

V • I • S • I • O • N • S

Newsletter of McLean County Regional Planning Commission

Message from the Chairman and Executive Director

Despite the current economic downturn, the Region's resilient economy, combined with a commitment to sensible growth, gives cause for renewed optimism. Following a modest decline in the fourth quarter of 2008, the number of jobs in Bloomington-Normal has been and is projected to be stable through 2010. Steady growth is predicted thereafter through 2013 (www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2009-02-06-new-jobs-growth-graphic_N.htm). These trends once again provide evidence of the dynamic community in which we live.

This annual report highlights some of the progress made collectively and individually by our planning partners towards the completion of a number of important area projects that support sensible growth and contribute to the Region's quality of life.

On behalf of our commissioners and staff, we extend our best wishes for a happy holiday season and a prosperous new year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carl F. Teichman, Chairman

Paul E. Russell, Executive Director

FALL 2009 ISSUE
Volume VIII, Number 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the Chairman and Executive Director..... 1

2009 Annual Progress Report..... 1



2009 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

This annual report summarizes progress made by the region's planning partners in planning and implementing area projects. It features the recently adopted update of the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan, and provides an overview of progress made on other projects during the past year. It describes some of the activities carried out by McLean County Regional Planning Commission as part of its ongoing work program, which is guided in part by the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan.

REGIONAL PLANS ADOPTED

The McLean County Board recently adopted updates to the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan and Regional Greenways Plan. The Plans were adopted following recommendations of the Land Use Committee of the County Board. The Comprehensive Plan was also endorsed by Bloomington and Normal as expressed in resolutions approved by the respective Councils. In separate actions, the Councils also adopted the Regional Greenways Plan.

These actions were taken after a public review process, which included public hearings held by Bloomington, Normal and the County. This process resulted in a number of suggestions that were ultimately incorporated into the plans.

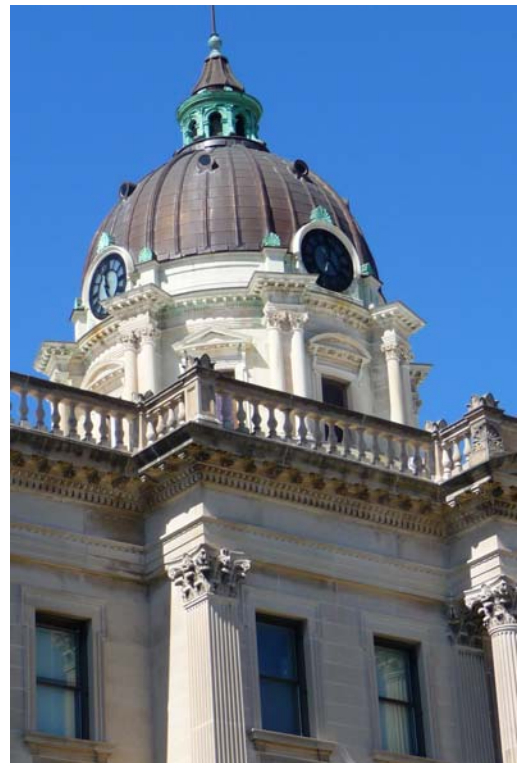
The plans were completed concurrently over a period of approximately two years with the assistance of advisory committees consisting of citizens and staff of Bloomington, Normal and McLean County.

The Executive Summary of the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan is reproduced as the feature article of this annual report. The McLean County Regional Greenways Plan was featured in an earlier issue of this newsletter. Other projects and activities of the past year are also highlighted in this report.

McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This plan presents a guide for sensible growth that supports efficient development, transportation alternatives, suitable housing for a variety of needs, local agriculture, and the enhancement of natural resources, human heritage, and quality of life.

