



2012 ALAPA Awards

Outstanding Media Coverage

This award recognizes outstanding media coverage of planning issues in written or broadcast media by a newspaper, television station, magazine, or radio station.

*Alabama Chapter of the American
Planning Association*



2012 ALAPA Awards

Tuscaloosa News

Coverage of the

*“Tuscaloosa Forward, A Strategic
Community Plan to Renew and Rebuild”*

Nominated by Mr. John McConnell

*Alabama Chapter of the American
Planning Association*



2012 ALAPA Awards

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The Tuscaloosa News provided outstanding media coverage to the citizens of Tuscaloosa County in the days after the storm. Their continued effort to provide information to the community in an open and subjective format was excellent. In addition to editorials and other relevant stories, the News printed the entire planning draft for the recovery for the public to view.

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Outstanding Media Coverage

The Tuscaloosa News

TUSCALOOSA, NORTHPORT, WEST ALABAMA

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2011 50¢

WWW.TUSCALOOSANEWS.COM

Consultants outline vision for rebuilding city

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | A Kansas City, Mo., consulting firm on Tuesday offered a vision for reconstructing a better city after the destruction of the April 27 tornado that hit Tuscaloosa.

The firm, BNIM, introduced itself to residents during the weekly City Council meeting at City Hall.

But BNIM, which was awarded a \$250,000 contract last week by the council, said it has no intentions of shaping the city on its own.

Robert J. Berkebile, a principal for BNIM, told the City Council that the process for constructing a plan to rebuild Tuscaloosa will require a "full, robust community dialog."

"Allowing the whole community to be a part of the dialog will contribute

greatly to your success," Berkebile said.

BNIM will host a town hall on June 30 and has established two websites, tuscaloosaforward.com and townhall.tuscaloosaforward.com, to immediately begin the conversation.

The websites will operate in conjunction with the city task force that was formed to help craft a master plan

for rebuilding the devastated areas of the city.

The websites also bear the new name of group: Tuscaloosa Forward Task Force. Its name was changed from the Rebuild Tuscaloosa Task Force in part because the website bearing the "Rebuild Tuscaloosa" name already had been claimed, officials said.

At tuscaloosaforward.com, resi-

dents will be able to follow along with the progress of the task force and the BNIM consultants as they work toward a July 15 deadline to craft a preliminary master plan for development.

But at townhall.tuscaloosaforward.com, residents can offer ideas about what they would like to see as part of the new Tuscaloosa. The website also

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Spirit of unity marks tornado recovery

Pastors, church members hold prayer service



Pastor Roy Ferguson of Saint John Missionary Baptist Church speaks during the church service. Also speaking were the Revs. Donald Payne of Forest Lake Baptist Church, below left, and Chris Denson, right, of Forest Lake United Methodist Church.



PHOTOS | MARION R. WALKING
People attend a service at Forest Lake Baptist Church on Thursday commemorating six months since the April 27 tornado. Forest Lake Baptist Church, which was hit by the storm, invited other area churches to participate in the service Thursday.

By Matt Cole
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

TUSCALOOSA

Pastors and congregation members from eight churches joined together Thursday night for a prayer service at Forest Lake Baptist Church, in a neighborhood where the April 27 tornado ripped apart homes, businesses and lives six months ago.

tion of race, political party or anything else there as people responded to help tornado victims. He said that after witnessing that example of cooperation, he became confident about Tuscaloosa's ability to recover from the tornado. The Rev. Chris Denson, pastor of Forest Lake United Methodist Church, said the community must keep that spirit alive in the days ahead. "Tonight is about looking forward," Denson said. "We don't want this unity to fade away. We

Pooling ideas to rebuild



STAFF PHOTOS | MICHELLE LEFRANKA CARTER

About 300 Tuscaloosa area residents listen Thursday night as Stephen Hardy of the BNIM consulting firm gives a presentation during a community town hall meeting held by the Tuscaloosa Forward Task Force at the Bryant Conference Center. After the presentation, the audience formed small groups to brainstorm ideas for a master plan to rebuild the city in the aftermath of the April 27 tornadoes.

Residents speak out about plans to revitalize city after tornado

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA

Almost 300 people turned out Thursday night to share their ideas about the future of storm-torn Tuscaloosa. The gathering included students, seniors and men and women of various races and backgrounds. Their ideas focused on maintaining an environmental consciousness while rebuilding an interconnected, livable city.

