



Rome-Floyd Development Authority Community Engagement Plan

June 2023

Prepared by: BRS, Inc.

RFCDA Community Engagement Plan

Contents

- 1. Overview 3
- 2. Target Stakeholder Groups 3
- 3. Existing Resources 6
- 4. Public Meeting Notices 6
- 5. Meeting Format Options 7
 - a. Public Meeting Materials 7
 - Dedicated Project Website* 7
 - Surveys/Polls* 7
 - Flyers* 7
 - b. Accessibility 8
- 6. Chronology of Community Involvement 8
- 7. Continued Community Involvement 8
- 8. Documentation 9
- Attachment 1 – EPA Assessment Grant Community Stakeholders Table 11**

1. Overview

The Rome-Floyd County Development Authority (RFCDA) was awarded an FY2022 USEPA Brownfields Assessment Grant to investigate potential contaminants at select sites throughout the City and County. Specifically, the RFCDA is targeting sites in the historical manufacturing area of North Rome and neighboring communities. North Rome includes the area north of the Etowah and Coosa Rivers consisting of Floyd County Census Tracts 5 and 6. The area totals approximately 8 square miles and, in addition to historical and present-day manufacturing areas, includes the historically African American Five Points business district and Blossom Hill neighborhood.

The purpose of this Community Engagement Plan is to present a variety of available tools and strategies for the RFCDA to utilize while soliciting community feedback during the assessment. This planning process intends to truly engage and empower the people in Rome and Floyd County. As such, the approaches will be tailored to fit the needs of the project and the feedback generated throughout the process. Engaging people in meaningful conversations fosters ongoing, long-term relationships for the benefit of the greater community. This Community Engagement Plan has been prepared under the guidelines of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Assessment Grant for the EPA Brownfields Cooperative Agreement No. BF 02D29722.

2. Target Stakeholder Groups

Harnessing existing relationships with agencies and organizations is necessary to promote the project and to identify key stakeholder groups. Groups will include community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, local businesses, government departments and more that may be identified through the planning process.

- a. **Government Departments:** Interviews with various public employees will be conducted.

Departments to be consulted with will be:

Organization	Website	Lead	Contact Information
Rome, GA Employees	www.rome.ga.us	Sammy Rich City Manager	Phone: (706) 236-4400
Floyd County Employees	www.floydcountyga.gov	Jamie McCord County Manager	Floyd County Administration: (706) 291-5110
Rome Downtown Development Authority	www.downtownrome.ga.us	Aundi Leslie Executive Director	Phone: (706) 236-4520
Rome-Floyd Planning Department	www.rome.ga.us/285/Planning-Zoning	Brice Wood Assistant Planning Director	Phone: (706) 236-5025
Rome-Floyd Land Bank Authority	https://www.rome.ga.us/233/Land-Bank-Authority	Bekki Fox	Phone: (706) 236-4477

During focused interviews with the key informants listed above, information will be obtained on the following topics:

- Historic data on the target assessment sites;
- Site reuse planning;
- Known interested developers;
- Identification of additional stakeholder groups;
- Sensitive populations.

b. **Brownfields Redevelopment Advisory Group:** The following organizations were identified in the grant application to be part of a brownfields project advisory team to participate in monthly meetings and to solicit and curate community input at public forums and unrelated community events.

Name of Organization	Point of contact (name, email & phone)	Specific involvement in the project or assistance provided
Georgia Power Community Development Dept	Tamara Brock Community Development Manager (706) 477-7009 twbrock@southernco.com	Redevelopment planning: economic impacts, business marketing needs. Commercial and industrial business information and trends.
Rome Floyd Chamber	Pam Powers-Smith (706) 291-7663 psmith@romega.com	Actively engages in the public meetings
North Rome Community Action Committee	Charles Love (706) 290-3437 charleslove3596@yahoo.com	Participate in public meetings and offer ongoing input in decision-making.
Greater Rome Existing Industries Association	Nat Massey (706) 291-7550 nat.massey@fandpgeorgia.com	Participate in public meetings and offer ongoing input in decision-making.
Rome Rotary	Mary Hardin Thornton (706) 236-4400 mthornton@romega.us	Participate in public meetings and offer ongoing input in decision-making.

c. **Additional Community Groups:** To date, the following community groups have been identified:

Name of Community Group	Point of Contact Name	Email & Phone	Website
Northwest Georgia Housing Authority	Sandra Hudson	shudson@nwgha.com / (706) 378-3949	https://www.nwgha.com/

