

SHARED VISIONS

Planning Smart Choices

Our Comprehensive Planning Process

Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Community Participation Program



Draft – Public Review Phase

January 2006

Community Participation Program

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Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission

February 2006

The opinions, findings, and conclusions of the publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the Department of Transportation, State of Georgia, or the Federal Highway Administration. Funding for this publication was provided by the Federal Highway Administration and Georgia Department of Transportation.

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*When asked if she could
imagine anything worse
than losing your eyesight,*

***Helen Keller responded,
“Yes, losing your vision!”***

Community Participation Program

Introduction

Mindful of Helen Keller’s wisdom, the Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission has developed a public involvement program for use in preparing our Comprehensive Plan. This document identifies the various stakeholders, overviews our selected participation techniques and provides a schedule for guiding the development of our Community Agenda. The information includes an overview of our previous and upcoming community participation events.

The Commission’s Community Participation Program has been structured to be innovative in design, creative in public interaction and packed with communitywide education and outreach.

**To underscore our commitment for strong community involvement,
we have named our entire comprehensive planning process:**

“Shared Visions - Planning Smart Choices”



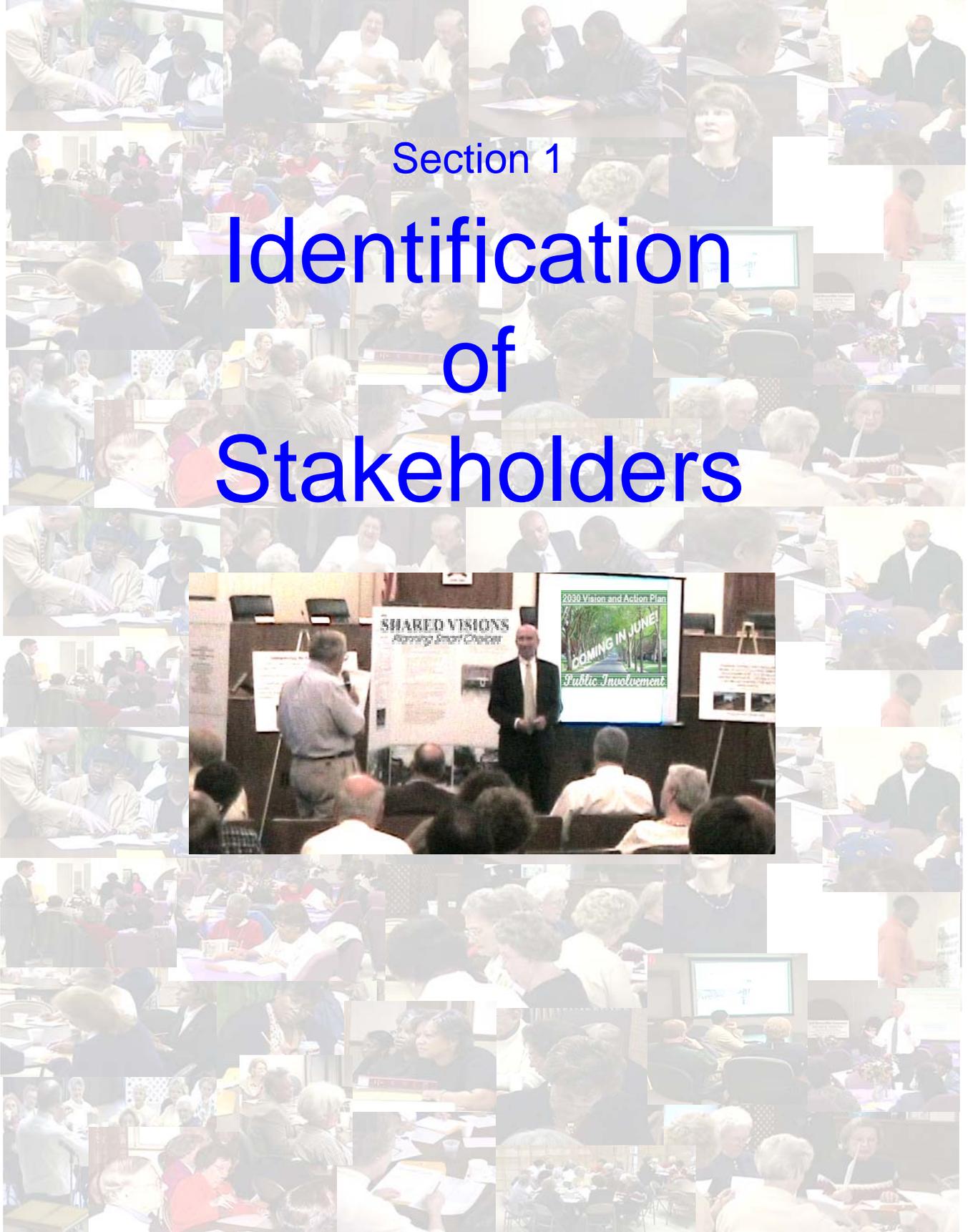
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Section 1

Identification of Stakeholders



Blue Ribbon Steering Committee

To assist in guiding this massive project, early-on the Commission appointed a *Blue Ribbon Steering Committee*. The group was requested to oversee the development of the Visual Preference Survey, assist in establishing a network of people to help distribute and promote it, interpret the tabulated results and formulate recommendations. Due to the nature of this project, it was crucial to appoint individuals who possess a genuine commitment to our community, a thorough knowledge of middle Georgia, and the time and talent needed to make the project a success. The committee's initial work began in May, 2001.