Sensible growth recognizes the potential benefits of population and economic growth, but sets high standards to preserve and enhance the community for both present and future generations. It involves the building of livable communities that feature distinctive identities with pedestrian-friendly designs and many social and cultural amenities. It also involves promoting economic growth to provide the jobs and tax base that can help sup-



port these amenities. Sensible growth also occurs in harmony with the natural landscape and environment.

The regional comprehensive plan provides a framework for continuing regional cooperation in support of sensible growth. Many growth issues involve multiple jurisdictions and may require cooperative approaches to achieve optimal solutions. Issues such as farmland preservation, urban revitalization and the delivery of services often impact more than one unit of government and can impact the quality of life for the entire region. It is becoming increasingly apparent that an individualized approach cannot effectively address all of these issues. Therefore, a collaborative approach with participation by all levels of government and by a wide range of citizen and private interests was used to develop the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan. A cross section of those interests was also engaged to complete this update.

Citizen Participation

Citizen committees representing a wide range of public and private interests were formed to assist in preparing the different elements (see Figure A) of the plan, which was completed in the year 2000. More than 100 persons from many walks of life served on a series of committees representing the different elements of the plan and drawing upon the work of previous citizen-based visioning committees to help guide plan development. These individuals provided ideas and expertise that benefited the plan in many ways, including the broadening of public understanding and support. Representatives from these committees served on the review committee, which played a major role in completing the update. The review committee reviewed and refined the previously identified goals, objectives, policies and actions for each element of the plan. Additional citizen input was received through a series of public meetings and hearings on the plan update.

Characteristics and Trends

The current patterns of growth and development were major considerations in developing and updating this plan. It is anticipated that the region's high quality of life will continue to attract the people and business needed to sustain a vibrant economy and generate continued population growth at least for the foreseeable future. The population of the county is predicted to exceed 234,200 by the year 2035, with the Bloomington-Normal urban area growing to nearly 185,000. Substantial growth is also predicted for a number of designated rural growth areas and smaller communities as well.

The current trend is for a continua-

natives and are intended to guide decision making toward preserving and enhancing the region's quality of life through the year 2035.

Challenges and Opportunities

The plan identifies future challenges and opportunities for preserving and enhancing quality of life. Challenges and opportunities are identified for each element of the regional comprehensive plan based on an assessment of current trends and characteristics. These challenges and opportunities were a consideration in forming strategies and priorities to address quality of life issues.

Strategies and Priorities

The citizen committees with technical assistance provided by the staffs of the local governments and McLean County Regional Planning Commission originally identified and prioritized more than 300 strategies for consideration by local governments in addressing the region's future challenges. During this update, these strategies were reviewed and refined by the review committee to reflect current conditions for each element of the plan. The committee also identified the initiatives in Figure B as the top priorities for early consideration by community leaders. The identified strategies were considered in developing plans for land use, transportation, selected community facilities and services, and implementation.

Functional Plans

Plans for land use, transportation, and community facilities and services were updated to reflect the revised strategies and recent development activity as well as known projects, including the East Side Highway Study.

Land Use

In addition to existing and currently proposed development patterns, the land use plan reflects the growth policies identified in adopted area plans



tion of the conventional, low density, suburban development that has been the norm throughout the nation for the past 60 plus years. Urban densities have been steadily declining in Bloomington-Normal and the plan recognizes that this trend may continue. At the same time, however, the plan identifies some of the challenges that result from decreasing densities, especially in context with rising energy costs, and presents some sensible growth alternatives. The strategies outlined in this plan reflect the sensible growth alter-

as well as the other relevant strategies identified in this regional plan. Accordingly, the plan provides for a system of interconnected conservation and recreation areas consistent with the McLean County Regional Greenways Plan. It also designates other areas outside of urban growth areas for primary or secondary agriculture, depending upon the general soil and terrain characteristics. The plan provides for relatively compact and contiguous development within and adjacent to incorporated communities, with growth occurring in and around Bloomington-Normal, smaller municipalities in the western two-thirds of the county and in the selected rural growth areas. It also provides for regional service centers in Bloomington-Normal and for sub-regional service centers in the downtowns of the region's smaller communities, in the neighborhoods of Bloomington-Normal, and at selected highway interchanges.