ON THE WEB

Comments and suggestions on the master plan being crafted by the Tuscaloosa Forward Task Force for the affected areas of Tuscaloosa are still being taken online at <http://townhall.tuscaloosafoward.com>. Additional information on the status of the master plan and the task force itself can be found at <http://tuscaloosafoward.com>.

"We have known all too well that it's our citizens who are going to lead us to a better tomorrow," said Mayor Walt Maddox at the beginning of the organized brainstorming session. "It's going to be your plans, your hopes and your dreams that honor the 43 who died and five who are still missing."

Led by planners with BNIM consulting firm, the community town hall meeting was part of the efforts of the Tuscaloosa Forward Task Force, a collection of about 50 residents. Task force members range from business



Tuscaloosa residents examine and discuss a large map featuring preliminary ideas for rebuilding Tuscaloosa during a Thursday night community town hall meeting held by the Tuscaloosa Forward Task Force at the Bryant Conference Center.

SEE REBUILD | 9A



STAFF PHOTO | ROBERT SUTTON

Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox discusses Tuscaloosa's future with Alberta resident Anthony Benderson during the city's town hall forum on Saturday at Central High School.

Rebuild city safer, better, residents say

Hundreds attend information forum on the Tuscaloosa Forward Strategic Plan

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

ON THE WEB

TUSCALOOSA | Hundreds of residents filtered through the gymnasium of Central High School on Saturday to get a look at and offer suggestions on a proposed master plan that will influence the revitalization efforts of storm-torn Tuscaloosa.

Visitors to the come-and-go public information forum hosted by City Hall began arriving well before the noon start time, and they ranged from those who had lost their homes in the April 27 tornado to indirectly affected residents who were curious about the future of the city where they live, work or study.

Across the freshly waxed gym floor were a series of long tables that offered looks at the proposed Tuscaloosa Forward Strategic Plan that was crafted during five weeks of brainstorming and idea-gathering from city officials, business owners, city residents and the Tuscaloosa Forward Task Force. It centers on seven key elements, ranging from a city-wide greenbelt and walking trail to

SEE CITY | 6A

View the proposed master plan for rebuilding areas of the city damaged on April 27 at tuscaloosafoward.com. Submit comments on the plan at townhall.tuscaloosafoward.com.

WHAT'S NEXT

Aug. 21: Mayor will present the plan to the Citizens Advisory Committee and the City Council for review.

Aug. 15: The Citizens Advisory Committee will present the plan, along with suggestions or changes, to the Planning Commission.

Aug. 23: The Planning Commission's recommendation is due to the City Council.

Aug. 27: Plan could be formally adopted at a regularly scheduled City Council meeting.

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City Council to vote next week on plan to rebuild after storm



STAFF FILE PHOTOS | ROBERT SUTTON

Ray Saunders attends a Tuscaloosa Forward town hall forum at Central High School on July 23. After months of development and input from the community, the formal Tuscaloosa Forward master plan was presented on Tuesday to the City Council and members of the public, who appeared divided over the plan.

Business leaders remain opposed

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | City Council members on Tuesday heard the formal presentation of the Tuscaloosa Forward master plan, a comprehensive rebuilding approach for the tornado-ravaged areas of the city.

No action was taken during the council work session. Council President Harrison Taylor said members will vote on adopting the plan next week during its formal Tuesday night meeting.

However, the residents who packed the council chambers appeared to be evenly divided when Taylor asked for a show of hands of those who favored
SEE PLAN | 3B



Lucy Arnold Sikes and her children, Evers, 3, and Harper, 6, check out the city master plan on July 23. The City Council and the public were given a formal presentation of the plan on Tuesday.

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20 July 2011 | Draft

You hold in your hands the most current draft of the Tuscaloosa Forward Strategic Plan. A final version of this plan will be used as the framework for rebuilding from the April 27 tornado in Tuscaloosa.

This draft plan is the planning team's recommendation based on extensive community input. It is an evolving document, open to change, and has not yet been approved by Mayor Walt Maddox or the City Council.

The planning team is still tweaking things, and more changes are likely following a public workshop from noon-5 p.m. Saturday at Central High School, 905 15th St. At that meeting, consultants and city planners will present most current draft at that point, and invite comments from the public.

From there, the plan will move to the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission and then the City Council for final approval.

As you will see if you spend time to review this document, it is not intended as a construction blueprint. It is about the big ideas behind the construction as it moves forward.

The Tuscaloosa News and the city of Tuscaloosa are sharing in the cost of bringing this full version of the draft report to you today as a public service.

