



RICHMOND RISING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Stakeholder Engagement | *Meeting Summaries*

April 10, 2019

OVERVIEW

The project team held a series of stakeholder meeting on April 10, 2019 in Lingle Hall at Reid Hospital. The project team worked with the City to identify over 60 individuals to invite to this engagement opportunity. Attendees ranged from residents and business owners to developers, city staff, and various community organization members. The stakeholder meetings were an hour along and covered 6 different topic areas including:

1. Housing, Neighborhoods, and Real Estate
2. Education, Workforce, and Economic Development
3. Elected and Appointed Officials
4. Transportation and Utilities
5. Community Services and Amenities
6. Downtown, Business, and Redevelopment Opportunity Areas

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Extensive notes were taken during each of the stakeholder meetings by the project team. This summary works to provide only a glimpse of the discussions and key takeaways for each topic. The information gathered through this engagement will be used to supplement the data/information collection tasks and will ultimately help guide the direction of the draft comprehensive plan. These stakeholders will gather again towards the end of the planning process to determine if the project team accurately addressed the community challenges that were identified during the engagement process. The following sections include the key takeaways from each meeting.

Housing, Neighborhoods, and Real Estate

- Richmond residents like how the City has a small town feel but big town potential.
- Richmond residents feel that the City is authentic and recognize there is a lot of activity happening both publicly and privately.
- Neighborhood groups need to be engaged in this process because many areas are facing challenges regarding blight, absentee landlords, and quality of housing.
- This planning process is an opportunity to encourage “complete neighborhoods” meaning the neighborhoods are walkable, safe, and offer access to convenient goods and services.
- There are over 25 neighborhoods with mapped boundaries in Richmond.
- Housing challenges include blighted areas, code enforcement and unsafe living conditions such as no running water or heat.

RICHMOND RISING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Stakeholder Engagement | *Meeting Summaries*

April 10, 2019

- Richmond has several absentee landlords that are only concerned with getting their money and not about the condition of the properties.
- Richmond has the tools and regulations in place, the City just needs to do a better job using them and consistently enforcing rules and regulations.
- Residential infill is desired but residents want the development to fit into the existing character of the area.
- Housing efficiency standards make new development very expensive and difficult.
- Mixed use development is appropriate along major corridors.
- Richmond has 6 historic districts that serve as a selling point for people who want to live in historic homes.
- Beautification is an important selling point. Richmond needs to improve its streetscapes and curb appeal.
- It is important to mix old with new to create an environment people want to live in.

Education, Workforce, and Economic Development

- Favorite things in Richmond include recreational amenities, education institutions, arts and cultural, and architecture.
- The 5 higher education institutions and Reid Hospital were identified as major employers in Richmond.
- Organizations including the Excel Center, Boys and Girls Club, Girls Ink, Wayne County Foundation, United Way, Innovation Center, WorkOne, and the career center provide education and workforce training programs.
- Richmond's geographic location along interstate 70 and affordability give the City a competitive edge.
- There are a lot of people who work in Richmond that don't live in the City. It is assumed this is because of the lack of amenities, blight, and housing types/conditions.
- Richmond needs luxury housing types to attract young professionals such as high-end apartments with a pool, trails, dog parks, etc.
- The return on investment for private development is good in Richmond but the City's systems and processes aren't efficient enough to act quickly.
- Healthcare and manufacturing were identified as Richmond's top industries.
- Employers have trouble with staffing because they are competing with companies from across the state due to the size of the labor pool.
- This planning process should align with Forward Wayne County.
- Richmond leadership should be willing to take some risks for the benefit of the community. It isn't always about getting re-elected.
- Wayne County is an employment center and the City should capitalize on that.

RICHMOND RISING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Stakeholder Engagement | *Meeting Summaries*

April 10, 2019

Elected and Appointed Officials

- Overall officials feel they work well together. Outside of the election, everyone works for what is best for the City.
- There is always room for improvement with communications. There is hope that it will improve with the recent hire of a communications officer.
- There is a desire to improve efficiencies between county and city government.
- The comprehensive plan should include recommendations regarding Fire Station One and public services such as police and EMS.
- Funding presents some challenges since the City does not want to go into debt and the community is too conservative to accept funding mechanisms.
- Officials are willing to fund improvement(s) but there has to be a strong action plan and the impacts/ benefits of the improvement(s) need to be clear.
- Downtown was identified as a community asset and the community should invest in it.
- The former Elder Beerman building is an opportunity to house small business offices. Additional business offices, would result in getting more workers downtown.
- The Warner building, located at Fort Wayne Avenue and N 7th Street, could be considered a redevelopment opportunity but the site has some parking challenges.
- There is very little communication between the City and the school corporation. Declining enrollment is a major concern.
- The former Reid Hospital site could be used for office. There is a conceptual development plan being explored by Paul Engle.
- The floodplain portion of the former hospital could include a trail or memorial garden.
- Signage was identified as a challenge. This planning process could set the stage for a new sign ordinance.
- The comprehensive plan should be specific, serve as a roadmap, include a communications plan, and consider funding options for proposed projects.

