

V • I • S • I • O • N • S

Newsletter of McLean County Regional Planning Commission

Message from the Chairman and Executive Director

Visioning is a process by which the community defines what it wants for its future. This process builds consensus on core values and helps people realize that despite their individual differences they share the same long-term goals. A growing number of communities are using "visioning" as the first step to a long-range planning process.

Earlier this year, over 2,000 residents of Bloomington participated in a similar visioning process called "Bring It On Bloomington" as part of the City of Bloomington's comprehensive plan process. While there is a lot of variation on what respondents valued about the community and wanted for its future, there certainly are dominant themes that provide a clear direction for the future of the community.

The results of the entire process are published on the project site www.bringitonbloomington.com. This newsletter highlights the core values that came out of the process. We hope you will enjoy learning the passion your fellow residents share for the future of Bloomington. Do not hesitate to contact us with your questions or comments in this regard.



George Benjamin
Chairman



Vasudha Pinnamaraju, AICP



FALL 2014 ISSUE
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the Chairman and Executive Director	1
Vision & Values	1
Updates	7

BLOOMINGTON'S VISIONING PROCESS

In the last 50 years, the City of Bloomington doubled in population and grew more than 2.5 times in the corporate area. This growth brought about many changes in the demographic profile of the City. Given the rapid growth and changes coupled with the fiscal challenges posed by the recent recession, City of Bloomington leadership wanted a deeper understanding of the community's vision for the future and the developmental priorities. McLean County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) was charged with that task as part of the City's comprehensive plan.

Visioning is a process by which the community defines what it wants for the future. An extensive public outreach that allows everyone to collectively shape the vision is a critical first step. Accordingly, MCRPC launched an outreach effort called "Bring It On Bloomington" in June 2014, whereby the community's core

values were identified upon which a unified vision will be built.

With the motto of "we will come to you for your input," this four-month long process reached over 6,000 people at 51 different meetings or community events. Over 2,000 members of the community completed and returned the four-question open ended survey during the outreach. Particular attention was paid throughout the process to include voices that are typically not involved in local decision making.

Over 8,000 individual comments were reviewed and analyzed, discovering what the community members love and hold close to their heart, things they see as challenges, their inspirations for the future and suggested strategies to help overcome those challenges. The respondents covered a wide variety of topics with great depth. While there are variations, a few dominant themes or core community values quickly

**BRING IT,
BLOOMINGTON!**
PLAN IT. SEE IT. LIVE IT.

**A VISION FOR
THE FUTURE**

This report was prepared by the
McLean County Regional Planning Commission
as Phase 2 of the City of Bloomington's
Comprehensive Plan 2035.

DRAFT

December 2014

emerged. Bring It On Bloomington—A Vision For the Future is a compilation of those voices, values and the themes in all their complexity. This complete report is available on the McLean County Regional Planning Commission’s website at www.mcplan.org or the City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan website at www.bringitonbloomington.com.

This newsletter highlights the core values that emerged from that process. There is a distinct sense of community in Bloomington. Many describe this as a family-friendly community and prize its “small town feel” where people care for each other, and it is generally clean, peaceful and quiet. They see this spirit in the neigh-

borhood schools, parks and public places where the children and neighbors gather. Bloomington’s plentiful job opportunities, universities and community colleges, entertainment choices and cultural opportunities, and a range of shopping and dining options were the “big city amenities” frequently cited by the respondents.

It was clear that the rich history is greatly valued and celebrated. Overwhelmingly, respondents wanted to see a vibrant core where the Downtown is thriving and the older neighborhoods are in vogue again.

