

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
JOINT COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION  
MINUTES  
JANUARY 16, 2007 5:30 P.M.  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Present were Mayor Ramos and Council Members Blaze, Cichocki, Crooks, Klepacz, Kurtz and Wisnieski. Absent was Councilman Grendel. Also present from the City were Assistant Law Director Adam Cornett, Service Director Snyderburn, Fire Chief Nelson, City Planner Markley (arrived 5:48 p.m.) and Economic Developer White. Present from the Planning Commission was Dale Lytkowski and Jack Shallcross. Present from the Downtown Redevelopment Task Force were, Bill Michaels, Don Krolikowski, Dorothy Ornas, John Nicastro, Sr., Anthony Togliatti and Rev. Robert Hendrix. Also present was Paul Vernon of Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative.

Mayor Ramos called the Workshop to order at 5:40 p.m.

Mayor Ramos stated, I want to thank everyone for coming. We really appreciate your being here.

Most of us have had an opportunity to appear before the Task Force, or at least attend some of the meetings. I wanted to publicly thank all of those who served on the Task Force. There were many meetings and a lot of time and thought put into this.

I don't think any one person has the answer. I think that this has to be worked on together by bringing together different parts of our community, our residents, elected officials, our professionals, our businesses, our churches, etc. in order to make this work. I think it's important that it be approached this way because we have no preconceived notions of what should happen with out downtown area. Everyone has different ideas. Everyone has different priorities. Everyone would like to see something different.

We want to try and mesh something together that would be acceptable to the community. If we try and be ideal in the sense that we're going to keep everybody happy about everything, that's not going to happen. All we want to do is try to appease or try to address as many concerns and as many issues as we possibly can so that we can come up with a plan acceptable to our residents, acceptable to our businesses, and most importantly, in the best interests of our City. That's what we're attempting to do.

Councilwoman Wisnieski stated, I would just like to publicly thank Don Krolikowski, he's my representative in this Task Force.

Mayor Ramos continued, I would like to comment on where I'm coming from. It has been a minority point of view and I think that I talked to the Task Force about this.

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We talked about getting a master plan together with the input of a lot of people, including our residents. My suggestion that was really not accepted was that we would choose a developer to work with us. I still feel that that is the preferred way to go because many of the things that we're going to be discussing and many of the ideas that will be discussed are going to be the economic part of it which is an essential and a big criteria of that project.

Over the past year there have been two developers who have expressed a sincere interest in participating in our downtown revitalization. However, we have informed them that until we come up with a master plan relating to the entire project, we are going to contact them afterwards.

I want to move this downtown revitalization project along. As I indicated, Independence is such a fantastic community. It has excellent services, excellent amenities. Our businesses and our residents make this city what it is.

However, with that being said, one of our shortcomings is our downtown area. It's not because of a lack of effort. The businesses located in our downtown area have a big investment and work very hard in order to make it a viable entity. We should make the commitment that we partner with them in order for them to be successful. In order for us to be successful, they need to be successful. We need to use the resources in order to make that possible.

It's my understanding that this is the process that we're going to be following as far as coming up with a master plan and then going forward with the master plan.

I respect that, but I just wanted everyone to know that I don't so much agree with the process but in the interest of moving the downtown renovation area forward, I am certainly very excited about the report and am very appreciative of the time and the effort that everyone has spent with regard to this report.

I would like to start out by asking for the presentation from Ron White. Jeff Markley will also be forthcoming.

Ron White stated, we thought that having a series of Work Sessions it would be something that we would build on. We're not anticipating that we're going to duplicate this meeting at the next meeting or the third meeting. Hopefully we'll build on each meeting.

We don't know exactly how this is going to pan out – either this evening or what direction we might take from this point forward. Jeff Markley and I will make some comments. Jeff will get a little more detailed with his comments.

I want to thank the Task Force members whether they were able to remain with the process or not. It's time away from their families. The offering of their intellect and their opinions was very helpful. Their patience with the process up to this point has been stupendous and we appreciate it. We had a lot of debate and a lot of different opinions. We had all the dynamics that we had hoped for – a good balance and a blended set of opinions and you come away with a feeling that you really dealt with things. Thank you for your insight into this project.

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Jeff and I acted as facilitators through this process. We offered opinions but hopefully drew along the group of 19 or so individual through the different thoughts and ideas, different topics, obstacles, challenges that we were going to face. We gave them opportunities to gain knowledge, to give them information that would help them form judgments as they worked through this. We feel we created an environment where they had the opportunity to be a little more ahead of others but offering, but yet offering as this cross section of our residents is, a good idea as to what perhaps the whole would feel toward these topics. This is a fairly good cross section. It wasn't that we struck out to make it balanced, but a good cross section coming from a lot of different areas.

We hope that these Work Sessions will develop our way of moving forward, we come away with another set of directions. Our goal is to keep this process moving in a direction where we walk away with a plan that we can implement at some point in time with the help of developers, investors, stakeholders, that are already in place. With the help of the people like the Urban Design Center, the Cleveland Restoration Society to work with us along the way and others that we work with, this is going to be a great process that will result in something important and lasting for this community.

This is a topic that has been looked at a number of times even as far back as the 80's. We're at another moment in our history where we're looking at it again and hopefully at a time where we can actually implement something.

We dealt with what should be the guiding theme for this group to adhere to – to have a mainstream of coming back to something if we get too far away from something – a way to say, this is why we're here. This is where we're going. We struck a theme and worked on the language. The following is the result:

*The final master plan will have a historical orientation, offering a moderate, unique approach and presentation, serving as a central gathering place and gateway for interactive and interpretive educational opportunities with a welcoming and warm atmosphere.*

It is really the center of how this group worked forward on everything that they looked at and touched. It was a way of trying to remain consistent in the thinking process.

