

# V · I · S · I · O · N · S

## Newsletter of McLean County Regional Planning Commission

### To Our Planning Partners And Citizens Of McLean County:

The recent tragic events will only make us more determined to build healthy and prosperous communities which strengthen our state and nation.

This past year following the completion of the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan has brought significant progress toward meeting a number of the plan's objectives for sensible growth, as well as in meeting other objectives identified in the Commission's overall work program for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 2001.

This Annual Progress Report reviews the top priorities identified in the Regional Plan and outlines the principal actions taken to date by this Commission and its planning partners in addressing those priorities. It also briefly describes other activities completed during the past year consistent with the Commission's work program. Additionally, it summarizes Commission finances and provides a glimpse of activities planned for the coming year.

Feel free to contact us with questions or comments. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Richard Buchanan Paul Russell*

Richard Buchanan,  
Chairman

Paul Russell,  
Director

### FALL 2001 ISSUE

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## 2001 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

The mission of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission is to "prepare and advocate the implementation of plans for coordinated and harmonious development that enhances the quality of life in the Community of McLean County".

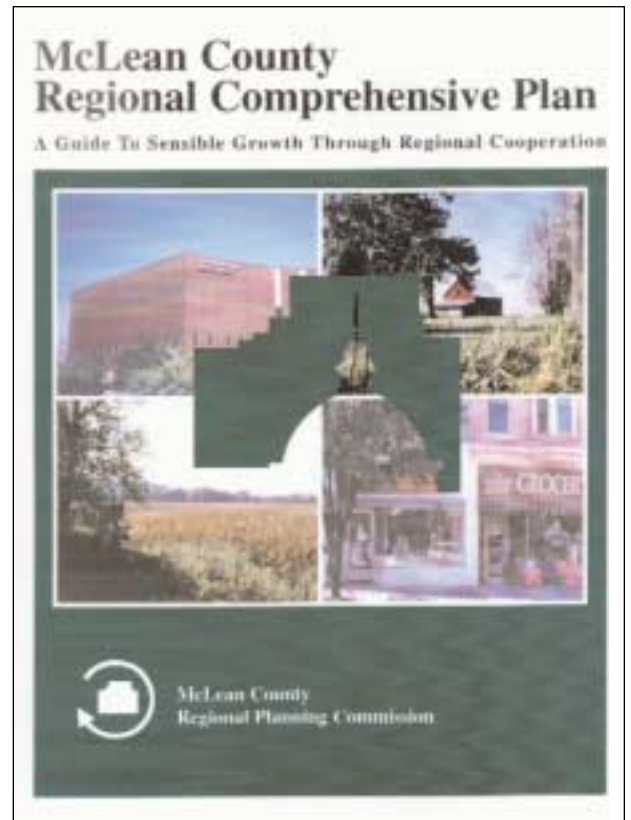
In support of this mission, the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan was prepared using a collaborative approach with participation by all levels of government and by a wide range of citizen and private interests.

This plan provides a framework for continuing regional cooperation in pursuit of socially, economically and environmentally healthy communities. Toward this end, the plan identifies priority strategies to be considered by local governments during the years immediately following the adoption of the plan.

One of the plan's priority strategies was the completion of annual reports on the progress made toward implementing the Plan. This first such report is being incorporated into the Commission's regular annual reporting process. Although the Commission's role in addressing the strategies identified in the plan varies considerably and is sometimes limited, the Commission was identified in the plan as the agency responsible for

coordinating and monitoring progress, including preparation of annual progress reports.

This report provides a summation of the plan's top priorities, and describes the progress made on strategies scheduled to be addressed during this past year. It also describes other activities completed during this time frame in accordance with the Commission's work program, as well as the finances associated with this work. The report concludes with an outline of additional planning activities scheduled for the coming year.



The McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2000 and provides for annual progress reports.

## STATUS OF PRIORITY 1 STRATEGIES

Of the sixteen priority one strategies identified in the Regional Plan, efforts were to begin on the implementation of twelve during the first year after the adoption of the plan by Bloomington, Normal and McLean County. Only one of these—the Population Growth Survey—was scheduled to be completed during the first year. This project is described below, followed by a brief status report on the other projects which were scheduled to begin during this past year. The schedule is summarized in Figure 1.

