

City of Bowling Green Comprehensive Plan: Future Land Use Update
STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES - 1/29/2014

Present: Vicky Valentine-Adler, Jeff Betts, Julie Broadwell, Charles Buki (consultant), Suzanne Clark, Doug Cubberley, Judy Ennis, Gary Hess, Bruce Jeffers, Earlene Kilpatrick, Steve Krakoff, Sandy Milligan, Emily Monago, Mark Remeis, Barbara Ruland, Heather Sayler, Lori Tretter and Jeff Winston (consultant).

Absent: Sarah Burgoyne and Jill Carr.

Visitors: Brian Bushong, Brad Conner, Brian Craft, John Fawcett, David McDonald, Bob McOmber and John Zanfardino (left after BGSU presentation).

Ms. Heather Sayler asked Mr. Steve Krakoff, Steering Committee member and VP Capital Planning and Campus Operations, to begin the meeting with a presentation highlighting the master plan for BGSU (a copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes). The presentation was highlighted by the following:

- The university master plan is focused on looking inward at the campus core for about 10 to 20 years out.
- Market issues have changed the reality of campus planning. For example, the United States must produce 20 million additional degreed workers by 2025, while high school graduates are decreasing. Additionally, traditional students constitute 16% of college students...thus, the rise in non-traditional students is creating the need to re-align educational needs.
- The hard economic times felt by the university and the economy in general have created the need to look for new ways to attract and recruit all types of students. Additionally, massive on-line classes have created an increase in competitors and less of a need to serve the traditional student.
- A concern the plan addresses is the amount of aging buildings that have feel into disrepair over several years – 40% of buildings are 40 years or older. There is a building analysis map that equates to \$500 million dollars minimum required to make the needed improvements (deferred maintenance).
- Thus, due to the state of education and market forces, the university footprint will contract and square footage of buildings will decrease - “right-sizing”.
- The learning platform and teaching is being regenerated to build “learning communities”, where living and learning will happen everywhere.
- There will be more connections west with the City and campus and better scaling and green spaces between buildings. For example, the university has tended to wall itself off from the community over the years by the way the buildings have been aligned. In the future, Harshman Quadrangle will be demolished and later the Administration Building. These will be turned into aesthetically-pleasing green spaces, create a greater transition between buildings, and open up the campus more to the community. Significant investments have already been made Centennial Hall, Falcon Heights, McDonald Residence Hall, upgrading dining halls, and the Falcon Health Center. Future investment will include the Greek Village to be demolished, with the capacity reduced from about 700 beds to 350 to 400.
- The prime focus of the plan is regenerating the academic core.

- There are campus edges (“gateways”, “front doors”) that the university would like to soften with water features, decreased pavement, and more green space (former Harshman and Administration Building site, corner of Thurstin/E. Wooster and S. College/E. Wooster entryway).
- Possible areas of cooperation between the City/University with co-branding to improve first impression upon arrival into the city including the entryway experience (I-75), Wooster Street corridor, and signage and wayfinding.
- Looking at campus edge development that creates and connects great places on and off campus. Key strategic drivers could include: Creating new (student) housing supply, need for employees to live near campus (create market for commercial capital, new private investment – involve mixed-use), developments in strategic locations, and BGSU/City involvement in local and regional economic development.

After the presentation, there were questions about the future of East Wooster. If the university is contracting, but yet it is still buying property on East Wooster? The university is being opportunistic and in reality does not have the money to buy all properties, nor a plan for E. Wooster. However, this does present strategic locations and perfect timing for the City/University to plan ahead in these areas that border the university. As stated in the presentation, the plan focuses on the academic core. In 20 years, how can the university be smaller, look good, and be more efficient? This is a challenge for all Midwest universities, since the growth it occurring at south east and south west colleges. The university is a big complex organization, similar to the city, thus cultural change is also something they have to deal with and does not create change quickly or easily.

The meeting moved along into the presentation the committee was assigned to do as homework. A copy of the 2-page memo was passed out (attached as part of the minutes) and Ms. Judy Ennis began the presentation by introducing the 6 major areas the committee decided to focus on issues the City cannot change (such as “making” a chain restaurant come to BG or “taking” the Woodland Mall and re-purposing the use).

Mr. Mark Remeis introduced the first category: Identify and focus on improving primary and secondary corridors in the City. In essence, the goals include identifying primary and secondary corridors, ways to improve the aesthetics of these corridors, and building upon the areas and neighborhoods that border the university.

Ms. Julie Broadwell discussed the next category: Study and adopt a Complete Streets related-policy or ordinance. In summary, streets should accommodate all modes of transportation, but more specifically bike paths and sidewalks are important to the people that live here now and to attract people to live here. They are crucial for a high quality of life and as an economic development tool (think high tech and for the new generation).

Ms. Broadwell also presented the next category: Housing and neighborhoods. As a resident of Ward 1, she described firsthand the impact that older housing and the greater amount of rentals have on Ward 1 and Ward 2. The importance of being adjacent to the university and the need to attract more university staff is needed as a community-wide effort to improve these older areas. University staff should not be encouraged to live in Perrysburg and we can help make BG more appealing and lessen the east and west divide feeling the City has. All neighborhoods can have more diverse housing choices and be connected to services, destinations, schools, etc. by all modes of transportation (bikes lanes and sidewalks, not just cars).

Mr. Remeis discussed the next priority item: Consider and study growth boundaries. The focus of development should start from the center out, housing developments that are not yet finished, and the cost

of services new development brings to the City. There is value to preserving open space, considering what benefits redevelopment brings versus development that expands City boundaries, and considering what new development may further leave other buildings in poor condition.

