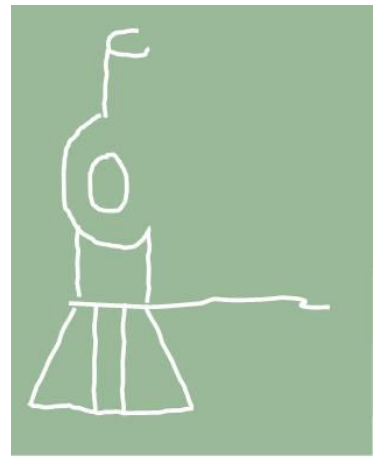


Chapter 3: The Planning Process



All Aboard!

The Planning Process



Photo: Vision Advisory Team meeting.

Figure 3. Vision Advisory Team Members.

Mary Ann Barnes
Fred Burns
Richard Conville
John Delgado
Kenneth Fairley
Perry Knight
Bert Kuyrkendall
Linda McMurtrey
Wanda Naylor
Jim O'Dair
Johnnie Ruth Owens
Betsy Rowell
Micah Scott
Addie Stover

Where We Started

Hattiesburg has been working toward a comprehensive plan for almost a decade. The roots of the city's current effort can be traced back to the 1999-2001 neighborhood planning program—*Neighborhoods Building Hattiesburg's Future*.

In June 1999, the City Council officially adopted a “City Resolution for the Neighborhood Planning Program.” The program set out to establish an information exchange between the city's governing body and neighborhood residents. The process consisted of three phases: 1) Initiation, 2) Organizing/Outreach, and 3) Visioning/Planning.

Over the course of several years, the city's outreach included two city-wide informational meetings to initiate the planning program, four major training work sessions for residents and city officials, completion of over 1,000 resident surveys, and City planning staff facilitation of over 150 individual neighborhood meetings.

The last phase—Visioning/Planning—concluded in 2001 with the establishment of a city-wide network of 24 neighborhood associations. As a result of the three-year effort, each association had a neighborhood boundary map, demographic profile and a series of vision statements.

Today, there are 37 recognized neighborhood associations and an office of neighborhood planning within the City's Department of Urban Development.

Getting On Track

Vision Advisory Team

Hattiesburg's current comprehensive planning efforts formally began in March 2007 with the appointment of the plan's steering committee, the Vision Advisory Team. The team contained 14 members appointed by Mayor DuPree, the Hattiesburg City Council, and the Hattiesburg Planning Commission. Additional information about the team's duties may be found under Appendix B.

The Vision Advisory Team participated in a rigorous schedule of 19 meetings occurring between March 22 and November 29, 2007. At each meeting, the team

was given a presentation by a guest speaker who had expertise in a particular aspect of Hattiesburg’s physical, social, and economic conditions. The team was asked to explore issues related to each topic and set policies for future growth and decision-making. The team held four work sessions to discuss and reach consensus on the plan’s vision statements, goals and implementation strategies.

Technical Advisory Team

A Technical Advisory Team was assembled with members representing all city departments. Team members provided technical information to planners and served as a resource to the Vision Advisory Team. A complete list of Technical Advisory Team members appears under page *ii*, *Acknowledgments*.

Plan Contributors and Focus Groups

Planners and the Vision Advisory Team met with members representing other public, quasi-public, and private entities in the city, including representatives from Forrest County, Lamar County, the University of Southern Mississippi, William Carey University, the Longleaf Trace Rails-to-Trails Commission, Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association, health care providers, and the Area Development Partnership. These contributors and focus groups assisted with data collection and provided important information on community issues that are not under the authority of the City of Hattiesburg.

Health Care Providers

A Health Care Roundtable was held September 28, 2007, to discuss local health care issues and the Comprehensive Plan. Participants included representatives from Wesley Medical Center, Forrest General Hospital, Southeast Mississippi Rural Healthcare Initiative, Student Health Services at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM), and a representative from the Mississippi Department of Public Health.

Participants shared information about their facilities and discussed industry-wide issues and challenges. Full details of the roundtable discussion appear under Appendix B.

To conclude the meeting, participants agreed upon a list of issues, challenges and goals that should be

Figure 4. Vision Advisory Team Meetings.

