

# ***CRITICAL ISSUES REPORT***

## ***(PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY)***

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# Critical Issues Summary

## Public Engagement Process

The following is a summation of the issues raised during the City of Brunswick's Town Planning Workshop, stakeholder interviews and monthly meetings that took place throughout the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan with the Steering Committee (Planning Commission). These meetings were open to the public and often included the active participation of residents, business professionals and elected officials.

## Town Planning Workshop

The Town Planning Workshop was held on March 3, 2010 at Sherry's Restaurant in Brunswick. The workshop lasted from 5:00 pm till 9:00 pm and included 36 participants. The participants were divided into five (5) teams and instructed to discuss ten (10) topics relating to the past, present and future of Brunswick. Each team consisted of a secretary, cartographer and at least one (1) presenter. At the end of the workshop, a representative from each team presented their findings. Each team recorded their findings on maps of the City and workbooks provided to each team. The Consultant recorded notes throughout the workshop. A citizen survey was distributed at the close of the meeting. In total, 37 citizen surveys were completed and return to the planning team.

## Critical Issues

The demographic and socio-economic trends presented in the Existing Conditions report presented in Chapter 1 provided background factors that influence the key critical issue areas listed below. How the City deals with land use change within the context of economic and demographic change is a key focus of the Comprehensive Plan. The goals, objectives and policy statements presented in Chapter 4 were developed based on the findings obtained during the preparation of this Plan and summarized herein. In an attempt to address the collective response of all the citizens and Town Planning Meeting participants, the concerns were grouped into eight (8) categories.

Downtown Revitalization

Tourism

Economic Development

Parks & Recreation

Quality of Life

Transportation

Housing

Future Growth & Annexation

## Priorities

When asked to describe "the top priorities" facing the City of Brunswick the following items were identified:

**Downtown Revitalization.** Downtown Brunswick is not being utilized to its fullest potential. More retail and restaurants needed.

**Active Living.** The installation of sidewalks, lighting and landscaping is needed to encourage walking, healthy lifestyles and increase chance encounters among neighbors and create a spontaneous marketplace downtown.

**Planned/Orderly Growth.** Controlled, balanced growth- well thought out smart growth- nothing forced.

**Stricter, More Consistent Enforcement.**

**Maintaining High Standards.** The community must continue to invest in housing, the school system, commercial development, public recreation and infrastructure.

### **Downtown Brunswick**

A leading concern according to all teams that participated in the Brunswick Town Planning Workshop is that downtown Brunswick is not being utilized to its fullest potential. While many participants have fond memories of the vitality Downtown Brunswick once possessed, today most believe there are too many vacant storefronts, abandoned second floor apartments and aging infrastructure. The anticipated improvements to the sidewalks and private investment that has taken place over the last few years are signs that the future of downtown Brunswick is bright. The following list includes recommended downtown improvements provided throughout the public engagement process:

**Apartment Lofts:** All teams suggested restoring the second story apartments that once provided quality housing downtown and helped define the character, heritage and bring vitality downtown. Improving the upper stories of existing buildings to include living units and encouraging new buildings to have apartment lofts, that provide an affordable alternative to single family homes, is one of the leading revitalization strategies for downtown. The rationale for expanding the city's housing stock Downtown include:

Most of the upper floors in downtown are vacant or not being used to their fullest potential. Creating apartments, lofts or live/work units in these spaces addresses the two leading concerns regarding downtown Brunswick- high vacancy and lack of vitality.

Residents of the downtown would be more willing to patronize the businesses already located downtown, provide a built-in market for businesses wishing to locate downtown, and reduce vehicle miles traveled, thereby reducing carbon emissions.

**Streetscape Improvements:** Sidewalk, lighting, and landscape improvements are needed to help improve the appearance downtown and increase the confidence to invest. These improvements should be done in conjunction with other business recruitment and retention efforts to give people a reason to be downtown. Streetscape improvements alone will not attract people, however, they will enhance the downtown experience and increase the duration and frequency people visit downtown.

