

# Planning Ahead

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## Planning & Government Services (PGS) Division

The Planning & Government Services (PGS) Division's staff assists local governments in a range of services and programs related to local and regional planning, transportation, and community and economic development on a local and regional level. Information on these services and programs are provided in greater detail on our website [negrc.org](http://negrc.org).

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## SB 157

In May, Governor Nathan Deal signed SB 157 which addresses local solid waste management planning and reporting requirements in Georgia. The bill, as signed, continues to require that each county and municipality in Georgia develop or be included in a comprehensive solid waste management plan. However, local governments are no longer required to submit solid waste management plans to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) or regional commissions for review.



DCA will continue to develop and publish solid waste planning guidance that a county or municipality may use to update or amend their solid waste plan. Solid waste plans must, at minimum provide assurance of adequate solid waste handling capability and capacity for at least ten years, enumerate the solid waste handling facilities as to size and type; and identify sites not suitable for solid waste handling facilities based on environmental and land use factors.

To be included as part of a solid waste plan, each county and municipality included in the plan must adopt the plan and any plan updates by local ordinance or resolution. Local governments that propose to update or amend their solid waste plan must publish a notice of the proposed action in the county legal organ or the local government's internet website at least two weeks prior to adopting the update or amendment.

Annual local government reporting to DCA on the status of solid waste management is now optional. However, public and private owners or operators of municipal solid waste landfills must report annually to DCA on the status of solid waste management for each landfill it owns or operates.

SB 157 goes into effect on July 1, 2011 and DCA in the process of developing recommended guidance for solid waste management plans.



New on-line form for requesting GIS data, custom maps, and data license agreements is now available on the NEGRC web site. This is a simple fill-in-the-blank form that can be submitted to initiate your request for mapping assistance.

[http://www.negrc.org/user\\_files/1308235580\\_GIS%20Request%20Form.pdf](http://www.negrc.org/user_files/1308235580_GIS%20Request%20Form.pdf)



## *Sustainability Summit*

On June 9th, stakeholders from Clarke County met at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission office to discuss local sustainability issues, share ideas and brainstorm new efforts to increase sustainability in the future. Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Meeting participants included Athens-Clarke County elected officials and government staff, Athens-Clarke County School Board representatives and the University of Georgia Office of Sustainability.

Participants identified local efforts already underway, including the use of energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs in government buildings, biodiesel buses and local recycling programs. Opportunities discussed to increase sustainability in the future included providing support for the locally-grown food, holding a large sustainability conference involving a large array of stakeholders, providing more public education and identifying sources for alternative energy.

The discussion was sponsored by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), a non-profit organization that provides technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local government in the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. For more info, please see <http://www.iclei.org>.

## *Land Trusts*

By administering conservation easements, land trusts across Georgia help protect a significant amount of land, including farms, riparian corridors, scenic vistas, forests, urban gardens, and parks. In 2005, the National Land Trust Census indicated Georgia had 103,057 acres protected by land trusts, an increase of 179% over the previous census in 2000. Steffney Thompson, Executive Director of the Oconee River Land Trust, says the recession has reduced the num-

ber of new conservation easements. Updated census numbers, expected to be available in October 2011, will show the current acreage of conservation land in Georgia, and provide an indication of how the economy has affected the trend of protecting land with easements.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency. It permanently limits the use of land in order to protect its conservation values and in doing so helps safeguard water quality, protect wildlife habitats, preserve working family farms, and/or provide opportunities for people to enjoy and appreciate greenspace. In return for protecting their land in perpetuity, land owners may receive certain tax benefits, making long-term retention of their property more affordable.

Recent legislation enacted in Georgia will encourage the protection of land with conservation easements. On May 11, Governor Deal signed HB 346, a new law that will become effective January 1, 2012 and will allow a taxpayer to transfer unused tax credits as a result of a land conservation donation to another Georgia taxpayer. As the Georgia Conservancy explains, many landowners do not earn enough money to benefit from the tax credits offered through conservation easements. By allowing the sale of conservation tax credits on the open market, these landowners will have an added incentive for protecting their land from development. Georgia is the fifth state to allow the transfer of land conservation tax credits, following Colorado, Virginia, South Carolina, and New Mexico. Thompson believes this new legislation will "spur more people to use (conservation easements) as a tool to protect their land."

Another piece of legislation recently introduced would benefit land owners who choose to protect their land in the future. The federal Conservation Easement Incentive Act introduced in May seeks to make the tax deductions that are available with conservation easement donations permanent. This bill, which would have otherwise expired at the end of this year, was co-sponsored by 252 House members, including four Representatives from Georgia: Sanford Bishop, John Lewis, John Barrow, and David Scott.

In Northeast Georgia, two accredited land trusts are operating: the Athens Land Trust and the Oconee River Land Trust. Additionally, the Georgia Land Conservation Center is located in Athens and serves as a resource for people wanting to learn more about land conservation. Their services can be accessed at [www.galandcc.com](http://www.galandcc.com).

## *Upcoming Events & Training Opportunities*

### **July 10, 2011**

“Planning for Implementation of Regional Water Plans” (GA Association of Water Professionals)  
Savannah, GA  
Register at <http://members.gawp.org/Core/Events/Events.aspx>

### **July 14, 2011**

FREE webinar  
“Bike Parking, Storage and Security” (Safe Routes to School National Partnership)  
Register at <http://www.instantpresenter.com/AccountManager/RegEv.aspx?PIID=E956DD85844C>

### **July 15, 2011**

FREE webinar  
“Community Erosion: How traffic flows like water” (APA Ohio)  
Register at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/478131202>

### **July 15-16, 2011**

2011 Community Planning Institute (GA Department of Community Affairs)  
Helen, GA  
To register, contact Annette Henson at [annette.henson@dca.ga.gov](mailto:annette.henson@dca.ga.gov)

### **July 16-19, 2011**

Georgia Forestry Association Annual Conference  
Savannah, GA  
Register at <http://www.gfagrow.org/annualmeeting.asp>

### **July 28-29, 2011**

Georgia Association of Zoning Administrators (GAZA) Conference  
Pine Mountain, GA  
Register at <http://www.georgiazoning.org/>

### **August 5, 2011**

FREE webinar  
“Zoning Statutes for Sustainable Development in Rural and Suburban Communities” (APA Upstate New York)  
Register at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/204832163>

### **September 8, 2011**

FREE webinar  
“What Economic Development Planners Should Know About Eco-Industrial Development” (APA ED Division)  
Register at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/139613035>

### **September 18-21, 2011**

International Economic Development Council Annual Conference  
Charlotte, NC  
Register at <http://www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/index.html>

### **September 28-30, 2011**

Georgia Downtown Conference  
Rome, Georgia  
Register at <http://www.georgiadowntownassociation.org/conference.asp>

### **October 19-22, 2011**

National Preservation Conference  
Buffalo, New York  
Register at <http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/training/npc/>

## *Training Opportunities at NEGRC*

Please take one minute to answer a couple of questions about planning-related training opportunities at NEGRC:  
<http://796044.poll daddy.com/s/audio-web-conference-topics>

Visit our new website at <http://www.negrc.org/local-services.php>.

Our old planning website at [www.negplanning.org](http://www.negplanning.org) will no longer be available after July 1, 2011.

Please email [jball@negrc](mailto:jball@negrc) to opt out of this newsletter