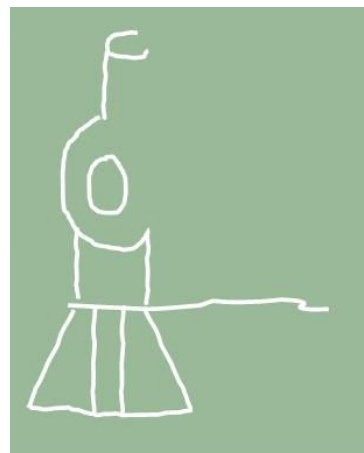


Chapter 1: Introduction



All Aboard!

Introduction



Photo: Oak trees in the Oaks District.



Photo: Hattiesburg City Hall Fountain

About Hattiesburg

Hattiesburg is positioned at the confluence of the Leaf and Bouie Rivers, in the heart of South Mississippi's rolling piney woods. Known as the "Hub City," Hattiesburg is located at the intersections of Interstate 59 and U.S. Highways 49, 98 and 11. Hattiesburg is located less than 100 miles from the state capital of Jackson, as well as the Gulf Coast, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama. The city of Hattiesburg is located within both Forrest and Lamar counties and is one of the fastest growing areas in South Mississippi. Hattiesburg is home to the University of Southern Mississippi, William Carey University, Forrest General Hospital, Wesley Medical Center, and the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.

Rationale for a New Plan

Hattiesburg's most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 1988. The past twenty years have brought many changes to Hattiesburg and the surrounding region. Since 1988, Hattiesburg's corporate limits have expanded from 24 square miles to 54 square miles. Continued growth in the size of the metropolitan population has resulted in a tremendous economic boom for the retail and service industries, as well as a greater need for public services. Today, the City of Hattiesburg is classified as a *Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)* with a Census 2000 population estimate of 123,812 persons.¹

The most significant change to all aspects of the city's environment occurred when Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, becoming the worst natural disaster ever recorded in the history of the United States. The loss of life and property throughout South Mississippi has forever changed the way we look at our cities, development patterns, construction methods and transportation facilities.

Hattiesburg's current comprehensive plan does not sufficiently address the enlarged corporate limits or the major advances in technology that have changed the way we live, work, and play. This new comprehensive plan for Hattiesburg addresses these and other changes needed to set Hattiesburg's course for the coming 20 years.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan is to identify the long-range goals and policies that should be used to guide public and private decision-making related to Hattiesburg's future growth and community development. As a policy statement, the plan expresses the city's desire to affect the physical form of its destiny. By approaching that future in a coordinated and unified manner, Hattiesburg seeks to preserve, promote, protect and improve the public health, safety, comfort, good order and appearance within its jurisdiction.

Plan Components and Legal Basis

The City of Hattiesburg exercises authority granted by the state under Title 17, Chapter 1, of the Mississippi Code of 1972, as amended, in the interpretation, administration and evaluation of the comprehensive plan.

Consistent with Title 17, Chapter 1, all land development within the incorporated area of Hattiesburg's jurisdiction will be consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan. In addition, all land development regulations enacted or amended will be consistent with the plan. Land development regulations existing at the time of adoption of the plan that are in conflict with this plan should be amended so as to be consistent.

Figure 1 contains the definition of a comprehensive plan as it appears in the Mississippi Code of 1972, as amended. At a minimum, plans in Mississippi must contain four elements—long-range goals and objectives, a land use plan, a transportation plan, and a community facilities plan.

How to Use the Plan

A comprehensive plan is a policy document. It is a vision of what the city will look like and how it will function in the coming years, and it contains strategies to achieve that vision. The comprehensive plan must be adopted by the City Council and, in doing so, the council declares that the plan is the central policy to guide all public decision-making.

Figure 1. Excerpt of Mississippi Code of 1972. Section 17-1-1 Definitions.