We went from a wider set of information of where we are in the downtown area to a narrower set of information which is what the preliminary report is that you see. Now we have to tighten it up even further, closer to where we are going to eventually implement a master plan. That is pretty much what all the hours, information, debating among ourselves our Task Force members have brought us to.

Over the past six months or so, bi-weekly, we held meetings. We responded to questions and concepts. We dealt with a lot of things.

Anyone who would like a copy of the Preliminary Report can request one.

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Jeff Markley is going to lead us through a lot of the different elements of the plan. I'll touch on some areas – the concerns, the standards of how we would develop the zoning for mixed use, the design which is an environmental kind of design. We feel that the lead approach, leadership and environmental design, rebuilding concept is important to consider and incorporate into whatever we develop. It would be a leading edge kind of thing for our community to do that. And deed restrictions, funding resources, land assemblage, ongoing programming – what we mean by that is events, entertainment, marketing, promotions, recreational and other opportunities to make this area live and have a life that people will demonstrate their desire to come to. It's a destination. They want to come because they can be entertained, have recreation, shop and have a good time. It's some place to come to – a gathering place.

Jeff Markley entered the meeting.

Jeff Markley stated, first, recognize that from my perspective these Work Sessions are important for a couple of reasons. There are a couple of objectives that we're hoping to glean from these sessions.

The first is to formally present and recognize the efforts of the Task Force. I want to thank them. They spent a lot of time and a lot of effort contributing to this process and were very helpful. Also, the gleaning of concerns, suggestions, recommendations and direction – we need to be able to move forward. The Task Force has spent a lot of time so the Administration need to help us be able to move forward with this project. We really hope that we're going to get those comments and be able to take those and move them forward.

Finally, the end result – why we are here, is to facilitate the creation of a community driven master plan. We had the opportunity to sit with developers and have them create that plan for us and the decision by the Task Force was to be able to have a community process. That's where we are today with the process we decided to engage in. We need that master plan in order to be able to move forward. That is the end game here in this Work Session.

The City's redevelopment project seems to be borne out of the plan that Ron mentioned in 1983. This was born out of the essential business area study – basically Stone Road to Daisy Avenue. That was commissioned in 1983 and prepared by my predecessor. I'll quote from that, "the central business area is the very heart of the City. It is highly visible and the center of social contact. It has not, however, realized it's true potential in terms of function and aesthetic quality. Independence needs a business district which provides for the shopping and service needs of the community in a pleasing arrangement of buildings and landscaped spaces."

I think sitting here in 2007 we have a similar concern and approach. That's why the Downtown Redevelopment Program was started and has evolved to this point.

I joined the City in early 2006 when the Task Force was assembled and was able to meet with the three developers who responded to the RFQ/P. We got to hear presentations and look at their plans. I'm sure all of you have had the opportunity to review those plans to some extent.

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We met numerous times to discuss the merits of those plans. Again, ultimately the Task Force decided to have this a community based decision and make it part of the process. Therefore, in June the Task Force recommended to Council and the Mayor that we move forward with my involvement, consultants and various City Officials to move this along.

They did a tremendous amount of work looking at a number of different areas and issues. This report summarizes that. I call them “project concerns.” In the report concerns, issues, topics, conversation, whatever you like, they were debated heavily and aggressively and with a lot of forethought. I would reference those sections in the report.

My presentation will largely focus on the Executive Summary. Those really detail what the Task Force has done. Follow up with the summary statements of each of those project concerns in Section 3. Those will summarize the issues.

Most interesting was at the last Task Force meeting that we had Ron and I decided that we were going to get a vote of the Task Force on each of these issues. We had been trying to build a consensus, trying to stimulate the discussion and dialogue. We needed to get a vote. We wanted to throw numbers to this process. By a show of hands we were able to do that. It took quite awhile on a couple of the issues to come up with a question that everyone was willing to accept as legitimate questions we were asking. Once we did, we were able to then get a show of hands on the various issues. Again, those will be referenced in the Summary Statements.

Recognize that the Task Force is a very diverse group of people representing various aspects of the community. The concern came up numerous times about the survey of the community. Did we really represent the interests of the community at large? Were we speaking on a certain constituency? That concern still exists.

Most of the show of hand votes resulted in 11-1, 12-0 vote. The one vote that was the closest was 6-5. That was related to the survey. The Task Force felt very strongly about a survey. Six people voted to go ahead and allow us to present this document to Council and the Mayor prior to a survey being taken. Five people felt that the survey should be taken prior to us releasing this document. Eleven people felt that a survey was needed. That being said, you can write a book on how to take surveys. We discussed the merits of surveys, the process. We discussed what form a survey should take. Essentially, the paper survey, statistically how valid, how many responses, how well are you going to be able to glean enough information from that survey was the concern. We drafted a questionnaire on some pointed issues – those issues that the Task Force really struggled with. Suffice it to say, it was the middle school and it was housing – no surprise there.

I’ve had a little bit of experience with surveys from my own community. We continue to hear about statistically valid surveys. Telephone surveys, although annoying at times, can pinpoint an issue and you can get some direct answers.

A survey is included in this document. Those are the questions that we shared with the group and the group seemed to unanimously support the questionnaire. It’s up to this body whether or not you want to go forward with that, but that seemed to be an anchor for the Task Force with

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proceeding further. There's a comfort level of being able to represent their community and I understand the weight that maybe some of these decisions have on your shoulders.

