

Memo

To: Robert Benner, Smart Growth America

From: Alex Morrison, Macon-Bibb County Assistant Manager of Economic Development

RE: Smart Growth Building Blocks six month report

Macon-Bibb County has been integrating the principles of smart growth into its operations in even more robust ways since our last report. Several efforts have come into great focus—all based around connectivity and walkability in a vibrant urban core. This is the mantra of our government today and we have a host of partners on board to make smart growth a reality.

The follow is how Macon-Bibb is specifically addressing the six-month goals.

Six Months

4. Redevelop downtown – Identify groups that articulate a desire to be better represented in downtown revitalization. Seek their help in identifying public events and place-making projects that are important to them.

The later stages on the MAP process included specific outreach to communities that felt under-represented in Downtown projects and projects in general. Specifically, neighborhoods adjacent to downtown have been invited to share ideas and engage in placemaking. Improvements to plans around Clinton St and Pleasant Hill have been the direct result.

5. Redevelop downtown - Continue to program events that bring everyone downtown to see and feel the impact of recent changes and investments.

The City and its partners have continued to maintain a very robust event schedule. Since the smart growth meeting, we have seen huge increases in annual events by promoting a pedestrian first approach, making each of the events far more successful than they were before. New events have cropped up as well, including a new spin on New Year's Eve, a pop-up market, and events that support nightlife with bar-crawls and competitions that last until last call.

6. Redevelop downtown – Identify significant downtown events where County Commissioners can be included. Select at least one event and focus effort and attention on engaging and celebrating Commissioners' efforts.

The aforementioned NYE event was sponsored by the Macon-Bibb Commission and highlighted the successes downtown has made in its promotions. We will continue to identify events with clear participation from commissioners that highlight their support of initiatives that improve downtown. A recent press event lauded the blight efforts of commissioners and their support of the MAP plan and a new arts village within the urban core.

7. Participate in planning - Complete audit of plans and zoning codes.

The City and partners have done considerable research into the planning and zoning codes that impact downtown, highlighting several issues pertaining to mixed-use areas of the CBD and limits to the historic preservation elements in the zoning code.

8. Participate in planning - Initiate process of proposing changes to plans and zoning codes.
Alternate suggestions, including advocating for a historic preservation commission has been proposed by several agencies. This is underway.

9. Participate in planning - Review the adopted plans of other City Authorities.
This has been accomplished along with the further advocating of MAP.

10. Participate in planning - Work with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission to identify relevant opportunities for participation and appoint representatives.
The regional plan process has been opened to a broad group of officials and citizens to ensure better participation. City is working with the regional commission on an updated blight and urban redevelopment plan.

11. Participate in planning - Begin to appoint young leaders to Authorities and Commissions.
Mayor has begun including more young leaders and new faces in appointments to Authorities and Commissions. He has added younger leaders to the UDA board, the Development Authority of Bibb County, and the Macon College Hill Corridor Commission board. In the past year, he appointed at least 6 members age 45 or younger.

12. Strengthen neighborhoods – Identify health-focused businesses, non-profits, and community groups who are already working on active living, safe housing, and healthy food initiatives.
Completed, and city is working closely with Shalom Zones and other community groups in key areas to expand park, garden, and code enforcement efforts in blighted neighborhoods. The Mill Hill Project is the prime example of such collaborations in the community.

13. Strengthen neighborhoods - Identify opportunities to work with health-oriented partners in specific neighborhoods, prioritizing those adjacent to downtown.
Health and connectivity are a vital part of the MAP effort and the city is working on promoting better trail and bikeway access to all citizens. We will continue to work with groups promoting healthful foods and healthcare access to underserved neighborhoods.

14. Adopt MAP - Designate responsible staff to manage process of adopting MAP goals and recommendations.

MAP has been integrated into the work plans of several department heads and will continue to be led by a coalition of partners. The Urban Development Authority and NewTown Macon have signed a memorandum of agreement to work closely to implement the plan and devoted time of both directors to the task.