

Signal Mountain Strategic Plan

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THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE 

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

Town Participants

Mayor Bill Lusk
Vice-Mayor Susan Robertson
Councilmember Annette Allen
Councilmember Dick Gee
Councilmember Bill Wallace
City Manager Honna Rogers

Introduction

Strategic thinking and planning are the most critical elements of public management. Their purpose is to establish long-term goals, annual objectives, and detailed actions/strategies that address issues related to performance, productivity, required statutory services, and community and personal well-being. Because their focus must be on identifying the most critical factors affecting the community or client base and on seeking the most effective and efficient means to address them, strategic thinking and planning are key factors in any successful organization.

If successful, the strategic planning process will:

- Accelerate the town's ability to solve identified issues and challenges.
- Encourage creativity and innovation.
- Ensure a more efficient use of resources.
- Develop a greater degree of cooperation and collaboration.
- Create a sense of team and mutual accomplishment.
- Reduce confusion about roles, responsibilities, and accountability.
- Serve as a basis for evaluating employee and program performance.
- Tie the budget to program performance.
- Serve as the basis for funding requests and the allocation process.
- Clarify and showcase an agency's intent and use of funds.

In an eight (8) hour planning session, the council and the city manager reviewed the previous strategic plan that was developed

approximately two (2) years ago; conducted a review of town strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis); developed goals and objectives; and developed a revised mission and vision statement.

The Town's Vision for the Future

The council identified the town's vision for the future as:

'Signal Mountain: 21st Century living –small town charm.'

The Mission Statement

The mission statement was identified as:

'Provide high quality service, efficient use of resources, and sustainability through managed growth while preserving small town character.'

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Town Staff and Management. Apparently the council has confidence in the town staff and management and recognizes them as important resources.
- Educated and Engaged Citizens. Town citizens are knowledgeable, informed and participate in town affairs.
- Strong Financial Base with Adequate Resources. The town is in excellent financial condition and has the ability to sustain town services.
- Proactive Council. The council carefully reviews issues and proposals; does critical thinking and plans ahead. Developing a strategic plan is an example of a proactive council.
- Natural Beauty. The town is blessed with a natural mountain setting.

- Good Schools. While part of the Hamilton County School System, town citizens encourage and support an outstanding local education program for its citizens.
- Retail Opportunities. Council policies encourage retail support and development.
- Parks and Trails. The town has abundant parks and trails for outdoor enthusiasts.
- Safe and Secure Community. The town has a low crime rate and an outstanding fire service.
- Family Oriented Community. Community activities are oriented toward families.
- A Full Service Community. The town provides fire, police, utility, streets, drainage, recreation, cultural/arts, sanitation and other services that are important to its residents.

Weaknesses

- A Reduction in State Shared Revenues. The town has little control over the reduction in state shared revenues.
- Limited Commercial Income. The income potential for some businesses is limited.
- Lack of Mountain Top Government Cooperation. The inability to consolidate some public services may not be in the best interest of mountain top governments.
- Aging Public Infrastructure. Streets, drainage systems, sewer (mains, main connectors and laterals connections) and public facilities are aging and in need of repair, maintenance or replacement.
- Wastewater System. Including failing private septic systems that in some cases may pollute the local environment.
- Cost of Municipal Court. When fines and court costs are forgiven to the users of the court system, the general public must subsidize the cost of the court system.
- Stormwater Drainage. While flooding on the mountain top is uncommon, washed drainage tile and washed street foundations do occur.
- Impaired Streams. Failed private sewage systems sometimes pollute local streams.

- Road Access on State Route 8/127. The road access is unsafe and the roadbed sometimes washes out during heavy rains. It needs to be redesigned to local preference and community character to an acceptable standard.
- Moratorium. The sewer moratorium is a hindrance to commercial and residential growth and development.

Opportunities

- Explore Small Business Opportunities. The town supports selective businesses and desires to explore opportunities for retail and business growth.
- Grant Funding. The town should identify and seek available grant funding for town projects and programs.
- Environmental Leadership. The town should participate in and provide leadership in good environmental policies and practices.
- Restore and Expand MACC. The town should encourage and support the development of cultural and art programs and facilities.
- Expand the Sewer System. The town should expand the sewer system to include areas presently served by failed private sewer systems and provide for new commercial and residential service.
- Commercial and Residential Development. The town should encourage selective commercial development that is in conformance with the small town mountain character and encourage residential development.
- Garbage Enterprise Fund. The State of Tennessee has contemplated the requirement that solid waste in Tennessee cities be operated as enterprise funds where user fees pay for the operation and maintenance of the solid waste system. Some cities encourage “pay as you throw” in an effort for users to pay for the cost of the service. The town should review the enterprise system for solid waste services.
- Consolidation of Water Utility. It may be beneficial for the town to consolidate the water system with nearby water utilities.
- Technological Improvements. The town has the opportunity to use electronic meter reading, bar coding for billing purposes,

and the timely upgrade of computer systems to improve operating efficiency.