We'll hit each Summary Statement very quickly. It will give an opportunity to expand on some of the issues.

Public Square – by an 11-1 margin, Public Square remains essentially as it is. Perhaps it's enhanced to attract more people, more frequently. It's the focal point. It's probably the gateway to the downtown core. As a result, it should be that magnet. It's an invaluable open space. It defines a sense of place for the City of Independence. With careful planning it becomes the gateway. Through pedestrian connections tied to all purpose trails, ties to the Towpath in the Valley, it becomes that gateway. By an 11-1 margin that group felt that we should consider going ahead and designing a way for that to become more of a focal point – even more so than it is right now.

Councilman Crooks asked, the alternative then was to do nothing?

Jeff Markley replied, the alternative was to leave it as it is. Largely the concern was discussion about the bandstand and the condition of the bandstand, how it's being utilized. Is it something that should be enhanced in some way architecturally? Should it be relocated? Is it a significant enough focal point to draw people, or does it take the events to bring people to Public Square – the Tree Lighting Ceremony, Home Days and events like that? The overall consensus seemed to be, let's do a little bit more there to bring people. Make it an attractive area. There was some discussion about the fountain masking the traffic noise. If you're on the trails and you've just come up the hill from the valley and you wanted a spot to stop in, it could be a potential location for something like that. Think of Boston, think of Charleston, South Carolina, think of Savannah, Georgia, those kinds of squares are what exists out there with a focal point.

Councilman Crooks stated, not speaking on behalf of my colleagues, but my point of view is that you want to take your time on each one of these summary statements.

Vice Mayor Kurtz asked, was much thought given to allowing an overlay use of the housing stock for small shops within the Square area?

Jeff Markley replied, not specifically within the Square. There is a topic further down under "Housing." We touched on several things, overlay being the zoning is a component that we talked about. Mixed use is a component that we talked about. Mixed use was discussed and housing stock was discussed but not specifically in that area. It's not to say that you couldn't. That becomes a potential magnet.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, leave the houses as residential dwellings so people aren't uprooted but allow the houses to have an overlay use if they want to be converted into small shops. Then utilize the land behind the houses on the east side for parking and additional amenities for the property to the rear and playing off of what the City already owns in the southeast corner of the Square – the Fortlage property and old city hall. You could create that additional magnetism.

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Jeff Markley responded, I would be the first to admit that this is a document of broad recommendations. Does it have a lot of meat in it? At first there were some concerns relative to this document that it doesn't tell us exactly what we should be doing here, here and here. That was not the intention of this document. This was a preliminary draft document that allowed people to see where discussions were headed.

If that's a viable option in that area, I don't see why you wouldn't want to consider it.

Moving on to another fun topic which was the middle school, the Task Force recommended by a show of 12-0 that the middle school building and property be developed for the best economic enhancement and community service purposes, which includes all thoughtful options related to the building. It basically says, let the market dictate what that building should be.

Ron White added, that was the key thing. It was the market, or the economic value that that would mean to the community. That is valuable, needed space – either it be developed or it be razed or somewhere in between.

Reverend Hendrix commented, there is really no consensus. You have all these different opinions regarding that.

Jeff Markley responded, you have a lot of emotion tied with that. You have a lot of perspective on the hope that it can be used as it is now. We can keep the building and use it for something. There was still that hope out there that the building could still be used for some economic purpose. I thought that the driving factor was economic use - it wouldn't solely be developed at the City's expense or a building that you might use a couple of times a month. That was the overall concern – the economic factor.

Vice Mayor Kurtz commented, as I read through the documents it seemed to me that there was a lot of flexibility given in terms of commitment, the City's participation. We have \$2 million in that structure and that property but it doesn't limit our ability and flexibility. The Task Force seemed to understand that.

Jeff Markley replied, largely. You still have the emotional ties.

Vice Mayor Kurtz added, the other side is the historical perspective in this community that needs to be addressed as part of any type of renovation, removal. It's going to be a hot issue in terms of whether we utilize this building to its full capacity, a diminished capacity or the essential core element of the original facility. Maybe the wings are removed so the core remains part of the history or even a transitioning from its previous use to some other economically viable. . . I liked some of the ideas that were discussed by the Task Force in terms of whether it be retail shops, some type of professional use or even on a smaller scale than the entire building. That portion of the property may offer some opportunity.

Jeff Markley responded, part of the reuse of that building or use of that building or property is going to be tied specifically to the Independence Shopping Center redevelopment plan and how that works out.

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I'm known for just throwing out ideas and if I get slammed for them, so be it. Could you gut the entire thing and make that a parking garage and still maintaining the building in its shell? How many people truly care about the inside of the building as much as seeing that presence there and the reminder that there's a historical perspective? I threw that out there.

When we get to the water tank I'll throw another idea out that I threw out to the Task Force.

As far as the water tank, the City of Cleveland Water Department sent a letter. Suffice it to say, it would cost us around \$12 million to relocate that tank to another area at the cost of a developer or the City. We came to the conclusion that we better try to figure out a way of working around that and it stays in place. The original estimate for relocation was \$23 million so the figure has come down.

Vice Mayor Kurtz asked, was there any discussion with the Water Department about the footprint of property behind the original water tower in terms of acquisition. Back in the late 80's or early 90's the school board sold a duplicate footprint of the tower property to the Water Department. At the time the Water Department wanted to add capacity so there is an additional footprint of property that the school board conveyed to the Water Department. I'm wondering if that is going to be one of many considerations. Was that ever asked?

