



Chapter 2

Community Outreach

The community outreach process for the New Carlisle Comprehensive Plan sought input from a broad spectrum of the community including residents, business and property owners, community service providers, elected/appointed officials, and Town staff.

A variety of outreach efforts were used to provide multiple avenues to gather feedback about existing conditions and local issues, needs and aspirations.

Outreach efforts were also used to promote a sense of community and foster stewardship for the plan by underscoring that many voices have been heard and their ideas have influenced final decisions.

This chapter summarizes the community outreach efforts that were completed in the early stages of the planning process and used to document existing conditions in the community and identify issues the Comprehensive Plan is to address.

- ⇒ Steering Committee
- ⇒ Workshop Questionnaires
- ⇒ Community Surveys
- ⇒ Key-Person Interviews
- ⇒ Focus Groups with Area High School Students

STEERING COMMITTEE

A Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was established to work with the Consultant Team throughout the course of the study. The Steering Committee consisted of Town Board members and staff, elected and appointed officials, business owners, community service providers and members of the New Carlisle community who were willing to shepherd the Comprehensive Plan on a day-to-day basis. The Steering Committee provided input throughout the planning process and served as a sounding board for the community.

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

During the Months of February and March of 2018, we conducted a survey online and in-person with the residents and visitors of the New Carlisle area.

We conducted a live intercept of patrons at New Age Bakery where we exchanged a free donut in return for taking our written survey. Our online survey replicated the written survey, save for a set of questions concerning the library which was added to our online survey at the request of the New Carlisle Library.

The online survey was shared with our Steering Committee for distribution throughout their social networks, email lists, and friends and family. The online survey was also shared across social media pages including the City and Discover New Carlisle and was placed on the Town of New Carlisle's website. The survey asked open-ended questions that allowed the participant to provide detail concerning assets or concerns in the town.

Our live survey intercept gained a total of 96 responses and our online survey gained 223 responses for a total response of 319 people. Based on the population of New Carlisle in 2018, this represented a 15-percent share of the population.

» **TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SURVEYS INCLUDED:**

- The majority of residents find life in New Carlisle to be Average (32.7%) or Above Average (50.6%).
- The greatest strengths of New Carlisle were its small-town feel (232), schools (133) and welcoming & friendly people (127).
- The greatest improvements to life in New Carlisle were reported to be new restaurants (129), new retail (111) and a community center (99).

- Participants cited a lack of shopping (28.3%), a lack of restaurants (27%), deteriorating infrastructure (25%), the town government (24.6%) and a lack of employment opportunities (22.6%) as what they “liked least” about New Carlisle.
- Participants cited the library, local business owners, Historic New Carlisle, Inc. and Discover New Carlisle as leaders doing something good for the community.
- When faced with projected growth in New Carlisle, participants cited “losing the small-town feel,” an increase in crime, drugs, heavy traffic and “growing faster than town services” as the major concerns.

KEY-PERSON INTERVIEWS

As a part of the Community Outreach phase of the Comprehensive Plan’s planning process, confidential interviews were conducted with individuals to discuss conditions and potentials within the New Carlisle community. Individuals who possess various interests and insights into the New Carlisle community as well as the Town’s growth areas were selected. Persons interviewed included local government officials, business owners, developers and residents.

Interviews were conducted on March 14, 15, 20, and 21, 2018 and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Each interviewee was asked a series of open-ended questions regarding the community. Overall responses to each question are summarized below.

» ***WHAT’S SPECIAL ABOUT NEW CARLISLE?***

- Small-town feel
- Friendly community – everyone knows each other
- A great sense of community is demonstrated by the participation of community activities
- Quality of the school system
- Small-town atmosphere

» ***WHAT’S BEST ABOUT NEW CARLISLE?***

- The school system
- The Town’s regional location
- Caring community

» ***WHAT’S WORST ABOUT NEW CARLISLE?***

- High utility costs in Town
- The Town’s gossip
- Town Government

» ***IF A BAG OF MONEY FELL FROM THE SKY AND YOU COULD SPEND IT ON NEW CARLISLE. WHAT WOULD YOU USE IT FOR?***

- Infrastructure
- Marketing of the Downtown and businesses
- Fix up the older, historic buildings in the Downtown
- More retail businesses

» ***WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE IN NEW CARLISLE?***

- Town’s communication with the community
- Infrastructure improvements
- Town needs to get a focus in their direction into the future

- » **WHO IN NEW CARLISLE IS DOING SOMETHING GREAT AND WHAT IS IT?**
 - Discover New Carlisle
 - Historic New Carlisle
 - Downtown businesses

- » **THERE SEEMS TO BE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEW CARLISLE, ROLLING PRAIRIE AND EVEN THE TWO LAKES?**
 - There is a feeling and perception of “the other side of the tracks”
 - New Carlisle is seen as the “golden child”
 - More full-time Chicago people in those areas

