Summary of April 18, 2011 Meeting

Approximately 20 persons attended the meeting at Fleming Garden Christian Church. Staff began the meeting with introductions and a brief explanation of the planning process. Attendees then broke out into two discussion groups.

Notes from the Land Use, Zoning and Site Development Work Group:

- This was the first meeting for the Land Use working group.
- Staff provided and discussed the following list of development principles / criteria for Land Use and Zoning recommendations:
  - Buildings should be pedestrian in scale to neighborhood.
  - Two to four story development along Washington Street.
  - Incorporate new urbanism concepts to keep residential nearby when warranted.
  - Look at increasing density of some residential that is immediately adjacent to commercial uses.
  - Allow for mixed use zoning along Washington Street. (Apartments over commercial or office storefronts).
  - Provide for street level commercial at transit nodes.
  - Consider down zoning of those C5 commercial sites that cannot meet C5 standards to C4 or C3.
  - Use right of way access for sidewalks and pedestrian mobility.
  - Facilitate use of public transit.
  - Move parking lots to rear of businesses where space is available.
  - Determine areas where right of way is sufficient to allow for on street parking in front of neighborhood based retail.
  - Share / consolidate parking lots for multiple business where available for alternate hours use. (i.e. arrangements for businesses to use church parking lots during the week when churches do not use them. Allow churches to use retail parking lots on Sunday mornings when retail stores are closed).
  - Lessen the impact of car lots on the corridor through centralization / clustering of lots.
  - Incorporate landscaping / green space into the right of way.
  - Include storm water management with new right of way upgrades.

Comments received:

- Some used car lots are converting to tire stores and auto repair. They need to meet code enforcement standards as well as car lots.

- There is a proliferation of homemade signs along the corridor.

- Understand the need for C5 zoning, and will allow it as long as users meet standards.

- How do we make sure that any recommendations for increase in density is matched with increases in infrastructure? Such as fire protection, sanitary sewers, storm sewers, etc.
Notes from the Housing, Recreation and Neighborhoods Work Group:

Alice Gatewood introduced Mr. Tom Schubert an engineer from Triad and Associates. Mr. Schubert acted as representative for the Ben Davis Conservancy District. His company is the engineering consultant for the BDCD.

Mr. Schubert started the discussion by illustrating that approximately 85% of the West Washington Street project area falls within the Ben Davis Conservancy District. The conservancy started in the 1950s and laid its first sewer lines in 1958. The sanitary sewer lines within the BDCD are more than fifty years old. The life expectancy of the sewer lines is fifty years. Some pipes will last longer however a lot of the lines are in bad shape. When you create a conservancy district it has to be for specific reasons. This one is only for the sanitary sewers and it’s the only one of its kind in the state of Indiana in that it falls within a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (a major city).

Work group participants shared their frustrating experiences with trying to get help with their sanitary sewer problems. Mr. Schubert gave participants a new number to call (317) 241-2941 when trying to solve sanitary sewer issues. This number will get you directly to the proper personnel. In addition Mr. Schubert noted their issues and information to help expedite the process.

Mr. Shubert continued the discussion with more background information on the BDCD. He explained that property owners within the BDCD are taxed through the County and that the Conservancy was set up through the Superior Court. He further explained that the Conservancy pays the City for waste water treatment. Every drop that goes into the sanitary sewer has to be treated even overflow from the storm sewer system.

A bond issue of $3,260,000 was issued in 1959 and has since been paid off by the Conservancy residents. Mr. Schubert stated that the Conservancy spends on average about $200,000.00 a year on improvements to the system. He gave an estimate of six million dollars for all the work that has been done to date on installation and maintenance of the sanitary sewers within the BDCD.

The Conservancy is run by a board of directors who answers to the Superior Court. Questions about the BDCD have to go through the Superior Court. The tax rate has to be approved by the County tax board. The Conservancy submits a budget every year. He explained that the sewer rates go up as the property values go up and commercial property owners pay more than residential property owners. Projects within the BDCD are publicly bid which are posted in the local papers.

In 1995 the board of directors commissioned a study to evaluate their collection system. They were having problems with overflow from the storm sewers into their sanitary sewers. Triad Associates conducted a study that called for smoke testing sewers, manhole investigations, flow volume in sewers and, flow monitoring. From that a priority list was created. The list prioritized the issues and precisely what needs to be done. The list is being followed as funding becomes available. In the BDCD office there is a map showing what has been done and everything that’s been proposed as of now.