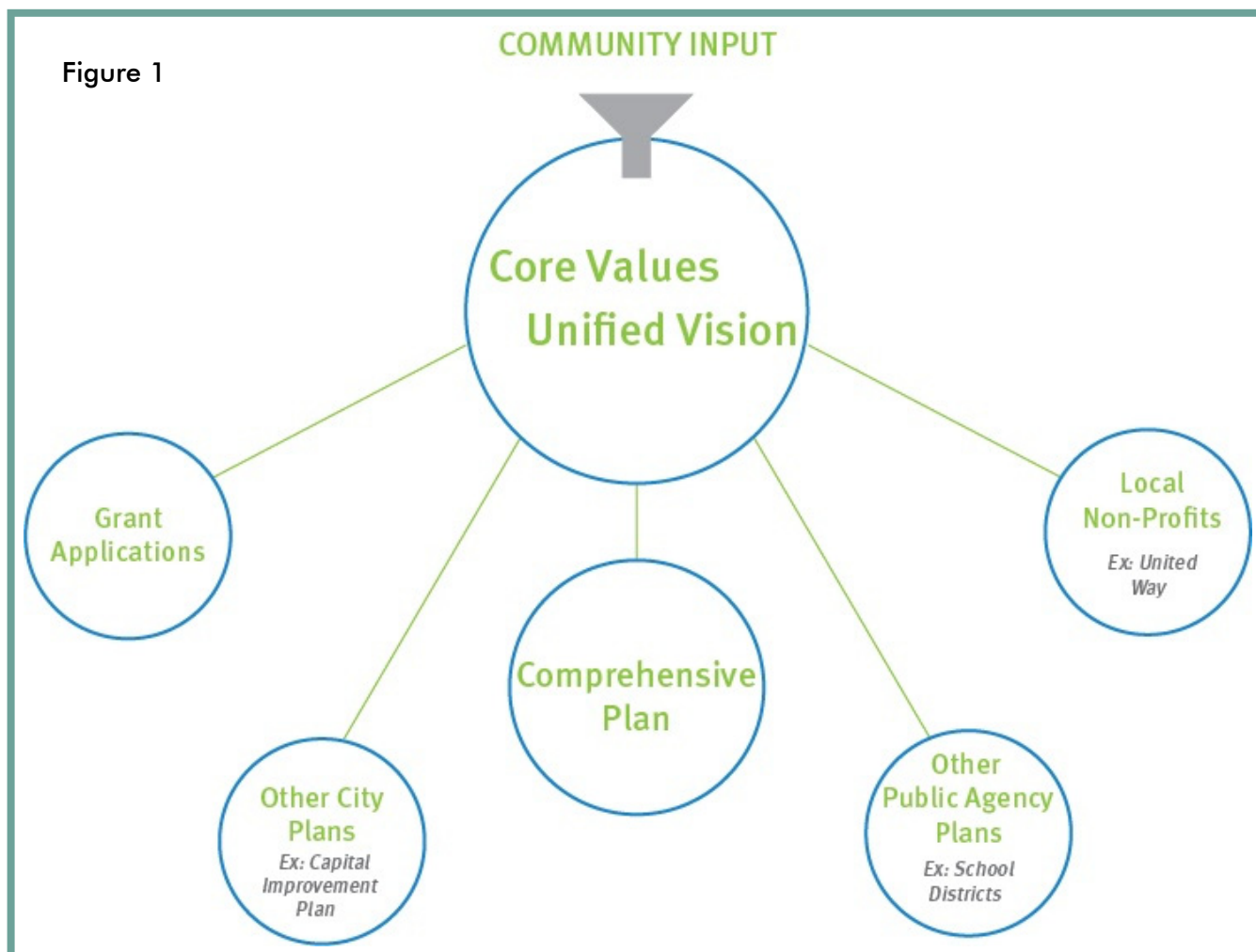
People recognize solid infrastructure as the backbone for the growth and prosperity of the City. Many urged continued in-

vestment in the City’s current infrastructure and careful, thoughtful expansion of critical assets in the future. The community values opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles, such as the City’s many parks, Constitution Trail, and access to fresh, local food.

Residents favor an efficient city government that operates with transparency and respect for the public. Many value the good work of City staff in protecting and providing services for residents.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the core values and the unified vision can become the foundation for future planning initiatives by the City, other public and not for profits as well as grant applications.

