

City of Worthington
Community Visioning Committee
Tuesday, October 13, 2020 - 6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members Present: Laura Abu-Absi, Kathryn Burris, Catey Corl, Paul Cynkar, Cindy Findlay, Matt Lees, Jon Melchi, Linda Mercadante, Austin Mitchell, Don Mottley, Beth Sommer, Graham Wood, and Joe Sherman

Committee Members Absent: Jon Melchi

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt, Public Information Officer Anne Brown, Lauren Falcone Poggemeyer Design Group, and no visitors were in attendance

Mr. Sherman convened the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

MOTION *Mr. Cynkar moved, seconded by Ms. Sommer to approve the meeting minutes from the Community Visioning Committee meeting of September 8, 2020.*

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Falcone provided an update on the draft vision statement mailers and stated that there have been over 200 mailers returned so far. The feedback has been well thought out and it is obvious that people took a lot of time with their responses. However, a large percentage of respondents have had a difficulty grasping the concept of visioning. For the most part people have agreed with the draft visions and much of the disagreement was centered around how they are not being done today. Some of the constructive criticism has been for the visions to be more aspirational, with less jargon and buzzwords. There were people who expressed how they were not a fan of spending money on visioning, and we need to get our head out of the clouds. One big thing that came through is that the community wants to be more inclusive. One person suggested that for older folks, putting critical services nearby is better than another bank. Another person stated that there needs to be a better vision for City's long-term finances. Others have said that Worthington needs to be more visionary, and to lead, not follow.

Mr. Mitchell explained that the next step of the meeting will be to have committee members complete a survey on the draft visions, because it is critical to make sure that we are hearing from everybody on all of the visions. He overviewed the format of the survey and suggested that the group take 20 minutes to complete it.

Committee members completed the survey.

Mr. Mitchell began discussing the next steps, explaining how Ms. Falcone will send out the mailer comments. Over the next couple weeks, we will be working on pulling together all the information and making the needed refinements in order to put the revised statements on the website and to get feedback from the community. The next committee meeting on October 26th will focus on the report and the upcoming City Council presentation on November 9th. The report is to be finalized in mid-November and made publicly available before seeking Council adoption in December.

Ms. Abu-Absi described how great everything looks, but she wonders about the packaging of the rest of the report. We have talked about appendices and suggested action items, but when she was looking back at the original job descriptions, this report is supposed to include majority views and significant minority views on various items. She wondered what sort of input the group will have on the rest of the report package. Mr. Sherman explained how we will work closely with Ms. Falcone on this. She has done a good job capturing everything, and we will need to see what we have before organizing this report appropriately. Ms. Falcone explained how she typically organizes the report in chapters and then everyone will review it. As far as majority and minority voices, that is why the mailer is separated out into agree or disagree. The survey data will help with this to make sure everyone was heard. Mr. Lees asked if a section of the report would be around demographics and diversity, highlighting the ways the committee deliberately reached out to minority voices. Ms. Falcone replied that included will be mentions about the outreach to students and people of color. We also sent out a mailer with a return stamp so there is no bias towards people with no access to a computer.

Mr. Cynkar explained how we could get intercepted by the news that Lifestyle Communities increased the density for their plans at the UMCH property. To him, we did not hear from the community that they wanted or valued higher density. He heard things such as balanced, sustainable, and environmentally friendly. He wondered if that should be something that we are strong on. Mr. Sherman replied he has had a lot of questions about this, and he has been clear that the Committee has no opinion and are not here to set any kind of go forward on the approval or disapproval of what Lifestyle has put forward. This is a slippery slope, and we need to be careful. Ms. Findlay asserted that we have heard a lot on the question of density. She asked if we are going to refuse to address the question of density. Mr. Sherman explained that we heard about density, but this is specific to UMCH. Ms. Falcone noted that there have been comments all over the board regarding density. People want something done for UMCH, but what that is, is something that the Committee cannot comment on.

Mr. Mitchell provided an overview on the survey results and will start the discussion with the one that had the highest consensus, that Worthington is diverse and inclusive. There was alignment that it is essential to the future. Ms. Falcone brought up how 157 mailers agreed with vision statement, "Worthington is Welcoming to All". Mr. Lees expressed that he likes the "Worthington is Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable" because it is stronger and more visionary. Ms. Falcone brought up the question about undoing harm. Ms. Sommer expressed that language is looking backwards and we are trying to look forward. Mr. Lees questioned what a "modest income" means. The Committee flagged that language to refine. Ms. Falcone explained how the question about income diversity came up again and again, and how all income levels should be able to enjoy, live, work, and play in Worthington. Ms. Stewart circled back to the question about actively working to undo harm. Mr. Wood described how that pertains to ideas about redlining that were actively undertaken, and other inequitable housing practices to lead to a segregated community and how to address that moving forward. Ms. Stewart explained how there are some people that have demanded that the City pay reparations to the Columbus Schools and questioned whether this statement related to that concept. Ms. Abu-Absi noted that did come up that and was one of the things being alluded in her charrette group. It was getting at everything along the lines of redlining and reparations of sorts. Ms. Falcone explained that it came out in the focus groups too. Mr. Cynkar asserted that it was one or two people with very strong feelings, and there was another voice that was as strong that took the position that the Worthington area is an area that provides opportunity to residents and schoolkids, and wanting to provide those opportunities to more people. It is not about paying reparations but making it easier for

a larger variety to live here and get benefits of living here. Mr. Wood expressed that we do not need to get into what it would look like to undo harm.

