

City of Bowling Green Comprehensive Plan: Future Land Use Update

STEERING COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES – 2/12/2014

Present: Vicky Valentine-Adler, Jeff Betts, Julie Broadwell, Jill Carr, Suzanne Clark, Judy Ennis, Gary Hess, Bruce Jeffers, Earlene Kilpatrick, Steve Krakoff, Sandy Milligan, Emily Monago, Mark Remeis, Barbara Ruland, Heather Saylor, and Lori Tretter.

Absent: Sarah Burgoyne and Doug Cubberley.

Visitors: Jean Romans, Clint Corps, and Charles Klinard.

Mr. Bruce Jeffers welcomed the committee and offered continued thanks for their continued participation and hard work. The first item of focus was to determine what the short presentation to Council would look like, who would participate, and what items of importance are to be mentioned in the 7-minute presentation. Ms. Heather Saylor pointed the committee to the email that was sent to them on Tuesday, February 11, 2014. The consultant gave advice as to what the outline could be and to focus on the presentation being an update to Council. He suggested the following as key elements:

1. This is an introductory report.
2. The City has taken a novel approach to this update, being done by citizens and staff. (with assistance from national experts)
3. Bowling Green is a remarkable community with many assets. (give examples of what is working)
4. Bowling Green is facing a number of problems, with the potential to become very serious. (give example of what the committee thinks is “not working” and/or “what’s wrong with the current trajectory we are on”)
5. This is not just wishful thinking, or “wouldn’t it be nice if...”. This is serious. City-building is competitive. We are in competition with Perrysburg and ?. (give concrete examples such as % of employees of BGSU that do not live here, BGSU is facing serious issues with the changing nature of education, etc.)
6. In order to set a course for the future, we have to know “who we want to be”, “who we want to appeal to”, and why”. The “why” is important in order to have strong public support for what we have to do.
7. The committee is working hard to identify and refine a vision for the community, identify our target markets, and outline strategies and options to appeal to them.
8. The committee will be coming to the public, Planning Commission, and Council in several months to pass on ideas and let them be shaped into a document that will help us all get on the same page with regard to important decisions facing us.
9. No action is needed. The committee encourages the Council to begin thinking now about their own answers to these questions.

It was also recommended that each slide be simple with bullet points and pictures work better than words. There were concerns mentioned over using certain pictures that may lead people to believe the committee is targeting their house, neighborhood or business, so it was agreed upon to use general pictures, such as one of downtown when listing assets. There was also a brief discussion about having a verbal presentation solely instead of PowerPoint, but the majority felt using PowerPoint keeps more interest, while keeping the slides simple and using the presenters to supplement the basic slides.

Ms. Sayler asked for presenters for the Council update and also requested, if able, that all of the committee attend in support. It was agreed that given the short time-frame, that too many presenters would take more time. Ms. Judy Ennis, Mr. Mark Remeis, and Ms. Sandy Milligan agreed to be presenters. Ms. Lori Tretter volunteered to provide the framework of the PowerPoint presentation. The committee agreed the outline provided by the consultant made sense and provided the basic framework of the presentation. The presenters agreed to meet with staff later in the week to create the wording of the PowerPoint and it would then be forwarded to the committee.

Mr. Charles Klinard, a visitor to the meeting, asked to speak. He said he is a retired traffic engineer and has been involved in comprehensive planning. He said it is crucial the committee set goals and focus on transportation. He said the City does not have a good transportation plan right now and he feels there are too many “blockages” in the City. He said the City has not planned “big enough”, hopes the committee dreams big, and the task they have is very important. The committee thanked Mr. Klinard for his comments and “pep talk”.

The committee then moved into discussion about what the “vision” and the “who” is for the City. The consultant provided a matrix of what has been heard thus far and the committee started with the first notes under “vision”. The committee agreed with all aspect listed under the “vision/goals”:

- small college town
- high quality of life for all residents
- downtown that is the heart of the community
- quality schools
- unique locally-owned stores, restaurants and services

The committee discussed adding the importance of sustainability to the vision. The City is unique in the fact that the utilities will be made up of 37% energy efficient sources (wind, solar and hydro) and the first wind turbines were located here in the state. Thus, the City is known for placing importance on “green energy” in many ways.

