

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE**  
**JOINT COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION**  
**MINUTES**  
**FEBRUARY 20, 2007 5:30 P.M.**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Present were Mayor Ramos and Council Members Blaze, Cichocki, Crooks (left 6:20 p.m.), Klepacz, Kurtz (arrived 6:02 p.m.) and Wisnieski (left 6:27 p.m.). Absent was Councilman Grendel. Also present from the City were David Burke from the Law Department, City Planner Markley and Economic Developer White. Present from the Planning Commission was Dale Lytkowski and Jack Shallcross.

Present from the Downtown Redevelopment Task Force were Don Krolikowski, John Nicasro, Sr., Hank Panek, Dorothy Ornas, Dr. Carl Asseff.

Mayor Ramos called the Work Session to order at 5:47 p.m.

Mayor Ramos stated, we'll be passing out a timeline to work off of.

I know these things take a long time but I would like things to move quicker. With all due respect, sometimes what happens is we analyze and analyze, but I think we have to come up with some type of concept or plan. It's not going to be something that everyone is going to be happy with. Maybe some of us will only be 60% happy. What I'm shooting for is a plan that when you look at it you say, I really like 60% of this plan. It's impossible that everyone is going to like every aspect of the plan.

I also want to come up with something that our community is going to accept. I'm not trying to come up with something to force feed to everyone. I think it's important that our community supports this and that we move it along.

I, along with Council, other elected officials and the rest of the team here are very excited about the City of Independence. We certainly have a deep love and affection and a passion for it. But I think we all agree that we have to do something with our downtown area. The question is, what do we do with it?

I find it a little frustrating that the time line is so extended, but at the same time, I know that there is a lot of work that needs to be done. We need to get a lot of input into the project. As long as we have some type of plan and some type of schedule, the only thing I ask is that if we adopt this schedule, flowchart that we adhere to it, because to be quite honest with you, as an editorial comment, I'm tired of talking about downtown. I want to get something going that our community is going to support. I want to be sensitive to the people who are already in the downtown area. I want to be sensitive to the people who live adjacent to the downtown area.

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I find it somewhat frustrating sometimes because I see what happens in other communities and how they develop their downtown areas.

I talked to the mayor of Hudson. He told me it was a five year process. What made it different in Hudson is that they got someone who moved forward with the project.

I'm going to turn this over to Jeff Markley and Ron White.

Ron White stated, we met with CUDC subsequent to our last meeting and talked with them. As it turns out, the person who is representing them here, Paul Vernon, indicated that this is not a good timing to commence with the redevelopment plan. They're not going to be available to assist us for the time being. They still have an interest in downtown because they believe there are a lot of assets here that are going to make this a great project. They do think that we have a greater potential for implementation and success than probably any other community that they've worked with, but they are just going to be unavailable to us for the time being. They will be available down the road and we'll have access to their help. They encourage us to continue along.

We're going to use in-house services through our City Planner, Jeff Markley, who has access to other resources, and we're going to move along and continue the process. Tonight will be a start of that with some visioning, some defining, some timetables. We're going to put some action sets to this and move this along.

I know that we are all going to help participate in this process. The Task Force has been very instrumental in doing that, and now with Council, and the Planning Commission members involved, I just have great confidence that we're going to be able to move along on different steps.

Jeff Markley passed out a proposed timeline for the project.

Dale Lytkowski asked, have we paid the CUDC anything?

Ron White replied, no. We have not paid them any money and there is no money to be paid. They have been very gracious toward us.

Jeff Markley stated, as Ron White and the Mayor said, I am on for the duration of this project. (Inaudible) *[I have been involved with the]* Task Force (inaudible) *[from the inception of]* this project and to that end in helping to guide the Task Force through their decision making we touched on a few of the things we're going to touch on tonight but in no great detail. I recognize that from the Mayor's perspective this is time-consuming. There are arguments out there that consultants are (inaudible) *[involved in long-term planning]* just to make more money. They spend a lot of time doing the plans, but as the Mayor said, there are communities out there that have to go through this process (inaudible) *[to involve the residents and stakeholders]* and some of these boards up here are from different communities that have undertaken this planning process – Hudson, Chagrin Falls, Kirtland, Independence, Willoughby.

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The process isn't any different. We all want to get to the end [blue boxes at end of flow chart] which says "Downtown Redevelopment Project Underway." We all want to get there as quickly as we can, but if we circumvent steps in the process, we are probably going to pay for moving too quickly. What I mean by that is, we're going to miss a stakeholder – somebody that has an interest and doesn't come out until it's too late. From that perspective I think it's vital that we do take some of those steps and move forward.

The Mayor is absolutely correct in that we have to look at developer interest because (inaudible) *[they have the experience with]* market viability. We can come up with a pretty picture and great plans and then hand it off to somebody and say, (inaudible) *["Work with this", but they may likely come back with comments where]* there's no market for that. We can't do it (inaudible) *[without understanding market viability]*.

The developers that came before us said housing is part of their project. We recognize almost collectively that that makes us uncomfortable and we didn't want to go that route, so we opted, as a Task Force, to come forward and undertake this planning process.

I think we also recognize that a developer, at some point in time, sooner rather than later, will end up having to be involved to help us finance the project, help us as a guide to economic vitality to the project.

That being said, you will see on the flow chart two locations, June of 2007 and again in October of 2007, where developer input is solicited and are actually involved in this process. So before June gets here we have to think about what we have to do.

