

TOWN OF ONTARIO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Steering Committee Meeting #4 | December 1, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Susan Brown
Bob Heintzelman
Bob Kelsch, Deputy Supervisor
Brian Natale
David Alicea
Deb Doud
Don Cedruly
Edward Summers
George Konstantinou
Joe Barone

John Crestuk
John Evanowsky
John Graziose
Glenn Majewski
Mike Roberts
Jenna Mausolf
Matt Horn, MRB Group
Jane Nicholson, MRB Group

Project Updates

Matt opened the meeting with brief updates on the following:

Website: All members of the Committee are encouraged to visit the website, and share the link within their networks. The website directs the public to the survey, project updates, and posted meeting minutes.

Community Survey: The survey is still live, and we are looking for 200-300 responses to get a representative sample size. We have received 197 to date.

Public Workshop: The workshop is tentatively scheduled for December 10th; however, Matt noted that there were concerns about the facility and large group gatherings. He recommended that the group take an alternative approach, focusing on round tables (digital or in-person) and interviews with key stakeholders. The Steering Committee agreed to postpone the public forum until February, and proceed with stakeholder interviews.

MRB Group will e-mail a preliminary list of stakeholders to the Steering Committee to expand upon and provide potential contacts. A list of interviewees may include:

- Small business owners
- Developers
- HOA Representatives
- Parks and Trails Enthusiasts
- Schools
- Government
- Civic Associations

Matt explained that we are still in Phase I of the process which is focused on what is happening. This includes garnering feedback and input from the public, stakeholders, focus groups and crafting a vision around the community. Phase II will include a second public forum, focused on land use and implementation.

The group expressed concern that it's difficult to get people in the community to attend in-person events, and that other alternatives should be explored to gain feedback. Ideas including

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a video, such as a Facebook Live event, presenting in different parts of the Town, and the need to push the plan/survey through Facebook networks would help create a buzz around the plan.

Visual Preference (Continued)

The group continued reviewing and discussing the various aspects of the town they like and don't like based on their own experiences:

John E. – Bear Creek Harbor

- Limited access to the lake
- Entry point
- Rundown docks
- Single Use
- Needs to be a showcase; family; lighting; kayak launches
- Deferred maintenance

Sylvia R.

- Likes: fruit stands, need more stores, trails, summer concerts, schools, Casey Park, small-town happenings, fishing
- Dislikes: empty businesses, eyesore, Main Street

Susan B.

- Likes: library, community, Bear Creek Harbor, atmosphere, suburban, schools, Casey Park
- Dislikes: challenged downtown, lack of broadband, cell reception, retail alternative

Jenna M.

- Likes: lake, library (online options), town, Main Street, enjoys walking
- Dislikes: eye sores, particularly on Main Street, ballfield (vacant), Route 104

Glenn M.

- Likes: Bear Creek, green / open space, agricultural landscape, heritage square area, history (need to promote)
- Dislikes: property maintenance / role of codes, empty storefronts Main Street, need better welcome signs and gateways, empty shopping centers, advertising at Town Hall

Discussion

Following a review of the photos, Matt engaged in a discussion around the proposed Vision Statements, and how they tie into several recurring themes:

- Downtown is "Dead": Free markets and the response; the state of downtown signals that "no one cares". The bar has been set, when investors and developers find that a higher bar has been set, they will invest in the community.
- The community has to determine where they invest, understanding, for example in the case of parks, the more you add you have to have a long-term maintenance plan to uphold the quality. The Town needs to enforce to a standard that they comfortable with.
- Simple investments, such as gateway signs, can help signal an arrival in the community
- Harness groups, like the Friends of the Park, to work on specific issues, such as lake improvements

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- Partnerships, such as the Chamber and the Town, are critical to overcoming barriers to development. We need to determine what point we say we don't need more (empty buildings, rundown properties, etc.). What the Town can do is make the downtown and properties so valuable that stores you don't want, cannot afford to move in.
- Need infrastructure to support the right economy
- Ontario is a rural community, not a city. The Town's resource is farming, apple farming, how do we take advantage of this? We don't want to have to give this up for housing and development.

Matt directed the group back to the "golden circle" (our Why), stating that we can only know what's wrong with the community when we know what's right – this is our why.

Matt introduced each of the draft Vision Statements to the Committee. The vision framework will help get to the community's "why". The goal is to get to a comfortable spot with each of the statements, then present them to the community in the public forum. Key takeaways from the initial discussion include:

- Inclusivity
- Need to attract and retain younger population
- Housing options
- Gateways
- Property maintenance / upkeep

Summary & Next Steps

MRB Group will distribute a preliminary list of stakeholders, and ask for feedback regarding names and contact information to complete the list. Members of the Steering Committee are welcome to participate in the interview process that will occur through the month of January.

The next meeting is to be held on January 5th at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.