For the vision statement regarding neighborhoods, Mr. Mitchell expressed there are opportunities to consolidate the principles with none of the principles standing out. One that is the least important was #6 about the schools. Mr. Lees suggested that consolidation would be good, but housing options are extremely important. He would not want the group to water it down with zoning, just keep it housing. The Committee generally agreed that #6 might belong in another category. Mr. Cynkar described how we heard about the need for senior housing and places where people can move out of their larger homes to stay in the community cradle to grave. However, the Lifestyle apartments are more than many people's mortgages. This speaks to the fact that we did not hear that dense apartments were what the people of Worthington wanted. Mr. Melchi disagreed and explained how it would be a mistake to continue to come back to the Lifestyle and UMCH as we are talking through this. We heard the desire for diverse housing options and that can mean a variety of things including apartments. We are running the risk of being distracted by a proposal that will be changed and it is not the place of the committee to comment on this specific property. Ms. Abu-Absi expressed that the vision principle about libraries and arts, in their charrette nobody liked it and expressed that it sounded like a committee wrote it. Mr. Lees said that we heard these concepts many times and might want to change some language, but these are pieces that are critical to what we heard. Ms. Sommer emphasized that we heard infrastructure over and over. Ms. Abu-Absi explained that the content is good but how it was packaged was the problem.

Mr. Mitchell explained how on the environmental stewardship vision, the feedback indicated that this is either exactly or close to being right in alignment, with everyone thinking it is essential. Two that were deemed least important were the local food options and energy production, and the dedication to clean and quality waterways. Ms. Falcone stated that 166 respondents agreed with this vision in the mailers and 57 disagreed. Ms. Findlay described how she put #8 and #9 as less important because they need to be strengthened and more fleshed out. Some of these can also be consolidated.

Regarding the vision about being a strong and healthy community, Mr. Mitchell noted how four committee members did not feel like this was what we heard. Ms. Findlay conveyed that it was heard in charrette. People liked it and how vision-like it was. Mr. Wood shared that it is not a no, but he is not sure what we are saying here that is not a vague version of what we are saying everywhere. Mr. Cynkar expressed that he does not like, "...complete social, physical, mental prosperity in all stages of life..." Mr. Lees stated that he does like the simplicity of it and if we can get closer to this simplicity on the other ones, this could be used as an overarching concept.

Mr. Mitchell explained that the downtown-centric vision was unanimously thought to be all the way there or just needs a little work. A few did not think it was absolutely essential. There are not clear, different principles that rise to the top. Mr. Cynkar expressed he was turned off by the broader region idea, we cannot compete against Dublin. He likes our uniqueness. Mr. Wood explained that he did not see it as comparing ourselves, but it was more about connecting with other areas of Columbus. Ms. Falcone said we heard a lot about bringing people in from other places. Mr. Sherman explained how in the charrette, we heard about how there are three downtowns: Old Worthington, the Worthington Mall, and Linworth. Mr. Mitchell suggested adding a principle about understanding the importance of all our commercial centers. Ms. Stewart noted how currently the City pays particular attention to Old Worthington. If the City needs to equally focus on all three centers, it will naturally dilute the current support for Old

Worthington by splitting resources. Mr. Mottley described how downtown Old Worthington is different than Linworth and the Worthington Mall which are commercial centers. Those do not offer the same opportunities to interact as downtown. Ms. Burris brought up how people on the Linworth side of town might have a different perspective on what they would like to see happening over there. There is a question of whether the community wants to have lively centers in places other than downtown.

Mr. Mitchell described how the survey results for the economy indicated that it was aligned with what we heard. All but one committee member thought it was essential. #2 and #7 were considered to be unimportant. Ms. Falcone detailed how the pool was mentioned a number of times and needs to be added to the right place. Mr. Mitchell explained that a number of folks said this is only closely aligned with what we heard. Ms. Findlay said that this got a lot of very logical, sensible criticism in the charrette as having a lack of direction. It is just throwing in what everyone wants without saying anything. Ms. Sommer explained how with #2 we are not saying anything but are appeasing everyone's opinion. Mr. Cynkar stated that you can ask anyone about economic development or redevelopment, and they would not characterize Worthington as unique or creative. Ms. Findlay stated that what makes Worthington competitive, is that we need to be more creative and resilient in how we approach economic development.

Mr. Mitchell moved on to the next vision about Worthington being mobile and interconnected, and all but one thought it was aligned. Mr. Lees commented that there is a lot of redundancy in the principles. Ms. Findlay disagreed, stating that the committee heard so much about walkability and bikeability and making sure bike and pedestrian plan is implemented. We also need to be more forward thinking about transportation and there should be a standalone vision on getting around in the community and connecting the community digitally. Ms. Falcone noted how 144 people agreed with this vision and 44 disagreed. The majority disagreed because it is not happening now. People are passionate about sidewalks on both sides of the issue. Mr. Melchi expressed how we heard so much about Worthington's location being an asset, it would be a mistake to downplay both our intra- and inter- community transit.

The final vision about lifelong learning, Mr. Mitchell explained how one person said it did not align and not everyone felt like this vision was essential. Ms. Burris conveyed how she cannot say she heard residents talking about this anymore than the schools. The library never really came up that much in these conversations, which was surprising to her. Mr. Mitchell expressed that he feels same way, schools are the top reason why people move here, but the City does not control the schools. Ms. Findlay suggested trying to emphasize that we want to maintain and create stronger connections with the schools. The quality of the schools is so important to the quality of life in Worthington. Mr. Mottley expressed how earlier iterations of this vision was more about governance as opposed to lifelong learning and being forward thinking and collaborative.

Mr. Mitchell discussed the next steps and the need for people to volunteer and be engaged in the next week to make enhancements. There also needs to be a person or two that looks at the document holistically to make sure it is all in the same voice, so it sounds like a single document.

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.