### Growth Survey

This Commission, with the assistance of its Growth Advisory Committee (GAC), completed a survey of 3,500 McLean County residents with the intent of encouraging public discussion on growth alternatives. This effort also included a public forum on this topic, which was attended by approximately seventy-five persons, including the news media. The results of this scientifically conducted and statistically significant survey were summarized in a brochure published by the Commission in June of this year. This brochure was distributed to approximately 500 community leaders in McLean County for consideration when making decisions pertaining to growth and development.

### Regional Water Study

The intent of this strategy is to identify actions and timelines for implementing the regional water study completed for Bloomington, Normal and McLean County in the early part of the previous decade.

At the initiative of local elected officials, a committee of officials and staff from McLean and Tazewell County governments was formed to consider possible means of implementing a regional water system to meet the needs of communities in

both counties. Several meetings were held to identify a course of action, which included contacting other Tazewell County officials to determine their interest levels and to invite their participation. Those contacts are currently being made, and upon completion, the results will be reported to the Committee for consideration in determining further actions.

### Farmland Preservation Study

This study is to consider a variety of techniques and concepts to address the issue of farmland preservation. These techniques may include zoning and subdivision regulations, agricultural and conservation easements, transfer and purchase of development rights, urban infill and revitalization, conservation subdivisions and other alternative development concepts.

This study has been incorporated as a component of the

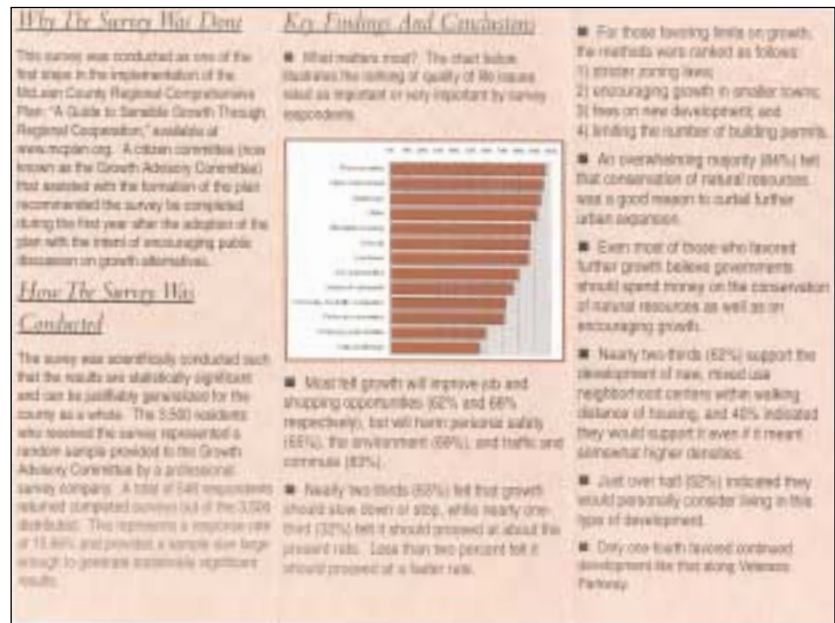
"McLean County Land Development Guide", which is to be completed with funding assistance from a corridor planning grant through the Illinois Department of Transportation. Commission staff applied for the grant on behalf of McLean County to complete the farmland preservation component, along with a plan for a conservation subdivision and the preparation of site development guidelines for possible inclusion in local subdivision ordinances.

To date a study proposal has been developed, an advisory committee has been formed, and preliminary discussions with area land owners/developers have been initiated. Newsletters on the topics of farmland preservation and conservation subdivisions were also published by the Commission.

### Soil Conservation Programs

The intent of this strategy is

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A survey on growth in McLean County was completed with the assistance of the Commission's Growth Advisory Committee.

