

Implementable Comprehensive Plan for the Town of McCandless

Meeting Notes

Date, Time, and Location: Wednesday, December 6, 2017, at 7:30 p.m., Assembly Room, Municipal Building, 9955 Grubbs Road, McCandless, PA15090

Attendees: Steering Committee, Toby Cordek, Town Manager, Andrew Hartwell, Allegheny County, Jim Pashek and Elaine Kramer, Pashek+MTR

Discussion Items:

1. Jim Pashek introduced the consulting team working on this Implementable Comprehensive Plan. Jim Pashek will be involved in all phases of the project. Elaine Kramer is project manager and will be responsible for the day-to-day activities of the project. Heather Cuyler will be involved with Park and Recreation issues and will provide planning support.
2. The traditional comprehensive plan was described and additional information was provided about the Implementable Comprehensive Plan that the Town of McCandless was about to undertake. The Implementable Comprehensive Plan:
 - i. Is developed around key issues that are important to the Town of McCandless, and not based on topics that may or may not be relevant to the needs of the community.
 - ii. The plan focuses on a few prominent issues, which allows the consultant to give further time to developing more detailed recommendations that should provide step-by-step strategies.
 - iii. The plan is a process, not a book. This process should consider ways to increase municipal capacity through volunteers.
 - iv. It is important to engage elected officials so that there is ownership in the plan.
3. Jim reviewed the **Scope of Work (attachment #1)**. The process is divided into two phases, tasks related to "Understanding the community's needs," and the second phase, "Drilling down for solutions."
4. The Role of the Steering Committee is to:
 - i. Be enthusiastic and listen to others

- ii. Be prepared to attend all the steering committee meetings (about 10-12 over a year or so), public meetings and, if needed, additional meetings.
 - iii. Be succinct with your comments during the meeting.
- 5. Elaine provided an opportunity for each steering committee member to provide an aspiration for the plan or the community as we all consider the future. She started the discussion off by asking members to complete the following sentence: "The Town of McCandless is a place that ..." **Attachments #2 and 3 list comments** as originally described, along with a second list, which combines similar themes with minor adjustments to wording for consistency.
- 6. Each steering committee member then offered their thoughts on the key issues of the Town of McCandless. **A list of those issues, attachment #4**, is attached, along with a list that combines those issues under thematic titles, with some minor word changes and consolidation, **attachment #5**.
- 7. The group suggested that the initial public meeting about the comprehensive plan take the form of an "open house," rather than a sit-down-and-listen meeting. That way, more people might be able to attend, as it will take place over a longer timeframe, and will be less formal, enabling families to attend.
- 8. Jim described various means of collecting public input – public meetings, the steering committee, interviews, special-topic/research focus groups, and a community quality of life questionnaire. He asked for input regarding the types of information the steering committee would like a questionnaire to yield. **See list, attachment #6**. The steering committee also provided ideas for how to conduct outreach/publicity about the questionnaire.
 - i. Neighborhood associations
 - ii. Thursday "envelope" from elementary schools
 - iii. Target older H.S. students
 - iv. Make sure hard copies are available at central locations such as library
 - v. Include QR code links where possible
 - vi. Social media, North Hills Journal, postcard, Savvy Citizen
 - vii. Explore phone call blast

The questionnaire will be hosted by Survey Monkey and a link will be provided to the Town.

- 9. To keep our promise to the steering committee to end the meeting at 9pm, Jim suggested that there be additional communications between the consultant and steering committee on the following topics included in the agenda:
 - i. The date of the public meeting in January, once municipal and school board schedules are reviewed
 - ii. Listing of potential planning studies completed in the Municipality that have taken place in the past 5-10 years
 - iii. The date of the next steering committee meeting in February based on a

doodle poll circulated to the steering committee

Next Steps:

10. Paskek+MTR will begin to draft the community quality of life questionnaire next week and will send it out for feedback, probably twice, with the goal of a solid final draft before the end of the year.
11. Paskek+MTR will send out a doodle poll asking steering committee members to choose among likely dates for the next steering committee meeting.
12. Paskek+MTR will send out a meeting invitation for the first public meeting (NOTE: Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2018 was later selected based on room availability, consultant availability and no major conflicts with school district or town calendars.)
13. Paskek+MTR will work with the town to begin getting word out about the plan in general, the initial public meeting and the upcoming questionnaire.

