

City of Hobart – Comprehensive Plan Update

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes - January 26, 2022 - 1:00 - 3:00pm

Participants:

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City of Hobart

Councilman Chris Wells
Commissioner Craig Brooks
Ross Pietrzak – City Planner, City of Hobart
Beth Jacobson – Director of Development, City of Hobart
Phil Gralik – City Engineer, City of Hobart
Kelly Goodpaster – Parks Director, City of Hobart

The Lakota Group

Kevin Clark
Scott Ruhland
Alexis Stein

Vetter Consulting

Christian Vetter

Duncan Associates

Kirk Bishop

Kimley-Horn

Peter Lemmon

MEETING AGENDA

1. Introductions, Welcome and Background
 - i. Vetter Consulting - Market Research
 - ii. Duncan Associates – updates to zoning, land use policies, etc.
 - iii. Kimley Horn – transportation and mobility planning

2. City’s Planning Mission and Primary Goals
 - *Opportunity for City staff to describe the project, key issues, and goals*
 - i. Ross –
 1. There is a duality within city.
 2. **Old Hobart Township** is to the north. The focus here is to redevelop and revitalize
 3. **South Hobart/Ross Township.** There is a lot of open land, many development opportunities. The City needs to determine what sort of development to encourage and where.

4. The current **land use map** is not adequate and this needs to be addressed.
5. Need to determine what the community wants to see in the area.
6. **Mall** is biggest economic driver and the area continues to thrive. Need to determine what redevelopment options are considering that malls are facing challenges during this time. *The whole corridor (Route 30) is Hobart's biggest economic driver*
7. There are **many unique sub-areas** that need to be incorporated into a bigger vision for the whole community
8. Some residents are resistant to change: **"Old Hobart mentality"**
9. **Schools:** New elementary is already at capacity and district boundaries are unlikely to change.

ii. Chris –

1. Schools

- a. Schools have made great investments in the community
- b. The school-age population is expected to grow
- c. May have new middle and elementary school – need to determine where they should be located
- d. Schools are at capacity
- e. There are many new residents, and the City is expecting more
- f. 3 school districts – Hobart, Merrillville, River Forest
- g. School district is built out in terms of housing within Hobart district boundaries – consider increasing density
- h. "Voice and Choice" at middle school and high school – Google form – every Wednesday at 2 o'clock – could be an engagement opportunity

iii. Kelly –

1. Ross Township has its own park district and two major parks
2. In the past, have surveyed kids about what they want to see in parks, type of programming they want. It's critical to engage them, as they are an important demographic

3. Project Work Scope and Timeline

- *Project Scope Overview, Tasks, Phasing, and Sequencing*
 - Phase 1: Engagement (January – May)
 - State of City Report in May– Land Use, Codes, Zoning, Development Guidelines, Market, Transportation, Park System, Stakeholder Interviews
 - Phase 2: Visioning (June-September)
 - Ideas, concepts, strategies
 - Refine preferred plans from this

- Various touch points with City Leaders
- Updates on website
- Phase 3: Planning (October – January)
 - Putting together draft Master Plan
 - Synthesizing findings and visions

4. Community Engagement Plan – Task 1.2-Deliverable #1

- *Community Survey, Website, Online Engagement/Social Media*
 - *Website will be populated along the way*
 - *Surveys will be available on the website*
 - Tap into existing followers from Hobart’s social media
- *Stakeholder Interviews*
 - 2-3 days of focus groups or one-on-ones with community leaders, park board members, homeowners, property owners, community groups, business owners, etc.
 - Establish a basis of information and opinion
 - Need a solid list of people who should be involved in the stakeholder interviews (provided by City)
- *Public Engagement Events/Community Open House (3)*
 - One open house per phase
 - Kelly – need to see how events align with the timeline – it’s possible to schedule something quickly
 - Kevin – How can we engage people that haven’t typically been engaged? We want to get everyone’s voice in the plan
 - Ross – will discuss engagement during City Council Meeting
- *Regular updates with City Staff (monthly)*
 - Monthly Checkpoint between Lakota and City staff

5. Initial Project-related Issues, Ideas, and Challenges

- *Discuss any critical path items, active development projects, project impediments*
 - i. Phil –
 1. North Side Sanitary Sewer Master Plan
 2. South Side Sanitary Sewer Master Plan – need to extend sanitary sewers for farmland located within the city boundaries
 3. There are 4 active overflow points and it’s not a combined system
 4. Merrillville Conservancy District – there are several trunk lines and lots of developable land in reach
 5. Water company serves all of the City (mostly)