Some of the *[pre-planning and data collection]* would have to be done whether we hand it off to a developer (inaudible) *[to]* master plan completely or just decide to do absolutely nothing assuming (inaudible) *[we have or know]* this information.

What we're going to go through today is the process. I want to *[explain]* this process as quickly as I can so everybody has a feel for where we're at. There is a little teaser at the end of this presentation. You'll see a quick little snippet, if you will, a teaser that people have asked for.

Dorothy Ornas stated, looking at this timeline I don't see anything about looking at the results of a survey. (Inaudible) Task Force. (Inaudible).

Jeff Markley replied, we talked about a survey at the last meeting. Some were pro and some were con. I don't know that there was an answer to that.

Dorothy Ornas' response inaudible. *[I believe her point was that a survey was needed prior to finishing the Master Plan and that there are issues that need to be considered]*.

Jeff Markley replied, the Task Force did do that. The Task Force recommended the process of a survey, but the dialogue at the last meeting was such that they didn't think we were going to get any new information out of a survey.

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There was some discussion about surveying the people down on Rockside Road, the business district, to see if we could collect some information. That is obviously a piece of information that we need to decide *[whether to collect]*. Are we going to go forward with a survey? I don't think that's been decided. I'm putting that in the March 13<sup>th</sup> deadline – Inventory/Analysis of Base Information. That would be base information that would obviously be helpful if we're going to get it. If we're not moving forward with it, then we move forward. We move forward with the stakeholders, meeting the stakeholders, meaning business owners, the churches.

Whether we survey the residents or we don't is ultimately for the Mayor and Council to decide. As Planner, I will take whatever information I can gather and use it to the best of my ability. If I don't have that piece, then we'll still move forward.

Dorothy Ornas responded, who is going to make a decision on whether or not we're going to do a survey?

Jeff Markley responded, I would like to defer to the Mayor and Council whether to do the survey or not.

Dorothy Ornas replied, that's not (inaudible).

Jeff Markley responded, the challenge of a survey is to make sure that we ask the right questions and we're able to take that data from those answers and use *[it effectively]*.

This process, through June or July, allows us to continue to move forward (inaudible) *[with or without a]* survey. There is still a lot left to debate *[and a lot of information]* that we have to gather in order to make this thing (inaudible) *[a reality]*. So we have some time, but it's still something that the Task Force *[supported]* and which you guys must wrangle with and decide whether it's appropriate or not appropriate – one way or another make decisions on whether we're going to do it or we're not going to do it. We can all (inaudible) *[continue to debate the need for a survey, but we must continue to]* move forward. The survey is not on *[the timeline]* other than in Inventory Analysis and Base Information. We'll work with *[whatever information is gathered]*.

Starting again with the timeline, I want to take you through the planning, what we're going to need to do to move forward and (inaudible) develop the concept, ultimately get to a point as far as the City of Independence Master Plan.

What you're going to see is a lot of examples. They're not examples for Independence because we're not there just yet.

Part of the process is the (inaudible) *[development of the Conceptual]* plan, starting to identify the (inaudible) *[existing land use]* areas and the project areas. We have that. In Chagrin Falls we had what we called the bubble diagram. It's identifying the (inaudible) the areas that we're going to concentrate on. We have a boundary line in the outline of the downtown area but it's not a land use plan. It's not an area planned per se. It's a combination of retail, office,

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residential, civic and there is open space in that plan. The idea has to be on identifying the district.

(Inaudible) *[The strategy is]* basically inventorying what we've got. As planners we need to identify the uses and get input on that so that it can help us target (inaudible) *[what is needed]*. Just to say that we're going to put a grocery store here, or a specialty (inaudible) *[store]* here or whatever, to build economic viability, will be (inaudible) professionally (inaudible) *[irresponsible, in my opinion]*. We have to look at *[redevelopment]* from the standpoint of (inaudible) *[what is reality, what is needed]*. (Inaudible) *[Collection of existing land use data and stakeholder perspectives are]* critical when considering the focal point for the residents. *[This collection of information]* should be done for this project (inaudible) and according to this timeline.

We talked about how *[current and future]* zoning is going to impact this redevelopment. There are many different existing zoning classifications. I think *[it's important to]* recognize the (inaudible) different zoning districts in this area, and the different land uses and how they're zoned now to be able to present to the Planning Commission and to Council the challenges of changing particular zoning in different areas. There will be some (inaudible) *[potentially extreme]* changes. You have residential here and suddenly allow some offices to make use (inaudible) *[of a residentially zoned property]*. You want to identify that on the map.

Ownership – the City owns a number of (inaudible) *[parcels]*. We have located those parcels on the map and you'll see that we've done that. Having that (inaudible) *[information]* and then zeroing in on those other pieces that we want to acquire and why we want to acquire. These all will start to overlay on a plan and it will start to make sense. The plan will begin taking shape.

Very simply speaking, *[this planning process involves]* taking layers of information – environmental, zoning, land use and marrying them all together and being able to determine the appropriate places for certain things. It's a mapping process. By doing that (inaudible), (inaudible) *[we]* see visually what it is we're trying to accomplish and it will all come together.

Land use. We need to identify *[existing land uses]* based on particular locations in town...is this (inaudible) *[single-family]* residential or (inaudible) *[similar]*. (Inaudible) *[By locating the uses on the plan, we can begin to consider other uses such as additional]* retail/office. We need to map the downtown land uses to begin to understand the need for transition. We have a large area of residential. (Inaudible) how are we going to handle the transitional district. If we don't deal with the edges of land use right upfront, we're off to (inaudible) *[inevitable]* conflict.

