

Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update, 2005

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM 11/1/2004

Strategy Overview

To prepare a relevant updated Comprehensive Plan we must recognize at the outset who has an interest or concern in what the Comprehensive Plan says. This is a potentially large audience! Not everyone in this “audience”, however, is willing or able to participate in the plan preparation and review process. In practice only a limited number of interested persons will actually participate using the traditional citizen involvement techniques; such as public hearings, workshops, open houses, etc. Typically many of these individuals have personal interests or agendas they are pursuing. This reality does not release the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, or staff from an obligation to obtain citizen input from as broad a cross section of Rolla’s residents as is practical.

The following paragraphs will outline a citizen involvement strategy that will provide a balanced approach for the Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update. The challenge is to develop a participation program that stimulates citizens to come up with good, workable ideas and encourages broad support for the plan while reducing the influence of special interest groups.

- I. **Planning Advisory Committee:** The City Council with Planning and Zoning Commission input would designate a Planning Advisory Committee consisting of Council/Commission members and representatives from various vital community organizations; such as UMR, Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce, Rolla School District, Phelps County Regional Medical Center, businesspersons, the development community; the media, and others. The responsibilities of the Committee will be to:
 - A. Identify a community “Vision” for Rolla’s future and to keep this “big picture” in focus during the planning process;
 - B. Be a consensus builder in the community;
 - C. Serve as a guide and sounding board for staff during plan preparation and review;
 - D. Be an active proponent of the comprehensive planning process;
 - E. Oversee the implementation of the citizen involvement strategy;
 - F. Share knowledge of the area’s assets and key issues;
 - G. Attend the majority of Committee meetings and actively participate;
 - H. Help articulate goals and objectives;
 - I. Evaluate alternative policy statements and development scenarios;
 - J. Review draft documents and offer feedback; and
 - K. Commit to the successful implementation of the Plan.

The Planning Advisory Committee would, ideally, consist of between 12-15 members. The committee would meet periodically throughout the plan

Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update, 2005

development and approval process, and then disband as the plan update is concluded.

We would also designate a “Technical Advisory Committee” consisting of key staff persons, such as the Public Works Director, Parks Director, Finance Department Director, City Administrator, an RMU representative, and others. This group would meet as needed to address issues raised during the plan update process.

- II. **Citizen Attitudinal Survey:** The City Council and staff have successfully used community attitudinal surveys to determine how Rolla’s citizens feel about the issues confronting their city. Previous surveys have been used to support actions taken by the City Council, such as the multi-million dollar capital improvements program for street reconstruction. The City should use an outside contractor with extensive experience in survey applications to provide a good level of confidence in the results and to insure proper sampling techniques are used.

An attitudinal survey should be conducted early in the planning process to provide a baseline for evaluating issue priority. The survey results can be used to provide background perspective for the issues raised during the planning process.

- III. **Public Information Program:** The City will utilize several techniques to help maintain communication with Rolla citizens. A Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update link will be established on the City’s web site. A periodic (three or four issue) newsletter will be sent to community households to advise citizens about the progress of the plan and when workshops and open houses will be held, among other items of interest. Plan update material will be sent to local media and will be displayed in the Rolla Public Library and other public places for review. Additional techniques will be considered as needed and as opportunities present themselves, such as: radio interviews, service club talks, chamber luncheon talks, etc.
- IV. **Focus Group Interviews:** Early in the update process a series of focus group sessions will be held consisting of four to ten members. These small groups will allow more in-depth discussions of specific topics. One of the tasks of the Planning Advisory Committee will be to identify these individuals or organizations to participate in this process.
- V. **Work Shops:** Staff, with the support of the City Council, Planning Advisory Committee, and Technical Advisory Committee will conduct at least six workshops in Rolla – perhaps one in each ward as the first draft of the Comprehensive Plan is completed. The workshop mode is particularly effective when citizens consider alternative development

Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update, 2005

proposals and major capital improvements with their impacts on specific areas of the community.

- V. **Public Hearings:** Public hearings will be conducted as required by state statute and local ordinance.

Estimated Cost

The two most expensive components of the citizen involvement process will be the attitudinal survey and newsletters. An attitudinal survey of this type may cost as much as seven to eight thousand dollars. The newsletters, with printing cost and postage, should require another six to eight thousand dollars. The number of issues mailed and the use of

color will most impact newsletter cost. Though expensive, the survey and newsletters are vitally important to the City's effort to secure public input and to maintain open communication and good public relations.

The remaining elements will certainly have a cost associated with them that must be considered. Advertising costs, printing costs, and other materials used during the workshops/open houses and the public hearing process will require an additional investment of approximately \$ 1,500. The use of an outside consultant to assist in the visioning/goal setting process has some merit to maintain objectivity, but may add several thousand dollars to the cost.

The total cost to implement the citizen involvement strategy as outlined may range from \$ 17,000 to \$ 20,000.

Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update, 2005

PROPOSED PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

12/27/2004

1. City Council – 3
2. Planning and Zoning Commission – 3
3. Rolla Board of Education – 1
4. UMR – 1
5. RMU – 1
6. Phelps County Commission – 1
7. Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce – 1
8. Phelps County Regional Medical Center – 1
9. At large members – 3 (possible criteria used to select members)
 - a. Development community – builder, banker, realtor, appraiser
 - b. Small business person
 - c. Community “activist”-type persons – NAACP, Bob Nash
 - d. Environmental community – Audubon Society
 - e. Library Board
 - f. Arts Rolla!

15 total