



COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Pillar Team Members Meeting

Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 11:30 a.m.
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:

Mayor Mike McCann, Past City Mayor Rita Kissner, DDVB Executive Director Kirstie Mack, Defiance County Economic Development Executive Director Erika Willitzer, United Way Executive Director Abby Wolfrum, City Finance Director John Lehner, Next Gen Luis Rivera, Defiance Area Foundation Director Chris Yoder, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Sarah Tackett, MVPO Housing Coordinator Liz Keel, Defiance ProMedica President Doug Bush, Defiance Public Library Director Cara Potter, Executive Assistant Debbie Stevens

Members Absent: Defiance County Health Commissioner Jamie Gerken, Dream Center Guiseppe Blanchard, Defiance College President Richanne Mankey, Councilman John Hancock, Defiance City Schools Superintendent Bob Morton, Dream Center Kent Stamm, City Planner Niki Warncke

Remarks by Mayor Mike McCann: The Mayor welcomed all in attendance. There is a lot going on in the community and all are positive things except for the Pandemic.

PILLAR PROGRESS REPORTS:



ABBY WOLFUM and ERIKA WILLITZER: CONNECTIVITY PILLAR

ABBY WOLFRUM:

- Meeting with the Connectivity group is on her agenda to do along with Erika Willitzer.
- Transportation is a big topic. The Coordinated Plan is moving forward with MVPO Mobility Manager Kim Lammers and is posted on their website. Conversations are happening with K&P Medical who is looking to establish a non-profit arm of their business for transportation and are researching grant funding options. Trying to figure out where the responsibility lies within the City is a hot topic. Transportation is a huge need in Defiance but there are gaps to fill and assistance needed with community partners to continue. The Defiance County United Way staff are researching the worldwide Ride United Program to possibly roll into the Defiance United Way and may include some funding.
- The Flex Ride Program worked in prior years that ProMedica supported financially and without funding, it may not work again.

MIKE McCANN: Broadband is high on the list to get internet access in the community and in the country. Several community members and City staff have been meeting regularly and working hard on this topic. The Mayor met with Spectrum recently to discuss getting the county broadband and better broadband in the city. Also discussed issues he is hearing about their customer service which seems top-notch. If anyone has bad experiences with the customer service, the Mayor wants to hear about it. Making the community more walkable year-round is an idea for the future, which includes additional sidewalks or updating old prime location sidewalks in the city.



RITA KISSNER (CULTURE), RICHANNE MANKEY AND BOB MORTON (EDUCATION) CULTURE & EDUCATION PILLAR

CULTURE and EDUCATION: RITA KISSNER

- The Hamman Consultant Group was hired to help market the 1918 Building on Arabella Street. On September 7, 2021, a meeting was held with the 1918 Building Advisory Group and a few members of the Save Our Schools group where Jason Hamman discussed the marketing approach. Members of the Historic Homes of Defiance spent a great deal of time and energy working on the application to have the building included on the National Register of Historic Places and saving the integrity of the building exterior was of utmost importance. The best use of the building according to Jason Hamman was a boutique hotel, event space, office space, or even apartment/condos as options. Developing a plan for the building is the first step to ask for financial assistance and attract developers. A drone video or pictures of the building is needed. Jason suggested developing either a separate website or have a page on the City's website to draw attention to the building. The latter was preferred.
- Education: Rita Kissner is working with the Defiance Dream Center on workforce development and education. Director Bill Lammers met with Defiance Superintendent Bob Morton on using space in the Hinkle Building to hold classes. With interest from the State, Lydia Molholic, the Director of Development Services Agency, may visit Defiance again or have Bill Lammers come to Columbus to share information about the Defiance Dream Center and the life coaching skills they provide.

CARA POTTER: Library Update

- Currently working on the Archibald Worthington Cemetery Project which is a forgotten 19th Century private cemetery in rural Defiance County, which was the only "colored" cemetery located in the County in Highland Township by Ayersville and was abandoned. The Ayersville Water and Sewer District owns the land now but is currently under crops. There are no tombstones left to find an exact location, but Cara is working with KYK9 to use search dogs in late fall after crops are harvested to further search the area. This is on the Library website and receiving assistance from the Stroede Center on markers.
- A downtown Library idea is having a large meeting place and other so Cara is looking for a building downtown to add vibrancy and stability to the downtown. Clinton Street is busy and prefers a side street due to the age of folks using the facility. She looked at the Deluxe Cleaners Building as a possibility. The Trustees reviewed the space which could be a maker-space and teen space, retail space and story space for book sales, office space for a Literacy Coordinator to assist anyone with literacy options would be housed in this building. The back of building would be a meeting room with 149 seating and small huddle rooms, a kitchenette, rest rooms, and access in the back to open to the area around the lock.



