

Lake Center District Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 5 – 10 AM
Minutes

Present: Lori Knapp, Jim Pearson, Joe La Margo, Rex Simpson, Tim Kirkby, Vita Khosti, Danielle Anderson, Sherman Potter, Kendra Gwin, Chris Forth, Dan McGlaughin, Carmine Avantini, Terry Patterson, Doug Farr, Doug Lynes, Mary Beth Block

Absent: Shelly Pastor, Julie Ahlberg, Gary Goodrich, AJ Spicer

Lori welcomed the committee members and explained that the meeting recording will be distributed to the members who were unable to attend.

Doug Farr provided a brief overview of the placemaking study.

Lori asked the Steering Committee members:

- 1. Is the plan what you expected? How do you feel about the plan?**
- 2. What is your opinion pertaining to the configuration about Portage Road (number of lanes, speed limit, etc.)**

Rex shared that he likes the plan and that his biggest concern is the speed limit. He does not think a speed reduction just in the isthmus area is possible but that it would be difficult to reduce the speed limit for the entire district. He is unsure if the public will accept a speed reduction.

Danielle expressed that she likes that the plan includes some historical context including what previous administrations have done and provides the background of how we have arrived at this point. It also answers the criticism that the city is using an “out-of-town” consultant by showing that the Steering Committee (locals), the Council and the community have been instrumental in forming the plan. Danielle shared that it would be ideal to reduce the speed limit through the entire corridor, but it is not possible. She also shared that she does not think a lane reduction is possible so she is anxious to learn how we can slow traffic down.

Jim indicated that he likes that the 2015 plan shaped this new plan. He agreed that the first order of business is to decide how to slow the traffic. He likes use of a pilot project to slow speeds down, especially in the winter months. Jim expressed his appreciation for the use of a national professional firm with the needed expertise. He continued by saying that more than \$10 million is currently budgeted for the improvements in the district, making this project no longer theoretical.

Terry shared that he has enjoyed the planning process and is excited to see what the area can look like. He expressed his opinion that the isthmus can be a “cool” area and appreciates that Farr Associates incorporated the entire district into the plan. He believes that traffic speed must be reduced in order to create a cool atmosphere where people can bike, walk and shop.

Lori said that she is thrilled to hear that the Steering Committee appears to be on the same page. She stated traffic calming and reduced speeds must be accomplished somehow and that Farr Associates will help determine the appropriate method.

Dan reminded the committee that Doug Farr is actually from Michigan and has done a lot of work in Michigan.

Carmine advised the committee to remember that the plan is anticipatory in nature and looks out 20 years. He stated that younger generations are not as enthused with owning a vehicle as older generations are, which will result in fewer vehicles on roadways in the future. He also believes that continued high-traffic volumes in the area will discourage the type of investment that the city is seeking. He shared that incoming generations are looking for more walkable/bikeable communities. He urged to committee to remember this area should be built to serve future generations.

Joe believes that the plan displays a good balance and it confirms that the committee and the administration listened to the residents and addressed many of the concerns. He believes the outcomes will help the businesses in the area in the end and will create a sense of place. He called the isthmus “a diamond in the rough.” He appreciates that the area will be more pedestrian friendly and a desirable location for businesses and residents. He thinks the plan keeps the city on the cutting edge and will bring high-quality developments.

Chris expressed that the plan is what he expected and he is not surprised with anything of the recommendations. He agreed that it is important to remember that the plan will serve future generations. Chris hopes to create a sense of place not only in the isthmus area, but also throughout the district area. He encouraged creating cross access and consolidating driveways. He shared that he does not oppose a three-lane roadway to slow traffic and that the pilot program should start at Bacon Avenue and go through the isthmus. He also shared that the city should encourage the use of Sprinkle Road as a high-speed bypass.

CHAPTER 1

Page 5: Doug F. shared his appreciation for Terry’s comment that the isthmus area could be a “cool” area and indicated that he will incorporate the word “cool” in the Executive Summary.

Page 8:

Paragraph 1: School craft = Schoolcraft

Paragraph 3: Romence Road should be Centre Avenue

Paragraph 3: Osterhaut = Osterhout

Page 9:

Add Westnedge and Sprinkle Road street names to the Vicinity Map

Page 11:

Paragraph 4: Chris and Kendra explained the KATS funding mechanism. Doug F. will re-write the paragraph accordingly.