- » **WHAT’S THE BALANCE BETWEEN NEW CARLISLE DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL FARM LIVING?**
 - Not heavy industrial with good visual aesthetics
 - The Town of New Carlisle needs to be willing to welcome the employees of the new-growth areas

- » **WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE AS BUFFER ZONES BETWEEN DEVELOPMENTS?**
 - Buffer zones should NOT create a wall but rather carry beauty, aesthetics, landscaping and pathways
 - There is no need for a “buffer” and would rather ensure that there are good aesthetics and a variety of uses
 - Lighter industrial development

- » **ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TELL ME?**
 - There’s a need to be a “community board” that has representatives of Hudson Township, Rolling Prairie and New Carlisle
 - Communication is key in having an informed community
 - Need to figure out the vision for New Carlisle and plant those seeds early

HIGH SCHOOL FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

Our final community input came when we conducted live focus groups with four classes of students at New Prairie High School. The classes ranged in size from 10 to 25 students and totaled about 70 students who participated in these focus groups.

The students ranged from freshmen to seniors and helped provide useful insight into what the future residents of New Carlisle would like. Students were asked a variety of open-ended questions that encouraged discussion amongst their peers. The discussions were steered by our team to help maintain the quality of discussion and navigate the conversations towards building a better future through the Comprehensive Plan. Takeaways from the focus groups were:

- The majority of students prefer to leave New Carlisle after graduation
- Students felt that New Carlisle was a close-knit community, had an interesting downtown, was extremely walkable and was a good location between South Bend and La Porte
- Students cited the biggest detriments to New Carlisle were lack of employment for students, lack of restaurants, lack of retail stores, lack of entertainment and condition of the roads and sidewalks around town
- Students that were graduating were polled about their plans after school and listed IUSB, Purdue, Notre Dame and other local community colleges as the top secondary education destinations
- When asked about what positives they associated with other communities (Chicago, South Bend, La Porte and Valparaiso) students cited shopping, entertainment, music, food and jobs.
- When asked about what negatives they associated with other communities (Chicago, South Bend, La Porte and Valparaiso) students cited violence, shootings, drugs, traffic and homelessness.

- The majority of students enjoyed the outdoors but felt their options were limited in New Carlisle when it came to parks, beaches, swimming and other outdoor recreation.

As this study continues into its final phases additional public input and engagement will be collected and applied to the findings and recommendations of this plan.

Further input will be sought from the public via the use of public workshops and meetings. Discussion will include the following areas and documented using a Community Issues Mapping process:

- Identifying community assets
- Development Priority Sites
- Public Safety Concerns
- Undesirable Use along with Desired Use/Development
- Problem areas including street intersections, blighted areas, vacant/abandon areas, etc.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

An asset is defined as something that is useful or desirable within the community. As it pertains to the Comprehensive Plan, an asset is something the community residents, business persons, and/or elected/ appointed officials desire to maintain or enhance for the Town's long-term future. Community members identified a variety of destinations and features as assets throughout the Town. The more popular locations identified included the Town's parks (Memorial Park in particular), public safety facilities, historic portions of downtown, and town hall. The New Carlisle/Olive Township Public Library was also described as a great resource and asset for people of all ages.

INSERT MAP OF COMMUNITY ASSETS

PROBLEMATIC INTERSECTIONS

Problematic intersections are intersections within the Town that negatively impact the smooth, continuous flow of traffic, or pose safety concerns for area residents and visitors.

INSERT MAP OF PROBLEMATIC INTERSECTIONS

DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY SITES

A development priority site is a site that the community felt should be developed/ redeveloped in the near future, or that should take precedence over other sites in the Town and planning area. Oftentimes, these sites were identified as under-utilized or in poor condition and include sites that are currently for sale, are home to incompatible and/ or undesirable uses, or consist of buildings that are dated or suffering from functional obsolescence. Still other comments highlighted future potential in undeveloped areas where new development is desired.

INSERT MAP OF DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY SITES

UNDESIRABLE USE

An undesirable use is a use that community members find undesirable or objectionable within New Carlisle.

INSERT MAP OF UNDESIRABLE USE

PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS

Public safety concerns are areas that pose a concern to public safety and pedestrians throughout the community.

INSERT MAP OF PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS

DESIRED USE/DEVELOPMENT

Desired uses /developments are areas in the community that residents felt should be developed, or targeted for a specific land use. Community members identified a variety of existing uses and development that they deemed desirable and identified several desirable uses for potential development sites. Desired uses/developments were spread throughout the community. Several comments also identified parks or trails that were desired.

INSERT MAP OF DESIRED USE / DEVELOPMENT

POOR APPEARANCE

Many of the locations noted for poor appearance also appear as locations of undesirable uses or development sites. Poor appearance indicates that an area is unsightly in its current state, or that it could benefit from additional landscaping or aesthetic improvements.

INSERT MAP OF POOR APPEARANCE