

Businesses give input on comprehensive plan

By **PAT FRIDGEN**
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Transportation issues made three of the top five on a list of concerns created by area business people regarding the future of the Greencastle-Antrim area. Local business owners and representatives met with members of Rettew Associates last week to discuss the status of the area today and the direction it should take.

Frank Chlebnikow, project manager, said his Camp Hill firm was hired by Antrim Township, the borough of Greencastle and the Greencastle-Antrim School District, to form a comprehensive plan for the area.

"The rule of thumb is to review a plan every 10 years, and project out 20 years," he said. "When should land be rezoned? When should it be developed?"

The current plan was initiated in 1992 and local governing bodies are updating it, with help from the people it impacts. Citizens gave input at a meeting in January, mentioning traffic, water, housing, and police services. Businesses cited similar issues, but the roadways were viewed as most important.

Problems with exit 3 off Interstate 81 topped the list. Exit 5 also needed to be improved and the interstate itself was viewed as over capacity. Those deficiencies hamper growth of

the industrial base in the area, said the 25 meeting attendees.

The other concerns were infrastructure to support growth, and the long-term availability of water and the capacity of the sewer systems.

"It's all growth management issues," said Mike Ross, Franklin County Area Development Corporation president. "For Antrim Township, this is going to be a breakout year. How do we manage it?"

Pluses and minuses

People know Greencastle before moving here, Chamber of Commerce director Bill Gour stated. He said they have researched it over the internet and often choose the community because of the school system. He was also pleased that the downtown is vital, with no empty storefronts.

Fred Frederick of Frederick, Seibert and Associates added that the Chamber was active in helping businesses network.

The retail district in Greencastle received accolades, with most people wanting to maintain its character.

The availability of parking was seen as a drawback, though. Carl's Drug owner Frank Ervin said people will circle the block or drive away if they can't find a parking spot in front of a store. Apartment dwellers who park on the street overnight and don't move their vehicles soon enough receive tickets from the police in the morning, he said.

Paul Perini of Perini Properties Corporation in Hagerstown favored a parking deck, saying it adds value to a downtown.

Mike Still, account manager with Aerotek in Hagerstown, said Greencastle was not very consumer friendly. He cited businesses closed evenings and weekends, and a lack of interesting restaurants.

"You need to pair history with newer amenities to get people downtown," he said.

While business owners said they were able to find quality employees despite the county's low unemployment rate, Ross said outside companies take that into consideration before relocating.

"Companies look at work-force analysis," he said. "It's a numbers issue."

Perini said that with the pay scales offered, people can't afford to live locally. "It's a tough recruit to get people to move here because of the cost of living."

Chlebnikow said his team would review the information compiled from the two meetings and do an analysis.

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to preserve and protect the local heritage and history, provide adequate services for current and future residents, and plan for future growth in the township while revitalizing the borough. The target adoption date of the new plan is February 2008, said Chlebnikow.