

## A Summary of the Planning Process

### Shelby County Comprehensive Plan: A Path to the Future

This has been a 3-year process that included:

- An Extensive Public Involvement Process
- The Creation of the Strategic Development Concept that responds to Public Input
- Development of Specific Strategies and Action Items required to Implement the Plan

The planning process started with an extensive ***Public Involvement Process*** that included eleven Townhall Meetings (one in each High School) to hear what the people thought were the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the county. The comments received were refined and prioritized through a series of ***Community Building Workshops***.

This information was synthesized and summarized into a report titled "*Paths to the Future*". Several common themes emerged which were noted in the document.

- 1) Rapid Uncontrolled Population Growth (loss of open space)
- 2) Poor Communication, Cooperation and Planning
- 3) Inability to Manage Growth
- 4) Need for better Intergovernmental Cooperation, Efficiency and Responsiveness
- 5) Duplication of Services and Service Delivery
- 6) Identifying Revenue and Fiscal Opportunities/Prioritization

These themes pointed to some key initiatives;

- 1) Develop an equitable funding program,
- 2) Develop a transportation plan,
- 3) Develop a community-planning program,
- 4) Foster development of a stronger economic base through creation of more jobs.

In the meantime, staff took the information gathered in the Townhalls and workshops and developed a concept that addressed the common themes reported in the *Paths* document. With the aid of a consultant, KPS Group, staff studied all the competing priorities and interests and found that many of the questions and issues raised in the public involvement process could be answered in the way land was developed in the past; as a series traditional neighborhoods that include a mix a different land uses anchored by a major activity center for new employment opportunities, schools, parks, or other community facilities. This formed the nucleus of the Strategic Development Concept (SDC), which was accepted by the Planning Commission.

We learned that the intentional concentration of development around traditional town or village centers could provide ample space to accommodate the 100,000 plus people expected to locate in Shelby County by 2025. The value of this approach is maximizing

infrastructure utilization, minimizing infrastructure cost, internalizing traffic, minimizing sprawl, providing opportunities to work with municipalities and incorporating design into our communities.

The application of this concept to rural unincorporated Shelby County led to the initial designation of as many as 28 locations. These are natural locations for places where a diverse mixture of land uses that are appropriately designed in the context of their location are encouraged by the plan. These centers of development could be of various scales depending on location and may be located at the fringes of existing municipalities.

Staff also recognized that the environment itself dictates how the land is best developed. An ecosystem analysis was performed by consultants LEC who defined the interrelationship of various components of the environment. This led to the definition of green infrastructure, which was accepted by the Planning Commission.

- 1) Slopes of 15% or greater,
- 2) Prime cropland,
- 3) Forestland
- 4) Pastureland and
- 5) Flood plains (FEMA zone “A”) plus a 500 ft. buffer (includes wetlands).

One of the keys to promoting centers of development is to establish a low rural density (10 acre minimum lots) that protects the green infrastructure and creates a market for development in the center. But the county recognizes that owners of property have a right to develop their property and crafting a system of incentives based on the set aside of green infrastructure and open space. The success of this strategy is largely dependent on the ability to control minimum lot size through the application of zoning.

A major part of any plan is the policies. They are the blueprint of the plan. Staff worked closely with the planning commission to develop a comprehensive, integrated group of policies that were greatly expanded from the 90% draft to support the SDC. Each goal has multiple objectives and each objective has multiple policies. There are 9 overall goals. Each element of the plan has a sub goal with multiple objectives and their policies.

The elements of the plan are:

- 1) Green Infrastructure
- 2) Communities of Place
- 3) The Community Core
- 4) The Community Focus Area
- 5) The Community Transition Area
- 6) Rural Landscapes
- 7) Community Connections
- 8) Public Facilities (Transportation, Infrastructure, Public Buildings, and Parks and Recreation), and
- 9) Economic Development

Plans without implementation are hollow promises. Shelby County is determined to give this plan a head start toward implementation by building consensus from major

stakeholders in the county. The Implementation Systems Committee (ISC) was formed to review the range of available strategies and mechanisms available to bring the plan to fruition. This committee met several times to review a laundry list of strategies that might be employed in Shelby County. Following the work of the ISC, the Action Plan Committee (APC) was formed to develop specific items designed to implement the goals of the plan. The work of the APC lasted 5 months and produced 50 action items of varying priority that would be need to implement the plan.

The next step is a public hearing on the plan, adoption by the Planning Commission and ratification by the county commission.