Transportation

The transportation plan provides for the extension of transportation facilities to serve planned growth areas. The street and highway plan provides for the southward extension of Mitsubishi Motorway on the west side of the urban area and incorporates the corridor from the East Side Highway Study to serve the east side of the urban area. Other improvements and extensions to the urban classified and the rural road systems are also identified to meet future needs consistent with the Regional Land Use Plan.

The transportation plan also addresses alternative modes of transportation and provides for numerous extensions to the existing trail system in the urban area and throughout the county, including the proposed Route 66 Bikeway. The plan for alternative modes also identifies potential future transit service for planned regional and sub-regional service centers in the urban area and recommends consideration be given to forming a transit

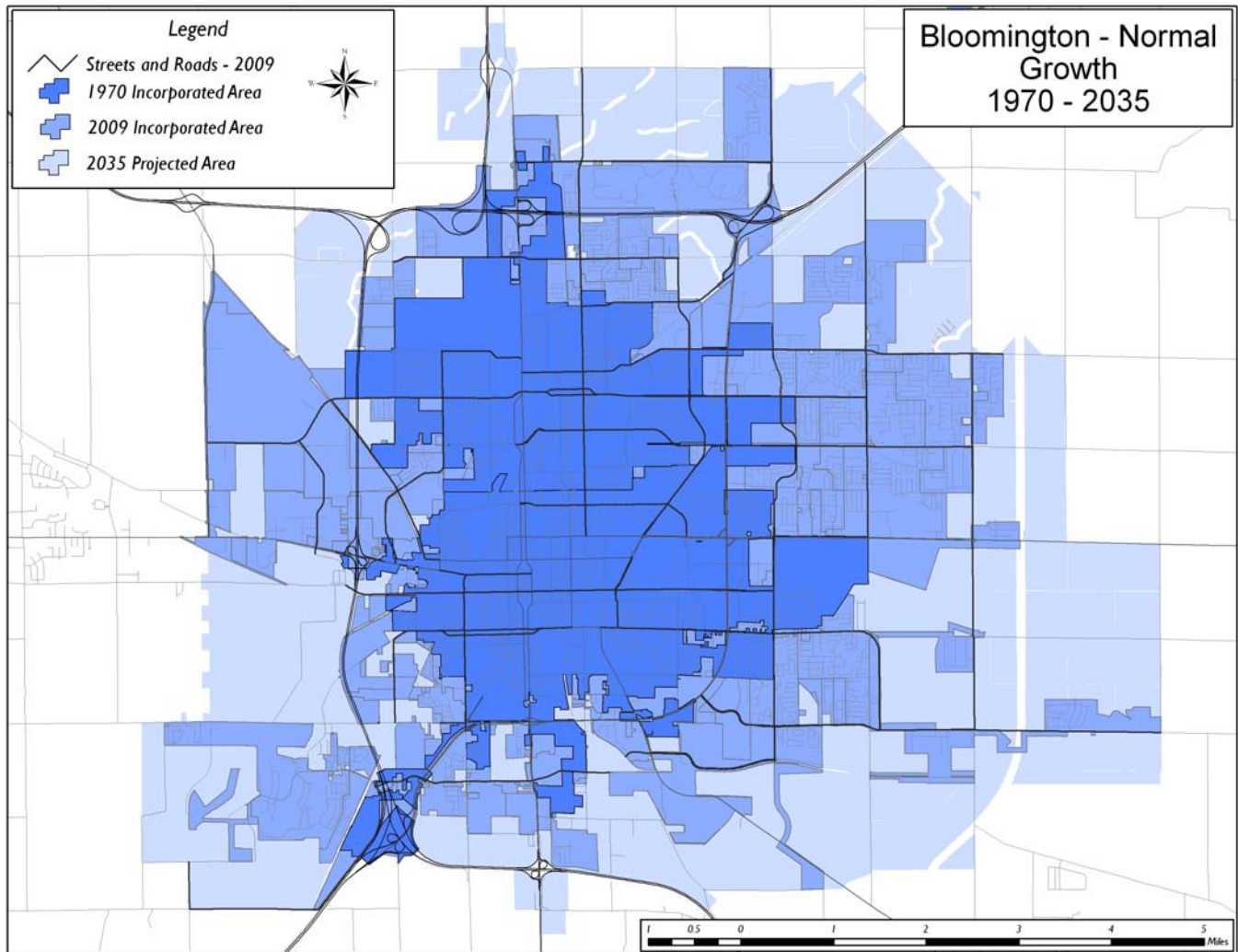
district to expand and enhance the public transit system.

