

## ***15.0 Public Input***

### ***15.1 Introduction***

The purpose of the public input program for the Comprehensive Plan is to build support and understanding for the plan and to incorporate the visions of the community's stakeholders in the plan and the planning process. For the City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan, a public input program was designed to ensure residents and stakeholders were given ample opportunity to participate in the planning process. The following elements were incorporated:

- Vision Session – A Vision Session was held with the Steering Committee at project kickoff. Vision sessions are designed to give the groups the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses of the City and to express their visions of the future. In the case of the department heads, discussion focused on the usefulness of the forthcoming plan and how it could best meet their needs.
- Focus Groups – Seven focus groups were conducted as part of the planning process. Focus Groups are facilitated discussions on a few questions with stakeholders and experts identified in particular topic areas.
- Interactive Public Workshops – The interactive public workshops are designed to allow the public to give their individual input as well as to collaborate with other residents and participants. Two rounds of public workshops were planned:
  - Round One – The first round of workshops focused on the identification of local issues. It featured individual and group input, gave participants the opportunity to give their personal opinions about issues in the City as well as a collaborative group exercise in which participants located the issue areas on maps of the City. The purpose of the session was to educate and inform the public about the plan and process as well as to gather opinions and feedback. The mapping contributed by the groups was used directly in the creation of the Future Land Use Plan.
  - Round Two – During the second round workshops, the goals and objectives of the plan are introduced. A “Futures Plan” graphically depicting potential projects and opportunities for Monroe was presented. Workshop participants were asked to identify priorities from among the proposals presented and to identify additional projects to enhance Monroe's future.



Community Survey – A community survey was mailed to a randomly selected representative number of Monroe households to gain community feedback about a range of community issues. The survey is the only scientifically executed element of the public input program. The survey instrument was developed specifically for the community through consultation with the Steering Committee and is an important indicator of community sentiments. In September 2007, 668 community surveys were mailed to a random sampling of City residents. There was a lower than expected response rate, so the Steering Committee decided to have a second mailing of the community survey in order to determine the reliability of the original survey results. In March 2008, the same survey was mailed to 1,500 randomly selected City residents.

The Public Input Element includes synopses of the vision session, focus groups, workshops and survey. A number of interviews were held throughout the planning process with elected and appointed officials, citizens, state and local leaders and others. A volume of correspondence was also received.

### ***15.2 Vision Session***

On June 26, 2007, 17 members of the Steering Committee participated in a Vision Session facilitated by the consultant. Two members submitted their responses at a later date. Participants were asked to describe the character of the City of Monroe, their vision for the City in 20 years, the City's strength and its constraints.

Steering Committee members provided varied descriptions of the character of the City. Some focused on its potential for growth. While others focused on its ethnic and cultural diversity, its role as a commercial center, or its size, "a big small town". The contrasting perception between what the community is and what it could be is exemplified by the following statement, "Monroe is a beautiful city and historic community with many opportunities and assets both hidden and obvious, yet divisions and egos slow its potential growth".

Barring all constraints, within 20 years steering committee members envision a united city and region, quality job opportunities that offer living wages and community pride. Monroe in the future is envisioned as "a diverse, thriving community with good infrastructure and a highly educated population", "a community of choice for new residents" and "a magnet which provides opportunity for all to progress".

When asked to list the City's most important opportunities and/or potentials, committee members' most frequent responses were the river, the institutions of higher education and beautification of the City. The City's most frequently identified constraints and/or obstacles that need to be addressed were divisions among residents, the poor image/appearance of the community and lack of good paying job opportunities.

Committee members noted the following special issues, among others, that should be addressed as the Comprehensive Plan is developed: lack of unity within the community, racial and economic divisions within the community and dissatisfaction with community leaders.



### *15.3 Focus Group Summaries*

Six Focus Groups session were held as part of the planning process, on June 26 and 27 and August 14, 2007. Focus Groups are facilitated discussions on a limited number of questions for discussion. Questions were posed to Focus Group participants about the character of Monroe, the focus the community should have over the next 20 years and the opportunities and challenges in the City. Discussion topics and participants were identified with the help of the Steering Committee.