Figure 1



CORE VALUES...

Small Town Feel With Big City Amenities

Residents prize Bloomington's **small town feel** where neighbors are welcoming and care about each other and those that are less fortunate.

The **family-friendliness** of the community makes it a great place to raise kids and grandkids.

Safe neighborhoods ensure general peace and quiet and a feeling of security in homes.

Residents appreciate the aura of **history**, with each new generation finding its place in Bloomington's journey.

Bloomington has **big city amenities such as job and education choices** to build lives, a **variety of entertainment options** that enhance the quality of life, and a rich palette of **arts and cultural opportunities**.

Keeping and enhancing our **sense of community**, community pride, diversity of people, jobs, activities, public spaces and amenities is vital for the long-term health and vibrancy of this community.

Stable Economy

The community's **recession-resistant economy** is highly valued by the residents and includes...

...a range of **good-paying jobs** provided by many large corporations and small companies.

...a highly educated "**white collar**" workforce.

...a **lively marketplace** of goods and services, with world products and local crafts.

People would like to see...

...a **diversified local economic base** with a range of stable businesses.

...an emphasis on **local services and small** businesses in the interest of long-term economic sustainability.

...a **culture of entrepreneurship** in the community.

...the City positioned to be competitive in the **21st century economy**.

Good Education System

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...a range of **good-paying jobs** provided by many large corporations and small companies.

...a highly educated "**white collar**" workforce.

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...the City positioned to be competitive in the **21st century economy**.

Dynamic Neighborhoods

Bloomington's people **value its wide selection of neighborhoods and strongly support neighborhood revitalization and preservation**.

The **Downtown** district is the

center of **history**, government and law. Residents seek to redefine the Downtown as the epicenter of all activity, a vibrant, unique, mixed-use neighborhood.

Residents value **historic neighborhoods surrounding Downtown** and support **their preservation and redevelopment** to enhance the City's character.

West Side neighborhoods have experienced severe disinvestment but hold great potential.

Newer neighborhoods bring their own character and attractions.

Residents support...

...**dissolving** the physical, economic and social **divide between the East and West Sides**

...development of **vibrant, connected, affordable, mixed-use neighborhoods in the future.**

...providing a **range of housing choices** for people of all ages and income levels.

Solid Infrastructure

Bloomington boasts civic infrastructure developed over 150 years. Residents recognize that a solid infrastructure is the backbone to support growth and quality of life in the community.

Residents value the parks, trails,

streets, community facilities and other municipal service systems that earlier generations had the foresight to conceive and build.

Bloomington confronts the dilemmas of...

...aging infrastructure above and below ground.

...constrained resources for repair, renovation and preservation.

Residents advocate...

...immediate investment in the upkeep of current assets.

... careful and thoughtful consideration of expansion.

...evaluation of the ongoing costs and benefits.

Healthy Community

Residents of Bloomington embraced healthy and active lives with...

...frequent use of **trails, parks and other recreational opportunities** across the city.

...**support for local food producers and farmers' markets.**

...local restaurants that focus on **local products.**

...**clean resources** such as water and air.

...easy access to **quality health care services.**

Residents desire...

...a safe and attractive **walking and biking network** throughout the community.

...a **small footprint** that will foster **multi-modal transportation** while preserving the surrounding **natural environment.**

Effective Government

Residents of Bloomington favor...

