

Lowndes County Presentation

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to

Joint Study Committee on SDS



October 3, 2023

Thank You

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Thank you for meeting here in Lowndes County today.

Thank you for allowing Lowndes County and the Cities to speak.



Lowndes is One County

Lowndes County is one county.

The Board of Commissioners represents all of Lowndes County.



Growth Benefits All

Lowndes County has been and is growing.

Much of this growth is in the unincorporated area.

This growth benefits city residents and businesses as well as unincorporated area residents and businesses.



Personal Experience

The Slaughter family owns and operates a HVAC business located in Valdosta.

Growth in the unincorporated area benefits our business.

County services provided in the unincorporated area benefit our business.



Water and Sewer Services

In our most recent SDS negotiation, we were able to reach agreement on water and sewer service areas.

This is critical for expanding county water and sewer services.

County water and sewer services are vital to growth of our county.



SDS Act Procedures

The SDS Act should promote efficient resolution of differences of opinion.

This will be good for counties and cities.



Introduction to Recommendations

Lowndes County recommends a clear, unambiguous, simple dispute resolution procedure that will facilitate efficient resolution.

The County recommends against substantive revisions to the SDS Act regarding any particular service or services.



Dispute Resolution Procedure

The County suggests:

- ▶ clear, unambiguous triggers for review and revision
- ▶ a reasonable specified time for negotiation
- ▶ one mediation before a mediator trained in SDS
- ▶ a fixed deadline to submit a strategy to DCA
- ▶ sanctions if a strategy is not submitted by the deadline

Dispute Resolution Procedure

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A multi-step procedure does not promote efficient resolution.

A complicated procedure does not promote resolution.

A lengthy procedure protracts differences of opinion.



Dispute Resolution Procedure

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The provision and funding of local government services is best determined by locally elected representatives.

Any involvement of a judge should be limited to the judicial function of construing the SDS law.



Dispute Resolution Procedure

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Procedural issues in the Act should be resolved:

- ▶ the triggers for review and revision
- ▶ when a county or city may use the dispute resolution procedure
- ▶ whether an existing strategy expires
- ▶ when a local government becomes ineligible for financial assistance or grants, loans, and permits
- ▶ the role of DCA



Lowndes County Services

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Most Lowndes County services are provided for the benefit of all county residents.

The County provides some services primarily for the benefit of the unincorporated area.

- ▶ These services relate to unincorporated area property.



Lowndes County Fire Protection

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Lowndes County provides fire protection in the unincorporated area.

The cost is funded with special district property taxes and insurance premium taxes.

County-wide revenues are not used.



Lowndes County
Solid Waste Collection, Solid Waste
Disposal, Recycling

Users pay user fees to franchised haulers.

County-wide revenues are not used.



Lowndes County Water and Sewer Services

The County and Cities have agreed to water and sewer service areas.

Water and sewer service areas are critical to expanding water and sewer services.

These service areas may be changed upon approval of the affected County or City following a written request of a property owner.

The cost of county water and sewer services is funded by user fees.



Lowndes County Special Services Fund

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Lowndes County has a special services fund for:

- ▶ services the County provides primarily for the benefit of the unincorporated area, and
- ▶ the County's share of jointly funded services.



Lowndes County Special Services Fund

The cost is paid from revenues derived from the unincorporated area:

- ▶ insurance premium taxes
- ▶ alcoholic beverage license fees
- ▶ alcoholic beverage excise taxes
- ▶ cable television franchise fees
- ▶ financial institution taxes
- ▶ occupation taxes
- ▶ unrestricted hotel-motel taxes
- ▶ zoning fees
- ▶ solid waste franchise fees



Lowndes County Special Services Fund

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These revenues fund the cost of services the County provides primarily for the benefit of the unincorporated area:

- ▶ code enforcement
- ▶ planning
- ▶ zoning
- ▶ mosquito control

These services relate to unincorporated area property.



Lowndes County Special Services Fund

These revenues also fund the County's share of the cost of services jointly funded by the County and a City:

- ▶ airport
- ▶ arts center
- ▶ geographic information system
- ▶ metropolitan planning
- ▶ regional planning
- ▶ property rehabilitation



Disproportionate Benefits

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In Lowndes County, many county services disproportionately benefit city residents. Examples include:

- ▶ EMS
- ▶ Animal Services
- ▶ Public Defender
- ▶ Juvenile Court
- ▶ District Attorney
- ▶ Libraries
- ▶ Parks and Recreation



Disproportionate Benefit

	Incorporated Area		
	<u>Service</u>	<u>Pop</u>	<u>GF</u>
EMS	70%	52%	51%
Animal Services	56%	52%	51%
Public Defender	70%	52%	51%
Juvenile Court	68%	52%	51%
District Attorney	65%	52%	51%
Libraries	86%	52%	51%
Parks & Rec	70%	52%	51%



Lowndes County Road System

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The county road system is a system of roads.

It is provided for the benefit of all county residents.

Individuals choose to use the county road system.

It is regularly used by city residents and businesses.



Lowndes County Road System

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The county road system is provided for the benefit of city businesses to reach customers:

- ▶ plumbers
- ▶ electricians
- ▶ HVAC providers
- ▶ roofers
- ▶ yard services
- ▶ cleaning services
- ▶ home health providers
- ▶ internet providers



Lowndes County Road System

The county road system is provided for the benefit of city businesses to make deliveries:

- ▶ pharmacies
- ▶ supermarkets
- ▶ restaurants
- ▶ florists
- ▶ dry cleaners



Lowndes County Road System

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The county road system is provided for the benefit of city residents to reach destinations in the unincorporated area and other cities:

- ▶ places of work
- ▶ stores
- ▶ hospitals, doctors' offices, dentists' offices
- ▶ schools
- ▶ movie theaters
- ▶ parks, playgrounds, tennis courts, sports fields, golf courses
- ▶ boat ramps
- ▶ places of worship
- ▶ amusement parks
- ▶ wedding and event venues



Unintended Consequences

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A substantive amendment to the SDS Act regarding any specific service will likely have unintended consequences.

A negatively affected party may pursue the correction of inequities in the provision and funding of other services.

This will lead to duplication of services and the inefficient provision of services contrary to the intent of the Act.



Conclusion

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Lowndes County recommends a clear, simple dispute resolution procedure.

A clear, simple procedure will facilitate efficient resolution of differences of opinion.

This will be good for all of Lowndes County and Georgia.

