



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Phase II Plan are products of a planning process that actively sought input from a variety of stakeholders, including residents, business owners, developers, service providers, elected and appointed officials, and City staff. A variety of outreach efforts, both in-person and online, were used to gather this input. Ultimately, this has helped promote stewardship for both Plans.

This section briefly summarizes the community outreach efforts that were completed during the planning process. A more detailed summary of each outreach event can be found in the Existing Conditions Report and on the City's website.

Outreach included:

- Kick-Off CPAC & DPAC Workshop (September 10, 2014)*
- Community Workshop (September 11, 2014)*
- Business Workshop (September 11, 2014)*
- Key Person Interviews (November 5-6, 2014)*
- Junior Leadership Workshop (November 17, 2014)*
- Youth Workshop (January 22, 2015)*
- Visioning Workshop (January 22, 2015)*
- Project Website (September 2014 – September 2015)*
- Online Surveys (September 2014 – September 2015)*
- sMap Online Mapping Tool (September 2014 – September 2015)*



KICK-OFF CPAC & DPAC WORKSHOP

A kick-off workshop was held with both the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) and the Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC) at City Hall on September 10, 2014. Both committees were composed of individuals who represent the community and were able to act as a sounding board for the City and Consultant Team throughout the planning process.

The workshop began with an overview of the comprehensive planning process. After a review of the scope of work and questions and comments from the Advisory Committees, the Consultant led a group exercise to gather input.

SUMMARY OF INPUT

The committees discussed a variety of topics. The top issues facing the community included balancing economic growth with preservation of local character, the need to increase non-motorized connectivity, enhancement of the Downtown core, support for local schools, diversification of the housing stock, and the need to improve traffic within the core.

KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

In order to get greater detail about important issues, the Consultant Team conducted confidential one-on-one interviews and roundtable discussions with 46 people in November 2014. Those interviewed possessed a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds, including small and large business owners, elected and appointed officials, old and new residents, key service providers, developers, educators, activists, and more. Each group of participants was asked a series of questions about Hudson, with interviews generally lasting about one hour. Not surprisingly, responses varied based on a range of factors and perspectives.

SUMMARY OF INPUT

Some of the key themes or issues shared in the interviews included:

- Interviewees expressed pride in living and working in Hudson.
- There was a universal sense of needing to balance preservation of Hudson's unique physical and social character with the implementation of strategic changes that can make the city more livable and economically competitive in the 21st century.
- Overall, interviewees from the business and development fields generally see Hudson as a challenging place to do business relative to its neighbors. Small businesses tended to view the city as more business friendly than developers and larger businesses.
- City staff received high marks for access, knowledge and general friendliness, but most business leaders felt that the City's economic development team is not given any tangible tools to recruit and retain businesses, in terms of formal incentives or policies.
- Hudson's retail base is sizable for a city of its size. The general consensus was that Hudson's retail market is fairly saturated and that little market space exists for further retail development.
- Major employers noted that Hudson has a great regional location with access to a well-educated and high-quality labor force.
- Nearly all interviewees made some mention of the need to increase housing diversity in order to attract young families and retain empty nesters and seniors. Support for rental or affordable properties was mixed.
- Participants were extremely proud of the city's education system and noted that it was one of the main draws to living in Hudson.
- Transportation issues tended to center on three key issues: poor connectivity, train traffic, and automobile traffic. Sidewalk infrastructure is spotty, and many neighborhoods are not connected to one another, especially in areas outside of the original town core. Several rail crossings are at-grade and can hold up traffic during rush hours. Road congestion was also a challenge; one interviewee stated "we essentially have an agrarian road system with a suburban population."

- The decision to purchase the YDC site from Cuyahoga County was viewed negatively by interviewees. There was little consensus among interviewees on what to do with the property.
- Downtown Hudson is perceived as the heart of the community and perhaps Hudson's greatest asset.
- The First & Main development, which was greeted with skepticism by the community when it was first proposed, is now accepted as a great achievement for Hudson. One interviewee stated that the completion of First & Main was integral in "changing the not-in-my-backyard mentality" and showing that new development can be tasteful and in keeping with Hudson's existing charm and character.
- There was unanimous support among interviewees for some element of higher-density residential development within Downtown Phase II that could cater to young professionals, young families, and seniors. Support for office uses was also given.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

A Community Workshop was held at Hudson High School on September 11, 2014 to allow residents to communicate their issues, aspirations, and priorities for the future of Hudson. This workshop was the first of many opportunities to publicly discuss issues and challenges related to living in Hudson. After a review of the scope of work and questions and comments from those in attendance, the consultant led a group exercise to gather input from the public.

