

The COUNTRY CHRONICLE

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AROUND TOWN

- Public presentation of the Blythewood master plan will held Saturday at 3 p.m. at the community center.
- The Blythewood Planning Commission will meet Monday, Aug. 11 at 6 p.m., at Town Hall.
- The Architectural Review Board will meet Monday, Aug. 18 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall. **For more town information, visit townofblythewood.com.**

ETC.

- The Greater Blythewood Chamber of Commerce will meet Tuesday, Aug. 12 at 7:30 a.m. at Southern Pig.
- A ribbon-cutting for the Chamber will be held Thursday, Aug. 21 at Town Hall.
- The Chamber's grand opening will be celebrated Tuesday, Aug. 26 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at Columbia Country Club.
- To place civic and other information in the community calendar, call 786-5681.

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Community gets first look at plan for Blythewood

By Martin Mobley
Editor

About 50 community residents Tuesday night got their first look at the work that's been done this week on Blythewood's master plan.

Representatives of Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh (TSW), the community planning consultants hired by the town to design a master plan concept for the next 25 years, showed they had been busy.

Tables at the community center were littered with colorful maps and diagrams that drew the curious interest of the residents.

Mayor Keith Bailey opened the session by thanking TSW for the amount of "legwork," and thanking residents and other community "stakeholders" for their input in interviews this week.

"We have invested a lot of money in this, and our goal is to put that first shovel in the



Country Chronicle/MARTIN MOBLEY

A resident takes a look at a map showing part of Blythewood master plan.

ground on our watch," said Bailey, who has 3 ½ years remaining in his first term. "These are exciting times.

"Once we are done (with the master plan), we need to stick to the product and start as soon as we can," he said. "Once you start, it's hard to stop the momentum."

Bailey said the community center will be open the rest of this week for residents to come by and look at the work that's been done.

Caleb Racicot, project manager, and TSW partner Tom Walsh both echoed the mayor's

comments, saying, "(You) need take it and implement it. We want your project implemented."

They cautioned that without it, for example, Blythewood Road in 10 years would be six lanes.

"You don't want that," said Walsh.

As with other communities TSW has planned, Blythewood is seen as a walkable, sustainable, green community with

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Country Chronicle/MARTIN MOBLEY

Lang-Mekra North America president Sabine Lang stands in front of an etched mirror, much like the ones her grandparents' plant first produced in Germany in the 1930s.

Lang-Mekra's Sabine Lang: A 'reflection' of success

By Martin Mobley
Editor

RIDGWAY - Despite an industry that has been "leveling out," Lang-Mekra North America, under the leadership of German-born Blythewood resident Sabine Lang, continues to be a successful manufacturer and a model as an employee-sensitive company.

Located near Ridgeway in Fairfield County's Walter Brown Industrial Park, German-based Lang-Mekra is the leading supplier worldwide of rear-view mirror assemblies for trucks.

Much of the company's success is due to the guidance of Lang, who came to America in 1994 with \$250,000 and little else, to establish an American presence to support Lang-Mekra's European operations.

Founded in 1932 by Lang's grandparents, Hans and Frieda Lang, the Hans Lang mirror company originally operated out of the couple's cellar in Furth in southern Germany.

Following its destruction by

Allied bombers during World War Two, the business rebuilt, and opened its first factory in Furth in 1964. Expansion led to production of mirrors for commercial and passenger vehicles, and in 1968, the addition of a plastics division.

Guided during this time by Sabine Lang's father, Heinrich, and her uncle, Gunther, the company in 1981 bought a former distributor, Mekra, and cornered the European market.

When Volvo, one of its clients, demanded a presence to service its growing North American operations, Lang-Mekra North America was born.

In 1996, Lang-Mekra North America had a zero market share and 20 direct competitors. Today, it's a \$40+ million-a year manufacturer operating in a 200,000-square foot facility, has just three competitors and a 65-percent share in certain industry sectors.

One reason for its success?

"We're like a family here," says

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of Events

Teen Scene is hosting a parents 6 to 10 p.m. Sign up your teen excitement of The Teen Scene. movie in one of our two lounges from the community. Pizza and to members, and \$10 for non-99-0035 or send an e-mail to

T. The Northeast Democrats Aug. 9, to discuss issues that didates to focus on before the st will be held at Ryan's Steak d, from 8:30 to 10 a.m. Cost ax and gratuity. All attendees e information, contact Mari-arilynsummers@aol.com.

