

GROWTH POLICIES PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY, JUNE 28, 2012

Meeting summaries are transcribed in an abridged manner and no audio recordings are available. All Steering Committee meetings are open to the public.

Attendance:

Steering Committee Members: Steve Smith, Tom Swafford, Doug Horn, Dave Harstad, Jack Baker, Patrick Murray, Mike Litwin, Larry Wilson, Jim Murphy, Maggie Sullivan, Don Griffin, Jacob Sinex, and Jan Sorby

Others in attendance: Josh Desmond (staff), Scott Robinson (staff), Nate Nickel (staff), Katie Bannon (staff), Jacqui Bauer (staff), Danise Alano-Martin (staff), Chris Cockerham, Nikki Johnson, and Nicholas Carter

Brief Recap of ImagineBloomington Outreach Efforts

Mr. Nickel provided a summary and some general staff comments regarding input received from the public during Visioning. The Vision Input Summary document that was emailed provides more detail.

The public could complete the ImagineBloomington visioning survey in various ways: online, at one of the 11 public workshops, tabling events around the community (including IU, Rhino's, and the library), by mail or in person at the Planning department.

We received a total of 402 surveys. The majority of surveys were submitted online. The workshops allowed a unique opportunity for people to share their ideas and hear from others. Workshop participants shared differing opinions to come to a consensus and develop priorities. We received positive feedback on workshop evaluations about the format. Workshop summaries and word clouds are available on the ImagineBloomington webpage:
http://bloomington.in.gov/documents/viewDocument.php?document_id=6543

An online forum, UserVoice was also available: <http://imaginebloomington.uservoice.com/>
Participants could post ideas and share feedback and vote on their preferred ideas. It received a fair amount of traffic.

Overall, we heard some new major themes developing throughout the process. Mr. Nickel highlighted some of the themes that emerged that were different from what we heard last time working on the 2002 Growth Policies Plan (GPP):

- Strong cultural vibrancy
- A progressive community
- Need to provide affordable housing
- Establish community safety net & social services
- Development and protection of neighborhoods, with less primary focus on downtown
- More attention on architecture and building appearance
- Senior citizens and children

- Broader view of environmental issues
- Economic development – especially jobs and opportunities for local residents

Several Steering Committee members had questions about how to increase participation among underrepresented demographics. Mr. Nickel explained that some workshops had lower attendance. He described some of the methods used for publicity.

Guidance for the New Vision Statement Framework – Review Options

Mr. Robinson explained that we are at a key juncture in the development of the plan. The vision statement is the foundation of the plan and provides structure for what we want to achieve in the plan. Staff put together a list of three overall categories or frameworks for the vision. Which framework is chosen provides staff with direction for plan development. Thus far, we've been thinking outside of the box by asking the community broad questions.

Mr. Robinson explained the handout which provided three frameworks:

- Growth Policies Plan framework - using the existing Seven Guiding Principles and fitting all topics into these areas
- Conventional Comprehensive Plan framework - developing a plan around broader topic areas such as housing, transportation, education, and land use
- Sustainability Framework – writing a plan around the 3 E's of sustainability: equity, environment, and economics

The handout picked 2 common example themes, Culture and Transportation, to provide context for each framework. Mr. Robinson explained that the Culture theme could fit into the Sustain Economic and Cultural Vibrancy Guiding Principle in the Growth Policies Plan. Transportation in the Growth Policies Plan is focused on land use, growth, development, and the zoning code. It has not been as helpful for contentious topics such as roundabouts or policies addressing bus rapid transit and downtown parking. Implementation of the GPP involved mainly updating the zoning code.

Steering Committee members discussed the various frameworks. Several Steering Committee members stated that they wanted a tweak of the existing Growth Policies Plan rather than a more comprehensive update. The GPP is working so why reinvent the wheel? Mr. Baker stated that the Seven Guiding Principles use confusing terms and could be simplified by using terms like Transportation and Economic Growth. Mr. Wilson asked how well the GPP is working with development petitions. Mr. Robinson said it's difficult to answer. The phrase "compact urban form" from the GPP is often mentioned at meetings but its meaning is often unclear.