SUMMARY OF INPUT

Community members debated and discussed a variety of topics, including preservation of Hudson's small-town character, the attraction of young residents and families, diversification of the housing stock, connectivity, and support for local schools.



BUSINESS WORKSHOP

A Business Workshop was held on September 11, 2014 at the Hudson Country Club with local business owners and operators. The goal of the workshop was to identify issues and opportunities that are unique to Hudson's business community. After a review of the scope of work and questions and comments from those in attendance, the consultant led a group exercise to gather input from the public.

SUMMARY OF INPUT

Business leaders identified several important issues, including the attraction and retention of businesses, diversification of the housing stock, Downtown parking, reduction of taxes and utility taxes, and improvement of traffic congestion.

JUNIOR LEADERSHIP HUDSON WORKSHOP

On November 17, 2014 a Junior Leadership Hudson Workshop was held at City Hall to allow members of the current class to communicate their issues, aspirations, and priorities for the future of Hudson. Junior Leadership Hudson is a mixture of young high school leaders from the Hudson area who work collaboratively towards the betterment of the community, while meeting and networking with community leaders.

SUMMARY OF INPUT

Young leaders want to see more things for young people to do, especially within the Downtown, and an improvement of recreation opportunities. Other issues included the need to improve road conditions, increase bike-hike trails, and redevelopment of the YDC site.

YOUTH WORKSHOP

On January 22, 2015 a Youth Workshop was held at Hudson High School to engage the city's youth about their aspirations and priorities for the future of the community. About 20 students participated, ranging from freshmen to seniors. After a review of the project and questions and comments from those in attendance, the consultant led a group exercise to gather input from the students.

SUMMARY OF INPUT

The students discussed a range of topics important to them, including the need for better youth activities, community diversity, youth-friendly businesses, and Downtown traffic.

VISION WORKSHOP

On January 22nd, the City of Hudson held a Visioning Workshop at Hudson High School. Attendees were assigned to one of seven "breakout" groups and provided with markers and a large map of the city. Over the course of an hour, each group worked as a team to draw their "vision" for the City of Hudson on the map. Topics were provided to guide each table's discussion, and they included: transportation; parks, open space, and recreation; sustainability and the environment; housing and neighborhoods; community facilities; commercial goods and services; employment and industry; and image and identity. In addition to marking up the map, each group also recorded their recommendations in a workbook. At the end of the hour, the groups shared their findings with the entire audience.

SUMMARY OF INPUT

Workshop participants felt strongly about constructing a recreation center, preserving Hudson's unique character and charm, adding new trails and pathways, enhancing Downtown, improving traffic flow, and increasing the diversity of the housing stock (e.g. senior housing, apartments, condos, etc.), particularly in the Downtown Phase II study area.

PROJECT WEBSITE

A project website was created to establish a centralized location for information regarding the Hudson Comprehensive Plan. The website contained information and updates concerning the project, meeting notices, and downloadable versions of project documents and reports. To provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website was accessed through a link on the City of Hudson's home page. The project website also contained links to online questionnaires for residents and business owners, as well as the sMap mapping tool.

RESIDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

An online questionnaire for Hudson residents was posted on the project website. It was designed to supplement in-person outreach activities conducted throughout the community, and is not intended to be a scientific survey instrument. The questionnaire was launched in September 2014 and remained open during the duration of the process. Nearly 400 residents participated.

BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

An on-line questionnaire for Hudson businesses was also posted on the project website, with the purpose of soliciting insight about the City's business climate. The questionnaire was launched in September 2014 and remained open during the duration of the planning process. Eleven businesses participated.

SMAP MAPPING TOOL

sMap is a social mapping application developed by Houseal Lavigne Associates that allows residents to actively participate in the planning process. Participants were able to create their own community maps of issues and opportunities, including comments tagged to specific locations. Residents flagged public safety concerns, undesirable uses, key transit destinations, desired developments, poor appearance, community assets, priority development sites, problematic intersections, and more. Eight users made maps, tagging and commenting on more than 100 points.