

2010 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Introduction

Under Indiana Code 36-7—14-13, the Redevelopment Commission (“RC” or “Commission”) must prepare an annual Report outlining the activities of the Commission, the members, and the expenditures made during 2010. The following is a summary of the year and then a recap of each month. A list of members, the dates of all meetings, and the budget/expenditures for the year follows.

Summary

Due to the downturn in the economy, the Commission focused on developing plans for a new Redevelopment Area for the Commercial Corridors. The Plan will allow tax increment financing and tax abatement for the remainder of the business corridors that were not included within the first Redevelopment Plan for the Downtown. It will allow a “greening” of the corridors, prepare for high tech business, and provide basic building requirements for the area. The Commission viewed this time as an opportunity to prepare and to place Highland in a unique position for future growth.

The Commission also provided a public offering on the former Bult Oil site located at 2605 Condit Avenue. Only one bid was received and that fell short of the \$105,250.00 offering price. The bidder did not have a plan for the property at this time. The Commission will continue to seek possible buyers for the property.

Another focus of the Commission during 2010 was the development of the Highland Main Street program. This group will begin as a subcommittee of the Redevelopment Commission until it is fully developed and stable. The purpose of Highland Main Street will be to encourage new businesses and retain current businesses in the downtown and to improve and enhance the downtown area. Commissioners explored the possibility of providing a façade improvement program under Highland Main Street. A student at Purdue Calumet volunteered to develop a data base listing businesses in the Main Street boundaries, the light industrial area, and the new Redevelopment Area under development.

The Commission also assisted Circle Buick GMC with its efforts to locate in Highland by recommending their application for tax abatement. Tax abatement was approved by the Town Council and work has begun at their new location, 2440 45<sup>th</sup> Street.

Other issues that came before the Commission included a review of the Storm Water Run-off Policy as it relates to small one lot commercial developments and a change in the kiosk lease policy to encourage greater participation in the program.

Several grants were applied for including the new Northwest Indiana Economic Development District’s CED Plan, Indiana Lake Michigan Coastal Grant, and Congressman Visclosky’s request for projects.

In addition, the Director is the contact point for businesses seeking information about Highland. A data base of contacts is maintained and networking events are attended to promote Highland.

The following is a monthly summary of Commission meetings.

January

During the yearly organizational meeting of the Commission, the following were appointed by the Town Council to serve on the Redevelopment Commission for 2010: Greg Kuzmar, Tom Crowel, Bridget DeYoung, Dominic Noce, and Michael Maloney. Officers were elected: Tom Crowel, President, Greg Kuzmar, Vice President, and Dominic Noce, Secretary. The School Town of Highland reappointed Luanne Jurczak and Larry Vassar to the Redevelopment Commission.

*Resolution 2010-01, A Resolution to Authorize Compensation for Certain Employees to be Derived from the Proper Fund of the Redevelopment Department of the Town of Highland, Lake County* was approved. This resolution authorized compensation for the Director, Cecile Petro, the Recording Secretary, Cecile Petro, and the Attorney, Carol Green-Fraley.

President Crowel tabled *Resolution 2010-02, A Resolution Authorizing the Commission to Enter into an Agreement with a Firm for Professional Services for a Wetland Assessment and Memorandum*. This item will be tabled until further information is received from vendors.

*Resolution 2010-03, A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission Approving a Retainer Agreement for Financial Advisory Services and General Redevelopment Consulting to the Highland Redevelopment Commission* was approved. This resolution provides funding for financial consulting.

*Resolution 2010-04, A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission Approving an Agreement for Legal Services to the Highland Redevelopment Commission for 2010* was approved. This resolution provides funding for legal consulting.

A meeting schedule and the 2009 Annual Report were approved by the Commission. The 2010 Goals were tabled until they could be reviewed and discussed further.