The purpose of these sessions is to gather the reflections and insights on the character of the City of Monroe and perspectives on the unique challenges and opportunities facing the City. The Vision Sessions inputs are used along with the other sources of public input to assist in the identification of matters of special concern within the City. The opinions and views expressed during these and other public input sessions help to lay the basis of the goals and objectives for the plan which express the vision of the future for the City of Monroe. These sessions also help alert the consulting team to issues of special concern about which they may not have been aware.

#### Economic Development

Ten individuals were invited to the Economic Development Focus Group held on June 26 and eight attended. Participants described Monroe as a diverse city with potential. Participants noted positive aspects of the community, but also indicated that the City remains “held back” by social issues. One participant described Monroe as “a city in need of a catalyst to bring about positive compromise on issues which have divided us.”

When asked what the City’s economic development focus should be over the next 20 years participants suggested: downtown development, development of the Ouachita River as an asset, education and labor force development, improvement of economically depressed areas of the City, quality of life aspects, property maintenance and litter abatement, maximizing the University resources, commercial redevelopment where infrastructure already exists, developing resources for an aging population and small business and retail development.

Participants noted a number of opportunities for economic development in the City such as developing the Ouachita River as a destination, improving the downtown, improving the South side, emphasizing the Zoo and other cultural and historic assets in Monroe, utilizing the University and developing drug manufacturing and distribution centers to capitalize on the College of Pharmacy and retail development.

Among the challenges mentioned by participants were: lack of self esteem, lack of pride, lack of discipline in the youth population, a need to consolidate the two school systems, overcoming mistrust in our community, healing divisions in the community, interregional competition, transportation issues, improving communication, poverty, attracting industry and preparing youth with readily usable skills.

#### Education

Nine individuals were invited to the Education Focus Group held on June 27 and four attended. Participants described Monroe as a diverse city with a “small town” atmosphere that is rich in cultural activities. While participants noted that the City is economically challenged, it was also said to have potential as the hub for all Northeast Louisiana with great educational potential.



When asked what the City’s educational focus should be over the next 20 years participants suggested: providing a “seamless educational process” for grades K-12 and beyond; workforce training; improving graduation rates, literacy rates and college readiness; providing high school technical programs; providing year-round educational programs for all citizens and developing cooperation and coordination between parish and city school systems.

Participants noted a number of opportunities for education in Monroe including: providing alternative degree programs beginning at the high school level, universal pre-school, schools close to everyone’s home, job fairs/shadowing/internships, getting parents involved, higher education opportunities (Community College, Vocational School, Technical College, ULM, LaTech, GSU), developing civic responsibility in all residents, developing leaders and providing trade school opportunities in high school.

Among the challenges mentioned by participants were: communication, collaboration, cycle of poverty, lack of emphasis on the need for higher educational attainment, parental involvement, stigma associated with two-year college/technical school, addressing issues of race and poverty, willingness to actively consolidate into one school system and an uneducated/under educated adult workforce.

### Transportation

Of the 11 individuals who were invited to the Transportation Focus Group held on June 26, nine attended. Participants described Monroe as a good place to live but one that needs both improvement and a commitment to improvement. The City was also characterized as the hub of Northeast Louisiana that retains a small town atmosphere.

When asked what the City’s transportation focus should be over the next 20 years participants suggested: constructing both a north and a south bridge, more interchanges and overpasses, new airport/airport terminal, a loop within Monroe that’s tied to a loop for the entire Parish, better north/south access, more buses that run later and to more areas and a fully operational Ouachita Port. The need for more sidewalks and wider streets in south Monroe, connections to Amtrak, decreasing traffic deficiencies on Highway 165 and a local option gasoline tax were also mentioned.

Among the challenges mentioned by participants were: limited funding, gas expenses, bringing government and people together, federal regulations regarding railroads, rail crossings and increase rail traffic, city and state ordinances, getting people to come out to public meetings and providing public transit outside of the City.

### Historic and Cultural

Eleven individuals were invited to the Historic and Cultural Focus Group held on June 27 and six attended. Participants described Monroe as a center for economics, arts and culture that has a lot to offer, those cultural resources are being threatened because they are unrealized and unappreciated.

When asked what the City’s historic and cultural focus should be over the next 20 years participants suggested: preservation of historic sites and buildings, education, cultural events, the university as a resource, planning with concrete results, adaptive reuse, maintaining the Civic Center and providing programs to protect cultural activities.



