

A Solid Record,  
A Clear Vision...



Finishing What We Started

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## Preface

**Putting ideas and goals on paper, for everyone to see, discuss and understand, is an important aspect of being a serious candidate for public office.** Brad Cole developed a comprehensive, eighteen page position paper that he immediately released to the community when he announced his first bid for Mayor of the City of Carbondale in 2003. That position paper has served as a steady template and guidepost for Cole's four years in office; a copy rests on his desk at City Hall for daily reference.

Now, with many accomplishments under his belt and with numerous projects in motion, Mayor Brad Cole releases an update to that original position paper. **This document, part of his plan for the next four years as Mayor, symbolizes his continued belief that a candidate should have reasonable and rational goals and objectives when seeking election.** The position of Mayor requires responsibility, leadership and professionalism. It is a full-time post that deserves full-time attention. Some ideas include "big thinking" goals that will take longer than four years to achieve, but must be started now for success in the future. Other ideas are "common sense" and just need the right vision for prompt implementation; they need a clear vision like Mayor Brad Cole's.

In addition to his annual State of the City addresses, the original 2003 planning document and this 2007 update, **these position papers are Brad Cole's written pledge to move Carbondale forward as a community, as a municipal government and as the recognized Capital of Southern Illinois.**

More information and all of the documents mentioned here, including press releases and remarks made at several public events, are available anytime on-line at [www.teambrad.com](http://www.teambrad.com). The public is invited to give feedback and make suggestions as these plans develop further and are put into practice.

## Growing the Community

It has been a central effort of Mayor Brad Cole's administration to recruit new investment and build a revitalized economy that diversifies its interests to include more than just a few centerpiece industries. In today's competitive environment, where communities and even states fight against each other to offer the most-attractive incentive packages for new business, this effort takes longer than many people understand and it becomes more and more complex with each new business prospect. **Our mayor understands what it takes to start from scratch, to begin to rebuild an economic base and to stimulate new growth.**

Government, especially local government, must begin to adopt an entrepreneurial approach, a spirit of initiative and a willingness to consider how rules, regulations or bureaucratic red tape impact business development. Too often, the people who regulate business have lost touch with the people who run business. A meeting of the minds, a more constructive atmosphere and an open dialogue need to be established in order for both sides to understand the other, and for government to increase its effectiveness. **Mayor Cole has named a Business Development Roundtable for this very purpose;** it meets quarterly and its sole function is to bring forward ideas and opportunities to make it easier to do business in Carbondale.

### Economic Development

Knowing that full-scale changes needed to happen, the Mayor garnered widespread support to pull economic development back into City Hall. The organizational change meant substantial savings and greater accountability, which came along with better, more integrated customer service that could be offered to new businesses as they moved from concept to completion with their projects. Efficiency and timeliness are critical issues for developers who commit thousands or even millions of dollars to see a deal get done. Improvements could be seen almost overnight and are still being made every day along these lines.

Undertaking the City's first-ever Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to spur development in the downtown area, the City of Carbondale has seen nearly thirty acres of previously blighted land turned into prime real estate, ripe for rapid development. **With an aggressive plan to demolish old buildings and clear the land for speculation, the heart of the community has been transformed during the past four years** from an area with falling-down, abandoned structures and busted-out windows and doors to the center of positive attention along our main commercial traffic thoroughfare. With new retail stores and professional services, the first full-service and family-owned grocery store to be located downtown in decades, and other developments already underway, the TIF project has shown what can be done when government planning and foresight join together with concentrated private investment.

An emphasis has also been placed on improving retail stores and outlets that attract consumers from throughout the region. Carbondale is known for its national, name brand stores and unique specialty shops that provide customers with products that they would normally only find in major metropolitan areas. Balancing both sides of the retail equation – the developers and the customers – is often tricky and relies partly on financial forecasting, partly on trends and market adjustments, partly on gut instinct and largely on timing and luck. **The community has fared-well under the leadership of Brad Cole**, someone who knows when a deal is worth making and also knows when the costs are just too high or the benefits are just too low to work out in the best interests of the community. The same is true for restaurant development, an industry with an appetite as fickle as the customers they serve, and one that sees constant change within itself.

