

## **Memo**

To: Sean Geygan, Smart Growth America

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

RE: Smart Growth Building Blocks one-month report

Macon-Bibb County is well poised to implement smart growth principles as evidenced in the reports and workshops held in the spring. The Mayor and staff have begun to identify impediments to smart growth at all levels of city code and are working methodically to address them, particularly in changing the codes pertaining to streets and sidewalks to improve walkability and limit the adverse effect of increased curb-cuts. Macon-Bibb wants walkability to be a central tenet of its operations going forward and has adopted a people first mantra for all departments.

The following is how Macon-Bibb is specifically addressing the one-month goals:

### **One month**

1. Participate in planning - Begin audit of existing plans and zoning codes – Select County staff or retain volunteers with understanding of downtown redevelopment goals to review existing codes and identify areas of concern. Use a tool such as the Smart Growth Code and Zoning Audit.

Macon-Bibb is reviewing ways to strengthen local codes as part of Macon. Local leaders recently stopped an effort to abolish the design review board. A new streets and sidewalks ordinance that favors walkability has been adopted. Engineering is analyzing existing encroachments and rules pertaining to curb-cuts. Planning and Zoning officials have halted some plans for sprawl development while new codes can be developed.

2. Redevelop downtown - Communicate the economic and fiscal relationship between downtown redevelopment and the rest of Macon – Begin to use information about the economic and fiscal benefits of downtown redevelopment in op-eds, speeches, and talking points.

Urban Core development is a primary focus of the Mayor's 2016 budget. All speaking engagements include Smart Growth data. Several articles have been written promoting the smart growth approach. Smart growth data was used to argue in favor of concentrating blight dollars in our community. Future op-eds will focus on smart growth principles in non-traditional media.

3. Adopt MAP - Begin to explore different options to give MAP staying power. Investigate the different suggestions and additional mechanisms to incorporate MAP goals and proposals into official policy, focusing on questions of legality, political feasibility, and long-term effectiveness.

MAP is in its final public comment phase. More than 1,300 people have had direct input on the plan to this point. UDA and Macon-Bibb are working together to take suggestions to the implementation level, including a downtown lighting plan, park strategy, biking minimum grids, and trail improvements.

MAP will be officially unveiled in September and will be distributed to different groups for adoption. All strategies are under further review by Interface to refine and flesh out suggestions in light of Smart Growth seminar.