Ron White replied, yes, it was asked of them. They were aware of it. We had meetings with them and they indicated that they'd be willing to sell that back to the City at fair market value. They had no further plans to expand their system in that way so it is really not land that they were using. However, they still have a need for some kind of easement rights for whatever purposes.

Mayor Ramos added, it really comes down to what the price is. It's just a questions of how much.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, they're governed by the same rules we are. Get a couple of appraisals and it shouldn't be that difficult. My personal opinion is that that piece and the small piece next to it to the north could offer additional opportunities in terms of ingress and egress of the entire upgrade of that area. It lends itself to that.

Ron White responded, we asked the Water Department to consider the options – either keep it as is where it is and bury the tank or put it in another location nearby. Behind Vodrazka there is a piece of land that sits behind the shopping strip where the hardware store is and the preschool. That's where it could go. It would work but would cost \$11 million. So it's not worth it as far as we can see. But that's wasn't a decision for us to make. It's just for us to provide the information.

Jeff Markley added, the 12-0 vote came up to either screen, camouflage or otherwise mask the tank. That comes in a couple of different ways. One is to literally screen or block it from view. One of the concepts he threw out there was, is it possible to deconstruct the façade of the middle school and replant that in front of the water tank. It might be just as expensive as relocating. He has no idea.

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Vice Mayor Kurtz asked, was it also considered to reconfigure the retail to add retail in front of it to block it?

Jeff Markley replied, yes. There's also landscaping and fencing. Building an observation tower was discussed. Could we put something over the top of it?

Mayor Ramos added, another idea thrown out by several of the residents was Bucyrus, Ohio with a water tank. We'll make copies and get them out to everyone.

Jeff Markley continued, if you don't mask, hide or screen it from view, make it a focal point. Consider it a big blank canvas – come up with a mural or some kind of theme element.

What he would suggest is that whatever we do decide that we would like to do with the tank, would likely be run by the Water Department. They're probably going to have some approval process in place before we go ahead.

Ron White added, another thought that came about was to make a roundabout – put a road around it so that if we do extend Chestnut east. The roundabout would go out to Stone and then do whatever you're going to do with the tank.

Dorothy Ornas asked, do we know how often they do repair or maintenance on the tank?

Ron White replied, probably every 10 to 20 years or so.

Jeff Markley added, that's a good question. If you're going to spend money on a mural or create that image, you want to make sure that it's going to last quite awhile. I don't have any background with that so I don't know how long something like that lasts. Obviously, it's a specialty.

Director Snyderburn commented, he thinks the last time they did it, it was painted and the height was raised by a half million gallons.

Councilwoman Wisnieski's comment regarding the water tower was inaudible.

Jeff Markley commented, we probably ought to find out if they're looking to increase capacity. You don't want to paint something and find them cutting the top off and raising it another ten feet. That's a follow through that we would want to do.

Next is the Independence Shopping Center. There was a vote of 12-0 that the City consider transferring City owned property to private interests for the redevelopment of the downtown, provided that the redevelopment conform to City standards that are implemented and which incorporate City improvements as detailed in the master plan.

What all that means is that the Task Force would recommend or go along with the concept of transferring City property to a private interest, provided they conform to the master plan

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document which included improvement costs to the road, burial of utilities and all of that. That's the relationship you would have to work out.

Dale Lytkowski asked, are you suggesting transferring the property or selling the property?

Jeff Markley replied, to transfer would be to sell it. It would be a sale.

Reverend Hendrix asked, the property you're talking about is the middle school property?

Jeff Markley replied, yes.

Reverend Hendrix asked, is there any other City owned property in that area?

Mayor Ramos replied, not in that area. There is some City owned property across the street.

Jeff Markley commented, one thing to recognize is that these public/private partnerships do exist and the appraised value of the property, if developed commercially, is "x" and you apply that dollar and that increased value of the property once the improvements are in place. It's all put into a spreadsheet and you decide what the value. The value is this much, the improvements are this much, where can we establish a wash if there ever is a wash, or do we have to contribute more to the process? That was basically the mindset of that.

We did have an opportunity to meet with Mr. Marotta briefly to go through the process and explain to him what we were looking for. He seemed to be interested in participating in some further discussion.

Mayor Ramos added, Mr. Marotta has been sent a copy of this report. We did have some meetings with him. When the senior housing issue failed, one of the first calls we made was to Mr. Marotta because it made much more sense to partner with him to make something happen. We did have a meeting with him several weeks ago just to explore if he wishes to participate, if he wishes to partner, the possibilities of extending Chestnut into the shopping center to provide him some frontage on that side. Unfortunately, part of the problem with his shopping center is that he doesn't have the frontage on a dedicated street. We were talking with him about extending Chestnut into the shopping center so that those stores had some frontage where people could park and walk along.

Councilman Crooks asked, did you get any response to that?

Mayor Ramos replied, he was interested. He said that he would like to hear more about it and he would be getting back to us but he hasn't heard from him.

Ron White added, he's south so he's not in the area and won't be back until February or March. John Morgan, his representative, is who we're working with and he does communicate with him.

Vice Mayor Kurtz asked, did the Task Force take into consideration alternative areas from the main infrastructure, main road. You talked about bringing in Chestnut, but did you think in

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terms of moving the building around and coming out by the middle school, and creating a true access, ingress and egress – opening up that whole area. When people drive down Route 21, their snapshot is Route 21 – create an alternative where you’re almost forced to come into the area through the middle school or that area, come out by Valley View Drive or even an extension of Chestnut, along the back of the water tower. You’re just throwing out ideas. If you really want to look at the big picture, then that should be another creative thought process that we incorporate into this concept.

If you look at what they did in Hudson behind old Hudson, adding the additional infrastructure behind that creates a draw, a magnet.

