



MPC Headlines

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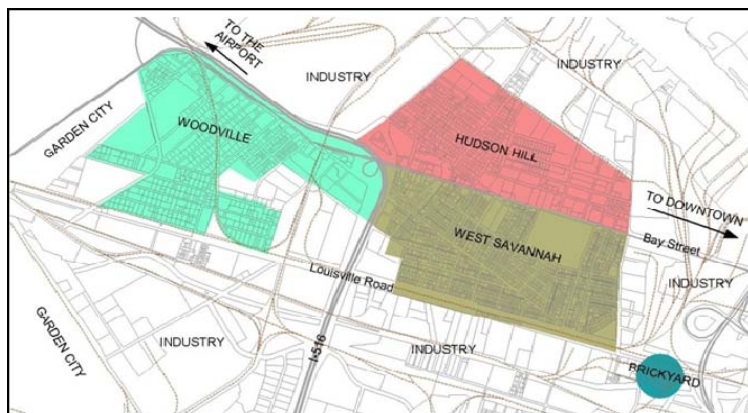
Rezoning of Westside Neighborhoods Underway

*Courtland Hyser,
Land Use Planner*

Over the past several years, MPC has been working with four neighborhoods on Savannah's Westside to address zoning-related issues that affect overall quality of life. These four neighborhoods; West Savannah, Hudson Hill, Woodville, and the Brickyard, share much in common, but are surprisingly unique in spite of their close proximity to one another. Because the specific issues that needed to be addressed varied from one neighborhood to the next, MPC instituted a rezoning program for the Westside that addressed each neighborhood individually rather than attempting to rezone the entire area all at once. This approach has proven to be time-consuming, but it has the advantage of allowing each neighborhood to be fully studied before any rezoning recommendations are made. This, in turn, has enabled MPC staff to fully address the concerns of residents and business owners, and as a result community sup-

port for each neighborhood rezoning has been high.

In April 2007, West Savannah became the first neighborhood to be rezoned under this program. The rezonings in West Savannah were designed to support the recommendations contained in 2005's *West Savannah Neighborhood Revitalization Plan*. These included encouraging retail uses on Augusta Avenue, eliminating industrial zoning within the neighborhood boundaries, and allowing the Fellwood Homes public housing site to be redeveloped as a mixed use community. Shortly thereafter, in July 2007, portions of the Woodville neighborhood were rezoned to promote single family residential development. Most recently, in September 2008, the Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval of a rezoning plan for the Brickyard community to limit the potential for commercial development within the neighborhood. After the Savannah City Council has taken action on the Brickyard rezoning, work on the Hudson Hill Zoning Study will begin.



Director's Corner

What makes a great planning organization? Effective leadership? Talented well trained and motivated employees? Great pay and benefits? First class office space and working environment? Teamwork?



You are likely to find many of these factors in the plethora of management books available. However what we know is that no one of these factors necessarily makes a great organization. Look at George Steinbrenner and the Yankees. The highest paid roster in the league does not guarantee success. Enron failed with top office space. In my book, leadership, motivated employees and the ability to work as a team are essential components.

As a motivated employee of the MPC, I am continually striving to find the best formula for success of our organization. Recently I have read two books that have given me inspiration. *The Leadership Pill* by Ken Blanchard and Marc Muchnick use a metaphor of a "Leadership Pill" and "Effective Leader" to make the point that not one "pill" will provide leadership for an organization but that it takes the right blend of ingredients. In summary, Blanchard and Muchnick say the ingredients of leadership include:

- Integrity: Being the person you want others to be
- Partnership: Building a rela-

Continued on page 4

Rehabilitation Tax Incentives: The New Deal

*Ellen Harris
Preservation Planner*

Did you know that if you own a historic building in any one of Chatham County's fifteen National Register Historic Districts, your next rehabilitation project could qualify for significant federal and state tax credits? There are three tax incentives available: the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit, the State Rehabilitation Tax Credit, and the State Property Tax Freeze.

The Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit allows owners of qualified rehabilitated properties to take a tax credit equal to 20 percent of the cost of the rehabilitation on his/her federal income tax return. For this program, the property must be income-producing. Rentals do qualify for this program.

