

meeting memorandum

TO FILE

Project Name: Hays Comprehensive Plan

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Subject: Stakeholder Group Meetings

DISCUSSION

This memorandum summarizes the ideas and issues discussed during the stakeholder group meetings held from June 21st to June 23rd. These groups provide essential insight into the opportunities and issues that will be addressed in the Hays Comprehensive Plan and assist in the development of the Plan Goals. Over the three day period, there were 15 stakeholder group meetings and one community visioning workshop that engaged approximately 120 residents. Stakeholder groups included representatives from:

- Senior citizens and the disabled.
- Realtors, lenders, developers, and landlords.
- Major employers.
- Civic groups.
- Small business owners.
- Social service agencies, non-profits, and ministerial alliance.
- Recreation groups.
- Downtown, arts, and culture.
- Convention, tourism, and hospitality industry.
- Chamber, economic development, HYAP, and ambassadors.
- Transportation (ground and air).
- Neighborhood leaders.
- Education (K-12, college, and university).
- Medical and health-related industries.
- Community investors.

At each of the groups, representatives discussed the major issues and opportunities related to their area of knowledge and the community in general. Although different groups had their own perspectives on future opportunities there were a number of reoccurring themes. These themes included:

- Housing affordability, entry level housing, and housing for seniors
- Mobility around the community including bike and pedestrian access and transit
- Economic development opportunities for community growth and stability
- Retail demand and growth
- Senior needs and market opportunities
- FHSU opportunities and growth

The following summary provides a more detailed description of the opportunities and issues related to the overall themes.



I. Transportation:

- A. Active transportation was identified as a community priority. The need to find ways to connect community destinations for all generations is an important factor in community quality along with recreational trails.
 - 1. Every group mentioned the need for pedestrian and bicycle connections in the city.
- B. Air service is very important to the city and the region. Need to think about the impact of decreased federal funding and plan for this possibility.
- C. Access provides good transit service to the community, but there is a need for more than what Access currently provides. The current demand is generated by
 - 1. University students
 - 2. Seniors
 - 3. The city's younger residents.
- D. Growth at the university, especially among international students, would only increase the demand for transportation.

II. Housing:

- A. Stakeholder Groups:
 - 1. Economic Development and Major Employers: Limited supply of affordable housing makes recruiting new talent difficult. There is a need for higher amenity multi-family housing for young professionals and entry level or gateway housing for first-time homebuyers moving to the city.
 - 2. Seniors: Need for maintenance-free independent living and congregate-style housing.
 - 3. Realtors, Lenders, and Developers: Higher building costs limit construction of new affordable housing; a growing demand for multi-family and duplex housing exists and there is a real opportunity to attract seniors to the city with the construction of quality senior housing.
- B. Summary Comments:
 - 1. New construction over the past ten years has focused on higher market rate housing.
 - 2. The city is currently at an all time low for number of houses on the market. This limits choices and could ultimately drive prices even higher.
 - 3. The ratio of income-to-housing cost is seen as an issue and the lack of gateway housing challenges economic development and the attraction of new residents.
 - 4. There has been limited multi-family construction in the past decade, especially higher amenity multi-family housing that would be appealing to young professionals.
 - 5. Independent and congregate senior housing is both a gap and an opportunity for the city.

III. Economic Development:

- A. Stakeholder Groups:
 - 1. Major Employers: Limited labor pool can make expansion difficult for some industries and recruiting is often challenged to find jobs for trailing spouses.
 - 2. Economic Development Agencies: Need for entrepreneurial support, retaining college graduates, and housing and daycare options for new workers.
 - 3. Downtown: Significant opportunity to build on past efforts by attracting more restaurants, housing, and the development of an events space.



4. Recreation Groups: Recreation should continue to be viewed as an economic development opportunity that will attract regional visitors.
5. Small Businesses: Need to continue to support small businesses that are not significant water users.

B. Summary Comments:

1. Focus on home-grown growth has been and should continue to be a key strategy.
2. Use of the city's existing assets to expand the city's economy. These include:
 - a. Education: From kindergarten to the university (USD 489, TMP, FHSU, and North Central Technical College).
 - b. Medical services.
 - c. The strong economy.
 - d. The overall quality of the community.
3. There is a need for entrepreneurial support.
4. Medical is an important strength for the community, but regional population loss could limit future growth of this industry.
5. The city could be a center for conventions and other regional events in Western Kansas, but lacks the space to hold these events.
 - a. A program and site review for the construction of a convention center should occur that can meet the city's existing and future needs.

C. Challenges Include:

1. Low unemployment with a smaller pool of workers to fill new jobs.
2. Lack of childcare for new workers.
3. Limited housing supply.

IV. Senior Needs and Opportunities Summary:

- A. Hays is and should be an appealing destination for seniors. The medical facilities, university, and activities available to the community are very appealing, but the housing issue is the missing piece.
- B. Residents looking for ways to create active, strong community for seniors.
- C. There is a need for an integrated senior center (life plan center) with multiple uses.
- D. Housing opportunities for seniors include:
 1. The first step in senior housing with lower maintenance and single-story.
 2. Congregate housing where a dining area and cleaning services are provided.
 3. Senior daycare, but there was some concern about a consistent level of demand to support the service.
- E. Transit for seniors is limited, which can restrict free movement around the city.

V. Fort Hays State University Growth:

- A. FHSU wants to add 2,500 or more students on campus by 2020. This could have a significant impact on the city. North Central Kansas Technical College (NCKTC) also has plans for substantial growth. Housing for this growth will be one of the most important issues facing the city. The issue will need to be addressed in two ways:
 1. More on-campus housing.



2. New multi-family residential units off campus. Market responses can lag in this area and result in lower-quality structures. Planning for this response will be very important.
 - B. City and university growth depend on each other. The marketing of a high-quality city is important to university growth, while a strong university is important to the marketing and growth of the city.
- VI. Retail:
- A. Both an amenity and a necessity for a community.
 - B. A large portion of both small and larger retails' customers come from outside of Hays.
 - C. The lack of retail is important to both the attraction of new workers and students, but also in sustaining the city's dominance as a retail hub for the region.
 - D. The struggle is to attract the next level of retail, but also address the aging retail centers along Vine Street, specifically the mall.
 1. Thinking of the mall in new ways may be essential to the future success of this retail center.
 - E. The downtown is a central asset. In the past ten years, it has reversed its decline and revitalized the district. Gaps in the district would appear to be:
 1. The low number of restaurants.
 2. Housing.
 3. Public spaces for a farmers market and outdoor events.
 4. A clear connection or link to the University.

Comments, additions, or corrections to this memo should be communicated in writing to RDG Planning & Design within seven (7) days of receipt. If no comments are received within that period, this memo will be assumed accurate and filed as part of the permanent record for this project.

AH/jm