It is possible that some homeowners are still on septic systems within the BDCD which is a violation of state statute. The Conservancy provided sewers up to the right-of-way line then it’s the responsibility of the homeowner to get connected.

Mr. Schubert addressed the misconception that the sanitary sewers are undersized by saying that for the most part that is not true. In some places people will have a low yard area and that area has cleanouts. Many times what folks will do if they have standing water in their yard they will open that cleanout and let the water drain out through there. Firstly that is against the law and secondly it drives up the cost. As a district we pay for that extra water in the sanitary sewer line.
The Conservancy has a Board of Directors. There is an election and it is advertised. There are three seats on the board and I don’t know how often their elections come around however they are staggered elections. Positions on the board don’t all come due at the same time. To serve on the board you have to live within the district. The board meets every month except in January. They generally meet around the 10th of the month. Meeting notices are published in the paper. They meet around 8:30 AM at their office located at 703 South Tibbs Avenue.

The board does have a system for work orders. They write up work orders for the things that have to be done and the BDCD goes out to check complaints. They have four staff members. Mary Willoughby, the executive secretary also does the books. She is a paid employee. The workers go out to do the work and the executive director is also on call. To line the sanitary sewer they inject what looks like a sock and then just pull that through. Then it’s pressurized with hot water which causes a chemical reaction. They put epoxy in the lining and it makes what is similar to a plastic lining. It is slicker than the original pipe. It stops the leaks and revitalizes the structure. It costs approximately 27 to30 dollars per linear foot. We come back in after the sock is set. We have to pump the waste water around the section of pipe being lined for about 8 hours while the sock is set and come back with a camera and cut out where the service connections go. It is a big scale “colonoscopy.” Then we have a record of everything that has been done. It’s less expensive than cutting up the street and putting it back together.

Community Gardens and Farmer’s Markets
Alice Gatewood Introduce James Saunders from the City of Indianapolis Office of Sustainability, Department of Public Works. He handles most of the community gardens and farmer’s markets type relationships and projects. Mr. Saunders talked about the Mayor’s Urban Garden Projects. Properties that are within the City’s Land Bank, usually held for community development corporations, are offered up for leases to be used as community gardens. Everyone that they have dealt with so far has put in vegetable gardens. They have dealt with about 10 to 11 groups so far. They are currently working on 16 or 17 properties at this time. Mr. Saunders offered that it would be easy to find out if any of the available properties fall within the West Washington Street planning area. The City offers these properties but the impetus really falls on the individuals who take on the daily task of starting and maintaining properties. The risk in using other properties other than the one available through the City, is that the owners may decide to take them back. Whereas with the City they guarantee at least five year leases with expectations that they can re-signed at the end. Mr. Saunders prescribed the following steps for getting started with either a community garden or a farmers market:

- Create an organization of people who want to see it happen. The key to getting a community garden or farmer’s market started is finding a group of people that want to see it happen and are willing to put effort into it.
- Select a person to serve as the market manager or community garden manager. This position requires a hefty time commitment.
- Create a fee based system to try and cover some of the cost. You want people to feel comfortable enough to participate so you can’t charge too much. The most I’ve heard of fees costing is about $20.00 to $30.00 per season. A lot of times when a community starts a farmer’s market it comes on the free labor of volunteers in the community and some donations for startup cost and things like that.
- Once you have a group of people committed to the project you have to start trying to find a location and you want it to be in a place that has heavy traffic. A lot of the people who end up coming to a farmer’s market are the people who drive by but didn’t necessarily know about it in advance: although that is not where you should rely on getting your customers
Having startup funds for signs to direct customers to the market is a good idea. Choosing a good day and time to have your farmers market is important as well.

- Getting farmers to come, you will have to compete with their other obligations to other markets. Making the first day a success is really important. If you can get 20 people to get 20 of their friends to commit to coming and purchasing items then that will make vendors want to come back. It will also get a good buzz started which leads to more customers coming out.

A participant asked if people can come to the market selling cakes, desserts and stuff like that. Mr. Saunders answered; if a person(s) is in other markets then it should be an easy transition but if they have just decided sell prepared foods, I do believe it would be illegal. There are precautions and standards that must be met by anyone selling prepared foods. And I do believe that the farmers market will have paperwork to fill out from the Marion County Health Department. Fruits and vegetables are fair game but meats also have to be prepared and packaged a certain way. Because you are starting a farmers market you have to fill out paperwork with the Marion County Health Department which will cover all these basic issues.

- Don’t be afraid of a small market with only two or three vendors. It can be a success too. And just because it’s small doesn’t mean that it will not require a lot of work to get it started.