Rome-Floyd Development Authority
EPA Assessment Grant Community Engagement Plan

Rome-Floyd County Library	Allison Robinson	arobinson@shrls.org / (706) 236-4600	https://www.rome-floyd.com/library
The Boys and Girls Clubs of Northwest Georgia	JR Davis	jrdavis@bgcnwga.org / (706) 234-8591	https://bgcnwga.org/
The Rome-Floyd County Community Kitchen	Lisa Stuenkel	stuenkel8587@gmail.com / (706) 622-7454	N/A
The Rome-Floyd County Recreation Authority	Todd Wofford	twofford@rfpra.com / (706) 291-0766	https://rfpra.com/
The South Rome Alliance	Gary Waters	gwaters@berry.edu / (706) 591-8339	N/A
Greater Rome Board of Realtors	Susan Jones	susanjones@ttwrome.com / (770) 547-0197	https://romeboard-realtors.com/
Georgia Northwestern Technical College	Heidi Popham	hpopham@gntc.edu / (866) 983-4682	https://www.gntc.edu/
Community Foundation of Greater Rome	Ashley Garner	agarner@cffgr.org / (706) 728-3453	https://cffgr.org

Northwest Georgia Housing Authority: The Northwest Georgia Housing Authority is a government agency that provides affordable housing options and support services to low-income families and individuals in the area, including those in the North Rome neighborhood.

Rome-Floyd County Library: The Rome-Floyd County Library is a public library that provides a variety of resources and services to the community, including access to books, online resources, and community events and programs.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Northwest Georgia: A nonprofit organization that provides after-school and summer programs for children and youth in Floyd County. They offer educational, athletic, and cultural programs that help young people develop skills, build self-esteem, and make positive choices.

The Rome-Floyd County Community Kitchen: A nonprofit organization that provides meals and support services to individuals and families in need. They offer daily meals, food boxes, and emergency assistance to help people meet their basic needs and improve their lives.

The Rome-Floyd County Recreation Authority: A government agency that provides parks, facilities, and programs to promote physical activity and recreation in the community. They offer sports leagues, fitness classes, and outdoor recreation opportunities for people of all ages.

The South Rome Alliance: A nonprofit organization that promotes economic and community development in the South Rome area. They work to revitalize commercial areas, attract new

businesses, and improve the quality of life for residents through affordable housing, community events, and other initiatives.

Georgia Northwestern Technical College: GNTC is a public technical college serving nine counties across northwestern Georgia and is built upon a close relationship with the community and a commitment to be responsive to community needs in an effort to promote community development through workforce development.

Greater Rome Board of Realtors: Serves as a central source of information for local realtors and provides an outlet for community involvement and a means of defending the American dream of home ownership and private property rights.

Community Foundation of Greater Rome: Provides charitable support in the form of grants and funds to local non-profits and community projects to support the Rome/Floyd community.

d. **Additional Community Resources to be included in outreach efforts, where available:**

- Volunteer organizations
- Community leaders (e.g., representatives from specific segments of the community, including seniors, minority populations, and non-English speakers)
- School boards
- Higher education institutions
- Media outlets

3. Existing Resources

Agency Websites: Floyd County, Rome, and RFCDA each have their own respective websites. Notice of public meetings related to site assessments will be posted on RFCDA website, and submitted for Floyd County and Rome websites, along with digital versions of meeting materials and draft plans.

Project Website: The project team will prepare a webpage, discussed in more detail below, that will be linked on the above-mentioned websites either on the home page or relevant department's page.

Social Media Accounts: Government and Community-led Facebook and other social media groups (i.e., Instagram, Nextdoor, etc.), as mentioned above, will be engaged to disperse meeting information and solicit comments from residents.

4. Public Meeting Notices

Notice of public meetings will be advertised in several places and in several different ways to reach as many residents as possible. It is the intention of RFCDA to schedule meetings and provide notice a month prior to the meeting. Notices will also be provided in Spanish on an as-needed basis.

Newspapers/publications advertisement: Meeting notices will be published in the local newspaper: Rome News-Tribune: <https://www.northwestgeorgianews.com/rome/>

Agency Website: As previously mentioned, all meeting notices will be included on the various agencies' websites.

Email Blasts: The project team will identify if any of the community organizations listed above send out periodic emails regarding local news and announcements. Meeting notices and links to meeting materials will be included in email blasts.

Social Media: The project team will work with the RFCDA and community organizations mentioned above to craft meaningful social media posts that will inform followers of meeting times and locations, as well as include links to meeting materials.

