

PHOTO: MEGHAN ZIMMERMAN GOUGH



Developers and builders in Harrison County met with planners to talk about planning tools they can use to help build new houses.



This fall a community plan for the rebuilding of Henderson Point will be undertaken.

PHOTO: JENNIFER COWLEY

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The Harrison County *planner*

Student Edition

What is Community Planning?

Community planning is a process that helps communities solve problems, protect important community features, and guide how the community will grow and change in the future.

Every community in Harrison County is experiencing problems. For example, there is too little housing following Hurricane Katrina. In some areas there are not enough parks for children to play in. You can likely think of other problems your community is facing.

Every community has features that the residents would like to protect. For example, the community may want to make sure that their bayous and waterways are clean or that the old buildings in the community are preserved.

One of the major challenges in community planning is guiding future growth and change. Following Hurricane Katrina, many communi-

ties in Harrison County are trying to determine how they should rebuild and where new growth should occur. This includes deciding where new houses and businesses should be built, where schools and parks should be placed, and which land should be left as natural.

Community planners direct the planning process. Citizens, children to grandparents, play an important part in the planning process. Planners and citizens decide how to improve their community and what it should look like in the future. Since Hurricane Katrina, communities across Harrison County have been engaged in community planning efforts. For example, students at Pineville Elementary School provided their opinions on what their community should look like in the future.

Planning works best when planners and citizens recognize how the

parts of the community fit together. For example, new houses for families should be near schools and parks. Factories should be near large streets where trucks can easily get to them. Sound planning considers the needs of every member of the community.

Once the planners have worked

GET INVOLVED

Citizen participation is an important part of the planning process. Here are a few ways that you can learn more about planning and get involved in the planning process for your community.:

View Community Plans at the Mississippi Renewal Forum, which includes plans for cities.

www.mississippirenewal.com

Harrison County is responsible for planning for areas outside the cities. View Community Plans for these areas at:

www.co.harrison.ms.us/departments/zoning/

Call with comments
1-800-609-9006 ext. 9647

Join the online forums
<http://co.harrison.ms.us/departments/zoning/>



Image: Matthew Hinkle

The citizens of Saucier worked together with planners to help protect the rural character of their community. Together they created the *Community Plan for Saucier*.

with the community to create the plan, they then work with many other people and groups to carry it out. The elected officials are very important to the implementation of any plan. The elected officials, planners, citizens, businesses, and professionals such as the police, schools, and others work together to make the community a good place to live and work.

To learn more about community planning visit <http://www.planning.org/KidsandCommunity/>. Information contained in this newsletter has been adapted from information provided by the American Planning Association.

Picture Your Town as a Great Place Contest

Create a picture of a great place in your town and win a prize. Harrison County wants to know what you think is great about your town. Be creative! It can be of any place you like - for example, a nearby playground, your block or neighborhood, a community center, or your house. Along with your picture include a paragraph that explains what the place is and why it is so great. For example, maybe you have fun there with your friends or family. Maybe you like the design of a garden with a fountain, or a playground that has the perfect site for skateboarding. Or it could be a place that is quiet and feels safe.

The winning entry will appear in the December issue of the Harrison County Planner and will receive a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

All entries must be received by November 1, 2006. Entries should be mailed to: Patrick Bonck, Harrison County Zoning Office, 15309 Community Road, Gulfport, MS 39503.

Planning Word Find

Find the missing words listed below on the right in the word find. Each of the words is related to community planning.

N C W S E R O T S E E M U W H K
 A E N V I R O N M E N T U M R G
 L A W I B B S A R T S I N O B L
 P D P U O N S A D N S N W E E M
 E O L G R O W T H W I M R E N P
 V O A N M B M A N D A L S G D R
 I H N C R O A N Y E E Y E A H N
 S R N R C S A N T T I R S N S B
 N O I T A P I C I T R A P E S E
 E B N A G R E E N S P A C E A A
 H H G N S A A H U V M I S R E E
 E G E E I W U R M C F U I W C P
 R I R S B L S A M F O R O O B C
 P E O M C E F M O H R E E T P I
 M N I G O C I W C I R W D O A V
 O W A S N C E M N I T S R O G H
 C N U W S E O E T N N O R W O S

- new urbanism
- comprehensive plan
- community
- neighborhood
- sprawl
- growth
- planning
- environment
- teamwork
- participation
- greenspace
- houses
- roadways
- offices
- stores

Create a Poem About Your Community.

Writing poetry is a fun activity. Below is a method to write a poem about your community.

1 On first line of the poem write the name of your town.

2 On the second line write two words that describe your town.

3 On the third line write three action words that tell what happens in your town, what it feels like or what it does, has done, or will do. This can be a phrase or single words.

4 On the fourth line write four words that describe how you feel about your town. This can be a phrase or single words.

5 On the fifth line write one word that sums up your town.

Now you have created a poem about your community. Below is an example poem about the city of Gulfport.

