

HUDSON

Comprehensive Plan

Business Workshop Summary September 11, 2014

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. The workshop was organized around three key questions:

- What are five issues or concerns facing businesses in Hudson?
- What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken in Hudson?
- What are the primary strengths and assets of Hudson?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions discussed in the workshop as a response to these questions. It is important to note that the items identified in this document are not recommendations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Top Issues

The discussion began by asking participants to identify and discuss five issues or concerns facing business in Hudson. A wide variety of topics were brought up as a result of this question; however, many of these issues overlapped with and were in agreement with the responses of other participants. Accordingly, the responses are organized below into several common themes.

Attract and Retain Businesses

Business operators highlighted the need to attract new businesses to Hudson, especially within the Downtown area. The recruitment of a large "corporate" business was also mentioned as a way to increase both local employment levels and the tax base.

Diversify the Housing Stock

Participants emphasized a need for affordable single-story housing (e.g. ranches, townhomes, rowhomes, and duplexes), specifically targeted at "empty nester" couples needing to downsize from larger single-family properties. Demand for affordable housing was also discussed in order to ensure that Hudson's workers can afford to live near where they work.

Expand Downtown Parking

Some participants felt that a lack of parking is impacting economic growth within the Downtown. It was noted that employees or "all-day parkers" monopolize spots that should be allocated for shoppers, office visitors, and tourists. Special events significantly increase parking demand, often leading to congestion and an inability to find a spot. It was also suggested that the parking issue may be in large part perceptual and based on the location of parking areas.

Reduce Taxes and Utility Costs

Owners and operators expressed concern about the high costs of taxes and utilities. This was noted as a potential deterrent to businesses choosing to expand or locate in Hudson.

Improve Traffic

Rush hour and special event traffic creates congestion, especially along arterial roads and within the Downtown area. Other traffic issues include at-grade railroad crossings, which often block roadways and force drivers to find less convenient alternate routes.

Additional Issues

The list below includes other issues and concerns raised by participants that do not fit within the identified themes:

- Supporting Hudson's schools
- Maintaining Hudson's small town charm
- Spreading the tax burden evenly
- Marketing Hudson's regional location
- Introducing city-wide fiber or wi-fi

Top Project or Actions

Business owners and operators suggested a number of action items to improve Hudson, but several ideas were often repeated. Some of the more popular responses included: redevelopment of the YDC property, the introduction of a fiber system throughout the city, various traffic calming measures to alleviate congestion, and the repair/construction of new infrastructure to increase connectivity.

Specific projects and actions provided are listed below:

- Redevelop the YDC property for commercial or residential uses
- Promote economic growth in the Downtown
- Promote economic growth west of Route 91
- Prepare a marketing plan, focusing on Hudson's strategic regional location
- Attract a corporate headquarters
- Prepare a plan for the Hines Hill property
- Identify specific growth objectives for businesses
- Lower taxes
- Equalize the tax burden
- Introduce a fiber system for all residents
- Utilize traffic calming measures to reduce speeding and improve circulation
- Conduct a traffic study
- Construct the Oviatt Connector
- Construct railroad crossings at all at-grade locations
- Repair road infrastructure
- Fill sidewalk gaps
- Construct new bike infrastructure
- Complete streetscaping along Main Street

- Increase municipal services
- Construct “empty nester” housing
- Introduce single story housing in the Downtown

Primary Strengths & Assets

Finally, workshop participants were asked to identify Hudson’s major strengths and assets. Popular responses focused on the school system, small town charm, the Downtown, reputation as a family-oriented community, and engaged residents.

A list of responses is provided below:

- Schools
- Sense of place
- Small town charm
- Attractive, quaint image
- Unique, thriving Downtown
- Restaurants
- Regional location
- Library
- Rich history
- Low crime
- Effective police force
- Family friendly community
- Close-knit community
- Educated and engaged residents
- Wealth
- High quality of life
- Quality of housing
- Western Reserve Academy
- Hudson Springs Park