Now we get into what is called a vision plan. This is basically a site plan, the actual footprint of the downtown – marrying that usage and concept that we got from the bubble on to a plan – each building can or cannot work in that type of situation. If something cannot work in a particular situation, what changes are we going to make?

We talked about the middle school, the water tank. We've gone through that whole process for quite some time. It's now time to step back, look at the big picture in terms of its use and find out what is appropriate.

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We know the boundary. We know we have ownership. We know what properties are City-owned. We know what properties the City might want to own (inaudible) *[which we can conceptually]* overlay on to this map.

Existing land use – again, a general perspective on how the City is broken down in terms of its use. Somebody might point out that a building (inaudible) *[exists as]* an office or whatever. That's fine. We will get that when we start taking that inventory and photographing it into a plan so we'll know exactly what use is what. But if we take a broad-brush approach, we know where retail is, where residential is and whether the open space corridor belongs here. (Inaudible) *[Ultimately,]* we want to protect that open space as green space. Residential zoning, civic, (inaudible) *[retail, office and open space all exist within the plan]*..

Now the plans can start building off of that land use. We can start talking about proposed land use as part of the process.

Jeff Markley talked about the 1985 Master Plan.

At that time there was mapping done. There were buildings the City wanted to preserve, buildings to rehab, areas of construction and redevelopment areas. (Inaudible). (Inaudible) *[The City Planner identified]* a (inaudible) *[boundary]* line, basically a concept plan back in 1985 that had conservation, rehabilitation and new construction and putting it all together and saying, here's what we want to do. Going back this is essentially the bubble diagram. It has the different uses. It takes the downtown City footprint and begins to look at particular uses and overlays them. This shows the redevelopment of the area.

Between 2000 and 2002 (inaudible), *[the Preliminary plan or concept was developed]*. This involved one-story retail, rehabs and congregate housing and assisted living facility. Again, the same kind of mindset, it had to do assisted living with senior housing and redevelopment (inaudible).

In 2006, (inaudible), *[another plan or]* concept came up again largely to support the senior housing component. Again, another bubble diagram – different concepts on senior housing and how that would work.

Where I'm headed with all this is we've had plans since 1985. We've had concepts and we've had discussions. We've certainly had a lot of work over the past six or seven months with the Task Force.

Why weren't those plans from 1985 until now successful? Why have we not taken it any further than that? What were the shortcomings of the plans? Why were they not executed back then?

I offer these plans for discussion because we can go through the same planning process again and develop nice graphics, pretty boards and nice plans but if it doesn't sell *[or isn't practical]*, we're not going to get anywhere. Ten or fifteen years from now we'll talk about plans from 2007 (inaudible) *[as being pretty pictures but nothing substantive]*.

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Mayor Ramos responded, I think as far as the plans that were made after 2000, both of them relied pretty much on the housing aspect of it for purposes of supporting the downtown area. I think when we were looking at the master plan for the downtown area, or the concept, it involved housing. As I indicated at the last meeting, that is going to be very challenging because I'm not sure whether or not the community would support the high density housing that was proposed in each one of those plans. I think people will support the individual ownership, the single-family. We might be able to do something as far as smaller lot sizes, a smaller neighborhood type of approach in order to support the downtown area. In each one of the downtown area plans that you look at, there is a housing component. I think it should be included, but at the same time I certainly don't want this to be the main thrust of any type of plan for purposes of getting accepted by the community.

Jeff Markley responded, back in 1985 the plan didn't incorporate any housing. What happened to that process?

Dr. Asseff replied, I think all of these plans failed because (inaudible). There wasn't enough to carry it through. People had ideas and personal items. I was here in 1985 – not enough to carry it. They were individual concepts of individual people and it was not a master plan to carry it forward, and we've seen this as late as the senior housing vote. We've seen it in 2002 with the middle school - the same things, individual concepts approved – not enough to carry the day.

And where are we? We are no further ahead other than the planning process (inaudible). We now are at a wall. We have to break through that wall because unless it is economically viable, it's going nowhere. Money is going to drive the system. No developer is going to come in and say, let's do X,Y,Z and not make a profit.

Jeff Markley asked, so you're saying that the plans were somewhat limited in their scope. They were either really bent toward senior housing or bent toward residential, or in the case in 1985, new construction, rehabilitation, bigger boxes if you will, more toward the commercial component here, but back in 1985 maybe that wasn't what was desired?

Dr. Asseff replied, yes, so it didn't happen. Our plan that we have now cannot enhance any one segment of the community. It has to enhance the entire community. It can't be for seniors alone. It can't be for business alone. It has to be an enhancement so that we can draw people in from other communities who have money to spend. If you're going to rely on money to be spent by the people of Independence alone, it is going to fail badly. There have been shops here that have closed. And why did they leave? There was no business here.

Jeff Markley commented, one thing that we can all count on is that Route 21 through downtown is largely a commuter corridor. I use it that way myself to circumvent I-77 at times. I would imagine there are quite a few people who choose to go that route? How are we going to draw people from that corridor once they get into the downtown district into that?

Dr. Asseff replied, you have to make them stop and say, I want to spend some time here.