Another item to be added to the vision was “connectivity”. The committee discussed clarifying what “complete streets” meant and one member felt it meant having streets designed for access to all and accommodating all modes of transportation (cars, bikes, pedestrians, wheel chairs, etc.). It was stated this is important because people want to have more lifestyle choices. Alternate transportation allows for having choices and contributes to a higher quality of life. The article that was sent to the committee about attracting the new generation of the workforce put a greater weight on choosing where to live and work by quality of life, rather than location and income. There was also a discussion about the availability of public transportation for the region and how this also relates back to being a sustainable community. Other efforts within the county are moving forward to make regional transportation a greater possibility.

The committee also expounded upon being a “college town”. Members thought making it clear that the community wants to be a welcoming college town that is attractive to a wide variety of residents is important to the vision/goals (do not want to be known as “snooty”). The committee is proud of being a college town and wants to embrace, market, and build on this asset. It was also mentioned that BG is a small, yet forward-thinking town with big city appeal.

The committee moved on to talk about the “who” matrix in the handout. Committee members talked about having a diverse community and to have this, a diversity of housing stock and shops is also needed. Ms.

Suzanne Clark pointed out that the number of total manufacturing jobs now outweighs the number of BGSU employees. Thus, attracting a manufacturing workforce to live here is also important. She said hourly workers tend to not live in BG. This is potentially a niche (also referred to by the committee as a “sweet spot”) of attracting incomes between \$40,000 to \$60,000 (also considered the starting salary of a teacher or new professor), along with the BGSU staff/faculty who may average starting at \$60,000 and up (another potential “sweet spot”). The committee asked Ms. Jill Carr if she could provide the actual number of employees that live in BG. The committee has heard not many BGSU employees live here, but wanted to know a factual number. Ms. Carr said she would look into that number. In theory, the committee is looking at identifying gaps and filling in those gaps. These are opportunities to build on and potentially the community is not reaping the benefits of: manufacturing workforce and BGSU staff. There was also a discussion of the perception some BGSU faculty have chose living in Perrysburg over BG due to a better public school system. How can that perception be changed?

The importance of attracting entrepreneurs was mentioned. They tend to be well paid, hire professionals, and are looking for the quality of life that has been mentioned several times. These comments led to questions about housing stock. Mr. Mark Remeis stated there seems to be enough housing stock up to \$150,000, but not beyond that price point. The committee wondered if there is a need, than why has a developer not built this price point? It was also pointed out there subdivisions that still have lots waiting to be built on, so there does not appear to be any additional residential zoning needed at the fringes of the City. There was also a question posed about wondering if the City needs more mixed-use? Who does that appeal to? The discussion also led to the potential important of regional branding. Are we part of northwest Ohio or do we stand alone? The region has good things and it is all in driving distance, but the committee felt focusing on the assets of BG is first and foremost.

The committee also read through the first column of “what is required to achieve the vision and attract the who’s?”, the second column of “how, where should it (they) go”, the last column of “why (which of the who’s will this most appeal to)?” and the goals and objectives from the last comprehensive plan. The first question posed for further discussion was “which, if any, of all of the above contribute to “small college-town character”? The committee believed that all close to all items listed in the first column contribute to this vision. The committee did not have time to discuss the remaining questions, which include: “What else will appeal to the who’s you have identified? What are the most important attractions for the who’s? and You can see from column 3 that some of the what’s are contradictory...thus the need to establish priorities amount he vision, who’s and what’s...Can you agree on overall priorities?” **The committee will look at this handout further and think about the questions posed and make notes.**

Lastly, **the committee reviewed the homework to be done for the next meeting on Wednesday, February 26 at 3:30 p.m.** with the consultant, Mr. Charles Buki. The homework is to help facilitate the “what’s important to who”. The purpose is to connect “who” the committee wants as a target market and “what” will be important to attracting them. For example, if one of the goals is attracting more BGSU faculty to live in BG, what will it take? It can also be used in reverse, if the committee states they want more “complete streets with bike lanes”, than is that appealing to a certain target market? There are no wrong answers to this homework, however, figuring out what the community “want’s” and the “who’s” will help shape land use regulations. There were a few questions for clarification that Ms. Saylor will email the committee about after talking with the consultant.

Meeting lasted approximately 3:00 p.m.- 4:50 p.m.