

May 10, 2007

Chester Township Trustees
Ms. Judy Caputo
Mr. Ron Cotman
Mr. Charlie Stevens
12701 Chillicothe Road
Chesterland, Ohio 44026

re: Comprehensive Community Planning

Dear Trustees:

Nearly fourteen years ago I was introduced to a few new planning concepts in one of the many classes that were required to earn an architectural degree. The theories discussed how communities lacked identity due to the placeless sprawl that was occurring nationwide. The sprawl was supported by zoning codes that separate uses and cater to the widespread use of the automobile. At first blush I did not think much of these theories because they related to planning and not to my intended focus of building architecture. However, through the learning process of several school projects I discovered that Chesterland exemplified the ill effects of sprawl and could surely benefit from the implementation of studied planning.

This newly discovered knowledge altered the course of my education and drove me to dedicate nearly two years of post graduate study to our town. This study culminated in a degree of Master of Architecture, but the focus was the urban design of Chesterland. Since these days of intense study I have had the opportunity to develop my planning skills and knowledge by creating urban designs for several of the country's largest mixed use projects.

A copy of my Thesis has been at Geauga West Library for the past ten years. A few have contacted me to discuss the ideas, but not until Ron Cotman has anyone really taken it to heart. Last summer Ron invited me to a meeting with the Park Board and the Rotary President. These two groups desired to develop community amenities but were not sure exactly where and what they should do. It became clear that a community based master plan that could inform development decisions would be immeasurably helpful.

Shortly after this meeting Mark Purchase asked if I would help with the design of Safety Township. Again, as you are aware, the lack of planning left us all questioning where this incredible asset should be located. These individual but related activities led to more private dialogue that culminated in my presentation to the Board last fall. I will admit that this left much to be desired, but it was the start of something that is gaining momentum every day.

The Rotary sponsored a second presentation in March and invited the entire Community. The feedback and interest level was surprisingly good. Several members of our Community have stepped forward to volunteer their time and talents to lead a planning effort.

2775 S Moreland Blvd
Shaker Square
Cleveland, OH 44120
T 216 752 8750
F 216 752 9437

396 Broadway
Suite 208
New York, NY 10013
T 212 941 1390
F 212 941 9955

I believe that the time is right for a Community Visioning Process and the development of a Comprehensive Master Plan. I would like to lead this effort if you choose to implement it. Attached is a first pass at the structure, goals and tasks that I see as mission critical for creating a legacy that we can all be proud of. This town has a plethora of opportunity and natural assets if we choose to harness it. Chesterland can transform from the ho hum town that currently exists into a regional leader as a sprawl killer. It is happening elsewhere in the country and it can happen here. The tools exist for us to accentuate the assets and rethink the liabilities of the physical form of our town. We have the option and ability to protect what we love and make what we desire. This will take substantial commitment and leadership, but I am ready for the challenge if you are.

Imagine a Chesterland where a pedestrian could not only navigate the town via sidewalks, but could window shop, stop for dinner at a sidewalk café and partake in a community event in one of several community gathering spaces. Could this pedestrian also arrive downtown via bike and then ride out to one of our many parks? The downtown could be a thriving 24 hour a day place for people. A place where people not only shop, but, live and work. We can create a place for our senior generation who would like to be close to amenities and away from 5 acres of grass maintenance. This place can also provide ample employment for all income levels. I could go on and on about what could be, but we need to hear from the community on what they want it to be. Have we really ever asked each other what we want our town to be like?

The next community presentation is scheduled for May 24th. This would be a great opportunity to announce the formation of a committee and seek additional people to lead this monumental task. Please feel free to call me at any time to discuss this further. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Bill Laditka
Senior Associate

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