Participants noted a number of opportunities for historic and cultural resources in Monroe including: recognizing the assets the City has, resource coordination, the Ouachita River, marketing the City's historic and cultural resources, developing a museum district and urban core infill development.

Among the challenges mentioned by participants were: educating the public on the historic and cultural assets in Monroe, developing revenue sources, recognizing the importance of historic and cultural resources to the quality of life, lack of coordination and commitment, the need for professional management, building a cohesive plan and the repair and upkeep of structures. Other issues cited by participants included intelligent zoning, planning, landscape and consistent enforcement of sign standards.

### Housing

The Housing Focus Group was held on June 27. Twelve individuals were invited and nine attended. Participants generally described Monroe as a place with potential. It is perceived as being a good place to raise a family, live, work and retire that is full of Southern hospitality yet poverty stricken and facing challenges in the areas of housing, infrastructure and services.

When asked what the City's housing focus should be over the next 20 years participants suggested: increasing safe affordable housing, increasing homeownership, eliminating blight, providing more retirement housing and enacting legislation to address abandoned property.

Participants noted a number of opportunities for housing development in Monroe including: Low Income Housing Tax Credits, upgrade of old housing stock, non-profit - government partnerships, becoming a certified retirement community, rebuilding existing neighborhoods, initiatives for the south side of Monroe, annexation and homeowner training.

Among the challenges mentioned by participants were: funding, jobs, politics, lack of a comprehensive plan, implementing a comprehensive plan, racial and class issues, negativity, communication and cooperation, poverty, uneducated/unprepared labor force, absentee ownership and how to handle adjudicated properties.

Other issues cited by participants included a need to include the youth population in the planning process.

### Parks and Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Focus Group held on June 27. Of the 10 people invited, one attended, the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department. Rather than conducting a focus group session the Director was interviewed regarding issues affecting his department. The director discussed the need for a park and recreation master plan, the department's goal of becoming accredited with the National Parks and Recreation Association and the need for additional staff and funds.

As a result of the poor turnout for the Parks and Recreation Focus Group, the focus group was conducted a second time. Ten individuals were invited to a meeting on August 14 and three attended. Participants described Monroe as a great place to live that tries to provide activities and programs for its residents, but that lacks cohesive pride. Participants felt that the City needs to refocus on the needs of citizens of all ages and backgrounds in terms of parks and recreation programming.



### Youth

The Youth Focus Group was held on December 11 and there were 11 participants. We asked to describe Monroe, the close knit feel of the community and limited things to do were the most frequently mentioned points. One participant described the City as having “some really beautiful places but also some that could use serious improvement.”

Suggested areas to focus on over the next 20 years included increasing job/economic opportunities, cleaning up and beautifying the City, improving education and increasing the cultural and recreational activities in the City.

Important opportunities or potentials included the local education facilities (colleges and high school), the people and the traditions/charm of the area. Identified challenges were crime issues, lack of job opportunities and the mindset of residents.

Most participants indicated that they did not plan to stay in Monroe. The reason most often given was lack of local opportunities in their chosen career path. However, several expressed an interest in helping the City improve.

### ***15.4 Community Survey***

In September 2007, 668 community surveys were mailed to a random sampling of homeowners and renters in the City of Monroe. Respondents were asked to provide information about themselves and to answer questions in the areas of community and government services; community identity and design; land use; culture, history and education; transportation and circulation, environment; recreation; and economy and business services.

There was a lower than expected response rate (17% or 106 responses) to the community survey. Due to the low response rate, the Steering Committee decided to have a second mailing of the community survey in order to determine the reliability of the original survey results.

In March 2008, the same survey was mailed to 1,500 randomly selected homeowners and renters in the City of Monroe. Recipients of the first survey mailing were eliminated from the second sampling pool. The second mailing had a 14% response rate (208 responses). Despite the low response rate, the similarity of results from the two sampling provided increased confidence in the reliability of the results. The following summary discussion reflects an aggregation of the responses from the two survey mailings.

It should be noted that while the survey was randomly distributed, the sample collected by those that responded is not a random representation of the City of Monroe. There is a certain degree of sample bias inherent in all mail-back surveys, due to the fact that a certain segment of the population chooses not to respond. Typically, those who respond to this type of survey are better educated and/or politically motivated.