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Jeff Markley responded, so to your point, is it for an individual group as this process has moved in the past, we've not really asked for a consensus of stakeholders, which is why this timeline identifies taking a step back and going through that process. We got the Task Force together. We've debated the issue. We've had our pros and cons on why this issue will or will not be supported, but have we gone out and asked Romito's, the Bike Shoppe owner, the bank owner Marotta, the owner of the shopping center what they want? That might be the next step. We need to get that type of feedback as well. We have feedback from a cross section of the community. We have a cross-section of City Officials to give us a perspective. Now it's a matter of going through this process hopefully one last time.

Dr. Asseff, if we don't take notice of the best business minds that we have available to try and enhance business for the community which will pay a lot of things for us.

Jeff Markley responded, economic viability.

Vice Mayor Kurtz commented, I'd like to give a little perspective on some of the things that you've addressed in terms of the history of 1985 until now.

First of all, there were several limitations the City had back in the 1980's. One was money. We didn't have a lot of money back in the 80's, so we didn't have the ability to go out and reinvest in the community to a great extent.

Secondly, what's changed from 1985 is we didn't own a lot of the land we own today. The entire Haydite property was in litigation in the courts. The City ended up getting that property as a settlement with the State of Ohio and the previous owner. That created a new dimension of opportunity, i.e. the property behind the new research facility. The Fortlage property was an access to the back property, adjacent to the research property. We didn't have the center of town, the old barber shop. We cleaned up a lot of that on the west side of Route 21.

At the time, in the 80's there were two owners, Marotta and Glaser who owned the shopping center. They were feuding. Every time we tried to communicate with them and ask about their future and what would be the best for the future with regard to upgrading. They could not agree. They were 50-50 owners so we were between a rock and a hard place. Now Marotta does have full ownership of that property.

From the historical perspective, first we had limitations in terms of money. Secondly, we didn't have the property that we have today in the center of town. The only thing we owned at that point was the Square. We've acquired the middle school property since then.

A lot of our opportunity lies in the fact that we have a stake in the ground in various areas of the downtown redevelopment framework that now provides tremendous opportunities.

Jeff Markley responded, so this plan largely relied on private (inaudible) [*support and funding*] back in 1985?

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Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, back in 1985 we didn't talk about the middle school property being an option for anything because it was a school. We didn't talk about the Fortlage property being accessed because it was residential and we had a policy that we wouldn't acquire residential and displace people from residential dwellings. And the business community on the west side of Route 21, opposite the middle school, was just a bunch of little shops. There was an old gas station, barbershop and we disassembled that to try to be of assistance to further development.

Jeff Markley responded, (inaudible) *[that]* back in 1985 some of the (inaudible) *[public issues]* were not applicable because we're looking at a redevelopment opportunity (inaudible), rehabilitation and new construction.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, very much so.

Jeff Markley's next comment totally inaudible. *[The idea of redevelopment of private property to stimulate a "beautification" effort was limited to a handful of business owners in a relatively small area, most of which was developed to support the local population]*

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, you have to remember that we have the same number of residents today as back in 1985. The study back in 1985 talked about us having a population of 15,000 or 20,000, so a lot of was based on growth, but we have the same population we had 20 years ago.

Jeff Markley responded, from what we know (inaudible) *[right now,]* we have a commercial district *[in the Rockside Road area]* that obviously wants more business. We have (inaudible) *[a major north-south transportation]* corridor that the downtown can draw from for part of the process. (inaudible) *[Would it]* be enough to draw people not just from Independence but from outside, and do we want to go that route? Do we want to plan the downtown center just for our 7,500 residents of Independence? If we go that direction, what businesses will be willing to stake their financial lives on the market of 7,500 people?

Mayor Ramos responded, I think that's where the survey comes in. If we are focusing on just trying to service the 7,500 people that live in town, then I think the survey is extremely important. If we are looking at trying to service not only our residents, but also purposes of a destination, people to come into the area, if we do the bike trail bring people downtown, then we approach it differently.

Jeff Markley responded, if we all agree that economic viability for downtown is critical to success, we're going to have to go out for more than just the residents of Independence. We almost have to.

Dorothy Ornas responded, in the 70's and 80's also we had road problems, creek problems and a lot of money we were spending was on the infrastructure of the City so downtown redevelopment was put on the back burner.

Jeff Markley asked, in 2007 can you think of any priorities other than downtown redevelopment?

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Several people speaking at once.

Jeff Markley stated, it really hasn't changed from that standpoint. I think that part of the mindset needs to be that we want to go ahead and commit to something. To go ahead and move forward with something on downtown, we're going to have to recognize that there are going to be other priorities as well. You will probably need financial assistance – grants and developers. There has to be private money involved in moving forward with development.

Is this for Independence or are we going to try and create a destination? There are a lot of people up and down that corridor. You have a lot of people on Rockside Road. Is there any value in soliciting them?

Dr. Asseff commented, people may say they want to spend money a certain way, but when it comes to spending that money they don't. If we're going to build a viability based on a survey for the economics of the downtown for just the Independence people, I would be very worried.

We've seen surveys come through this City before of people supporting issues and when it came to a vote they changed their minds. We have to be very careful.

I think we have one opportunity to do this right because the money is not here right now to do it anyway. Once the money is here there's not going to be enough money (inaudible).

Jeff Markley responded, we talked about this in the Task Force. We didn't simply do a streetscape project. I don't think we can fund it solely with taxpayer dollars. I don't think the City has the money to fund the (inaudible) *[improvements]* without the private dollar. I think that if we're going to focus on private dollars, go back to the market. What is going to be viable here? Why would somebody want to spend millions of dollars in redevelopment of the downtown in order for us to get some nightlife, neighbors, wider sidewalks, pedestrian access, clock tower or whatever? We're not going to buy it ourselves because we don't have the money to do it. We have to look at (inaudible) *[viable private investment]*.