- The Use of Conservation for the Protection of Parks. The town should encourage the use of conservation practice to protect and preserve parks for the future.
- Improve State Route 8/127. While the maintenance and improvement to this mountain access route is a state highway function, the town should encourage State Transportation Officials and area legislative representatives to support the need to improve this route.

Threats

- Condition of State Route 8/127. The route is in need of safety improvements and redesign for better access to the town.
- Infrastructure Deterioration. A substandard wastewater system could bring a Commissioner's Order with significant fines and penalties. As long as repairs and maintenance to public facilities are neglected, their costs for repairs and maintenance will increase in the future.
- Impaired Streams. Private sewage systems sometimes pollute local streams causing a potential health hazard.
- A Reduction in State Shared Revenue. As the state looks for additional sources of revenue, it has in the past made reductions in state shared revenue. Such a reduction at the local level would be burdensome to the town in its efforts to provide for capital improvements and operating.
- Natural Disasters. Damages caused by windstorms or earthquakes or other natural disasters could pose significant damages to the town and its citizens.
- Failing Economy. A failing area economy could affect the ability of citizens to support public services.
- A Failure to Act on Weaknesses. The failure to act on weaknesses could pose a threat to the town.
- The Increasing Costs for Capital Facilities, Operating and Other Costs. Costs for health care, supplies, services and facilities continue to increase.
- Unaffordable Housing. The inability to provide for affordable housing for a segment of the community is a potential threat.

Non Prioritized Goals

- Improve State Route 8/127.
- Develop a capital facilities program.
- Improve water quality.
- Establish financial contingencies.
- Update and implement the strategic plan.
- Improve governmental operating efficiency.
- Establish a response plan for natural disasters.
- Provide incentives to builders who build affordable housing.
- Identify small business needs and incentives.
- Increase the use of cultural/art facilities.
- Work with WWTA and the City of Chattanooga in improving the sewer system.
- Encourage land conservation.
- Upgrade recreation facilities
- Selectively market the community.

Prioritized Goals

Goal 1-Improve State Route 8/Highway 127. This roadway has experience undermining and in December 2009, a portion collapsed. A loss of this roadway would result in no commercial access to the mountain, among other problems. It is important for the state to begin addressing safety concerns and making long range plans for a road that can adequately hold the future growth of the mountain top and other areas that utilize the road regularly.

Objectives:

1. Support the Tennessee Department of Transportation Study.
2. Encourage Legislative support for the needed improvement.
3. Increase community awareness.
4. Maintain local preference in design of improvements.

Goal 2-Work with WWTA and the City of Chattanooga in improving the wastewater system. The Town is currently under a sewer connection moratorium. In order for this to be lifted, the WWTA must connect to the treatment plant in Chattanooga. The Town also experiences contaminated

streams and this is believed to be caused by the septic systems on the mountain. The only permanent solution is to connect the remaining homes to sewer (2/3 of the Town).

Objectives:

1. Assist the WWTA with obtaining a signed agreement with Chattanooga for connection to the regional wastewater sewer system.
2. Support PSLP (Public Sewer Lateral Program)
3. Conduct four (4) area meetings and at least one (1) town meeting/hearing on the wastewater system improvement needs.
4. Develop a finance plan by 2012.

Goal 3-Develop a town capital facilities plan. The Town Council recognizes the importance of long range planning. The town facilities are beginning to age and a plan will help with financial decisions in the future and ensure that buildings are improved or replaced as needed.

Objectives:

1. Develop the plan within two (2) years.

Goal 4-Identify small business needs and incentives. The Town Council recognizes the importance of small businesses in our community and desires to find new ways to support them and help them succeed.

Objectives:

1. Provide information for businesses.
2. Appoint a committee to explore business opportunities.
3. Use the town website to provide information.
4. Staff advise the council on incentive options.
5. Provide public information relative to liquor store locations.

Goal 5-Provide incentives for affordable housing. The Town Council would like to work towards expanding the affordable housing that is available in the community in an effort to attract more families and provide for seniors who may not want a larger home.

Objectives:

1. Obtain information about incentive programs.
2. Identify affordable housing incentives for builders.

While all goals were not prioritized with specific objectives for attainment, they are nevertheless community goals and should be reviewed for implementation as appropriate.

Summary

Signal Mountain Strategic Plan

Signal Mountain: 21st Century living-small town charm.

Our mission is to provide quality service, efficient use of resources, and sustainability through managed growth while preserving small town character.

The Town's prioritized goals are:

1. Improve State Route 8/127.
2. Work with WWTA and the City of Chattanooga in Improving the Wastewater System.
3. Develop a Town Capital Facilities Plan.
4. Identify Small Business Needs/Incentives.
5. Provide Incentives for Affordable Housing.