The information contained in these minutes was recorded by Pashek + MTR and represents our interpretation and understanding of the discussions that occurred during the meeting. Please notify Pashek + MTR within one week of distribution.

Prepared by: Jim Pashek
Date Prepared: 12.12.17
Distributed to: Attendees, Mary Lopus, Heather Cuyler

Attachment 1: Scope of Work Tasks

Implementable Comprehensive Plan for McCandless

Understanding the community's needs

1. Meet with steering committee for kickoff meeting/workshop
2. Prepare online questionnaire
3. Develop blog/Facebook page
4. Conduct key informant interviews
5. Review prior planning efforts
6. Tour community with staff
7. Meet with steering committee
8. Prepare presentation and facilitate public meeting
9. Update for council
10. Summarize public input
11. Meet with steering committee to review input, focus areas
12. Consolidate issues into four key issue focus areas
13. Meet with steering committee to review and affirm key issue areas
14. Update council
15. Prepare presentation and facilitate public meeting
16. Present progress to planning commission

"Drilling down" for solutions

1. Work on each area of focus:
 - A. Research background data, including mapping
 - B. Photograph the community
 - C. Review best practices
 - D. Convene focus group
2. Meet with steering committee to update/discuss focus areas
3. Develop strategies for implementation
4. Conduct more interviews related to implementation
5. Meet with steering committee to review progress
6. Continue to develop implementation detail
7. Meet with steering committee to review draft plan
8. Update council
9. Compile report
10. Prepare presentation and facilitate public meeting / celebration
11. Revise the draft plan
12. Distribute plan report for official reviews
13. Meet with steering committee to review comments
14. Present the plan to planning commission
15. Present plan summary at public hearing
16. Deliver copies of final report

Attachment 2: Aspirations for McCandless

(As noted at 12/6/17 meeting)

McCandless is a place that

Is very diverse but no central identity. More cohesive, more identity. Untapped potential.

Health care, education and technology leader for the North Hills

Well-located, most affordable housing. Continue this.

Citizens of all ages and abilities are able to thrive. Attract all.

Up and coming place – appeals to all, especially younger generations. McCandless Crossing is example of way to make it appealing. Also Community Day and other events with themes.

Connected. Via all modes of transportation

Kids stay and elders return. Best Place to Live.

Improve identity. Recognize different types of areas throughout community. Keep the great things about it.

Recognize and improve assets – North Park, I-79, McCandless Crossing

Values life-long learning for everyone. Includes all forms of learning, such as past cultural learning, the bookstore, experiential learning.

Improve the visual appeal, such as at Wexford Flats. Eliminate overhead power lines and implement design standards.

Encourages structure so citizens can communicate and have an opportunity to know each other. Avoid parochialism.

Open to small business.

My kids want to come back to, with affordable housing and attractive location.

Greater sense of community. Greater quality of life via clean air, green space, clean water.

Poised to sustain quality we have – to build and improve a vibrant community.

Hub of North Hills, a destination. Bus lines help to create a stable municipality. Look at neighboring communities and find a fit.

Can live your whole life here, aided by public transit access, which also reduces pollution and consumes less gas. Consider circulator routes.

Attachment 3: Aspirations for McCandless (Consolidated list)

COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

McCandless is a place with a strong local identity rooted in its diversity and the potential of all citizens.

McCandless is a place with a strong town identity that embraces the distinctive characters of its individual neighborhoods.

McCandless is committed to effective two-way communication to enhance engagement and a sense of community.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING RESIDENTS

McCandless is a conveniently located place with housing choices that are attainable by working and professional people.

McCandless attracts and retains residents through all stages of life, providing both needed services and appealing amenities.

McCandless is a town that attracts citizens of all ages and abilities, and helps them to thrive.

McCandless is an up-and-coming town that appeals to all, but especially younger generations to ensure future prosperity.

McCandless is the “Best Place to Live” in the North Hills, where kids want to return and elders choose to stay.

McCandless is a place sought out by young families as affordable, attractive and convenient.

LOCATION, SERVICES AND CONNECTIVITY

McCandless is a place with well-developed connectivity for users of all modes of transportation.

