

MEMO

January 3, 2009

TO: Mayor and Council-members, Ed Koryzno, City Manager
Participants in the Goal-Setting Workshop, City of Ypsilanti

FROM: Dr. Joe Ohren, EMU

RE: Summary of the December 13 Work Session Discussion

As I promised following the work session on December 13 I have summarized our discussion and extended the draft action plan in anticipation of a brief follow-up session in early January. As I did for the December 8th session, I have presented the notes as a report of our meeting together, and they can constitute an attachment to the official record of the meeting. As you will note, I have made no effort to summarize the presentation by Mr. Beal in the Public Participation portion of the agenda on Saturday morning.

We began our discussion by continuing to examine possible issues in several departments that will need to be addressed in the coming fiscal year (a process begun on Monday evening December 8), and then focused most of our attention on the draft action plan that had emerged in our earlier work. I have summarized the early discussion in narrative form, and incorporated most of the discussion on the action plan in that document. To facilitate some attention to priorities, I have also provided a clean copy of the draft action plan as a separate file; we will focus our attention on that at the January work session, and as you will note, I have asked you to identify priorities among strategies in advance of the January meeting.

<p>This report, prepared by Dr. Joe Ohren, constitutes an attachment to the official record of the work session of December 13, 2008, provided by the Clerk.</p>
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Core services--Continued

At the Monday evening session each department head was asked to identify some of the issues and challenges they face in the near term; this provided all participants with a better understanding of the needs in each department as an overlay to the goals and tasks spelled out in the draft action plan. At the Monday session we covered the following departments: Administrative Services, Fire, DPW, Police, Downtown and Depot Town, Planning

As we began on Saturday we covered those included in the narrative below.

Clerk

Several challenges lay ahead for the clerk's office:

- continue to build the effectiveness of the city's website, perhaps by automating some submissions and applications
- build and maintain a database of contracts utilized by the city
- create a searchable database for minutes and resolutions of city council

City Manager

The key task for the manager's office for the upcoming year is to continue to pursue every possible lead for the development of the Water Street project. More generally the city needs to review and address what can be done to enhance the overall business climate of the city, and then focus on specific redevelopment opportunities, such as the ACH property.

Housing (Walter Norris from the Housing Commission participated in Saturday's session)

Mr. Norris identified several specific efforts ongoing at the Housing Commission:

- the Commission has secured a consultant who is developing a plan for redeveloping Commission properties to be begun in the coming year;
- a plan to address housing code violations at Commission properties needs to be developed and implemented in the coming year;
- the Housing Commission is looking to partner with tenants, property owners and HUD to redevelop the Parkview area; broader discussion will be necessary to develop a plan.

Building Department

Ms. McGrath indicated that since the departure of the previous Director the city has contracted for building inspection with Pittsfield Township. That relationship has proved to be cost effective, generating significant savings with inspection fees covering most of the cost of the contract, and the city will continue the arrangement. It has also allowed for some restructuring and reorganization of the department that has permitted the city to maintain services, albeit increasing demands on employees.

Ordinance enforcement represents a significant challenge; currently there are two rental inspectors, one of whom is defacto supervisor, a code enforcement officer and two secretaries. In addition to fielding citizen complaints, DPS staff help the department identify enforcement concerns—typically involving leaves, snow and weeds—and warning letters are generated to alert property owners about violations. The key is not generating tickets but resolving complaints and violations and securing compliance with ordinances. If action is needed, clean-up or snow removal for example, then contracted help is utilized. A complaint tracking system has been set up to better follow-up on warning notices and violations. And, a review and update of fee schedules needs to be done on an annual basis to reflect changing costs. A special work session will be scheduled for council on ordinance enforcement in the next few months.

Economic Development

In addition to making every effort to promote development of the Water Street property, the city needs to link more effectively with state and local partners, communicating and providing information about what incentives are available, what properties in the city might be developed or redeveloped, and improving access to such information through the city's website.

City Attorney

The focus of the city attorney's efforts over the past several years has been to improve communication and information sharing with the city, increasing access to records, streamlining tasks such as publishing notices, and reducing the time needed to respond to requests for assistance. Much of this has been done by digitizing records and communicating via email.

