

2011 Solon Master Plan Citizen's Committee
April 21, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

The City of Solon Master Plan Citizen's Committee met at City Hall on the above date.

Present: Citizen Members Teresa Lichtcsien, David Gordon, Cindy Bomeli, Greg Rosenberg, Regina Olbinsky, Bob Neides and; Planning Director Rob Frankland, Planner Linda Crombie and Secretary Cheryl Shackelford

Absent: Citizen Members Eileen Siebert, Richard Perry, David Gordon
Also present: Bill Mazur (Planning Commission member)

Mr. Frankland reviewed the strategy for tonight's meeting, which involves a goal formulation process known as "SWOT", which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. He noted that the "SWOT" analysis and/or "SWOT" identification is a tool used to help identify what the major issues are, and then at the next meeting the committee can prioritize their "SWOT" findings and begin formulating goal statements. Mr. Frankland clarified that other goals may be included, even if they do not fall under any of the specified "SWOT" categories.

Mr. Frankland explained that once the goals are established by the committee, then the committee would begin comparing them to the goals in the 2010 Master Plan to determine what goal statements in 2010 Master Plan should remain the same, be modified, and/or deleted. He believes this might take two meetings to complete this phase.

The next phase involves the Community Attitudes Survey, and Mr. Frankland informed the committee that he has requested the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission provide him with a proposal to conduct the survey.

Ms. Olbinsky asked if the survey is conducted online or door-to-door, and Mr. Frankland answered by saying the last survey was done through the mail; noting 1 out of 15 households were randomly surveyed. Mr. Frankland said he was very pleased with the work the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission did on the 2001 Community Attitudes Survey, and he informed the committee that they would have the opportunity to provide input on what questions will be on the survey.

Mr. Frankland took this opportunity to poll the committee members for input on a couple of items.

Outdoor Amphitheater:

Mr. Frankland asked for the committees input on having an amphitheater located at the city park property, since both the Recreation Director Holub and the Center of the Arts Director Prasser have expressed an interest in placing an amphitheater across the street from the Solon Branch Library at the corner of SOM Center/Portz Parkway. Mr. Frankland noted that this

location would place the amphitheater close to the existing homes off SOM Center Road, which has already raised some concerns due to potential noise issues since it would be in close proximity to the homes.

As an alternative, Mr. Frankland explained that Mr. Holub has suggested the city hire a professional consultant, one who is an expert in designing parks, to design a layout plan for the entire city park property that would reflect the highest optimal use of the land for the entire city park area. Mr. Frankland said he supports Mr. Holub's suggestion; and the consultant could write this section of the Master Plan. Mr. Frankland said he would present the completed plan to the committee for comment.

Mrs. Olbinsky suggested some type of landscape buffering be considered to soften the noise from disturbing the residential properties located within the Preserve subdivision, since this subdivision abuts the city park property to the east.

Mr. Rosenberg suggested Timberlake Park be considered as an alternative location. Mr. Frankland said he believes a more central location is preferred, noting Timberlake Park is located off the Pettibone Road at the edge of the city's corporate limits.

Mrs. Lichtcsien asked what the timeframe would be for this project to occur, and Mr. Frankland said he believes the Center for the Arts Director is actively pursuing grant money to fund the project as early as this year.

Mrs. Lichtcsien said the committee has previously talked about having an amphitheater located here off Bainbridge Road across the street from the Center for Arts building. She said she prefers the Bainbridge Road location because the city could utilize the amphitheater for special event, such as the July 4 celebration, and it would be in close proximity to the Arts Center facility.

Mr. Kotmel agreed that he prefers the Bainbridge Road location for the amphitheater. Mr. Frankland said the 2010 Master Plan recommends the Bainbridge Road site for the amphitheater and it recommends the Lynch home be relocated, which would create more much needed green space.

Mr. Frankland asked the committee to consider the bigger picture and the opportunity being presented, whereas, both the Arts Center and Recreation Directors have teamed up to hire a consultant to do a complete revamping of the city park, which would include writing a much needed Recreation section for the city's Master Plan. In fact, the city needs a comprehensive parks plan for the entire city, and he noted the 2010 Master Plan identified goal statements for more soccer fields, ball diamonds, and neighbor parks. The consultant would prepare the overall plan and it would be presented back to the committee for input and comment. The final location for the amphitheater does not have to be determined tonight, it could be determined as we go through the process.

Discussion followed, whereas, the committee agreed it would be beneficial to have a professional design a conceptual overall plan for the city park. Several committee members suggested the amphitheater could work at the city park property if it was placed further back from SOM Center Road.