Regular Meetings

- Meeting 1: Welcome and introduction
- Meeting 2: Plan history and program coordination
- Meeting 3: History of “Neighborhoods Building Hattiesburg’s Future” neighborhood planning program
- Meeting 4: Storm drainage, environmental protection, floodplains
- Meeting 5: Public schools
- Meeting 6: Population characteristics and housing programs
- Meeting 7: Current and future economic conditions
- Meeting 8: Visioning work session #1
- Meeting 9: Parks and recreation
- Meeting 10: Police and fire protection
- Meeting 11: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Meeting 12: Visioning work session #2
- Meeting 13: Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and city transportation projects
- Meeting 14: Commercial corridors/residential neighborhoods *mobile workshop*
- Meeting 15: Town-Gown: Southern Miss and surrounding neighborhoods
- Meeting 16: SMART partnership and visioning work session #3
- Meeting 17: Downtown Hattiesburg walking tour
- Meeting 18: Visioning work session #4
- Meeting 19: Visioning work session #5

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included in the comprehensive plan. These items should be addressed by health care providers in partnership with the City of Hattiesburg to enhance the quality of life for all residents:

- › *Population and Medical Insurance Issues:*
County health departments no longer serve a majority of the uninsured, particularly the pre-natal care program recipients. As county health departments reduced individual patient health services, the number of visits to local hospital emergency rooms for primary, non-emergency health care has increased.

Continue to enhance existing programs, such as the Southeast Mississippi Rural Healthcare Initiative (SeMRHI) and identify new opportunities to serve those residents who are insured, under-insured, or uninsured find affordable non-emergency health care and reduce the number of visits to local hospital emergency rooms for primary care.

- › *Mass Transit and Special Transportation to Medical Facilities.*
Undertake public relations and promotional campaigns to improve the perception of the city's mass transit system to promote ridership from a wider range of the population.
- › *Public Awareness and Promotion of Preventive Measures:*
Expand partnerships with local media to increase awareness of the many health-related events such as community walks, runs and bicycle races.
- › *Partnership Forum:*
Partner to coordinate a semi-annual meeting of representatives from local health care providers and city officials to discuss current issues, trends and challenges.
- › *City Website Link:*
Create a link on the City's website, entitled "Health Care," to list all of the local institutions that can assist university students, military personnel, newcomers, and visitors in locating service providers. Create and distribute a health care brochure to local businesses, university campuses, eating establishments, churches, public buildings, and government agencies.

William Carey University area Town-Gown

The main campus of William Carey University is located at 498 Tuscan Avenue in southeast Hattiesburg. The university was founded in 1906 as Mississippi Woman's College. In 1954, the school was renamed William Carey College, in honor of the founder of modern missions, and became coeducational. The college was renamed William Carey University in 2006.¹

Planners met with President R. Tommy King on December 6, 2007, to discuss Hattiesburg's comprehensive plan and any plans the university may have developed for its 120-acre campus and the surrounding area. The university has identified the following issues that are important to the overall improvement of the campus environment and that will facilitate the university's plans for future growth:²

1. Create a zoning overlay district along Tuscan Avenue to promote neighborhood mixed-use areas and design guidelines for new commercial and multi-family construction.
2. Partner with the City of Hattiesburg to address pedestrian and bicycle connections between the university, Downtown Hattiesburg and the Longleaf Trace.
3. Support existing student-community partnerships and promote new ones, particularly with adjacent neighborhood associations and businesses.²

Below is the university's "wish list" of programs and projects that would further enhance student life and the university environment:²

1. Encourage new development of safe off-campus housing within walking distance of campus.
2. Continue to acquire dilapidated structures adjacent to campus.
3. Address crime and safety issues around campus.²

Full details of the meeting with President King appear under Appendix B.

University of Southern Mississippi/Forrest

General Hospital District

A neighborhood visioning workshop for the University of Southern Mississippi/Forrest General Hospital District was held October 25, 2006. The visioning



Photo: Chain Garden, William Carey University.

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Photo: Participants discuss plan options at the visioning session sponsored by the Mississippi Chapter of the American Planning Association.



Photo: Recommendation for new Hardy Street streetscape design presented at visioning session.

workshop was a pre-conference event for the 2006 meeting of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Planning Association (MAPA). The focus of the event was to explore ideas and gather input on possible land use, streetscape design, and development options for an area surrounded by the University of Southern Mississippi, Forrest General Hospital and the University Heights neighborhood.