Community Facilities and Services

The community facilities and services element presents strategies for water service; sewer service; schools; parks and trails; solid waste management; libraries; cultural and entertainment facilities; fire, police and emergency services; and energy and telecommunications. The plan addresses future water supply and distribution and wastewater collection and treatment. It also advocates coordinated planning for schools among communities and school districts, including consideration of development fees. The plan also identifies proposed sites for future parks as well as an interconnected regional trail system. The plan encourages the inclusion of libraries and cultural and entertainment facilities in the local budgetary process. Further coordination and cooperation among fire, police and emergency service providers is also encouraged. The plan recommends increased commer-

Figure B
Priority Initiatives of the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan

- Identify communities, neighborhoods, and business districts to be targeted for revitalization activities and funding.
- Periodically review and update land use plans and ordinances to provide for more compact development patterns in urban areas to achieve more efficient use of land, energy, environmental, and fiscal resources.
- Create a comprehensive water resource management plan that addresses current and future water quality and quantity needs.
- Investigate the creation of a transit district to support expanded and enhanced public transit service throughout the Bloomington-Normal metro area.
- Consider alternatives for local governments to share costs and revenues from property and sales taxes resulting from future economic development.
- Support the development of a comprehensive digital database and directory of McLean County natural resources to provide an improved guide for making development-related decisions.
- Create a comprehensive and up-to-date inventory of historic and archaeological resources throughout McLean County to provide an improved basis for preservation efforts.
- Explore the costs, benefits, and alternatives for providing inclusionary housing in McLean County communities.
- Review the current structure of development fees to help ensure efficiency and equity in the provision of community facilities and services throughout McLean County.



This map illustrates the growth of the Bloomington-Normal urban area since 1970 and how it will expand by the year 2035 if growth occurs in accordance with the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan.

cial and industrial recycling, and expansion of residential curbside recycling consistent with the McLean County Solid Waste Management Plan. Finally, the plan encourages continued communication and coordination among local governments and utility companies to help ensure adequate levels of service with minimal impacts on the community.

Implementation

The implementation element identifies a long range implementation strategy and a list of priorities for early consideration in carrying out the plan. The long range strategy encapsulates the strategies identified for all elements of the plan and summarizes key policies for implementation. It also identifies priorities for early consideration as

outlined in Figure B. The implementation policies and priorities reflect the input of the plan review committee and provide a synopsis of the major issues identified and conclusions drawn in this update of the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan. ♦

PROJECT UPDATES

Main Street Corridor

Since the Main Street Corridor Plan was adopted or endorsed by all member entities represented on the Main Street Commission in 2007, it has served as a guide for making development-related decisions within the corridor. A draft form-based zoning code to guide and regulate redevelopment consistent with the plan has been com-

pleted, and is to be reviewed by Bloomington and Normal in cooperation with the McLean County Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, with the assistance of the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area, efforts are also underway to establish a development corporation to facilitate the assemblage of property for redevelopment.