**Figure 1  
Scheduled Year To Start And Complete Priority 1 Strategies  
Of The McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan**

Strategy	Description	Calendar Year	
		To Start	To Complete
Complete Regional Water Study	Identifies actions and timelines for implementation.	2000	2002
Prepare Farmland Preservation Study	Develop a program that considers alternative preservation methods.	2001	2003
Publicize Soil Conservation Programs	Promotes existing programs and methods for conservation.	2000	continuing
Prepare Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance	Creates a model TND Ordinance tailored to local needs to provide a guide for mixed use and traditional neighborhood design.	2000	2001
Initiate Downtown Business Retention/Development Program	Tailors programs for downtown areas.	2001	continuing
Direct Urban Growth	Directs growth to proposed growth areas and evaluates joint review process for regionally significant development proposals.	2000	continuing
Enhance Cooperative Business Recruitment and Retention	Supports related activities of the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area.	continuing	continuing
Identify Balanced Economic Development Sites	Identifies and promotes central city sites as well as fringe area sites for commercial and industrial development.	2001	2002
Conduct Population Survey	Provides for public surveys and discussions on growth alternatives.	2000	2001
Encourage Housing Redevelopment	Encourages redevelopment of housing in existing neighborhoods.	2000	continuing
Adopt Site Development Guidelines	Protects environmental resources where non-farm residential development is permitted.	2001	2002
Support Comprehensive Planning	Promotes comprehensive planning and public understanding and support for comprehensive plans and the planning process.	2000	continuing
Promote Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning	Promotes transit/people friendly design and coordinated design review.	2000	continuing
Utilize Access Management	Uses access management strategies to grant or deny access to major streets and roads.	as needed	continuing
Develop Alignment Corridor Studies	Provides for development of studies as needed.	as needed	as needed
Prepare Annual Progress Reports	Annual review and report on progress made toward implementing the comprehensive planning strategies.	each fall	each fall

to increase area participation in existing soil conservation programs through publicizing those programs and practices. The Commission's planning programs promote sound management practices for soil, land and water. The site development guidelines component of the "Land Development Guide" described above will also consider conservation of soil as well as other natural resources during the development process. In addition, a number of Commission newsletters have addressed this and related topics.

### **Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinance**

This strategy creates a model ordinance tailored to local needs to provide a guide for mixed use and traditional neighborhood design. The ordinance will provide a guide for developers interested in this concept and for local governments to review such projects.

A draft ordinance has been completed jointly by local and regional planning and engineering staff with input from local parks and recreation staff and utility companies. The draft is currently being reviewed by other local staff and development committees.

### **Downtown Business Retention And Development**

This strategy tailors programs specifically for downtown areas. Both Bloomington and Normal have been very active in downtown revitalization and have received support from the McLean County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area through established business retention and development programs. Commission staff participate as a board member of the Downtown Bloomington Association and as a member of the Town of Normal Multimodal Advisory Committee. Future activities will attempt to provide additional focus on business

retention and development in downtown areas.

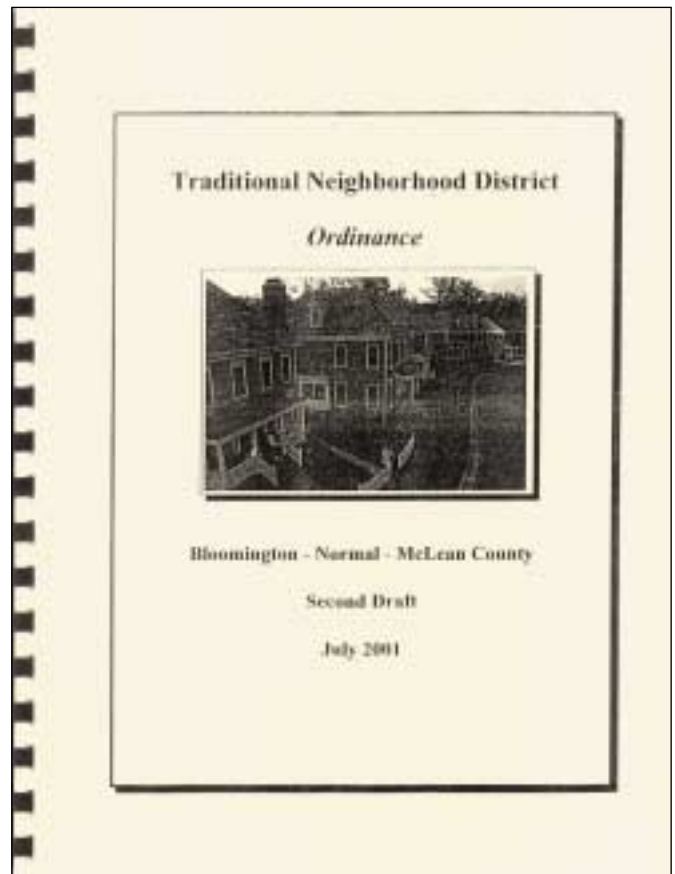
### **Direct Urban Growth**

This strategy considers methods to enhance the joint review process currently in use for regionally significant development projects as a means to direct growth in accordance with local and regional comprehensive plans.