Mayor Ramos responded, I understand about the survey. I'm not discounting the opinion of our residents, but when we took the survey regarding senior housing we had 1,400 respond, which is a lot of people. Approximately 78% of the people said that they would support senior housing. The first time the issue was put on the ballot I don't even think we got that number of votes, so I don't know if it's too reflective.

Dr. Asseff responded, you can't base a plan on something that you can't count on.

Jeff Markley responded we have a mission statement written down and we have talked about what we (inaudible) *[feel the City needs are, what the residents want,]* and the economic viability.

Don Krolkowski commented, I wrote this at the last meeting while we were in discussion: *functional, pleasing, attractive downtown destination for the residents which provides economic viability for the merchants at that destination serving the community.*

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Jeff Markley stated, we go back to the timeline, where we have to be in pretty short order is an adoption of that mission statement. We all agree that this (inaudible) [*Preliminary Report is a summary of*] the options – housing and whatever form it will take. It seems that all plans that come forward have some degree of housing. There is that aspect that we have to be cognizant of. The Bob Hill plan back in the 80's shows a redevelopment of the bigger boxes. (Inaudible) [*Various building sizes replacing existing uses*] but bigger shell than sit there now. Those were (inaudible) [*identified and conceptually planned,*] developing (inaudible) a certain vitality and vibrancy to the downtown. Why would people stop and pull into my shop and buy something?

John Nicastro, Sr. commented, in fairness to the planners we've had in the past and in fairness to the Administration and Council, we only have one problem in town, and that is people don't want to change. Unless they come up with a plan or a building or whatever you're talking about that has a stake in it for everyone, if there is something in that place for me, then I will go for it. We don't want to change in this town. We still want to live in the single-family dwellings with two and three bedrooms. We want to go down to a local shop and pick up a pizza because there are so many other things around us that attract our attention and we can go shopping at. Brecksville is building another shopping center. Most of the people are going to go there. They're starting to build places in Seven Hills and so forth and so on.

What I hear from people in town is mainly, we want the world to do business with Rockside and Pleasant Valley, but you need a center of town too for us in Independence. Unless we concentrate on doing that, we're not going to be too successful.

If I was a businessman and I looked at the center of this town, I can't see investing too much. But if we build the housing sector of this that we're talking about, we're talking about density. We're talking about smaller homes. We're talking about senior houses. We're talking about maybe a preference for the professionals and young married couples and so forth and so on. All of a sudden I see 300 or 400 people around the center of town. Then maybe I would love a pizza shop, an ice cream parlor and then I would do that. But unless you show a businessman something in the center of town that he wants to invest money in, he's not going to come here, and you're not going to tell him what to build. He knows where his money is going to be spent. Unless you do that, it's not going to be successful.

A little bit for everybody, otherwise we won't buy it.

Jeff Markley stated, back to our timeline. We have a timeline that maps us out from today until the summer of 2008 – 18 months.

To answer Mr. Nicastro, what is that something for everybody? I'm not sure if it only has to be for (inaudible) businessman develop. I would be willing to (inaudible). Again, you have the arterial corridor through there. Everyone has to slow down. It gives them time to look around and see what shops are available.

We still have to go through the process, and if you're all sincere about moving forward, there is a point which I touch base with all of you on the steps to some extent to basically inventory

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(inaudible) [*and analyze*] the collection of raw data. It's the concept plan which you see on the boards before you with a bubble diagram, with schematics with a little bit more detail and then finally to a master plan. (Inaudible) [*Develop a*] schedule of that master plan. Part of that process needs to involve the stakeholders. All that needs to involve the developers because they're the ones that are going to be able give us the market information and whether it's realistic or not.

This schedule, I hope, (inaudible) [*is a workable, though optimistic*] schedule. If you have comments, concerns or questions regarding it, we didn't put any hard, fast dates other than the first couple of months. I'm prepared to go ahead and use this as our roadmap to get down to the blue – Downtown Redevelopment Project Underway. If that means doing a survey, or doing without a survey, meetings with stakeholders, meeting with developers, if need be another RFP that has to go out at some point as it's much further out in process, that's what we need to do.

My job here today is to bring it full term as to what the planning process is all about. We can't really skip steps. Starting with the foundation of a house, you can't just skip to the roof. You have to do a few other things first. That's what we're hoping to do.

Vice Mayor Kurtz stated, I apologize for being late tonight. I had a hospital board meeting and they're usually done promptly at 5 o'clock. The chairman wasn't there.

I want to talk about some of the outside issues. I have a couple of questions based on the timeline.

First of all the Task Force did a great job and provided a wealth of information with their research and putting together the foundation. I think now is the time that we make the comments and create procedures to come up with a final master plan.

What I keep seeing early on is developer input. I guess I'm going down a different path. My expectation is, and I've talked to some developers and I've talked with some planners, I think we want to plan the downtown. I don't want developers doing it. I think that we limit our ability to think, ability to plan and the ability to create a vision by having developers in the mix that early on. If you're talking about developers for checks and balances for an economic model that's one thing, but short of that, I don't want a developer in on this thing until we tell them what we want. Then we have the synergy and the competition to help us implement this plan.