A number of projects have been developed or approved for development under the guidance of the Main Street Plan, including one each in Bloomington and Normal during 2009. The Normal Council approved the proposed Rogy's daycare center to be constructed at Main and Harris. The Bloomington City Council approved the renovation of Holy Trinity Catholic

Church to include a million dollar roofing and tuck pointing project.

West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan

The past year has seen much progress relating to the West Bloomington Redevelopment Plan. Achievements of the plan thus far have included a community garden at the corner of Roosevelt and Mulberry, neighborhood safety improvements, and a computer donation and rehabilitation program undertaken by Blue Jay Computers. Other projects planned or underway include home construction and rehabilitations, and retail expansion. In October, the West Bloomington Plan received the award for best strategic plan from the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association. In the near future the project will have an office on Washington Street and a steering committee will appoint an executive director.

Downtown Bloomington Redevelopment Plan

In September, Farr Associates presented an initial draft of the Downtown Bloomington Redevelopment Plan that will serve as a guide for the future of



the downtown area. After the initial presentation, public input was gathered on the Downtown Bloomington Association website, and at a public meeting in October. Some of the main aspects of the plan to be considered by the City are the installation of parking meters downtown in an effort to make the area more accessible and pedestrian friendly, and changing East and Madison Streets from one-way to two-way streets. The plan is expected to go before the Bloomington City Council in the near future.

Uptown Normal Redevelopment

2009 saw major renovation and development for the Uptown Normal area. From March through mid-October, underground infrastructure, sidewalks, and streets were reconstructed, with new lighting and street furniture installed as well. Landscaping projects began this year, and work on smaller projects will continue into the spring of 2010.

Construction began on "Uptown Crossing" in mid-2009 with a projected opening of summer 2010. This five-story mixed-use project is located at the corner of North and Fell Streets. A CVS pharmacy will anchor the first floor retail space, the second floor being used for office space, with the rest of the building being one and two bedroom apartments. Underground parking will be available for residents.

In October, the nine-story Marriott hotel and conference center opened after three years of construction. The hotel features 229 guest rooms and two presidential suites. The over 20,000 square foot conference center is physically connected to the Normal Theater, providing for a variety of events. Façade work was also carried out on a number of Uptown buildings.

Information Forum

In April, the commission hosted its fourth annual Information Forum at the DoubleTree Hotel and Conference Center in Bloomington. This year's guest speaker was James B. Duncan of Duncan Associates, an urban planning