**Business Retention and Recruitment:** All teams agree that there are too many vacant buildings downtown. The Enyert Building, the old Theatre and pretty much the entire south side of 24 in midtown are eyesores. The City needs to focus on this area and encourage the following revitalization efforts:

Restore Brunswick's historic buildings by encouraging preservation efforts. Historic preservation and improvement to City Hall, the Shell Building, Russel Opera House, the Tom Kussman Building, and Elion Theatre are needed to restore vitality in the City's historic downtown.

Façade improvements are needed. Seek funding from the State's CDBG program, public/private partnerships or other funding sources.

Remove old buildings that have outlived their usefulness or provide a public health or safety threat.

Remove buildings that are located in the floodplain. Use these lots for outdoor gathering places, outdoor markets, parking and encourage restorative development on lots that are outside the flood limits.

Downtown Brunswick needs new businesses. Fill vacant buildings with businesses.

Better curb appeal needed. Focus attention on windows- make sure they are clean, classy and animated- put curtains upstairs- in residential units. Discourage boarded up storefronts.

Bring 3-phase electric to downtown to encourage larger users.

Provide incentives to bring businesses into Brunswick. Consider waiving taxes, rent, subsidies and low interest loans to help businesses get started.

Create a business incubator- offering low rent, tax abatement, etc.

Locate a recreation/civic center downtown

**Signage / Wayfinding:** Improve signage and way-finding downtown. Develop a consistent signage theme to help “brand” the downtown and inform people of the City’s attractions/destinations and help guide them to these places. (parks, businesses, river access, etc.)

**Public improvements:** All teams agreed that sidewalk improvements and lighting would have the greatest positive impact on revitalizing downtown. Other recommended public improvements included:

Planting trees across from Allen’s.

Camper access at public access

Bus parking provided downtown

Public restrooms downtown

### **Economic Development**

Brunswick residents want more variety in shopping and entertainment. Participants support businesses and community investments that offer more things to do and see, support active living and reduce the need to leave town. Businesses and activities Brunswick residents support include;

More sit-down restaurants.

A drive-in restaurant.

Winery

Better retail selection needed with a focus on specialty shops. Examples included a pecan store and/or shop that specialize in Missouri and locally made products, specialty food market with a focus on local cuisine, open air/outdoor retailers, frame/film/picture/camera shop or studio and a wide range of craft stores with interactive studios/galleries as well as a wide selection of general commercial retail such as a dollar store, department store, dry cleaning, medical services, pharmacy, dental services, outdoor outfitter with a wide selection of hunting cloths, fishing equipment, ammo and a bait shop, store with farming cloths (Orscheln Farm & Home) and a thrift store/resell shop.

A Community center that offers indoor and outdoor recreation, such as a YMCA, fitness bowling alley, billiards room, etc located in an area that is blighted.

Antique store(s). Make Brunswick an Antique Mecca.

Museum

Information center

Embrace the Amish and their culture. Entice these people to come- they draw tourism.\*

Farmers market.

Places for people to work, such as a factory that provides jobs.

More daycare service needed- so adults can work.

Need more- whatever works!

### **Quality of Life / Public improvements:**

All teams agreed that sidewalks and lighting throughout town would have the greatest positive public quality of life impact. Other recommended public improvements included:

More entertainment (indoor and outdoor). In general the residents want more things to do and see. Build upon the summer movie series. An indoor movie house would be nice. Brunswick needs more places for the youth to gather (teen town, community building, basketball, skateboard park, pool, bowling, soccer, etc.)

Expanding upon the City's current events and encouraging the development of new activities, such as a fair, to help promote the businesses and people of Brunswick, its rich heritage and designation as the Pecan capital of Missouri.

Organized promotion is needed- create a brochure listing places to go, stay, shop, hunt, fish, etc.

Make Brunswick known as a healthy community.

Encourage the establishment of walking groups.

Install sidewalks to the school and along all roads. Make sure kids can safely walk to school

Bike and walking trails needed. Bike trail is needed along the river and along the abandoned RR.

Better nutrition (restaurants, shopping, farmers market).

Youth events. Need more places for teens. Teen town needed.

Brunswick needs a better water source- better quality and affordability.

Utilities are too expensive

Sewer concerns- ensure lagoon meets specifications.

More daycare service needed.

