

**Southeast Strategy
Community Forum Results
8/28/06
A.M. Session**

Question #1

Did you hear anything new or surprising in the presentations? If so, What?

The majority of the responses were related to the potential value and absorption rates of new housing conveyed in the Southeast Housing Market Potential Study. The information in the MetroEdge Retail Study on the level of buying power in the Southeast received the second highest number of responses.

Question #2

Did anything in the presentations change your mind set regarding Southeast Fort Wayne? If so how? If not, why?

The majority of the responses referred to a difference between perception and reality as stated in the MetroEdge Study and the Housing Market Study. Some respondents also indicated that there was no change in their mindset and added that the Studies reinforced their positive perspective about the Southeast in general.

Question #3

Were there any facts or issues related to housing and commercial development which were overlooked in the presentations.

Responses to this question were scattered among several topical areas including issues and problems with existing housing stock, employment retention and creation, education, image/perception, and residential investment risks.

Question #4

What stands out most in your mind when you see this map. (“this map” refers to the map of development opportunity areas and current initiative areas presented to each group)

The majority of responses referred to the need for positive neighborhood commercial, professional and personal services. Other responses indicated the need for employment centers and additional opportunity areas.

Question #5

What relevant physical features and/or real estate development is missing from the map?

A majority of the respondents indicated that the area is in need of positive neighborhood commercial, professional and personal services in addition to recreational opportunities.

Question #6

What would you consider to be the single most important asset or initiative on this map?

The respondents indicated Southtown Center and Renaissance Pointe as being important initiatives. Other responses referred generally to the number of opportunity areas shown on the map.

Question #7

What are some of the positive reasons for developing and/or investing Southeast?

The majority of respondents indicated that the buying power, lack of competition, and the health of the City as a whole were all positive reasons. Other responses indicated the availability of inexpensive real estate, diversity, and existing infrastructure as additional positive reasons.

Question #8

What are some of the barriers to investment Southeast?

The majority of respondents indicated that the negative perception/image of the Southeast is the largest barrier to investment. Other respondents indicated education issues and lack of disposable income as barriers.

Question #9

What can the City do to help eliminate barriers (i.e. programs, incentives, or other ideas)?

The majority of respondents indicated marketing, education, and incentives along with the creativity in the development of incentives. Other respondents stated education system improvements and government organization issues (i.e. resource allocation, partnerships, focus areas).

Question #10

Of the items listed in the last question, which should be the highest priority?

The majority of respondents indicated that the highest priority should be the creative development of incentives. The need for marketing and education programs received the second highest number of responses.

The map exercise

The participants were asked to place three red dots on the map to indicate their highest priority commercial areas and three blue dots to indicate their highest priority residential areas.

**Southeast Strategy
Community Forum Results
8/28/06
P.M. Session**

Question #1

Did you hear anything new or surprising in the presentations? If so, what?

The majority of responses referred to information contained in the MetroEdge Retail Study especially related to float and buying power. This was also reinforced by comments related to the need for help for existing small businesses and the need for additional positive neighborhood commercial, personal and professional services in the area. There were also a number of responses which spoke to the need to change the negative image and perception of the Southeast.

Question #2

Were there any facts or issues related to housing and commercial development which were overlooked in the presentations?

The majority of responses stated that issues related to problems with existing housing stock were overlooked. Comments also indicated that the studies did not adequately address the need for specific neighborhood level commercial, professional and personal services.

Question #3

What stands out most in your mind when you see this map? (“this map” refers to the map of development opportunity areas and current initiative areas presented to each group)

The majority of responses referred to the need for positive neighborhood level commercial, professional and personal services. Respondents also highlighted the number of development opportunity areas and the number of areas that could be opportunity areas. There were also several responses indicating that the current initiatives were positive but there needs to be more of them.

Question #4

What would you consider to be the single most important asset or initiative on this map? (“this map” refers to the map of development opportunity areas and current initiative areas presented to each group)

The majority of responses referred generally to initiatives currently underway. Assets or initiatives specifically named were Southtown Center, Renaissance Pointe, and McMillen Park.

Question #5

What are some of the positive reasons for developing and/or investing in the Southeast?

The majority of responses referenced the buying power of the southeast area as indicated in the MetroEdge retail market study. Other responses highlighted area amenities, the number of available opportunity areas, and the presence of strong, diverse neighborhoods.

Question #6

What are the barriers to investment Southeast and what can the City do to help eliminate those barriers?

The majority of respondents indicated that the biggest barrier to investment is the negative perception / image of the southeast with the need for more positive promotion and marketing as something the City can do to help. Other barriers indicated were issues related to the lack of positive neighborhood level commercial, personal and professional services, lack of interest and/or perceived high risk by local developers, education issues, and issues related to race relations.