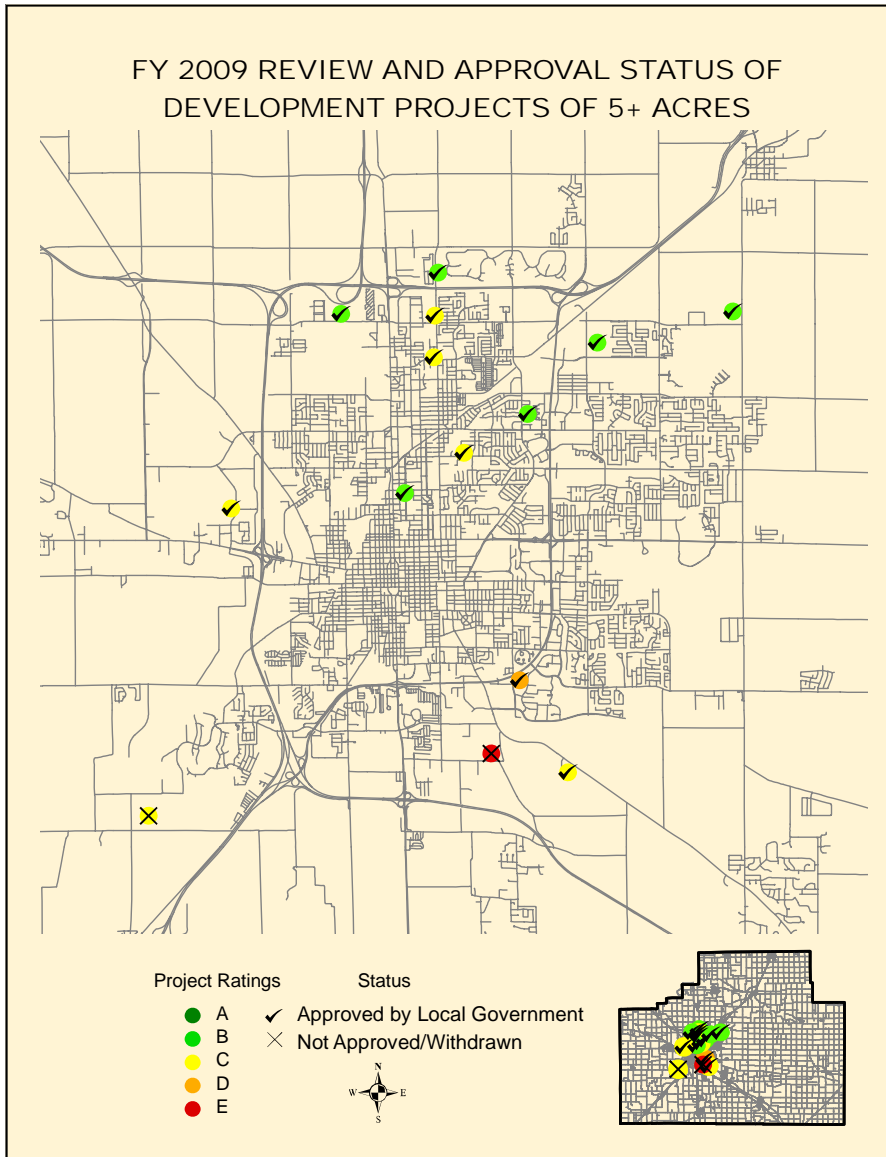
firm specializing in development regulations and preparing infrastructure financing studies. Mr. Duncan spoke on the "Pros and Cons of Impact Fees." The event was well attended.

James Brainard, mayor of Carmel, Indiana has been confirmed as the speaker for the 2010 forum to be held on April 21. Mayor Brainard will speak on "Creating Places Where People Want to Live and Do Business." These forums provide an opportunity to learn from other regions and receive local input from citizens and community leaders on planning and development issues.

Website

The MCRPC website has been under construction over the past year. In January 2010, the commission will be publishing a new web site with a new look. The site will feature information covering the areas of the commission's work, including community and transportation planning with access to the commission's past and present plans. It will also include a summary of projects programmed for the 2010 fiscal year. The website is accessible at www.mcplan.org.

FY 2009 REVIEW AND APPROVAL STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS OF 5+ ACRES



Development Reviews

During the 2009 fiscal year, 14 projects of five acres or more were reviewed and evaluated by the Intergovernmental Development Staff Committee for consistency with local and regional comprehensive plans. The committee consists of local and regional planners and engineers from the City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, McLean County and the McLean County Regional Planning Commission. These project reviews are submitted to respective government entities for consideration in the local review process.

Projects are rated on a scale of "A" (highest rating) through "E" (lowest rating) based on minimal and optional features included in the project. Project modifications are recommended by the committee when appropriate.

During Fiscal Year 2009, 12 of the 14 projects reviewed were eventually approved by the appropriate government body as depicted on the map (above). The other two were withdrawn by the applicants. Six of the approved projects received a "B" rating, five received a "C," and one received a "D." In comparison, five projects were approved in FY 2008, all of which received a "C" rating.

Transportation Improvement Program

Projects planned for Federal FY 2010 – 2014 include nearly \$156 million invested in streets, roads and trails, including \$93 million in state-sponsored projects, and slightly more than \$25 million allocated for transit services in McLean County. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided the following funding to area projects:

- approximately \$3 million was allocated to local government street and road projects
- approximately \$2.4 million to the construction of the new B-NPTS facility
- \$1.4 million to begin construction on the Historic Route 66 Bicycle Trail between Bloomington and Shirley

In addition to the ARRA funding, \$13.6 million was allocated from the Illinois Jobs Now! program for the continuation of the East Side Highway study process.