This area was selected because of its tremendous potential to create a unique, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented district that is an amenity to university students and employees, neighborhood residents, and employees and patients of the hospital, area clinics and medical offices. The purpose of the workshop was to identify a comprehensive vision for the area's design and quality of life.

The study area is bounded to the north by Hardy Street and the university, to the east by U.S. Highway 49, to the south by Arlington Loop, and to the west by South 31st Avenue. The area includes a mix of single-family and multi-family residences, private commercial uses, and university-owned properties.

Approximately thirty people participated, including property owners, developers, neighborhood residents, university, medical, and government representatives. Planners and landscape architects from across the state also participated. Participants separated into three teams to develop design ideas for the study area.

At the conclusion of the MAPA conference, the findings were presented by each group. The three district plans are included under Appendix B. Additionally, a detailed description of land use issues for this area may be found in Chapter 7, page 115.

Community Forums

A variety of types of community meetings were held to reach as many residents as possible. Planners attended regular functions conducted by the City, such as Council of Neighborhood Meetings and Night Out Against Crime events, and conducted special meetings to gather input on the comprehensive plan. Below is a description of those events.

Kick-Off Event at the W. U. Sigler Center

Hattiesburg residents attended the June 1 and 2 kick-off event to begin the city's comprehensive planning

process. Upon entering, residents were given a post-it-note pad and pen and asked to write down their opinions on a number of different community issues, including neighborhoods, housing, streets, sidewalks, bikeways, community facilities, land use and education.

More than 400 comments were received. Residents who commented wanted additional code enforcement, new sidewalks and bicycle paths, better street maintenance, more shopping opportunities downtown and east of Highway 49, cultural heritage events, drainage improvements, and recycling programs. A complete list of all comments received at the meeting may be found under Appendix B.

Night Out Against Crime Events

Since 1991, Hattiesburg has participated in National Night Out Against Crime—a program of the National Association of Town Watch. The city has earned 16 National Night Out Police-Community Partnership Awards recognizing outstanding participation in “America’s Night Out Against Crime.” The awards are presented by the National Association of Town Watch and Target stores. Hattiesburg’s Night Out Against Crime event is a city-wide effort that has grown over the years to include a large number of neighborhood residents and local businesses.

A “Kick-Off” party is held one week in advance of the annual event to provide information to participating neighborhood associations and distribute block party supplies. The 2007 Kick-Off party at Kamper Park and Zoo created an opportunity to *kick-off* the 2008-2028 comprehensive plan neighborhood surveys that were distributed through the end of January 2008. Appendix D contains a sample of the survey and individual neighborhood data.

Ward Meetings

The City’s Department of Urban Development facilitated a series of five town meetings to review the 2008-2012 draft of the Consolidated plan for housing and community development programs. One meeting was held in each of the five city council wards to solicit comments on the proposed allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds.

After the Consolidated Plan hearings, the consultant planners provided information on the comprehensive



Photo: City residents submit comments at the comprehensive plan kick-off event at the W. U. Sigler Center.

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Figure 5. Five neighborhood strategies that were favored most by workshop attendees.

Attendees at the January neighborhood workshop were given an opportunity to “vote” on the preliminary goals and objectives that were proposed by the Vision Advisory Team. Residents were asked to indicate the three goals or strategies they thought were most important to address neighborhood issues. The top five goals and strategies are shown below.

1. Protect the value, safety and stability of neighborhoods by ensuring that local zoning and development decisions do not create potential nuisances—noises, odors, vibrations, increases in non-residential traffic—or allow inappropriate non-residential encroachments.
2. Aggressively enforce property maintenance codes and give neighborhood associations the tools—information, training and public support—to persuade neighborhood residents to respect their neighborhoods by maintaining clean, attractive properties.
3. Continue to demolish dilapidated properties that are creating a blighting influence on neighborhoods.
4. Continue programs to assist neighborhood associations; mobilize neighborhood residents to improve neighborhood conditions and participate in civic issues and community decision-making.
5. Continue to create and distribute brochures regarding property maintenance codes and applicable historic preservation ordinances to neighborhood associations. Provide new residents with the brochures and information when they purchase neighborhood homes.

plan and public involvement opportunities. Neighborhood surveys and comment forms were distributed to participants. The meetings provided an opportunity to inform residents about the comprehensive plan and how they can participate in the planning process.