I'm of the opinion that we need to plan, bring in a professional planner, a national professional planner if necessary and let a planner who in concert with you, because you know where all the nuts and bolts are. You have easy access to this data because you helped put it together. You take your information and then we pay. I'm talking about paying a planner, not free. I'm talking about bringing in a national planner. If you go on the internet you can find them. A lot of them have worked locally. They're there.

Planners are distinct from developers. The point I want to make is I'm not looking for a developer. I'm looking for a planner. Then we sit down with the information that the Task

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Force has put together with your efforts and then we have them assemble the nuts and bolts into something that makes sense from a bigger perspective.

You take that and then you get input from all the elected officials and all the stakeholders and then you have your master plan that's based on a national prominence or a major prominence planner who we pay money for. It's ours when we're done and we're not renting it from somebody. There is no expectation that I would get the development contract when it's all said and done. It's our product. We did it the way we want it. We paid for it so it's ours and then we decide what we want to do with it, how we want to implement it, what funds are available.

You mentioned the summer of 2008. That would be an optimistic date because that's when you're just starting the process of development. Anybody who thinks this is a one, two or three year deal you want to look at 1985 and some of the decisions made back then but now we're at the point where we can actually look to the future.

Take the middle school property. It was outlined on pages 13, 14 and 15. I don't think that there is a question that there is some historical significance to that property. Whether it's real or perceived there are people that like the school there that believe it's real. I know that there is a segment among us that feel that the building be preserved for historical significance. Then you can read through and say get rid of it because it takes too much of a footprint, so maybe in the final analysis we develop the first floor, and just the first floor, because the real cost of the upgrading the entire building is beyond the first floor – elevators and renovations. Maybe that's a different perspective of how to achieve a common goal somewhere down the road.

All I'm trying to suggest is that in my opinion developers are not the answer. We need a national professional, planner, there may be some competition on planner sites. To facilitate that give them the information that you generously developed along with the Task Force. Then we spend some money, get some input and go forward. That's the way I think I'd want it.

Jeff Markley responded, I'm not disagreeing with that, but the planning process, however, is the same for a national planner as it is for me. The process of collecting the data and analyzing it, this document is good. It provides a lot of valuable information, that process of collecting that information and asking the questions can continue now. There is no need to stop what we're doing to collect that information. Get the (inaudible) [*base information*], get the stakeholders involved because then we can provide that data to whomever the City chooses to go with large scale, a name or whatever, and that's (inaudible) [*the general concept*] that we want to put there or (inaudible) or whatever, being able to approach that developer, that planner, that national entity with documentation. This is the work that the community has put forward thus far. This is for Romito's. This is for the Bike Shop. These are the players. These are their interests and these are their wants, needs and desires. Here is the package. Here is our concept, now go work your magic.

But I still think you're going to have to deal with the reality of the marketplace.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, I understand the marketplace. I think I look at the Village of Wynona in Indiana. They brought a planner in that brought ideas in from all over the place, from

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all around the country. Then they were able to incorporate the arts, eateries, shops, the shore by the lake, all within their master plan. Obviously there was some project development (inaudible) but I think you attract that when you bring in a planner that can draw from the larger perspective.

I look at you and have a tremendous amount of respect for what you've accomplished in terms of your ideas, not just downtown redevelopment, but you respond quickly to a community's needs such as ours.

I look at that as one idea, one area, one city, one little village that was able to think on a larger scale and draw it back down to their roots and then implement it. Now it's a successful, viable – you don't just drive through it. It's a destination.

Jeff Markley responded, I would submit to you that we look at the three boards up here right now – Kirtland, Chagrin Falls and Richfield are all going through this process. Chagrin Falls is looking at a combination of a national planner and developer combined as well as a local planner. (Inaudible).

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, maybe a combination.

Jeff Markley added, but they're also looking at developers to come in as part of the (inaudible) *[planning]* process so that they can get (inaudible) *[input]* if it's ridiculous, it's never going to happen. You need to get that out there early in the process (inaudible) *[, all the ideas no matter how crazy even if seems like]* it will never happen here. You would probably be able to wipe that off fairly quickly and understand why we've wiped it off. There are only two places where we're looking for a developer's input. It's a checks and balances. You're (inaudible) *[at a certain point]* as of June 2007 with our evaluation (inaudible) *[of concepts and Big Picture ideas]*. You have to kind of work the whole process out. Here's where we're at. Feed it to a developer, several developers and say, we need some comments, have lunch over at the old middle school or something and have a little charette session with some (inaudible) *[whiteboards and poster boards where you can]* send your people over here who want to talk some of these concepts. What do you think? Just have an ink pen and mark it up on boards and say, this won't work here or this will work.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, I agree with what you're saying if you're saying react to what (inaudible) not just plan what we're doing.

Jeff Markley replied, yes. That's right. The Task Force has already committed to planning, not having the developer plan, but I think you have to engage them sooner rather than later for the checks and balances to react to where we're headed, to make sure we're not headed down the wrong road.

Mayor Ramos commented, I think a developer plays an essential part of the planning process for purposes of ensuring economic viability. We had Dave Hartt who is probably one of the best planners in the area that is available and that would participate, and has participated in Craig Cawrse's plan. I probably have ten or twelve books from different land planning firms who would step up to the plate, but the problem is once again, I have a very big concern about

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drawing pretty pictures and having somebody come in and say, that's not economically viable. That's not going to work. The bottom line is that at the end of this process you're going to have to turn this over to somebody. The one thing that that person is going to say is what is in it for me? If I'm going to be investing millions and millions of dollars into this downtown area, it better work.