### Personal Information

As indicated in the table that follows, respondents to the survey were primarily home owners, who lived in one or two person households without any children under the age of 18, worked in Monroe and possessed an Associate’s degree or higher. The highest percentage of responders had annual household incomes that ranged from \$10,000 to \$29,999.



**Table 15-1 Survey: Personal Information**

How many <b>adults</b> (18 or older) are living in your residence, <u>including yourself</u> ?	1	2	3-5	6 or more			
	40.8%	44.7%	14.5%	0.0%			
How many <b>children</b> (under 18) are living in your residence?	0	1	2	3-5	6 or more		
	73.4%	11.7%	11.7%	3.2%	0.0%		
What is your <b>age</b> ?	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-65	65 plus	
	1.0%	9.9%	13.9%	15.5%	30.4%	29.4%	
Do you <b>own or rent</b> the Monroe residence in which you are living?	Own	Rent					
	72.3%	27.7%					
Do you <b>work</b> in Monroe?	Yes	No	Retired				
	51.9%	17.0%	31.1%				
Could you share your annual household income category?	Less than \$10,000	\$10,000-29,999	\$30,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$99,999	\$100,000-149,999	\$150,000+
	11.6%	23.9%	21.8%	16.2%	8.5%	10.9%	7.0%
What is your highest level of <b>education</b> ?	Below High School	High School Grad	Some College	Associates Degree	Bachelors Degree	Masters or Doctorate Degree	
	7.5%	16.0%	22.5%	4.2%	28.3%	21.5%	

Among respondents, 51% reported they live in 71201, 18% reported they live in 71202 and 31% live in 71203. According to Census data, 41% of residents of Monroe are in 71201, 37% are in 71202 and 22% are in 71203. Not all respondents answered the question, and a very few gave zip codes that were wrong, outside the city or are zip codes that exclusively serve post office boxes. Overall, 80% of respondents gave a correct and useable zip code.

Community and Government Services

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements about community and government services issues. Approximately 44% of respondents indicated that they feel safe in Monroe and 34% indicated they were satisfied with the value of City services for taxes paid. However, when asked about specific services, 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with police services, 81% were satisfied with fire services and 72% were satisfied with ambulance services.

**Table 15-2 Survey: Community & Government Services**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I know about <b>City services and offices</b>	8.7%	38.8%	30.1%	17.3%	5.2%
I feel <b>safe</b> in Monroe	4.0%	40.4%	22.9%	22.2%	10.4%
I am satisfied with the <b>value of City services</b> for taxes paid	2.5%	31.4%	26.8%	27.5%	11.8%
My <b>level of satisfaction</b> with the following services is:					
Police	15.1%	46.4%	21.7%	10.2%	6.6%
Fire	23.1%	57.9%	17.7%	0.7%	0.7%
Ambulance	16.7%	55.5%	21.1%	5.0%	1.7%
Streets	3.3%	30.3%	18.7%	30.0%	17.7%
Water and Sewer	6.1%	36.6%	21.0%	21.7%	14.6%
Museums and Cultural Facilities	8.1%	40.4%	31.3%	14.1%	6.1%
Parks and Recreation	8.7%	37.9%	28.5%	17.4%	7.4%



Location of respondents and their level of agreement with the statement “I feel safe in Monroe” are evenly distributed. No clear picture of whether or not residents feel safe emerges because so many respondents stated no opinion one way or another.

Among respondents who live in 71201, 46% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and 37% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among residents of 71202 who responded, 37% agreed or strongly agreed and 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents living in 71203 had the highest proportion agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement; 49% agreed or strongly agreed while 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Families that reported household incomes of less than \$30,000 per year and those reporting incomes of more than \$150,000 per year were most likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement “I feel safe in Monroe.” However, a low proportion of responses for the upper income bracket makes this response somewhat unreliable.

Respondents from 71203 were less positive than the residents of the other two zip codes on the issue of whether they were satisfied with the value of the services they receive from the city. Among respondents in that area, 56% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with the value of the services they receive. Residents of the other two areas, 71201 and -02 were less dissatisfied, 40% and 47% respectively. The level of satisfaction with the value of services is 32%, 22% and 35% respectively in zip codes 71201, -02 and -03.

