

Stakeholder Questions

Economic Development

1. **What do you see as the major economic development challenges in the next 10-20 years?** Shifting the perception and definition of “economic development” in the taxpayer’s/taxpayers’ mind. Broadening what economic development is by emphasizing cultural capital, historic icons (like Ladyman’s Café...) that bring value that, while perhaps it is not Super Wal-Mart, it adds community character that is priceless. Also, conveying the costs of economic development incentives to citizens is very important. In local government, from the Council perspective, these costs must be described by strengthening the tax abatement compliance reviews process, and examining the use of TIF. Economic Development should also get closer, in the next 10-20 years to addressing peak oil, dependence on foreign oil, ultimately fostering the protection of local environment for a local, healthy, sustainable, economy.
2. **What do you see as the major economic development opportunities in the next 10-20 years?** Innovation, truly modern approaches, to urban planning that integrates the components of sustainable living with synergy of city-county-university-and small businesses—technology being a major link between all the entities---the city of Bloomington, being “artistic,” ought to be able to commit to a design sensibility that would, for instance, foster following through with The Limestone Initiative...which would interface very well with both the County and IU arenas of diverse economic development “architects.” (By architect, I mean both literally and figuratively.)
3. **In response to #1 & #2, what plans are in place to address these challenges and seize these opportunities?** The Limestone Initiative has been presented to the Convention and Visitor’s Bureau commission, board, etc. The last two elections have ensured that representatives from the community will be interested in the diversity of opinion about what constitutes economic development. Mayor Kruzan of Bloomington has been working to “broaden” the definition of economic development. The Living Wage initiative in City Government has ensured that when tax abatements are given to a new company, they must guarantee a living wage—were the county to adopt such an incentive, a step towards meaningful, quality jobs being created in Monroe County would be conducive towards bringing people sound economic development.
4. **What do you see as weaknesses in County-wide economic development efforts?** Lack of communication to citizens and taxpayers of interesting ideas, clear long-term plans (particularly road expansion) and poor justification for development or compliance approval. The weaknesses are in a lack of political will or meaningful effort to convey to the public that “the geography of nowhere” doesn’t have to be the template for Monroe County---again, to mention Super Wal-Mart as an example: is that the best offering to citizens?
5. **What do you see as strengths in County-wide economic development efforts?** The strength lies in the fact that Monroe County is the most business-friendly place in Indiana and that the City of Bloomington is tolerant of diversity. People choose to stay, reside, or remain in Bloomington because it is different from the rest of

Indiana—forcing it to look like “Anytown” and to feel like “anytown” undermines what an asset it is to the state of Indiana.

Residential Development

1. **What do you see as the major challenges facing residential development in Monroe County in the next 10-20 years?** Quality and truly affordable housing, addressing homelessness.
2. **What do you see as the major opportunities for residential development in Monroe County in the next 10-20 years?** Doing things differently—with design, materials, planning that reflect talent and quality.
3. **What do you see as the strengths of the current residential development pattern in the County?** Lip service being paid to new ideas, concepts—the first step in shifting the current paradigm.
4. **What do you see as the weaknesses of the current residential development pattern in the County?** Lip service that stops when action is taken by governing bodies.

Public Facilities, Transportation and Services

1. **What deficiencies (if any) in public facilities, transportation, or service delivery can you identify?** Reliance on cars, trucks, and outmoded concepts about roads.
2. **What strengths in public facilities, transportation, or service delivery service can you identify?** Developing interest in public transportation—Bloomington Transit is working hard on de-stigmatizing bus transport. I am personally interested in the GO21 initiative that supports freight rail.

Environmental Conservation

1. **What do you see as the most pressing environmental issues facing the County in the next 10-20 years?** Water, protecting it and keeping it plentiful. Addressing the ongoing after effects of PCB contamination---avoiding history repeating itself.
2. **What do you see as the solutions for those issues?** Vigilant outreach with good information and concerted recognition of the realities of local encroachment and violation of natural resources.
3. **What do you see as the best environmental opportunity for the County in the next 10-20 years?** Green initiatives in building that would set MoCo apart from the conventional models of development.
4. **What are the County’s weaknesses regarding environmental conservation?** Not being at the forefront for voicing the concerns of citizens who recognize that environmental conservation is a great part of bolstering our local economy.
5. **What are the County’s strengths regarding environmental conservation?** Newly-elected officials who will be incoming in 2007—among them, representatives who will build upon the foundation laid by a few officials who have championed environmental care and protection.

Inter-governmental Cooperation

1. **What do you see as weaknesses in the County’s relationships with the cities and towns located within the County?** The main weakness is a condescending and presumptuous attitude towards the value of township, neighborhood governance—a lack of regard for grassroots energy, organization, and community spirit and sense of place. The MPO needs to be more transparent to the public so that the citizens understand the role of metropolitan planning and the sphere of influence it has over development---this body is not one that conducts substantive outreach to citizens at the present time.
2. **How do you think the County can improve these relationships?** Recognize their value, seek the input of township, neighborhood representatives. For example, the Indian Creek township stance against I-69 is a major statement that the County should acknowledge formally. County elected officials could do more to alert the public about meetings of bodies like the MPO, Plan Commission, Economic Development Commission, etc.
3. **What do you see as weaknesses in the County’s relationship with its neighboring counties and the larger region?** Apathy and a tacit dismissal of supporting neighboring counties’ efforts (or lack of effort) to improve their own economies—Proactive acknowledgment would alleviate Monroe County from being a “doughnut county.”
4. **How do you think the County can improve these relationships?** Work on them, develop public relations with their governments, leaders, and working people—and, for that matter, their out-of-work people.
5. **What do you see as strengths in the County’s relationships with the cities and towns located within the County and with its neighbors?** The MoCo Planning Department’s comprehensive community planning groups, discussions, etc. are wonderful starts to strengthening relations with people who desire their cities and towns to be nicely, vibrantly planned and defined.
6. **What do you think the cities and towns located within Monroe County can do to improve their relationship with the County?** I believe it is up to the County to hold out the olive branch for it looms larger in peoples’ consciousness. County government needs to do whatever they can to boost their confidence, support their small businesses, and well-chosen infrastructure (for instance, technology access in remote parts of the county.)
7. **What plans (if any) does your organization have for interaction with Monroe County in the upcoming few years?** Council needs to work hard to exercise the democratic process fairly, proactively, and with constant development of modern tools to create a budget that reflects the priorities and values of the citizens. The new majority on the Council will be one that is more in tune with the diverse people of Monroe County. Ensuring that the Council is a healthy body requires being in touch with citizens. However that can be fostered is my goal and mission as a public servant.

Other?

When opponents of some of the concepts I’ve outlined begin co-opting the language of Progressives (words like “sustainability” or jargon like “arts-economy” or “green-

building” or “snout house”) it is a sign that the “shift in the paradigm” is taking root. When reviewing the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan is deeper, I hope that these words will be attributed to the leaders who have introduced those concepts to the citizens, public elected officials, appointees, in order that the lexicon is used meaningfully. A historic backdrop to the raising of consciousness about the pitfalls of “sprawl” and “the growth machine” and “the geography of nowhere,” as it is demonstrated locally in Monroe County, would be a valuable statement-synopsis for the Comp Plan to include for future reference.

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