A number of alternatives have been identified during the past year and are currently being considered as means to address the issue of maintaining a streamlined review process while encouraging development which is consistent with the objectives of local and regional comprehensive plans. These alternatives focus on expanded regional cooperation in the review of projects, and are currently being refined and evaluated for possible future applications.

### **Cooperative Business Recruitment And Retention**

This strategy continues the support of business retention and recruitment programs carried out by the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area. Staff serve on the Workforce Issues Committee of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce. Activities and progress related to these programs and committees are monitored and reported by the Council.



A draft Traditional Neighborhood Development ordinance is currently being reviewed by local staff and development committees.

### **Balanced Economic Development Sites**

The implementation strategy for geographically balanced economic development sites includes the identification and promotion of central city sites as well as fringe area sites for commercial and industrial development. Activities to date have included formulating plans for incorporating potential development sites into the regional GIS database to provide a readily accessible and comprehensive inventory of available sites. This will most likely be a continuing program of developing and maintaining the database, and promoting the development of available sites.

### **Housing Redevelopment**

This strategy encourages redevelopment of housing in existing neighborhoods, primarily through education and outreach relevant to

available programs and alternative concepts.

During the past year, the Commission published a newsletter on housing variety and affordability, which emphasizes the use of designs that aid in redeveloping older neighborhoods as well as developing new ones.

The Commission also published a brochure on "Affordable Housing And Its Relationship To Neighboring Property Values". This brochure describes how well-designed affordable housing can benefit both old and new neighborhoods in many ways, including increasing the values of neighboring properties.

The Commission also published a fact sheet on housing variety and affordability and participated in the locally sponsored "Old House Fair" held in the Fall of the year.

Activities such as these will continue to be a component of the Commission's education and outreach program.

### Site Development Guidelines

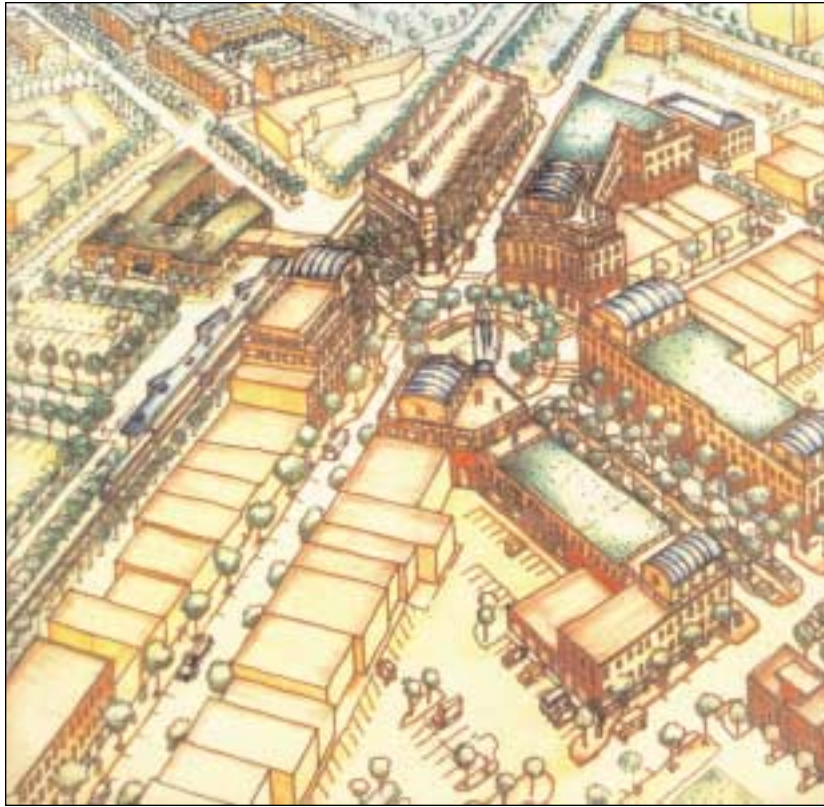
Site development guidelines provide a means to protect environmental resources where non-farm residential development is permitted. This strategy is to be implemented as part of the "Land Development Guide" project described above under the heading of "Farmland Preservation Study". A newsletter on this topic was also published by the Commission.

