

**Community COMPASS**



HAMILTON COUNTY  
Regional  
Planning  
Commission

## Thanks for Making the Countywide Town Meeting a Success

On Saturday, January 12, 2002, participants, volunteers and facilitators packed Cincinnati Music Hall's ballroom to set the course for Hamilton County's future. The first ever Countywide Town Meeting (CTM) was the largest gathering of its type in which residents from across Hamilton



County came together to plan for the county's future. The meeting was the latest stage of Community COMPASS, the Comprehensive Master plan and Strategies for Hamilton County. Community COMPASS is the first such plan in over 30 years.

Following opening remarks from Hamilton County Commissioners Tom Neyer, Jr. and Todd Portune, Cincinnati Vice Mayor Alicia Reece and Ron Miller, Executive Director of the Hamilton County Regional Planning

Commission, meeting participants began using wireless keypads and laptop computers to learn about each other and begin discussing and addressing some of the most challenging issues facing Hamilton County. Participants were highly representative of the demographic profile of Hamilton County in the 2000 census (see table to the right). Participants also represented all geographic areas of the County.

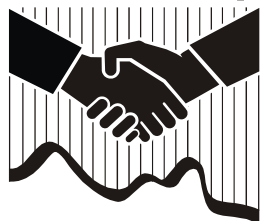
To become familiarized with the wireless technology, participants were polled about chili preferences using keypads. When asked how they prefer to eat their chili, 33 percent of the participants prefer the chili, spaghetti and cheese combo of the 3-way, while 4-ways and 5-ways rounded out the top three preferences.

### CTM Racial Breakdown

<i>African American</i>	20%
<i>Asian or Pacific Islander</i>	2%
<i>Caucasian</i>	74%
<i>Hispanic</i>	2%
<i>Mixed Race</i>	2%
<i>Native American</i>	1%
<i>Other</i>	1%

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## Participants Confirm Four Core Issues

After lunch, participants began discussing four core issues facing Hamilton County. Eight hundred participants in 12 public forums last fall identified these core issues:

1. Assuring Economic Prosperity
2. Building Collaborative Decision-Making
3. Embracing Diversity and Equity
4. Balancing Development and the Environment

## Shared Things We Value

Early in the meeting Saturday, participants were asked to name the places and things they valued about Hamilton County. A group of people at the meeting known as the Theme Team reviewed the many responses from the participants, combined similar ideas, and created a list of things that citizens value together about their county. These shared values included:

- Greenspace, parks, and the Ohio River
- Downtown Cincinnati
- Variety of arts, culture, and recreation
- Hillsides and topography
- Community facilities (hospitals, YMCA, library, zoo)
- Education (especially higher education)
- Historic resources and character
- Sense of community (walkable, bike & hike trails, diversity of neighborhood character)
- Easy accessibility to shops, work, facilities



## The Challenges Hamilton County Faces

The ten greatest challenges that will disrupt future efforts to balance development and the environment, according to participant input included:

- Lack of balance/different view points
- Lack of public/private partnerships between developers and communities
- Resistance to change by vested interests
- Policies that encourage sprawl
- Private developers drive development
- Lack of coordination of investment with regional comprehensive land use planning
- Lack of appropriate leadership from public officials
- No understanding of Hamilton County role in development
- Balancing private property rights with larger public interests

## Improving Citizen Participation

Participants were asked for ideas on how to increase public involvement in the planning and governmental processes in the future. Some of these ideas were:

- More Townhall Meetings
- Use the technology that is available (e-mail, internet, interactive TV)
- County-wide development authority
- Questionnaire with city & county income tax statements
- Web-based forums
- Keypad the entire community
- Reinstate block clubs
- Ombudsperson
- Expand county commission to fifteen members

## What Happens Next?

The planning process did not stop on Saturday January 12<sup>th</sup>. From this point, COMPASS action teams (CATs) will be formed around the four key issues discussed. These CATs will help identify concrete action steps that can make the vision for the county a reality. The CATs will meet in the coming months to identify potential solutions to the issues identified and discussed at the Countywide Town Meeting and will report their findings to the public in August. Meeting times and places are to be announced. If you would like to volunteer your time and expertise to one of the four CAT's, you can call the Community COMPASS hotline at 946-4505 or if you would like more information about the CAT process, please contact Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission by telephone at 946-4500.