

Mayor's Column for June 17, 2009 Review

The Evansville Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Common Council on June 15, 2005. The twenty-year Plan provides specific goals and objectives for transportation, housing, land use, economic development, community facilities, and agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. Our community is beginning year five of using the Comprehensive Plan as a guide for decision-making.

Wisconsin Smart Growth legislation provides that as of January 1, 2010, all future land use decisions must be consistent with our adopted Plan. City committees and the Plan Commission are currently reviewing the Plan to: 1) track progress on implementation objectives and goals, and 2) ensure that our Plan remains aligned with current community vision in advance of January 1.

The Smart Growth Plan has been actively used as a tool for decision-making. It has not been sitting on a shelf at City Hall gathering dust. Here are some of the implementation objectives and goals accomplished or worked on since the Plan's adoption.

The Public Works Committee recently reviewed their substantial Plan implementation efforts. Transportation Goal #3 of the Plan is to create and maintain a uniform and safe sidewalk system in Evansville. This has been accomplished by updating the sidewalk plan inventory, identifying locations of additional sidewalk connections, and devising a maintenance and construction schedule, incorporating improvements into the five-year Capital Improvement Budget.

Development of a transportation network in accordance with adopted land use plans, economic considerations, physical constraints and community desires is Transportation Goal #5. Adopting a Heavy Traffic Route Ordinance (truck routes), reducing the "bottleneck" downtown through additional east-west corridors (Water Street improvements), and coordinating with Rock County to upgrade county roads, i.e. County M and County C, to accommodate additional local traffic are supporting activities that have been accomplished.

Transportation Goal #9 is to improve transportation amenities downtown. The three supporting objectives of completing a parking study, pursuing alternative parking accommodations for downtown businesses, and replacement of sidewalks and curbing have been completed.

Developing a streetscape plan for downtown, including sidewalk improvements, lighting improvements, signage and canopies, street furniture and landscaping, and investing in these needed improvements are supporting objectives of the Plan's Economic Development Goal #3, revitalizing the downtown to enhance its historic charm, mix of businesses, walkable amenities, and tourist potential.

Land Use Goal #3 is creating a destination point for residents and visitors, and is supported by the nearly completed objectives of expanding identification, directional, and historic street signage and historic street lighting.

The accomplished objectives of developing a regional storm water management plan and pursuing establishment of a storm water utility support the Utilities and Community Facilities Goal #4, providing an efficient, well-maintained system for storm-water management.

The supporting objective of identifying and implementing strategies to address Lake Leota sediment issues is done and addresses Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Goal #4, to preserve, protect and expand the natural resources of Evansville for the use and enjoyment by present residents, visitors, and future generations.

A facilities assessment study to determine a long-term strategy for providing additional waste water treatment capacity was completed to support the Utilities and Community Facilities Goal #6 of maintaining a sanitary system that is capable of serving the needs of a growing city population. Improvements are scheduled to begin later this summer.

The above activities are only a partial listing of the Public Works Department's efforts related to the Smart Growth Plan.

The Park and Recreation Board updated the Evansville Park & Outdoor Recreation Plan, which was necessary to maintain grant eligibility for related state funds. The Park and Recreation Plan is an important tool for accomplishing Utilities and Community Facilities Goal #1, providing adequate active and passive recreational opportunities of various kinds that are accessible to all segments of the population and areas of the City. Continued development of Westside Park to maintain recreational choices supported Economic Development Goal #2, developing and maintaining a physical, cultural, educational, and recreational environment in the City that is conducive to business and residential development. The Park Board worked in concert with Public Works on the Lake Leota restoration project.

The Historic Preservation Commission has updated the inventory of historic properties through a Certified Local Government subgrant, routinely utilized the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's standards for historic preservation projects, partnered in administering the building façade improvement program for businesses, promoted Evansville's historic district and community historic resources, and assisted with researching the Main Street Program as a possibility for promoting historic preservation and downtown economic revitalization. These activities are supporting objectives for Goal #6 of the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources element of the Plan, the preservation and protection of the historic resources of the City to . . . provide for a more interesting, attractive, and vital community.