Question #7

Of the items listed in the last question (question #6) which should be the highest priority?

The majority of respondents indicated that the highest priority should be the negative image / perception issues especially as it relates to crime and race relations. Lack of interest and/or perceived high risk by local developers and the need for positive neighborhood commercial, professional and personal services were tied for the second highest number of responses.

The map exercise

The participants were asked to place three red dots on the map to indicate their highest priority commercial areas and three blue dots to indicate their highest priority residential areas.

Southeast Strategy Young Professionals Focus Group

Paul Harding High School – Room E100

Tuesday, December 5, 2006 @ 4p

Housing:

Question #1: Why did you choose to live southeast – were you born here? Moved? If you came from outside Ft. Wayne, what influenced your location to live southeast?

The majority of the responses were very similar. Many of the participants work in the Southeast, they attend church Southeast, their friends all live southeast and they were raised southeast. There was one participant that moved here after college and she decided to live southeast because she worked southeast and all her friends lived southeast. Another participant stated that she wanted to be near her ‘people’- the African-American community. Affordable housing was also another reason given for living southeast.

Question #2: When do you think you will buy your next house? What will you want in a house and property when you start looking for your next home? What kinds of features are important?

Each response to this question varied. The average time frame for many of the participants to purchase their homes was between 1.5 to 2 years. One participant recently purchased her first home and she chose that house based on its proximity to her parent’s house, work and recreational facilities. She also liked the fact that it was an older house and in good condition. Other participants that have not purchased homes yet would all like to remain southeast; however the product they are looking for is not available. Another participant is planning on building a new home southeast because he was not able to find what he was looking for. Suburban style housing is wanted southeast. Houses with cathedral ceilings, large open spaces, 2-3 car garages, modern kitchens and bathrooms are examples of amenities many are looking for when they purchase their homes.

Question #3: If the home you desire is available in a subdivision southeast, is there a price range and quality you would consider purchasing?

All participants stated that the price range between 120K- 150K would be a good upgrade only if the area was able to support the investment being made. One participant stated that 150K would be too much for a home near Creighton Street, but would pay that amount near Harding High School.

Question #4: Where would you be interested in moving to (what geographic area)? I.e. Inside of I-469 and off of U.S. 27?

The areas identified are Tillman Road and Paulding Road eastward of South Anthony Boulevard and the areas near the U.S. 27 and I-469 interchange.

Additional Comments:

- The framework of thinking needs to be changed – instead of buying a new home, think of it as investing.
- Show how current homes and neighborhoods retain their values
- Neighborhood Associations can be very helpful in maintaining good neighborhoods.
- There needs to be more education available for home owners.
- Neighbors aren't the same therefore it's hard to build communities as they were in the past.

Purchasing, lifestyle, and shopping decisions:

Question #5: How important are convenient shopping locations to your housing purchase decisions? What other types of retail stores would you like to see in the Southeast?

All participants agreed that a 'sit-down' restaurant such as an Applebee's or Chili's is needed southeast. They also think that the development at Southtown Centre is great. One participant did suggest bringing another shopping mall into the area and movie theaters. Many of the youth in the area could use the employment opportunities early on and close to home. It allows them to gain a sense of ownership in their communities. Another participant suggested more promotion for the businesses that are currently serving the area – similar to the "Proud to Shop South" campaign many years ago. Another comment given was that having convenient shopping and other retail in the Southeast would make life easier.

Question #6: How important is a quality school system to your next housing choices?

Many of the participants attended school within the Fort Wayne Community Schools or East Allen County Schools. They all think their experiences were great and enjoyed the diversity of the schools. Some participants think that diversity within the schools is most important.

Southeast Strategy Developer/Investor Forum

Friday, January 19, 2007 @ 8:00a

Staff Present: Tom Walls, Pam Holocher, Julie Sanchez, Terry McCaffrey, Cristian White

Advisory Committee Members Present: Bill Brown, Mike Bynum

Developers/Investors Present:

Brad Sturges & Guest – CBRE/Sturges

Dave Nugent – BND Commercial

James Wilhelm – RCI Development

Todd Ramsey – RCI Development

Brian Fleming – RCI Development

Adam Probst – The Parke Group

Rick Zehr – Northeastern Group

Karl Bandemer – CBRE/Sturges

Jeff Thomas – Oakmont Development/Mike Thomas Associates

Matt Lancia – Lancia Homes

Welcome

Advisory Committee member Commissioner Bill Brown opened the forum with a few words about the Southeast Strategy, his ties to the area, and his experience as an Advisory Committee member. Everyone then introduced themselves.

Introduction to the Southeast Strategy

Pam Holocher gave a brief introduction to the strategy. She also summarized the progress thus far by detailing the various methods of public input being used, and by explaining the elements being included within the strategy.