ERIKA WILLITZER and JOHN LEHNER

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PILLAR
DEFIANCE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

ERIKA WILLITZER: Economic Development (DCED)

- The Mission of the Defiance County CIC is to increase investment in Defiance County and increase high paying wages. Their office is always looking at the long game of the prosperity of the community.
- There are several projects in the works and a few solid ones being announced soon. Defiance's location is prime with US 24 close by and is a driving force for economic development.
- Kortney Williams is the new workforce manager and Sonya Herber is the new office manager.
- Kortney visited Four County Career Center and offered to assist placing their 300 graduates in to open job positions in the County.



JAMIE GERKEN, DOUG BUSH, RICHANNE MANKEY

HEALTH & WELLNESS PILLAR
DEFIANCE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The Wellness Focus is on 4 Key Areas:

1) The Farmers Market, 2) Walking Program/Trails, 3) Research, and 4) The Health in all Policy

DOUG BUSH:

- This Committee hasn't met for a while, but work has not slowed. Working on community-based initiatives like the farmers market and walking programs, and other processes promoting health.
- The Kingsbury Park improvements look really nice with the repaving and the new Pickleball Park shows an active community.
- The group will refocus on non-covid related items.



LIZ KEEL AND RITA KISSNER

HOUSING PILLAR

DEFIANCE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

LIZ KEEL:

- The housing demand continues to be high, and the cost of building materials is still excessive.
- At the August 25, 2021, Housing Committee meeting, Nick Hirt, a small developer from Small Ridge Development, may have interest in building in Defiance.
- Another housing company connected to Benny Avina will review infill lots to build on in our community.
- Carol Yeager, a local realtor, stated there are 24 active listings which is very low for Defiance, and homes are selling as fast as they are listed.

MIKE McCANN: City Planner Niki Warncke mentioned that the buildings on the 300 block of Clinton Street on the 2nd and 3rd floors may have housing units built in the future. Using the Downtown Redevelopment District (DRD), which is an economic development mechanism available to municipalities in Ohio to promote the rehabilitation of historic buildings along with Tax Increment Financing (TIF), which is a public financing method used as a subsidy for redevelopment, infrastructure, and other community-improvements could assist with projects such as these.

Finding solutions during the pandemic at a time when material costs are high, new builders are not in the area, and current builders are so busy now is hard to figure out solutions. There is some good news in housing initiatives. A landowner may have interest in selling land to develop a residential sub-division.



LUIS RIVERA, JR., KIRSTIE MACK, CHRIS YODER, SARAH TACKETT

PERCEPTION PILLAR

DEFIANCE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

KIRSTIE MACK:

- The DDVB is promoting the annual Rib Fest in a unique way by highlighting the Defiance College volunteer groups for this event on social media to tie Defiance College students, parents, and staff to the City of Defiance.
- Defiance College will offer free admission for all of their home sporting events and will push this information out soon.
- A Community Day at Defiance College will be held on November 13, 2021, during the DC home football game vs Bluffton University and there is also a home men's basketball game that evening. In the spring, the Community Day will shift to the downtown area bringing in college students and personnel to visit the downtown and community offerings. This will help promote the City of Defiance as a college town. Kirstie is asking for ideas for this event from this group.

LOU RIVERA:

- This Committee has not met for a few months but there is a lot of activity happening in the community, such as St. Mary's Parish Festival last weekend.
- One suggestion was to have an event at the old football stadium at the 1918 Building such as live bands, food trucks, concerts, etc.
- "Parks Board" is the name of the Facebook page being developed which will carry over into Instagram and Twitter.

- There is a lot of buzz in the community regarding good perception.
- A future plan is to have a whiffle ball field at Bronson Park for all ages and genders. The small baseball field is still there and would be perfect for this sport. Painting lines and a sign is all that is needed.

MIKE McCANN: Two forces that act upon the perception upon our community is first, an external impact: Mike seldom hears negative feedback from out-of-towners and; second, an internal impact: for the most part is good, but there are a few negative impacts toward in the city on social media that could be harmful when generating new economic development plans or people looking to live here. This group mentioned it will be nipped in the bud by the Defiance lovers immediately. There will always be negative, unhappy people but the positivity will outweigh and rise above the negativity. The City is doing great things for the community. Having Defiance ambassadors to help promote the City in comments and their posts would help generate interest and positivity.

Next SPC Pillar Team Leader meeting: Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at 11:30 a.m. at City Hall Council Chambers.

Submitted by Executive Assistant Debbie Stevens