Code enforcement- get on absentee landlords

The City needs to hire someone to coordinate and lead grant writing efforts for federal and state applications. The City should also take a proactive role in talking with County and State representatives regarding financing opportunities.

## **Housing**

Brunswick residents would like to see more affordable options such as apartments, duplexes, townhomes and apartments downtown or within walking distance to downtown. The City should develop and promote new entry level housing for young professionals who value walkability, history, nature. Currently, professionals, such as teachers, want to live in Brunswick but cannot afford it. Additional housing recommendations included:

Housing needed- all types

Senior housing needed

Demolition process is good. It was patterned after Slater, however it needs to be followed up with the installation of quality housing infill. Consider partnerships with Habitat for Humanity. Consider permitting modular homes with minimum standards, such as not allowing trailers, requiring pitched roofs, permanent foundations, landscaping, garages, etc.

Need more starter homes, 1st time homebuyers, entry level

Modular homes, not trailers, needed

Loft apartments

## **Tourism**

All participants in the public engagement process were asked how to expand upon and promote the City to make it more attractive to non-residents and enhance the Brunswick experience for all. They provided the following suggestions:

Need a pecan themed shore. Create a store that specializes in locally made products (pecans). Make it an interactive facility that is open year round and programmed with special/seasonal events and activities.

Need better promotion. Word of mouth advertising is all we have to offer. We need to start working together as a community, get serious about networking and educate each other of what Brunswick offers.

Be prepared to provide info to target businesses, families etc.

Obtain national exposure- Advertise in *Country Home* and other regional magazines.

Promote and expand upon the area's outdoor recreation opportunities. Promote river recreation. The Old Riverside Campground- is a missed opportunity. A KOA campground is one of the few attractions that would be permitted in the floodplain. A nice campground would help attract tourist/consumers and prolong their stay.

Develop and promote regional fishing tournaments (catfish, etc).

Corn maze, fall freshness, bow shoot, fairground functions (capitalize on seasonal events)

Expand the fairgrounds for the fall festival

History tour

Camper access needed (at public access)

Pumpkin patch

Sponsor a Bow shoot, regional fishing tournaments, etc.

### **Parks, Recreation**

Each participant was asked to describe the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the City's parks and recreation activities. The following findings were reported:

Maintain what we already have.

Summer Director of Recreation needed.

Community center is needed- health, exercise

Need a senior center

Parks need updating- install electric to all shelter houses. Improvements to the City's parks, especially the pool. Consider replacement of the pool with a modern aquatic facility with a waterslide. Park equipment needs replacement. Tennis courts and basketball courts needed.

Outdoor activities- bike, hike, boat, fish

Parks and Recreation for kids

Regional Trail

Parks are one of the city's strengths.

Improve signage and way-finding for all city parks and recreation destinations. Develop a consistent signage theme to help "brand" the Brunswick's Parks.

Create a park at 3 Sims (vacant buildings)

### **Transportation**

Connecting residential neighborhoods to schools, downtown, recreation areas and employment destinations are important land use considerations for all Brunswick residents. The following items identify the desired improvements needed for Brunswick's transportation system.

Street lighting needed along Y and 24  
Happy Hollow needs to be widened and paved  
Better pothole repair and general street maintenance needed  
Better school crossings needed  
Better signage needed  
Bus and RV Parking needed downtown  
Access- Post Office, Brunswick Pool  
Limited sidewalks  
Poor walkability

## **Future Growth & Annexation**

### **Commercial**

Need another nice casual restaurant with outdoor dining, a great atmosphere, quality service and great food.  
More specialty shops, a nice clothing store.  
A banquet center to hold receptions, showers & meetings (to celebrate life's milestones)  
Dry cleaners  
Highway 24 to the east will support more retail. Business growth should be directed along the north side of 24, east of downtown.

### **Residential**

Get tough on absentee landlords and take care of what we have before we annex additional land.  
Housing is needed- annex areas where people want to live  
Encourage lofts (downtown) and other types of affordable housing for 1<sup>st</sup> time homebuyers.