Overview of Key Areas

Tom Walls gave a brief synopsis of the Public Input Forum in August 2006. He explained that the public placed votes in areas where they desired focused efforts. After a few explanations of the various current initiatives and opportunity areas the staff identified, Tom gave an overview of the Southeast Strategy Conceptual Development Map. He explained all the areas the staff identified as proposed commercial nodes, residential nodes, rehabilitation nodes, mixed-use nodes and major corridors.

Summary of Commercial Incentives

Julie Sanchez gave an overview of the reasons certain commercial/retail nodes were identified. She then gave brief summaries of the commercial incentives available in the area. Those incentives include Tax Abatement, the PRISE matching grant façade program, and many others. She also informed the group of ideas staff will propose to increase incentives by: 1) collaborating with Development Services and City Utilities and 2) expanding Economic Development Target Areas.

Summary of Housing Incentives

Tom Walls briefly explained the justification for staff selection of areas identified for focused housing efforts. He reviewed the general information about Renaissance Pointe, the City's primary housing focus. He also informed the group that residents that participated in the August 2006 Public Input Forum identified the area surrounding Renaissance Pointe as an opportunity for major housing rehabilitation. Pam Holocher informed the group about the Young Professionals Focus Group held December 2006. Responses from that forum indicated that despite the perception of the area, suburban style housing is also strongly desired in the area.

Tom explained that the areas identified for Greenfield development outside city limits are close enough to the city that discussions can take place regarding city utility extensions and available incentives.

Key Development Questions:

Question #1: Which of the opportunity areas cited on the map interest you most? Least? Are there other areas that need to be considered?

- *Many of the group participants have not been to the area in a while. Re-discovering the area was important to the group. A couple of individuals did drive the area and noticed some opportunity areas.*
- *The map should include Interstate 469 and water and sewer line delineations.*
- *Land (50 acres or more) should be identified as a precursor to identifying new development prospects.*
- *Focus should begin in the Southtown Centre area and slowly migrate north along South Anthony Blvd.*
- *There seemed to be a consensus about housing and retail needing to come to the area simultaneously, as mixed-use development, as opposed to traditional ideals of housing then retail.*
- *South Anthony Boulevard was identified as a major corridor by staff and the group. The group agreed that beautification of that corridor could spark much needed development.*
- *The former Franks Store and Victoria Acres site were noted as potential opportunity areas to be investigated.*

Question #2: What do you think are the most important incentives presented? Are there other development incentives that might be important or of interest?

- *Over time the cost of connecting to city utilities has risen, therefore utility discounts or other utility “breaks” should be offered or used to incentivize development in the area.*
- *Programs should be developed that allow for demolition in areas where rehab costs exceed market values, but prevented in areas that have seen years of demolition and have since turned into vacant blocks of land.*
- *The group agreed that there should be an effort to focus incentives in areas that are very visible such as major corridors and larger groups of vacant, available land.*

Question #4: What would it take for you to develop a project in southeast Fort Wayne?

- *The group agreed it would take a combination of factors mentioned above, such as land packages, price, retail and housing being developed simultaneously, etc.*
- *The school districts often impact where development occurs. “There are strong parochial schools in the other quadrants of the city, but not in the southeast,” was a comment made by one developer. Northwest Allen County Schools was also identified as a target area for many homebuyers.*
- *One issue raised was trying to find a buyer for clients who are purchasing new homes and need to sell their old homes.*

- *The rising cost of materials and the amount of time to invest in the area before accepting a loss were two issues raised by one developer.*
- *“Perception is reality.” The City should focus its efforts on dealing with the perception of the area first. The City should partner with developers, initiate both residential and commercial development simultaneously, and take on more risk in development projects.*
- *There is an “unsophisticated selling market.” Suggestion made to change the way realtors sell properties.*
- *Reward the first developer(s) who takes the risk in investing in the southeast area.*

Question #5: If you had this strategy and/or map in hand, would you use it?

- *All agreed that they would use the Southeast Strategy materials and want to use them as soon as copies are available. The developers suggested adding a few things to the map such as aerial photos with opportunities areas identified, a layer that identifies areas where incentives are available, and a map layer identifying the locations of water and sewer lines.*

There was a brief discussion that followed the question session of the forum about various properties in the area. Staff in attendance was able to answer many of the questions being asked. Julie Sanchez agreed to work as a mediator between various property owners and local developers interested in the area. Staff also reported that the planning team is working with the Board of Works to confirm that current water and sewer lines in the area have enough capacity to accommodate further development.

The developer group unanimously decided that they would like to meet again soon to discuss ways to collaborate on a major mixed-use project Southeast. They also agreed to drive around the area and familiarize themselves with the opportunity areas staff has identified. Staff agreed to provide the Conceptual Development Map and the aerial map as soon as possible.