Transportation and Utilities

- The community needs to have an open mind going through this planning process.
- Growth is desirable but it needs to happen in a way that makes sense for everyone.
- The comprehensive plan is an opportunity to spell out a unified message on annexation. Currently the utility districts policies do not align with each other.
- Often time's engineers are seen as the "bad guys" because they are responsible for assisting in sustainable/efficient growth decisions.
- Utility infrastructure such as storm and sanitary pipes are aging and deteriorating. The City needs to address this before it's too late.

RICHMOND RISING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Stakeholder Engagement | *Meeting Summaries*

April 10, 2019

- The sanitary district could use an additional technical staff person to help facilitate projects.
- Signalization as a whole needs to be addressed. There are 10-20 intersections maintained by the City. Efficiencies of maintenance / optimization could be beneficial.
- The idea of on street bike lanes is good but the design was been poor. There is definitely room for improvement.
- Richmond needs to focus their efforts of attracting businesses and residents and retention of younger generations.

Community Services and Amenities

- Richmond was described as, “small enough to do what we want, big enough to get it done.”
- The comprehensive plan should prioritize initiatives to help identify where the City should focus their efforts.
- The comprehensive plan should have a clear, defined vision and an engagement process that speaks to all demographics.
- One of Richmond’s major challenges is working together rather than in silos. This could be true for both City government and other organizations/entities.
- Police and fire departments struggle with continuous turnover and competition within the industry.
- Equipment replacement plans are needed within the fire and police departments.
- The senior center is located in an old building and they need funding for updates and maintenance.
- Seniors are wanting more active opportunities such as chair volleyball, sport leagues, and fitness center.
- Richmond sponsors a municipal led farmers market that happens year around.
- The farmers market would benefit from a permanent location near Elstro plaza for the winter months.
- Richmond has 19 parks but they were put in place before sprawl occurred so the outer edges of the city are lacking in park amenities.
- The healthcare industry is struggling to recruit physicians because of the perceived quality of life in Richmond.
- The state hospital is a community asset but their services need to be better communicated to residents.
- Reid Hospital is politically protected because other providers are not allowed to develop in Richmond.

RICHMOND RISING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Stakeholder Engagement | *Meeting Summaries*

April 10, 2019

- Reid Hospital is perceived to be more expensive than other surrounding providers in nearby communities.
- Reid Hospital owns valuable real estate along the interchange and does not pay taxes on it but gives back to the community in other ways. Currently Reid Hospital is paying for marketing plans for the 5 public school districts.

Downtown, Business, and Redevelopment Opportunity Areas

- Residents appreciate the big city amenities that are offered while being only 10 minutes from everything.
- This planning process is an opportunity to consider a consistent look/feel throughout the City.
- The comprehensive plan should define the boundaries of downtown so that it is identified consistently.
- Vacancy is high downtown so it's a challenge to identify anchor businesses.
- There aren't enough people downtown to support a wide array of uses.
- The Depot District was described as feeling more open and accessible than downtown.
- It's hard to find a reason to go downtown right now. Businesses need to stay open past 5PM.
- Building upgrades are too costly based on current codes and safety requirements.
- There is a desire for young professional to live downtown but rental options are limited.
- The major transportation corridors throughout the City could use aesthetic improvements.
- The former hospital site was identified as a redevelopment opportunity.
- Richmond needs to capitalize on its riverfront. This could be a great development opportunity.
- The three way liquor license overlay is an incentive for development downtown.
- A challenge for downtown is that majority of the current business owners are owned/operated by residents at or near retirement age. What will happen to the businesses?

NEXT STEPS

The input and feedback heard from these meetings, among other things like the public meeting, steering committee, and existing conditions data, will serve as the foundation for some of the draft plan components including a preliminary list of challenges, draft vision statement, and draft goal statements. The project team will spend the next couple of weeks working to draft those items and present an initial draft to the steering committee for review.



RICHMOND RISING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Stakeholder Engagement | *Meeting Summaries*

April 10, 2019