Third Draft of Plan

To facilitate review and discussion of the revised draft of the plan, I have sought to incorporate our discussion into the plan using boxed or italicized text to explain suggested changes. In addition, in response to the circulation of the draft plan after Monday evening's session, several staff suggested clarification of details in the draft. Those too have been incorporated into the draft. Finally, and also by way of preface, as I noted in the summary from December 8, the possible measures of activity and impact that I have suggested are not final; there are far too many to be useful here and these may not even be the correct measures. They were included to provide a way to help you conceptualize what we are trying to accomplish by implementing various strategies.

In anticipation of our meeting on Tuesday evening, January 13, please **highlight or check the strategies for each goal that you deem to be the most important for the coming year**. While the plan sets out goals for the next three to five years, we also need to focus on the specific strategies or tasks to be included in the Manager's budget for fiscal year 2010.

City of Ypsilanti, Draft Strategic Plan, 12/13/08

Goal A Create a vibrant downtown as a hub for activity in Ypsilanti and larger community

Note: the original draft include separate strategies, one and two under this goal, related to business and residential development downtown. As a product of our discussion we combined those two items, broadening the strategy to focus on developing the downtown. It was also noted that several of the specific tasks included in the listing were responsibilities of the DDA's, but incorporating them here indicates council's support for those initiatives (e.g., implementation of the Main Street Program designation).

Strategies/Tasks

1. Identify and Implement strategies for developing the downtown
 - a. Develop and implement over time a coherent plan to integrate the several commercial areas that make up the downtown, including the core downtown, Depot Town, and West Cross Street corridor
 - b. Develop closer relationships with the two DDA's and business associations to implement marketing and development initiatives across the commercial areas
 - c. Continue utilizing and expand if resources permit a range of incentives and support for physical property improvements, such as OPRA (obsolete property renovations), façade improvements, brownfield or historic property programs
 - d. Include residential development as part of the coherent development plan for the commercial areas
 - e. Encourage through ordinance changes as appropriate additional uses of upper floors of commercial/office facilities (*the original language focused on residential uses but the point was made that we need additional uses of upper floors, not just residential uses*)
 - f. Encourage, by changing ordinances if need be, sidewalk cafes, temporary outdoor sales and other outdoor uses in commercial areas to the extent appropriate
 - g. Support implementation of the Main Street Program in the downtown commercial area

It was noted that both a and b under number three below are in the works; additional language was added to address parking issues related to the downtown, as noted. A task originally listed under one above related to signage and walking connections was also moved here.

2. Traffic/Infrastructure

- a. Work with MDOT to secure left turn lanes in appropriate locations in the Michigan Avenue corridor
- b. Work with MDOT to address timing of traffic lights in the Michigan Avenue corridor
- c. Develop and implement a plan for supporting/funding the maintenance of parking in the downtown area
- d. Develop better walking connections and signage from off-street parking areas to commercial areas

3. Events

- a. Support as resources permit festivals and events that bring people downtown
- b. Partner with other entities to encourage and facilitate events in the downtown commercial area

4. Safety

- a. Seek funding for special police patrols in commercial areas through the DDA's or business associations
- b. Explore and secure a partnership agreement with AATA to improve security and safety at the transfer terminal in downtown Ypsilanti

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

- 1. Growth in downtown businesses; number of employees, sales data, etc.
- 2. Growth in taxable value in the downtown district and across the city
- 3. Increase in taxable value of downtown as proportion of total taxable value
- 4. Higher utilization of upper floors in multi-level buildings
- 5. Increasing occupancy/reducing vacancy rates/reducing turnover of business properties in the downtown
- 6. Increasing foot traffic and human activity in downtown
- 7. Increasing profitability for businesses in the downtown area
- 8. Increasing market demand for properties; rise in value, market price
- 9. Amount of private investment leveraged by use of incentives in redevelopment processes
- 10. Number of events conducted downtown, estimated participation
- 11. MDOT approval secured for turn lanes off Michigan Ave., turn lanes installed
- 12. MDOT approval of change in timing of street lights on Michigan Ave.
- 13. New funding secured for special police operations in the downtown area
- 14. Reduction in police incidents in the area of the AATA transit terminal