Community Identity and Design

Respondents were generally ambivalent about whether or not Monroe had a positive sense of identity. Roughly 45% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the City had a positive sense of identity and 25% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. However, there was general consensus that the City should encourage commercial development in the six areas named. Among the areas named for encouraging commercial development 82% of respondents agreed with Mid-City/Louisville while 81% agreed with Downtown and 79% agreed with the I-20 Development Corridor.

**Table 15-3 Survey: Community Identity & Design**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Monroe has a <b>positive sense of identity</b>	5.5%	25.3%	24.6%	31.4%	13.3%
The <b>character and appearance</b> of Monroe’s commercial and public buildings is of high quality	4.0%	24.0%	29.0%	32.0%	11.0%
<b>The City should encourage commercial development in the following areas:</b>					
Downtown	42.9%	38.1%	10.2%	5.1%	3.7%
South Monroe	35.0%	28.7%	17.1%	10.8%	8.4%
Tower-Armand Corridor	29.0%	41.7%	21.9%	4.2%	3.2%
I-20 Development Corridor	37.5%	41.4%	15.7%	3.6%	1.8%
Mid-City/Louisville	39.0%	43.4%	14.5%	2.4%	0.7%
Airport area	37.2%	41.1%	16.8%	3.9%	1.1%

Overall 45% of respondents overall disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “Monroe has a positive sense of identity.” Half of respondents living in 71201 disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement; 47% of respondents from 71202 disagreed or strongly disagreed; respondents from





71203 had the lowest proportion with a poor view of Monroe’s sense of identity: 43% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

As with the respondents’ answers level of agreement with the statement “I feel safe in Monroe” respondents’ ambivalence is high. The proportion of respondents in 71201, -02 and -03 who had no opinion was 22%, 26% and 28% respectively.

Among respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 74% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the city has a positive sense of identity. This is a higher proportion (52%) than those who agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe who also agreed or strongly agreed that the city has a positive sense of identity.

Land Use

Over 70% of respondents agreed that the City needs to identify areas to redevelop housing but 68% of respondents disagreed that mobile homes should be allowed in residential areas. There was no general consensus as to the appropriateness of the range of housing types; 44% of respondents agreed that the City had a broad range of housing types, 28% neither agreed nor disagreed and 28% disagreed. Most respondents (80%) agreed that land should be available for economic development projects. Roughly 85% agreed that industrial uses should be encouraged compared to 71% for office development, 68% for residential development and 65% for retail space development.

**Table 15-4 Survey: Land Use**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Monroe needs to identify areas to <b>redevelop housing</b> to better meet the needs of its residents	35.0%	37.1%	20.1%	3.7%	4.1%
The City has a <b>broad range of housing types</b> to meet residents’ needs and is affordable for all incomes	9.7%	34.1%	28.4%	21.7%	6.0%
There is enough <b>public access to the bayou and river</b>	9.0%	33.4%	25.8%	21.1%	10.7%
The City should encourage <b>more development</b> of:					
Industrial uses	42.5%	42.8%	12.6%	1.4%	0.7%
Offices	29.3%	42.1%	24.5%	3.3%	0.7%
Retail space	28.2%	36.6%	27.8%	5.9%	1.5%
Homes	29.1%	38.5%	25.9%	5.8%	0.7%
Land should be available for <b>economic development</b> projects	39.6%	39.9%	15.6%	2.8%	2.1%
Mobile homes <b>should be allowed</b> in residential areas of the City	10.7%	8.4%	12.7%	21.4%	46.8%

Respondents who live in 71202 were less satisfied with the availability and affordability of housing than those of 71201 and -03. Among the respondents from 71202, 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed that “the city has a broad range of housing types to meet residents’ needs and is affordable for all incomes;” 37% of respondents in 71202 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In contrast, 49% of 71203 respondents agreed or strongly agreed there was available and affordable housing, with 28% of these respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing; among 71201 respondents, 42% were positive on the question and 25% negative.



Culture, History and Education

Respondents generally agreed that cultural facilities (82%) and cultural programs (85%) should be encouraged and that historic and cultural resources (90%) should be preserved. There was also general agreement that public schools should prepare students for further education (96%) yet focus on job readiness (83%).

