Forward 2040 Town Hall
October 25, 2017
5:30-7:30
Kennedy High School

Turnout: 4 people in addition to City staff

Interactive Display

An interactive display was provided for attendees to view at the beginning of the townhall event. The draft definitions of the five desired Outcomes to achieve over the next 20 years were displayed along with photographs of images potentially reflecting what the outcomes might "look" like. Attendees were asked to review and comment on the Outcome definitions and to match the photo images with the outcomes.

Group Discussion

Following a brief overview of the Forward 2040 Plan and process, given the small turnout, a single group discussion format was used to discuss the following topics: changing demographics, housing choices and affordability, and sustainability and resilience. To clarify each topic, some possible aspects of each of the topics were described as follows:

Demographic Changes
- Aging population
- Increasing diversity

Housing Choices & Affordability
- Shifting preferences
- Special needs
- High land costs – limited supply
- Very low vacancies – limited supply
- Retaining existing affordability

Sustainability and Resilience
- Alternative energy
- Emergency preparedness
- Blue/green infrastructure [stormwater mgmt, etc.]
- Conservation, reuse, recycling

A summary of the comments for each of the topic groups follows.

Changing Demographics

- New families are moving in (especially east Bloomington, but even in west Bloomington)
- First generation immigrants have more challenges
  - Financially can't upkeep home
  - Don't know what the standards are and may not be aware of existing programs
    - Need more education on how to maintain home and available assistance
    - Things like mowing and storage of equpment; for example some may not be aware that you shouldn't keep play equipment in front yard or other simple maintenance protocols
- Curious about the number of homeowners vs. renters for minority population.
  - (Minority population is much more likely to rent than White ACS Table S2502)
- Some elderly homeowners are unable to keep up with home maintenance.
  - Like the idea of utilizing City staff and other service providers who work out in the community and may serve as "eyes on the street" to identify individuals who need assistance.
- City provides great resources but people are unaware – NEED BETTER MARKETING AND OUTREACH.
  - Noted that City has lots of information (website, handouts, forms, etc) but unless people know where to look, they can't use it.
  - Permitting program that the City uses is great. Need to get the information out to the immigrant community.
  - Working with churches may be a good way to communicate with different communities – could help to have certain identified people at the City to contact.

Housing Choices and Affordability

- Suggested that the City should provide some guidance on design; particularly for rehab projects using City funds.
  - Concern expressed about the wide use of vinyl siding on rambler rehabs; many using the same muted brown colors.
    - Concern raised about the environmental issues with vinyl and the aesthetics.
    - Another participant noted she loves having vinyl siding – very easy to maintain and given its long term durability, it is more sustainable than other products.
  - Providing more information or classes on home improvement would be great.

Flexible Regulations
- Flexible zoning to let innovation breathe and "repurposing" to occur
- Zoning flexibility and zoning changes
- Provide zoning regulations that allow shift fromm retail to service/support operations

Recognize Telecommuting & Remote Workplaces
- Recognize telecommuting as a workstyle trend that will only increase. Might involve tolerance of commercial activity (within reason) in neighborhoods.
- Develop City jobs that focus on changing dynamics [jobs w/in City organization] and dedicate resources to them.
- Create an area that can host and nurture small businesses.
  - Provide or maintain community gathering spaces. [idea was that these are increasingly important as more people work remotely. They provide a common place to gather and interact; possibly provide support services like internet access, copy/printing, coffee shop, meeting rooms.]

Other
- Sustainability/energy efficiency
  - Lower energy load of public buildings and residential
  - Superinsulate, then solar or wind.

