

Community Visioning Workshop

St. Charles Comprehensive Plan

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

On Wednesday, November 30, 2011, a community workshop was held at the City Hall to provide the community a chance to collaboratively craft a vision for the City St. Charles. This was an interactive workshop where residents were able to illustrate and describe their vision for St. Charles. With markers and pens, participants marked on maps the changes they hope to see as it relates to the function, appearance, and development patterns of the City.

Before the meeting began, attendees were randomly separated into seven groups. Each group gathered at its own table with a set of instructions, a base map of the community, markers to illustrate their thoughts, and a workbook for their notes. Following this mapping exercise, groups presented a summary of their vision to the workshop attendees. Presented below, in the order in which they were presented, are the key recommendations for each group.

Group 4's Vision for St. Charles:

- Create a truck bypass around downtown along the vacant railroad right of way.
- Expand Woodward Drive east to connect at Randall Road to allow easy access to the new Woodward Drive development.
- More neighborhood parks. The City might use places where homes are foreclosed and vacant and build park space on those sites.
- Create a new Riverwalk near 1st Street on west side of river instead of the existing plan for First Street redevelopment.
- Turn the library into a dual purpose library and cultural center.
- Put more focus on downtown development on the east side of the river since 1st Street area seems to have gained the most attention thus far.
- There should be more incentives and assistance programs for historic property owners to reinvest in their properties. If incentives are not possible, some more leniencies for property owners who cannot conform to historic property rules would be appropriate.
- No residential at old St. Charles Mall site. There is already enough multi-family/high residential development in the area.
- Create a moratorium on the west side for new multi-family development. New multi-family development should be focused on the east side from now on.
- Beautify East Main Street since this section of Main is neglected, yet is a primary gateway for people entering St. Charles to visit or pass through.
- Randall Road should see more commercial development along its length and existing gaps in development should be in-filled with retail.
- A parking deck at Cedar and 31 would help to alleviate the problems with a lack of parking in the area.
- Begin an express shuttle to the Geneva Metra station for people who don't want to drive or who don't have access to a car.

Group 2's Vision for St. Charles:

- The group would like to see Charlestowne Mall change its format. One suggestion was to convert the mall into an open air mall or lifestyle center.
- The east and west gateways are the first thing many new visitors to St. Charles see. The group would like to enhance the east and west gateways to present a better appearance to visitors.
- First street development continues to be stalled. Residents want to create a temporary First Street development that would transition into a higher quality development when the market improved.
- The St. Charles Mall site should be redeveloped. This group says a “medium box” store on the site would be the best use.
- Group members would like to see the parks surrounding the new Red Gate bridge preserved.
- While the community has some existing trails running throughout, the group would like to see a more extensive trail system built.
- The existing green space in the community is an asset the group would like to see preserved.
- The Main Street bridge is already an iconic space, but the group would like to see it further enhanced with the addition of water cannons on the site.
- Getting across Main Street is a challenge. Residents want to see a new pedestrian bridge or tunnel built so people don't have to worry about traffic when crossing Main.
- The Arcada Theater is a community asset many are proud of, but this group believes the theater should be invested in more by the community. They suggest moving the chamber of commerce to the theater to help bring in more investment.
- While much of St. Charles is walkable, there are also many areas that could see improved pedestrian access. The group would like to see a more pedestrian-friendly environment throughout the city.
- The Oliver Hoffman area, located near the Charlestowne Mall, should be the home of a new arts center or other cultural amenity.
- Residents don't want to see wind turbines installed in the community.
- The group wants to see new standards of appearance for businesses that develop in St. Charles.

Group 6's Vision for St. Charles:

- Use green space to buffer the industrial areas from surrounding areas to the north of Pheasant Run.
- Attract a Macy's, Nordstrom's, or other similar retailer to Charlestowne Mall.
- Tin Cup pass, a strip mall along Main/64 has a dated and worn down appearance and needs a facelift.
- This group would like to see some new commercial development at the Foxfield commons shopping area.
- Harris Bank in downtown St. Charles should receive a makeover to make it more attractive and blend it in better with the downtown.
- In general, group 6 wants to see more commercial and high end restaurants on the mall sites throughout the City of St. Charles.
- A new college should be attracted to the community to provide for jobs, educational opportunities, and regional recognition.
- The fairgrounds along Randall Road should be moved to a different location to allow for more commercial development along the Randall Road frontage.
- The area behind the Meijer store could be redeveloped with industrial uses.