### Comprehensive Planning

This strategy provides for continued comprehensive planning and promotes public understanding and support for plans and the planning process through education and

outreach.

Bloomington, Normal, Lexington and McLean County have each initiated or continued long range planning activities since the Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted. During the past year, the



An architectural rendering from the Normal Downtown Renewal Plan.

Commission has completed a draft update of the Town of Normal Long Range Development Plan, and has recently initiated work with the City of Lexington on preparing a comprehensive plan.

The Commission has also expanded its education and outreach program to expand public understanding and support of the strategies presented in the Regional Plan and outlined in this report.

### Integrated Planning

The strategy to promote integrated land use and transportation planning addresses the need for land use and transportation designs which are people-friendly and provide transportation options. Similar to the strategy to "Guide Urban Growth" described above, this strate-

gy involves consideration of a process that provides for intergovernmental cooperation and participation in the review of regionally significant development proposals.

The concept of people-friendly design with transportation alternatives has been incorporated into virtually all long range planning which has occurred since the Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The Commission has also published a number of newsletters on this and similar topics.

On a related note, the Commission continues to coordinate efforts to develop the Route 66 Bikeway. This has included preparing on behalf of the County and other participating units of government, a successful grant application for \$255,000 (80%) of the funding needed for phase I engineering of the bikeway. It also included

coordinating the development of related intergovernmental agreements and coordinating the process for selecting a firm to complete the first phase engineering. The Commission will continue to coordinate and assist with this large scale and long term project in the hope that this will result in the implementation of the first leg of a statewide bikeway along this historic highway.

### Access Management

This strategy was identified in the plan for use on an as needed basis to grant or deny access to major streets and roads. After further consideration of this issue in context with the Region's high rate of growth, it was decided to assist McLean County in the pursuit of a planning grant to prepare an access

management plan to guide access decisions in Bloomington, Normal and McLean County. The application is pending as of the publication date of this report.

### Alignment/Corridor Studies

Commission staff applied for and was approved for a grant on behalf of McLean County, Bloomington, Normal, Downs and Towanda to help fund a corridor feasibility study to determine the need and location for transportation facilities to serve the east side of the urban area. The feasibility of an east side by-pass between I-55 and I-74 is to be addressed in the study. The Commission also coordinated the intergovernmental agreement and the consultant selection process, and is currently administering the grant and the consultant contract. The study is approximately fifty percent complete and is about to begin the public input process.

### Annual Progress Report

This strategy provides for the annual review and report on the progress made toward implementing the top priorities identified in the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan. The intent is to not only provide a benchmark of progress achieved to date, but also to provide a basis for determining future actions in context with current conditions. This is the first scheduled annual progress report since the plan was adopted.

### OTHER PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

In addition to the activities described above in support of the priority strategies of the McLean County Regional Plan, the Commission's Fiscal Year 2001 Work Program

includes a number of other activities completed in cooperation with local units of government. Some of these activities are briefly summarized below.

### Transportation Program

In cooperation with local governments, the Commission participates in a number of other transportation related activities. The Transportation Improvement Program is one of these. This annual work activity updates the transportation improvements programmed for the next three-year period within Bloomington, Normal and urbanizing portions of McLean County. It is funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation for purposes of budgeting and coordination.

Commission staff have also worked with Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System over the past year in a number of areas. These include providing technical input and data for the transit study, conducting a bus sampling survey, and promoting the use of bicycle racks on public transit buses.

### Greenways Guide

A draft of the "Guide To McLean County Greenways And Trails" was prepared during this past year. This guide provides information on recreational opportunities in McLean County with emphasis on greenway and trail resources. The National Park Service provided funding assistance for the guide, which is currently being reviewed by the Commission's Greenways Advisory Committee.

### Geographic Information Systems

Commission staff coordinate the development and management of the McLean County Geographic Information System (McGIS). McGIS is a cooperative effort by a number of local government agencies with the common goal of providing an improved base of information with less duplication of effort. Through cooperative resource management McGIS is developing a countywide geographic information system to better serve the public and to aid decision making in many facets of local government operations, including, planning, engineering, tax



A draft of this guide was prepared this year and is currently being reviewed by the Greenways Advisory Committee.

assessment and emergency services.

