

Gaston County's GCAMP proves successful

What would happen if the cities that compromise a county could get together and see how each individual's plans might affect the other?

David Williams, Gaston County Community Development Administrator saw the need to coordinate growth so in November 2002, Gaston County and Municipal Planners (GCAMP) was created.

GCAMP encompasses 15 jurisdictions and includes their planners, Gaston County School Operations Director, Health Department representative and Law Enforcement representative. In the future the group hopes to include a Social Worker, Technology/GIS expert and a representative from the Housing Authority.

Meeting every other month since July of 2003, each meeting is held in a different jurisdiction. Their meetings include a keynote speaker whose topics educate planners with a variety of experience on emerging issues to help communities. Typically between 12 and 17 people participate.

According to Williams, what impresses him most is the level of that participation. Williams said: "In order for such a group to work there must be a commitment from the planners to come to meetings and actively participate. This group is rich in this. They each strongly believe in its purpose and recognize that 'Information is Power'. They are in this together and their collective efforts are key".

The goal of GCAMP is to serve as a support system, share best practices, share information on changes in their communities and be an avenue for networking. Although no binding decisions are being made at these meetings GCAMP members can take information learned from a meeting and share it with their elected officials. This in turn may help the officials make more informed decisions.

Having an outlet like GCAMP has provided Gaston County planners and others the opportunity to communicate openly with one another, build on best practices, encourage consensus building and allow the planners in the county to grow their working relationships.

Centralina planners are working with Cabarrus, Iredell, Rowan and Union counties to initiate planning groups such as Gaston County's GCAMP. If you would like more information on how to start a county planners network, contact Jason Wager at 704.348.2707 jwager@centralina.org or Laura Mundell at 704.348.2720 lmundell@centralina.org

