

Smart Growth Efforts Continue with Series of Workshops

Thursday, January 15, 2004 - The City of Evansville Smart Growth Planning Committee hosted a series of four public workshops at the Evansville High School. Earlier this month, the Smart Growth Planning Committee identified local stakeholders that were to receive an invitation to these workshops. While each workshop was open to the public, the purpose of the invitations was to make an additional attempt to solicit input from affected stakeholders. For example, local business owners were sent invitations to the Economic Development Workshop. Accordingly, local real estate agents, builders and developers were sent invitations to the Housing Workshop. Each of the four workshops were dedicated to a different plan element:

9:00 – 10:30 am	Economic Development
11:00 – 12:30pm	Housing
1:00 – 2:30 pm	Transportation
3:00 – 4:30 pm	Utilities and Community Facilities

OMNNI Associates – the Appleton-based consulting firm selected by the City to assist with development of the Smart Growth Plan, facilitated each workshop. What follows is a brief summary of each workshop. During each session, OMNNI Associates presented an overview of the Evansville Planning Program, as well as, general information about the Smart Growth Planning Law.

Economic Development Element

34 people participated in the Economic Development Workshop. During the session, a questionnaire was distributed to generate ideas and discussion related to the following questions:

- What makes Evansville a good place to do business?
- What Types of New Business/Industrial development (if any) are needed?
- What should Downtown Development include?
- What challenges do businesses in Evansville face?
- What can/should the City do to promote economic development?

Housing Element

39 people participated in the Housing Element Workshop to identify and discuss the City's housing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This discussion was a continuation of more general discussion that occurred at the Kick-Off Meeting in August of 2003. Below are some of the points raised with respect to each topic:

Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools ▪ Affordability ▪ Location ▪ Community Safety
Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic ▪ Lack of Multiple Family Housing and Perception that More is Not Needed ▪ Lack of Coordination in Planning ▪ Lack of a Larger Vision
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To develop housing adjacent to the Downtown ▪ To develop additional housing choices for all markets ▪ To develop mixed housing developments to accommodate a diversified collection of housing choices in a single development, such as larger and smaller single family homes, duplexes and town homes.
Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Of becoming a bedroom community ▪ Of not providing diversified housing choices to allow people to lived in community long-term

Transportation Element

21 people attended the Transportation Workshop. During this session, Barbara Feeney of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, spent about 1/3 of the allotted time answering questions about the scheduled improvements of USH 14.

The remaining time in the session was dedicated to a discussion about local transportation issues and concerns the plan should address. Some of the items identified by participants include:

- Traffic calming opportunities
- Improvement of sidewalk condition, particularly downtown and along 5th Street
- Mass transit opportunities to Madison (high speed rail, carpooling, etc.)
- Alternative traffic routes for people living on the West Side of the City who want to travel north to Madison
- Need for a controlled intersection (i.e. light) at the intersection of USH 14 and CTH M

Utilities and Community Facilities Element

24 people attended this workshop. Participants included representatives from City Staff, local utilities, the Rock County Sheriff's Office, the school district, and the Evansville Community Partnership. Discussion initially was centered on those utilities and community facilities that residents take great pride in. During this discussion it was revealed that residents are generally satisfied with all services and facilities available today, but additional services or expanded services are desired. Moreover, the need to maintain service levels, as the City grows, was also expressed as an important priority. Particular challenges identified include:

- Improved access to communication facilities, including high speed Internet and local phone service to surrounding communities
- The long-term sustainability of the wastewater treatment plant
- The anticipated need for additional water and sewer infrastructure as development continues
- An indoor community pool
- The potential to promote "green" energy choices (including Wind and Solar Technologies)
- Intergovernmental Agreement with the Town of Union to address growth and service needs on a regional basis
- Improvements to Allen Creek and Lake Leota

The final portion of this session was spent discussing alternatives to paying for the desired services and infrastructure improvements. Ideas considered included: tax increases, user fees, impact fees, and the establishment of utilities.

How Will the Information Be Used?

OMNNI Associates, will be preparing drafts of the Economic Development, Housing, Transportation and Utilities & Community Facilities Elements. These drafts will include the information gained in the workshops. In addition, the drafts will include goals, objectives and policies to address the concerns raised at each workshop.

City Staff is asked to review each draft to ensure that information about existing programs, trends, and ordinances is correct. Then, the Smart Growth Planning Committee is charged with the task of reviewing the draft to ensure that the issues identified are accurate. Additionally, the Smart Growth Planning Committee has the initial responsibility of refining the goals, objectives and policies for each element.

When Will the next Public Workshops Be Held?

The next public workshops will be held in the summer. Those workshops will be dedicated to the Agricultural, Natural, Cultural Resources Element and the Land Use Element. Look for announcements and additional information on this web page.

In the meantime, residents are welcome to attend the meetings of the Smart Growth Planning Committee. The Smart Growth Planning Committee meets 2x each month.

For information about meeting times and locations, refer to the Evansville Community Calendar.

Residents are also encouraged to complete the community survey (to be distributed in early 2004).

As always, please check this website regularly to review draft chapters and information. Resident feedback is welcome!

Please check this site again for updates!!!!!!!!!!