Membership

- * Tommy Barnes *
- * James F. Carson *
- * Eugene Cox Dunwody *
- * C. Jack Ellis *
- * Daniel P. Fischer *
- * Susan Hanberry *
- * Samuel F. Hart *
- * Doug Hayes *
- * Robert G. Lewis, Jr. *
- * Tommy C. Olmstead *
- * Robert L. Place *
- * Anita J. Ponder *
- * Jennifer Taylor (Chair) *
- * Robert J. Williams *

A Community of Stakeholders

Creating the Vision - Community Wide Participation...

Our stakeholders and partnerships throughout the city and county are massive and the public involvement is extraordinary. Using electronic media and “old fashioned” community meetings, our *Vision for the Future* will be created by Asking, Listening & Learning!

In Building a Community Agenda, our Visioning activities have involved a tremendous network of stakeholders.

- * Cox Communications *
- * City of Macon Government Access Channel 14 *
 - * Leadership Macon *
 - * Design Review Board *
 - * Federated Garden Club *
- * Family & Consumer Science Group *
- * Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation *
 - * Kiwanis Club *
 - * Wimbish Woods Garden Club *
 - * GEICO *
- * Bibb County Public Schools *
- * Lawrence Drive Baptist Church *
- * Porter Ellis Community Center *
 - * City/County Employees *
- * Anthony Homes Community Center *
- * Home Builders Association of Macon *
- * Youth Leadership Bibb County, Inc. *
 - * Disability Connections *
 - * Macon Arts Alliance *
- * Middle Georgia Board of Realtors *
- * Vineville Neighborhood Association *
- * Georgia College & State University *
- * Pentecostal Temple Holiness Church *
 - * Mercer University *
 - * NewTown Macon *
- * Kiwanis Club of Macon (Men’s Golden K) *
 - * Lundy Chapel Baptist Church *
- * United Churches of East Macon (St. Peters Baptist Church) *
 - * New Birth Missionary Baptist Church *
- * Union Baptist Church (East Macon-Bibb Connection Group) *
 - * American Institute of Architects *
- * Golden K Kiwanis Club – (Women’s Club) *
 - * Riverside United Methodist Church *
- * Greater Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church *
 - * Pleasant Hill Weed & Seed Initiative *
 - * Three Oaks Bible Chapel *
 - * Wesleyan College *

Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

The purpose of the Citizen Advisory Committee is to provide a broad-based citizen input into the process of transportation planning. Specifically, the CAC advises the MATS Policy Committee of the opinions of individual citizens and citizen groups regarding the adoption of, or changes to the Macon Area Transportation Plan. This committee will involve and/or represent segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects, as well as those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households.

Recognizing the group's valuable expertise and noteworthy commitment to the community, the CAC will be involved every step of the way in building our Comprehensive Plan.

MATS Citizens Advisory Committee Membership

- * Susan Hanberry, Environmental Rep. , Chair*
- * Mary Anne Richardson, Disabled Pop. Rep., Vice Chair *
 - * Bob Cleveland, County @ Large *
 - * Older Americans Council *
 - * Disabled Transp. User *
 - * James H. Webb, City Ward 1 *
 - * City Ward 2 *
 - * City Ward 3 *
 - * City Ward 4 *
 - *Stella Tsai, City Ward 5 *
 - * Bibb Co. Board of Education *
 - * County District 1 *
- * Anthony E. Cunningham, County District 2 *
 - * Tim Thornton, County District 3 *
 - * County District 4 *
 - * Josh Edmondson, Jones County *
 - * Neighborhood Assoc. *
- * Lindsay Holiday, League of Women Voters *
 - * League of Women Voters *
- * Chris Wells, Bike Users/Pedestrian Rep. *
 - * Macon Housing Authority *
 - * Transit Ridership *



Section 2

Community Participation Techniques

Public
Education,
Input &
Interaction

Community Participation Techniques

As indicated herein, the Commission’s community participation techniques comprehensively align with the state planning requirements shown below:

In an effective community participation process the following principles can ensure that the process is meaningful and productive:

- The public has a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives;
- The Public is involved as early as possible in the community participation and decision making process in order to build trust;
- The involvement of those potentially affected is sought and participants are encouraged to assist in defining how they participate;
- Participants are provided with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; education and participation are directly combined whenever possible;
- The needs and concerns of the public are listened to and their input is integrated into the outcome.

The following participation techniques have been chosen for use in the public involvement activities associated with developing our comprehensive plan:



We recognized the excellent opportunity to establish, promote and sustain strong public involvement, education & outreach; consequently, a comprehensive planning process logo and theme were locally developed to reflect and demonstrate our approach:

“Shared Visions – Planning Smart Choices”.

The versatile and positive message of the slogan has evolved into a recognizable P & Z emblem and is now being used on all of our planning publications. When the public sees the phrase, they immediately think of THEIR local planning commission!

Community Participation Techniques

continued



Project Identity

We have given the process further identity and exposure by locally designing and printing an array of project material: Brochures, stationary, postcards, note-cards – even the staff's business cards were revised to advertise the project.



The Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission launched an ambitious project which was centered around the belief that middle Georgia citizens should have a prominent voice in planning for a better tomorrow! Beginning with the premise that all places are unique and no one knows a community as well as those who use it everyday, P & Z recognized the value of going to the masses and ASKING, LISTENING & LEARNING. The *Visual Preference Survey* was the chosen pathway to the vision. The selected process, created and trademarked by *A. Nelesen Associates*, of Bel Meade, New Jersey, asks participants to rank a series of more than 150 images of commercial, residential and street scenes.

Many of the photographs included local properties. Along

with the image rating, a companion 12-page written survey form was used to inventory demographics and attitudinal issues concerning market and policy preferences. By participating, the citizens helped to delineate critical development issues, such as the design of neighborhood and commercial areas, green spaces, roadways and more. **The community embraced this process, with participation that exceeded 1,250 citizens!** While the *Visual Preference Survey* is a planning tool developed in Belle Meade, New Jersey, the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission designed and launched an innovative campaign to massively promote and administer the program.

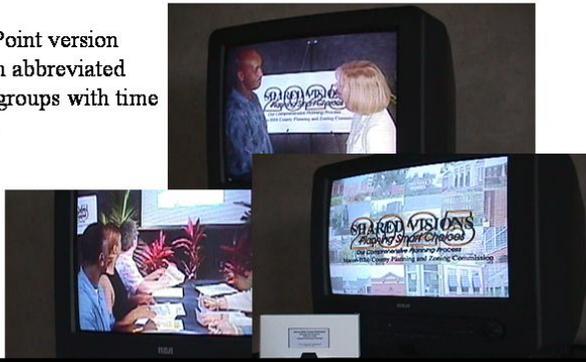


A "traveling" *Visual Preference* kiosk visited festivals, meetings and events throughout the community. This promotional device urged citizens to get involved with our comprehensive planning process.

Community Participation Techniques continued

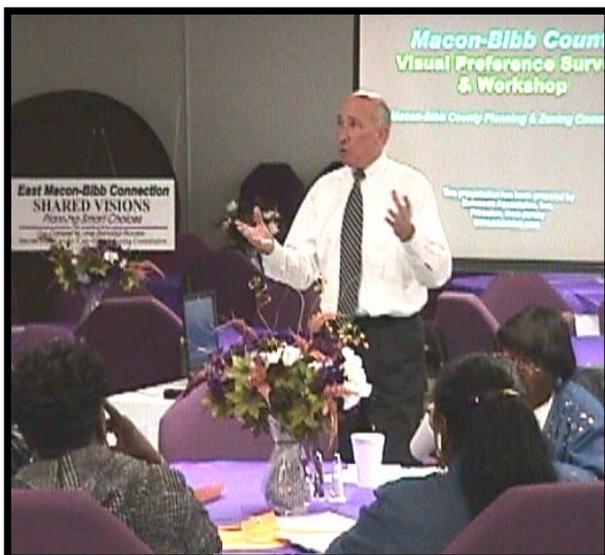
Administering the Visual Preference Survey

- A 53-minute video presentation was produced and broadcast six times daily on a local cable television channel.
- Loaner copies of the video were also made available.
- A PowerPoint version provided an abbreviated format for groups with time limitations.



Rather than simply coordinating the Visual Preference Survey, we seized an opportunity to raise the public's awareness of professional planning. Partnering with *Bright Blue Sky Productions* (a local civic-minded production company) and a team of volunteers on our Blue Ribbon Steering Committee, we were able to locally write and produce a 53-minute video presentation. A local TV/radio personality graciously agreed to serve as our on-camera talent. **The innovative media piece was not only designed to administer the survey, but also to educate and promote the importance of professional planning at a grand scale.** The video invited the community to roll up their sleeves, get involved and help. Using computer morphing

techniques, the public could watch and rate roadways, corridors and related development as the streetscapes were “magically” transformed into “what if” scenarios. Our partnership was significantly expanded by welcoming representatives from local cable TV to join our team. With their help, the 53-minute video survey ran six times daily for over a year. Individual loaner copies of the presentation were also made available.



Along with the television survey, our staff conducted over thirty (30) VPS sessions throughout the community. The survey was taken to local industry, civic organizations, churches, neighborhood associations, community centers and professional organizations. **The above meetings not only allowed us to collect the data, but also served as a valuable chance to dialogue with citizens about other community issues and opportunities.** If requests for service were made and needed to be referred to other public sector agencies, we helped coordinate the contact. **The events gave citizens a stronger voice and served to connect them to the overall planning initiatives.** In fact, this project has paved the way for an ongoing network of continued input and support which has, in turn, led to the development of a series of P & Z newsletters, appropriately entitled: “*Connections*”.

