



## MINUTES

**Downtown Master Plan Advisory Committee  
Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 6:30 p.m.  
Carbondale Community High School  
1301 East Walnut Street**

Mr. Langowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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**Members Present:** Bleyer, Bukowski, Clow, Cole, Colombo, Gorton, Gregory, Langowski, Miller, Ramseyer, Dr. Reddy, Schachel, Sheffer, Sigler, Terry

**Members Absent:** Boeckman, Carter, Dr. Pink-Harper, Stevens

**Staff Present:** Sergeev

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Approximately 30 persons in attendance.

**1) Bring to order:**

**J. Langowski** made his opening remarks.

**2) Approval of minutes:**

**J. Langowski** asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014, meeting.

**A. Miller** made the motion and **D. Gorton** seconded the motion and all were in favor.

**3) Introductory Remarks:**

**J. Langowski** made introductory remarks.

**J. Langowski** introduced **Dr. Charlie Leonard** to give a presentation regarding the Alumni Survey that was administered by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. He received more than 4,300 responses out of 160,000 surveys sent out. The respondents rated the city as poor for reasons to stay in the city after graduation and do not have a friendly business owner environment. 75% of the respondents had visited the downtown at least once per week when they were students here. 25% of respondents recommended Carbondale as a place to live. Dr. Leonard reviewed additional highlights of the survey and stated the full report can be obtained on the Paul Simon Institute's web page.

**J. Langowski** thanked **Dr. Leonard** for his comments and stated many of the results of

the survey confirm what the committee has heard in these meetings.

**J. Langowski** began his presentation on economic viability.

**J. Langowski** defined economic viability. The committee does not wish to create a plan that is not able to be completed. The committee would like to have the public's input on how to make the ideas happen. In 2012, the city created the TIF district #2. It helps with the brick and mortar investments. This has helped to start six projects downtown, including the new downtown apartment building being built by Tartan developments. A plan needs to be developed on how to spend the potential capital generated by the TIF district #2. Carbondale needs to redefine and reconsider the function of the current Amtrak station. 140,000 passengers rode Amtrak in 2012. The new station can integrate a multimodal system into the new station. Many monies can come from outside our city through grants and highway funds. A traffic study needs to be performed to determine feasibility design for the taking over of South Illinois Avenue. The downtown parking garage is important to the downtown area. Parking fees and cost sharing could help to make this garage economically feasible. A study from a consultant will be requested to determine if a garage is feasible. The gigabyte city is currently under development. Frontier is putting this on hold to fix a infrastructure issue. They want to place a wi-fi network downtown. The city should lead this project and create a contract for three years at a contract rate. The city met with Ameren to develop a cost structure to move the utility lines. The liquor commission is meeting to discuss the outdoor consumption of alcohol within a patio or café space. He recommended a permanent item be placed on the City Council agenda regarding the progress of the Downtown Plan. He recommended a Downtown Development Authority that act as an agent of the City. The public should help the non-profits in the downtown to help improve the downtown.

**J. Langowski** introduced **D. Gorton** to give his presentation regarding neighborhood feasibility.

**D. Gorton** spoke about Branding. There needs to be a certain quality that attracts people to the town. The root of our town is the Illinois Central Rail Road and the University. Mr. Buckminster Fuller is a worldwide personality that can help advertise our community. We need to create spaces that are welcoming and allow access for all. If we are to accommodate the world wide populations that Carbondale enjoys, we need to provide entertainment facilities to support many outdoor activities. Items like a cricket field, a skate park, a farmers market, and a family park, are great for all members of our community. The Bucky Path could be developed with these items. The path could be themed with domes and provide education about Mr. Buckminster Fuller. The Farmers Market could happen at the intersection of E. Walnut and S. Washington streets. We could host music and festivals in this location. A town square family park could occur where the parking lot is currently on the north east corner of the town square. All of the items included in the plan should be supportive of each idea.

**J. Langowski** thanked **D. Gorton** for his presentation and began speaking on S. Carter's behalf as she was sick.

**J. Langowski** spoke on community leadership. The arts and entertainment collation

should be formed to market and support the music and entertainment scene in Carbondale. The yearly art fairs used to be a large attraction to the City and we should bring it back. The city council should be informed as to the community's progress on items in the plan. The businesses in the downtown should strongly address how they present themselves to the community. The local owners can really help in cleanliness of downtown and the friendliness of our downtown as well.

**J. Langowski** introduced **E. Ramseyer** and began his presentation with her regarding the Past Present and Future of Carbondale. The committee gave a draft plan for where certain items can be installed and stressed it was only a draft.

