

DATE: October 30, 2023

TO: Whitewater Township Planning Commission
Whitewater Township Resident Outreach Subcommittee (ROS)

FROM: Barry Hicks, AICP, LIAA
Randy Mielnik, AICP, North Place Planning, LLC

RE: **Master Plan Open House Results and Goals and Strategies Planning Session**

The Whitewater Township Planning Commission, and its Resident Outreach Subcommittee (ROS) held an Open House at Mill Creek Elementary School on Thursday, September 28, 2023, to receive input from residents to help develop goals and objectives for the Master Plan update. There were 76 participants that signed-in, though some participants came together and only one person would sign in. Participants were asked to provide feedback at five stations around the room about various topics such as zoning/land-use, infrastructure, and development. The information received will be used to help develop goals and objectives at the next public input session. Below is a summary of the feedback received from each station at the open house.

2015 Master Plan

- Respect private property rights.
- Encouraging new development.
- Do NOT streamline the permit process – what does this mean? Do residents not like the current the process? What is working or not working in the ordinances or permit process?
 - Identify what ordinances need work.
 - Differentiate between what should be policies vs guidelines.
 - Clarify zoning map.

Zoning/Land-Use

Preserve, Enhance and Transform

- Downtown Whitewater Township needs some attention – what specifically do we need to address here?
- Corner of Crisp and Moore – traffic concerns, possibly a stop sign needed.
- Petobego Creek Natural Area – some attention needed.
- Battle Creek Natural Area – liked, but might need some attention.
- Whitewater Township Park – liked, but might need some attention.
- Trails in the southern portion of township are liked.
- New development near M-72 and Baggs road – potentially some room for resident concerns.

Alternative Energy

- A mix of support or dissent for alternative energy, specifically solar fields – concerns about siting and visual impact.
- Some comments about wind energy – similar concerns to solar regarding visual impact.
- Some comments and interest received regarding net-zero emissions housing.

Rural Character

- Generally, all of the pictures received positive feedback with the exception of the red-commercial/newer looking barn.

Development

Housing

- Most commercial development should be focused along M-72 near Williamsburg Road Intersection.
- Medium to high density residential areas should be near M-72 near Williamsburg. Some votes also focused near M-72 between Skegemog Point Road and Baggs Road.
- Most people favored low-density, single family dwellings on larger lot sizes with some feedback received indicating the need for smaller lot sizes to allow for lower- to moderate-income housing.
- Traditional medium to high density single-family residential neighborhoods as well as higher-density apartments or condos were not favored.
 - NOTE: Some exceptions for higher-density apartments or condos were favored with more green/open space. Lower height (one- to three- story max) would be better than anything taller.

Commercial

- Detached, single-unit Commercial development along the M-72 corridor is preferred.
- Traditional Rural American architectural styling (such as a colonial or craftsman look with gables or hip-roofs and porches), is preferred with materials such as wood or metal siding and roofs.

Downtown

- There is support to develop a more traditional downtown area in Williamsburg.
- Traditional look with seating, pedestrian scale lighting and permeable/transparent storefronts are preferred.

Infrastructure

Trails

- Generally, participants felt the trails were a positive attribute of the township.
- Some comments received indicated there could be better signage at trail heads to help locate and identify trails.
- Bike trails and walking trails could be separated.

M-72 and Traffic

- Participants were overwhelmingly supportive of limiting curb-cuts along M-72
 - Improve safety and reduce the number of opportunities for accidents.
 - Combined curb-cuts for multiple businesses.
- Some concerns around who will pay for these improvements.

Facilities

- EMS and fire facility should use some improvement. Some felt a new facility was needed or a combined EMS/Fire/Town Hall facility could be constructed.
- Public Transportation – while many felt traffic control and safety were a high priority, the integration of more public transportation was not necessary at this time.
- Town Hall - Many comments received indicated the building was in good shape or needed minor repairs. Most felt a new facility was not necessary.
- A resident posed the question as to whether or not there should be septic field inspections on lakefront property. This question was written on the general comment board and received 11 “yes” votes and four “no” votes.

General Feedback

- Support for short-term rentals is split between those opposed and those not opposed so long as there are restrictions or regulations in place.
- The condition and the need for better/more maintenance were mentioned several times.
- Many comments were directed towards enforcing the current ordinances.

Master Plan Goals and Strategies Session

The next session will be held on Tuesday, November 7th from 7-9pm and will be held at Mill Creek Elementary School. This session will be a guided workshop that will take participants through the results of the public input process and help refine suggested goals and potentially develop new ones. The Planning Consultants developed some suggested goals based on the 2015 Master Plan as well as public feedback received from the survey and open house. The ROS Committee reviewed this information and provided some feedback which has been incorporated into the document.

Accompanying this memo is a working document titled “Whitewater Township Planning Principles, Goals, and Implementation.” It uses the four topics from the 2015 Master Plan as a way to divide existing or new goals into subject areas to allow for some consistency between plans. The goals provided under each topic heading are meant to be a starting point to spur conversation and narrow down some of the things that we would like participants to focus on during the session. They may require further refinement once we receive more input from the session.

Session Outline

The general outline for the next session will be as follows:

- 7:00 – 7:20pm
The presentation will welcome participants and discuss the following topics:
 - What is a Master Plan and why are we doing this?
 - Project background, maps, and township demographics
 - Planning Enabling Act requirements

- Timeline – what is complete, where are we today, what happens next?
- Explanation of “S.M.A.R.T.” Goals
- Explain Key Performance Indicators (KPI) – aka “measurability”
- Explanation of policies and initiatives
- Review goals developed by the Planning Consultant/ROS
- 7:20 – 7:30 pm
 - Discuss purpose of this evening’s exercise
 - Provide instructions for the groups
 - Ground rules and respect - no criticism or judgement, focus on quality not quantity, and build on each other’s ideas
 - Role of the Moderator
 - Role of the “Group Leader/Note-Taker”
 - Explain where/how groups will convene and split up
- 7:30 – 8:10 pm
 - Group activity – appoint a group leader/Note-Taker
 - Review the proposed topic area and associated goals (as provided by the ROS)
 - Ask questions and discuss
 - What are our values (as it pertains to the assigned topic area)?
 - Where are we now?
 - Wouldn’t it be fantastic if ...
 - what is liked, disliked, agreed with, disagreed with
 - Prioritize the goals
 - What do we ultimately want to achieve and why?
 - What can we do (resources available) and what will we do (five more years will not pass by without some measurable action)?
 - What is the timeline for each goal?
- 8:10 – 8:20 pm – BREAK TIME!
- 8:20 – 8:40 pm
 - Group presentations – what was discussed and why did you rank each goal where you did?
 - Audience participation – how does the rest of the room feel the group did? Was anything missed? Should we rearrange their rankings? Could be done through round of applause.
- 8:40 – 8:45pm
 - Bringing it all together – recap each group’s goals/priorities
 - Discuss next steps in the planning process
 - Discuss how people can still participate – through public hearings/meetings, mail, email, etc.
 - Thanks!

There is a 15-minute cushion intentionally built-in to allow for any spill-over between activities.