I don't have any problem as far as getting land planners and professionals and getting their input. However, I think that the developer is an essential component because I don't want to get to the end of the road and then send it out with what we would like to see and then the developers say that it's just not feasible, it's not workable, You don't have the people to support it, traffic to support it, the demographics to support this type of thing.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, a lot of things we looked at years ago and we created the Independence Community Development Corporation and we didn't really use it as a tool but we potentially could. It was a tool that was put in place for bonding and funding at the time. I believe that there was a component that allowed that ICDC to help us, not active developer, but as the funding mechanism to motivate, to stimulate this type of development. So instead of having one person we were able to use that as a component umbrella, so to speak, to help this retail, or this retail, or draw into this, maybe alternate housing. So there are some components out there that are maybe a little more sophisticated than what we're used to dealing with that could be utilized just like we created the TIF's. It's a new tool. Maybe we need some more of these more sophisticated tools in our toolbox because we've matured to that level. So that's another level research that needs to be incorporated into this.

Jeff Markley responded, again, market feasibility. I think our Task Force worked to identify a couple of feasibility professionals. If that satisfies Council and the Mayor, maybe that's the direction we all should – it seems like one consensus we've gotten out of this room is the economic viability has to be there. We can do a pretty picture or we can have developers' (inaudible), but regardless, it has to be viable before anything gets built, whether on the City's side or the developer's side. That's really a part of this planning process. In going through these steps, some of the key fundamental questions in the process is that economic model – get that market forecast and ask, what is buildable in this downtown – do our demographic study, do our analysis of all the shops and the marketplace not only here in town, but regionally – Seven Hills, Brecksville. Get all that out there. What can really work downtown? We don't want to compete with anything in the Rockside Road corridor. If we have that information I think that helps direct this plan and it doesn't necessarily have to be a pretty picture. It can be based on an economic model.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, so you're saying you have the tools to do that? You have the resources through different agencies and different entities that have that data?

Jeff Markley replied, I have some of that (inaudible) [*experience in-house*].

Vice Mayor Kurtz continued, to be able to compile that data.

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Jeff Markley responded, the Center for Research & Development out of Oxford (inaudible) [Ohio, the location of] Miami University does that very thing. Wooster College, Ohio State, the Center for Economic Development also (inaudible) [can assist] too, but to that point if you're not afraid of spending a few dollars, (inaudible) there are groups out there that are actually market forecasters, those people that do the same research for the developers (inaudible). They have no vested interest in development. We bring them in and say, we want to know what will work in this area. They don't have an allegiance to developers. They can tell us what works. (Inaudible) as far as the process.

Vice Mayor Kurtz added, we also have to have certain guidelines and ground rules established. For example, I think it's pretty safe to say that we're not going to displace any residents. I think we can also say that if there's a landowner that is not being displaced residentially but it's a vital component to our plan with the development we have that tool in our toolbox..

Jeff Markley responded, you brought up a good point last session. We won't displace homeowners, but give them an opportunity to convert to something else. (Inaudible) [If possible], could we (inaudible) [convert] those residential (inaudible) [properties] to a live/work scenario? You're giving the homeowner the option.

Vice Mayor Kurtz responded, I think if they have the option, for example, the five houses on Stone Road that could be part of a larger development or a more sophisticated development. It should be a mandate that they get the right to relocate in (inaudible) housing. Then there are other people who should have a higher level of involvement because they're giving something to get something. There are so many different components that I think we need to establish ground rules, guidelines because I think we've said that we're not displacing any residents, but we need a tool in our toolbox. If a commercial enterprise doesn't want to relocate to a more viable situation, then we say, it's time to step up. I'm not sure that we've got that conviction at this point. It needs to be discussed, but certainly we're in a position now today that we weren't in 20 years ago. I think if we don't take advantage of that, as you said, it will be 20 years from now and people will still say, I like downtown just the way it is. Leave it the way it is. Sometimes they don't know what's best for them either.

Several people speaking at once.

Vice Mayor Kurtz commented, sometimes people are so used to going down one path that they don't realize that alternative housing is an opportunity that may be in their best interest because they're so (inaudible).

Jeff Markley responded, I know that this is a trying process for everyone (inaudible). I want to get some agreement (inaudible) [on the process moving forward]. I would like Council to debate this and look at surveys, whether you want to do one or not (inaudible) [regarding] the survey process.

Secondly, market feasibility, I'd like to suggest that you debate the option of whether to conduct feasibility studies and (inaudible) [market research]. Let's move this process forward.

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Thirdly, you need to have discussion on whether we're going to move forward in the process based on this timetable and complete that. The Task Force and myself are kind of out there in limbo, so to speak and I'm sure the residents are as well at figuring out what we're going to do.

I'm going to continue moving forward based on the timeline unless I hear otherwise. I'll keep going to move forward with the collection of data. That data has to be collected regardless of who the planner is or developer is or architect. We have to start collecting this information as a compilation of the master plan. I think you can help with this (inaudible) [*process of developing a*] master plan, pretty picture, this is going to be the design. We're not there yet. The only way to get there is through this process. I'm proposing to keep working with this Task Force. We'll move (inaudible) [*the infrastructure and circulation*] pieces parts together, non-controversial. It's a skeleton (inaudible) [*or framework for the weightier, more controversial subjects*]. We can start talking about the issues.

Hank Panek asked, did we ever answer the question from last time why we're doing this? Is it residential or is it revenue generated?

Jeff Markley replied, we want it (inaudible) and we want it economically viable.