6. There are plans to expand capacity and serve developments
 7. The problem is that the sanitary district doesn't have a tax – difficult to fund expansion
 8. Merrillville Conservancy District does have a tax and can fund improvements with that
 9. Stormwater Master Plan – partnering with Little Calumet Water Commission to reroute water and alleviate flooding
- ii.* Chris –
1. Development demand without the infrastructure to facilitate that
 2. Determine areas where there is the most immediate demand
 3. “Development-centric future”
- iii.* Chris Wells
1. Stinky Creek project to help with flooding
 2. Dealing with storm sewers
- iv.* Beth
1. A lot of interest from light industrial sector
 2. Inflation is impacting development plans
 3. Infrastructure costs are one of the biggest challenges
 4. Need larger contributions from developers
 5. Timing and economic conditions are the bigger factors that are impacting development – out of control
- v.* *Christian*
1. *Light industry along 61st ave – are there plans to extend?*
- vi.* *Ross* –
1. Rezone for 61st and Colorado – similar to North Winds Parkway development – same developer
 2. 150 acres build out
 3. Infrastructure not in place – no “turn-key” properties
- vii.* Beth –
1. North Wind – industrial development
 2. 157 acres starting at s/e corner of 61st and Colorado
 3. Have a past relationship with developer – 69th east of Mississippi under construction now
 4. Need a roundabout near development (Arizona and 61st), Colorado needs to be widened, sewer needs to be brought over
 5. Predevelopment agreement – cash contribution toward total project cost
 6. Need developers to make contributions to off-site improvements

- 7. Funds are stretched within TIF districts
 - viii. Peter – any traffic studies or preliminary plans for roundabouts – add traffic studies to folder
 - 1. Phil - traffic study from developer and preliminary studies for roundabout; southwest traffic study to determine key intersections; interchange justification study (69th)
 - ix. Kevin – important to map all of these key developments and infrastructure enhancements
 - x. Chris Wells –
 - 1. District in Old Hobart
 - 2. Old 40s-built, small houses
 - 3. In his district roads not wide enough, there are no driveways, no room for vehicles or City services such as plows
 - 4. Financially poorer side of town – some feel neglected and left out
 - 5. Some residents complain a lot, but don't show up/vote
 - 6. Not connected to rest of City – tough to get on bike path
 - 7. Better bike access is preferred
 - 8. Affordable housing side of town – this is an asset
 - 9. Need to attract more/better businesses along 6th
 - xi. Ross
 - 1. Complete streets stalled when the City attempted to implement in the past
 - 2. Currently working to get more sidewalks
 - 3. Non-vehicular access is limited throughout the City, though there is a good system of bike paths
 - 4. Need to address multimodal options
- *Key topic or focus areas*
 - a. *Parks and Recreation Planning - IDNR Guidelines*
 - b. *Corridor/ED Planning – US Route 30 and 37th Avenue/Ridge Road*
 - c. *Downtown Planning*
 - d. *Natural Resource Assessment – State/Regional Considerations*
 - e. *Others? 61^s Street, US Route 6*
- i. Ross -
 - 1. North/East side of city: Johnson Farm, Remus Farms on Ridge Road, Countyline Orchard – “Agro-tourism” – draws many people from Chicago
 - 2. Take mostly a policy approach
 - 3. Nature District – need better coordination
 - 4. Downtown – encourage growth/more restaurants
 - 5. Hospital – development around hospital – want to see more growth in this area

- ii. Kelly –
 - 1. Prefer no more parkland
 - 2. Want to make sure people can get to parks safely
 - 3. Want neighborhood park in each district
 - 4. Follow IDNR guidelines for grant funding
 - 5. Look at strengths and weaknesses in parks department
 - 6. Need to engage community and give them a deliverable in a timely manner
 - 7. Brickie Bowl – want to create a park around this events facility – want to promote future use at larger scale – plans to move in a bigger and better direction than previous plans

- iii. Beth –
 - 1. Silverstone property – have seen a ton of proposals – lots of ideas being pitched – good to consider future land uses here
 - 2. Don't have as good of a relationship with mall owner, but old manager is still in place
 - 3. Look into who owns particular portions of the parking lots (different store owners own different parts of the parking lots)

- iv. Ross –
 - 1. Erosion and sediments in Lake George. Need to incorporate resources plan into the comp plan. Encourage some controls to keep Lake George clean
 - 2. Dredging only lasts 20 years

6. Preliminary Schedule, Data, and Resources

- *Reference to Scope, Phase 1 Schedule, Key Contacts, Data Sources*
- Next Steps:
 - Engagement Plan
 - Populate focus groups with key stakeholders (Lakota to come up with key categories)
 - Work on project brand and establish framework of website
 - Field work - trip to Hobart

7. Community Tour to follow at later date.