Paragraph 5: Jim asked Lori if a snap poll concerning the installation of a traffic signal at Forest was appropriate. **Lori concurred and asked the committee members if they believe a signal at this location is appropriate.**

- Jim – Yes
- Rex – Yes but remove the crosswalk
- Danielle – Yes but remove crosswalk
- Terry – Yes but remove crosswalk
- Lori – Yes

Pages 18-19:

Doug F. suggested that the identified neighborhoods need names and that they should each have a coherent entrance / exit from Portage Road.

Jim suggested that the city call upon the residents in each neighborhood to name the neighborhoods and encouraged staff to consider how to do this.

Doug F. recommended that the city prepare requirements for development of the area noted as “Future Development” rather than a developer determining the plan. He encouraged a “Neighborhood” vs. a “Subdivision.”

Chris shared that Pfizer owns the property, which is for sale, and that there are developers currently interested.

Page 28:

Danielle asked about the plans for the vacant parcel at the southeast corner of Zylman and Portage.

Chris shared that the city bought the parcel and has recently made some improvements to the site.

Jim inquired about a previous CIP project for this location.

Joe answered by saying that the administration is waiting for a clear direction on the plan before creating plans for the property.

Pages 42-44:

Jim asked if the city has plans to talk with the identified businesses to advise them of the suggested façade improvements, the cohesive motif, etc. He also asked if the city has plans to assist with funding the façade improvements.

Joe indicated that funding is set aside for a façade improvement grant program. He shared that Dan and his team have come up with some revised rehabilitation codes to make it more affordable for the owners to make improvements. He cautioned that the improvements must

meet state codes that still exist. The updated codes may encourage exterior and interior improvements.

Lori encouraged the administration to talk with the identified business owners prior to the public meeting.

Joe answered affirmatively.

Doug F. asked how much grant funding is available for a façade improvement program.

Joe answered that the city envisions matching grants of \$25,000 to \$50,000 each.

Doug F. shared his opinion that is amount of funding is not adequate. He encouraged a cohesive plan (the pitch, the funding, etc.) to ensure a successful program.

Joe shared that the city may also offer funding for driveway consolidation and improvement.

Terry suggested that the current pylon signs are dated. He encouraged that the city require monument style signs and offer funding assistance for signage improvements as well.

Sidewalks

Jim stated the CIP contains significant funding for sidewalks and asked the administration to refrain from making sidewalk improvements until a decision about traffic calming is reached.

Joe indicated that no improvements would be made until the Council considers and approves the placemaking study.

CHAPTER 2:

Pages 57-61

Doug F. explained that the current version of the plan shows both the live audience survey results and the results that came in over the next several days. He believes there was an effort to pack the “after the fact” survey with negative submissions. **Doug F. asked the committee members their opinion of how to share the results (all or nothing, one and not the other).**

Joe shared that there was also an effort on social media to influence survey results.

Jim believes that the plan should be transparent by showing both survey results. He also encouraged the addition of a paragraph explaining the effort to influence the survey results

Lori agreed, saying that the survey was too public to exclude the results from the study. She also encouraged Farr Associates to explain the efforts to influence results and share that a certain number of responses likely came from non-Portage residents. She said, “People can take whatever they want from that. We’re just stating a fact.” She also requested that the language be repeated on pages 60-61.

Doug F agreed and said that it shows to the Council that the committee and administration listened to the community, but that it must do what is best for Portage.

Pages 62-63:

Doug F. asked if the programmed funding is specific in purpose or if it is flexible so that some of the budget in the first year can be used for the façade improvements, beautification, etc.

Joe and Jim both answered affirmatively.

Lori asked the committee members to provide an opinion on the suggestion for a temporary traffic calming measure, specific to segments 2, 3 and 4.

Terry said, thinking about the people to the south who want to “zoom” through, perhaps they will discover a new route on Sprinkle Road.

Danielle shared that she likes the idea of a temporary pilot, but wondered how to measure the success of the pilot. Is there another word for successful? How will we know if it is successful? She believes that with change, unhappiness should be expected.

Doug F. agreed and indicated that he will change the text to add “temporary leading to permanent.”