During the Study Sessions, the Commission discussed several issues. First, the Director shared a letter from a developer, Cressy & Everett/Grubb & Ellis, stating that they are not currently interested in developing the North end of Kennedy Avenue. In addition, Commissioners will look at possible alternatives to meeting with owners of property and businesses in the light industrial area. The Director also provided information on the insurance claim for two damaged kiosks. Lastly, the Redevelopment Commission discussed the possibility of creating a new Redevelopment Area for the business corridors in order to allow Tax Increment Financing and Tax Abatement.

#### February

*Resolution 2010-01, A Resolution to Authorize Compensation for Certain Employees to be Derived from the Proper Fund of the Redevelopment Department of the Town of Highland, Lake County* was approved. The resolution needed to be reapproved due to inaccurate salary amounts listed on the resolution.

*Resolution 2010-02, A Resolution Authorizing the Commission to Enter into an Agreement with a Firm for Professional Services for a Wetland Assessment and Memorandum* was tabled again. The Commission decided not to go forward with this effort at this time.

*Resolution 2010-05, A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission Approving an Agreement for Kiosk Repair* was approved. Parts from two damaged kiosks will be combined to produce one working kiosk.

The 2010 Highland Redevelopment Commission Goals were approved. They are as follows:

#### Urgent Goals for the Redevelopment Commission

1. Work with developers that have an interest in redeveloping/developing in the Redevelopment Area.
2. Identify and determine the future location of the public works garage and the Sharp Athletic Complex, so that development may occur at this location.
3. Offer tax increment financing (TIF) in the Redevelopment Area and the Economic Development Area to developers who will abide by our Design Standards and make a significant contribution to the redevelopment of Highland.
4. Encourage restaurants to locate in the Redevelopment Area by informing them of the benefits of the Riverfront Development District program.
5. Determine the "best and highest" future use direction of the Light Industrial areas within the Town of Highland by continuing to meet with property owners and other stakeholders within the Light Industrial Areas.
6. Explore the feasibility of establishing a foundation to develop plans and strategies for assembling parcels of real estate of sufficient size for the purpose of promoting and controlling the types of new construction and supporting the rehabilitation of existing structures, new machinery and equipment.
7. Revise the Redevelopment Area Loan program and accept applications from businesses that will remodel or rehab their exteriors to meet the Architectural and Design Standards and Guidelines.
8. Decide upon a course of action in reference to a Master Developer for the Redevelopment Area.  
Work with local colleges and universities in our redevelopment efforts, especially as they relate to attracting technology and life science businesses to Highland.
9. Develop an economic development website to clearly reflect the opportunities within Highland.  
Explore the possibility of creating additional tax abatement and tax increment financing areas within Highland.

#### Maintenance Goals for the Redevelopment Commission

1. Utilize the Design Advisory Committee so that the process of development/redevelopment will be more efficient for developers and current business/property owners.
2. Continue to offer tax abatement within Economic Revitalization Areas and Economic Development Target Areas to potential developers and owners to upgrade those areas, retain or create jobs, and increase the property tax base of the town.
3. Continue to recruit and meet with potential businesses to locate within Highland; and assist and encourage existing businesses with expansion plans.
4. Continue to participate in local and regional organizations, and attend professional meetings and conferences, in order to develop contacts for redevelopment and become informed about issues that may impact future development in Highland.

5. Continue to provide information to the community about the Redevelopment Commission and its activities by providing articles for the Town's newsletter and by updating the website on a timely basis.
6. Acquire part-time clerical assistance for routine office tasks.  
Continue to participate in the Lake County Housing Task Force to address housing related issues and the Propel Conference Group to increase entrepreneurship and job opportunities.
7. Continue to apply for funding opportunities whenever possible.
8. Continue to participate in the 2010 Census committee to achieve a full census count for the town.

The Director coordinated efforts with other department heads to submit applications for the new CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan), a region-wide economic development not-for-profit corporation. Two projects submitted by the Redevelopment Commission included 1) installing conduit for high speed fiber along Kennedy Avenue and Indianapolis Boulevard and 2) demolishing and rebuilding the Public Works Garage on Kennedy Avenue.

