



Project 46 Retreat Meeting Notes

Wednesday, Sept 2nd: 10:15am - 2:15pm

Cal Brand Meeting Hall at City Hall

123 Washington Street, Columbus 47201.

Meeting Goals

- Identify top focus areas for P46
- Identify top strategies for P46
- Identify critical stakeholders for priority actualization
- Determine structure for advancing priorities

Meeting Agenda

10:15am – Welcome and Meeting Objectives

10:20am – Setting the Priority Focus Areas

10:30am – Identify Top Strategies and Projects in Each Priority Focus Area

12:00pm – Working Lunch and Steering Committee Business Items

12:45pm – Priority Updates for Leadership

1:00pm – Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement

1:55pm – Structure for Advancing Priorities

2:10pm – Closing and Next Steps

Meeting Attendees

FACILITATORS

- Kim Schlaepfer, Lotus Engineering & Sustainability
- Grace Sullivan, Lotus Engineering & Sustainability

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

City of Bloomington

- Shawn Miya, Assistant Director of Sustainability and Project 46 Chair

- Joel Pontius, Conservation & Energy Resource Manager
- Jonas Chang, Grant Manager
- Hopi Stosberg, Council Member

City of Columbus

- Mary Ferdon, Mayor
- Jake Sipe, Director of Community Development

Town of Nashville

- Sandie Jones, Town Manager and Project 46 Co-Chair

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Bill Brown, Environmental Resilience Institute, Indiana University
- Michelle Cohen, Lake Monroe Water Fund
- Patrick Foley, Electron Charger
- Jennifer Ehara, Sierra Club Hoosier Winding Waters Group
- Stephanie Richards, Gnarly Tree Sustainability Institute
- Brijesh Krishnan, Cummins

Meeting Notes

The meeting was called to order at 10:15am on September 2, 2026. The meeting was held in person with a virtual meeting option. Joel and Jonas from City of Bloomington Utilities joined the meeting virtually.

WELCOME & ICEBREAKER (10:15 AM)

- Lotus provided an overview of the meeting agenda, meeting goals, and meeting agreements for the retreat.
- Lotus shared the primary objectives of the meeting. Those objectives were to leave the meeting with:
 - Clear priorities and next steps
 - Clear pitch of what Project 46 is doing
 - And clear roles and responsibilities.
- The attendees participated in an icebreaker activity to share their thoughts on what it looks like to have a sustainable 3-community region. Responses included the following:
 - Meet the community needs within the community - energy, food, etc.
 - Benefit from each other's strengths
 - Powered by solar income
 - Collaborating to leverage resources and stories
 - Help each other become more resilient
 - Amazing human resources - how to get collaboration across the region
 - Resilience and collaboration: solar to power EVs and buildings
 - Share existing efforts to break silos

- Access to things we wouldn't have on our own
- Focus on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, reducing costs, and preparing for extreme weather
- Coordinated plan of action - people have options to make sustainable choices and they want to!
- Place that can support community activity and health, shorten supply chains, become more resilient and strengthen connection
- High impact and collaborative climate action

SETTING THE PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS (10:45 AM)