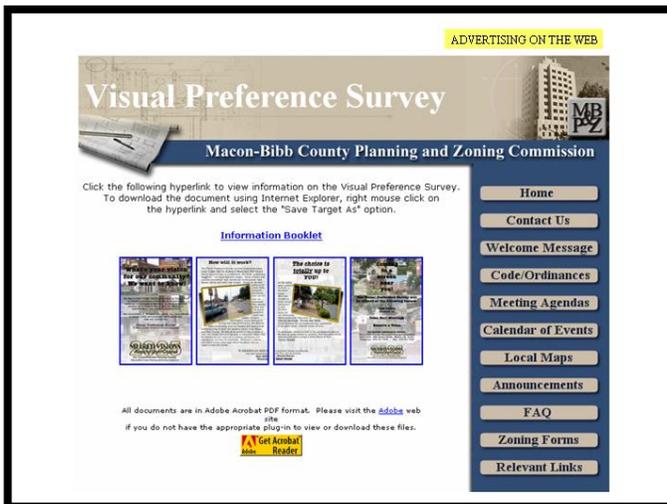
Community Participation Techniques

continued



Promotional Ads on Transit System

In an effort to bring our comprehensive planning activities to every citizen, promotional ads were even placed on the sides of public transit buses.



A hyperlink to the Visual Preference brochure was floated on the P & Z website. On-line opportunities for citizens to comment on other comprehensive planning activities will also be available.



Our Comprehensive Planning process has receive several feature stories in the print media. Ads are being periodically published seeking on-going participation.

Community Participation Techniques continued



In an effort to raise public awareness of our overall comprehensive planning process and specifically the visioning activities, TV and print media ads were produced. Through an in-kind donation from Cox Communications, the “high-energy” public service announcement, entitled “*Make Your Voice Heard*” received substantial air-time.

The comprehensive plan visioning analysis was unveiled in a highly publicized town hall meeting held at the Douglass Theatre in Downtown Macon. To promote the event, we locally produced a 30-second public service announcement (entitled: “*Everybody Likes To See Results*”). Through an in-kind donation from Cox Communications, the commercial received substantial air-play and helped to make the evening a success.

Those in attendance received a full briefing on the report which provides a wealth of guidelines and policies for our: Downtown, Neighborhoods, and the Rural/suburban fringe. Within each character area, the study focuses on seven categories: street types/character, development options, pedestrian realm, parks/open space, parking options, signs, and mobility/transportation options.



The multi-year process for creating our new comprehensive plan will be tracked every step of the way. We are using a brief video presentation designed to render a status report to the citizens. The 10-minute segment has been taped and was broadcasted daily on a Cox Communications government access channel. Also, Planning & Zoning produced a 1.5 hour DVD of our Town Hall meeting where we unveiled the results of the Visual Preference Survey. **The digital program categories the event into three menu items, which have been chosen as our proposed character areas:**

- * Downtown *
- * Neighborhoods *
- * Rural/Suburban Fringe *

Community Participation Techniques continued

Public Involvement
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Public Forum
6:00 p.m., Thursday, June 17, 2004
City Council Chambers (Room 204)
City Hall - 700 Poplar Street
Macon, Georgia

The Macon-Bibb Co. Planning & Zoning Commission is pleased to announce an upcoming public forum to discuss our proposed

2030 Vision and Action Plan
The document has been prepared to provide guidance for the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) & our Comprehensive Planning Process. Using past goals and objectives, matched with the wealth of data gleaned from our **Visual Preference Survey**, we have been able to meld the collective ideas of over 1,250 citizens into a proposed plan of action.

For further details, contact the VPS Project Director, R. Barry Bissonette, Public Information Officer
Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
Suite 1000 - 682 Cherry Street - Macon, GA 31201
Phone: (478) 751-7478 Fax: (478) 751-7448
Email: BBissonette@mbpz.org

Please Plan To Attend!

Public Forums Promoted using Mail-outs!

Using our newsletter mailing list, over 500 meeting notices were sent to promote the referenced public forum. Over seventy (70) citizens attended the forum to provide input on developing the comprehensive plan's proposed goals and objectives. A vision and action plan was presented which helped to focus the wealth of visual preference survey data. **Our Implementation Plan is being developed from the Action Plan.**

Public Involvement
Macon-Bibb County Georgia Planning & Zoning Commission
SHARED VISIONS Planning Smart Choices

2030 VISION AND ACTION PLAN

Guidance for the Macon-Area Transportation Study (MATS) and our Comprehensive Planning Process

Includes Precinctal Goals, Objectives and Plans of Action

Based on 15 months of **ASKING, LISTENING & LEARNING!**
From over 1,250 Visual Preference Survey Participants!

April 2004

Public Involvement
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Planning & Zoning Public Forum
Sponsored by the
Pleasant Hill Weed & Seed Initiative
6:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 20, 2004
L. H. Williams Elementary School
Gymnasium - 325 Pursley Street
Macon, Georgia

At the upcoming event,
Planning & Zoning will be seeking public input on the 2030 Vision and Action Plan & on other issues associated with preparation of the Macon Area Long Range Transportation and Comprehensive Plans.
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED!

For further details, contact Leroy Dennis, Pleasant Hill Weed & Seed Site Coordinator
Phone: (478) 751-7008 or contact the VPS Project Director, R. Barry Bissonette, Public Information Officer
Phone: (478) 751-7478 Fax: (478) 751-7448 Email: BBissonette@mbpz.org

Taking Notices Door to Door Partnering with Neighborhood Groups

Over 30 public involvement events have been held throughout the community. The notice shown (at left) was used to promote a meeting which sought citizen input on the 2030 Vision and Action Plan and other issues associated with preparation of the Macon Area Long Range Transportation and Comprehensive Plans. **To promote the meeting, some of the residents volunteered to go door to door to help distribute over 300 meeting notices.** A newspaper ad was also published. Electronic media covered the event.

