

Position Paper
City of South Pittsburg
June 7, 2001

INTRODUCTION

On May 22, 2001, the Mayor, City Council, City Manager and the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) met in city hall to assess the city's current condition and prepare for the future of South Pittsburg. The city used the SWOT model as a tool to conduct strategic planning for the betterment of this small community in Marion County Tennessee. SWOT is an acronym for Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. This marketing tool has been used often in both the public and private sector to help organizations prepare for the future by examining the present. Results of this model were analyzed by city officials to later create a goal setting session to prioritize several manageable goals for the city to reach during the year 2001. This incremental process for goal setting should ensure a higher probability rate for success.

This position paper will examine the SWOT model and present goals established by the Mayor and City Council at the May 22, 2001 meeting. The Mayor and City Council have agreed to monitor the implementation of this goal-setting project with the purpose of revisiting the SWOT model before end of the year. This position paper is available to the citizens of South Pittsburg for their comment and review. As always, the Mayor and City Council are eager for the city officials, staff, local businesses and the citizenry to all work together to accomplish the strategic planning mission for the city of South Pittsburg.

II SOUTH PITTSBURG'S STRENGTHS

The Mayor and City Council commented on the high level of community support. The city is fortunate to have quality volunteers to aid in various civic functions. We all agreed that good volunteers were a critical strength to have in order to become a quality city. Location was also identified as a key strength for the city of South Pittsburg. There are five (5) major southeastern metropolitan areas located within a two (2) hour drive from South Pittsburg. Further, these metropolitan areas of Knoxville, Nashville, Birmingham, Atlanta and Chattanooga all contain airports to enhance transportation activities for residents of South Pittsburg. Chattanooga is approximately 30 miles from South Pittsburg.

Industry diversification was identified as a strength by several council members. Shaw Industries has a yarn manufacturing facility which employs 300 employees here in South Pittsburg. Lodge has 260 employees who work in the cast iron facility plant. Galaxy employs 80

people. The fireworks industry employs dozens of people here in South Pittsburg. Other industry providers include foundry stoves and nursing homes.

South Pittsburg has a vibrant downtown business district for a city of its size. The city has an excellent mix of downtown businesses to serve both the residents and tourists of South Pittsburg. Tourism was also identified as a strength here in South Pittsburg. The annual national cornbread festival attracts over 100,000 visitors to South Pittsburg during the last week of April. The town of Kimball recently contributed proceeds from tourists staying overnight for the festival to help fund the city's historic preservation efforts. This festival has brought national recognition to this community of 3300 people.

The final strength identified by the board was the natural beauty of the area. Southeastern Tennessee is known for its valley, lakes and ample outdoor recreational areas in this part of the state. In sum, the following components were classified as strengths:

- Volunteers
- Location
- Industry Diversification
- Downtown Businesses
- Festival/Tourism
- Natural Beauty

III. SOUTH PITTSBURG'S WEAKNESSES

The Mayor and City Council all agreed that the city is hindered by land restrictions and limited access to highway 72. Further, the state constructed a fence on the bypass that has limited mobility to downtown. The land restrictions have made it difficult for the city to annex utility service areas.

Another area of weakness identified by the Mayor and City Council was lack of cooperation and assistance from Marion County. According to South Pittsburg city officials, the city has been neglected by the county because South Pittsburg is not the county seat. Major utility and road improvements have been built away from South Pittsburg. South Pittsburg city leaders also expressed concerns over lack of state assistance.

Selective and reactive code enforcement activities were noted during the SWOT analysis. The Mayor did express a commitment to address this issue in the future. Lack of suitable recreational ballfield facilities and programming were also identified as a city weakness. Lack of suitable vacant properties for potential park development has created this weakness. Finally, limited local

sales tax was noted as a weakness. City officials believe that since the city is devoid of liquor by the drink sales, that this effect has been detrimental to recruiting new restaurants. Another contribution to a limited local sales tax was the development of a super Walmart in a neighboring town. This has created hardship to local food and hardware stores. In sum, the following components were classified as weaknesses:

1. Land Restrictions
2. Fence on bypass/road access
3. Selective and Reactive Code Enforcement
4. Limited Recreational facilities and programming
4. Limited local sales tax

IV SOUTH PITTSBURG'S OPPORTUNITIES

As a result of the many strengths identified earlier, city officials were confident that plenty of opportunities await the city. After considerable discussion, the Mayor and City Council presented several opportunities for the city. Since tourism has taken on a more recent significant role with the annual cornbread festival; city leaders stated that there were opportunities to enhance and aggressively market the Fort McCook Civil War Monument and Black American Museum.

Another opportunity to help combat the city's limited local sales tax collection would be the development of a large restaurant franchise and/or major grocery retailer off exit 24 nearby the old package store. The city was close to landing a major franchise several years ago. With the recent success generated by the upshot in tourism, the city's chances for obtaining a major restaurant franchise appear to be very favorable.

Marketing was another opportunity discussed by the Mayor and City Council. Since the city has little assistance from the county Chamber of Commerce, officials believe that by using resources from outside sources. A Fortune 500 firm can help promote the city with the annual cornbread festival. Due to the success of the annual cornbread festival, the city could examine the feasibility of having several mini festivals to help facilitate year round tourism.

Another opportunity explored included improving property values with better code enforcement. The final opportunity reviewed was the placement of better recreational facilities for the residents of South Pittsburg. In sum, the following components were identified as opportunities:

1. Increased Tourism
2. Restaurant/Grocery Chain
3. Improved Neighborhoods
4. Improved Marketing
5. Recreation

5. SOUTH PITTSBURG'S THREATS

City officials were cognizant that the weaknesses identified earlier were symptoms of threats to the viability of South Pittsburg. Lack of cooperation by county government and the chamber of commerce has been a weakness that has threatened the city's efforts to provide adequate services and infrastructure to citizens, businesses and tourists of South Pittsburg. The Mayor and Council also mentioned that inaction by the board regarding code enforcement is a threat to combating declining property values in some neighborhoods.

The Mayor and City Council mentioned that a threat to the community exists when they do not "follow through" on memorials for existing community leaders. This issue can hinder the city's sense of pride and history.

A final threat to the community was the issue of maintenance at the city cemetery. This historic cemetery needs to be better maintained by the city. In sum, the following components were identified as threats:

1. Lack of Local Cooperation
2. Inaction by city
3. Follow through for memorials
4. City cemetery upkeep

VI. SOUTH PITTSBURG'S GOALS

As a result of this analysis, the Mayor and City Council established four (4) goals to follow during the rest of the year. At year end, we will reconvene to gauge the effectiveness of the city's efforts to meet the below goals:

1. Better Code Enforcement
2. New and Improved Market Strategy with the private sector
3. Enhanced commitment to recreation
4. Focus more on history and memorials for the city.

VII. CONCLUSION

This goal setting process has resulted in a suitable comprehensive planning product for the city to implement and monitor during 2001. We appreciate the effort given by the city leaders and hope that the community embraces our process.