

**City of Bowling Green Comprehensive Plan: Future Land Use Update**  
**STEERING COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES - 12/10/2013**

Present: Jeff Betts, Julie Broadwell, Sarah Burgoyne, Jill Carr, Suzanne Clark, Doug Cubberley, Judy Ennis, Earlene Kilpatrick, Steve Krakoff, Sandy Milligan, Emily Monago, Mark Remeis, Heather Saylor, Lori Tretter, and Jeff Winston (consultant).

Absent: Gary Hess and Vicky Valentine

Visitors: Mayor Richards Edwards

Mayor Richard Edwards welcomed the Steering Committee to their first meeting on Tuesday, December 10, 2013. He thanked the committee for their time and work on this important task. Heather Saylor explained that the update the Future Land Use Section was last completed in 1986 and introduced the planning consultant that was hired to assist with the task, Jeff Winston. Ms. Saylor described the importance of having a broad representative committee that is able to look at many perspectives and provide several viewpoints. Each committee member introduced themselves and a brief background on their history of being a part of the Bowling Green community.

Mr. Winston described his 35 years of experience in planning, including the company he is part of, MIG. The City's contract is with czbLLC (Charles Buki) and Mr. Winston is operating as a sub-contractor with his planning experience. Their planning firm is designed to create a plan that does not "sit on the shelf", but builds words into action. Mr. Winston described what a comprehensive plan is, with input from the committee. It is about fostering change, being consistent and serves as a foundation document that gets all departments working on the same page. While this update is for the Future Land Use Section, all other sections are intertwined and most likely will need updates in the future, which include: Economic Development, Transportation, Utilities, Downtown and Parks and Recreation. The plan will help the City make decisions and have community consensus on what those decisions and vision for the City will look like. Mr. Winston described the plan as staff-driven, with czbLLC/MIG providing expertise throughout the process. He described the role of the committee as a sounding board, an advocate for the plan before Council and to monitor implementation. Mr. Winston asked for volunteers for the position of Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr. Bruce Jeffers volunteered to be the Chair of the committee and Ms. Judy Ennis volunteered to be the Vice-Chair. Mr. Jeffers later expressed concerns that he will not be able to lead the presentation to Planning Commission and Council, since he is a Council member. However, he could step away from that portion and allow the Vice-Chair and other members to present the final presentation to Planning Commission and Council.

Mr. Winston led a committee discussion involving various questions; What is the current trajectory of Bowling Green? Where will we end up if we continue on the current course? Are we on the right track as a place to live, shop, do business, and recreate? The committee felt Bowling Green is on the right track.

Opinions in summary:

- Bowling Green does not grow quickly or force growth. The City allows people in the township to annex at their request. Resistance to change and growth can be felt in the community, however.
- The City is headed in a good direction, but at a slower pace than preferred. The City needs to define which demographic it is trying to maintain and/or attract?

- There is the push and pull between the City and University. The University will be changing in ways that impact community in 7 to 10 years, per their Master Plan. The University population is changing, also, with a decrease in the typical 18-22 year olds and an increase in the older students, with technology. Increased communication between the City and University is crucial.
- The City needs to think about the physical connection where boundaries of City/University connect. There is potential tension, but yet opportunities exist in these areas as the University acquires more properties. There needs to be recognition that we are part of a greater economic region, with the University/City further intertwined with both having diminishing resources. The University will most likely be smaller in enrollment and less buildings, which will impact City resources further.
- The City needs more retail options so it feels more like “home”. If the community was inclusive of many services, residents would not need to drive out of the City to shop. Having broader retail choices would save the time it takes to travel to shopping, save fuel used to travel, keep money spent in the community, and provide employment.
- There is a concern regarding the push for more green space vs. economic development. The City does not want to turn into a “little Detroit.” The City needs to pay attention to the fiscal impact of these types of choices.

Mr. Winston discussed the way the City receives revenue, which the majority is by income tax. What does that mean for Bowling Green? The City needs jobs to be competitive and realize that quality of life attracts employers/employees.

