

## **New Albany comprehensive plan moves forward**

### **Plan heads to city council**

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By Danielle Grady

NEW ALBANY – After one public meeting, five steering committee meetings, several stakeholder gatherings and nearly 700 online survey responses – New Albany finally has a draft of a 20-year comprehensive plan to introduce to the city council.

The city's plan commission, with six members present, voted unanimously Tuesday to recommend the plan to the city council with some adjustments to its language regarding reintegrating the city with its riverfront.

"I'm just really pleased with it. I'm proud to be associated with it," said Scott Wood, the director of New Albany's plan commission.

The council will decide whether to adopt the plan at its Dec. 15 meeting. The council can also ask for changes to the plan, which would send it back to the plan commission.

The plan forms a long-term vision for the city, serves as a guide for those involved in making decisions for the city and covers the city's economic development, growth, land use, housing and other aspects.

New Albany's comprehensive plan hasn't been updated since 1999, which is longer than what's recommended for a city, said Wood.

The commission sat through a presentation of the plan by Chris Hamm, a senior planner with HWC Engineering, the company that created the plan with Beam Longest and Neff, another engineering firm.

Hamm covered five sections within the plan: economic development and quality of place, land use, housing and neighborhoods, natural resources, transportation and utilities and infrastructure. Each section was accompanied by a set of goals.

The plan also incorporated policy, or broad information, on how to achieve some of those goals, Hamm said.

"[It's] probably more detailed than any comprehensive plan that I've been involved with in most communities," he said.

The plan commission favorably recommended the plan after Hamm's presentation, but they did vote to tweak it in one respect.

One of the plan's quality of life goals involved developing New Albany's riverfront into a community recreational area.

Currently, a large levee divides the town and the riverfront in some spots.

It's still not entirely possible to open the closed off area, however, Wood said.

"The Army Corps said we could take out a section of the flood levee," he said. "We'd have to put in a closing gate so that we could protect ourselves from a flood, but the corps said they'd work with us on that."

The plan commission voted to change the plan's language to include the possibility of creating something like that. That might make it easier to garner support for that kind of change, Wood said.

In general, the new comprehensive plan isn't very radical, Hamm said, but it does include some aggressive goals.

"You've had tremendous success in redevelopment opportunities," said Hamm about New Albany.

But there's a need to expand upon those opportunities – to make sure there is a solid infrastructure and policies in place to seize them, Hamm said.

"Hopefully this plan is a good basis and foundation," he said.

The draft of the plan presented at the meeting will eventually be available online for the public to view.

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