### Quality, Affordable Housing

In order for a business to come to this or any other community, there has to be reason for investing. As big or small business looks at growing they also look to see if the community is growing around it, and how. **For too long, Carbondale was stagnant in the growth of its housing stock.** Old properties were the norm and barely a dozen or two new houses were being built each year. **Under a plan designed by Mayor Brad Cole, that has changed remarkably.**

New housing starts in any given month now equal what they had once been in a full calendar year. Home construction incentives were put into place to offset certain infrastructure costs that seemingly made the overall cost of building and owning a new home slightly out of reach. The result will be meeting the lofty goal of building 200 new homes within three years of establishing the program. And the program isn't only for new subdivisions and planned growth, it also recognizes the availability of existing lots throughout town and provides resources for those lots to be developed one at a time or in blocks to in-fill and reduce sprawl. **This program is the envy of other communities and should be continued indefinitely -- and it will be under the renewed leadership of Mayor Brad Cole.**

Why focus on housing starts and building new residential opportunities for Carbondale? Why is it the city government's concern? Quite simply, because as the community sat still for years in some of its economic development efforts, it also sat still in population growth. **It is Mayor Cole's vision to see Carbondale reach a population mark of more than 30,000 by the year 2020... or sooner, if possible.** For too long the city's population has hovered just above 25,000 residents. The trend must be reversed and the community must look to all possible ways to increase its population base. This will assist with business development and job growth potential, and it will help stabilize the public school systems that have seen steady declines in general student enrollment at the elementary and secondary levels. The downward spiral needs to be reversed into a steady uplift, or the harsh effect will be felt for years to come.

## Taxes and Spending

A key factor that everyone points to when discussing both business growth and housing expansion is real estate property taxes; they're too high. **It was Brad Cole who proposed eliminating the City's portion of property taxes, and since he has been Mayor not one cent in property tax has been collected for city government purposes.** It is the Mayor's commitment to continuing this policy and continuing to make the government's ends meet without adding to the property tax burden of already-strapped home owners and small business people. **As your Mayor, Brad Cole will never vote to re-instate the City's portion of property taxes.** Creative "big thinking" about new revenue sources and reducing government expenditures are the way to keep hard-earned tax dollars in the pockets of hard-working tax payers, and not in the cash drawer at City Hall. It has worked for four years and with committed, strong leadership it can continue to work.

At the same time, it will be important to keep a watchful eye on government spending. A standard has already been set to keep costs down and slow the expansion of government, but as more people want more things and expect the local government to pay for them, tough decisions wait around almost every corner. The City Council should continue to review and examine the funding process for outside organizations, making sure that priorities are kept current and that there is a return on investment for public dollars. That return can be in the form of services or programs to underserved populations or at-risk individuals, and in some cases that may warrant more funding rather than less, but accountability should be in the forefront.

Budgeting and financial management skills are essential in a mayor. **Mayor Brad Cole has proven himself to be an informed and dedicated steward, with an intricate knowledge of the city's budget and financial policies.** His common sense approach to difficult situations and his willingness to consider new solutions for old problems will help guide the community through the end of the decade.

## Investing in the Future

Public infrastructure takes on many forms in today's world. It's not just the roads and bridges or the water and sewer lines of past generations. **Today, investing in the future of a community involves planning for technologies that don't currently exist and recognizing both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence and improve the quality of life for families, neighborhoods and an entire community.**

### The Virtual World

Virtually everything that someone needs or wants can be obtained via the World Wide Web. The youth of today have resources available at their fingertips that were only dreamed of by prior generations. From on-line academic programs to e-mail and instant messaging, 24-hour banking to global mapping, internet shopping, on-demand entertainment and so forth, technological advancements continue to outpace even the boldest inspirations and expectations. **Meeting the needs of evolving market influences for internet access and providing electronic opportunities for managing daily chores are challenges that local governments must be able to address and meet.**

**Mayor Cole recognizes the need for keeping up with the opportunities and advantages that come with new technology.** It is because of this that the City of Carbondale expanded its on-line bill paying programs and updated its web site to include new products and services that can be accessed from any where at any time, reducing the need for people to physically stop by City Hall for a permit form or job application or to pay a water and sewer bill.