Topic: Healthy Lifestyles

Observations
- Use health club memberships
- People have healthy food habits
- Pop-up farmers markets are great
- More biking
- Cedar Avenue Bridge/ River Bottoms is a great asset
- Hyland trail to river bottoms
- 86th Avenue Bridge is open which makes alternative transportation easier
- Use to love Play Days or the gym being open on Saturday mornings.
  - Do need someone to monitor – could be opportunity for senior population to volunteer
- Community Puzzle – every contributes a little bit, fun to see the progress when you come back
- Meal Prep at church helps families or even singles opportunity to make healthy meals for the week
- Seen benefit of separate trials for bikes and pedestrians
- Safety is important to have people be social in the community

Concerns
- Youth more engaged with technology
- Winter walking – sidewalks can be slick and streets are dark
- Lots of barriers to eating healthy
  - Time constraints to prepare food
  - Energy to prepare food at the end of a long day
  - Quantity of food is too much for single person household
  - Not enough education about what is healthy
- Services intended for vulnerable population are not always the most user friendly

- o There was discussion about the need for the City to provide education to help explain the purpose and benefits of activities like clearing under-brush and removal of "weed" trees in the MN River Valley.
- o Julie also explain that at areas like trailheads where more people gather, it may be necessary for more development and clearance just to accommodate the higher volume of visitors, maximize visibility and keep it safe. As you move away from trail heads the area will continue to remain more natural.
- It was suggested that more education is needed about environmentally-friendly lawn care, including: how to choose a lawn care company and the impacts of fertilizer and weed killer on the watershed.
  - o Can provide new residents some information
  - o Could conduct mini-educational seminars/displays at the farmers market on these types of topics.
  - o Likewise City could host a miniseries on lawn and home maintenance (potential partnership with Hennepin Technical College)
- Love the Hennepin Recycling Facility.
- Coyotes are an issue- safety for pets

Other Concerns

- Lack of unique businesses along Lyndale and older commercial areas
  - o Can we get more proactive attracting businesses
  - o Less chains like Applebee's and Red Robin
  - o Redevelop Southtown – currently very tired and retail is dying.
- Participants typically learn about meeting and this Town Hall through the City email list.
  - o Briefing is ok, but usually skim through it.

Forward 2040 Town Hall
November 9, 2017
5:30-7:30
VEAP

Attendance: approximately 15 people in addition to City and VEAP staff

Interactive Display

An interactive display was provided for attendees to view at the beginning of the townhall event. The draft definitions of the five desired Outcomes to achieve over the next 20 years were displayed along with photographs of images potentially reflecting what the outcomes might "look" like. Attendees were asked to review and comment on the Outcome definitions and to match the photo images with the outcomes.

Group Discussions

Following a brief overview of the Forward 2040 Plan and process, the group separated into two groups to engage in topic-specific discussions. One group covered two discussion topics: Shifting Markets & New Technologies and Sense of Place & Connection. The other group covered Healthy Lifestyles. To clarify the topic, some possible aspects of each of the topics were described as follows:

Shifting Markets & New Technologies might include:
- Rise of sharing economy
- Decline in "bricks & mortar" retail
- Decline in traditional manufacturing
- "Smart" systems
- Autonomous vehicles
- Job automation

Healthy Lifestyles might include:
- Access to healthy food
- Access to physical activity and play [bike/walk network, parks, rec facilities]
- Access to nature

Sense of Place and Connection might include:
- Safe, open, and welcoming to all
- Destinations and neighborhood identity
- Community engagement

Group discussions focused on three questions, listed below. The first two questions were discussed as a group. For the last question, individuals were asked to write their ideas on sheets of paper, which were then shared with the group and organized under common themes.

1. What have you seen in your neighborhood or in your daily life related to this topic?

2. What are your concerns (or what excites you) related to this topic?

3. What are some things the City could do to address those concerns?

A summary of the comments for each of the topic groups follows.

Topic: Shifting Markets & New Technologies

Observations
- Desire for more flexible work hours – more people working from home
- Transportation systems becoming more multi-modal – provide for a broader range of transportation options.
- Driverless car services are becoming more attractive
  - This will have implications on parking demand and other land uses
- Retail deliver processes are changing
  - Retailers (esp big box) are starting to create pick-up areas; need to address in development standards.
- Witnessing more Uber/Lyft use in neighborhoods; evidence in increased use/demand for these services.