News Radio: Meeting notices will be announced on the local news radio stations, including:

- WRGA - WRGA AM 1470
- TalkRadio 1410- WLAQ AM 1410

5. Meeting Format Options

In-person with virtual linkup or fully virtual: If health and safety protocols permit, the project team and authority staff will conduct in-person public meetings at a community accessible venue. Meeting materials such as handouts and interactive displays will be provided to allow residents to be actively engaged in the planning process. Meeting materials will also be available for viewing and download on the project website. As appropriate, the project team and RFCDA staff will facilitate a hybrid meeting approach with live streaming video content from the in-person meeting with the opportunity for virtual participants to ask questions and provide feedback in real time. The suggested format for this session would be a Zoom meeting, a well-regarded and heavily used format for live meetings that the project team has utilized for live online presentations. Zoom provides the ability for presenters to conduct polling in real time that would obtain participant feedback in a controlled environment. Such polling can be done with the live audience and the online participants.

Online surveys: To facilitate broad and diverse participation, the project website will have a section that is dedicated to public meeting and communication information, including: notices of meetings, agendas, materials, and notes; and interactive data and maps, and strategies that have been implemented in other communities. This “home base” will serve as an exchange of information and education about the topic, with opportunities to provide input and feedback. It will serve as a topic-based virtual gathering space, and will be maintained as a user-friendly way for the community to access the summarized explanations of sometimes complicated information contained in the final report. See attached outline of sections to closely follow the project tasks.

a. Public Meeting Materials

Dedicated Project Website: The project website will be linked to the existing government agency webpages. It streamlines residents’ access to engaging and dynamic information on the project, including outreach, printed materials, mapping, and data. It will house additional supplemental tools such as surveys and interactive mapping.

Surveys/Polls: Informal questionnaire surveys will be implemented throughout the outreach process, in addition to targeted surveys for key informants and polling in public meetings.

Flyers: One-page documents that give an overview of the targeted sites. These documents will be used to distribute at in-person meetings as well as post at various places throughout the County, as determined appropriate by RFCDA employees and community organizations.

b. Accessibility

To engage the largest audience possible, all or a mix of the following engagement options will be used.

Teleconference Calls: Teleconference calls have been established practices for years for businesses and organizations. 96% of Americans own a cellphone, which means that a significant portion of residents without videoconferencing capabilities can still participate in calls. A teleconference call-in option will be offered along with the virtual zoom meeting link, allowing residents to have a choice in how to participate.

Partnering with community and/or neighborhood leaders: This method will rely on partnering with some of the above-mentioned organizations. These representatives often already have the confidence and support of residents and will be asked to help develop creative ways to keep their community members involved and informed. Many live or work within hard-to-reach or underrepresented communities and can provide opportunities for improved two-way communication between the City/County and the residents.

Translation services: For sites that are within neighborhoods with a high percentage of Spanish-speaking residents, a translator will be provided for the community engagement meetings.

6. Chronology of Community Involvement

Community outreach will be informed by and implemented in partnership with the municipal staff. An effort to implement engagement in a safe, accessible, and engaging manner is one of the top priorities. Meetings may be in person, online, or a hybrid format depending on what is likely to attract the most participants and maintain safety protocols.

The engagement will be ongoing through the project and beyond but will have targeted activities at critical decision points in the project as follows:

Meeting	Timeline	Location
Kick-off Meeting	July 2023	Virtual
Prioritization	August 2023	Hybrid virtual/RFCDA meeting room
Site-specific informational meetings	As Needed	Hybrid virtual/RFCDA meeting room
Reuse Planning	As Needed	Hybrid virtual/RFCDA meeting room
Property Owner's Workshops	As Needed	Hybrid virtual/RFCDA meeting room

The above timeline is estimated and meeting scheduling will be aligned with project as the project advances.

7. Continued Community Involvement

The expectation is that the community will continue to be engaged in multiple ways. RFCDA has been successful in garnering participation with average attendance at community meetings ranging from

10-12 attendees. Building on this success, the RFCDA plans a minimum of two public meetings per year to communicate information and to solicit additional input specific to the brownfields program, additional brownfields inventory, and site reuse. The achievement of project milestones or discovery of new information may warrant additional meetings. During work at priority sites, less formal information sessions will be held (1-2 times per site per year, depending on size and interest in pending reuse) to keep the community informed of progress, answer resident questions about ongoing work, and obtain information about resident perceptions/concerns.

8. Documentation

Documenting the community engagement process will help to maintain continuity in project decision-making. Outreach tasks will be documented for reference throughout the project term, and beyond, and documents will be posted to the project web page on the city's website. The following deliverables will be included:

- Community Engagement Plan
- Brownfields Advisory Group Meeting Summaries
- Charrette and Workshop Summaries
- Presentations and Newsletters
- Website Content

Attachment 1
EPA Assessment Grant
Community Stakeholders Table