The Redevelopment Authority, through the consultant services of R.A. Smith and Associates, completed the Allen Creek and North Union Street Redevelopment Master

Plan to identify opportunities to expand the downtown district by integrating the area between the west side of Union Street and Allen Creek. This objective also supports the revitalization of downtown, Economic Development Goal #3.

City Hall has re-aligned staffing, made improvements to the City website, applied for grants that are available for public facilities improvements, and worked to improve communications with residents. City staff has solved the long-time problem of lack of up-to-date Municipal Code availability and the current Code is readily available on the City website. Employees are currently undertaking the large task of computerizing cemetery records. These efforts support Plan Goals of providing adequate, efficient, cost-effective City services and adapting staff and infrastructure needed to meet the requirements of a growing community.

A subcommittee of the Plan Commission completed a large scale commercial development ordinance, often called a “big box” ordinance, which was subsequently passed by the Common Council. Another Commission subcommittee completed a Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinance that was subsequently adopted. A third subcommittee, the Unified Land Development Code Committee is currently reviewing the zoning and subdivision chapters of the Municipal Code to streamline and simplify development requirements. These subcommittees were/are focused on land use and development issues identified in the Smart Growth Plan.

The establishment of the Evansville-Union Implementation Committee was the initial step in beginning to address many of the intergovernmental objectives identified in our Smart Growth Plan. The Committee meets monthly and has preliminarily explored some possible areas of shared services, identified common areas in land use planning, and discussed multi-jurisdictional issues that have occurred. The City has participated in the comprehensive planning activities of Rock County to make sure our interests are represented. Maximizing opportunities to improve communication with intergovernmental partners is a Smart Growth Goal.

The many economic development efforts and activities in Evansville in the four years since Smart Growth Plan adoption will be the topic of my next mayor’s column.

The Plan Commission is charged with the primary responsibility for implementation of the Evansville Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan. The Plan has guided significant activity in our community the past four years. It is intended to be a living document. Reviewing implementation activities will focus attention on future community direction and updating the Plan will keep it relevant and of continuing value to Evansville. Plan review and discussion of possible Plan amendments will continue over the next few months.

ENERGY NEWS

City Hall staff wisely suggested we consider removing the soda machine at City Hall to reduce energy usage/expense. We metered the machine for a week---it cost more than

\$9.00 per week to run. The annual energy cost is approximately \$500. The machine is scheduled for removal.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Evansville welcomes R & A Canoeing as a new boat and canoe rental service in our community. The business is renting space in the park and can be found next to the warming house.

The Fourth of July holiday activities are nearly upon us. I encourage everyone to consider a hometown celebration. The kick-off will be the July 2 Lake Leota Grand Reopening. The Library ice cream social, great music, fireworks, baseball, Lions chicken barbeque, pool party, parade, historic trolley tours, and many other fun-filled activities are planned through the weekend.

COMMUNITY CONGRATULATIONS/THANKS

Evansville's best wishes and congratulations are extended to the Evansville High School Class of 2009. As you embark on new adventures, remember that your hometown friends and family always remain your solid foundation and support.

Congratulations, "Mr. Steve" Hoffenberg, on your well-deserved retirement! You have touched many lives in our community with your decades of inspired teaching of Evansville's kindergarten students.

Evansville thanks Amy Sperry Faldet for her dedicated efforts in beautifying Leonard-Leota Park. Amy has planted the circular flower bed at the bottom of the park hill every year since the age of nineteen.

The City and the Police Department thank Jenny Katzenmeyer and the EHS Greenhouse Class for sprucing up the yard and grounds at the Police Department building. We appreciate your work.

Evansville is proud of the collaborative efforts of the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, VFW, and Lions Club for organizing and sponsoring the spaghetti supper to benefit Jake Janes. Thanks for your efforts.