COLONIAL PROPERTIES TRUST

Seeking Public Involvement!

As the Macon-Bibb Co. Planning & Zoning Commission prepares the Long Range Transportation & Comprehensive Plans, we want your input. On Friday, October 22, 2004 from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. drop by our booth at Colonial Mall, 3661 Eisenhower Parkway, Macon, GA. We encourage you to complete a Transportation Issues Survey at the mall or on our website - www.mbpz.org

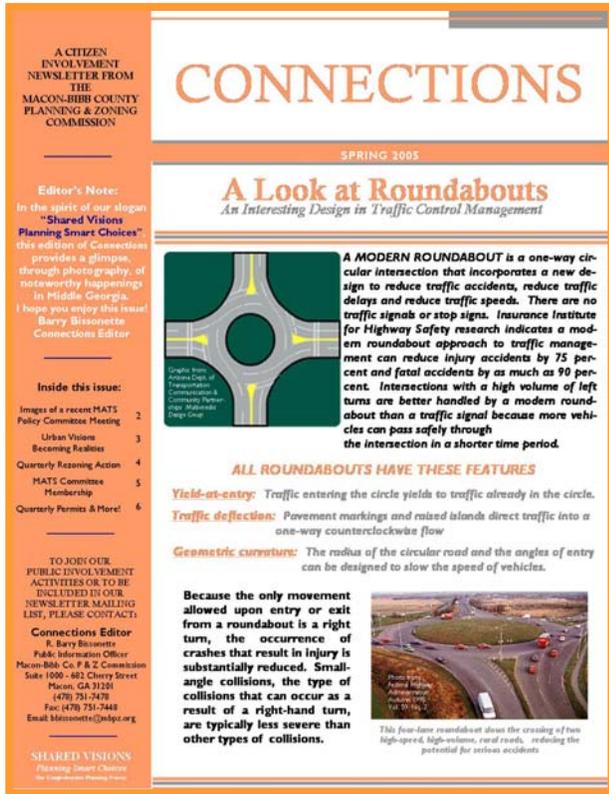
For details, call Barry Bissonette, Public Information Officer (478) 751-7478.

Promotional Booth in a Mall

The Commission staff has received day-long input from the public at a local shopping mall. An overview of our comprehensive planning process was provided and participants were encouraged to complete a transportation issues survey.

Community Participation Techniques

continued



Newsletter Publication

Connecting, Informing & Educating

As earlier stated, our initial comprehensive planning meetings throughout the community have given citizens a stronger voice and served to connect them to the overall planning initiatives. In fact, the process paved the way for an ongoing network of continued input and support which has, in turn, led to the development of a series of P & Z newsletters, appropriately entitled: **"Connections"**. The continuity of this activity provides further validation of, and commitment to our logo and theme:

SHARED VISIONS
Planning Smart Choices
 Our Comprehensive Planning Process

Technical Advisory/Steering Committees

As mentioned in the proceeding section, technical advisory and steering committees have been used in the development of our comprehensive plan. **Blue Ribbon Steering Committee:** To assist in guiding this massive project, early-on the Commission appointed a *Blue Ribbon Steering Committee*. The group was requested to oversee the development of the Visual Preference Survey, assist in establishing a network of people to help distribute and promote it, interpret the tabulated results and formulate recommendations. Due to the nature of this project, it was crucial to appoint individuals who possess a genuine commitment to our community, a thorough knowledge of middle Georgia, and the time and talent needed to make the project a success. The committee's initial work began in May, 2001. **Macon Area Transportation Plan (MATS) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC):** The purpose of the Committee is to provide a broad-based citizen input into the process of transportation planning. Specifically, the CAC advises the MATS Policy Committee of the opinions of individual citizens and citizen groups regarding the adoption of, or changes to the Macon Area Transportation Plan. This committee will involve and/or represent segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects, as well as those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households. Recognizing the group's valuable expertise and noteworthy commitment to the community, the CAC will be involved every step of the way in building our Comprehensive Plan.



Community Participation Techniques continued

Brainstorming Techniques were incorporated into our community visioning sessions and will also be used in upcoming public hearings where input will be sought on our Community Assessment, proposed Character Areas, the Public Involvement Plan and the preparation of the Community Agenda.

A Public Involvement Activity

from the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission

Shared Visions – Planning Smart Choices

Our Comprehensive Planning Process

Brainstorming in Middle Georgia

P & Z is Asking, Listening & Learning!

Section 3

Schedule for completion of the Community Agenda

Weekly

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Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission

Town Hall Meeting - 6 P.M.
Booth at Macon Mall - Friday
Visioning Session - Monday
Cable TV PSA - starts today
Newspaper - Sunday
Survey Begins!