Goal B Increase employment and strengthen the economic base of the City

Note: the language of the goal was broadened to include employment, since we are striving not only to develop the economic/tax base but also to generate jobs (and some might add jobs that pay a living wage). Several other minor changes in the language of strategies were made, as noted below. There was also some discussion about identifying specific sites or properties in the city that might be a focus for attention, as had been done in the past, but beyond the ACH site and the Industrial Park, no further site details were provided. Finally, at a later point in the discussion there was a suggestion to integrate strategies from Goal F here; I will wait for additional direction before doing that although it certainly makes sense.

Strategies/Tasks

1. Small business development
 - a. Continue partnership efforts with the Chamber, SPARK, the Eastern Leaders Group, and the small business development center to recruit and retain businesses in the community
 - b. Implement business retention efforts along the Washtenaw Avenue corridor
 - c. Work with SPARK to identify, inventory and market vacant buildings in the city
 - d. Support the business incubator project sponsored by SPARK
2. Redevelopment
 - a. Continue to offer appropriate incentives as needed to foster redevelopment, obsolete property renovations and façade improvements (*the language here as been broadened from the original focus on use of OPRA's to include other incentives*)
 - b. Take advantage of all appropriate external funding sources to support redevelopment efforts
3. Development processes
 - a. Identify impediments to redevelopment and modify development processes as needed and appropriate to insure that they are streamlined and user friendly (*they key change in the language here was to identify any impediments that stand in the way of redevelopment*)
 - b. Rewrite the zoning ordinance
 - c. Review and update as appropriate ordinances that affect businesses—e. g., signs—striking an effective balance between control and opportunity
 - d. Enlist business associations as partners in reviewing and implementing development processes and applying peer pressure to secure compliance (*the point was made that regulating businesses may not be as effective as peer pressure from other business owners in securing compliance with ordinances*)
4. Water Street development
 - a. Implement special monitoring/reporting program to keep council informed of status
 - b. Conduct special work sessions with council to explore possible development prospects and opportunities
 - c. Exercise care in selecting potential developers to insure that development is consistent with the city's vision for the area

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

1. Increasing level of private investment committed for development projects
2. Increasing number of jobs available in the city
3. Increasing income levels of city residents
4. Reducing vacant land or buildings through development
5. Increasing occupancy/reducing vacancy rates of business properties
6. Increasing market demand for properties across all commercial areas in the city
7. Development of promotional material and strategies and extent of marketing campaign; number of materials distributed
8. Incubator continues to be utilized
9. Completion of ordinance revisions; completion of master plan update
10. Development processes reviewed and streamlined where appropriate
11. Extent of overall investment in the redevelopment process
12. Extent and level of activity in Water Street area; number of site visits of prospective investors linked to promotional/recruitment efforts; development agreement executed

Goal C Insure diversity in the Ypsilanti community

Strategies/Tasks

1. Housing opportunities
 - a. Insure diverse housing opportunities as plans are developed and proposals for development or redevelopment take shape
 - b. Explore partnerships with others to minimize the impact of foreclosures in the city (e.g., neighborhood stabilization program)
 - c. Explore partnerships with others to implement affordable housing strategies
 - d. Identify and implement to the extent resources permit strategies for redeveloping the public housing complex
 - e. Examine and modify as needed code enforcement strategies to promote housing improvements and high quality rental units
2. Demographic mix
 - a. Explore systematic outreach efforts to minority communities in the area
 - b. Utilize as appropriate bi-lingual signs, forms, etc.
3. Insure that the city's workforce is representative of the city workforce as a whole

Strategy number three is an addition to the original draft and reflects a focus on the makeup of city employees. There was also mention of an ongoing effort in the larger community to "ban the box," deleting the question from employment applications referring to arrests/convictions. That discussion was not extensive and probably requires greater attention.

