

86 W. Center Street
PO Box 757
Douglas, MI 49406
269-857-1438 Office
269-857-4751 Fax

City of the Village of Douglas

Memo

To: Douglas Advisory Committee
From: Ryan Kilpatrick, AICP
Director of Community Development
Date: December 2, 2011
Re: Blue Star Community Forum

This memo is intended to provide a brief summary of the community forum held on November 16th and regarding the Blue Star Corridor planning endeavor.

The community forum was broadly considered a successful event in which we gathered a significant amount of public opinion from property owners, shopkeepers, residents and public officials. Issues of walkability, landscaping, land use, transportation infrastructure and parking configurations were discussed.

The format of the community forum included a 30 minute presentation from City staff describing the existing conditions and progress made by the Douglas Advisory Committee to date. This included a brief review of the community opinion survey results, stakeholder interviews and successful projects already completed by the DAC, including the Douglas Post Office garden (Nern Memorial Garden) and the Your Town workshop.

Following the presentation, guests were asked to respond to a series of images which represented existing or potential future conditions along the Blue Star Highway. Following a presentation of the images, we held a large group discussion about each image and how well it related to the group's desired future for the Blue Star Highway.

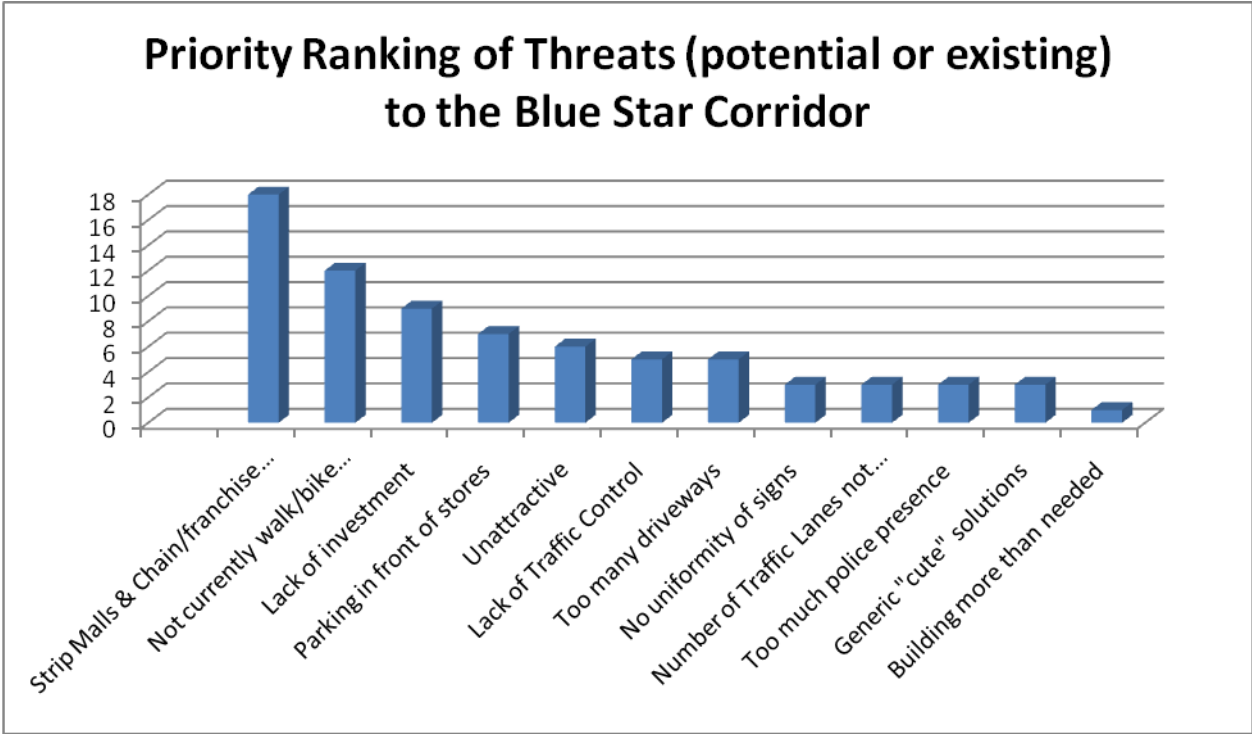
The next activity involved breaking into small groups of 5 to 8 participants to discuss the major strengths and weaknesses of the corridor and then to prioritize those strengths or weaknesses in order of importance (i.e. which issues should be addressed first, second, third, etc.).

Finally, each of the small groups were asked to create a vision statement which expressed the desires of the group members pertaining to the future of the Blue Star Corridor. These vision statements were then shared with the large group.

A summary of the small group activity is included in the attached documents. A listing of all strengths and weaknesses identified by the small groups are included, with a priority ranking next to each item. A larger number next to a topic indicates that it was more important to the group than those topics with lower numbers.