**E. Ramseyer** discussed the Past and Present of downtown Carbondale. She discussed the locations of former locations on the strip. She discussed that the hospital has been a major contributor to our community since the establishment of Holden Hospital. She stated the town had at one time had a great community spirit. The town has a strong history of live music performances. We need more private investment in the streetscape. Her street was turned around through private investment. She showed an example of Charleston, West Virginia as a vision to strive for.

**J. Langowski** discussed the Future of Carbondale. There is a desire to create a flow between the SIH, SIU, Neighborhoods and downtown. J. Langowski showed a potential development that could establish this flow. He discussed all the proposed spaces on the flow. One suggestion is to create a boutique hotel on the old Tuscan lodge property. Provide parallel parking areas along the streets. Create a downtown park next to a downtown farmers market for fairs, music festivals, and art festivals. We should add substantial trees to our parking lots and streets. We should also provide a bike path through the downtown that is protected. We should provide a multimodal transportation center. We should renovate the Varsity Center. The city cannot fund it all, we must help. The West Mill Street and South Illinois Avenue intersection needs a traffic and transportation engineer to help figure out how to fix that intersection. This intersection hinders student interaction with the downtown. We must create an entrepreneur handbook. Help them find their way through the codes. We need to brand and use our music scene to help advertise the town. We should face lift our community rather than demolish it.

**John Washburn (Facilitator)** to handle the public comment portion of the meeting.

#### 4) Comments from the public

**John Washburn (Facilitator)** asked for public comment at this time.

**Stacey Sloboda (audience member)** spoke on the importance of playgrounds in the neighborhood and providing funding for their construction through "KABOOM!". They are a national nonprofit organization that provides funding to help solve a "Play Deficit" Benefits for children to play recreational space.

**Jesus Ponce Deleon (audience member)** provide a place that is accessible for people to congregate and provide transportation to get people to destinations within the city.

**Don Monty (audience member)** spoke on civic responsibility. Everyone wants trees along the streets but business owners don't want trees downtown because they block their signs. The building owners are responsible to upgrade and maintain their buildings. The city does provide incentives to business owners to maintain their buildings. Sidewalk cafes are a great idea. He asked people to walk up and down S. Illinois Ave. and notice all the slopes and terrain changes and these make sidewalk cafes difficult. The store fronts are at the original heights of the streets. Many streets have been lowered and that's why there are steps on some of our sidewalks. Streets can be made two-way, sidewalks can be widened, but the physical terrain must be dealt with as well. Too often, the public looks to the city to complete all projects but the city does not have the funds to do everything. The community must be willing to step up to the plate and help complete projects. There must be a Public-Private partnership in order to accomplish the goals of the plan.

**Mary O'Hara (audience member)** Carbondale has some of the best disaster preparedness codes. At an earthquake conference she attended, they said Carbondale's codes are going to let the community survive the best. Code enforcement needs to know why each code is in place.

**Navreet Kang (audience member)** Madison, Wisconsin and Naperville, Illinois downtown used trees and lights to create an environment that encourages drivers to slow down and enjoy surroundings. Currently, Carbondale has thoroughfares running thru downtown. Making our downtown one lane instead of two lanes everyone would slow down. Sidewalk Cafés in Montreal are well lit with wide sidewalks and this causes traffic to slow down so people see surroundings and stop and shop.

**Jane Adams (audience member)** the downtown sidewalks are two narrow. The code requires the buildings to be up against the property lines and we should change that to require them to be set back from the property line to allow for more space for sidewalks and sidewalk cafes.

**Jesus Ponce Deleon (audience member)** Bloomington IN has enjoyed a ten year revitalization process. The key to success was their City Council member's review of all the codes and ordinances to understand what is enforced. This process allowed them to make changes to outdated systems and improve setbacks and allow for congregation places.

**Gail White (audience member)** stated the city codes and building codes are complex and overlap. Carbondale is a medium strict municipality compared to other municipalities. He is in a tough position as designer and property owner. Some places have no enforcement and others are very strict. Carbondale is doing what it needs to be doing to protect life and property. Most codes come about because of problems in the past or insurance regulations. In the long run, codes protect property values and life safety. The city could help owners understand the codes. In the time he has spent in the city, the city has gotten better being business friendly. He spoke about the 1990 process and noted some of the projects that were accomplished. The town has improved greatly since the 1970's when he moved here.

**Ray Simpson (audience member)** When he moved to Carbondale in 2008 he intentionally bought home as close to downtown as possible. He wanted to be able to walk downtown from his home. The housing located near downtown would be great for an SIH professional housing area.

**Stacey Sloboda (audience member)** stated we need noise abatement for the freight trains to allow for further development downtown.