The same rationale was the impetus behind pushing for public access, wireless internet, also known as Wi-Fi. **The initial plan that is already in process will allow for wireless internet access in the downtown area, giving transient business people, students of all ages and many others the ability to log-on for short periods of time for personal or professional reasons.** The network will be ready for easy expansion to include many more of the community's parks, schools and open spaces as additional resources are committed and improvements are made to equipment and transmission products.

### Public Facilities

Already more than ten years old, the City Hall/Civic Center has taken its place in the heart of downtown. As a convenient meeting place and popular reception hall for small and large functions, the building has become a symbol of the community. Investments must be made to stay ahead of the aging process and to be able to market the facility for additional uses. Maintenance and upkeep are obvious needs for any structure,

but there should also be upgrades and finishing touches that improve the appearance and appeal of this important facility.

The City Hall side of the building needs a breath of fresh air to rejuvenate some of its sterile walls and corridors. **This is why Mayor Cole has worked with area school children to line the second floor hallway with painted tiles, one from each elementary school student** (more than 1,000 total). The dynamic color this will bring when completed will be a daily tribute to our youth and it will also inject some excitement into the otherwise stoic structure. The same can be done throughout various offices, with designs and colors and messages aimed at improving the surroundings for both employees and customers. Paying a traffic ticket or going to court is depressing enough without being engulfed by a drab office that only reminds that person of an overcast day. Small but noticeable changes could make a lasting impression and also improve morale of those who work in the building everyday.

Perhaps the most important community investment project now underway is the planned construction of a joint-use public safety center to house the City of Carbondale Police Department, the Southern Illinois University Department of Public Safety, an emergency services control center and administrative offices for the City of Carbondale Fire Department. **It was Brad Cole who obtained a \$750,000 Illinois FIRST grant to kick-start this effort and he continues to lead the advocacy effort that seeks to garner federal, state and local funds to see this through to completion.** It may take several more years until the doors are opened for this first-of-its-kind joint-use facility, but **Mayor Cole believes in it and he won't stop working until it's done.**

Better coordination between departments and more efficient use of space will allow all of the proposed tenants of this public safety center to improve and increase services to the public. **State of the art equipment, the addition of holdings cells and more-spacious evidence storage areas, as well as improved public accessibility will be just some of the benefits from the new structure that is to be located on the site of the former Lincoln Middle School.** The surrounding area will also be bolstered by the regular presence of public safety personnel in an area that has undergone drastic demographic changes from a single-family residential neighborhood to low-end and subsidized rental housing.

With the City Hall/Civic Center and the planned joint-use public safety center as necessary cornerstones to the downtown area, there is at least one other component left missing. **The City of Carbondale must immediately begin to develop plans for a consolidated Inter-Modal Transportation Center.**

The increased frequency of passenger rail service provided by Amtrak is to be celebrated and will quickly outgrow the existing, sub-standard rail station on South Illinois Avenue. When this reality is combined with the fact that there is no central pick-up/drop-off site or permanent station for Greyhound Bus service, an inter-modal facility is a necessity. Such a terminal can also support better taxi service and Saluki Mass Transit routes, as well as serving as a catalyst for public and private investment

downtown. This dream has been fulfilled in numerous other communities similar to Carbondale and planning must start now to identify the best location and begin seeking outside assistance for the project. The idea is not just for a bus stop or train station, but for a public facility that could house restaurants or shops, host simple meeting space and serve as yet another attraction to the downtown business district. **Plans should be finalized soon in order to open the doors of this new facility by 2012, a realistic goal to achieve within the next five years.** By that time, alternative transportation needs will hopefully have increased the role of passenger rail service even more than it is today, and this Inter-Modal Transportation Center will be the hub of activity.

### The Great Outdoors

**The natural wonder and beauty of southern Illinois are unmatched anywhere else in the state.** The region has been blessed with tremendous natural resources for hiking, horseback riding, boating and fishing, hunting and observing the rich scenery and wildlife. Although Carbondale does not have a navigable river or waterway running through the city, there are numerous creeks and tributaries that meander about, each with their own character and neighborhood charm.

As the City has invested in constructing open green spaces and recreational areas, such as Friendship Plaza and the Super Block complex, now the City must also rededicate itself to cleaning-up and improving natural areas. **The recent Community Clean-Up Program was a great start to removing brush and trimming trees, and it contributed to sprucing-up many pieces of property that had been neglected or disregarded.** But there is more to be done and the Community Clean-Up Program should be continued, both for the obvious benefits and for the confidence it builds in the young people who participate.