Mr. Winston asked what is working well?

- The political climate is good and people seem to see the job as a true mission.
- People love our downtown and many people work hard to maintain it.
- There is a small town feeling, yet many services.
- There is a safe feeling here.
- The people that live and work here are passionate about Bowling Green, even if there are disagreements about certain situations.

Mr. Winston asked what is not working?

- There is a perceived divide between the east and west side of Main Street. There is frustration that new University staff are told to stay away from the east side. The amount of rental homes are also a challenge. There is a positive with the active East Side Neighborhood Association and that Council has been receptive to concerns.
- Town/gown relations need strengthened. Town/gown needs to better acclimate and embrace each others’ presence.
- There is no common place for students to meet with community members.
- There needs to be better linkage between the University and downtown. In other college towns, universities are closer to the center of town and there is more of a hub of activity, thus the retail follows. Bowling Green is about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the way there, with the hub of activity sparse here.
- BGSU land acquisition should be consistent with City land use plan and vice versa.
- There is not clarity between the motives of the City and University. There is a perceived threat of University property acquisition, but the University has really done little besides add grass and/or parking lots. The City has not articulated what they want, so it is a good time to complement each other, align interests, and share resources.

Mr. Winston asked if a CEO and/or his or her spouse visited, what would they think of Bowling Green?

- They would be “underwhelmed”, especially with East Wooster Street, which was referred to as “hamburger alley”.
- There are more absentee landlords, which has caused a significant impact to property standards. Having a commitment to community property standards would make the town look better.
- Bowling Green has been marketed as a family place, but it is lacking in places for children and things to do with children. This is seen as a “value disconnect”.
- Downtown needs more diversity in the products offered and events. Years ago there were City/University events downtown that brought many people downtown.
- There is a lack of qualified labor pool. As the population ages and retiring, with a good work ethic, younger people do not have the skills required. There is land and utilities available close to transportation, so why is the land not selling? Mr. Winston commented about the commitment Boulder, CO has made to bike trails and in return, high tech jobs and employees tend to go where quality of life fits into the whole package when choosing a site/job.

Mr. Winston asked why these things have not changed already?

- Change is hard.
- The City/University are not clear on each others’ motives and predictability is lacking.
- Economic incentives lacking and funding.
- Things are not so terrible that we have not demanded change.
- The lack of need, not in a crisis, so maintain status quo.
- There have not been any compelling big ideas, vision to create optimism as to what the future could be. No sense that we are all headed in the right direction.

Mr. Winston provided the committee with “homework” that will required the committee to meet again prior to the consultants returning to town at the end of January. The homework includes:

- Read the existing comprehensive plan and highlight what is still valid and no longer valid.
- Solicit input from friends, neighbors, co-workers, and groups you are part of and/or represent:
  1. Current trajectory of Bowling Green as a community.
  2. Anything wrong with the trajectory?
  3. Ideas for change/improvement.
- As a Steering Committee, meet and consolidate thoughts into:
  1. A 2-page memo to be forwarded to Planning staff and Council.
  2. A 15 minute presentation.
  3. Due next meeting when consultants return: late January.

Additionally, Ms. Saylor will email existing sections of the Comprehensive Plan and the visioning process that was undertaken between the University and City. Mr. Winston discussed the visioning process as a starting point for discussions. There is no need to start from scratch when community members put time into the documents and ideas.

Future public meetings were discussed and Mr. Winston stated the thought has been once initial ideas are consolidated is the right time to have a public meeting that is focused on “here’s what we have heard so far” potentially in February. The meeting needs to be educational in nature, with City demographics and patterns identified, and will be more constructive starting with ideas, rather than a blank sheet. Further down the

road, a Land Use draft will be circulated and mutual aspirations and expectation will need to be established. This committee will help leave a legacy, a gift to the next generation, and create a culture that we are all making decisions toward the same “big idea”. Mr. Winston told the committee to think of the current work as being in the diagnostic and observation phase, as we have these discussions with the community. The scope of work is scheduled to be completed in May of 2014.