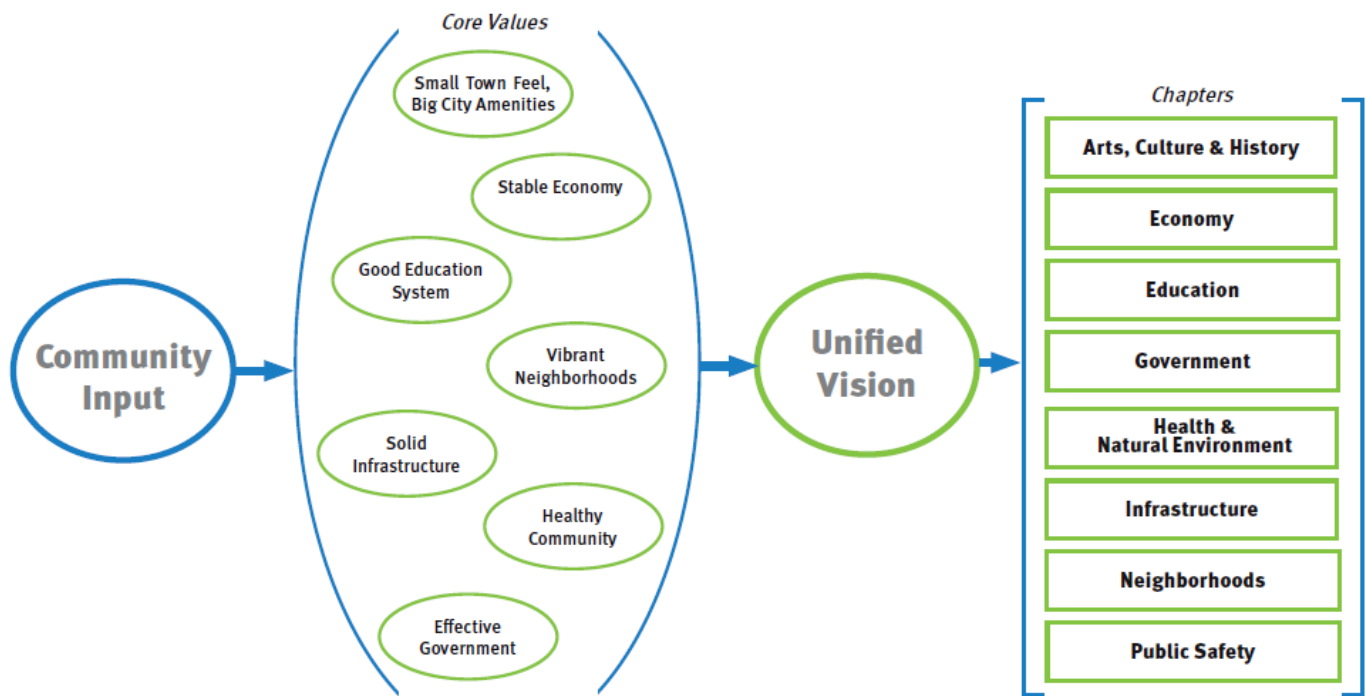
...government that is a **careful and thrifty** steward of **City resources.**

...government that considers issues raised by residents in its actions.

...cooperation, communication and **vision from its elected leadership.**

...municipal government that operates with **transparency and respect** for the public.

Residents value the **good work of city staff** protecting and providing for residents in everyday and extraordinary circumstances.



Respondents addressed a breadth and depth of issues from built to social and civic to political. These issues are carefully organized into eight different chapters. Each chapter represents the community's collective thoughts within an interconnected network in which no one person, organization or institution is fully in charge. The visioning report can be accessed at www.bringitonbloomington.com.

**April 9th,
2014**

**SAVE THE
DATE**

7:00 AM

**10th Annual
Community Information Forum**

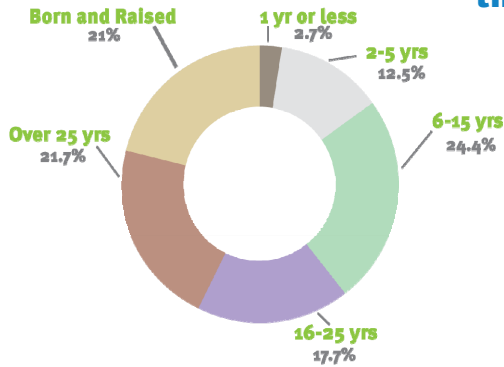
**Guest Speaker
Kenneth A Bowers, AICP**

"Innovative Comprehensive Planning"