- Lotus shared the results of the legislative review they conducted looking at policies, legislation, programs, funding available, and stakeholder interest - to look at opportunities that offer synchronicity across these factors. Lotus also reviewed the GHG inventory and the opportunity for these focus areas to lend themselves to resilience.
- There was discussion about the resilience score for the various focus areas. Bill Brown shared that the scores looked incorrect in a few focus areas. For these focus areas he suggested that activities in these focus areas would have a larger impact on resilience than scored in the Lotus review. For example, renewable energy and energy efficiency should have higher ranking because local renewable energy and energy efficient buildings do in fact contribute to local resilience in extreme weather, events, and power outages. The group agreed via the discussion that followed.
- Following the presentation of the legislative review and scoring, the committee was asked to consider which focus areas they thought should be the priorities for Project 46 for the next 2 years. Each committee member was given three dots to vote on the key focus areas.
- Following the vote, the dots were counted for each focus area to determine the areas with the most votes.
- The results of the committee vote are as follows.
 - Flood and hazard mitigation - top priority
 - Energy Efficiency - tied for 2nd
 - Renewable Energy - tied for 2nd
 - Waste - 3rd
 - EVs - 4th
 - Water Supply & Waste Water - 5th
 - Natural resources - tied for 6th
 - Transportation- tied for 6th
- Committee Discussion:
 - Mary - I am not sure that we can be effective in moving forward Renewable Energy in Columbus. It seems like our power here would be legislative. Otherwise it's just building solar.
 - Birjesh - would agree with this, we looked at a solar project on a brown field and it fell through. We need to be practical about the current political situation.
 - We could have a renewable energy subset to energy efficiency perhaps.
 - Jennifer - my thought is that it's contagious when you see small-scale solar. If the ball hasn't started rolling and we could get the ball rolling, it could move to small churches and other businesses. If we can get the ball rolling it would be great.

- Stephanie - we could get moving on renewable energy and recruit the County's to participate. The space for this is in the County vs the cities themselves. Objections to rural residents to large scale renewable energy.
- Mary - Sit in the solid waste management district. We struggle because we can't find a space for recycling. There's already a push to just cut recycling. This is a priority. There's a concern that recycling could go away if we don't focus on it. Worried what will happen if recycling goes away. We've looked far and wide for this.
- Hopi - Composting is top of mind for me. How can we do this because the state allows for it. Voted for this as a region, can we impact it in different ways. Attract businesses who will use recycled materials, someone interested in a composting facility start up, etc. Bloomington is a little stymied.
- Shawn - Do the County waste departments already collaborate? Yes, there used to be a pretty strong network, not sure if it is anymore.
 - Birjesh - We had launched in Indianapolis we launched a waste management protocol. There are some learnings we can take here.
 - Voice support for Waste as well - industry and resident perspective are both important. Industry, we spend a lot moving waste around. It's all about infrastructure and capability. It becomes much more feasible.
- Shawn - we had a composting company go out of business. Would love to see neighborhood based programs for composting - collection and reuse locally.
- Final Priority Focus Areas agreed upon by the Committee:
 - Flood plain and Hazard Mitigation
 - Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy
 - Waste

IDENTIFY TOP STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS IN EACH PRIORITY FOCUS AREA (11:20 AM)

- Lotus presented a series of project and strategy examples from peer communities that fell under the priority focus areas identified in the first session.
- Following a presentation of peer community strategies, Lotus broke the committee into three groups for in-person participants and convened one group virtually. Each group was asked to identify 1-4 strategies within each focus area category they wanted to focus on as a regional collaborative.
- The Committee breakout groups discussed and identified strategies, which were presented after the business items and working lunch.

WORKING LUNCH AND STEERING COMMITTEE BUSINESS ITEMS (12:15 PM)

New Membership

- IEIF presented slides to pitch why they should be voted to join the Advisory Committee.
- Committee Discussion:
 - Michelle - he is on my board and he's wonderful and is active to his commitments.
 - Sandie - I feel that he can be helpful with tabling and education
 - Bill - He travels around the state and can be a wealth of information around what's happening in other places.

- Vote:
 - Unanimous support to invite Alex to join the Advisory Committee
- Alex: what would be the best next step?
 - I will communicate with Grace about coming back into the meeting.