Further, the City should begin to study what can be done to support the local ecological network. On the topic of creeks and tributaries, the City should initiate a plan to seek funding and support from environmental agencies and organizations to get serious about protecting our environment. **It should start with developing a Piles Fork Creek Reclamation Project, beginning with the portion of the creek that runs between Grand Avenue and College Street.** This natural habitat is in desperate need of attention, with work needing to be done to widen the creek bed, to remove trash, litter and debris, and to improve the lighting and other aspects that would increase safety for those that enjoy walking or bicycling along the greenway. A comprehensive study should be coordinated to identify what can be done, how it can be done to include community volunteers and college students, and what sort of time line is reasonable to see real results. **The long-lasting benefits from reclaiming Piles Fork Creek will spill over into other projects and serve as a model to do similar work on other creeks through and around town.**

## Working Together

Things get done when people work together. **Mayor Brad Cole believes in working together with others to accomplish common goals.** He believes in providing solid leadership when necessary and he believes in the power of people to make decisions on their own, without the constant intrusion of government.

### Regional Leadership

It took a fresh perspective to bring together the mayors of neighboring communities and that is exactly what Mayor Brad Cole brought to the table after being elected. Never before had there been regular contact and discussion with the mayors along Illinois Route 13, but now there is constant communication and a willingness to work together as one region. **Carbondale has positioned itself as a convener for resolving regional concerns and issues under Cole's leadership, this can and must continue.**

This was taken one step further as Cole was chosen to lead the Southern Illinois Mayors' Association. After recently serving one year as the organization's president, Cole remains an active member of the board of directors and help shape decisions that affect the entire area. **Recognized for his accomplishments in southern Illinois, Mayor Cole was elected by his statewide peers to serve on the board of directors of the Illinois Municipal League.** He has rapidly earned a reputation for no-nonsense decision-making and an ability to address problems at all levels of government.

Whether it is with other communities around the state, or with local school districts and elected officials, or simply working across political lines, **Mayor Brad Cole "talks the talk" and "walks the walk" of promoting regionalism and working together.** Anything less would be a disservice to the citizens of Carbondale, the citizens he represents every day.

### Town/Gown

**Nothing has changed since Brad Cole noted in his original position paper that "as Southern Illinois University goes, so goes Carbondale."** The community and the campus are interconnected like a married couple... sometimes they like each other, sometimes they get irritated with each other, but they always need each other to be successful in their partnership. Mayor Cole has built relationships on campus since his undergraduate days as Student Body President in the early 1990's. He maintains those -- as well as new relationships with campus administrators -- and together the City and the University have forged ahead with new efforts to support both entities.

**One major highlight of this newfound partnership was the recent annexation of all campus property into the corporate city limits of Carbondale**, something that had been discussed for decades but something that took new leadership on both sides to accomplish. Daily communication and an open mind toward working through common problems has been the key to fostering this positive relationship.

Realizing that Carbondale and Southern Illinois University are not unique to town/gown relationships, Brad Cole has engaged himself with other mayors and campus leaders from across the country. **Mayor Cole serves on the board of directors of the University Communities Caucus of the National League of Cities and meets regularly with others to share ideas and information.** Utilizing this collection of knowledge and experience helps address issues locally by borrowing from other cities and campuses that have dealt with similar problems.

**Students concerns are heard at the highest level of city government with the Mayor's open door policy and his through unmatched interaction with students.** Brad Cole believes that students are as much a part of the community as anyone else, he believes in treating them with respect, just as they should respect their college home town. Student input is sought and welcome at all times and on all issues before the City Council, and the Mayor actively appoints students to community boards, commissions, committees and advisory panels.

### City Council

One of the more visible functions of the Mayor is to conduct and chair meetings of the Carbondale City Council. **Under Mayor Brad Cole's leadership, a professional style has emerged** that utilizes Robert's Rules of Order and provides for efficient meetings with effective discussions on all matters. Open access to meetings is important for the general public, which is why Mayor Cole established the policy of providing links on the City's web site to digital audio recordings of all City Council meetings, in addition to written minutes and agenda items, both current and archived. Mayor Cole contends that when the meetings run well, the government runs well and the people's business gets done... and that's why there is a City Council, to do the people's business.