

3 Community Engagement

The City of St. Marys designed a community engagement program to inform the public about the Master Plan and provide an opportunity for citizens to be involved in the planning process. Effective engagement is essential in developing a plan that has buy-in and leads to better support for implementation efforts that will assist the community in achieving long-term goals. A full report on all the community engagement activities is included in the Public Involvement Addendum to this Master Plan, and is summarized below.

Public Involvement Strategies

Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC)

A steering committee was appointed by St. Marys City Council to assist City staff and the consultant through every step of the planning process. The MPSC met the first Thursday of each month for 18 months to review pertinent materials and to help devise other public involvement activities. The MCSC also participated in visioning, identification of issues and opportunities, and development of the final workplan.

Community Survey

The City administered a community survey to gain feedback from residents, business owners, and other interested parties. The survey provided opportunities for participants to offer opinions on topics such as community appearance, economic development, city services, transportation, housing, quality of life, and other planning issues. Nearly 600 people responded to the community survey.

Stakeholder Interviews

Members of the MPSC conducted interviews with specific stakeholders within the community to gain a more detailed understanding of needs and opportunities within the community. During this outreach activity, 30 individual interviews were completed and 6 group discussions were conducted.

Public Presentations

This public involvement strategy included public presentations to educate residents and other community stakeholders. A presentation was created and given to several community groups including the Camden Round Table, the Rotary Club and the Homebuilders Association. This approach allowed different members of the steering committee to give the presentation using a consistent message. It also provided an opportunity to get feedback from large groups with similar values in a single venue. The MPSC also provided updates on the plan development at two City Council Meetings and two Council Retreats. Lastly, a visioning exercise was held at a City Department Head meeting to get feedback from City staff on their thoughts related to services and other community needs.

Public Involvement Strategies

Master Plan Steering Committee

Community Survey

Stakeholder Interviews

Public Presentations

Mardi Gras Festival Booth

Public Workshops

Children's Art Contest

Smart Phone Mapping App

Media Campaign



Mardi Gras Festival Booth

The City of St. Marys, members of the MPSC, and their planning consultant manned a booth at the City's Annual Mardi Gras Festival on February 6, 2016 to promote the Master Plan. The booth included promotional handouts advertising involvement opportunities, tablets to complete the survey, large maps, and art supplies for the art contest. The Mardi Gras booth provided a great opportunity for members of the planning team to discuss community issues with people in attendance.

Public Workshops

A number of public workshops were held throughout the planning process. These events were designed to be interactive activities that paired members of the community with professional planners to gather information on various planning topics. A community open house was held at the St. Marys Welcome Center in March 2016 to gather information on community character and future land use trends. Three additional land use workshops were also held in March at various times and locations to offer the best opportunity for people to attend at a time and location that worked with their schedules. A workshop focused on transportation related issues was held at the Senior Center and gave residents an opportunity to voice concerns with regard to safety, pedestrian mobility, and other transportation related elements in the City. The topic of sustainability, resiliency, and sea level rise was also covered at a workshop held during a City Council workshop. This workshop included a presentation of a study recently completed for the City that focused on these issues. Lastly, a series of zoning workshops were held to give people an opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations for details that should be included and considered when the City crafts the new zoning ordinance. These workshops looked at scale, density, setbacks, form, and other zoning related elements that could be used to help the City steer development in a direction that best compliments the future vision.

Children's Art Contest

The City and the MPSC coordinated with staff at St. Marys Elementary School to sponsor an Art Contest to create student awareness of and interest in the Master Plan process. Local businesses also supported the contest by providing gift cards, certificates, and other prizes to the winners. The City received over 50 submissions. A panel of high school student judges was assembled and winners were selected from elementary and middle school students. The winners were recognized at a City Council meeting.



Smart Phone Mapping Applications

The City's consultant created a mapping application for hand-held devices that allowed people to take pictures of "What they love about St. Marys." The app included a mapping features that allowed the user to take a picture, record the location on a map, and to write a short note about what they love about the given location and/or why they took the picture. The app resulted in 60 St. Marys points of interest being added. The points recorded using the app included historic structures, unique architectural features, parks, sub-base related features, and beautiful vistas.

Media Campaign

An active media campaign was used to keep the public informed on the Master Plan development, upcoming events, and other opportunities for involvement. The City of St. Marys website contains a direct link to the Master Plan webpage (onestmarys.com), which includes meeting agendas and summaries from the Master Plan Steering Committee, the transportation report, the data assessment, the zoning audit, and upcoming events. The Master Plan page also includes contact information, links to other planning documents, and an interactive mapping application. Press releases and guest columns in the local newspaper were also used to provide information about the Master Plan and how citizens might get involved.

Community Snapshot

A community snapshot was developed to illustrate various demographic and land use trends within the community. Data from the U.S. Census, previous planning documents, and a recent land use study were compiled in a brochure like format to provide some general background information on the community. The snapshot was made available on the Master Plan website and was used to help advertise upcoming opportunity for involvement and workshops. The snap shot was also made available in hard copy format at City Hall, the Mardi Gras Festival, and other events.

