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Government, Opinion, Business

Route 30 Corridor Workshop Gathers Resident Input

Community members offer their wish list concerning characteristic appeal, eye sores and more in regard to the development of the Route 30 Corridor.

By Ann C. Piasecki | [Email the author](#) | September 27, 2012

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A \$60,000 grant from [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#) to the Village of New Lenox to plan the overall look of the Route 30 Corridor began last night with a community workshop to air ideas and goals. A wish list was prepared by residents and guided by planner John Houseal, of Chicago-based Houseal and Lavigne Associates.

Referred to as the [Route 30 Corridor Implementation Plan](#), Houseal elicited comments from residents in attendance at the workshop held at the Village Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to elicit suggestions and community input for development priorities, including what people might like to see developed along the strip in New Lenox and to identify the problems.

[Robin Ellis](#), community development director, along with [Nancy Hoehn](#), economic development director, encouraged residents to offer their feedback pertaining to top concerns confronting the Route 30 corridor. The concerns were categorized into topics that sought the most important issues; which public projects need addressing, and more.

Houseal handed out a survey that he hoped would gather a cumulative list of issues that would work as a stepping-off spot in a plan that is expected to be completed in about eight months.

Ellis cautioned the group that the corridor plan did not pertain to road widening. The plan is to determine identifiable goals that would lend itself to attracting the right kind of development build character and meet the needs of the community.

As reported by the residents, among the list of things to do:

1. Cleaning up blighted and dilapidated businesses and buildings
2. Create parking areas that reduced curb cuts while allowing for a smooth flow of traffic within commercial parking lots
3. Straightening out the Vine Street disconnect
4. Landscaping
5. Establishing a sense of character
6. Building on the style of the already established Village Commons Campus
7. Attracting development
8. Creating a downtown atmosphere that would invite pedestrian traffic
9. Building areas that are both bicycle and pedestrian friendly
10. Limiting the number of fast-food restaurants and attracting fine dining



PHOTOS (3)



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In an effort to gather more input, the village has added a Route 30 Corridor Development page to its website. [Comments will be accepted.](#)

Diane Batson, who grew up in New Lenox, told Houseal that she'd like to make sure that beyond residents and business that other stakeholder, including the Metra train station and others partner with the village in creating a plan.

For other, the lack of a turn lanes at Hickory Road and Route 30 has been frustrating. "We've been complaining about that for 30 years," said Jim Wirt.

Others complained that it's impossible to turn left out of some of the businesses on the south side of Route 30 just west of Cedar Road.

For John Loecke, a resident of New Lenox since 1974, some beautification measures would go a long way. "I'm very interested in the appearance of New Lenox. I'd like some landscaping along the medians (and those that are scheduled to be built.)"

For others, the priority for improvement is appropriate signage. "You go to Tinley Park and Oak Park Avenue has signs telling you where things are. I'm tired of being asked where the police station is," added Batson.

Wirt, who once owned the property where the Village Commons Campus is now situated, is a cheerleader for New Lenox. "We want to see this area develop, and we want to be careful. We want to make sure it's done right.

"New Lenox is a beautiful fertile field and it's ready to blossom. I'm very much in favor of New Lenox, and I want to see it grow properly."

He pointed out quality characteristics and features that make the community attractive, including good schools and plenty of room for the right kind of development.

Meanwhile, Mark Muehnickel, chairperson of the [Planning and Zoning Committee](#), said he appreciated the opportunity to hear the comments of others and to voice a few of his own. "I think I like the fact that (this Route 30 Corridor Plan) solicits from the community. We had people who have lived here from one to 50 years."

Speaking of the workshop and its availability online, he said, "It really brings up unique ideas."

Personally speaking, he said, "I'd like to see a secondary road behind KFC (Restaurant) and the (Village) Commons" develop. That whole swath of land between Vine Street and the [Village Commons](#) could use revitalization.

Professional planning outlook

Hueseal said his firm is about collecting data and information from the community. "We want more than a general plan." In about eight month's time, his firm will have coordinated the facts and figures. Then together with comments and insights from village officials, a plan will be produced to identify funding, to highlight matters that can be immediately implemented and prepare for long-term goals.

Some of the projects can come about as a result of zoning and others depend on the establishment of partnerships between public and private entities. Ultimately the plan is expected to include funding opportunities, such as grants, combination funding with state and federal projects, private endeavors and more, he said.

This was the first of a series of upcoming community workshops, added Ellis.