5. County Road Department facility
6. Fire station construction
7. Solid waste management handling improvements
8. Local code enforcement program
9. Hiring of an economic development director
10. T-SPLOST road improvements

**SENATOR JESSE STONE**  
District 23  
320-B Coverdell Legislative Office Building  
18 Capitol Square, S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
Tel: (404) 463-1314  
Fax: (404) 463-1388

Jesse.Stone@senate.ga.gov



**COMMITTEES:**  
Judiciary Non-Civil, Chairman  
Banking and Financial Institutions, Vice Chairman  
Education and Youth  
Ethics  
Judiciary

**The State Senate**  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

May 14, 2014

Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Plan First Program  
60 Executive Park South NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to endorse Johnson County's application to become a PlanFirst Community.

Over the past few years, Johnson County has exhibited a strong desire to improve their community, and they have truly embraced the philosophy of planning to achieve. The County has always encouraged the community to participate in their government, and provides multiple opportunities for citizens to become engaged and provide input.

It is always important for local elected officials to work together and the elected officials in Johnson County work well together, thus creating an atmosphere that has allowed Johnson County to accomplish many of their goals. The County has improved many of their services, including a complete overhaul of the EMS Department. The changes made to that department have had a significant impact on public safety in the community. The County has also placed a significant emphasis on historic preservation and improving County owned facilities.

Johnson County has demonstrated that by involving the community in active planning and utilizing those plans that true change can be achieved. They have come long way in the past few years and have established a path to success.

Sincerely,

*Jesse*

Jesse Stone  
Senator 23<sup>rd</sup> District



## *House of Representatives*

MATT HATCHETT  
REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 150  
100 CANTERBURY ROAD  
DUBLIN, GEORGIA 31021

E-MAIL: [matt.hatchett@house.ga.gov](mailto:matt.hatchett@house.ga.gov)

MAJORITY CAUCUS CHAIRMAN

415 STATE CAPITOL  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334  
(404) 656-5025  
(404) 657-8278 (FAX)

STANDING COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS – PUBLIC SAFETY  
ENERGY, UTILITIES & TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

May 13, 2014

Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Plan First Program  
60 Executive Park South NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to endorse Johnson County's application to become a PlanFirst Community.

Over the past few years, Johnson County has placed emphasis on planning and has used those plans as a guide to accomplish their goals. They have restructured and improved the EMS Department, revamped the waste program to more effective sites which also included the counties first recycling program. Johnson County has also hired a full time code enforcement officer and a part-time economic development executive director.

Johnson County has placed an emphasis on historic preservation and has renovations of the Depot, Courthouse and has a renovation of the Grice Inn in progress.

Having designed a plan of restructuring, renovation and preservation that is evident in Johnson County, I believe they would be an excellent candidate to become a PlanFirst Community and would certainly encourage your consideration.

Best regards,

Matt Hatchett

JMH/cb

cc: Guy Singletary

May 12, 2014

Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
60 Executive Park South, NE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

RE: Johnson County Plan First Application

To Whom It May Concern:

The Development Authority of Johnson County, Georgia, and the Wrightsville-Johnson County Chamber of Commerce, “**strongly**” endorse Johnson County’s application to become a PlanFirst Community.

Johnson County has made tremendous progress in the last few years to implement, and follow, a comprehensive plan that is being used by both government and private agencies in our county, to move forward for the betterment of all citizens. This community guide is working mainly due to the fact that not only government entities developed the plan, but they enlisted organizations, authorities, and various agencies, plus asking for and receiving input from private entities as to where we want to go and opinions on how to achieve this goal. With the leadership from the County Administrators Office, our county is moving forward into a new dimension.

From a personal standpoint, Johnson County has, in the last few years, recognized the need for an active Development Authority, and has generously funded this Authority. Only in the last three years have we had a paid Executive Director, and this speaks very high of the county government and their desire to improve the economic strength of our community. The Development Authority has assisted several local businesses in growing, adding jobs to our workforce, and introducing new financing avenues. We have also been successful in locating several new businesses in our county.

In addition to the above mentioned Authority, the County Administration has been a strong, vocal backer of our Chamber of Commerce. The County, while not directly funding this organization, provides office space and other non monetary items to the Chamber, and the Chamber in return provides public relations for the county, and the three cities located in our county. The Chamber is staffed and opened daily to assist not only citizens but also visitors and business inquiries as to what Johnson County has to offer. The Chamber is eagerly awaiting the completed renovation of our “Twist and Wiggle” Train Depot, as the Chamber will, in addition to their above mentioned duties, also maintain a welcome center at the building, and for the city and county.

Our county is moving forward, for the betterment of our citizens. With continued leadership and assistance from individuals, city and county governments, and with state assistance we will continue in the same direction. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to vent my views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George A. Milligan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "G".

George A. Milligan

Executive Director, Development Authority of Johnson County

and,

Executive Director, Wrightsville-Johnson County Chamber of Commerce



# Johnson County Probate Court



P.O. BOX 264

WRIGHTSVILLE, GEORGIA 31096

(478) 864-3316, Fax (478) 864-0528

MARY JO BUXTON  
Judge

CASSIE WALTERS  
Clerk  
ANGELA CONNELL  
Deputy Clerk

May 13, 2014

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

In Re: Plan First Program

Dear Sirs,

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of Johnson County Board of Commissioners' application for designation as a Plan First Community. I represented our local Constitutional Officers on the planning committee to update our local comprehensive plan.

I strongly believe that without a solid strategic plan Johnson County would not be moving forward as it is today. Having been President of the Constitutional Officers Association of Georgia and President of the Probate Judges Council of Georgia, I have participated in many strategic planning sessions. The most recent was while I sat on Georgia's Judicial Council with the Chief Justice of our Supreme Court and Chief Judge of our Court of Appeals. I have learned that the same basic strategic planning can be implemented to advance any organization, my home county included.

Our County Administrator, Guy Singletary, at the direction of our BOC, has worked tirelessly to push our county into being a more enterprising community. I have noted much improvement in our community since we worked on setting a comprehensive plan and sticking to it.

In conclusion, I fully support the efforts of the Johnson County Board of Commissioners as they seek to be designated as a Plan First Community

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Buxton, Judge

Johnson County Probate/Magistrate Court

MJB/ac  
cc: file