Bylaw

- Steering Committee members cannot attend virtually for more than 50% of the meetings throughout the year.
- Suggested change to bylaws:
 - The Steering Committee, at its discretion, is authorized to make decisions on behalf of the Alliance. A quorum of more than 50% of Steering Committee members is required to make decisions, and any decision must have the support of greater than 50% of those voting. Steering Committee votes may be made in person or electronically, in accordance with Indiana's Open Door Laws, provided the method of voting is communicated in advance to all Steering Committee members. At its discretion, the Steering Committee may determine that an Alliance decision should be made by a vote of the full membership. Under these circumstances, voting may take place in person or electronically, in accordance with Indiana's Open Door Laws, provided the method of voting is communicated in advance to all Steering Committee members. A majority (50%+1) vote of those voting when there is a quorum governs decisions and actions taken by the Alliance. In accordance with Indiana's Open Door Laws, members of the Steering Committee cannot attend more than 50% of meetings in a calendar year virtually, and cannot attend virtually more than two consecutive meetings at a time.
- Change to ensure we are compliant with Indiana Open Door Laws.
- Vote:
 - Unanimous approval of change to bylaws

Conference Sponsorship

- For the past 2 years we have sponsored the IU Sustainability and Resilience Conference.
- Great networking opportunities and it's really well attended.
- Last year we sponsored at the Silver level \$2,500.
- Proposing this year to sponsor at the Bronze level \$2,000
- We will set up a Project 46 table and will get two free tickets.
- Our logo will also be in the program information.
- Its in Plainfield, IN
- Vote
 - Unanimous support for conference sponsorship

Member Updates

- Beat the Heat - Sandie:
 - Town of Nashville is part of the Beat the Heat program. Its an OCRA program run by IU. What we've done so far, we've created a Beat the Heat week. IU came out to set up heat sensors in our community to ID the 'hot spots'.
 - We have a survey out for our residents to understand how folks are managing heat.
 - IU will help us id strategies to beat extreme heat

- Michelle:
 - Working on getting funding for a septic assistance program - loan and grant capital to replace or update the septic systems that are failing. Failing systems emit more GHG than functioning ones. Once we get funding in place we will let you know. We are trying to get funding for a forgivable loan for \$1 million dollars. Looking for a match for this 1:1.
 - Working on our grant - Indiana Forests to Faucets. Focuses on creating native landscapes and making sure our forests are healthy to support water quality. Took out invasive trees and planted native trees. Another partnership with Brown County Soil and Water conservation district to help private landowners to advise them on best practices on their land for forest health.
- Stephanie EV subcommittee:
 - Draft docs will be shared with the group to get feedback.
 - We did an inventory of EV infrastructure in the region.
 - Developed content for an educational brochure and website
 - Did a stakeholder analysis for the EV subcommittee. Interview folks who have an interest in building up the EV infrastructure in the region. Recruit committee members to help support the committee work.
 - Discussing with the Hoosier EV Association who is becoming active in Bloomington. Applied for a grant from the local community foundations to revise the association and do more education in Bloomington.
 - Recruited a WELL scholar to support the research efforts for the committee.
- Shawn:
 - Hired MPI solar to launch our new solar grants for homeowners program. For income qualified residents. Launch by Oct 1st. 5 kW system on 22 homes!

IDENTIFY TOP STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS IN EACH PRIORITY FOCUS AREA CONTINUED (1:00 PM)

The strategies and projects identified in the breakout group discussion are organized by priority focus area, below.

Energy Efficiency + Renewable energy

- Group 1:
 - Inform local officials, create incentives
 - Recruiting additional committee members
 - Revisiting building regulations to incentivize or require EE and RE.
 - Kim: Just as a note, we will recruit for any top focus area. This afternoon, we will discuss recruitment.
- Group 2:
 - Expanding, solar energy, efficiency and lighting program that Bloomington has
 - Rebates - green home improvement program targeted to residents. Fostering education for energy efficiency.
 - Education, creating templates, (project 46 intern start next week).
- Group 3:
 - All of these strategies are integrated

- Discussing what happened in Gary, battery energy storage at a large scale.
- Smaller scale, community resilience hubs (Libraries, Community Centers, Churches get battery storage). What does the community need?
- Grid solar - bulk purchase across the region. Bulk purchases could lower the cost of solar.
 - The state does not have a process. It doesn't outlaw it. It's a grey area. Some people have explored the grey area. Maybe the region could be an area for exploration)
- Communication about success stories. Overcome news deserts about what good things are happening.
- Hopi - When Shawn was talking about having templates, it could be helpful to have templates for how to become a resilience hub.
 - Folks have no ideas how much it takes to get battery storage for solar and how to size.
 - IRF is working on that incubator.
 - Brijesh: From a waste perspective, we will need to think of a place to dispose of batteries.
- Virtual Group: Joel and Jonas
 - PPA and partnership with Hoosier Energy
 - Set Regional Policies.