Mr. Frankland said he would inform both the Recreation Director and Arts Center Director that the committee supports contracting out the work, but that the committee does want the consultant's recommended plan be brought back to the Master Plan Committee. Mr. Frankland said he would reconvene the committee to review the conceptual plan upon its completion, which he expects could occur later this year.

Mr. Frankland said if the committee has no objections, he would inform the Arts Center Director and Recreation Director to proceed with the hiring of an outside firm to develop an overall plan for the city parks, and he would reconvene the committee to review the plan upon its completion, which is expected later this year.

Committee member Marilyn Matia arrived at 7:22 p.m.

2) I-2, Industrial Manufacturing (Expand uses to include Medical) – Referral from Council

Mr. Frankland explained that two separate requests from two different individual property owners came before City Council asking the city to modify the zoning code by allowing medical uses in the I-2, Industrial Manufacturing District. He further explained that Council did not support their applications based upon the consensus that by doing so, it would harm the existing commercial and office zoning districts. However, Council made the recommendation to refer this topic to the Master Plan Citizens' Committee for their input.

Mr. Frankland explained that currently the zoning code allows office use is in the Industrial Districts as it pertains to business and sales offices, but medical is not permitted.

Mr. Frankland noted that the city did receive a letter in opposition to the zone use change from an owner/developer who owns office spaces in both the industrial and commercial zoning districts in Solon.

Mr. Frankland said he did discuss this topic with the City's Economic Development Manager, Peggy Dorfman, who indicated that there is data to support that this change could adversely affect the commercial areas. Mr. Frankland also noted that the cost per square footage of building space is considerably less within the Industrial Districts as compared to the commercial districts, which could give the industrial areas an unfair advantage cost wise over the commercial areas.

The committee members strongly agreed that there are plenty of opportunities for medical office uses to acquire building space within the commercial districts, and they supported Council decision to deny the request to expand medical uses in the I-2 Industrial District.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths: What are the characteristics of the community that give it an advantage over others in the area? (*i.e. What makes Solon a good place to live and/or have a business?*)

Weaknesses: What are the characteristics of the community that place it at a disadvantage to others in the area? (*i.e. What makes Solon a less attractive place to live and/or have a business?*)

Opportunities: What are the external/internal variables that may provide the chance to improve conditions within the community in the future?

Threats: What are the external/internal variables that may cause harm to the community in the future?

During this exercise, the committee members expressed their thoughts on topics fell under each of the SWOT categories, which are listed below:

Strengths:

- Schools
- Housing variety
- Population diversity
- Solid industrial/tax base
- Access to highways
- Quality of city services (*i.e. EMS, Safety, Services*)
- Good leadership
- Good recreation facilities
- Family oriented community
- Proximity to Metro Parks
- Increasing stability of residential population
- Station Street—alternative connection between SOM Center & Solon Road

Weaknesses:

- Traffic
- Lack of large medical facility
- Lack of quality retail/restaurants
- Poor building infrastructure (*shopping plazas, etc.*)
- Lack of sidewalks (*industrial & residential*)
- Poor aesthetics of streetscaping in retail areas
- Not pedestrian friendly (*especially in retail areas*)
- Insufficient inventory of soccer and baseball fields, etc.
- Poorly designed existing road infrastructure

- Aging commercial & industrial building stock
- Poor directional signage to important community destinations
- Outdated codified ordinances
- Complex ownership relationships of existing shopping centers
- Unregulated residential rental properties
- Lack of housing opportunities for empty nesters
- Lack of attractions and housing for young professionals (*nightlife*)
- Lack of pedestrian infrastructure & attractions
- Lack of connection between Old South Miles & Bainbridge Road

Opportunities:

- Access to services in other communities
- Ability to rework park layout
- Following Master Plan
- Connector road
- Additional 422 exit(s), where possible
- Encourage & promote citizen participation (*i.e. electronic message board, Social media, newsletter (paper or online), Residents emails for alerts, etc.*)
- Increasing recycling programs
- Pursue green energy sources
- Expand access to existing parks
- Make city more bicycle & pedestrian friendly
- Greater regional cooperation
- Transition from development related focus to property maintenance focus

Threats:

- State funding for schools
- Development in adjacent communities
- Regional impact (commercial projects)
- Residential development impact on Solon Schools
- Increasing traffic volumes from internal & external sources (Corbett's farm)
- Increasing crime
- Decreasing residential property values
- Diminishing capacity for waste removal

The committee members decided on a May meeting schedule, whereas, the next meeting will be Thursday, May 5 at 7:00 p.m., which later had to be changed to May 12 at 7:00 p.m. and then followed by a meeting on Wednesday, May 18 at 7:00 p.m.

The committee meeting ended at 8:40 p.m.