Schedule for completion of the Community Agenda

As indicated herein, the Commission's community participation techniques comprehensively align with the current state planning requirements. In early 2001, as we launched our initial work on the development of our Comprehensive Plan, the current state planning standards and procedures were not in place. Prior to the adoption of the new requirements, much of our citizen involvement activities had been completed (including our award winning Visioning activities). However, the path that we have taken closely reflects the spirit and intent of the State's currently recommended schedule (shown below):

Currently Recommended - Community Agenda Sequence

- **Kickoff event to explain the planning process to the Community**
- **Formulation/appointment of stakeholders and committee(s) to guide development of the plan (e.g. Steering Committee, etc.)**
- **Community-wide event(s) to discuss and prioritize the Preliminary issues and opportunities list**
- **Processing of community input by guidance committee(s) (e.g. Steering Committee, etc.)**
- **Community-wide event(s) to produce/refine the Future Development Map.**
- **Processing community input by guidance committee(s).**
- **Development of draft Implementation Program by plan preparers (staff, planners, consultants, etc.).**
- **Community event(s) to react to draft Implementation Program**
- **Processing of community input by guidance committee(s)**
- **Assembly of draft Community Agenda by plan preparer (staff, planners, consultants, etc.)**
- **Community events(s) to react to draft Community Agenda (this could be the second public hearing required in Planning Standards)**
- **Processing of community input by guidance committee(s)**
- **Adoption of transmittal resolution by local government and submittal of Community Agenda to RDC for review.**

Launching the Project

In early 2001, the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission launched an ambitious project which was centered around the belief that middle Georgia citizens should have a prominent voice in planning for a better tomorrow! Beginning with the premise that all places are unique and no one knows a community as well as those who use it everyday, P & Z recognized the value of going to the masses and ASKING, LISTENING & LEARNING. The *Visual Preference Survey* was the chosen pathway to the vision. The selected process, created and trademarked by *A. Nelessen Associates*, of Bel Meade, New Jersey, asks participants to rank a series of more than 150 images of commercial, residential and street scenes. Many of the photographs included local properties. Along with the image rating, a companion 12-page written survey form was used to inventory demographics and attitudinal issues concerning market and policy preferences. By participating, the citizens helped to delineate critical development issues, such as the design of neighborhood and commercial areas, green spaces, roadways and more.

The results of this massive project will affect all entities that control development and quality of life in Macon and Bibb County, Georgia. A review of the highest and lowest rated images revealed the types of development and improvements that should be either encouraged or likewise avoided. Policy recommendations were drawn from an analysis of all image results and from the accompanying attitudinal questionnaire. These data provide a range of options for the future.

Capturing the Vision with Massive Public Involvement

The community embraced this process, with participation that exceeded 1,250 citizens! While the *Visual Preference Survey* is a planning tool developed in Belle Meade, New Jersey, the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission designed and launched an innovative campaign to massively promote and administer the program. Basically, the only materials “imported” from the VPS creator were the survey forms and images; all other components for collecting the data were created and coordinated locally. We recognized the excellent opportunity to establish, promote and sustain strong public involvement, education & outreach; consequently, a VPS logo and theme were locally developed to reflect and demonstrate our approach: *“Shared Visions – Planning Smart Choices”*. The versatile and positive message of the slogan has evolved into a recognizable P & Z emblem and is now being used on all of our planning publications. When the public sees the phrase, they immediately think of THEIR local planning commission!



Rather than simply coordinating the VPS survey, we seized an opportunity to raise the public’s awareness of professional planning. Partnering with *Bright Blue Sky Productions* (a local civic-minded production company) and a team of volunteers on our Blue Ribbon Steering Committee, we were able to locally write and produce a 53-minute video presentation. A local TV/radio personality graciously agreed to serve as our on-camera talent. The innovative media piece was not only designed to administer the survey, but also to educate and promote the importance of professional planning at a grand scale. The video invited the community to roll up their sleeves, get involved and help. Using computer morphing techniques, the public could watch and rate roadways, corridors and related development as the streetscapes were “magically” transformed into “what if” scenarios. Our partnership was significantly expanded by welcoming representatives from local cable TV to join our team. With their help, the 53-minute video survey ran six times daily for over a year. Individual loaner copies of the presentation were also made available.

Community Visioning Sessions

Along with the television survey, our staff conducted over thirty (30) VPS sessions throughout the community. The survey was taken to local industry, civic organizations, churches, neighborhood associations, community centers and professional organizations.



The Visual Preference Survey included “corridor visioning”. Computer simulations (morphs) were used to transform local roadways and streetscapes. This portion of the survey seemed to be a favorite among participants. The example shown above, illustrates development opportunities for improving *Ingleside Village*.

Community-wide Events To Discuss Issues & Opportunities

The following listing of events demonstrates the comprehensive scope of visioning sessions that were held throughout the community:

Community Group	Date of Session
Leadership Macon	8/19/01
Design Review Board	8/23/01
Federated Garden Club	1/22/02
Family & Consumer Science Group	2/19/02
Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation	3/7/02
Kiwanis Club	3/26/02
Wimbish Woods Garden Club	4/4/02
GEICO	4/11/02
Bibb County Public Schools -	Spring, 2002
Lawrence Drive Baptist Church	4/11/02
Porter Ellis Community Center	4/23/02
City/County Employees	4/24/02; 4/25/02; 4/26/02
Home Builders Association of Macon	5/8/02
Youth Leadership Bibb County, Inc.	5/18/02
Disability Connections	5/28/02
Anthony Homes Community Center	5/29/02
Macon Arts Alliance	6/12/02
Middle Georgia Board of Realtors	8/8/02
Vineville Neighborhood Association	9/9/02
Georgia College & State University	10/16/02
Pentecostal Temple Holiness Church	11/18/02
Mercer University	12/3/02
NewTown Macon	12/11/02
Kiwanis Club of Macon (Men's Golden K)	1/9/03
Lundy Chapel Baptist Church	1/22/03
United Churches of East Macon (St. Peters Baptist Church)	1/25/03
New Birth Missionary Baptist Church	2/5/03
Union Baptist Church (East Macon-Bibb Connection Group)	2/11/03
American Institute of Architects	2/18/03
Golden K Kiwanis Club – (Women's Club)	2/26/03
Riverside United Methodist Church	3/4/03
Greater Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church	3/24/03

