

River walk, theater district among wishes

By John Estridge

Editor

Imagine walking along a river walk in Brookville, which connects the Whitewater Canal Trail with Brookville Town Park.

While strolling along the river walk, taking a detour to see what is playing at the theater district. And while there, being overcome with the delightful odors emanating from the sidewalk café. Finding a table along the new, well-illuminated sidewalk near the café while enjoying a beverage and a delicious snack, one can enjoy the fountain bubbling from the courthouse lawn.

Fantasy?

Maybe not.

Those were some of the visions said aloud during a well-attended community meeting of Main Street Brookville Tuesday night, April 5.

Fifty-seven residents' heads were counted in the Schilling Center for the two-and-a-half hour

meeting.

"It's great to see this many people show up," Tom West of KZF Design said.

West said his company does this type of meeting in Indianapolis, Dayton and Cincinnati and does not have as many people show up in those places as did Tuesday night.

"This makes me see that you care about your town," West said.

Participants sat at tables in the Schilling Center. After West gave a brief overview, which included the project's parameters: Main Street from Third Street to Eighth Street and Progress Street on the west to Franklin Avenue on the east. Tom Sturmer, an engineer with the Schneider Corp., talked about infrastructure in that designated area.

According to Sturmer, the infrastructure in the area is very dated.

"It's a fairly old sewer," Sturmer said. "Several are a combination
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John Estridge photo

Marilyn Davis (standing) explains her table's wish list during the Main Street Brookville brainstorming meeting Tuesday night, April 5. Seated at the table in the forefront are, counterclockwise: Ed Roberts (back to camera), RoAnn Thompson, Earl Stenger and Wayne Bauer.

Wishes

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sanitary and storm sewer. (Local officials) have been trying to separate.

Laterals to individual businesses in the Main Street area are also old.

Infrastructure is important in planning improvements because if infrastructure is ignored and improvements are made at street level, then when the infrastructure has to be upgraded, the street level improvements will be destroyed in the subsequent digging.

Sturmer also rated the area's sidewalks.

After Sturmer, Douglas E. Harnish, president of Gem Public Sector Services of Dayton, Ohio, gave a talk about Brookville's demographics.

While population will remain stable through 2009, the number of households will increase by 14 percent.

This is due to the aging of the population. By 2009, 63 percent of Brookville residents will be 65 or older.

Median income is keeping pace with inflation and will increase by \$6.5 million by 2009. Franklin County residents will do better with their income growth increasing to \$118.7 million. Most of that will come from new households in the county.

Following the talks about infrastructure and demographics, those attending were shown a series of slides featuring various scenes from small towns and cities. People were asked to rate the scenes from negative five to five.

After rating all the scenes, West went back through the individual slides and people discussed why they gave the scores, emphasizing their likes and dislikes.

Broken down into tables, people

Eliminates

were asked to make their wish lists. These were then put on large sheets of paper and affixed to the walls around the Schilling Center. A spokesperson from each table discussed the table's choices.

Almost everyone present wanted something positive done with the Valley House, whether it is restored or torn down.

As many people who asked that something be done with the Valley House also asked for the termination of parking meters downtown.

Most wanted some sort of connection for Main Street with the Whitewater River's west fork.

Some wanted to extend the district south to include the bridge entering town.

Popular wishes included a café, improved lighting and sidewalks, the theater district, historically correct facade paint colors, and the removal of overhead wires.

West said the next step includes taking the input and putting into a format the Main Street Board can digest.

He said his company is the conduit for taking the community's plan and making something workable.

Main Street President Sid Bradley said money is available.

"There is no reason Brookville can't be part of it," Bradley said. "Exciting things are going to happen."

Membership meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, April 19. One will be held at noon in the Midtown Tavern while the second will be at 6:30 p.m. in the Schilling Center.

"We want to generate interest in membership and get all of Brookville involved," Bradley said. "To carry this out will be an ongoing process. We want to establish a membership base."

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