The Transportation Improvement Program is revised annually, and identifies transportation projects planned over the upcoming five years, including roads and street improvements, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit funding for operations and capital improvements, and other infrastructure upgrades. To develop the annual program, Commission staff works with engineering and public works staff from Bloomington, Normal, McLean County, area transit providers and the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP)

Through its Transportation Advisory Committee, the Commission administers the Bloomington – Normal urban area HSTP, which sets goals for transit service, objectives for implementation, and is a means to improve cooperation among transit providers, social service agencies, transportation planners and transit users.

In early 2009, Commission staff, in conjunction with the Kankakee County Regional Planning Commis-

sion, began coordinating these activities for the Region 6 HSTP, which includes Ford, Iroquois, Grundy, Kankakee, Livingston and McLean counties. As of July 2009, McLean County was chosen by IDOT to continue managing the Region.

East Side Highway

Throughout FY 2009, the Commission staff worked with the East Side Highway Phase 1 steering committee and Project Study Group, as the study moved toward completion in early 2009. The final report on the study was presented at a public meeting, and referred to the local governments for further hearings and legislative action. The study is a joint project of McLean County, the City of Bloomington, the Town of Normal, the McLean County Regional Planning Commission, and the Illinois Department of Transportation, with additional oversight by the Federal Highway Administration. As noted above, funding to proceed with the next steps of the Phase 1 study has been allocated under the Illinois Jobs Now! program created with the passage of the State capital bill.

McGIS Membership

- City of Bloomington
- City of Bloomington Township
- Town of Normal
- McLean County
- Emergency Telephone System Board (ETSB)
- McLean County Regional Planning Commission

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

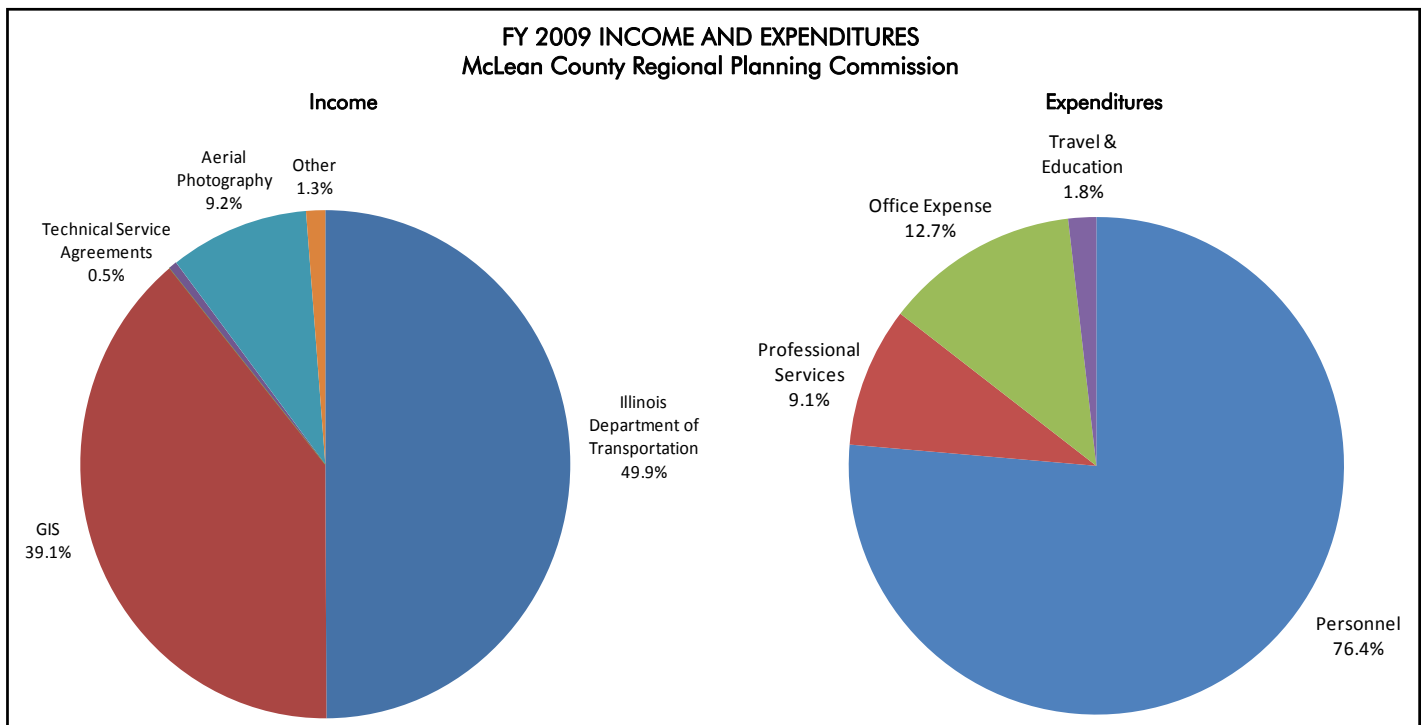
The commission serves as the coordinating agency for the six-member regional GIS consortium (McGIS). Over the past year, a number of system enhancements have been implemented, including system and software upgrades and acquisition of county-wide digital topographic coverage made available to the public on the internet without cost at www.McGIS.org. Also through inter-governmental collaborative efforts, all users now access a common, up-to-date base map that is seamless, crossing jurisdictional and operational boundaries. McGIS has also continued to work with Baker Engineering to pre-