Major strides have been made in the past year toward developing a common database linkage among the participating agencies to allow joint access to a wide range of data such as digital aerial photography, streets, buildings, addressing, parcel and other information.

### Technical Assistance

Commission staff provide technical assistance to local governments and organizations in McLean County through service on various committees and through responding to information requests. In addition to the committees mentioned above, Commission staff participate on a number of other committees which address different community issues, including affordable housing, transit, work force issues and traffic calming.

The Commission also provides assistance to local governments in administering the solid waste program and in preparing grant applications, such as for Normal's brownfield redevelopment plan and the Town's multimodal plan.

As a sub state clearinghouse, the Commission also reviews and comments on applications for state and federal funding of eligible capital improvement projects.

This review function extends to the review of regionally significant

development proposals for consistency with adopted local and regional plans.

### Education And Outreach

Education and outreach efforts report on planning issues and concepts to local governments, developers and the public. The intent is to increase understanding and to promote discussion and consideration of alternative solutions to community development problems. Activities include production of newsletters, informational brochures, slide and video presentations and press releases, as well as maintenance of the Commission library and web site.

### FINANCES

The Commission's revenue of over \$550,000 was received through a variety of sources as illustrated in Figure 2. Funding is provided by federal and state grants, technical service contracts and regional service agreements.

Regional service agreements with Bloomington, Normal and McLean County support Commission activities and provide matching shares for local, state and federal planning funds.

Commission finances are often significantly impacted by contracts administered on behalf of local governments for technical ser-

ices. Fiscal Year 2001 (FY 01) was no exception, as revenue from these types of service contracts was second only to Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) revenue. Technical service contracts accounted for approximately one-fourth of the total revenue. These revenues consist of funds provided by local governments and IDOT for outside consultants to complete projects such as the East Side Corridor Feasibility Study, aerial photography and cadastral (parcel) mapping.

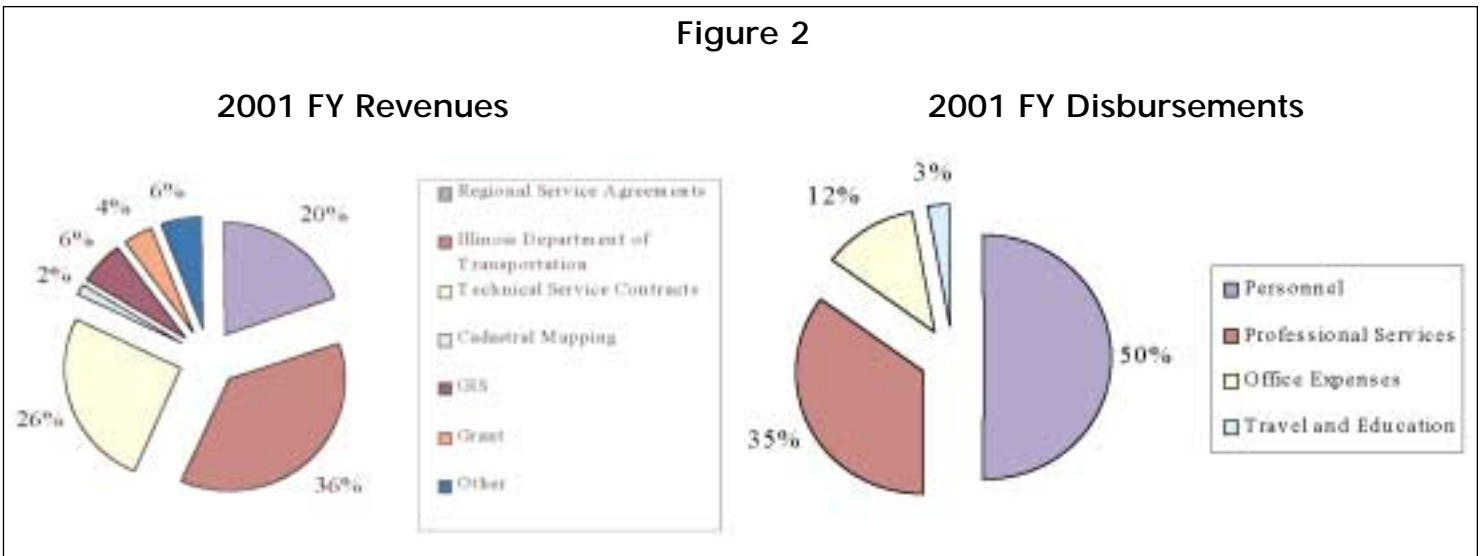
Total disbursements of over \$602,000 included payments to contractors from revenues received in a previous fiscal year. At fifty-two percent, personnel costs comprised the greatest portion of the Commission's disbursements. Professional services, primarily for the technical contracts, comprised the second greatest portion at thirty-two percent.

