

BizPac 2008 Candidate Information

Name Loretta P. Spencer Phone 536-2861

Home Address 1273 Becket Drive, Huntsville, AL 35801

Public Office You Are Seeking Mayor

Campaign Address Bob Wallace Avenue

Education B S Elementary Education

Work Experience Taught school, worked 24 years in family business, divorced and worked in another family business for 10 years.

Community Involvement Army Community Relations Committee, AUSA Board of Directors, NCAC Board, Community Free Clinic (charter board member), Crimestoppers Board (charter member), Chamber of Commerce – Executive Board, Rotary Club, First Methodist Church (usher twice a month).

Previous Political Experience Three (3) Terms as Mayor of Huntsville, Alabama

Campaign Organization (staff and key volunteer leaders) _____

Are you a graduate of the Committee of 100's Political Training Institute? No

Have you received any other political training? Please describe. No

Are you a graduate of the Leadership Huntsville-Madison County program? No. I started the program, planning the outline and wrote and chaired the "Quality of Life" section . Graduate of Leadership Alabama Class 1999-2000.

How much money have you raised to date for your campaign? _____

2008 BizPac Interviews
Huntsville Mayor/City Council Candidate Survey Questions

1. **Why are you running for this office and what do you hope to accomplish during the next four years?**
 - A. To complete the BRAC move – a commitment made to the Congressional delegation and multiple economic developments that I'm in the process of completing.
 - B. Complete construction of Lee High School, the 4th TIF, making a more Efficient school system, completing the EUL for Redstone Arsenal and the needed infrastructure.

2. **Do you see a need for a long-range vision for Huntsville and/or Madison County? If so, how should it be developed?** Yes. We began this process by putting a priority on schools. I have recruited industries since the late 70s when NASA had its downturn. We began by recruiting industries from Europe and pushed to diversify so as not to be so dependent on the federal government. When people looked at relocation, schools become the number one consideration, then they look at health care followed by quality of life. We have continued the process by recruiting Asian-Pacific companies such as L G Electronics and Toyota. We have always tried to be selective in recruiting environmentally clean businesses.

Greenways: Since 1996, the City has aggressively pursued grant funding to implement our Greenway system to provide close to home recreation and alternative transportation options for our citizens. Our system has become a great success and we look forward to continuing its expansion. Currently, we have just over 15 miles of paved greenway trails available and have utilized \$3,305,230 of grant funds to construct these trails. We also have partnered with the Land Trust of Huntsville and North Alabama to create the Wade Mountain Preserve in Northwest Huntsville. The City has obtained \$165,000 for acquisition and trail improvements in the Preserve to create over 4 miles of the unpaved portion of the greenway plan system.

The City has also been awarded two additional grants for a total of \$1,656,000; one for an extension of the Eastern Bypass greenway along Little Cove Road and a second for an extension of the Flint River Greenway in the J.D. and Annie S. Hays Nature Preserve. Both of these projects have been designed and construction should begin soon.

The City of Huntsville has been fortunate enough to acquire three major tracts of land through donations – J.D. and Annie S. Hays Nature Preserve (500 acres), Elliott Gift (90 acres) and Goldsmith-Shiffman Preserve (375 acres).

Annexations: The City of Huntsville annexes property primarily at the property owner's request. This policy should not be confused with an unorganized or haphazard approach to the growth and development of our city. All

annexations are discussed and analyzed to plan for future infrastructure and facility needs. For example, the western area fire station and sanitary sewer upgrades (150 million dollars has been spent to upgrade and extend the sewer systems) have been planned for several years, as well as additional schools, with the foresight that annexation to the west would occur. Park lands have been acquired to provide for recreation within our newly annexed areas.

Another primary consideration is that major corridors for commercial development which have been annexed into Huntsville provide increases in revenue that can be used to fund services city-wide, not just within the newly annexed areas.