pare a GIS needs assessment and strategic plan to guide continued system development and management.

FINANCES

The commission's revenue of \$729,500 was obtained from a variety of sources. Funding is provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), GIS revenues, and technical service agreements. IDOT funds support transportation related programs. GIS revenues include recorder's fee funding and member contributions to support the regional GIS program. Technical service agreements include funds provided by local governments to complete projects such as local comprehensive plans and an update to the regional aerial orthophotography. Technical service agreements also include funds provided by state and federal agencies to complete area planning projects, such as the McLean County Regional Greenways Plan and related greenways planning projects.

Total disbursements of \$730,881 included personnel expenses, office expenses, professional services and travel and education as shown on the charts below. ♦



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 visions@mcplan.org.

Commissioners

Carl Teichman, Chairman
Town of Normal

George Benjamin, Vice-Chair
County of McLean

Joseph Butcher
School District #87

Mary Jefferson
Town of Normal

William Doud
Water Reclamation District

Neale McCormick
Airport Authority

Jay Reece
Unit School District #5

Ken Ropp
County of McLean

Shane Rutherford
County of McLean

Vacancy
City of Bloomington

Vacancy
City of Bloomington

Executive Committee

Carl Teichman
Chairman

George Benjamin
Vice Chairman

David Hales
City Manager, City of Bloomington

Mark Peterson
City Manager, Town of Normal

Terry Lindberg
County Administrator, County of McLean

Staff

Paul Russell, AICP
Executive Director

Rick Nolan
Community Planner

Jennifer Sicks
Land Use/Transportation Planner

Khalid Hasan
GIS Director

Bill Jackson
GIS Coordinator

Scott Fowler
Associate Planner

Melissa Dougherty-O'Hara
Associate Planner

Teresa Casselman
Office Manager

VISIONS

McLean County Regional Planning Commission
115 E. Washington St. #M103
Bloomington, IL 61701

Route to:
✓ _____
✓ _____
✓ _____
✓ _____

Season's Greetings



from the Members and Staff of
McLean County Regional Planning Commission