

Jamestown residents weigh in on town's future

Posted: April 1, 2017

By Elizabeth Pearl

LEBANON— At a Jamestown public meeting earlier this month, representatives from the engineering firm hired to create the plan asked for input from residents on land use options and different projects they'd like to see get started in town. The plan will help the town establish goals, set priorities and take practical steps toward accomplishing those goals.

Jamestown Town Clerk Katie Conyer said that she wants to see more attention given to Jamestown's downtown and nature parks. She'd like to see them expand and include more playground equipment, she said. As a town employee, she also thinks that establishing a utility ordinance is important so that the town can maintain and fix any utility issues that arise.

Parks and zoning board president Jim Brown said that a lot of people want to see the downtown beautified and would like to have a community center where kids could play indoor sports in the winter. Town leaders also hope to establish a parking ordinance for the downtown, which already has few spaces and could be overrun if more businesses open.

In a survey of 130 people, conducted by the Jamestown Community Partnership last year, residents listed sidewalks, repairs to building façades on Main Street and park improvements as their three top priorities, said Cookie Leek, a member of the Jamestown Community Partnership.

The comprehensive plan is far from complete, but it will include goals to accomplish many of these projects over the next 20 years. The plan will also establish how land will be zoned and land use ideas for areas all over Jamestown.

The plan will go through months of drafting and revision, with multiple points where the public can weigh in with their thoughts and ideas, said Cory Whitesell, director of planning for HWC Engineering. Jamestown hired HWC to create the plan.

The plan is scheduled for adoption in November. In the meantime, the town is working simultaneously to update its ordinances and zoning regulations.

It's not uncommon for towns to revise their ordinances at the same time or soon after completing a new comprehensive plan, Whitesell said. In Jamestown's case, both the previous plan and the current ordinances were last updated in the 1970s.

The ordinances are outdated and at this point do not align with state standards, said Debbie Luzier, of GRW Inc., which handles Jamestown's planning department. For example, Jamestown's current zoning regulations do not even mention cellphone towers, she said.

By updating the ordinances at the same time as the plan, Jamestown can fit the ordinances to match the town's goals and ideas for land use. For example, land near the interstate could be zoned for light industrial.

The most difficult thing, however, is not creating a plan or zoning the land, but attracting businesses and housing.

In 2016, Jamestown issued a total of eight construction permits, including two commercial and five residential. All were for remodels, additions or accessory structures to already established buildings.

In order to thrive – which for Jamestown means some growth, but not too much – the town needs to bring in younger residents, a few more commercial industries and a slew of locally owned, small businesses.

Childress said that he would love to see three more light industrial facilities near FTIC and an influx of new residents who are looking to raise families.

“We're struggling with how to attract business now,” he said. “We're struggling to get people to come here ... We're an elderly community. I get bashed for saying that all the time, but most of our people are elderly. And if you're trying to grow a town your ... 30- and 40-year-olds are building roots and growing families. Ultimately we need to target those people and draw them here.”

The Boone Economic Development Corp. works with Jamestown in attracting businesses and establishing new ones. Three business in Jamestown have applied for the EDC's microloans program. The EDC also played a role in bringing FTIC to Jamestown, said Boone EDC executive director Molly Whitehead.

The Boone EDC is cognizant of Jamestown's specific identity and the kinds of enterprise it wants and doesn't want, Whitehead said.

“We want to make sure the types of projects that come in are a good fit, and not only for the client,” she said. “We try to tailor our responses to what the community wants to look like and does look like.”

While the EDC usually focuses on industry, it has worked with Jamestown on revitalizing downtown and culinary options, Whitehead said. That is because many industries need amenities like gas stations and restaurants in order to move somewhere, she said.

Another group is currently working to improve infrastructure in the downtown area. The Jamestown Community Partnership was inducted into Indiana's Main Street program, which enabled the nonprofit group to apply for grants to improve Jamestown.

The Office of Community and Rural Affairs, which runs the Main Street program, awarded the JCP a \$35,000 planning grant to study storm drainage in the downtown. Once the study is complete, the organization can come back with the findings and apply for further dollars to fix any issues.

Drainage is a big issue, Conyer said. Some areas in town flood with even the slightest bit of rain.

Overall, though the flurry of plans, updates and studies may seem overwhelming, many of Jamestown's leaders are happy with the direction the town is headed.

"We want Jamestown to be an attractive place for people to want to live and visit and shop," Brown said.

"We want people to feel pride in their community, for it to be a good place to call home... Absolutely we're going in the right direction. We just want to be careful that we control where we're going and how fast we get there."

[Click here to read the original article in *The Lebanon Reporter*.](#)