**Table 15-5 Survey: Culture, History & Education**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The City should encourage additional <b>cultural facilities</b> (concert hall, theater, museum, zoo)	43.0%	39.1%	11.9%	4.3%	1.7%
The City should encourage additional <b>cultural programs</b> (music and art programs and instruction, etc.)	41.4%	44.1%	11.5%	2.0%	1.0%
Monroe needs to continue to identify and preserve <b>historic and cultural resources</b>	40.1%	49.8%	9.1%	0.7%	0.3%
More needs to be done to <b>help owners preserve their properties</b> in Monroe's Historic Districts – Local and National	31.0%	39.3%	25.4%	3.3%	1.0%
There are enough <b>public libraries</b> in Monroe	20.3%	51.5%	15.4%	10.5%	2.3%
The public schools should focus on <b>job readiness</b>	42.6%	40.3%	11.9%	4.6%	0.7%
The public schools should prepare students for <b>further education</b>	57.5%	37.6%	3.3%	1.0%	0.7%
More needs to be done to <b>prevent dropouts</b>	65.0%	28.4%	5.0%	1.3%	0.3%
Monroe's many educational institutions work well together to coordinate and <b>provide educational opportunities</b> for everyone	16.3%	28.2%	30.9%	17.6%	7.0%

Transportation and Circulation

Approximately 61% of respondents supported the construction of another bridge across the Ouachita River and agreed that pedestrian safety was an issue in the City. However, there was no consensus about the adequacy of the Monroe Regional Airport (47% disagreed, 32% agreed and 21% neither agreed nor disagreed) and the adequacy of the quality and safety of the City's road system (41% agreed, 30% neither agreed nor disagreed and 29% disagreed). To solve traffic and safety issues, most respondents agreed that funding should be increased for railway underpasses and overpasses (78%), sidewalks (77%) and additional road connections (76%).

**Table 15-6 Survey: Transportation & Circulation**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I support road projects to <b>increase capacity</b> of:					
I-20	42.9%	42.6%	11.8%	1.7%	1.0%
US 165	32.6%	41.5%	18.4%	6.4%	1.1%
Highway 15 (Winnsboro and South 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	38.8%	40.5%	13.5%	5.2%	2.1%
Louisville Avenue	51.4%	32.3%	10.1%	5.2%	1.0%
I support construction of <b>another bridge</b> across the Ouachita River	28.1%	33.1%	32.5%	3.0%	3.3%
The City of Monroe public transit system is <b>convenient and affordable</b>	30.8%	26.8%	33.1%	6.0%	3.3%
I support the construction of a new terminal at the Monroe Airport	10.0%	22.3%	21.3%	29.6%	16.9%
The <b>quality and safety</b> of our City road system is adequate for the current population and future growth	19.3%	22.3%	30.3%	20.0%	8.0%
<b>Pedestrian safety</b> is an issue/problem in the City of Monroe	30.4%	31.4%	25.3%	9.6%	3.4%
To <b>solve traffic and safety issues</b> , the City should increase funding of:					
Sidewalks to connect neighborhoods and/or retail	37.4%	39.1%	14.9%	6.6%	2.1%
Greenways and trails (pedestrian/bike/walking trails)	28.2%	32.8%	28.9%	5.2%	4.9%
Public transportation (bus, trolley)	29.3%	36.7%	26.1%	5.3%	2.5%



Additional road connections	39.8%	35.6%	18.3%	4.2%	2.1%
Railway underpasses and overpasses	48.2%	29.5%	16.1%	5.4%	0.9%

Environment

The vast majority of respondents agreed that waterfronts, waterways and bayous should be preserved (84%) and that environmentally sensitive lands should be identified and protected (75%). While roughly 66% of respondents disagreed that the City was doing a sufficient job to control litter, there was significant ambivalence in regards to the City’s efforts to address noise, light and air pollution. Over 30% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the City was doing a sufficient job address those issues.