Flood & Hazard Mitigation

- Group 1:
 - Enhancing building requirements to better handle stormwater
 - Looking for opportunities for regional collaboration (Bloomington)
 - Recruit community members with expertise (Folks in stormwater management departments).
- Group 2:
 - Educate about green infrastructure projects that have been completed. Replicate across the region.
 - Fathom (Accurate flood map) Mapping, sample data for one area. Where ponding and flash flooding, how wide rivers and creeks can get during flooding events. Apply for grant funding. Climate projects out to 2050.
 - Story telling about completed projects - getting all emergency management folks together. How will we handle 12 inches?
 - Instead of using the word "climate resilience hubs" can we use the words "Emergency Resilience Hubs.
- Group 3:
 - Battery energy storage
 - Regional Communication Network
 - How do neighbors communicate with neighbors during flooding events?
- Virtual Group:
 - Insurance enterprise. Require insurance providers, as insurance premiums rise, to fund mitigation for community members.
 - Regional education around preparedness

- Discussion:
 - Brijesh, Communication is a subcomponent (Like recruiting committee members) of all focus areas.
 - Hopi: Agreed, communication and template creation is critical but it is different from storytelling, which is more inspirational. Marketing the work. Versus developing community partners. Frame this on how Lotus can build capacity in the short term.
 - Brijesh: Think about the sustenance of this work. As we recruit to the subcommittee, assign a communication and marketing champion for each subcommittee.
 - Responsibilities could be newsletter, press releases, etc.

Waste

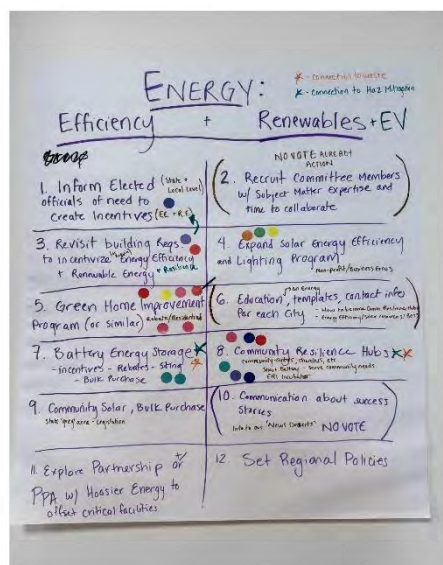
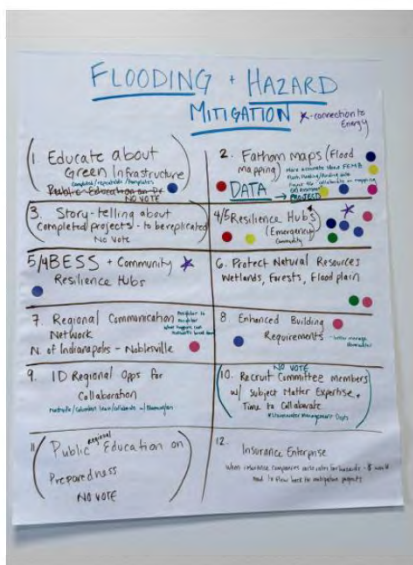
- Group 1:
 - Do a study on how waste is handled in each community. Identify gaps and opportunities
 - Recruit experts from solid waste management
 - Identify regional collaboration
- Group 2:
 - Developing tree waste chipping facility. Urban forester in Bloomington. They have approval to create a tree waste facility. Looking for an IDEM grant for a regional facility. Brijesh looked at the volume of tree waste. Mill tree waste into higher use materials. Partner with PW department,
 - Material Recovery Facility: Can we have close infrastructure so we don't have to send materials to Indianapolis. Not just recovering. Michelle: Also create an uptake market locally or use it.
 - Looking at food waste. Use interns to look at other areas. Non-profit looking at Bikashi, which is fermenting food waste. Sending food waste to food pantries. Work with IU to use their food dehydrator. Use that for composting.
 - Brijesh: 1) We need different types of infrastructure, 2) What is already happening in the community? Bring them into the initiative.
 - Jennifer: She did this as her project for P46. All of the larger grocery stores and restaurant chains are required to handle their waste. They have to put as little as possible into the landfills. They each have their own collection of that waste that could go anywhere. No coordination. Small scale independent groceries could tap into that.
 - Separated in the back, go to pantry or go to waste
 - Repair and replace electronics - collecting laptop and iPhones, refurbish them and give them to Boys and Girls Club or other folks who need them. Sansuhi -an organization- collects them currently but cannot put them back into circulation.
- Group 3:
 - Recruiting business that utilize waste as raw material
 - Can they use the Indianapolis model for waste management as a model for this region. What is Waste Management's (the company) capacity to do another in this region.
 - Brijesh, this is the same thing as number ten.
 - Educate people to create less trash and less stuff.
- Discussion:

- Combine the strategies to create a recovery facility and create the uptake market via recruiting businesses who use waste as raw materials. A vote for one is a vote for the other.

Committee Voting

- Following the report out of each group's strategies, the Committee was asked to vote again on the strategies they thought should be pursued in each focus area.
- During the reporting session group discussion identified strategies that should be owned by each focus group rather than specific, separate strategies to pursue.
- It was agreed that the following strategies or actions should be included in the work for each subcommittee / focus area. Therefore prior to committee voting, these strategies were removed from the voting options and assumed to be default strategies each group would pursue.
 - Recruiting subject matter experts
 - Developing educational resources and templates
 - Storytelling and sharing of case studies
- Each committee member was given two dots per focus area to vote on their top strategies.
- Lotus then reviewed the votes with the Committee members and the committee discussed the votes and finalized the top strategies to pursue in each area.

Images of posters listing strategy options and Committee votes.



Summary of Group Discussions

Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

- Green home improvement
- Resilience hubs - this moves over to Flood mitigation
- Hopi: It is a violation of state law to put any requirements as green buildings?
- Bill: Can we just update our code?
 - Hopi: We would have to update state code. You can't limit developers to put in natural gas. You can incentivize.

- Kim: New energy codes are fuel agnostic
- Bill: Could you require wind resistance
- Stephanie: In Bloomington, requirements for multifamily units to have EV chargers, there are also incentives (Increase by one level) if you add sustainability features.
- Kim: Maybe there is interest in exploring options that exist from peer communities.
 - Stephanie: We have to, funding is going away.
 - Brijesh: Are we tending towards number three (revisit building requirements to incentivize energy efficiency and renewable energy), which directly connects to number one (inform elected officials of the need to create incentives). It's very intentional.
 - Hopi - She actually had a city attorney that says we can't do this. May be wrong. but has spent lots of time trying to thread this needle. It's very tricky business and discouraging.
- Kim: Would local govt rep want this research
 - Sandie: Nashville, we are creating our unified development ordinance. She has a group/agency that is looking in to all those things for her.
 - Mary: TIF Dollars, easy incentives. Wouldn't it be nice if you had bioswales in your landscape?
- Decision - Great network of brain trust. How do we feel about writing a Project 46 letter to DHS to update building codes?