Terry and Danielle both concurred.

Rex asked where the traffic calming measures are to be installed (from where to where?).

Lori indicated that determining the specifics might be premature and asked if Rex is ok with the principle of pilot traffic calming measures.

Rex answered affirmatively, but cautioned against going from three lanes, to four lanes then back down to three lanes.

Lori agreed.

Doug L. said that he agrees with the traffic calming measures but cautions against reversing the measures.

Doug F. stated that traffic engineers would help determine how to implement traffic calming measures, first on a pilot basis to get the kinks out, and then making it permanent. He cautioned that the design of temporary or pilot programs is such that one should expect vehicles to strike the temporary equipment.

Jim asked if the plans call for three, four or five lanes.

Doug F. said that a four-lane configuration is the most dangerous.

Jim suggested that it is good to mention that in the plan.

Doug F. concurred.

CHAPTER 3:

Page 66:

Doug F. explained that the number of potential residential parcels/acreage/units are conceptual and this will be explained in the document.

Page 69:

Doug F. mentioned that the trees indicated might be temporary trees, because the road configuration might change.

Page 70:

Doug F. drew attention to the yellow dashed light that indicates the creation of a bike trail along the back lots of the businesses. The owner of Presidential Brewing made this recommendation.

Jim shared that he likes the idea but was under the impression that this area is wet or soggy.

Chris said that he has never heard that but will investigate.

Page 71:

Lori asked the committee members if they agree with the Recommended Improvements listed on page 71

Jim stated that he is in favor of the service alley / bike trail, so long as the engineering will be successful.

Rex shared that his only concern with the bike trail is how it affects the adjacent property owners. They might not be in favor.

Doug L. believes it is a win-win situation because it provides residents with easy access to the entire trail system.

Terry agreed with the suggested improvements to the referenced storm water detention facility.

Chris and Jim agreed wholeheartedly.

Lori agreed that this improvement should be the number one recommendation.

Doug F. wondered if a specific mention of McDonalds owning the retention basin is in order.

Danielle suggested that an added clarification that it is at the southwest corner should suffice.

Chris suggested that the trail be continued north to Centre to connect with existing/planned trail and believes that the city can find a route.

Lori stated that the city has always planned a Lake Centre gateway sign at Centre Avenue but the placemaking study identifies a gateway sign closer to the lakes. **Lori asked the committee members to voice their opinions concerning the location of gateway signs.**

Chris suggested that although the city set aside TIF money as part of the Treystar development to place a gateway sign at Centre Avenue, the addition of a sign at the isthmus is also a good idea.

Jim agreed and suggested the sign at the isthmus would serve as an indication to slow down.

Danielle agreed but wondered about the specific language.

Rex agreed that a sign at both locations is appropriate.

Terry agreed that a sign at both locations is appropriate. He suggested that coordination on branding the area between the city and businesses would bring neat opportunities and create a destination.

Doug L agreed that a sign at both locations is appropriate and suggested a sign at Osterhout as well.

Lori asked about the undergrounding of power lines and noted that this recommendation is not contained in the placemaking study.

Doug F. explained that the recommendation is not there because it is expensive to do. He shared that the highest priority is to clean up the district make it look attractive and that dollars spent undergrounding lines compete with dollars earmarked for the isthmus area.

Lori wondered if it is worth planting a seed.

Joe agreed and asked that undergrounding lines be added as a long-term recommendation.

Jim reminded the committee that the original plan called for undergrounding lines in the isthmus area and moving them behind the businesses in the rest of the district.

Joe concurred and suggested that this plan is more cost effective.

Kendra explained that relocating vs. undergrounding is less expenses due to the need to move the service connections to homes when undergrounding.

Jim asked if the plan still includes undergrounding in the isthmus.

Kendra said that currently, the lines are overhead in the isthmus but go through the park. She suggested that lines on the west side of the road can be undergrounded and those on the east could be relocated further to the east.

Doug F. shared his opinion that we can still create a cool place without undergrounding the lines.

Lori cautioned that this issue would continue through all the segments.

Lori noted the time (12:05 PM) and applauded the excellent progress made today. She adjourned the meeting and said that the committee will meet again on Tuesday, November 10 at 2 PM, picking up at Page 72, Segment 1.