

Focus Group and Interviews: Major Outcomes

In October of 2006, the planning consultant conducted interviews with various representatives of the community. Interviewees were selected by the Comprehensive Planning Committee and City staff. The majority of interviewees fit into one of four focus groups: City of Waterloo business owners, downtown Waterloo business owners, large land owners, or youth and education representatives. In addition representatives from Trek bicycles, McKay Nursery, and Perry Judd were interviewed. The significant outcomes of all interviews were as follows:

1. The City has a lot of potential, but it often lacks vision, direction, and leadership.
2. The City needs to exhibit more follow-through on its plans. Many efforts and plans have been started, but they all seem to stall over time.
3. The mentality of many City residents is that things should stay exactly the way they are, but the City is becoming stagnant. In order to remain healthy, the City needs to grow and progress.
4. The City's opportunities include the following:
 - Create a community and a downtown that people will both want to live in and want to visit. This includes providing more accessible and convenient parking in the downtown. Sit-down restaurants are desirable. The City must take advantage of the river and Firemen's Park
 - Buy up old community center building and transform into an active downtown community center for children, seniors, receptions, and other community uses.
 - Support inter-city modes of transportation other than the car to facilitate travel between Waterloo and other communities.
 - Become a leader in Jefferson County in bike and recreational trail systems. Create a trail system that not only serves recreation needs, but also transportation needs. It needs to be interconnected with the County's trails system; it needs to provide safe routes along major roadways; and it needs to be a destination where people want to come to bike.
 - Focus on improving aging school facilities. Quality schools attract people. Just because enrollments are declining doesn't mean that there are not improvements that need to be made.
 - Develop a City Park and Recreation Department. These programs can not run on volunteers forever.
 - City and school district should work together to better utilize the swimming pool. This is an asset to the community.
 - Take advantage of road projects to extend utilities and install bike facilities at the same time.
 - Do a better job at promoting the community and promoting local events.
 - Consider investing in the Perry Judd's property to remove the existing manufacturing building and prepare the land for residential and commercial development. This may speed up the sale and reuse of this land since it may be difficult to reuse the site as is.

5. The City needs to take better care of its existing businesses; the City should give existing businesses more incentives to stay in the community.
6. The City needs to be more proactive in recruiting new businesses. Fill up the industrial park.
7. People might complain less about high taxes if the money was being spent on tangible things that are clearly benefiting the community.
8. The City's access to transportation networks is considered both good and bad, depending on the perspective of the individual. Some interviewees felt that because the City is only nine miles from the Interstate access is great. Others felt that because the City is not located directly off of an interstate access is insufficient for substantial economic development.
9. The City needs to pay attention to aesthetics, the quality of development, building materials, the way streets look, landscaping around buildings, and streetscaping.