### **Downtown**

Downtown is viewed as a missed opportunity for affordable housing (lofts, 2nd story apartments, etc).  
Utilize vacant buildings and underutilized lots Downtown to house prospective businesses, entertainment and recreational uses.  
More historic preservation downtown- good job so far, be sure to keep it up.  
How can we fill-up downtown with tenants?  
Encourage future growth/utilization downtown  
Bus/RV/commuter parking lot needed  
Foot traffic is needed  
Better landscaping needed  
Downtown is great, but can be much better.  
Historic building stock- but in need of remodeling  
Sidewalk improvements are good; keep them up and plan annual improvements

### **Annexation**

Annex to Hwy 11 to accommodate future growth- housing and business  
Naturally, Brunswick wants to grow East and West along Hwy 24- target new development on empty lots.

Annex north to K.

Fairgrounds

More Businesses needed- annex areas that support business that would not otherwise want to be located downtown (factories, etc)

Adopt and enforcing zoning to promote planned growth

Extend sidewalks city-wide

Avoid floodplain- go north of 24

### **SWOT Analysis**

The discussion topics used in the Stakeholder meetings and the other public engagement activities were developed with the intent of identifying citizen defined values as they relate to the past, present and future of Brunswick. The responses to these questions, more specifically, help identify Brunswick's **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**. The following is a summary of the SWOT findings:

#### **Strengths:**

We have a major Highway running right through our town (Hwy 24). We need to use this to our advantage.

Local shops and retail are great- nurture them first, recruit new next.

Pecan festival- focus on pecans. Expand pecan festival to offer more things- need room- school could be used more.

Sherry's, Allen's, Railyard and SewSweet are great.

Retail survives on word of mouth and local patronage. Adjacent businesses work well together and refer customers to each other.

#### **Weaknesses:**

**Poor retail selection.** Retail is limited- most businesses close too early and are not open on the weekends. Most residents travel outside the city to shop, eat and entertain.

Downtown is dead, the vitality is gone. We fear there will be no downtown businesses.

Asian Carp- get ride of them!

Declining population

Fragmented leadership

Low self-esteem

Floodplain

Where's the federal stimulus money? Show us the Money!

Retention of the youth. Give college kids a reason to come home.

#### **Opportunities:**

Develop revitalization efforts after the Show-Me-Model.

Model downtown after Westin and Clarksville.

Use grant money to reinvest in the Downtown and increase occupancy downtown. Restore what we have to attract market-driven retail and rental space in upper levels for apartments.

Multipurpose community center. Youth center. Basketball courts, wedding receptions, etc.

Employment opportunities

More/better housing

Entertainment

Mississippi River Tour Boat- It once stopped at Brunswick and toured many other river towns. Start at St. Louis and head north – make it a destination, dinner cruise.

Vietnam boat – should be promoted and a more popular attraction

Make Brunswick a sought after destination for tourists and other visitors.

Changes needed are more comfortable lodging accommodations, more unique shops in the CBD.

Inviting river walk-hiking and biking trails close by.

Tasteful nightlife and entertainment

Antique mecca

Invest in downtown.

### **Threats**

Drawing quality attractions

Declining population

Vacant, dilapidated buildings and homes. Too many structures need paint and other maintenance.

Brain Drain. The community needs young professionals and salaried workers. Drawing and keeping young adult residents is a major threat.

Downtown: There's no reason to go downtown.

Retail Seepage.

Lack of Leaders: The beauty and charm of the city has been preserved- and made possible by a select few.

Economy: unemployment

Old Guard vs. New guard. Old people have been here forever. They don't want change, but they are getting older, new younger people are going to want some growth.

Business Hours: businesses close too early.

### **Positive Community Elements**

Participants were asked to identify positive features such as opportunity areas, positive development, town character, and/or special amenities. The following items were identified:

River access parking lot at Grand River

River access ramp and military boat.

Brunswick's Pecan festival does a good job of bringing people together

Downtown sidewalk improvements

Downtown- has remained pretty much the same, except some shops have left.

Virtually no crime.

The rivers, Grand/Missouri

Adequate affordable housing

The medical clinic

Healthy, active community: Chamber, churches, schools and other organizations do a good job of hosting events and bringing people together.

Business is good in Brunswick generally, but businesses rely on each other's ability to attract and cross sell to consumers. Repeat business is critical.

Strong Chamber.