Concerns
- Need more frequent transit service – convience is critical to encourage transit use.
- Potential impacts on tax base.
  - We need to better understand.
- Decline in "bricks and mortar" retail and office space could lead to increase in empty or obsolete buildings.
  - Need to think about how to repurpose these buildings.
  - Need sufficient regulatory flexibility to allow reuse of obsolete buildings.

What can the City do to address these concerns? (sticky board exercise)

Infrastructure
- Develop more electric charging stations
- Assure infrastructure is in place to support shift from fossil fuel vehicles to electric vehicles.
- Rebuild streets to meet need of mixed uses: driving, walking, biking, autonomous vehicles
- Improve broadband and wireless access – no "dead" spots
- [Provide] transportation vans (like Uber?) that pick up people (small groups) that run on a regular schedule on E-W routes that do not have enough volume to justify a "regular" bus.
- [Create] a broader – more inter-connected – trannsportation network.

Communication and Engagement
- Continue holding idea exchange meetings with various slices of the population.
- Participate in conversations with stakeholders with the goal to understand issues and imagine how City government needs to respond/plan/learn.
- Elect officials that reflect the changing dynamics and demographics.

- The home improvement fair is a start but is not frequent enough.
- Maintaining home value was important to all participants.
- It would be helpful to better define what affordable is. It is a term that is used so much but no one really explains what we are talking about. (I think the person was thinking of affordable housing as value not so much as percentage of income).
- Definitely see more starter homes on eastside.
  - Most moving into the east side are working adults and work downtown and choose the eastside because of transit.
- There was curiosity about the senior housing supply in neighboring communities and how Bloomington compares to our peers.
- Questions raised about the number of single family rental units.
  - Staff stated there are roughly a 1,000 (not sure how accurate that is) of the 24,000 homes in the City. Participants were surprised the number was so low.
  - Questioned if City can limit the number of rental licenses for single family or not.

Sustainability and Resilience

- Mary Hurliman provided an overview of the activities and priorities of the new Sustainability Commission: Stormwater education; Organics recycling; Ecological enhancements in the Mn River Valley; and Energy.
- One participant expressed disappointment about the Cedar Avenue bridge graffiti, noting how much she and her family enjoy having the bridge completed and exploring the river valley.
  - Suggested City need greater police presence in that area.
- Concerns expressed about over developing the MN River Valley. The bird watching community wants to keep the pristine nature. Not feel every part of the valley needs to be easily accessible, doing so may encourage use but could hurt the natural element. Over development means too many paved paths, garbage cans, clearing out underbrush etc. Desire for area to be kept wild and natural.
  - Mary explain that to bring back the native plant species will likely require a lot of disruption of the existing vegetation in the Valley. In the long term this will allow those long sustaining native plants to thrive. Many existing invasive trees have a life span of only 30 years. Improving the native landscape will involve clearing underbrush that is not native so native trees like Oaks that live a hundred years can reproduce and thrive. She noted that the native vegetation provides food to support animal populations whereas non-native plants can be toxic or not provide good nutritional value

- Not enough use of bike facilities
- Unwarranted safety concerns
    o Crime
    o Bike facilities

What can the City do to address these concerns? (sticky board exercise)

Food Access
- More community gardens (x 2)
- Healthy food trucks
- Incentivize grocery store in South Loop
- Famers markets – strategically place (pop-up)
- Not all senior facilities are equal – some don't provide healthy meal options

Social Programs and Facilities
- Community gathering places
- Inter-generational activities
- Need to find ways to give community members sense of purpose
- Find ways to connect people, should be baked into facilities

Transportation/Mobility Infrastructure
- Bike share
- Walkability in South Loop
- Better lit streets
- Promote buses – simple to use now with technology
- Pedestrian connections
- Can get creative with our parks
- More plantings in parks – utilize community volunteers
- Shuttle for seniors – could be private/public partnership – example is Edinborough apartments which provide a private shuttle
- More shuttle like bus services for senior population is needed – on demand service
- [Create] Bloomington Circulator route