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

1. Affordable housing units incorporated into development proposals
2. Number and proportion of housing available at "affordable" rates
3. Change in rental rates of housing over time

4. Number of inspections, number of citations, reduction in visible blight across the city
5. Number of code violations corrected
6. Number and proportion of housing units under code violations
7. Make-up of city workforce representative of the city workforce as a whole

Goal D Develop a reliable and effective transportation system serving the Ypsilanti community

Strategies/Tasks

Note: Two themes were evident in the extensive discussion on this matter. The first was that we are seeking **stable** funding arrangements for the transit system so that we don't confront this issue each year at budget time. The second point related to the tasks identified under subsection a below and related to timing of efforts; a(1) was seen as a long term solution, while a(2 through 4) were seen as short term options. With respect to a(4), we recognized also that AATA and not the city determines fare increases; the city can reduce the amount of subsidy for routes, but the Authority sets fares, and has indicated in the past a reluctance to set divergent fares across the system.

1. Bus System

a. Stable Financing Arrangements

- 1) Explore with others the feasibility of countywide/regional funding through a sales tax or regional property tax funding
- 2) Seek partners—e.g., St. Joseph Hospital and EMU—in financing AATA routes that serve the city and such institutions
- 3) Explore opportunities for a joint contract with AATA with Ypsilanti and Superior Townships
- 4) Shift if necessary additional costs to riders through rate increases to maintain service levels

b. Service accountability with AATA

- 1) Secure information on routes, ridership, alternative route arrangements, etc.

2. Rail

- a. Participate with others the emerging rail links to Detroit Metro Airport
- b. Identify a location and develop a plan for a rail stop in Ypsilanti (*the original language referred to securing a rail stop for the city; that has been done. The key now will be to plan for the stop.*)

3. Non-motorized transportation—biking and walking

- a. Continue participation in border-to-border trail system
- b. Improve and add bicycle and walking trails at public facilities as resources permit and encourage the private sector to do the same (*this is a new addition to the plan and as suggested implies the city taking a lead in implementing walking trails with public facility improvements*)

- c. Explore the feasibility and cost of adding pedestrian access across the I94 bridge at the south end of the city (*this was an addition as well; at some point some preliminary studies had been done through MDOT but they would need to be updated, and external funding would obviously be necessary*)
- d. Seek external funding for such efforts as available

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

- 1. Joint contract/service agreement with AATA negotiated with partners to lower costs of Ypsilanti bus routes
- 2. WCC and St. Joseph Hospital participate in funding Ypsilanti bus routes
- 3. Countywide entity created to provide mass transit services
- 4. Regional funding scheme adopted by residents
- 5. Passenger rail service from AA to Detroit, with a stop in Ypsilanti, approved, location planned, and running
- 6. Extensions through the city of the border-to-border bike trail
- 7. Bicycling and pedestrian facilities improved/added (bicycle racks, benches, sidewalks, etc.)

Goal E Establish an effective partnership with EMU

Strategies/Tasks

- 1. Formal relationship
 - a. Develop a framework for long-term collaboration and joint policy direction between the city and the university
 - b. Reestablish regular meetings of city and university leadership
 - c. Explore opportunities for periodic meetings between members of the Board of Regents and City Council
 - d. Identify areas for discussion concerning cooperation among both parties, including joint master planning, GIS mapping initiatives, College Place plans (*several specific areas of discussion were mentioned in this context, noted here; there are obviously others that could be added*)
- 2. Service partnerships
 - a. Explore opportunities for cooperative or consolidated service delivery arrangements
 - b. Explore opportunities for cooperative marketing or branding of the downtown and the city (*this is an addition from the earlier draft*)

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

- 1. Regular meetings of city and university leadership are occurring
- 2. Leadership adopts a formal agreement spelling out collaboration
- 3. Cooperative service arrangements are identified and implement where appropriate
- 4. Marketing partnership with EMU developed and implemented

Goal F Build on the Ann Arbor brand and integrate Ypsilanti’s assets in that broader marketing effort

Note: There was some general discussion about integrating this goal and strategies with the broader efforts devoted to business development included under Goal B. For purposes of the discussion in January I have left it separate in the draft, but we can certainly incorporate these strategies under B following additional discussion.