The above meetings not only allowed us to collect the data, but also served as a valuable chance to dialogue with citizens about other issues and opportunities. If requests for service were made and needed to be referred to other public sector agencies, we helped coordinate the contact. The events gave citizens a stronger voice and served to connect them to the overall planning initiatives. In fact, this project has paved the way for an ongoing network of continued input and support which has, in turn, led to the development of a series of P & Z newsletters, appropriately entitled: “*Connections*”.

As we administered the survey, we were fortunate to once again expand our partnership by obtaining over \$40,000 of in-kind donations from Cox Communications for the broadcast of a locally produced 30-second public service announcement (entitled: “*Make Your Voice Heard*”). The commercial urged citizens to get involved.

Project Identity

We gave the project further identity and exposure by locally designing and printing an array of project material: Brochures, stationary, postcards, note cards – even the staff’s business cards were revised to advertise the project. A “traveling” *Visual Preference* kiosk visited festivals, meetings and events throughout the community. In an effort to bring the message to every citizen, promotional ads were even placed on the sides of public transit buses. A hyperlink to the Visual Preference brochure was floated on the P & Z website. The project was fortunate to receive several feature stories in the print media and cleverly designed ads were periodically published to seek participation.

Unveiling the Vision

On June 26, 2003, we completed collecting the data and unveiled the results & recommendations in a highly publicized town hall meeting held at the Douglass Theatre in Downtown Macon. To promote the event, we locally produced a 30-second public service announcement (entitled: “*Everybody Likes To See Results*”). Through an in-kind donation from Cox Communications, the commercial received substantial air-play and helped to make the evening a success. Those in attendance received a full briefing on the report which provides a wealth of guidelines and policies for our: Downtown, Neighborhoods, and the Rural/suburban fringe. Within each area, the study focuses on seven categories: street types/character, development options, pedestrian realm, parks/open space, parking options, signs, and mobility/transportation options. The evening was captured on film and is now available on DVD & VHS tape. The Town Hall media piece has become a key component of our public involvement, education and outreach activities.

The Partnership Continues

As the survey results and policy recommendations were unveiled, we considered the project not finished but rather, just beginning. Our partnership with the community will be maintained for use in every step of preparing our Comprehensive Plan. We are using a brief video presentation designed to render a status report to the citizens. The 10-minute segment has been taped and was broadcast daily on a Cox Communications government access channel.

On June 17, 2004, over seventy (70) citizens attended a public forum to provide input on developing the proposed goals and objectives. A vision and action plan was presented which helped to focus the wealth of visual preference survey data. Our Implementation Plan is being developed from the Action Plan.

Bibb officials seek public input on design plans

By Travis Fain
Telegraph Staff Writer

Plans that will help determine what Bibb County looks like decades from now are being developed, and officials are looking for public input. The "Vision and Action Plan" is set for 6 p.m. Thursday in city council chambers at Macon City Hall. Planning & zoning officials have distilled some 1,250 resident surveys into some basic next steps but say they don't want to go much further without being sure it's what people want.

"(We want) a validation that this is a direction we need to be going, design-wise," said Vernon Ryle, executive director of the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission.

"We don't want a rubber stamp here," said Barry Bissonette, the commission's public information officer. "We want dialogue."

Planning & zoning staffers are working on a comprehensive land use plan, which likely won't be complete until 2006, that will affect all sorts of local regulations and projects. That plan could lead to far-reaching changes in building regulations, zoning laws and planned transportation projects.

Already, zoning staff are working on new regulations for commercial signs, Ryle said. And Jim Thomas, the commission's director of urban planning, has put together a plan to completely rework the village shopping area on Ingleside Avenue, and to cut it out of the way of a new boulevard of sorts flanked by trees.

Both efforts are based on resident input — those 1,250 surveys — gathered as part of the commission's award-winning "visual preference survey" project. More changes in the regulations that control

the county's growth are anticipated as a result of the survey, which called for a Macon with more greenery, more sidewalks and fewer parking lots.

For example, Ryle said he envisions building regulations that offer developers a choice: build the more traditional way or include sidewalks and small parks in a subdivision plan in return for a smaller minimum lot size. Smaller lots mean more homes and more money for developers and residents are left with a more attractive subdivision, Ryle said.

Or how about this: The city has parking-lot-size minimums for commercial businesses. Maybe there should be maximums, Ryle suggested, to keep from having huge, unused lots.

"I don't know about an overhaul (of zoning regulations)," Ryle said. "What we're looking at is areas where these design standards can be employed."