McCandless is a place that builds on the strength of its location near I-79 and I-279, North Park and a thriving commercial corridor.

McCandless is a place that sustains its high-quality services and amenities by building upon and improving its vibrant neighborhoods and commercial areas.

McCandless is a stable business, residential and public transit hub of the North Hills and an important destination for people in nearby communities.

McCandless is a place that is the health-care, education and technological leader in the North Hills.

McCandless supports a thriving small-business sector.

OTHER ASPIRATIONS

McCandless is a place whose visually appealing places and spaces help to attract and retain residents and businesses.

McCandless creates a sense of community and improves quality of life through clean air, green space and clean water.

McCandless is a place that highly values and facilitates life-long learning for diverse groups of citizens.

Attachment 4: Key issue brainstorming

(As noted at 12/6/17 meeting)

- ID assets and create partnerships – North Park OTB restaurant is an example. Public-private partnerships.
- Blighted properties – home values and aesthetics
- Walkability
- Communication to citizens
- Place to give birth in North Hills – traditional and holistic birth centers
- Tie neighborhoods and areas together, along with business corridor and park
- Community-building through community gardens, block parties, area to have parties
- Compatibility of commercial areas with residential zones
- Ingomar Road needs turn lanes – PennDOT issue
- Lack of public transit
- Eliminate power poles and overhead wires (expensive but these are eyesores)
- Figure out parking – where and how it should be
- Traffic increases during school rush hours, particularly at certain drop-off areas
- North Park is a great asset but isn't incorporated with McCandless
- No center to the community, no sense of community
- Pockets and areas are ripe for redevelopment
- Traffic safety, such as Ingomar Heights Road and Highland Road
- More recreation programming
- Value individual neighborhoods, such as Ingomar
- Lack of real, local restaurants
- Traffic roundabouts are needed at Ferguson Road and Townsend Run
- Schools and town should work together
- High-speed internet providers are limited to just Comcast and Verizon. Need more options.
- Identify town assets and communicate about them (parks, EAC, green spaces, churches). Brag!
- Bring back the flea market
- More local retailers

Attachment 5: Key issues brainstorming (Consolidated list)

VISUAL APPEARANCE

Blighted properties – home values and aesthetics

Eliminate power poles and overhead wires (expensive but these are eyesores)

GROWTH, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

Compatibility of commercial areas with residential zones

Ingomar Road needs turn lanes – PennDOT issue

Figure out parking – where and how it should be

Traffic increases during school rush hours, particularly at certain drop-off areas

High-speed internet providers are limited to just Comcast and Verizon. Need more options.

Pockets and areas of town are ripe for redevelopment

Traffic safety, such as Ingomar Heights Road and Highland Road

Lack of real, local restaurants

Traffic roundabouts are needed at Ferguson Road and Townsend Run

Place to give birth in North Hills – traditional and holistic birth centers

More local retailers

CONNECTIVITY

Tie neighborhoods and areas together, along with business corridor and park

Walkability

North Park is a great asset but isn't incorporated with McCandless

Lack of public transit

(more)

COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Community-building through community gardens, block parties, area to have parties

ID assets and create partnerships – North Park OTB restaurant is an example. Public-private partnerships.

Communication to citizens

No center to the community, no sense of community

Value individual neighborhoods, such as Ingomar

Schools and town should work together

More recreation programming

Identify town assets and communicate about them (parks, EAC, green spaces, churches). Brag!

Bring back the flea market

Attachment 6: What info should the questionnaire yield?

- Where do you get information about the community?
- Where do you live in town, and what parts of town do you use?
- What recreation or cultural activities don't we have?
- What do people like about McCandless neighborhoods?
- What services do you want that aren't offered now?
- What is your long-term plan? Are you going to stay here? What would make you move?
- What areas should be redeveloped, revitalized?
- What new events would you like to see in the community?
- What are you willing to pay for to get here, i.e. sidewalks, recreation
- What communities do you compare to when you want McCandless to improve?
- What do you like or not (when you brag about McCandless, what do you say?)
- What are three community strengths and three community weaknesses?
- Do you feel McCandless give a good "bang for the buck?" In other words, is the community spending money in a good way?