The State Rehabilitation Tax Credit allows owners of qualified rehabilitation to take a tax credit equal to 10-20 percent of the cost of the rehabilitation on his/her state income tax return. This credit had been capped at \$5,000. However, effective January 1, 2009, the credit

will increase to 25-30 percent of the cost of the rehabilitation and will be capped at \$100,000 for homes and \$300,000 for income-producing properties. This significant change in the percentage as well as the increase in the cap could produce a positive impact the financial feasibility of a rehabilitation project.

The State Tax Freeze, officially called the State Preferential Property Tax Assessment Program, allows owners of qualified rehabilitated properties to freeze their property tax assessments for eight and one half years. Both residential and commercial properties may qualify for this freeze.

Some property owners may feel daunted by the seemingly long list of requirements and paperwork required to qualify for these tax incentives, but it is relatively easy to comply if the owner prepares in advance. The proposed property must be at least 50 years old, listed on the National Register of Historic Places or be a contributing structure within a National Historic District, meet a "substantial rehabilitation test," work

completed within 24 months, abide by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and all phases of the rehabilitation, especially the before conditions, must be properly documented. Typically it is not possible to qualify for tax incentives on projects which have already begun or been completed. The tax credits may be spread out of several years.

It is also possible to combine these incentives with other incentives such as the low-income housing credit or the façade easement contribution program to save even more money.

Provided a property owner plans ahead to ensure all requirements are met, these incentives are very attainable and the subsequent cost savings can be substantial, particularly with the 2009 cap increase. Any property owner considering undertaking a rehabilitation project should look into these incentives, as the initial investment will be repaid many times over.

**"you...could
qualify for
significant federal
and state tax
credits"**



*Before and
after photos of
an historic
renovation in
Savannah.*





Rivers Alive!

River Clean Up

Saturday, October 18th

8:00 a.m. until Noon

Volunteers are needed to clean up the Vernon River headwaters. Kayaks, maps, and instructions will be located at the Rivers End boat ramp.

Volunteers will receive t-shirts, lunch, and prizes for the most trash collected and the most unusual item retrieved.

For more information please contact the City of Savannah Environmental Affairs Office at 651.2221.



National Community Planning Month

Charlotte Moore, AICP,
Director of Special Projects

In celebration of National Community Planning Month, staff of the MPC would like to share some of their favorite planning-related websites with you. Whether you work as a design professional or are a citizen who has an interest in planning, these websites will provide you with helpful, interesting and sometimes entertaining information.

American Planning Association

(www.apa.org): APA is the organization of the planning profession. Here you can find information on national legislation, obtain publications, locate conferences,

and learn more about careers in the planning profession.

Planetizen

(www.planetizen.com) A website for those with interest in the built and natural environment, readers can enjoy news, commentary, forums, and blogs. This one even offers Podcasts.

Cyberurbia

(www.cyberurbia.org): Need an answer to a planning-related question? This website is particularly helpful as planners from around the country offer insight from their own communities and experiences in the forum section.

United States Green Building Council

(www.usgbc.org) USGBC is the definitive website for Green building practices. Learn how you can integrate sustainable practices into your designs, workplace and home.

And don't forget to select MPC's own website (www.thempc.org) as one of your favorites. Resources such as the zoning and subdivision ordinances, historic preservation design guidelines, and transportation data and plans are available. Meeting agendas, applications, project updates, and reports from the Executive Director as well as other useful information can also be accessed.

Traffic Impact Analysis

Michael Adams
Transportation Planner

As the Savannah area continues to grow, the MPC must be prepared to plan for this growth. As part of this preparation, the MPC is formalizing the process for developers to conduct a traffic impact analysis if their proposed development or redevelopment is anticipated to produce 100 or

more new trips during the peak traffic hours when the development is built out.

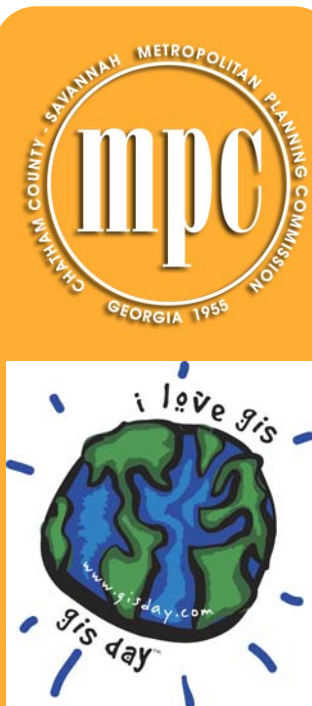
The traffic impact analysis will help MPC staff understand the impacts the proposed development will have on the existing roadway system during the peak traffic hours. The analysis will determine if and what transportation improvements may be needed to

accommodate the proposed development. If needed, MPC staff and the developer will work together to negotiate an agreeable list of improvements that the developer will fund and construct. The list of improvements will be presented to the MPC Board as part of the conditions of approval.