Jeff Markley responded, it’s its own little downtown.

Vice Mayor Kurtz continued, it’s its own little downtown but they both feed off of each other – whether it’s the square and small shops, revitalization of Route 21 itself or creating a small version of a downtown area.

Jeff Markley responded, we didn’t get much into any design planning whatsoever.

Paul Vernon from Urban Design commented, that’s one of the things (inaudible) we’ll be coming back (inaudible) with the (inaudible) that you’re talking about, whether it’s the (inaudible) the tower or (inaudible) we’ll come back (inaudible).

Ron White commented, we did discuss the presence of a street frontage for stores and shops. Route 21 is not a main street, even though it is it’s not conducive such a “First and Main” concept of bringing stores to the sidewalk and then to the curb and then parking right next to the shops.

Jeff Markley added, maybe one thing left to note on the shopping center too is that Mr. Marrotta did comment that it was for sale for a price. We could also recognize that perhaps that doesn’t exist in its current form.

Ron White added, he did acknowledge though that if he were to expand, he would do it in a “U” shape.

Jeff Markley added, so the “U” portion would be right through the middle of where the middle school is located.

We’ll move onto the Brecksville Road corridor. Simply put in this case was a “Main Street” look – the burial of the utilities, the improvement of the pavement sections, wider pedestrian trails. We looked at photographs and realized that once you park in a certain spot you’d have your bumper hanging over onto the sidewalk and then you have the curb and utility poles. You only have 2 ½ feet to walk in. It doesn’t feel real comfortable.

Dan Krolkowski commented, I do ride a bike to the bank. It’s difficult to dodge cars coming out of parking lots. It’s a dangerous proposition. The car bumpers are sticking out. There’s the

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concrete blocks that stop you from going further. There are little brick treelawns on the side. There is no green, no softness.

Jeff Markley added, and not a lot of room. This is the place where we talked about streetscape. The downtown redevelopment project was not conceived as a streetscape project. That's very simple – add some benches, add some pavers, bury the utilities, spend \$2 or \$3 million on the project and that's the streetscape project and you're done. That won't be your redevelopment project. That won't bring in the economic stimulus that you're looking for. It has to be much more than that. That's why we kind of relegated this Brecksville Road corridor to (inaudible). Streetscape is important but it's not the be all to end all. You can't just spend money on bricks and furniture and make it work downtown.

We talked about housing. Three members left at this point. This wasn't something they wanted to participate in. We had been talking about it to some degree throughout the six month period. There was a 9-0 vote. The Task Force supports the idea that residential housing is an extension of the downtown redevelopment district.

Successful contemporary projects elsewhere suggests that the inclusion of a residential component within a mixed use setting is what is going to succeed. With that said, specific location, type of housing and style of architecture has not been included but certainly has been discussed to quite some degree.

I know there is a specific component in the Charter, hence the vote on senior housing. This is something that is a hurdle that we need to think about. Concepts were described at the Task Force and I will elaborate on those thoughts.

One of the thoughts are, you're going to bring people into the downtown. You want this to be an activity area, not just when the CVS closes the lights go out. That's not the hub of the downtown. That doesn't bring in the life that I think you are looking for in this situation. Therefore, housing is absolutely going to have to be part of the plan and not two blocks down, actually right in the heart of it. There is going to be a lot of gnashing of teeth in talking through this process.

A concept that I tossed out was, if you can envision the back of the water tank, along the fringe of the National Park area, the rim of the Valley, having something that is "U" shaped retail. Retail shops on the first floor, a second floor office space and the third floor could potentially be some housing – something that can bring the people from Rockside Road, the single professionals, bring them up the street and call that home. That third story would then view the valley which would absolutely be a spectacular view.

Looking up from the valley, you could maybe have a terraced type of thing, green roof architecture, green engineering so that you maybe planted roofs. Acknowledging the fact that it's tied to the National Park you want to respect that.

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That's an opportunity. You've provided housing for people that are working right down the street. You've collected some office rent as well. You're keeping people that are normally leaving town because they can't find any housing stock that they want here in town.

This is just a thought that was tossed out there. I know that's against the Charter. We'll let you guys work through that. My job is to just bring a few ideas from elsewhere into this neighborhood.

Mayor Ramos commented, I certainly appreciate everything you said. I endorse those thoughts, especially regarding the overlook over the park. I am probably a minority voice, not only in the City but maybe in this room as well with respect to the housing element of this. The only thing I can say is that in order for the downtown area to be successful, I think we need to have the support in the downtown area. I endorse the mixed use type of thing. I feel that the housing element of the downtown area is essential, especially if it should be taken with the architectural thing as far as the other buildings are concerned – whether they be colonial type of housing or other types.

Jeff Markley added, brownstones.

Mayor Ramos continued, exactly, incorporating all that in there.

Whenever you talk to a developer regarding a downtown area, the housing part of it is essential. Because of our location, I don't think that the downtown area will be successful but for the housing to support it, in order to get the pedestrians and traffic.

I'm not looking to do a high density type of thing, but I think it needs to compliment as far as people walking, people being in the area. Whenever you look at these types of areas, that's an essential part of it.

I think that it should be an attractive area architecturally, add a lot of value to the area as well as hope the adjacent property owners' property values.

Jeff Markley added, I'm sure Paul Vernon can also provide some examples at some point, and there are probably lots of others out there, that could demonstrate what this would look like before anything is ever, ever, ever agreed to.

Dan Krolkowski asked Paul Vernon, in your studies and in your thoughts, it's important that the people in this community understand that if this type of housing is developed, it's not going to reduce their property value, their home value negatively.