Mr. Remeis talked about the next priority item: Focus planning efforts with the City and BGSU. Mr. Remeis stated that the presentation today by the Mr. Krakoff on behalf of the university has been very healthy and that most of us may have heard this for the first time today. Thus, as we move into the future, we are hopeful that both (university and City) will include each other to create cohesive plans that will mutually benefit each other.

Ms. Broadwell concluded the presentation with the final priority item: Identify location of downtown public space. BG has fabulous events throughout the year, but the lack of public space been heard by many constituents we talked to. A downtown space will add uniqueness to BG and help unite the community to a unified public space.

Ms. Ennis summarized the presentation as focusing on “a new start” for the community. BG is a small, unique college town that is dedicated to a high quality of life through the amount of public services and having an alert involved community. The community needs many committed partnerships to make these priority items happen, but realize change can only happen with the dedication of many. It is important to challenge ourselves to leave a legacy of a better community for our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Jeff Winston (planning consultant) asked what the committee heard about the trajectory of BG during talks with individuals and groups. Some members shared the conflicting views that were heard, such as wanting chain restaurants, but enjoying the unique downtown restaurants and not liking the traffic that goes along with these types of chain or big box developments. The trajectory people heard was mostly status quo, with a smaller mix stating it is getting better or worse. Mr. Winston pointed out that it appears we are in a competition with other cities. Some are going to attract a chain restaurant (such as Perrysburg or Findlay) and some will get and want the university, which BG has. Perrysburg seems to have more housing options and BG appears to lack sufficient housing. Some may choose to live in Perrysburg and some many not, but it is many factors. It is choices...schools, housing, shopping, etc. So what is the message BG sends? Is the message to “go elsewhere”?

Mr. Charles Buki (planning consultant) used a chart to describe the housing market of BG compared to Perrysburg (as an example) using high, middle and low. BG succeeds in providing low and high, but is missing more housing choices for the middle-income market. Attracting the middle income market equals attracting strong households. Strong households translate into attracting retail and other amenities. Another factor to plan around is that the State of Ohio, Wood County and the City’s population are predicted to stay flat all around. Thus, the piece of the pie that is shared by all service, retail, etc., will remain the same. The community needs to decide what it wants. When the “what” is decided, then the “how” to get there can be figured out. Often the only reason change is decided on is because there is significant problem. If doing nothing is okay, then the job of creating an update to this plan will be easy. How bad does the community want to change? Mr. Remeis shared an example of multiple new coaches being hired this year. The coaches wanted to live near the university, but there were not any houses near the university that fit what they wanted. There has been a problem being able to have enough rental property that is to a higher standard for coaches and staff that may be in BG a year or two and do not want to purchase a home. Mr. Buki asked is the community okay with this or does the community want to be able to have a housing product that fills this need? This type of situation indicates the “middle”, the 35 to 49 years olds, are missing. This is the type of crowd that attracts the “Olive Garden” type of market. Mr. Buki suggested a potential focus of obtaining

3,000 strong households (middle income), thus bringing more income into the community and then it could be figured out how much commercial square footage the community would need. Once the community knows what it wants, it can be decided as to “what do we say yes to”, “where do we put it”, and “how”.

There are 3 types of decisions that a community needs to make. 1-“Should we approve....” (a curb cut, a subdivision, a zoning change, etc.” 2-“Where should we....” (put a new street, put a park, a new city hall, etc.” and 3-“How do we....” (bring in new households, forge a closer relationship with the university, etc.). The document that is prepared in regards to the land use update should help answer these questions. Over time decisions have been made in many directions, but the purpose in planning is to get us all going in the general same direction. For example, the document that is created needs to provide guidance when it comes to annexation, instead of decisions that go in many directions.

Mr. Winston asked “what kind of place do you want BG to be”? This needs to be flushed out and get others to buy into whatever the answer is so we can get the “big stuff” right. When you define BG, we can create a guide to get closer (or further away) from the BG you want to be. If we put this all on paper, there is a greater chance it will happen and make a difference. This will be a living document that will need to be revised at times and when decisions are made to change the course. Tonight the university has given some front door ideas, which is a start to forming criteria to make sure we get the “big things” right. Committee members asked for examples of other community visions. Mr. Winston provided the example of Boulder CO. Their value system is keeping the mountains house-free, maintaining open space, and creating a network of over 60 miles in bike paths. Mr. Buki described the preservation of the waterfront in Alexandria VA and how other communities, such as Youngtown, have had to adapt to the changing climate (they are shrinking in population). The decisions of this community are based on how they define themselves and their value systems. BG needs to define what it wants to be and its value system.

Mr. Winston stated the committee did an excellent job on the homework and thanked Mr. Krakoff for the BGSU presentation. The next homework is taking the homework we have done so far (the 15-minute presentation), boiling it down to a 7 minute presentation, and presenting it at the next Council meeting. Consider what the assessment is of where we are at and where we need to be. If what the committee thinks does not translate clearly to what Council thinks, it may turn into an unimproved draft. In summary, the committee needs to get a spot on the Council agenda, let them know where the committee is at, and make it clear that we want regular visibility (which is needed since they will need to make the decision of approval down the road). These 7 minutes are to put them on notice to help get them to buy-in to the importance of the document. Preface the presentation with what you heard is the trajectory of BG and why this is important to change the course as the committee sees necessary.

Ms. Saylor stated she would get the next meeting scheduled before the Council meets to discuss the homework, set the presentation for Council and look at a future date in February to meet when the consultants return.

Meeting lasted approximately 3:35 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.