Hank Panek responded, you have a mission statement from Don Krolikowski. I believe it says in there, for the residents. Is it for the residents or isn't it?

Several people speaking at once.

Don Krolikowski commented, we were talking about this and I started writing some of the key (inaudible). I'll read it again, and if it needs to be massaged into something that we all agree upon. . . *A functional, pleasing and attractive downtown destination for the residents which provides economic viability for the merchants as a destination serving the community.*

Jeff Markley commented, (inaudible) [*We must be aware of the big*] picture for (inaudible) [*this Mission Statement potentially provides for a*] very narrow definition of 7,500 residents.

Several people speaking at once.

Hank Panek stated, going back to the survey. It mentions that it has to be economically viable. You have to bring people in from outside of the City. The City is not going to support it. We're not going to have apartments there. (Inaudible). It has to be from people outside the City.

On the other hand, John Nicastro, Sr. says that as long as there is something for everybody, everybody will be there, which I agree with.

The Mayor said that during the prior survey the question was brought up, what would you support? I see a survey as not being what would you do, but more factual. Where do you spend your money? How much do you spend? We need to get the actual facts. We're not trying to find out what somebody is going to do. We want to know their behavior now. Find out what the

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needs are of the community and see if that fits into some viable, economic plan that will provide something for everybody, for the residents and enhance the downtown area.

Jeff Markley responded, you can (inaudible) *[sell]* that survey perhaps. Councilman Crooks (inaudible) *[stated he has experience]* with surveys. (Inaudible) *[Various types of]* surveys (inaudible) *[can be conducted via]* e-mails or in the mail or whatever talk about their habits today, how much you're spending (inaudible) *[on services and goods]* now, that kind of thing so it is an actual habit survey. (Inaudible) *[It's probable that]* the market feasibility people will likely be able to supply that (inaudible) *[information]* to get us the answers of where are we shopping today? What are we buying? What types of products? What aren't we buying here and then (inaudible) *[what would be supported if it were provided]*.

Hank Panek responded, there are professionals that have a way of wording the questions that are pointed. I think there is information to be obtained from the residents. It's very important for this project, for the reason that we're doing the project itself.

If we take a look at everyone on Council, for example, if everybody who is given a project comes in at the next meeting and gives us your idea of what people are going out of town for and where they're spending the bulk of their money outside of major purchases. I bet we get many different answers (inaudible) because we don't know.

Jeff Markley responded, (inaudible) *[for homework, I would recommend that we]* have every Council (inaudible) *[member]* come up with eight questions you'd like to see on the survey. That might give you a start.

I would suggest a simple graphic (inaudible). It's not a long drawn out (inaudible) *[process]*. I didn't want to get bogged down with the issues to guide you through the process. There are a number of issues in the City that (inaudible) *[will take time to deliberate and discuss]*.

Jeff Markley showed a graphic of the downtown area.

On the east side are the existing buildings. The orange are the possibilities of buildings that are essentially locked up. You don't need it. You don't want it. There are options there. What you see in yellow are some of those things (inaudible) *[places that are flexible, that can be redesigned]*. Mr. Marotta talked about creating a "U" shape (inaudible) *[building configuration]*, creating some "U" shaped retail component. If you look at (inaudible) *[the Middle School]*, the architectural people can tell us what the bones of this building is, if it's worth saving (inaudible) *[or not]*. The orange are not historically significant buildings.

We have a couple of other options. Let's look at some different configurations. You start playing around. It has absolutely nothing to do with (inaudible) *[a particular form, type or style of]* housing (inaudible) *[or]* retail. (Inaudible.) They could be any number of things. Think of it as a potential for adaptive reuse of that building. (Inaudible) *[Perhaps even as a]* parking (inaudible) *[garage]*.

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Dorothy Ornas asked a question which was inaudible. *[I believe she asked about the civic uses of the building]*

Jeff Markley replied, (inaudible) *[almost any use is possible for the building,]* absolutely. That is essentially (inaudible) something that we can (inaudible) *[identify through market research],* come up with (inaudible) *[various concept]* studies and look at it.

What do you want to do with Public Square? We can (inaudible) *[identify similar]* models out there. (Inaudible) *[Anything that may be]* missing for (inaudible) *[the City's use or needs can be]* expanded on. (Inaudible) *[Similarly with ]*shopping center.

You can do whatever you want and start (inaudible) *[planning]* away and come up essentially what we're looking for (inaudible) *[in our conceptual]* plans before (inaudible) *the Master Plan is finalized]*.

Ron White asked if there were any questions before the conclusion of the Work Session.

Dale Lytkowski asked, I listened for over an hour. The problem I have right here is I truly feel and think to get the project done we need (inaudible). (Inaudible) whoever that is (inaudible) this same individual (inaudible). The failure to implement is the least problem we have. If we don't implement this plan (inaudible) it will never be built.

I agree with the Vice Mayor here, I said a long time ago lets get a a nationwide planner, high end, and he can tell us. If he's really good, he'll tell us whether or not the economics are there for what we want.

Several people speaking at once.

I hope the Mayor, the Vice Mayor and Council look to you to be their champion (inaudible). Let's get the (inaudible) done.

Jeff Markley responded, I think I've asked the Mayor that at one time. If you need me to be the sacrificial lamb, I'll do that, but I want to move this forward.

Dale Lytkowski replied, I want to see this move forward too.

There being no further business to discuss, the Joint Council/Planning Commission Work Session was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

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Susan E. Kurshuk, Clerk of Council

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