

## Workshop Summary

As the driving force in the development a successful plan, community outreach proactively engages residents, civic and business leaders, and other key stakeholders to understand the needs, concerns, issues, and opportunities within the community. The outreach and engagement process at the time of this report has included both in-person and online outreach, such as resident and business workshops, key person interviews, a project website, online surveys, and an interactive mapping tool. The process also relied on support from Galesburg Heart & Soul and their use of social media to further provide input during the Comprehensive Plan engagement activities. Input received from community outreach will help shape the direction of the Comprehensive Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan as well as inform key goals, objectives, and recommendations.

At present, completed outreach efforts and initiatives include:

- **Project Initiation Kick-Off.** The Project Initiation Kick-Off was conducted with the Galesburg Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) on June 20, 2017.
  - The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) provides ongoing assistance with the planning process. The CPAC serves as a representative group of residents, business owners, and elected and appointed officials who volunteer their time to identify key stakeholders to interview, assist with outreach and engagement efforts, and inform the planning process. The CPAC plays a key role in ensuring that the Comprehensive Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan is representative of the Galesburg community and supports the vision that the community aspires to achieve.
- **Community Workshops.** A community workshop was conducted on June 20, 2017.
- **Business Workshops.** A business workshop was conducted on June 21, 2017.

This document provides a collective summary of the input received at these workshops.

*It should be noted that the comments, observations, projects, and actions cited in this summary are not to be interpreted as recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan and do not represent City policy.*

## Key Community Issues & Opportunities

### Economic & Workforce Development

Workshop participants have emphasized the issue of educated, young individuals leaving the City and the need for a trained workforce. The limited supply of a skilled workforce as well as the lack of high-paying jobs has negatively impacted economic development in the City. In addition, participants noted that there should be more communication between the City and businesses as well as more cooperation between the City and the county.

Solutions identified by participants included marketing Galesburg to retain and attract a larger, more educated, and skilled workforce; establishing and encouraging more internships with the City; and encouraging more people to study in Galesburg. In addition, participants suggested that the addition of a Ferris wheel would help market the City by attracting tourists and businesses and contribute to community pride. Participants suggested that mixed-use, loft-style development within the Downtown would attract young professionals and encourage businesses to move to the City. Participants would also like to see the City establish more incentives to attract and support businesses.

### Diversity & Pride

Apathy and poor community pride were commonly cited as concerns from workshop participants. Participants were also concerned over the lack of diverse representation in City leadership. Participants suggested that underrepresented members of the community should be actively recruited to serve in leadership positions be more representative of the community they serve. Additionally, participants would like to see more large-scale community events created to bring the public together and foster a stronger sense of community pride.

### Community Health & Food Sources

Poor community health in relation to physical fitness and mental health was a shared concern among participants. Many felt that there exists inequality regarding access to healthy food, which leads to negative health outcomes within the community. In addition, many were concerned over the limited amount of available mental health services and resources within the community.

Community members discussed the need to offer more fun, free events that promote healthy physical activity and eating habits, such as creating a “Pack the Track” night, running clubs, and healthy cooking classes. Marketing and promoting physical fitness through incentives, such as offering participation points; healthy, reduced rate meals offered at restaurants; and school credit provided for students who exercise beyond school hours was also a suggestion among participants. Participants would also like to see the City recruit and support the provision of stable and effective mental health services. Finally, to promote healthy eating habits, participants would like to see additional support and promotion of urban agriculture throughout the community, including planting fruit trees and vegetable gardens in parks and public spaces, allowing community members to harvest food at no cost.

## Parks & Recreation

Participants were concerned over the limited activities catered to teenagers and young adults. Many were concerned over the lack of a community center as well as the limited amount of park programming for kids. The quality of parks and natural features, especially in lower income neighborhoods, was also a shared concern among participants.

Participants suggested the creation of a water park or large, community pool that would allow people of all ages and abilities to enjoy on the weekends. Participants noted the need to provide deeper swimming areas for adults to enjoy as well. Establishing adult community athletic clubs, such as soccer, baseball, and basketball was also recommended by community members. Participants were also interested in seeing the development of a mini-golf course for both adults and children to enjoy. Overall, most participants discussed the need to build a vibrant community center that is adequately staffed to offer recreation opportunities to all residents. There was the sentiment that a community center that was explicitly inclusive to people of all ages, races, socioeconomic statuses, religions, and gender identities would provide opportunities for the community to build relationships with one another, as well as provide adequate space for community members to reserve and gather in to attend free groups and events. The creation of a free or very inexpensive summer program that caters to low-income residents was also suggested among participants.

The quality parks in lower income residential neighborhoods was also a shared concern among participants. Expanding parks in lower income residential neighborhoods and enhancing parks with more benches, pavilions, lawn game rentals, public grills, and interactive sculptures were common suggestions. Cleaning up Lake Storey and improving regulations regarding fishing were also suggestions among participants. Participants also would like to see additional staff support in parks and recreation, which would help with park programming, upkeep, and provide more jobs. The community would eventually like to see the City create an outdoor sports complex that would allow Galesburg to compete in youth sports tournaments, similar to Rockford and Peoria.

## Blighted Properties & Maintenance

Blighted properties and poor property upkeep was frequently discussed among participants. Participants were concerned over the lack of property maintenance and number of abandoned properties, and mentioned that the City was slow to respond to inquiries regarding concerning properties. In addition, participants were unhappy with the inconsistency in code enforcement and the lack of resources, funding, and information available to assist them with property maintenance.

Participants would like to see the City incentivize people to improve their properties and would like to see property maintenance, repair, and renovations exist as more of a joint effort between the City and property owners. Participants would like to see more derelict, abandoned properties demolished, and deteriorating properties and neighborhoods renovated and redeveloped. There is a shared desire for the City to contract local companies to remodel vacant Downtown buildings and demolish and redevelop incompatible sites. Where redevelopment is not currently possible, participants would like to see vacant and abandoned buildings turned into green space and community parks.

### Accessible Transportation

Aging infrastructure and limited walkable areas of the City was a shared concern among participants. Suggested solutions included adding more bicycle trails and bicycle parking, and connecting the entire community with bicycle and walking paths, sidewalks, and trails from Lake Storey to King School. Participants suggested that the City focus more on improving sidewalks, curbs, and streets, and to extend and enhance sidewalks and bicycle paths to parks, creating a more interconnected system with added wayfinding signage. Participants would also like the City to create policies that establish more walkable communities when pursuing projects, especially around schools and bus stops.

### Renewable Energy

The lack of renewable energy in Galesburg was discussed among participants. Participants suggested that the City pursue building solar panels to provide power to residential spaces and to integrate renewable energy with play equipment in parks.