Jeff Markley responded, it will impact their property values but not negatively.

Dan Krolkowski commented, I think many of us on the Task Force agree, and I can't speak for everyone, that housing is certainly essential. That's my own opinion.

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Independence is unique. It's a special place where people want to live and that keeps our values high. To create too much housing and the wrong kind of housing is going to affect that negatively. I think it has to be done carefully.

As a side comment, lately I've noticed a lot of rental property in our community. I don't know if there are statistics that are kept. When you have zoning for senior housing or otherwise, if you have a great deal of rental property owners here, they're not going to vote for any type of higher density housing because it's going to impact them and their rental property.

Mayor Ramos responded, we kicked around about trying to figure out the number of rental units. I thought that there was a law that was just passed that the rental units have to be registered with the county auditors.

Asst. Law Director Cornett replied, yes there was. Residential rental property essentially has to register with the county.

Mayor Ramos stated, maybe we can get some information from them to assist us.

Dan Krolkowski responded, obviously that impacts the vote.

Paul Vernon commented (inaudible). I think the quality of the end product is probably going to take more (inaudible) to tie into the economy and (inaudible) you're going to need (inaudible) in order to really make this thing happen. I can't imagine a developer who (inaudible).

Councilman Blaze commented about rental units at Crocker Park.

Paul Vernon responded, it's not all rental. Many units are for sale. The rental part is pretty high dollar (inaudible).

Jeff Markley stated, allow me to segway from comments on housing to open space. Part of the housing stock that we talked about was single family, detached housing, but if you also look at the overriding concerns with open space preservation and protecting buffers to the National Park, single family, detached housing chews up an awful lot of land for a very little return when you think about it. You're chewing up open space that you'd look to preserve for the ability to build detached housing stock. That is something we absolutely have to get our hands around and work through. You can build 50 detached homes and maybe 150 homes in that same area with some type of attachment. You have to look at that perspective. Open space was talked about an awful lot with the Task Force.

Recognizing that one of the major draws besides being the crossroads of Cuyahoga County, Independence has an extremely valuable resource immediately to the east in the National Park. Those connections to the Towpath and to other natural features that exist within that area, the Blue Hole, the Mine, that experience is absolutely phenomenal.

With that being said, getting people down there and back up will be part of what we need to work on. The connection to those public open spaces to the Square, to the downtown, to the

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housing, to the shopping, think of Peninsula - they lost the Coliseum and yet they seem to be doing just fine. The old bar is now the Winking Lizard. The old tractor path is now the Towpath. The bike shop exists, the ice cream, the whole bit. It's a flourishing area. You've got the opportunity here to create that trailhead, that connection to the Towpath and become another stop.

As far as open space, Council did commission an open space plan. This falls into the Floyd Browne study. We did include that in the report but we wanted to give Floyd Browne the opportunity to present that plan to Council and the Mayor for discussion.

Suffice it to say that they've included some neat ideas in that plan. They've created a fairly noteworthy public part on the Hunt Estate and even going down into the DiGeronimo Aggregates mine so that 50 years or more from now when the mine ceases to exist, there is an opportunity to expand and have a master plan in place for that area.

There was real concern with maintaining the buffer to the National Park and the views from the National Park looking back up to the City. You don't want to just clear cut wherever that limit is and say now we can build from this point on.

The other aspect of the open space plan was to recognize that there certainly are areas to preserve within the downtown redevelopment area and outside of that, but there are also some green spaces within the downtown that should be developed economically and converted from green space to developed property. The open space plan does talk about that. When that is presented you'll be all set.

We talked about deed restrictions and how we could go ahead and make this all work once the master plan was created. We have governmental bodies in place to do just that. We have Planning Commission. We have Council and we have the Architectural Board of Review.

Deed restrictions are certainly a valuable tool to use to protect the standards by which the master plan has been created.

As far as design standards, recognize that there is an architectural style guide that was created by the Cleveland Restoration Society. They inventoried a significant number of buildings within the downtown redevelopment area and created a book of standards – the colonial revival, the bungalow, the Queen Anne, all different kinds of styles.

What probably would happen next would be to take a big plan and identify where those clusters of styles are and development that occurs within those, infill development or new development, would start to follow that same architectural style so there was some consistency. You didn't just have one style in one area and another style right next door. You're going to try and work harmoniously with the styles. That was the purpose for creating that architectural style guide – to recognize that there are a number of styles out there.

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Design standards would be used by the Architectural Board of Review and Planning Commission for lighting, signage, landscaping, paving, sod treatments and that type of thing. None of that has really been defined because we're too early in the game.

Recognizing what the master plan is, we'll start figuring out how all this gets paid for – most likely public/private partnership. It could be grant applications. It could be a combination of public dollars. . .

Ron White added, port authorities.

Jeff Markley continued, again, the idea that you have a livable downtown center, a very viable center of town, you can't just get by with Home Days and Tree Lighting. You have to do more than that to bring people into the downtown and to stay in the downtown and shop in the downtown. You don't want them driving down Rockside Road and spending their dollars down there, getting back on the highway and leaving. You would like to circulate into the downtown area.

Again, recognize that this is the heart of the City for the residents. We need to be mindful that this area needs to reflect that and provides some things that are true to the residents' needs, not so much to somebody driving in and saying this will be a great place to shop once and then I probably won't come back. It needs to be something that is ongoing and recurring.

It could be any number of things. We talked about a museum, a genealogy lab. It could be something related to the mining operation. It could be a number of different concepts. The idea of being able to climb up somewhere and look out over the valley is another concept they talked about.