**Don Monty (audience member)** spoke about trains and horns. Chicago and its suburbs have been addressing this issue. Train horns are required to sound at every crossing. Maybe if safety at the railroad crossings can be increased, the horn blasts might be decreased. The required improvements, such as adding nets to make it impossible to cross, may be expensive. This idea needs research. Even if an idea looks like it can't be done, put it out there so others can start researching it.

**Jane Adams (audience member)** Wayside-horns and directional horns don't arch too far and go in the direction of the train movement and do not go into the neighborhoods. These options should be pursued.

## 5) Brief Recess

**John Washburn (Facilitator)** began a recess at 8:50 pm.

## 6) Comments from the Committee members

The meeting was called back into session at 9:00 pm by **John Washburn (Facilitator)**.

**J. Langowski** announced the committee has a quorum with 15 of the 18 members in attendance.

**M. Bukowski** stated she agreed with ideas that had been presented.

**M. Cole** Private and public investment is required to make the plan happen. There must be a public and private cooperative. The action should happen sooner because the longer we wait, the more expensive the projects become.

**E. Ramseyer** she believes in private investment. The city should work with SIH/SIU to ensure they help as well.

**N. Colombo** The social environment created with low income housing and fine dining establishments may not be the best pairing for economic growth. Parks being in place that bring people downtown may not work with what property owners want from their property. Placing park land on some of the most expensive property downtown may not be the best use of the property. The ideas must be considerate of how people behave.

**D. Terry** The committee should look at how Champaign has redeveloped versus how other college towns the size of Carbondale have redeveloped. We need to see how they

financed their redevelopment and use that as guidance. Biggest obstacle is going to be SIU enrollment. If the enrollment does not turn around at the university, it's going to be hard to encourage property owners to invest in their businesses. The students are viable part of downtown Carbondale. How do we encourage current and proposed owners to invest in downtown without additional students?

**J. Clow** wanted to reinforce the use of signage as way finding maps. SIU students could be used as volunteers to help make visible crosswalks. There should be a code reform meeting that involves city officers, code consultant and entrepreneurs. The farmer's market area can host many events. Buckminster Fuller should be used as a branding too for the city. There is more to him than a dome. His main focus was sustainability and ecologically friendly design. The city should be more eco-friendly, we should be the first city in Illinois to be green city.

**D. Gorton** Increase the students downtown and they will bring their friends and they help make the place viable. City should lead off the renovations and gain the revenue back in the future. Enforcement of the codes and ordinance are unequal and needs to be more professional.

**K. Gregory** passed her turn to speak.

**G. Sheffer** we discussed what's feasible and what's right. As a business owner, he is upset. The day by day is going to have to be done by the business person. We need to ensure the plan is business friendly. If parking removed, it will cause a loss of businesses downtown. Parking must be considered when an event is hosted. He gave an example of how much parking is occupied by the sunset concerts in the Murdale shopping center. We must make sure our ideas fit the spaces that exist. Create competition that will weed out bad businesses. We need to adjust our codes to ensure families and quality homes are brought in. We also need quality students.

**Dr. Reddy** Obesity can be greatly helped by play grounds. More education will help much more than parks. Codes are there for safety. Carbondale has to change to compete with Marion. We must offer flexibility. SIH and SIU are not going to help. Solution must be entrepreneur driven, the City cannot drive it. Allow them to simplify the process. The developer needs one contact person at the City. We lack access to highway 57 compared to Marion.

**B. Bleyer** discussed his concern for trees in front of the signage. There is not a lot of vacancy in our downtown. We must discuss with building owners what will happen to their buildings. The business owner's plans must be determined so they can be supplemented by the downtown plan and assisted where possible. Where is the economic viability for return for the city and the business owners? What are the business owner's plans?

**J. Sigler** Always keep in mind moving forward-such as, opportunities new jobs, new parks, expand businesses. We need a road map to achieve the plans. The area has a competition for funding and there is no focus on how to get everybody the money and resources they need. We need choose a brand for the downtown. We started this review

process with 150 people and we are down to 10 people. The Carbondale community tends to lose attention on long term projects. What is the community going to do to keep interest in this topic? We need to achieve one or two goals as a community at a time to ensure completion instead of competing for the same fundraising. Where are the road maps, trees, parks, bike paths? There are too many cooks in the kitchen.

**J. Clow** Effingham is in lead for a 1,000 job Amazon.com location. Has anyone investigated if Carbondale could be the future location?

**D. Gorton** Carbondale has the infrastructure and data available but we lack the freeway access if it is going to be a distribution location.

**J. Langowski** the committee's mission has been to get input from the public and present to council progress is being made.

## **7) Adjournment**

**J. Langowski** asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**D. Gorton** made a motion to adjourn the meeting

**N. Colombo** seconded; all were in favor.

**J. Langowski** closed the meeting at 9:40 p.m.