Gulfport
 Friendly, Fun
 Busy, Bustling, Boisterous
 A good place to live
 Home

Students are invited to submit their poems to the Harrison County Zoning Office for inclusion in the next edition of the Harrison County Planner newsletter. To submit your poem, send an e-mail to: cowley.11@osu.edu or mail your poem to Patrick Bonck, Harrison County Zoning Office, 15309 Community Road, Gulfport, MS 39503.

Image: Maria Manta Conroy



These middle school students participated in a Planner's Day in School program. The students worked together to create a plan for what they would like to see in their neighborhood in the future.

Recommended Readings

There are a number of books that students can read to learn more about community planning and development. Students can ask their school or local librarian for help in finding books about planning. Below are several recommended books:

Underground by David MacCaulay describes the complicated system of infrastructure underneath ones feet.

Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold is about one student's favorite places in New York City. In this story the student shares what her city is like from the roof of her home.

Metropolis by Albert Lorenz and Joy Schleh explores ten cities across the world over time. The book describes what life was like in each city during that time period.

City: A Story of Roman Planning and Construction by David MacCaulay describes the planning of an imaginary Roman city.

The Great City Search by Rose Haywood lets students learn about different people who work in cities.

How to Draw Maps and Charts by Pam Beasant and Alastair Smith teaches students about how to create their own maps and charts.

The Art of Construction by Mario Salvadori describes how buildings are constructed.

Under Every Roof: A Kid's Style and Field Guide to the Architecture of American Houses by Patricia Brown Glenn allows students to learn about the different architectural styles across the United States.

Mapping Your Neighborhood

One part of community planning is learning how to make maps. What is a map? A map is a picture of what your neighborhood would look like from the air. Maps can be drawn by hand or created on a computer using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). To learn more about GIS visit <http://www.gis.com>.

Exercise 1: This activity allows you to create a map of your community. Before you begin, think about the same things that city planners think about when they help to plan a community. For example, where should different houses and businesses go? Should houses be next door to a factory? How will people get from home to work, to shopping, or to parks?

To begin, close your eyes and imagine that you are flying and looking down on your neighborhood. What do you see in your head? Where is the center of your neighborhood? Is there a street, business, park, or school that is at the center? What landmarks, such as a church, school, and fire station, are in your neighborhood? How big is your neighborhood? Where are the boundaries for your neighborhood? Where does the next neighborhood begin? What is your favorite place to go in your neighborhood? Where is your least favorite place? How do you get from your house to school? What three things would you do to make your neighborhood better? Jot down your thoughts.

Draw a map of your neighborhood. Include a legend to identify symbols on the map.

Exercise 2: This activity allows you to think about the differences in types of communities. To begin, read the following two scenarios.

Scenario 1: Jennifer is running late for work. She grabs her briefcase and runs two blocks to the bus stop. Luckily, the bus arrives in one minute.

As she sits on the bus, she looks out the window and notices that Vinnie's Pizza is going out of business and, one block later, that St. Joseph's Elementary School is having a carnival on Saturday. A block later she sees a "For rent" sign on a building and decides that maybe she should think about moving.

She gets to work just on time for her big day-long meeting.

At the end of the day, Jennifer walks eight blocks to meet a friend for dinner. The friend brags about her new car, and Jennifer says, "There's no way I would ever get a car. What a hassle!"

Scenario 2: Juan is running late for work. He opens the garage door and speeds down the driveway. As he goes down his street, he has to slow down for children and speed bumps.

Once he gets to the main boulevard, he hits two red lights. On the freeway, it's bumper-to-bumper. Never mind—he can get some work done on his cell phone and comb his hair in the process.

He makes it to work just in time for his big meeting. His presentation goes so well that he gets to leave work early. The traffic isn't too bad yet, as it's only 2:00. He stops at a fast food restaurant to get food for dinner. He then stops at the gas station to get fuel. Then goes home to make dinner and relax.

Think about each of the scenarios presented above. What kind of community does Jennifer live in and how is it different from Juan's community? On a piece of paper create

two maps, one of Jennifer's community and one of Juan's.

Exercise 3: Review the text in the box on the page 3 about sprawl and new urbanism. How do street design and layout affect a town?

How might sprawl affect the environment (e.g., animals, plants, and air and water quality)?

How might sprawl affect people's interactions with their neighbors? (Hint: Think about how long it takes people to get to and from work and the consequences of having a big garage rather than a front porch.)

What are some things that town planners can do to combat sprawl?

What are some of the benefits of living in a sprawl area?

This lesson is adapted from the National Geographic: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/12/g68/sprawlwhat.html>.



Planners use tools such as electronic voting devices to find out what citizens want for the future of their community. This image from a town hall meeting in Saucier shows a citizen voting on the appearance of buildings.

What is Sprawl?