Register Now at www.mcplan.org



1. How long have you lived in Bloomington?
total responses=2,008 skipped=68



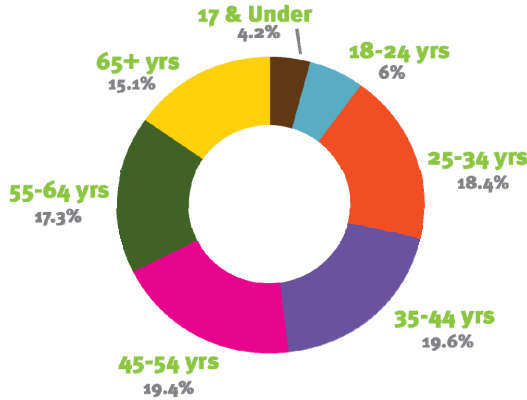
Who Participated in the Visioning Process?

2,076

Total # Survey Respondents

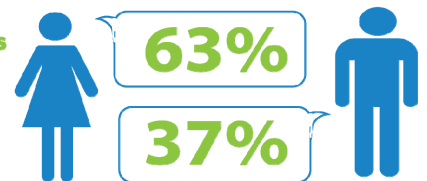
2. Your age?

total responses=2,011 skipped=65



4. Gender?

total responses=1,918 skipped=158



8. Home Ownership?

total responses=1,959 skipped=117



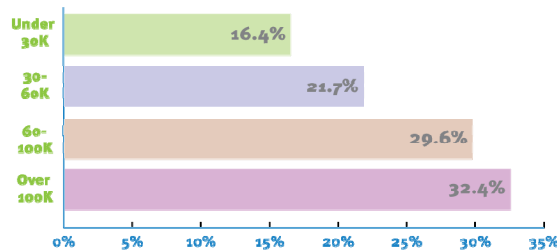
20%
Renter



80%
Owner

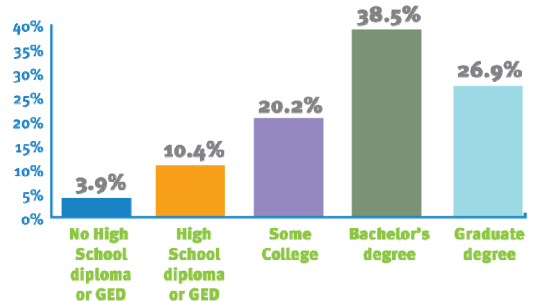
7. Household Income?

total responses=1,902 skipped=174



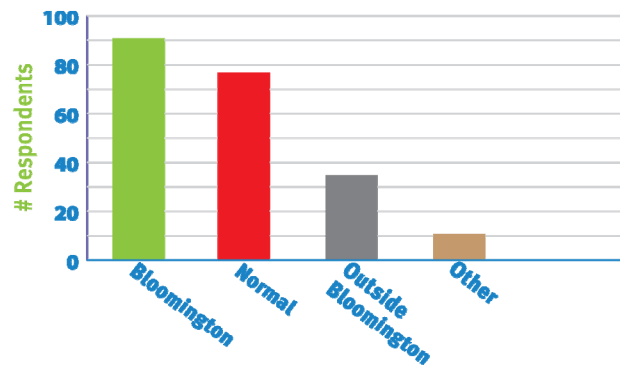
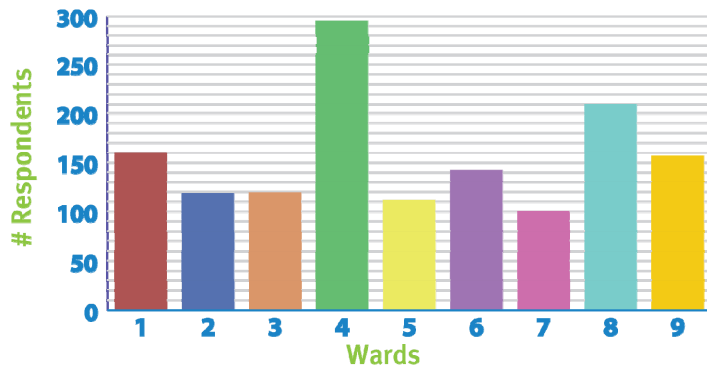
5. Educational Attainment?