**Table 15-7 Survey: Environment**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Identifying and protecting Monroe’s <b>environmentally sensitive lands</b> (wetlands, wildlife habitat) should be a priority	37.2%	37.8%	19.1%	4.2%	1.7%
Development should be planned to <b>preserve waterfronts, waterways and bayous</b>	44.7%	39.0%	13.6%	1.0%	1.7%
The City is doing a <b>sufficient job</b> to address the following issues:					
Noise Pollution	6.6%	25.2%	32.1%	22.8%	13.4%
Light Pollution	7.1%	29.1%	41.5%	14.2%	8.2%
Air Pollution	5.5%	23.1%	37.9%	21.7%	11.7%
Litter Control	4.4%	17.5%	12.8%	30.6%	34.7%
Appropriate steps are being taken to address erosion, storm water runoff, and other sources that pollute <b>surface and ground water resources</b>	4.9%	19.8%	44.5%	21.9%	8.8%

Recreation

Most respondents agreed that the Louisiana Purchase Garden and Zoo should be upgraded and better maintained (82%), that there should be more active recreational opportunities (78%) and additional community/recreational facilities (66%).

**Table 15-8 Survey: Recreation**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Additional parks</b> are needed in the City	24.9%	30.1%	21.5%	18.0%	5.5%
The <b>Louisiana Purchase Garden and Zoo</b> needs to be upgraded and better maintained	43.5%	38.2%	12.0%	3.3%	3.0%
More <b>passive recreational opportunities</b> (bird watching, nature watching) are needed in Monroe	20.1%	26.8%	41.3%	9.7%	2.0%
More <b>active recreational opportunities</b> (hiking, biking, swimming, fishing, golfing) are needed in Monroe	38.0%	39.6%	16.2%	4.3%	2.0%
<b>Additional community/recreation facilities</b> (baseball/softball, soccer, pool, youth center, etc.) are needed	32.3%	34.0%	24.8%	6.3%	2.6%
More <b>community/recreation programs</b> are needed in Monroe	26.9%	33.4%	30.7%	5.5%	3.4%
I would be <b>willing to pay more</b> for more/better recreation facilities	10.8%	30.3%	29.0%	17.2%	12.8%



Economy and Business Services

The vast majority of respondents agreed that the City should be promoted (92%) and business development and local small businesses should be encouraged (93%). Specifically, businesses in educational and research (93%) and health and medical fields should be encouraged (90%). Most respondents agreed that the City’s image should be improved by making the City more visually appealing (95%), improving the education system (93%) and identifying land and sites for development (88%). While 50% of respondents agreed that the City should have casino and riverboat gambling, 37% disagreed and 13% neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Table 15-9 Survey: Economy & Business Services**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The City should support <b>business development and local small businesses</b>	56.2%	36.4%	6.2%	1.0%	0.3%
The City should encourage businesses in the <b>health and medical</b> fields to locate in Monroe	54.2%	35.4%	8.4%	1.0%	1.0%
The City should encourage <b>educational and research businesses</b> to locate in Monroe	57.8%	35.0%	6.2%	0.3%	0.7%
More <b>large-scale destination retail</b> is needed in Monroe	31.3%	35.7%	22.6%	7.7%	2.7%
The Ouachita Port should be better promoted for economic development	46.2%	36.4%	15.7%	0.7%	1.0%
We need an arena and civic center that can <b>attract bigger and better shows and events</b> to Monroe	42.5%	26.8%	19.0%	9.5%	2.3%
We need to <b>promote Monroe</b> to attract people to live and do business here	61.1%	30.4%	5.6%	2.0%	1.0%
Monroe should have <b>casino and riverboat gambling</b>	34.2%	16.4%	12.8%	10.2%	26.3%
Monroe’s <b>image should be improved</b> and enhanced by:					
Concentrating on making the City more visually appealing	64.3%	31.0%	2.7%	0.7%	1.3%
Concentrating on making the City easier to get around	42.6%	41.9%	12.8%	2.4%	0.3%
Identifying land and sites for development and promoting them	49.7%	38.6%	10.1%	1.0%	0.7%
Developing additional incentives and tax breaks	49.8%	35.1%	11.4%	2.0%	1.7%
Improving the education system	60.9%	31.9%	5.2%	0.7%	1.3%
Improving housing	45.5%	34.8%	15.4%	2.3%	2.0%

**15.5 Interactive Public Meetings**

Issue Identification – Public Workshop

The same interactive public workshop was held at three different community centers within the City:

- October 22, 2007 – Saul Adler Community Center (28 attendees)
- October 24, 2007 – Liller Maddox Marbles Community Center (21 attendees)
- October 25, 2007 – Emily Parker Robinson Community Center (34 attendees)

There were a total of 83 attendees at the three meetings. Participants received a brief PowerPoint presentation that explained the Comprehensive Plan process, summarized the results from the community survey and highlighted findings from the preliminary community inventory. Following The PowerPoint presentation participants were asked to individually answer several questions about land use, circulation, economy and community services in the City. They were then asked to work in small groups to locate on a map the locations where identified issues existed or where there was a need for some action. Finally, each group was asked to identify their top three issues and to share those issues with the other groups.