Group 5's Vision for St. Charles:

- Main Street throughout the community needs to undergo appearance enhancements and beautification.
- The east side development appears stagnant. This group wants to see more development along the east side.
- The first thing visitors see when they enter the community on the east and west sides could be improved in favor of more welcoming gateways or entry features.
- Pheasant Run should be updated since it is aging and no longer has the appearance it once did.
- Charlestowne Mall site needs to be renovated to make it more inviting for shoppers as well as new merchants.
- The Oliver Hoffman area should be upgraded and this new opportunity used to expand the Charlestowne mall site.
- The areas along Main Street between Tyler and 7th Ave should be redeveloped.
- The Arcada theater is a community asset and should be upgraded and possibly used for more cultural activities.
- The uses on the west side of the city are not diverse enough. This group would like to see new forms of development and a better blend of uses on the west side.
- The existing 1st Street development plans should be scaled back in favor of a development that is less dense and that better reflects a small town character.

- Main Street near downtown is difficult to cross. A bike and pedestrian tunnel should be installed across Main to make it easier for people using active modes of transportation to get across the street.
- The vacant railroad right of way should be converted into a bike lane.
- Randall Road needs both beautification as well as an improved public transportation system along its length. West Main could use the same types of improvements.
- A new mixed use development should be considered for the area around 14th and Route 38.
- The old St. Charles mall site should be considered for both commercial and cultural development.
- The area where the fairground fronts Randall Road should be redeveloped.
- The Cardinal property should be redeveloped with a residential and commercial mix of uses.

Group 1's Vision for St. Charles:

- Charlestowne Mall needs to be redeveloped to include new retail options.
- The Oliver Hoffman parcel should be developed in a manner that is context sensitive.
- The St. Charles Mall site would be a good location for a new University to help attract investment in the community.
- The "Hines" property is an eyesore and something should be done about it.
- Create a grand plan that provides a sense of flow and unification throughout the City from a design perspective.
- The existing bridge crossings are not sufficient. Install a new bridge crossing to help alleviate traffic.
- Connect the Prairie Street bridge with Adams Ave. The existing arrangement is not convenient.
- Take another look at First Street development and the form it will take. Explore the possibility of a less dense form—or even turning the space into a park.
- Make the intersection of 31 and 64 more efficient and attractive.
- Make changes to alleviate congestion along Prairie St.
- Move the fairgrounds to a site more appropriate for the sporadic traffic the grounds generate.
- Create a more comprehensive approach to Randall Road development
- Add a new bus route, BRT or otherwise, along Randall Road that could spur new types of development in the area.

Group 7's Vision for St. Charles:

- Connect Woodward to Randall Road so that there is more direct access to the new development sites to the west of Randall Road.
- Add more green space along the river and preserve the existing green space.
- Parking in downtown is hard to locate, especially for visitors to the downtown. This group would like to see more parking-oriented way finding in the downtown district.
- This group would also like to see a bike path installed in the vacant rail right of way.
- The group would like to see more cultural and arts activities along Main/64 in the downtown area.
- The Applied Composites site should not be redeveloped as a high density development.
- Improve the sidewalks and paths throughout the community so that it is safer and more inviting for people on foot.
- Add parking structures throughout the community to help alleviate parking problems without adding more surface parking lots

Group 3's Vision for St. Charles:

- Agreed with many previous comments so this group's presentation only contained items not mentioned previously.
- There is a need for new senior housing in the community. Seek opportunities for a new senior housing development.
- Create a bike and pedestrian path along Tyler Road.
- Traffic congestion around the Junior High School (Thompson, Haines, Richmond, and Davis) is a problem that should be addressed.