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City consultants unveil proposed rebuilding plan

Officials, residents invited to influence the final version

Proposed BNM plan

Coordinated public facilities

- Existing schools
- Existing police station
- Existing hospital
- Existing fire stations

Greenway

- Parks and open space
- Potential greenway trail

Connected neighborhoods

- Revised key corridors
- Potential trail
- Potential lake route

Neighborhoods

- Potential village center
- Potential master neighborhood

Unique district/land use
Shown below

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

PROPOSED MASTER PLAN

A proposed master plan has been released to City Hall by BNIM, the consulting firm hired by the Tuscaloosa City Council to develop a master plan for rebuilding the areas of Tuscaloosa damaged on April 27. The public will have a chance to comment on this proposal on Saturday at Central High School. The plan presented during this community forum may include additional changes imposed by Mayor Walt Maddox and the City Council.

WHAT'S NEXT

Here is what will happen before the final plan is adopted:

- Aug. 2:** Mayor's presentation of the plan to the Citizens Advisory Committee and the City Council for review.
- Aug. 15:** The Citizens Advisory Committee presents the plan, along with its suggestions or changes, to the city's Planning Commission.
- Aug. 23:** The Planning Commission's recommendation is due to the City Council.
- Aug. 27:** Plan could be formally adopted during this regularly scheduled meeting of the City Council.

Proposed BNM land use

- Village center
- Island use
- Village residential
- Residential
- Participate space
- Greenway trail
- Public/semi public
- Industrial

SEE PLAN | 4A

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WWW.TUSCALOOSANEWS.COM

Tuscaloosa Forward plan passes unanimously

Master plan passes after three weeks of vocal opposition from business owners

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | After more than three months of gathering ideas to influence the vision for rebuilding Tus-

caloosa, the City Council on Tuesday unanimously adopted the Tuscaloosa Forward master plan.

The vote came after three weeks of intense, vocal opposition from 15th Street business owners to the guide-

lines put forth in the nearly 90-page plan, which was crafted during multiple public meetings with input from two city-formed committees.

The opposition, however, was tempered some by supporters who called on city leaders to adopt a vision for a new Tuscaloosa and not allow the same, pre-tornado appearance and lack of amenities to return.

Now, the city will turn to the Code Studio consultant firm of Austin,

Texas, to help craft building codes, zoning rules and other policies that will turn the elements of the Tuscaloosa Forward plan into reality.

Mayor Walt Maddox said he hopes the City Council would have a set of policies, codes and ordinances to consider by Thanksgiving.

And to work alongside Code Studio in the formation of the new rules, Maddox said he intends to call on the

SEE FORWARD | 7A

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Code Studio consultant firm of Austin, Texas, will craft Tuscaloosa Forward's building codes, zoning rules and other policies. The goal is to have that work presented to the City Council by Thanksgiving.

■ **On the Web:** View the Tuscaloosa Forward master plan at <http://tuscaloosafoward.com> under the "Recovery Planning" tab.

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WWW.TUSCALOOSANEWS.COM

Zoning changes within tornado zone unveiled

Draft focusing on multi-use areas met with skepticism by some business owners

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | Residents and property owners were given their first look Monday night at a proposed set of building codes and development guidelines for the planned multi-use corridors within the tornado recovery zone.

And to many, the details were eye-opening.

The proposed regulations were unveiled during a forum at the University

of Alabama's Bryant Conference Center by consultants with Code Studio and BNIM, who indicated the goal of the design standards is to create safe and walkable zones that allow for a mixture of uses ranging from residential to retail. Code Studio and BNIM are the respective building code and master plan consulting firms hired by City Hall to assist in the redevelopment process.

A similar forum is planned for Oct. 27 to discuss proposed changes to neighborhood zones, but Monday's

ONLINE

To view the proposed building codes and zoning rule changes, visit www.tuscaloosaneews.com.

initial draft pertained strictly to the multi-use areas stemming from the Tuscaloosa Forward master plan adopted unanimously last month by the City Council.

The proposed changes focus on three key areas of the city: the 10th Avenue and Interstate 359 corridor, the confluence of 15th Street and McFarland Boulevard and Alberta, which also included areas around Five Points and the intersection of Skyland and University boulevards.

SEE ZONING | 7A



Bart Tingle, left, Jeff Thompson and Eddie Thompson talk with BNIM consultant Aaron Ross during a Tuscaloosa Forward forum to discuss possible code and zoning regulations for business and multi-use corridors at the Bryant Conference Center Monday.

STAFF PHOTO | MICHELLE LEPIANKA CARTER

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