Farewell, Courtland!!

The MPC Headlines would like to wish Courtland Hyser a fond farewell, and say thanks for all of the great articles and ideas this past year. Courtland is leaving the Lowcountry to work in the Mile-High City for the next phase of his career. Good luck!





SAGIS highlights for 2007 and 2008:

- Complete re-working of centerlines
- SDE Read-Only implementation
- SDE editing instances
- Data ownership establishment and agreements
- GIS training for City/County/ MPC employees
- Savannah's first GIS Day
- Standards creation and adoption
- 2008 imagery acquisition
- 2008 Planimetrics acquisition
- CEMA tool update
- MAD Tool
- SCMPD GIS assistance
- ACS automation

SAGIS Presents GIS Day Savannah 2008

By Lara Hall
GIS Technician

Held each year on the Wednesday of National Geographic Society's Geography Awareness Week, GIS Day is a global event that celebrates GIS technology. GIS Day serves to make people aware of GIS technology and the important contributions it is making in the fields of science, technology, information, and the humanities. It is a grassroots event and a reflection of the enthusiasm and commitment of individual GIS users everywhere. GIS Day Savannah provides an opportunity for those curious about GIS to see its applications in action.

In 2007, the first annual

Director Continued

relationship with your team and communicating about organizational goals

- Affirmation: Appreciating good work
- Perfecting the Blend: Getting people in the right place and trusting them to do their job

The second book that I found as interesting as it was instructive is *Its Your Ship* by Captain D. Michael Abrashoff, former Commander, of the USS Benfold. His story was about management techniques he used to make the Benfold the "Best Damn Ship" in the Navy. The insights into the operations of a guided missile destroyer and what it takes to get it ready and maintain it for action made his story compelling. His principles are described in

GIS Day Savannah highlighted the use of GIS in our community by government agencies, businesses, and educational institutions through technology demonstrations, a map gallery, and activities. Event participants and sponsors included Chatham County, City of Savannah, Coastal BETA, Coastal Georgia RDC, EMC Engineering, Georgia Power, Georgia Southern University, Georgia Tech Savannah, HGBD, NOAA Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, Pictometry, Saussy Engineering, Savannah Chatham County Public Schools, Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission, Savannah Multi-List Corporation, Sligh Environmental Consultants, Spatial Engineering, The Creative

such chapters as: Take Command, Lead by Example, Listen Aggressively, Communicate Purpose and Meaning, Create a Climate of Trust, Look for Results not Salutes, Take Calculated Risks, Go Beyond Standard Procedure, Build Up Your People, Generate Unity and Improve Your People's Quality of Life.

I particularly liked the chapter *Build up Your People*. One of the realities of being an executive director is that you are as successful as the people who work for you. One person cannot do it all. How well staff utilizes its talents, is self-motivated, innovative and can work as a team toward agency goals can make the difference in the organization's success. Abrashoff's key point in this chapter that stuck with me was "expect

Coast Initiative, and Thomas & Hutton Engineering. Over 200 8th grade students and 150 local professionals toured the booths and exhibits.

In 2008, the GIS Day Committee plans to make this year's event bigger and better. GIS Day will be held on Wednesday, November 19 at the Savannah Civic Center. The morning session will be scheduled for local 6th and 8th grade classes. The afternoon session will be open to all ages. Sponsors, exhibitors, and volunteers are needed. For more information, please contact Lara Hall at hall@thempc.org or 912-651-1440.

the best from your crew and you will get it." Encouraging staff to express themselves on a personal and professional level builds self-esteem and creates an environment where successes above expectations can occur. Abrashoff said "Trust people – they usually will show you are right."

I believe these attributes are reflected by the MPC staff. That is why we have the "Best Damn Planning Staff" in the state. Let them know if you think so too.

Tom Thomson,

Executive Director

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