

Updating the City's Comprehensive Plan Provides a Map for the Future

By Mike Barhorst

"If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else," baseball legend Yogi Berra reportedly said. Put another way, the Chinese philosopher, Confucius said, "A man who does not plan long ahead will find trouble at his door." Successful people and organizations are aware of this concept, and know that forward planning is an essential ingredient for success.

For this reason, the City of Sidney long ago developed a Comprehensive Plan, which is periodically updated. The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan intended to guide growth and development of our community. It includes an analysis of community assets and recommendations for future actions. The plan is based on public input, planning initiatives, physical characteristics, and social and economic conditions.

The City of Sidney is currently in the process of updating our Comprehensive Plan. City officials, together with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, started the process to update the Plan this past October. The lengthy process should result in the Plan being ready for approval in January 2017.

The purpose of the plan is to create a shared vision for the future of the City. The plan will build on the City's heritage of interactive and timely planning for desirable growth and development.

The planning process presents an opportunity for residents, businesses and elected officials to work together to help create the best possible future for our community. The goal of this planning process is to review the previous Comprehensive Plan for "continued relevance" and to help prioritize the community's goals and strategies for the next five years.

Reveille, a firm that specializes in planning, economic development and community design solutions, has been selected to assist the Steering Committee comprised in developing the plan update. Representatives of Reveille have already begun their work.

Public participation plays an important role in the planning process. An interactive public process has been developed to solicit ideas and solutions. I want to encourage community participatBy Mion in the planning process and participate in the decision-making that will impact new and existing neighborhoods, land use, downtown revitalization, community services and facilities, infrastructure and economic development.

Reveille conducted the first community forum on March 1. That forum was held at the Sidney-Shelby County YMCA. During that community forum the top three activities that respondents said would get their biggest support were: 1) the attraction/retention of office, retail and services; 2) improve downtown attractiveness and functionality; 3) and, street improvements. Amenities in Sidney that rated highest with forum participants included: 1) fire/emergency medical service; 2) police services; and, 3) parks and recreational opportunities.

The next community forum, focused on Sidney's Downtown, will be held at the Senior Center of Sidney-Shelby County (304 South West Avenue). The forum will be held from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 30.

At that forum, residents and interested downtown stakeholders will learn about the plan update process, receive a snapshot of the results of the ongoing community survey, and participate in activities which will help guide the Plan in the specific area of the Downtown.

I would also encourage residents to complete a community survey. The online, 18-question survey is online, and can be accessed by selecting the "Community Survey" link on the City's website (www.sidneyoh.com).

I certainly thank the approximately 600 residents who have already completed the survey. It is an easy to participate in the process, allow your voice to be heard without leaving the comfort of your home, and help to build a better, more vibrant community.

If you have any questions about the planning process, don't hesitate to contact Community Services Director Barbara Dulworth. Of course, you should also feel free to contact your City Councilmember.