By creating a "U" shaped buildings, perhaps there is a space in the center that then becomes a festival space.

There is the proposed survey at the end. Feel free to read those questions. You start the survey off with the question, are you aware that the City of Independence is considering a revitalization plan? If the answer is no, then it's thank you, end the call and move on or you expand on that.

Councilman Crooks asked, were the questions compiled by the Task Force?

Jeff Markley replied, largely by me. I presented them to the Task Force and they went through them and didn't change very much. They didn't like the idea of shopping. They said services and I think patronize was the word we used.

Councilman Crooks responded, I have some experience writing surveys and polls. I think that yes and no responses may not be the direction that will get us the best information.

Jeff Markley responded, I have no experience in polls and surveys. They said they wanted a survey so I thought let's go ahead and figure out a way of putting that in there. The point of the survey was that it was pointed, that we had a specific answer, not a broad based answer of trying

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to cover 37 issues. The idea was, let's focus on a couple of things. We were trying to hit the heated areas that the Task Force was struggling with. That was the mindset. I threw a question in at the end. *Would you support alternative housing choices in the downtown district?*

Councilman Crooks asked, they have a price for a five minute and ten minute survey? Is the ten minute adding questions?

Ron White replied, they would develop questions for our consideration in a professional format. We can certainly craft those questions.

Jeff Markley added, we just have to make sure that they're not a biased question.

We were faced with that in my community – would you like a recreation center with a swimming pool and this and that? Ninety percent of the people said yes. The only question they didn't ask was, would you be willing to pay \$20 million to have it? When it ultimately got on the ballot, 90% of the people said no, they don't want to spend \$20 million for a rec center, so we don't have a rec center.

Ron White commented, that is the sort of the formal part of this first Work Session, just to work through this so we have an area of understanding of what we've been through. Now I think we're at that point where we'd just like to open up for discussion and perhaps at the end of this, what direction, what step do we take into the next session? What is it that we want the next session to accomplish? If we can achieve that tonight through any discussions we want to continue, at the end we'll decide what we want to do at the January 30<sup>th</sup> Work Session I think then we've made some good progress, a good step forward in this whole effort to create that master plan.

Jeff Markley added, we don't want to repeat.

Ron White continued, we don't want to repeat. This is progressive.

Councilman Cichocki commented, the downtown revitalization is premised on an increase in the residential population. I think if you ask the average person in this town if they wanted more people here, they're going to say no. (Inaudible). Is there any way to revitalize the downtown short of increasing the number of residential units there?

Jeff Markley replied, if you want a livable downtown center, you need the activity. If you're okay with the idea that at 9 o'clock the lights are off, and the fountain shuts off and that kind of thing, then that's what the downtown becomes. Then it becomes more of a glorified streetscape project.

Councilman Cichocki responded, I'm not sure that that's not what the average resident wants, a glorified streetscape.

Jeff Markley responded, I'm not sure either.

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Councilman Cichocki responded, they're talking about extending Chestnut. What become of the people who live on Chestnut? Their road becomes a grand boulevard because of this grand shopping center. I'm not sure you're heading in the right direction myself. This is my observation.

Jeff Markley replied, I appreciate that.

Councilman Cichocki commented, as far as a survey, there was a survey out there that 80% of the population would support senior housing. . .

Everyone speaking at once.

Dan Krolikowski commented, Councilman Cichocki, I agree with you on that. I'm not sure that the average resident in Independence wants additional people. That needs to be worked out.

I wanted to add that all the professional people that we had give these presentations over the last six months felt very strongly that to make this project succeed we need to have. . .

Councilman Cichocki responded, a developer wants to make money on the process of bringing housing units in.

Dan Krolikowski responded, we talked about the different components to make this work and we said, okay, if there's no housing, then we work with what's there and we take that shopping center and we work with the owner and we massage that and make it a little more attractive or whatever. Then it came up, well, Mr. Marrotta wasn't real amenable to working with the community. You could see - oh, where do we go from here? Now we're back to streetscape. Now no one in the community is going to want to spend \$2 million or whatever it costs to bury power lines and put planters on the street and do that just to make it look nice.

Jeff Markley mentioned that the administration needs at this point to help the Task Force move forward. The Task Force has worked diligently on this and listened to all these people. We want a community process. It needs to go out to the community in some manner.

Over 80% of the public said that they want to go with senior housing and then when we go to vote it's something different.

Go back to the rental housing. Are there a lot of rental units here? Yes, 80% said they wanted senior housing but then a guy that is renting out a piece of property here and making a good amount of money on it, does he want all of a sudden to see that and possibly some of his income gone?

The other thing is, can Council work together on this? Can you guys all work together? If you take this and go back to two developers, are you guys going to be able to work on this, because one of the things we saw on the Task Force is that some of you came and addressed. We got all different messages from our Council people. That's okay, because as a Task Force we all had different ideas too, but, we're really at the point where the Task Force needs the

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Administration's say. We either put money forward for a survey, and it's got to be an effective survey. It has to be done by a company that's respected. That's really where we're at.

Jeff Markley commented, as a follow up, whether the community wishes to add more to the population is really a viable question to ask. But we also have to recognize that there is always that mindset that, I want to be the last one in the community and I'll shut the door. You have a fairly limited style of housing stock. It is a challenge to be able to be born, grow up and have successive housing, whether it's senior housing or through a young professional being able to work just down the street on Rockside. Is there something available for that individual to buy? Maybe there is that fixer upper house. I don't know. I don't know your housing stock that well.

I'm not proposing that you're going to add 1,000 new people to the community. I'm just saying that you should perhaps consider diversifying the stock of housing opportunities and give alternative choices. Will it add 100 or 200? I don't know.