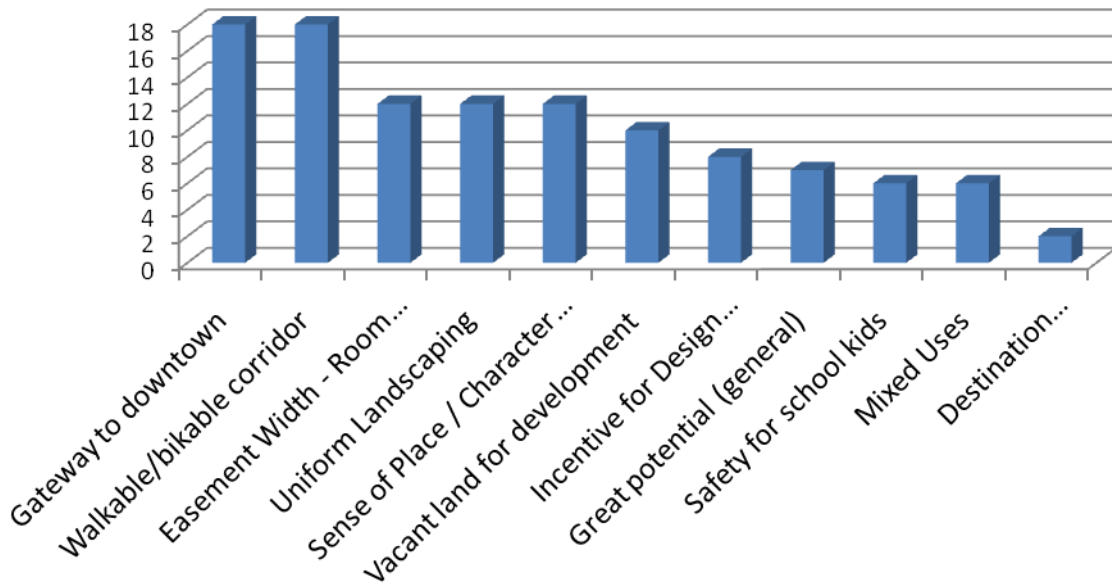
A topic without a number indicates that members of the small groups did not feel the issue was of adequate significance to assign a priority ranking. You may note that some of the topic descriptions are fairly self explanatory and others may require some interpretation. As we move forward with our next steps in the process, one of our goals should be to clarify any issues which are not yet clear.

I have also included the list of vision statements provided by the small groups as well as a general bar graph which illustrates the priorities expressed by respondents to the Community Opinion Survey which was issued in September, 2011.



Threats/Weaknesses for Blue Star Highway	Priority Ranking
Strip Malls & Chain/franchise establishments - lack of character	18
Not currently walk/bike friendly	12
Lack of private investment	9
Parking in front of stores (prefer side or rear parking)	7
Unattractive	6
Lack of Traffic Control	5
Too many driveways	5
No uniformity of signs	3
Number of Traffic Lanes not uniform	3
Too much police presence	3
Generic "cute" solutions	3
Building more than needed	1
Current setback requirements are not observed (excessive non-conformities)	0
Seasonal Jobs	0
Lack of Affordable / Workforce Housing	0
Lack of directional signage	0
High taxes	0
No visual identity / lack of cohesive community character	0

Opportunities (existing or potential) On Blue Star Highway



Strengths/Opportunities for Blue Star Highway	Priority Ranking
Gateway to downtown	18
Potential for walkable/bikable corridor	18
Width - Room for improvements	12
Uniform Landscaping	12
Sense of Place / Character of Community	12
Vacant land for development	10
Incentive for Design Improvements	8
Great potential (general)	7
Safety for school kids	6
Mixed Uses	6
Destination businesses/visibility	2
Near water / View of water	0
Texture	0
Established Businesses / Small / Local Business	0
Joins to halves of City	0
Plenty of traffic	0
Access to 196 (Chicago/Grand Rapids/Indianapolis)	0
Business visibility	0

The following statements were provided by the small groups. These are intended to describe the desired future of the corridor as expressed by our workshop participants.

Vision Statements – Blue Star Highway

“In 2018 the Blue Star Corridor will be a uniform roadway from Exit 36 (196) to the Bridge - three lanes all the way through. Along the entire corridor will be wide, usable sidewalks with safe, obvious crosswalks.”

“In 2018 the Blue Star Corridor will include additional traffic controls (lights, stops or other traffic calming measures) which will provide breaks in traffic for motorists to turn onto or cross the road and for pedestrians to safely use crosswalks.”

“Sign ordinances will be improved & enforced to reduce or eliminate old, unattractive, or non-conforming signage.”

“In 2018, the Blue Star Corridor will be dressed with significant landscape improvements, including street trees, landscaped pedestrian refuge islands and medians where appropriate to add elements of safety, beauty and interest to the entire corridor.”

“In 2018, the Blue Star Highway will be a thriving mixed use corridor which provides well paying jobs for members of the local community.”

Douglas Community Opinion Survey
 Respondents indicating an issue to be “Very Important”
 Sorted by Age Group