total responses=1,956 skipped=120



10. Please provide your address or city ward?

total responses=1,636 skipped=440



UPDATES

Uptown Normal Plan

Mayor Chris Koos announced the beginning of "Uptown 2.0," as the Town of Normal kicked off an update to the fifteen-year-old plan for the redevelopment of Uptown Normal. Consultants Farr & Associates and others described how the updated plan would address new priorities expressed by the Millennial generation for retail, housing and transportation choices. Mayor Koos noted that the updated plan will expand the area under consideration, moving north to Willow Street, south to Vernon Avenue, east to Walnut Street and west to Main Street. Additional meetings will be held in 2015, culminating in an open house in June.

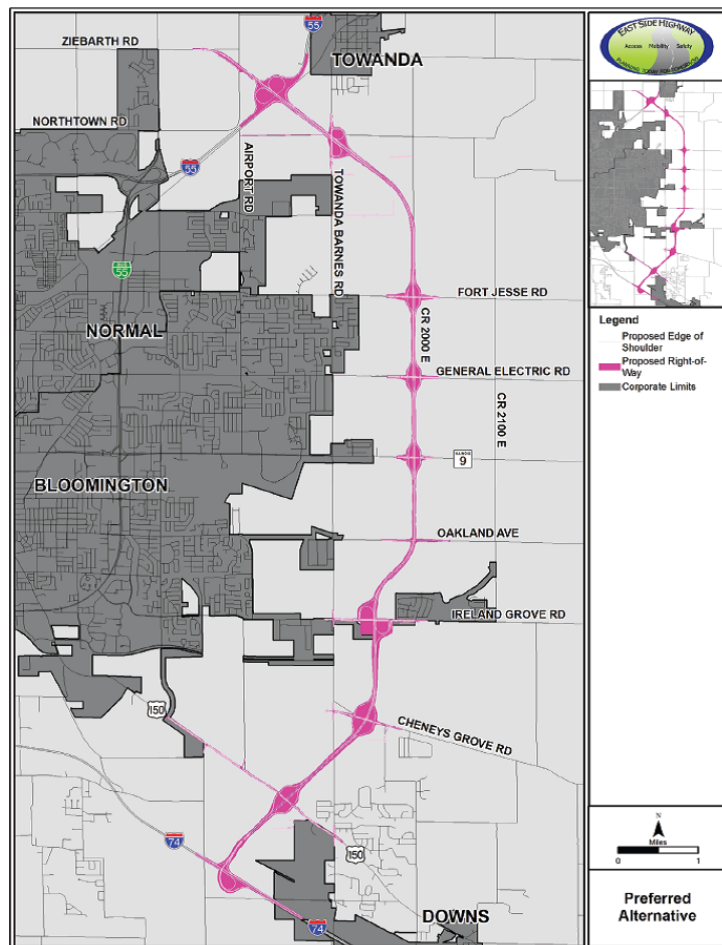


Uptown Normal Circle

Source: Brad Basham Photography www.bbasham.com

East Side Highway

After years of public outreach and environmental review, the East Side Highway Environmental Assessment project is nearing submission of a final report to state and federal transportation officials. With the selection of a preferred alignment for the proposed highway earlier in 2014, the study is completing final steps in preparation of the assessment. Project staff anticipate announcing a public information session during the first half of 2015, with action from the U.S. Department of Transportation to follow. This study was funded by a grant provided through the Illinois Jobs Now! program; funding for future study and construction, if needed, is not yet secured.





VISIONS

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This publication presents information on planning and development issues that impact the quality of life in the Community of McLean County. We can be reached by mail at 115 E. Washington St. #M103, Bloomington, IL 61701, by phone at (309) 828-4331, by fax at (309) 827-4773, or by e-mail at mcrpc@mcplan.org.

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