Final decisions, Ryle said, will be based on two things: what residents want and what new regulations and costs developers can bear.

"Some things we'll just have to tweak, and some things may need some major revisions," Ryle said.

'We don't want a rubber stamp here. We want dialogue.'
Barry Bissonette, the commission's public information officer

DESIGN
Continued from 1B

Please see DESIGN, 5B

On October 20, 2004, a public involvement event was held in the Pleasant Hill neighborhood. At the meeting citizen input was sought on the 2030 Vision and Action Plan and other issues associated with preparation of the Macon Area Long Range Transportation and Comprehensive Plans. Participants were encouraged to complete a transportation issues survey. Since October, 2004 the survey was also offered to the public on the Planning and Zoning website.

At a day-long event on October 22, 2004, the Commission staff received input from the public at a local shopping mall. Participants were encouraged to complete the above referenced transportation issues survey.

The "Connections" Newsletter (which was launched in Fall, 2002) continues to feature stories on our comprehensive planning process, providing information on our Long Range Transportation Plan and our Comprehensive Plan.. Approximately 500 citizens are on our newsletter mailing list.

MATS Committee Input: Detailed presentations on the socio-economic, land use, and network data components of the Long Range Transportation Plan were made at the following MATS committee meetings: MATS Citizen Advisory Committee meeting - January 12, 2005; MATS Technical Coordinating Committee meeting - January 19, 2005; MATS Policy Committee Meeting - February 2, 2005. Much of the data and analysis contained within the Long Range Plan will also be incorporated into our Comprehensive Plan.

On January 13, 2005, a public forum was held at City Hall to seek citizen input on the proposed Growth Forecast and Land Use elements of the plan.

MATS Committees - Adoption of the proposed Long Range Transportation Plan drafts: Detailed presentations on the proposed draft of the Long Range Transportation Plan, Conformity Determination Report, Land Use Plan and the Transportation Improvement Plan were made at the following MATS committee meetings: MATS Citizen Advisory Committee meeting - March 8, 2005; MATS Technical Coordinating Committee meeting - March 9, 2005; MATS Policy Committee Meeting - March 11, 2005. The three committees adopted the drafts. Much of the data and analysis contained in the Long Range Transportation documents will be incorporated into our Comprehensive plan.

On April 7, 2005 the Planning and Zoning staff held a nine-hour session

(10:00 a.m.- 7:00 p.m.) where the public was invited to drop by the P & Z offices for further review and comment of the above referenced Long Range Transportation documents. Over 140 citizens were in attendance. As earlier mentioned, the data and analysis contained therein, will be incorporated into our Comprehensive plans.

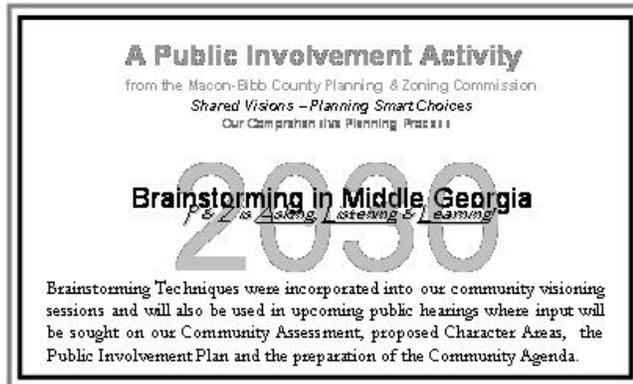


Over 140 citizens took part in the day-long event.



During Fall, 2005, proposed drafts will be prepared for the following components of the Comprehensive Plan: (1) Proposed Character Areas will be delineated; (2) Proposed Community Assessment will be compiled; (3) The proposed Community Participation Program will be drafted.

During Winter, 2006, a public hearing will be held for the purpose of seeking citizen input on (1) the proposed Character Areas; (2) proposed Community Assessment; and (3) the proposed Community Participation Program. Brainstorming techniques will be used in this day-long event where the public will be encouraged to drop by our offices and dialogue about the proposals.



We plan to format the day in a freethinking forum to not only generate ideas but also to obtain feedback on the work that will have be accomplished thus far. Our goal will be to ask, listen and learn. The open discussions will not only lead to a consensus on the referenced items but also the input will be applied as the Community Agenda is subsequently prepared. Discussions will be centered around maintaining a continuity of format and direction as set forth in our earlier coordinated Visioning process. The comprehensive plan's character areas will maintain the same three Visual Preference Survey regions of focus - Downtown, Neighborhoods and Rural/Suburban Realm. Within the three character areas, categorical implementation plans will provide guidance for: Streets types, Commercial Development, Residential Development, the Pedestrian Realm, Parks & Open Space, Parking Options, Signage Options and Mobility Options. Members of our Blue Ribbon Committee and the MATS Citizens Advisory Committee will be asked to attend the Public Forum and take part in the discussion. We will be seeking community-wide participation.

During Winter/Spring, 2006, the Commission will assemble the draft Community Agenda; after which a second Brainstorming public forum will be scheduled for the community's reaction to the draft. Once again, our stakeholder committees will be invited to take part along with the rest of the community. Upon receiving public input and finalizing the document, a transmittal resolution will be adopted and the Community Agenda will be submitted to the Regional Development Center (RDC) for review.

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Public Involvement

**To Join Our
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