Sports and Exercise
- More youth sports
- More affordable youth sports
- Food pre/ meal prep – maybe classes
- Play Days – Open Gym

Public Outreach, Marketing and Service Delivery
- Annual events that promote health (bike rodeo, bike rides, food)
- Need to establish an inventory of activities in the City to see where partnerships can be established and services are not duplicated

- Possible that advances in technology could help overcome process barriers – streamline processes
- Provide facilities for those who traditionally haven't used facilities
- One Bloomington needs to focus on our commonalities but not ignore our diversity

Addressing Special Needs
- Mental health advocacy
- Coordinate things for vulnerable
- Aging in place is more common but has detrimental effects on health
- Finding ways to show seniors the reality of senior living facilities verse perception
- Need more programs such as rehab loans to assist seniors with maintenance

Topic: Sense of Place and Connection

Observations

- Negative impacts of bombing at Muslim Community Center
- Sidewalks and walkability of neighborhoods allows for more neighbor to neighbor interaction
    - Some neighborhoods feel safe enough to walk at night
- Opportunities exist to be involved in the community
- Unwelcome East vs. West mentality
- Participants responded that the river bottoms & around Normandale Lake were popular destination spots for locals

Concerns

- Need more gathering places, especially those locally accessible
    - Need walkable destinations in neighborhoods
- Sense of place is increased with repeated neighbor to neighbor interactions
- Zoning is too restrictive for special use areas within neighborhoods
    - Ie, Mom & Pop stores may have a more difficult time meeting zoning standards compared to a Starbucks or McDonald's.
    - People don't have the option to remain in their neighborhoods once they get older and need to transition to a smaller townhome or apartment (since townhomes are not an allowed use in some single-family residential districts)
- Need to facilitate and establish a structure for Neighborhood Associations to form
- Need to label neighborhood areas – this would show some intent to enhance sense of community
- Need to create neighborhood districts
- More community and city-wide events are desired
    - Ie, eating contest, biking event

What can the City do to address these concerns? (sticky board exercise)

Participants were asked to write down their ideas on notecards about how the city could address the above concerns. Notecards were then placed on a sticky wall and grouped according to similarities. The following categories were formed based on the listed responses.

Events
- More city-wide events bringing together residents & businesses (street art fairs, etc)
- Creating events/gatherings to get to know people from different cultures
- Open streets (neighborhood streets temporarily closed for community events)
- Giant bike ride on Old Shakopee Road with local business vendors
- Annual community picnic on the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge
- Heritage Days Parade on Lyndale Avenue
- Annual Events (new traditions, bike tour, 10k & 5k races)

Process & Facilitation
- Promotion of neighborhood identities
- Model neighborhood organizing
- Provide a support structure that neighborhoods can organize under (guidelines, non-profit status, official recognition, communication)
- Survey other cities (ie, what do they do to promote neighborhoods)
- Improved transportation network/system (to connect people and places)
- Find ways to engage the millennials in community building
- Improved dissemination of information
- Community boards at popular destinations
- Identify key community/neighborhood contacts & leaders
- Engage local & neighborhood groups and organizations
- Foster and support grassroots groups

Zoning
- More flexible zoning requirements & restrictions
- Zoning & regulations that are more friendly to small shops & cafes
- Zoning for more mixed residential

Community Center
- Build a new community center (x2)

Neighborhood Destinations
- Help develop local/neighborhood gathering places
- Provide opportunity to create physical space in each neighborhood to allow for events to occur
- Promote & allow space for neighborhood destination sites
  - Chef-driven neighborhood Restaurants
  - Brewpubs
  - Breweries
- Rebuild neighborhood nodes
- Create more than two high schools
  - There was further discussion around this topic. Council member Busse mentioned the idea of having one high school instead of two, which more participants agreed with and thought that this could help break down the barrier of east vs west