

West Monroe Master Plan
Where Do We Start
By Doug Fuegel

Attempting to develop a master plan for the Town of West Monroe is nothing new, more than two decades ago the then town board commissioned a master plan for the purpose of defining the town, setting some guidelines for development both commercial and residential with a goal of making West Monroe a wanted destination for both it's established residents and want to be residents. Perhaps due to poor communication or lack of board interest the plan was never accepted and subsequently swept under the rug and left the town doing business as usual with no visible direction or planning for the future.

In late spring of 2008 your town board commissioned a new Master Plan Committee consisting of eleven town residents with various backgrounds in business, home making and retired persons all long time residents each sharing a deep love and concern for West Monroe. Deliberately only one member, Debra MacDougal Phillips had any connection with town politics first because of her lifetime residence in the town and secondly to aid in keeping the present town board aware of our progress.

Keeping in mind that presently there is no plan now in place for our future, our town is like many, as a wandering animal in the desert with no direction. Developing and accepting a plan will provide an opportunity for a wide spectrum of the community to be involved with shaping the community's physical and economic future. In this regard every Master Plan meeting is open for public comment and involvement. Why prepare a plan at all? Apparently your present Town Board saw this wandering animal with no direction and no future and decided a well-prepared plan can act as a community marketing tool that implemented over time would encourage appropriate private and public investment. By providing a positive current image and optimistic vision for the future a well devised plan can act as a catalyst, a magnet for both local and outside resources to be assembled to best benefit our future and be most desirable for all our residents.

Starting from scratch with eleven people who had never developed any master plans of any magnitude in the beginning seemed a goal unattainable. There is no question the dedicated eleven shared a vision for the future of West Monroe for in the beginning that was all they had, the road ahead would be long, tedious and the sacrifices many. In the beginning no one knew the task ahead, the time involved or any sense of a progress schedule consequently the first order of business was to develop a schedule of meeting every two weeks. Looking back at the beginning I often wonder if a plan would have ever been developed without the leadership of member Steve Patch who brought to the committee at least some knowledge of where to begin and how to develop a plan. Under Patch's guidance the first task of the committee was to create two lists, everything everyone liked and disliked about the towns present condition; surprisingly the committee developed a list of more than 50 likes and dislikes about the town, it was a beginning. After many weeks a rough master plan began to emerge however no one knew if we were on the right course for the town until the Master Plan developed more than two decades ago was resurrected from the archives; surprisingly the similarities to the committees first draft plan and the dusted off version were overwhelming.

Developing a plan for the future of West Monroe was the main charge thrust upon it by the Town Board however the Master Plan committee knew from previous attempts and failures by previous committees that keeping the public informed and communicating often would be our key to success. Hopefully through this publication and other media outlets plus the hard work by West Monroe's web master Paul Baxter we have succeeded at least to some degree. Every published article concerning the plan's progress plus the latest 3rd draft of the plan is on the web site for your viewing and comments.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday July 28, 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall; the 3rd draft plan which is nearing the completion for a final draft plan will be discussed; as always West Monroe residents are urged to attend. Please visit the web site at www.townofwestmonroe-ny.us click on Master Plan to familiarize yourself with its contents.