Neighborhood Workshops

Neighborhood workshops were held on September 20, 2007, and January 17, 2008. The purpose of the events was to update the information that was obtained through the 1999-2001 neighborhood planning program—*Neighborhoods Building Hattiesburg’s Future*—and to identify current issues and concerns. A list of participating neighborhoods is displayed in Figure 6. The neighborhood information is available on the city’s website: www.hattiesburgms.com.

At the September workshop, 41 residents participated from 16 neighborhoods. Residents used neighborhood maps to identify landmarks, existing and needed public facilities, and desired improvements. Additional information from neighborhoods was sought through the fall of 2007 and a second neighborhood workshop was held in January 2008.

At the January workshop, 21 residents participated from ten neighborhoods. Residents were grouped at tables with their fellow neighborhood residents. They were given an analysis showing how current neighborhood residents viewed the major issues contained in their neighborhood’s 2000 plan. If the neighborhood had not participated in the 2000 planning program, they were given preliminary results from the 2007-08 neighborhood surveys for their neighborhoods.

Residents were also given vision worksheets and asked to write vision statements on the following topics:

- › Overall neighborhood vision;
- › Housing;
- › Appearance and curb appeal;
- › Streets, sidewalks, bicycle paths;
- › Utilities;
- › Retail and service businesses;
- › Parks and recreation;
- › Other city services (police, fire, code enforcement);

and

- › Natural environment.

Results from the 2007-08 neighborhood surveys are contained in each neighborhood's profile. Lastly, proposed goals and strategies related to neighborhood development were posted and residents were asked to vote on the three strategies they favored most. The five responses that received the most "votes" are shown in Figure 5.

Public Meetings and Hearings

The final period for public input began on May 9, 2008, when the preliminary draft of the comprehensive plan was placed on the city's website. Copies of the draft document were also available to the public at city hall and the Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County. A citywide public meeting was held May 22, 2008, at the Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center, to provide information on the plan and receive public input.

A public hearing was held June 11, 2008, at a special-called meeting of the Hattiesburg Planning Commission. Public comments were received during and after the public hearing and were placed into a comment log for review by a subcommittee of the planning commission. The subcommittee reviewed each comment submitted by city residents and recommended whether or not to edit the plan. The comment log process was approved by the planning commission at the regularly scheduled October meeting. Upon approval of the edited final draft, the planning commission made a recommendation to the Hattiesburg City Council to adopt the comprehensive plan. The Comprehensive Plan 2008-2028 was adopted by the City Council on December 16, 2008.

Sources

1. About William Carey University. <http://www.wmcarey.edu/about/>. Website accessed March 6, 2008.
2. R. Tommy King, President and Chief Executive Officer of William Carey University. Personal interview. December 6, 2007.

Figure 6. List of Participating Neighborhood Associations.

- › Arcadia-Sunset Drive Neighborhood
- › Arledge-Manning Neighborhood
- › Audubon Westwood Neighborhood
- › Baywood Cove Homeowners
- › Bethune-Eastside-Rowan Neighborhood
- › Concerned Citizens of Palmer's Crossing
- › Country Club Lake Estates Homeowners
- › Duane/Myrtle Neighborhood
- › East Jerusalem Enhancement Organization
- › Grace Avenue and Northhills Drive
- › Hattiesburg Historic Neighborhood
- › Hattiesburg Housing Authority
- › The Highlands
- › Hope Drive Neighborhood
- › Innswood Homeowners
- › Irene Chapel Neighborhood
- › Jamestown/Lincoln Road Neighborhood
- › Kamper-Avenues Neighborhood
- › Katie-John-Dabbs Street Neighborhood
- › Midway Subdivision Neighborhood
- › Mobile-Bouie Neighborhood
- › Newman-Buschman Neighborhood
- › North Main Historic Neighborhood
- › Oaks District Homeowners
- › Palmer Heights Neighborhood
- › Parkhaven Neighborhood
- › Pinehills Neighborhood
- › Pinehurst Neighborhood
- › Robertson Place Neighborhood
- › Royal Oaks Tenant Association
- › Southern Heights Neighborhood
- › Timberton Homeowners
- › Timberton Park Neighborhood I
- › Timberton Park Neighborhood II
- › Unified Neighborhood
- › University Heights Neighborhood
- › Westgate Neighborhood
- › Woodhaven Lake Estate