"Comprehensive plan," a statement of public policy for the physical development of the entire municipality or county adopted by resolution of the governing body, consisting of the following elements at a minimum:

- i. Goals and objectives for the long-range (twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) years) development of the county or municipality. Required goals and objectives shall address... residential, commercial and industrial development; parks, open space and recreation; street or road improvements; public schools and community facilities.
- ii. A land use plan which designates in map or policy form the proposed general distribution and extent of the uses of land for residences, commerce, industry, recreation and open space, public/quasi-public facilities and lands. Background information shall be provided concerning the ... residential densities; intensity of commercial uses; industrial and public/quasi-public uses... Projections of population and economic growth for the area encompassed by the plan may be the basis for quantitative recommendations for each land use category.
- iii. A transportation plan depicting in map form the proposed functional classifications for all existing and proposed streets, roads and highways... Functional classifications shall consist of arterial, collector and local streets, roads and highways, and these classifications shall be defined on the plan as to minimum right-of-way and surface width requirements... All other forms of transportation pertinent to the local jurisdiction shall be addressed as appropriate. The transportation plan shall be a basis for a capital improvements program.
- iv. A community facilities plan as a basis for a capital improvements program including, but not limited to, the following: housing; schools; parks and recreation; public buildings and facilities; and utilities and drainage.

Introduction



Photo: Saenger Theater.

It is vital that all stakeholders—public and quasi-public agencies, private interest groups, neighborhood associations, and residents—are involved in the planning process, so that the policies contained in the plan broadly represent the visions and goals of city residents. The plan cannot be implemented by any one agency alone, such as the City of Hattiesburg. To be successful, all residents must do their part to realize the plan’s vision.

The comprehensive plan is implemented in a number of ways. The Hattiesburg City Council adopts local ordinances—the City Code of Ordinances and the Land Development Code—establishes city policies, prepares annual budgets and capital improvement programs, and makes daily decisions that are consistent with the plan. Land use decisions considered by appointed bodies—the Hattiesburg Planning Commission, Land Development Code Board of Adjustments, and Historic Conservation Commission—should be based upon the goals, objectives and policies contained in the plan.

Additionally, the plan contains a vision of how the residents want the city to look and function. Individual citizens develop land, manage businesses and industries, maintain properties, and provide services. The comprehensive plan’s collective vision can only be achieved if these activities are undertaken in such a way that is consistent with the plan.

The plan cannot be a static document. Changes in areas such as technology, personal attitudes, social issues, the natural environment, and state and federal policies may require changes to the plan. If the plan is not updated as these changes occur, it may be perceived as irrelevant or obsolete.

When considering land use and zoning proposals, it is important to note the challenges in anticipating changes in development trends, market forces and the future desires of individual property owners. Decision-makers should compare area development trends with the future land use plan and consider whether proposals are consistent with the plan’s spirit and intent.

Matters such as new development trends, advances in technology, or evolving neighborhood desires may be used to support amendments to plan text and maps. Area residents and stakeholders should have an

important voice when changes to the plan are being considered. City officials should ensure that any changes to the comprehensive plan are made to achieve of the greatest overall benefit to area property owners.

City leaders must be able to identify and distinguish between policy changes that would benefit individual neighborhoods or the city as a whole, and changes that may trigger neighborhood declines or have unanticipated negative consequences. On one hand, it is important for the city to be flexible to changes in area conditions and be able to accommodate plan amendments that could yield high-quality, creative development proposals that benefit a neighborhood and surrounding community. Land development regulations should be written to allow innovative solutions to be reached through a proactive, inclusive public process.

On the other hand, the decision-makers must be able to recognize proposals that are in conflict with the spirit of the comprehensive plan, and that are not considered to enhance a neighborhood or community. In this situation, decision-makers should be able to identify the underlying principles in the plan that are not flexible to time or market forces, and to identify development options that would be consistent with those principles.

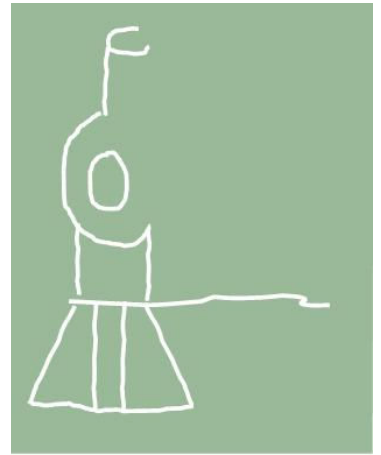
Sources

1. Census 2000, Census of Population and Housing, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.



Photo: Hattiesburg Convention Center.

Chapter 2: Executive Summary



All Aboard!