Staff stated that they feel like we have gone as far as we can with the Implementation Steps that were written into the Growth Policies Plan. We accomplished most steps through a new zoning code, hiring a consultant for a few projects, and creating a few recommended plans. The implementation steps that called for government coordination are ongoing. Staff also has concerns about tweaking that ends up being more of a rewrite. In the past, it's been difficult to tell some members of the public, "Thanks for your input, but we're not doing that at this time."

Steering Committee members discussed that the Growth Policies Plan is focused on growth, which has a negative connotation for some citizens. Mr. Swafford raised concerns about how the City would pay for implementation of the plan. Members believe the plan should be realistic. Ms. Sorby stated that policies in the plan should have teeth and be implementable.

Ms. Bauer explained that a sustainability plan is a cohesive vision, not just requirements. Energy challenges are an example of how people can work together to achieve a vision. The plan could have broad goals and facilitated steps to get to that vision. Mr. Robinson provided green building incentives as an example.

Mr. Harstad stated that platitudes should be removed and goals written in plain English. Although he is not opposed to sustainability, he does not necessarily want it to be the overarching theme of the plan. Data needs to drive future plan discussion and actions. Some members stated that the GPP is focused too much on growth, a loaded term. Mr. Smith stated that our plan should start bigger picture. A plan based on sustainability would be too specialized. Mr. Wilson stated that community plan could be broader and provide clear guidance for the community. It's not just about growth management. The title Growth Policies Plan conveys limits. Ms. Sorby stated that the plan could be more proactive – less “don't do this” and more “this is what we want to see.”

Mr. Robinson stated that a sustainability focus would involve using the 3 E's to examine how policies would affect the overall community. We could plan for Transportation generally or we could examine it for its social, economic, and environmental impacts.

Mr. Griffin asked about planning for things we don't have control over. Mr. Murphy stated that there's a question about what affordable actually means, what affordable housing actually means. Mr. Robinson stated that we have to set benchmarks or it's just rhetoric. He states that more agencies would be involved than just the Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals. For example, Patterson Pointe development involved the City HAND Department, the State, and the Plan Commission. Mr. Robinson noted that the recent poll by the American Planning Association showed that the public's interests in planning are changing. Job creation and the economy were major topics that came up. Mr. Swafford stated that getting rid of the title Growth Policies Plan would help in making a more comprehensive plan with a broad short vision statement. Mr. Murphy said we need to be careful to define a good title that will direct the focus of the plan.

Members stated that they believed the overall vision of the plan could capture sustainability but that it doesn't need to be explicit about examining each E for each topic. There was agreement that common terms should be used in the plan. Ms. Sullivan said that sustainability is important, but it can be nebulous. A holistic approach is needed. Mr. Baker stated that sustainability is an important theme, but it can be confusing to define. Sustainability should be part of the plan, but we shouldn't make the plan a sustainability only plan.

Mr. Robinson stated that staff would like to see measurable outcomes to help plan. Staff agreed that a broader vision and plan would be helpful. Mr. Murphy stated that he would prefer an update to the existing Growth Policies Plan. Members agreed that existing plans should relate to

the new plan, for example, the Long Range Transportation Plan. Complete Streets should be part of the vision. The Growth Policies Plan is working pretty well as a land use plan but is missing some topics. Most members believed that a more comprehensive plan would be preferable.

Overview of Next Steps and Targeted Project Timeline

Ms. Bannon provided an overview of the next steps for the plan. All dates are subject to change based on how the process goes and what input we receive. Staff will prepare a draft vision statement based on tonight's feedback and present it at the next Steering Committee meeting sometime in early August. An additional meeting will likely be held in September to finalize a draft before presenting it to the public.

In October, we plan to receive public input and public comment about the draft vision statement. The format has not been determined, but it will likely include an online component and a public meeting component. We'll have a November Steering Committee meeting to review public comment. Then we aim to present a vision statement to the Plan Commission in late 2012. Our goal is to have it before City Council in early 2013.

Other Comments

Mr. Swafford suggested proposing to the Herald Times a series of articles about ImagineBloomington. Each article could have a different focus. Members also suggested going out to faith-based groups, the Rotary Club, homebuilders, and other community groups. Mr. Robinson stated that we also look to the Steering Committee to help get the word out. With more specific plan language, we may get more feedback from members of the public who haven't been involved thus far.