



**Middletown Master Plan
Steering Committee Meeting #8
December 9, 2004, 4:30 pm**

Minutes

Present

Steering Committee: Sam Ashworth, Doug Bean, John Civile, Dane Donham, Harold Jackson, Ted Karchner, Nancy Nix, Virginia Ritan, John Sawyer, Bob Wells, Gregg Russell, Noah Powers

Staff: Bill Becker, Marty Kohler, Joanne Mejias-Yancey, Brian Forschner

Consultants: Brad Schwab

Additional: Rachel Lewitt (guest), Mike Kurtz (Middletown Journal)

The Steering Committee meeting began at 4:35 pm. The purpose of the meeting was to identify potential strategies to improve community image. Image areas identified as needing improvement are shown in the below bullet list. The Steering Committee provided specific feedback for three image related Master Plan goals.

- Schools
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Industrial Economy
- Civic Disharmony
- Corridors & Gateways
- Regional Relations
- Retail / Services

Goal C.1 Achieve educational attainment levels that are a community asset.

- It was generally thought that the schools were making progress on improving test scores but more improvement was needed to make the community attractive for perspective residents and businesses.
- Programs were discussed to help children get a good start such as summer reading programs at the library.
- Disappointment was expressed due to the lack of participation by MCSD in Steering Committee meetings.



- The city should talk to similar school districts to learn about their success stories and methods.
- Increase number of tutors and mentors available to help younger students. Create a mentoring/tutoring program with Miami University.
- Must make city and schools more inclusive as a driving force for positive change.
- Business partners program was successful but hasn't met recently. A breakfast meeting will be held in January 2005.
- No representation from blue collar community in any effort. We should get the blue collar community involved to help.

C-2 Improve Image Locally and Regionally

Consultant suggested hiring a PR firm to constantly trickle good news stories to the media and create an organized and persistent PR campaign.

- One member asked how has the idea made a difference elsewhere.
- Idea won't fly with public dollars. We can use local volunteers to accomplish intent.
- The point is to have mechanism to inform a regional audience about the positives.
- A list of community assets were identified. It was felt that few people know about these and could be communicated better.
 - Abundant Parkland
 - Healthcare/MRH
 - Bicycle Facilities
 - Low cost of living
 - Education alternatives
 - Cultural amenities/MAC, Sorg Theatre
 - Events/festivals
 - Real town with historic center
 - Low crime
 - No traffic
- Many comments were made regarding the need for aesthetic enhancements at gateways and corridors.



- Improve civic unity. Embrace diversity. Improve communication with residents. Create and/or strengthen neighborhood organizations. Institute community based decision making.

Goal C.3. Provide Desirable Community Facilities

- No one shops at the Towne Mall. What revenue does it bring? Demographics have changed – stores moved. What is City willing to do improve the viability of the mall?
- A variety of ideas were discussed including the need for more bicycle facilities and improved park facilities to attract a new generation of residents.
- The cost factor was raised again. There is frustration that the city cannot pay for all the proposed improvements and that help is needed from businesses. The city needs to work with businesses to see what level of commitment exists.
- Example of a disconnect – we should be elated with facilities, but perception is cloudy – not enough promotion.

Additional Comments:

- Know your market and target promotions and communications.
- Include members in implementation process after plan is adopted. Master Plan Steering Committee could become Master Plan Implementation Committee.
- Steering Committee members could host gatherings with colleagues and peers.
- The collective group must strongly endorse the plan.