



TOWN
OF
Blythewood
SOUTH CAROLINA

Master Plan

Part 2: Public Participation

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The Town of Blythewood Master Plan is the result of an intensive public participation process that included a five-day charrette, stakeholder interviews, an online visual preference survey, and various public meetings.

Five-Day Charrette

A charrette is an intensive and inclusive multi-day session that brings together community stakeholders, designers, engineers, market specialists, and others to prepare a plan. The charrette format allows various ideas to be explored, vetted, and modified in a relatively short period of time. This creates a plan that has both broad community support and is grounded in reality.

From August 5-9, 2008, a charrette was held at the Blythewood Community Center to establish a vision for the town's future. It began with a public kick-off meeting to share principles of town planning, discuss the initial results of the on-line image preference survey, and review prior inventory work. This kickoff meeting was attended by more than 30 people.

During the days that followed, the public was given the opportunity to come to the charrette space to review and inform the work of the consultant team. During this time, constructive public feedback was received on architectural sketches, the draft land use plan, and renderings showing potential development.

The charrette concluded with a public presentation at Blythewood High School, attended by approximately 50 people. The results of the charrette were presented, and sketches and plans were on view for public comment.

Public Involvement

Other forms of public involvement during the master planning process included:

An **online image preference survey** conducted to gauge the town's response to a variety of photographs of buildings, streets, and public places. The 145 participants in the web-based survey ranked each image according to its appropriateness for Blythewood.



Stakeholders explore the draft concept plan produced during the charrette



Residents and consultants collaborate on elements of



Image preference survey participants ranked images as appropriate or inappropriate for the town's future

The master plan **web site** also provided updates on the planning process, including meeting announcements, public presentations, relevant documents and maps, and contact information.

Several **articles** in the Country Chronicle highlighted the master planning effort and advertised the events surrounding the charrette.

Interviews conducted prior to and during the charrette allowed a wide variety of participants to help inform the master plan. Residents, business owners, community leaders, representatives of local governmental and semi-public entities, and others were asked to identify important issues to help guide the master plan. Among the issues most frequently identified were:

- Plan before growth comes; make sure the plan is implemented.
- Maintain the historic character of Blythewood.
- Reenvision the town center as a distinct, cohesive focal point for the community, with shops, restaurants, and gathering places.
- Connect places across the railroad tracks and throughout the town, not just for cars.
- Explore potential for commuter buses or train.
- Emphasize expanded walking and biking opportunities, including trails.
- Cluster development and consider medium-density, mixed-use buildings.
- Attract knowledge industry jobs to boost the local economy.
- Preserve open spaces, including along streams.
- Focus on creating an attractive, well-built town that will naturally attract investment and raise property values.

In addition, the final draft plan was divided among four **review committees**, who together evaluated the plan in its entirety and provided comments and suggestions that were incorporated into the final version of the Master Plan.



The master plan web site provided up-to-date details about the planning process and contact information



A series of newspaper articles highlighted the master planning efforts and advertised public events

Plan Presentation

A final public meeting was held to present the Town of Blythewood Master Plan in the auditorium of Blythewood High School on Saturday, June 27, 2009. Approximately 35 people attended the presentation and viewed the exhibits in the lobby afterward. Final questions and comments were received and addressed.