Paul Vernon responded, (inaudible). There might be (inaudible) that actually sort of reclaim green space (inaudible) areas. (Inaudible) on this particular project (inaudible). But that doesn't mean we shouldn't (inaudible).

Jeff Markley added, the Vice Mayor even alluded to that decommissioning with his comments on Public Square. Maybe it's a handful of homes but creating an overlay there allows for an alternative use, so instead of residential, maybe a commercial use.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, the only place we decommissioned homes in the last 100 years is the old company houses in the area of the mine – the bottom of Stone Road and Hemlock.

Councilman Cichocki commented, and Rockside Road.

Councilman Klepacz made an inaudible comment.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, those were for infrastructure improvements.

Several people in the audience making inaudible comments.

Jeff Markley stated, recognize that you've got the land use plan, a major land use plan and residential areas are along corridors that are being threatened with other choices of building. That's a form of decommissioning in and of itself.

Director Snyderburn asked, what if the results of the survey won't work?

Jeff Markley replied, then you chart a new course or a different course. It's an indicator of what the people want and feel. You figure out another way of still achieving what you want, which is economic vitality in that center. You're trying to get that heart started and keep it going and do well.

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Dan Krolikowksi responded, that is why the Task Force did not want a developer to help us. We didn't want to be pushed to go in one direction.

Mayor Ramos responded, the only problem is that, with all due respect, it's just a different philosophy and I realize and appreciate that I've lost this argument already, but once again, I just want to move forward in the best interests of the City. I think that in planning this the economic part of this is essential.

Let's say that we come in with the master plan and as a developer I'm going to be bringing in my money because we're looking for private money. The City may participate or help out with TIF financing as far as infrastructure or streetscape and all that other stuff. If I'm going to be bringing in the money and I'm going to be investing my resources, you can be rest assured that I'm in there to make money.

I talked to many people, especially the two that have expressed a very sincere interest. It's important that the support is there because if we're just going to rely upon, with all due respect, the people that live in Independence and maybe some people who work in the Rockside area that come out, it's not going to work. It's not going to be viable. Therefore, if that's the course that people want to take, then fine. Let's work on the streetscaping. Let's improve that if that's what we want. But if they're looking to make a viable downtown, we need different elements. That's all I'm saying.

When we were sending out the RFQ/P's there were some people that were very critical. They said you have to come in with a plan and then send the plan out. Or, you come up with a developer to develop the plan from there.

The way I was looking at it, by introducing the developer and with the input of the public, the residents and the businesses, we can massage this thing into what we want to see.

Dan Krolikowski responded, we didn't feel at that point that we were ready for that. There were too many things to discuss. We don't disagree.

Dale Lytkowski commented, I think you guys did a great job. I read it and I think it's a great asset we have here in Independence. I love the concepts. We have a lot of concepts, a lot of ideas, and I like the idea of a survey. My concern is, how are we going to put all these ideas together?

My concern with a developer is if he's big and looks at housing, he's focused in that arena. I'd rather do somebody who has an open mind, maybe an architect or designer, and say, here's how I see it all coming together. Here's a plan, and then get the developer. . .

That's my concept. Someone has to put it all together.

Ron White stated, being mindful of the time, if we could get a sense as to what we want to accomplish on January 30<sup>th</sup>, do we want continue to debate and discuss what we've presented today, or is there another step we want to take to move the process along?

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Vice Mayor Kurtz replied, I would like to thank the group. They worked very hard putting a lot of time and effort into this. I want to thank Jeff Markley and Ron White for their extra efforts.

I think if we're going to have a successful result, we have to have a clear vision. I appreciated the fact that you listened to some of my thoughts, I was able to participate. I think that's important and I think we have to continue this dialogue in order to come up with something as we hone in on clear vision that will give us an opportunity to then present to the public as a result and not just a work in process.

Jeff Markley asked, what do we want to do differently on the 30<sup>th</sup>?

Councilman Crooks replied, I think we're at a point where some decisions need to be made.

I too want to thank the people who participated in the Task Force. I attended several meetings and I know what it's like to be away from family and other commitments. Thank you for your participation.

I think as far as January 30<sup>th</sup>, we're at a point where some tough decisions need to be made such as, what are we going to do with the middle school? What are we going to do with the water tank? So maybe on the 30<sup>th</sup> we can come back and identify what those tough decisions are. Are we going to have a market survey? We can make some of those decisions that night.

Paul Vernon's responded, (inaudible), as far as the middle school, we would show different options – all there, part of it there or none of it there, all in a comprehensive way (inaudible). As far as the water tower, can you cover it? Do you highlight it? (Inaudible) an issue as well (inaudible).

Councilwoman Wisnieski commented, at the next meeting I'd like to hear more about the definition of economic viability. What standard benchmark are we trying to achieve? Councilman Crooks talked about a market survey. What about a market analysis to see what the market would sustain here that would help us reach that benchmark of economic viability? I don't know that we all agree what that standard is.

Dan Krolkowski was talking about being pedestrian friendly. How do you achieve that pedestrian friendliness?

Jeff Markley replied, we did talk with market forecasters. We can maybe even get a proposal in that timeframe to talk about what economic viability is.

Councilwoman Wisnieski asked, is there a number and what traffic would sustain that?

Dorothy Ornas commented, (inaudible). Go through the notes and see what ideas that we came up with for the middle school and the water tower (inaudible).

Ron White replied, we'll bring that along on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

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There being no further business to discuss, the Joint Council/Planning Commission Work Session was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

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Susan E. Kurshuk, Clerk of Council

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