### THE YEAR AHEAD

Along with the completion or continuation of a number of FY 01 projects, the following new projects are included in the Commission's work program for the coming year:

- McLean County Land Development Guide
- Lexington Comprehensive Plan
- Stormwater Management Plan.

Figure 2



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 211 West Jefferson Street, Bloomington, IL 61701, by phone at (309) 828-4331, by fax at (309) 827-4773, or by e-mail at [markw@mcplan.org](mailto:markw@mcplan.org).

#### **Commissioners**

Richard Buchanan, Chairman  
*Airport Authority*

Sharon A. McGinnis, Vice Chair  
*Town of Normal*

William J. Bartley  
*Town of Normal*

Chris Brauer  
*County of McLean*

Don Fernandes  
*City of Bloomington*

Scott King  
*Water Reclamation District*

James Pearson  
*City of Bloomington*

Richard Percy  
*Unit School District #5*

Jim Rutherford  
*County of McLean*

Janet Smith  
*School District #87*

Sue Strang  
*McLean County*

#### **Executive Committee**

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*Chairman*

Sharon A. McGinnis  
*Vice Chairman*

Tom Hamilton  
*City Manager, City of Bloomington*

Mark Peterson  
*City Manager, Town of Normal*

John Zeunik  
*County Administrator, County of McLean*

#### **Staff**

Paul Russell, AICP  
*Executive Director*

Lydia Reynolds  
*Community Planner*

Jennifer Sicks  
*Transportation Planner*

David Mather  
*GIS Coordinator*

Troy Olson  
*GIS Specialist*

Bill Jackson  
*GIS Programmer Analyst*

Mark Wasakoski  
*Office Manager*

Teresa Casselman  
*Special Projects Coordinator*

## **STAFF NOTES**

Several staff changes have occurred in recent months. The Commission said farewell to Community Planner, Mark Dravillas, who accepted a planning position with the City of Columbus, Ohio. We appreciate Mark's good work and pleasant disposition, and we wish him the best.

Transportation Planner, Lydia Reynolds, will be assuming the duties of Community Planner. Lydia is familiar with the community planning programs and will continue to be available to assist with the transportation program as needed.

Jennifer Sicks has been appointed to the position of Transportation Planner. Jennifer is a Bloomington-Normal native who had been working a number of years for a Philadelphia law firm until deciding to return to Illinois to pursue a career in planning. She recently completed her Masters Degree in Urban Planning at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

## **VISIONS**

McLean County Regional Planning Commission  
211 W. Jefferson Street  
Bloomington, IL 61701

Bill Jackson was recently appointed to the newly created position of GIS Programmer Analyst. This position was created for the primary purpose of assisting local agencies in developing their GIS applications so they could begin to take advantage of the increasing capabilities of the regional GIS. Bill is also a Twin Cities native and resident, and has about nine years of experience in GIS and remote sensing.

Teresa Casselman has recently returned to the Commission to fill a previously vacated position. A lifelong McLean County resident, Teresa previously served as administrative assistant and information coordinator. She will be sharing some of these duties with Office Manager, Mark Wasakoski, and will become more involved with GIS.

The Commission is very pleased to have the services of Jennifer, Bill and Teresa to assist in meeting program objectives. ♦

Learn more about Geographic Information Systems by attending

## **McLean County GIS Day**

on Wednesday, November 14th from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
at the U.S. Post Office Facility at 1209 Towanda Avenue, Bloomington.

For more information, contact David Mather, GIS Coordinator,  
McLean County Regional Planning Commission (309) 828-4331.