



Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2016

Present: Steering Committee: Kevin Trevillyan, Rick Messerschmidt, Kevin Crowley, Tamara Kenworthy, Jim Miller, Debbie Westphal Swander, Bobbie Bishop, Colin McBee, Nick Valdez, Shauna Fessler, Vicky Long-Hill, Julie Eliason, Graham Jones, Tom Hadden, Clyde Evans, Naomi Hamlett, Sally Ortgies, Brian Hemesath, Althea Holcomb, Lynne Twedt, Zack Young

Consultants: Mike Hoffman, Erin Cigliano, Dominic Suardini
Next meeting: March 10, 2016

1. Introductions

All present introduced themselves and who they represented. Mike Hoffman provided a quick project overview. The group briefly discussed the driving tour, and all thought it was valuable.

2. Public Engagement

Erin Cigliano gave a quick summary of public engagement efforts to-date, including showing the project video, information on the App, Jingle-in-the Junction, and Chalk Board. Interviews, school and senior focus group findings were also summarized. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

3. Existing Conditions Discussion

Mike Hoffman summarized the status of the survey being conducted by Neighborhood Development Corporation, noting that the response rate was good and focus groups were being conducted. Survey results will be presented at the March meeting. Preliminary special census data was reviewed, as was a draft "Issues and Opportunities" map, and a map showing rental housing in the area.

4. Focus Issues/Themes

Mike Hoffman summarized some of the key themes/issues that have been identified so far, including:

- Continued housing rehabilitation
- Retain historical character of the area
- New development should blend with the character/scale of existing development
- 2nd Story reuse is important
- Redevelopment opportunities are limited, but sites must be identified. Key sites are likely along the edges – along Railroad and along 1st Avenue, the Phenix site, the Bridges of Iowa site on Vine, the site along 16th Street seen on the tour, and perhaps building over existing parking lots
- Availability of parking is a concern that must be addressed, particularly during events like the Farmers Market
- Expanding public art opportunities is desired
- Better integration of bikes into the area (bike racks and access from south of Railroad)

Steering Committee members added the following issues/opportunities to the list:

- Focus on enhancing intersection safety;
- Opportunity to enhance neighborhood / further sense of pride;
- Residential character should stay within the historic theme of the neighborhood;
- Entrance from Railroad Avenue needs better definition;
- Important to reach community through the school;
- Encouraging to see interest and desire for restaurants but we need to look ahead and consider what issues could arise from such; need to pull together and anticipate solutions in advance;
- Parking is a concern but it depends on time of day;
- Grease receptors are required for all restaurants, cafes, wine shops -- there should be an ordinance update that better defines use types and what is required -- a coffee shop shouldn't be held to the same standards as a wing restaurant / deep fried foods;
- Abundance of rental properties in the study area - desire to compare statistic to the entire city;
- Need to eliminate stigma of "crime-ridden" neighborhood / note the perception of housing being dilapidated contributes to this stigma;
- Need to better represent history and diversity of the area's roots;
- What is the Valley junction brand?
- How do we connect the area south of Railroad Avenue?
- Need bike lanes, bike parking/racks, and better connectivity;
- Need to showcase how past plans have been advanced - where are the recommendations today?
- What is the style / type of businesses and restaurants we'd like to see?
- Desire for music venue (Jazz - reference to "Noce" opening in Des Moines);
- Focus on showcasing the people;
- Comparable places include Waterbury, East Village, Ingersoll Avenue, Greenville, SC;
- Blade signage in Valley Junction Business District;
- Need to ensure that 30-something / millennials are heard -- they are a huge part of this plan, our future! The survey that was conducted should have reflected their comments / desires. Looking forward to hearing the statistics on demographics and age sectors.
- We need more affordable housing and better quality housing stock. We need more help getting residents the money to fix up their properties -- especially rentals.
- The inspections on rental properties are very strict.

5. Next Steps

The “Today and Tomorrow” Community Workshop is planned for tonight at 7pm. The next Steering Committee meeting will be March 10th at 4:15pm (location to be determined), followed by a second community workshop – Economics 101, led by Diane Williams of BDI.

Minutes prepared by Mike Hoffman, Teska Associates, Inc.