

**BLOOMINGTON PLAN COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**CASE #: MP-48-12
DATE: December 3, 2012**

PETITIONER: City of Bloomington
401 N. Morton Street, Suite 160

REQUEST: Forward the ImagineBloomington Vision Statement to the Common Council with a positive recommendation.

BACKGROUND: The Growth Policies Plan (GPP) is the comprehensive plan for the City of Bloomington. It was adopted by the Plan Commission and City Council in 2002. It is standard practice for municipal governments to update their comprehensive plans every decade. Since 2012 marks ten years since the GPP was adopted, the Plan Commission and City Council both gave the Planning Department direction to proceed with a GPP update in 2011.

In order to guide the GPP update, a Steering Committee was formed in October 2011. It consists of twenty-five members appointed by the Mayor, City Council and Plan Commission. The membership represents a wide spectrum of community interests. City staff held several educational meetings with the Steering Committee between late 2011 and early 2012. Meeting topics included comprehensive plan fundamentals, community profiles for Bloomington and Monroe County, peer city reviews and potential framework options for updating the GPP. City staff recommended to the Steering Committee that a Vision Statement be developed as the first phase of the GPP update process. The Vision Statement would then be used as a foundation for developing specific policies and topic areas to include in the updated GPP. Formally unveiled in February 2012, the visioning process was branded as "ImagineBloomington" for greater name recognition in the community.

The goal of ImagineBloomington was for the public to be directly engaged in crafting the specific elements of the Vision Statement. The workshops featured a mix of both individual and group activities designed to develop visioning priorities. This format allowed a unique opportunity for people to share their ideas, hear from others and come to consensus on differing opinions. The end result was that participants identified the most important issues currently facing Bloomington. They then developed targeted goals and actions the community should strive for in the future. Workshops were held at the downtown Monroe County Public Library, various public schools across the community and at the Bell Trace Senior Living Center.

Outside of these workshops, there were additional ways for the public to stay involved with ImagineBloomington. Multiple "tabling events" were held, in which

the public could talk with City staff and provide feedback in an informal environment. Locations for these events included the downtown Monroe County Public Library, the Wright Food Court at Indiana University and the Rhino's Youth Center. Staff also provided status reports and progress updates to a number of City boards and commissions. These included the Common Council, Plan Commission, Arts Commission, Environmental Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission on Aging and the Commission on Sustainability.

A number of innovative input gathering tools were utilized to enhance the outreach process. These included a dedicated ImagineBloomington project website, an on-line survey, and Facebook and Twitter pages. Detailed written summaries of each workshop, along with "word cloud" images that visually showed frequently occurring workshop topics, were posted on-line. These allowed the public to have timely updates and stay connected with the progress of ImagineBloomington. Additionally, an interactive on-line discussion forum tool called UserVoice was available to foster opportunities for public involvement. UserVoice provided a way for people to actively participate, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in topic discussions, offer feedback, submit ideas and vote on their preferred options. The public could also submit ideas to City staff through more traditional methods, including via telephone, United States Postal Service correspondence and in-person visits.

Following the conclusion of this outreach process, the Steering Committee reconvened in June 2012 to review the public input that was received. City staff worked closely with the Steering Committee to write a draft vision statement. The topic areas of the Vision Statement were developed directly based on the priorities identified by the public during the outreach process. Once the draft Vision Statement was approved by the Steering Committee, City staff began another round of outreach efforts. The goal of this second round was to provide opportunities for the public to review and comment on the language of the draft Vision Statement.

A total of three open house events were held in late October 2012. These were open format events that allowed the public to review the Vision Statement draft, provide feedback, offer comments and talk with City staff. Two were held at the downtown Monroe County Public Library, while the third was held in the City Hall atrium. In addition to the open house events, additional on-line opportunities were also available. The Vision Statement draft was posted on the dedicated ImagineBloomington project website for public review. An on-line survey was posted to allow a method for the public to provide feedback on each individual

topic point. The UserVoice site was also reactivated on the website to provide a way for the public to discuss the Vision Statement draft, provide comments, offer suggestions and vote for their preferences.

The Steering Committee met again in November 2012 to review the public feedback on the draft Vision Statement. Again, utilizing the input received from the public, the Steering Committee worked with City staff to make final revisions and edits to the draft. Following this refinement, the Vision Statement was ready to be sent to the Plan Commission for discussion and formal consideration.

OVERVIEW: the Vision Statement, developed by the Growth Policies Plan Update Steering Committee from the priorities identified by the public during the ImagineBloomington process, is listed below:

This vision statement reflects the concerns, wishes and aspirations of the residents of Bloomington, Indiana. ImagineBloomington engaged hundreds of residents, along with elected officials and members of City boards and commissions, to develop this vision for the future of Bloomington. This vision statement will provide both City government and the broader community with policy guidance and a common understanding of the values and themes that will shape Bloomington in the future.

We begin by recognizing Bloomington's strong foundation. We are culturally rich, cherish our progressive college town atmosphere and embrace diversity. We respect our past, while using innovation and collaboration to keep moving forward. Our wealth of natural and community resources allows us to maintain a highly desirable quality of life. Together, these are the defining features of a community with many strengths and a bright future.

This is our vision. Bloomington achieves excellence through collaboration, creativity, cultural vitality, inclusion and sustainability. We establish the following as core principles that will guide Bloomington's future.

- Fortify our strong commitment to equality, acceptance, openness and public engagement.
- Nurture our vibrant and historic downtown as the flourishing center of the community.
- Ensure all land development activity makes a positive and lasting community contribution.

- Recognize the many virtues of preservation, rehabilitation and reuse of our historic structures.
- Embrace all of our neighborhoods as active and vital community assets.
- Celebrate our rich, eclectic blend of arts, culture and local businesses.
- Invest in diverse, sustainable economic development.
- Enhance the community's role as a regional economic hub.
- Offer a wide variety of excellent educational opportunities for our residents at every stage of life.
- Deliver efficient, responsive and forward-thinking local government services.
- Reduce the community's environmental footprint and enhance self-sufficiency.
- Offer a wide variety of quality housing options for all incomes, ages and abilities.
- Provide a balanced, safe, efficient, accessible and connected system of transportation.
- Meet basic needs and ensure self-sufficiency for all residents.
- Provide high quality public spaces and parks.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles.
- Improve public safety and civility.

RECOMMENDATION: The ImagineBloomington process featured an aggressive outreach effort to solicit public input. Based on the priorities identified by the public, the Steering Committee worked very closely with City staff to develop this Vision Statement. The next anticipated step is to utilize the Vision Statement as the foundation to define the specific policies and topic areas of the GPP update. Therefore, staff recommends that the Plan Commission approve Case # MP-48-12 and forward it to the Common Council with a positive recommendation.