



Media Advisory

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TCMA presents Spring Hill with 2016 Award for Excellence in Municipal Government

NASHVILLE, Tenn. --- As the growing population of Middle Tennessee contributes to mounting transportation concerns in the region, the city of Spring Hill is moving toward the future by utilizing in-house resources to develop updates for its Major Thoroughfare Plan, Comprehensive Plan and the adoption of a Roadway Impact Fee study.

In recognition of the efforts of city leaders and employees to provide the best direction possible for the city, the Tennessee City Management Association presents the city of Spring Hill with the Excellence in Municipal Government Award.

Under the leadership of Mayor Rick Graham and City Administrator Victor Lay, the city updated its Major Thoroughfare Plan through 2040, coordinating the city's own vision with those of the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

"This award speaks volumes about what a talented staff we have onboard at the city of Spring Hill to be able to write our city's largest and most important long-term planning documents, and set up a custom fee structure for assessing roadway impact fees, without the help of an outside firm," Spring Hill Mayor Rick Graham said. "And that level of knowledge, skill and dedication has saved our city a great deal of money that will be put into actual construction projects to address Spring Hill's booming growth."

Assistant City Administrator Dan Allen said the new plan simplifies classifications of roadways, emphasizes connectivity and safety, as well as provides direction on rights-of-way the city needs to acquire and dedicate for future widening projects. One of the city's major challenges is the need for widening U.S. Route 31, which is one of the city's main arteries and serves as its Main Street.

"In the short-term, we have a major emphasis on interconnectivity," Allen said. "It is going to take a long time to plan a Highway 31 widening project. We know road funding is a challenge, and there is some discussion about ways to solve that problem. For the time being, things are very tight. For a high growth town like Spring Hill, maintenance mode doesn't work for us. Too many people are coming too fast. If we don't have money to upgrade our main roads fast enough, we have to add capacity by adding multiple ways to get around."

Rather than outsourcing, the city used in-house talent to conduct its own Roadway Impact Fee study. City staff researched development trends and forecasted projects for the next 10 years. These projections were then used to create various funding scenarios for the city. City officials reached out to the development community and other elected officials to compare their projections before adopting and implementing the impact fee study.

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“We took the elements of other city’s plans and combined them into what would work for us,” Allen said. “When you are doing something yourself and in-house, looking at what everyone else is doing makes things more efficient. We already had a roadway impact fee ordinance that had been adopted, but there was no fee schedule. The bones were there and we had plenty to work with. Ultimately, developing the fee schedule helped get things done.”

City staff also worked to update the Spring Hill Comprehensive Plan in-house, working alongside the mayor to develop a steering committee of citizens representing different demographics within the community. Allen said members of the 18-person steering committee included a firefighter, a retiree with planning commission experience, a grandmother, a pastor, a mechanic, young parents, and young professionals.

“We didn’t want this plan to be the city’s plan, the mayor’s plan or an individual’s plan,” Allen said. “We wanted it to be our plan. We all live here, and we all have a stake in what happens here. We really talked about who we are and what we want to be.”

The comprehensive plan – named Spring Hill Rising: 2040 – was coordinated with the Major Thoroughfare Plan for the city and integrates land-use and transportation planning decisions to better address the city’s rapid growth and infrastructure needs. Five public meetings were held to gather feedback and make recommendations on the plan.

Together, these three plans represented an estimated \$150,000 in cost savings to the city because they utilized in-house resources. Additionally, all three projects helped modernize and coordinate planning documents to allow city officials to have better tools and policy guides regarding zoning and infrastructure investment.

“The city has hired a lot of people with planning and engineering expertise. We decided to let the people that live here and have all this expertise do all the planning,” Allen said. “The thought is we know it better than anyone else, especially a consultant from out-of-town. It also helped us free up money toward getting actual infrastructure in the ground. Every dollar we can spend on asphalt rather than paper is a win for us.”

“The city of Spring Hill has grown at an incredibly rapid pace over the last 15 years. Fortunately, the city has very capable leadership through strong, knowledgeable department heads and very supportive elected officials. The development of these studies in house is a testament to the collective vision and talent of all involved. Now that these fundamental plans are set in place, we are actively working on real and viable solutions to our growth challenges,” said Victor Lay, Spring Hill city administrator.

In addition to these three major projects, city leaders and staff have also celebrated the success of other important projects and programs over the past year, including:

- Neighborhood Sidewalk Program – After identifying a need to respond more quickly to requests for multi-modal projects, the city developed its own Neighborhood Sidewalk Program, which provides a separately funded annual budget allotment of \$50,000 specifically for small scale projects like sidewalks and multi-use trails. The city has invested more than \$100,000 in partnerships with local neighborhoods to build sidewalks that

provide safer routes to school, better connectivity and promote better health among citizens.

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- Port Royal Park – At 30 acres, the new Port Royal Park is the city’s largest park and includes some of the features most requested by citizens. The new park includes a splash pad, veterans’ memorial wall, football fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, walking track, amphitheater, concessions building, and a playground with accessibility for children in wheelchairs and other disabilities. A new fire station is also located on the park property.
- Reserve Boulevard – A public-private partnership, Reserve Boulevard is a recently completed arterial roadway made possible through a \$1.75 million contribution from local developers and property owners and \$785,000 from the city. The unique partnership allowed the city to leverage private capital to construct the road with the cooperation of adjacent property owners. A new assisted living facility is slated to begin construction off the road.

“Spring Hill is widely known as one of the fastest growing communities not just in Tennessee but in the whole country. One of the hallmarks of the council-manager form of government is the process whereby elected officials and the community work together with the professional staff to create great outcomes. The long-term planning efforts in Spring Hill are a great example of this cooperative effort and very worthy of being awarded TCMA’s Award for Municipal Excellence,” said Kirk Bednar, TCMA president and Brentwood City Manager.

TCMA’s Award for Excellence in Municipal Government is awarded to a municipality that has developed unique and creative programs to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local government, sustainable programs that provide long-term health benefit to the community and can serve as a model for other communities, programs that improve service delivery to citizens and generate cost savings, or initiatives that have expanded the communities tax base or increased employment opportunities.

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The Tennessee City Management Association is a professional association of appointed city Managers and administrators and assistants that focuses on providing continuing education, technical assistance, training, and information resources to its 120 members. Managers are appointed by their elected boards to oversee the day-to-day operations of their cities or towns. Professional administrators work in partnership with their elected boards to create excellence in local governance.