- 3. What do you believe is the Mayor/City Council's role in economic development? Do you believe it is appropriate for the County Commission to purchase land for future industrial parks?** The Mayor's role in economic development is to be front and center leading the way, which is what I have done on projects such as Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Target and Verizon. I also play a very personal role in building and maintaining relationships with the Army, our Washington Delegation, and State Government, who all come to the table to help as a team to recruit new industry.
- 4. Do you support strategic marketing and incentives such as TIFs to stimulate retail/sales tax development? If so, what is your vision for this effort?** Yes. Without the support of a TIF, the construction of Lee High School would not have moved forward, or the opportunity to put funds into renovating schools in south Huntsville, as well as the EUL TIF for Redstone Arsenal.
- 5. What strategic steps should the City take over the next four years to expand and strengthen long-term revenue sources?** Roads – getting and continuing state support for infrastructure. Continue to be aggressive about the types of companies we recruit, but not drop our standards – the EUL on Redstone is a good example of not only helping our military base, but also making us a desirable location to move to. Due to the way this state operates, we will always be dependent on sales tax. This is why we have worked so hard to have our high bond rating (best in the state) in order to have a low interest rate when we go to the bond market. We continue to be in the top ten in all categories of cities to live, work and play, which makes us attractive for the relocation of businesses. This is why we worked very hard to have a successful 1995 BRAC (over 60% responded) because we knew that success would build for the next BRAC and it did.

- 6. Do you support efforts to better attract and retain the young, professional workforce to this community to fill advanced technology and other jobs? Do you have additional ideas to strengthen these efforts?** Yes. I am meeting quarterly with members of the Connect Class. We have enlarged it to include Huntsville, Madison County and the City of Madison. It started when they came to interview me about the Dog Park, and now I'm developing a second one. Supporting young professionals is another prime reason we made the investment we did in Bridge Street. I was selective about the particular stores as well as the restaurants we would bring, along with a first adventure as the Monaco experience—first in the country that they (the developers) would build. I also give five, annual, \$4,000 scholarships to deserving college students to encourage interest in science and engineering with ASMDA (Air, Space & Missile Defense Association).
- 7. Do you support the efforts of Big Spring Partners to stimulate downtown development with zoning and code changes, strategic master planning, redevelopment of private and government property, and other initiatives? Do you believe it is appropriate for the city to provide infrastructure improvements that will stimulate additional downtown development?** Yes. I encouraged the formation of Big Spring Partners when we had the opportunity to buy the Hilton Hotel. I have completed a number of public-private partnerships since being in office, including; Colonial Bank garage, Embassy Suite Hotel, Jeff Sikes' building on the Courthouse Square, The Summit, YMCA and the Thrasher Fountain.

The City has developed a comprehensive downtown master plan that was adopted in 2006. This plan is still being implemented to address the numerous and varied issues associated with downtown redevelopment and historic preservation. We, as a city, have many viewpoints about the future vision of our community and particularly our downtown. Our downtown exemplifies where this community came from and will be the heart of where we are going. For these reasons, much emphasis has been placed on developing a master plan that focuses on downtown, not only our traditional core, but also the future opportunities to expand our downtown with vibrant live, work and play opportunities.

Much discussion has been created by the height limitation that currently exists in the downtown zoning classification. The 2006 Downtown Master Plan recommended placing height limitations downtown, as did the 1989 Downtown Master Plan. Both plans were approved by the Planning Commission, but only after many public meetings were held with various stake holders as well as a steering committee. Public involvement has and will continue to be paramount in the development of all master plan documents.

However, when concerns were raised by differing groups regarding the height issue, several options to modify the height requirements were proposed. Three different options have been presented for public hearing and two options have gone to the City Council for approval, one of which would have eliminated the height restriction on the majority of downtown completely. However, again, due to the many voices in our community with varying opinions, the Council has declined to approve any modifications to the existing Zoning Ordinance, which was approved based on the adopted Master Plan.

The planning process is a participatory, often controversial function, but it does work and there are many examples of its success. The rezoning of the Lincoln Mill area, which was another element within the Downtown Master Plan that was implemented is a resounding success and is assisting to bring stability to a needed affordable housing area in our downtown core. Also, the zoning in the area was specifically written to preserve and protect the historic character of the mill village area.