Flood & Hazard Mitigation

- Flood mitigation projects will be very site specific. Is that a role that Project 46 would support?
 - Michelle: Can we negotiate a better price as a group for fathom
 - Sandie: Can we get the county involved with the flood mapping
 - Stephanie: Stormwater is created in the city, but it floods south of town. Externality. The builders want to reduce their cost with stormwater diversion, but the impose cost outside of the city through their actions.
 - Kim: So identify projects through the mapping, but that individual projects will come out of it? How will you all maintain regional
 - Shawn: emergency management is housed in the county.
 - Stephanie: Need to be on the committee to leverage this
 - Brijesh: Can you focus on what all data is needed? What are the vulnerabilities?
 - Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI) is bringing down County Data to the city level, what is the heat index going to be like? The Hoosier resilience index is based on the climate change index.
 - Bill: Flood maps could be a sensitive issue. It could redline communities.
 - Hopi: There is some overlap with the Baseline assessment in waste.
 - Kim: Would offer that it should be separate.
 - Stephanie: Baselining should be part of each subcommittee. Mirror some of the methods the EV Subcommittee applied.
 - Shawn: Question for Bill. Is ERI looking at extreme heat taking in grid and battery storage for the future? Are we looking at brown outs?
 - Bill: They are just looking at climate change impact. Out of that, they are using that for the Hoosier resilience index. Fine level of detail.
 - Data centers is a challenge, extreme weather taking out infrastructure
 - Heat does affect water lines too

- Kim: Resilience Hubs is a clear winner, then strategy #2 will be Fathom mapping and focus on what data do we need to reduce risk and how can we use that information regionally.
- Waste:
 - Kim: The winners are:
 - Material recovery + business recruitment
 - Food recovery
 - But to Hopi's point, the baseline assessment might be a precursor to both of those items
 - Michelle: You used to have to have a twenty-year plan.
 - Jenn: Solid waste management district has good data of what goes into the landfill
 - Kim: Reach out to major businesses to understand how they are doing.
 - Jenn: We only know where private homes and apartments where it is going.

Summary of Strategies Selected by Focus Area:

Waste:

- Circular economy assessment and materials recovery facility
- Food waste reductions through a waste assessment

Flood & Hazard Mitigation

- Community Resilience hubs
- Fathom mapping to collect data of impact, location, demographics, of flood zone areas

Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

- Rebate: Green home improvement program on the residential side.
 - Solar, lighting, batteries are included (see 4,5,7 on poster image)
- Maybe there is something we do touching building codes (see 1 and 3 on poster image and note above about letter or incentivizing development)

STRUCTURE FOR ADVANCING PRIORITIES (2:00 PM)

- Lotus led a very quick discussion on how the committee wants to organize the subcommittee structure to advance these new priorities and strategies. It was discussed that this conversation can continue at future steering committee meetings.
- Group Discussion:
 - Bill: Volunteer for the Community Resilience Hub
 - Suggest there is one committee working on resilience hubs and energy efficiency.
 - Hopi: it would be easier to have three subgroups than five. The Community Resilience hub makes more sense in the Hazard mitigation side.
 - Kim: Energy efficiency and renewable energy programs are a clear overlap, resilience hubs could be its own group, but could connect to the two groups. One group for waste.
 - Next question: What do we do with EV?
 - Mary: under energy?
 - Patrick: Keep going as a separate entity. Keep the work cruising under EVs.

- Final determination was a subcommittee to organize the following efforts:
 - Flooding Mitigation Subcommittee focused on fathom mapping
 - Resilience Hubs Subcommittee focused on resilience hub development (may collaborate with Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Group)
 - Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Subcommittee focused on a regional rebate and incentive program.
 - Waste Subcommittee focused on food waste and a materials recovery facility.
 - Continue the EV subcommittee efforts.

CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS (2:10PM)

- Notes, slides, and a retreat summary will be shared with the Committee.
- Business items:
 - Bylaws will be updated
 - Sponsorship will be sent
- Indiana Energy Independence Fund will be joining P46 structure
- Lotus will begin to coordinate with P46 leadership the following items:
 - Funding strategy mapping to newly identified priorities
 - Partner outreach strategy and new outreach
 - Organization of subcommittees to advance new priorities
- Lotus is continuing to ID updates to the website and will work with the Project 46 intern to activate these.

The meeting adjourned at 2:15pm.