In regards to land use, the issues that generated the greatest consensus were the need for more affordable housing and the need for improvements in the appearance of commercial development. There was also strong agreement regarding the need for safer rail crossing, the need to identify land to be redeveloped for industrial development and the need to better address storm water and drainage issues.

The table below summarizes the attitudes of the participants on the issues identified in the workbooks.

**Table 15-10 Public Workshop: Issue Identification**

Land Use	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Monroe needs to develop more affordable housing including single- and multi-family.	58.1%	32.3%	8.1%	0.0%	1.6%
The overall appearance of commercial development in the City should be better.	59.0%	31.1%	8.2%	0.0%	1.6%
The overall appearance of residential development in the City should be better.	27.9%	31.1%	14.8%	11.5%	14.8%
Dense mixed-use developments with both commercial and residential together should be encouraged in Monroe.	39.3%	34.4%	19.7%	6.6%	0.0%
Circulation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am concerned with the volume of traffic and traffic safety in the City.	39%	34%	20%	7%	0%
Additional parking is needed in the City.	38%	23%	33%	3%	3%
Pedestrian safety is an issue in Monroe and there is a need for more sidewalks.	61%	20%	15%	2%	3%
There is a need for safer rail crossings in Monroe.	62%	21%	13%	3%	0%
A comprehensive trail system for recreation and transportation purposes is needed in the City.	39%	27%	22%	7%	5%
Economy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Monroe needs concentrated neighborhood commercial and retail service areas.	23.0%	37.7%	16.4%	13.1%	9.8%
Monroe needs to identify land that could be redeveloped for industrial development such as manufacturing and light industrial.	50.8%	39.0%	6.8%	3.4%	0.0%
Monroe has potential tourism destinations.	36.1%	39.3%	14.8%	8.2%	1.6%
The Monroe economic development strategy of pursuing specific industry sectors such as financial services, plastics manufacturing, pharmaceutical and healthcare is a good idea.	38.6%	40.4%	7.0%	10.5%	3.5%
Community Services	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Monroe needs to better address storm water and drainage issues.	53.3%	35.0%	10.0%	1.7%	0.0%
There are adequate community and recreation centers and programs available in Monroe.	26.7%	30.0%	16.7%	15.0%	11.7%



## The Monroe Comprehensive Plan

The City should acquire land now for future parks, open space, schools and community facilities.	30.5%	30.5%	18.6%	11.9%	8.5%
The City should preserve unique natural features and areas to protect open space and encourage public access.	41.4%	32.8%	15.5%	6.9%	3.4%

During the group input, participants worked together to identify issues related to the issue areas addressed in individual input: Land Use, Circulation, Economic Vitality and Community Services. The results appear on the four maps below.

### Prioritization Public Workshop

A second workshop was held March 15, 2008 at the Monroe Civic Center to present the Goals and Objectives of the plan and to get responses and reactions to both the Goals and Objectives and the Futures Plan and graphics. There were 58 residents at the meeting, as well a number of City staff, members of the media and others.

The purpose and process of the Comprehensive Plan were reviewed. The Goals and Objectives were reviewed and directly related to the public input that had been received to date. All participants were provided with a copy of the Goals and Objectives to review at the meeting and on their own. Following the review of the Goals and Objectives the Futures Plan was presented. Residents were given the opportunity to provide feedback and additional ideas about the plan in general, the Goals and Objectives and the Futures Plan. Most of the written comments received were supportive of the Plan. Concerns were raised about many issues that were also noted in other elements of the public input program including economic development, condition of the city's housing stock, downtown revitalization and community cleanup.

Residents also said the city needs more for youths to do and suggested a number of ideas including a performing arts center, a recreation park with ball fields, bike route map and better connections between city neighborhoods and downtown.

Following the formal presentation, during a question and answer period, a number of residents voiced their support for the plan and for planning in Monroe and expressed their optimism about the future of the City.