

Support SB 86 Association County Commissioners of Georgia

SB 86 does not eliminate comprehensive planning. It allows counties and cities the option of completing a new level of planning, a basic local plan, that upon the request of a local government must be prepared by their Regional Commission using its existing resources. The Department of Community Affairs will work with Regional Commissions to define the contents of a basic local plan. SB 86 also streamlines the DRI reporting and public notice requirement while maintaining regional input and dialogue.

In order to be a Qualified Local Government (QLG), will all counties and cities be required to have a plan? Yes, a county or city must adopt either a comprehensive plan or basic local plan in order to gain or retain their qualified local government status.

Does SB 86 end comprehensive planning?

No. Counties and cities may, at their own discretion, prepare a comprehensive plan. A county or city will not lose their qualified local government status however if they elect not to have a comprehensive plan. Since SB 86 frees-up local resources, counties and cities will be able to develop and implement more individualized community plans rather than plans which are developed solely to meet rigid state requirements. Planners should embrace the flexibility that SB 86 offers. Removing the unfunded planning mandate will give planners the license to be innovative and develop plans that demonstrate the true value that planning can bring to a community. Businesses and citizens alike which desire to be part of a planned community will benefit from the planning flexibility provided here.

Why change the review process for developments of regional impact?

DRI findings are recommendations only – under the current system local governments have been forced to delay development decisions and follow a burdensome regulatory process which requires them to consider numerous extraneous factors. Failure to follow the current process can result in severe penalties for local governments, including loss of QLG status and costly legal challenges necessary to defend decisions they made in the best interest of their community. The revised process in SB 86 provides a role for the Regional Commissions to notify all affected local governments and encourage them to contact the local government making a decision regarding the proposed regional development. This streamlined process eliminates potentially conflicting, nonbinding recommendations made by Regional Commissions to local governments.

Will removing the comprehensive planning mandate put local zoning decisions at risk?

SB 86 does not eliminate comprehensive planning. Zoning decisions should be based upon a local government's land-use plan. If a city or county wants to ensure land-use and zoning decisions stand up to legal challenges, then its basic local plan or comprehensive plan should include a land use element. Depending upon the planning needs of the local government, this may be the only element of the comprehensive plan if SB 86 becomes law.

What are the cost savings to local governments and taxpayers?

The costs of preparing comprehensive plans vary widely across the state. For most rural counties, the cost to prepare a plan or have a Regional Commission prepare one is up to \$60,000. If a county contracts with a private planning firm, the cost ranges from \$50,000 to over \$130,000.