Strategies/Tasks

1. Collaborate with SPARK and the VCB’s
 - a. Collaborate with SPARK to retain existing businesses and to effectively recruit new investment and development to the region
 - b. ~~Support increased funding to support efforts by the two Visitors and Convention Bureaus in the area~~ *(the County Commission has approved additional funding since our initial session at which this was included; it thus is moot)*
2. Ypsilanti Assets
 - a. Identify the assets of the community to be used for marketing purposes both nationally and regionally
 - b. Identify and implement specific strategies for insuring that Ypsilanti’s assets are included in the regional message; e.g., inserts in brochures and material at local hotels
3. City Website
 - a. Work with partners to update and strengthen the city’s website as a medium to enhance the city’s marketing efforts in tandem with SPARK and the VCB

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

1. Marketing materials to highlight the assets of the Ypsilanti community included in SPARK marketing efforts
2. Website updated

Goal G Nurture and support neighborhood associations and citizen groups across Ypsilanti

Strategies/Tasks

1. Neighborhood Associations
 - a. Utilize neighborhood associations as communication conduits to and from residents
 - b. Meet with neighborhood associations periodically (e.g., department heads and others) to discuss area problems and to identify specific issues to be addressed
2. COPAC
 - a. Encourage evolution of the role of COPAC to a broader framework for neighborhood problem-solving
 - b. Use COPAC listserve (or a parallel listserve) as a basis for communicating with residents on city issues

- c. Consider development of on-line discussion groups through COPAC (or a similar group) to facilitate two-way communication and dialogue
3. Friends Groups and others
- a. Require formal legal arrangements for groups seeking partnership agreements with the city (*the earlier language used the term encourage, but the city already requires this in contract relationships*)
 - b. Provide training opportunities for groups seeking to secure 501 status and developing a work plan (*the point was made in the discussion that there are ready resources available for applying for 501 status, and to the extent that city is requiring groups to have such a status to engage in partnerships, such training may be helpful; one person referred to it as “capacity building”*)
 - c. Secure formal contracts with partners for the delivery of services

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

- 1. Number of meetings with neighborhood associations, COPAC, Friends Group
- 2. Number of groups achieving 501 status with assistance from the city
- 3. Number of formal agreements with partners for the delivery of services
- 4. Quality of services, satisfaction of partners with service delivery

Goal H Continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of city services

Strategies/Tasks

Note: There was considerable discussion about the strategies under this goal, both amending and clarifying the earlier language and extending it to include a new strategy related to the recreation commission. I have noted below where changes have been made from the earlier draft, but this section may require more attention in a later discussion.

- 1. Develop and implement a set of strategies to address the police and fire employee pension and health obligations (*made explicit that it is the unfunded liabilities in the police and fire pension/health fund that need attention*)
- 2. Continue to pursue over the long term regional approaches to the delivery of police and fire services (*regional special police services are already in place and final details of the functional fire district arrangement with Ann Arbor are being worked out; hence the emphasis here is on long term efforts that would generate efficiencies and cost-savings*)
- 3. Develop and implement a formal review of the city’s master plan, identifying any specific changes that might be in order (*attention at this points needs to be given to reviewing as opposed to formally updating the master plan; as the new strategy inserted below suggests, over the longer term the city will need to develop a plan for updating the master plan and the zoning ordinance*)

4. Develop a long-term plan for formally updating the city's master plan and zoning ordinance
5. Develop bargaining strategies for the three labor agreements that will come up for negotiation in the first six months of the calendar year (*while this will occur prior to the start of the new fiscal year, it will be helpful for it to be identified as a key task*)
6. Develop and implement a plan for improving code enforcement services (*as noted earlier, city council will convene a work session in the next several weeks on code enforcement issues that will address a range of challenges in the coming year*)
7. Review and clarify the role of the city Recreation Commission, identifying responsibilities with respect to the joint agreements in place for providing recreational services through partnership agreements (*the Recreation Commission prepared and the Council approved an update to the recreation plan, and since then members have not been clear as to their role, especially given the reliance on partnership agreements for service delivery*)

Possible Measures of Activity and Impact

1. Plan developed and adopted for addressing employee legacy costs
2. Formal review of master plan completed
3. Plan developed and implemented for master plan update
4. Code enforcement program reorganized/improved
5. Role of Recreation Commission clarified