The term sprawl is used to describe development patterns that are common throughout the United States. Sprawl:

- 1) uses more land than necessary;
- 2) has a lower population density than traditional cities and towns (e.g., fewer people in larger houses);
- 3) creates a dependence on cars for almost everything;
- 4) results in fragmented open spaces, wide gaps between development, and a scattered appearance;
- 5) separates uses into distinct areas (so, you don't usually have a store or a movie theater within walking distance from your home);
- 6) is characterized by repetitive one-story commercial buildings surrounded by acres of parking; and
- 7) lacks public spaces and community centers.

Community planners are working to try to prevent sprawl. Smart Growth is a term used to describe well-planned communities that protects the environment, provides places for people to walk, and a mix of housing and businesses. Planners are promoting traditional urban centers and towns, which is also known as new urbanism. A new urbanist community:

- 1) has higher population density than surrounding areas;
- 2) offers mixed use buildings (businesses and homes on the same block or at least within walking distance of each other);
- 3) is pedestrian-friendly;
- 4) is served by public facilities, services, and spaces (e.g., public transportation or community centers);
- 5) consists of many different types of housing and businesses;
- 6) have centers for community activities; and
- 7) are surrounded by open spaces, including productive farm and forest land.

There are numerous resources to learn more about sprawl, smart growth and new urbanism:

Smart Growth Network: <http://www.smartgrowth.org>

The Congress for the New Urbanism: <http://www.cnu.org>

Planning Commissioners Journal: <http://www.plannersweb.com/articles/sprawl-articles.html>

Sierra Club: <http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/>

National Geographic: http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/sprawl/index_flash.html



Above: This example of sprawl in Colorado shows housing next to farmland. Notice that the housing developments have farmland in between. This is known as leapfrog development.

Below: The Kentlands in Maryland is the first example of a new urbanist development. This community includes six neighborhoods that include a mix of housing, office, retail, and cultural uses.



Image: Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company

Careers in Community Planning

Planning is a growing career field with many jobs. What do planners do? Planners help communities determine their future. In addition to working with citizens, they perform technical analyses, create maps, work with developers, plan transportation systems, and protect the environment. Planners develop a plan through analysis of data and identification of goals for the community. Plans can take many different forms including: policy recommendations, comprehensive plans, neighborhood plans, regulations, and others. Planners are also responsible for helping implement the plan.

Planners work in every state and around the world. They work in rural communities, suburbs, and cities. They work in the public sector for federal, state, and local governments. They also work for non-profits and with private companies. Planners can specialize and focus on one type of planning, such as transportation planning, urban design, environmental planning, or information technology.

What do planners do at work? A typical day for a planner can vary, but generally planners spend a lot of their time working with other people. For example, at the beginning of the day the planner may meet with citizens to talk about how they plan to

add to their houses. In the afternoon they may meet with a neighborhood organization to discuss a neighborhood plan. Part of the planner's day may be spent collecting information, conducting interviews, and analyzing information. Planners use GIS, census data, and other information about a community.

What skills do planners need? Planners need strong writing skills to communicate with public officials, professionals, and citizens. Planners give public presentations, so they need to be able speak in front of large groups of people. Planners need to have good math skills to analyze data.

Planners work throughout the state of Mississippi. To learn more about planning in Mississippi visit the Mississippi Chapter of the American Planning Association (<http://www.msplanning.org/>) or visit a local planning department website. Below are a few examples of planning offices in Harrison County.

Harrison County Zoning Office is responsible for creating community plans for the unincorporated areas of Harrison County and working with citizens to build on their land. <http://www.co.harrison.ms.us/departments/zoning>

City of Gulfport Department of Urban Development is responsible for all planning and development inside the city of Gulfport. http://www.ci.gulfport.ms.us/NEWSite/urban_development_main.htm

Gulf Regional Planning Commission is responsible for transportation planning across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. <http://www.grpc.com/>

Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District is responsible for regional planning, economic development, and land use planning in the 15 south Mississippi counties. <http://www.smpdd.com>



Image: Jennifer Cowley

These students are studying planning at Ohio State University. As part of their classwork they are working with communities in Harrison County to create community plans.

What Kind of Education Do You Need to be a Planner?

Many planners have degrees in planning. However, others have studied geography, public administration, urban studies, architecture, landscape architecture, economics, sociology, or political science. Most planners have an undergraduate degree and many have a Master's degree. Jackson State University offers a Master's degree in planning (<http://www.jsu.edu/liberalarts/urban/index.html>) and the University of New Orleans offers an undergraduate degree in Urban Studies and Planning, as well as a Master's degree in Urban Planning (<http://cupa.uno.edu/bsusp.html>). To learn about other schools that offer planning degrees visit the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning at <http://www.acsp.org>.

Planning Maze

When communities are not designed well it can be difficult to find your way from home to school. Smart Growth ensures that students can easily get from home to school by walking, riding a bike, or on a bus. Find the way from the school to the house. There may be more than one path. As you complete the maze, think about your own community. What places do you pass as you travel from your school to your home? How do you get to school by car, by bus, by bike, or by walking? How would you like to be able to get to school? What would you like to see on your way, perhaps a library or snow cone stand?