We will continue to work with the Council to reach the same level of success regarding heights downtown.

Downtown Streetscape Project: The downtown streetscape project includes a major renovation of the courthouse square. The features include: new Granville light poles and fixtures, as well as traffic signal poles to match the downtown standard; a rework of the curbs to add 31 new parking spaces; 2 redesigned bus stops on north and south side square, new concrete sidewalks with brick edging to eliminate trip hazards, and new landscaping and irrigation. The estimated cost of this project is 2.9 million dollars and it is projected to begin October 1, 2008.

- 8. What do you believe is the Mayor/City Council's role in public education?** Mortar and bricks since so many buildings are fifty years old – it is part of a community's image and funding for school programs. The last four years we have been able to add an additional million dollars due to new construction and new retail sales tax. I recently chose to serve on a committee to determine what best could be done with under utilized facilities.
- 9. How would you work to improve cooperation between the Mayor and the City Council and within the City Council?** I presently have a very good relationship with the Council. They have passed my annual budget without changes the past eleven years. We also continuously communicate.

10. How would you work to improve cooperation with Huntsville, Madison and Madison County government entities? What opportunities do you see for shared services to improve our quality of life? We are doing joint bidding with the county as we can to facilitate savings, we jointly do road work with the County and Madison, and we just started handi-ride for Madison City. We do joint police grant work – I house EMA, at no charge, for all three of us. I also house the HEALS Clinic office for Huntsville and Madison County, at no charge. Huntsville carries the larger load for the Public Library, Madison County Health Department and Mental Health. The city is covering 50% of the Winchester Road widening for the county.

The City has assisted the county volunteer fire departments through donations of surplus vehicles, and fire equipment. The City has also applied for a one million dollar grant for an outdoor public safety training facility under the agreement that all agencies both police and fire in Madison County may utilize. The City of Huntsville annually shares a Byrne Grant with Madison County for technology upgrades.

The City pays the 50% match to fund the MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) for Huntsville, Madison County, Madison City, Owens Cross Roads and Triana. We furnish office space and administrative staff. The 5 TIFs we have completed benefit education in Huntsville, Madison County and Madison City. The TIFs have brought in 6.6 million dollars for education with 3.2 million being utilized in the City of Huntsville and the remaining amount being dispersed between Madison County and the City of Madison.

11. How would you work to stimulate state government support for local projects? This is how we built 10 houses on Redstone Arsenal for new generals' quarters. We work closely with the Highway Department for specific road projects we need. We also appreciate the value of our federal delegation for major projects.

Local Roads: The City of Huntsville and the State of Alabama have spent over 217 million dollars on roads over the past 4 years. For the next 4 years, over 244 million dollars will be spent. Huntsville is one of the few areas where the State is spending money for increased capacity for the transportation system. Our long range plan is a 25-year plan that will be implemented over a 25-year schedule. Based on the funding commitments the State has made for the next 4 years, and if this level of commitment can be continued for the remainder of the planning period, we believe the plan will be implemented on schedule.

When projects are designed and constructed using federal highway dollars, the federal process must be followed and can lengthen the time required to complete a project.

State Aid: The September 2006 Study concerning road funding has been presented to the Governor, and as a result, the State has increased the level of road funding from about 16 million dollars per year to about 35 million dollars. This significant increase was a direct result of lobbying by the City of Huntsville with the Governor. Other types of state aid are more dependant on politics and the specifics of the needs.

- 12. Do you support collective bargaining for public employees? If so, what do you see as the advantages of a public employee union?** No. I work hard to maintain a positive relationship with all our City employees and do not see the need for further unions.
- 13. Give an example when you believe you did the right thing, but the decision may have cost you votes.** Over the past twelve years there have been many issues that were not politically popular, such as the TIF programs, some of our downtown development projects, and my efforts to require greater accountability from our school leaders. All were controversial and have been used against me by political opponents, and all continue to be the right thing to do.