N. Spring Valley High School ear reunion weekend, Friday events include: Spring Valley m. on Oct. 3. Meet at Class of m. The Spring Valley-Sumter 30. Tickets are \$6, with a re-88 members. Meet at the tent will be held at the Lake House Center, 900 Clemson Road, ts are \$45 per person during and \$75 at the door. Log onto myevent.com/, for details, to register and pay online. For le Smith Turner at jturner@wec.com phone (803) 765-1223, or wec@msn.com.

annual Columbia Bridal Show- on Sunday, Sept. 14 at the on Center. The Showcase is Associates, a trade group of bridal shops, photographers, rs. The showcase will feature re perfect wedding, along with ight refreshments. Admission l Angela Koska at (803) 865- lde.com.

ater Columbia Children's Choir s 3 to 12 to audition for our new vate, non-threatening and free Saturday August 23 from 3:00 i from 5:00 - 6:30 PM. Please, g or call 776-0544 or 462-0126

hewood High School Bengals' e 2008 season on Thursday, -mail Coach Tony Rakes at

is open for all girls ages 5 to e leaders this season for the tball League. For more infor- l) 463-1648. Also, Pop Warner eded. For more information, 3) 576-0124.

In-person registration for the season will be held Saturday, wood Recreation Center. Reg- with a check for \$60, payable e. Include a birth certificate if O. Box 384, Blythewood, SC later than Aug. 15. Registra- at www.blythewoodsports.com. 61-7051.

UIZ'INS. Car enthusiasts are ner Cruiz'in" every Saturday in the parking lot next to D's a fun begins at 4 p.m., so bring mobile. Owners of these cars ent discount at D's. For more

PLAN

Continued from page 1

self-contained areas that could attract small retail businesses and diverse housing.

"It's about creating a community that embraces the best aspects," Racicot said. "It's about bringing a flavor and character to an area that has growth pressures."

Concepts being visualized include streetscaping, parks, green spaces, transportation corridors and others.

Much of the discussion focused on where the town center should be located: The current area around Town Hall, bounded by Langford Road and Wilson Boulevard; or the area around the community center, bounded by I-77, Blythewood Road and Community Road. A center on the eastern side would have great visibility from Blythewood Road, while a western town center would benefit from high visibility from I-77, according to Racicot.

Also of concern is the perception that I-77 is a barrier separating the two sides of town, and the idea was discussed of creating a pedestrian/bicycle corridor using the existing bridge over I-77, or building another non-interchange overpass. One location suggested for that option would be between Exit 24 and Exit 27, south of Blythewood High School.

On another issue, Walsh cautioned that, "You do not have enough rooftops (housing) to support a town for years; you need traffic to support it (the community)."

In addressing the housing concept, Walsh said, "You want choices; you need a variety of housing."

"You want to design a town that keeps its history and fabric of the community," he said.

Railroad tracks – typical of southern towns – are an advantage, particularly with the growing trend toward high-speed rail transit, according to Walsh.

"It's great to have a town built around the tracks," he said.

A number of impressions about Blythewood, generated during interviews conducted with residents this week, included:

- It is rural.
- It's a true village.
- It has unique small businesses.
- There are development pressures.

• Traffic is a major concern.

• There's a lack of a town focus (no town square or center).

• There's a desire for quality growth.

• Blythewood Road is the "gateway."

Racicot said the objective of the master plan is to tie together the strengths of the community, and use what Blythewood already has.

"You have historic resources, older homes and great churches and civic buildings," he said.

An open house was scheduled for Wednesday night, and a final presentation was to be held at 3 p.m. Saturday, with what TSW representatives promised would be some "amazing" exhibits and concepts. Af-

terward, the TSW team will return to Atlanta to complete its work, and return in December with final concepts for the future of Blythewood.

Let us know about your students' achievements and their school events. Call 786-5681 or email to: info@countrychronicle.com.

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WHEN: FRIDAY AUGUST 15TH @ 8:00

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TONYA

Continued from page 3

have been a cheaper alternative as a new remote control took its place on his bedside table.

Unfortunately, in order to take full advantage of

no longer so unobstructed, necessitating the removal of an oak tree audacious enough to interfere with our satellite signal.

As ridiculous as it