The Commission submitted its phytoremediation project at the former Bult Oil site (2605 Condit) to the Pride & Pedestal event on April 8, 2010.

During the Study Session in February, several items were discussed. The Commission discussed the reduction in lease pricing and additional marketing of the kiosks. The Procedure for selling the former Bult Oil site was also discussed. Another meeting with owners of property and businesses in the light industrial area was reviewed with a possible agenda. Cender and Company, financial consultants for the Commission, informed the Commission about requirements regarding a new Economic Development and/or Redevelopment Area and explained allocation and tax abatement areas.

#### March

Commissioners approved changes to the Kiosk lease agreement to encourage the use of the kiosks in the downtown area.

*Resolution 2010-06, a Resolution Authorizing and Approving the Development and Printing of a Kiosk Panel and Free Kiosk Space to Provide a Schedule of Centennial Events for the Town of Highland, not to exceed \$200* was approved. This resolution provided a kiosk panel listing the events for the Town's one hundred year celebration.

The Commission approved a motion to authorize a public notice announcing the sale of the former Bult Oil property located at 2606 and 2608 Garfield Avenue, and 2609 and 2605 Condit Avenue. The offering price of the .80 acre parcel was \$105,250.00, the average of two appraisals. The goal of the notice is to sell the property to a buyer who is interested in abiding by the new Design Standards and Guidelines of the Redevelopment Area and return the parcel to the tax rolls.

A second meeting with owners of property and businesses in the light industrial area met on March 24, 2010 at the Municipal building. Public Works Director John Bach and Indiana Port Director Peter Laman addressed the group.

A second Propel Conference focusing on business marketing for small business entrepreneurs took place on April 16, 2010 at Faith Church in Dyer. Director Petro and Economic Development Commissioner George VandeWerken are part of the South Shore Entrepreneurial Initiative that is organizing this and other entrepreneurial events.

Commissioners discussed a possible new Redevelopment Area from information presented by Cender & Company at the last meeting.

At the full Study Session in March, Commissioners discussed marketing efforts for the kiosks now that the price has been reduced. Bids for the purchase of the former Bult Oil site are due April 14, 2010 and will be opened at the regular public meeting of the Redevelopment Commission. The Director provided the Commission with an update on her activities with the Lake County Housing Task Force. She explained the importance of housing issues as they relate to business development in town and the problems with homestead tax exemptions. Commissioners discussed the purpose of a new Redevelopment Area: 1) to demonstrate that Highland is business friendly, 2) to have incentives in place to offer business owners, and 3) to prepare for the next generation of businesses including high tech businesses.

#### April

The Commission's attorney, Carol Green-Fraley opened the only proposal received for the purchase of the former Bult Oil site. The offer was \$85,000.00 from Pleasant View Dairy Corporation located at 2625 Highway Avenue. No action could be taken for thirty days since the offer price of \$105,250.00 was not bid. An informational meeting with the Dairy will be scheduled. The Director informed the Commission that she contacted the Indiana Main Street program to investigate whether Highland could become a Main Street community. She will meet with the director of the state program on May 12, 2010.

During the full Study Session in April, the owners of Pleasant View Dairy, Bill and Fred Leep, addressed the Commission regarding their proposal to purchase the former Bult Oil site located at 2605-2609 Condit Avenue and 2606-2608 Garfield Avenue. They stated that the Dairy owns much of the land in that area and they would like to purchase the former Bult Oil site to "fill out" the area. The Dairy would like to see the area maintained as a light industrial area, although it doesn't have specific plans for the property at this time.

Dan Botich from Cender & Company presented a proposal outlining the cost and timetable for establishing a new Redevelopment or Economic Development Area for the major business corridors in Highland. Professional fees will not exceed \$13,600.00.

#### May

*Resolution 2010-07, A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission to Approve a Proposal to Provide Consulting and Professional Planning Services Related to the Preparation of a Redevelopment Plan for a Redevelopment Area within the Major Commercial Corridors of Highland, Indiana* was approved. Cender and Company will work with the Commission to develop the Plan. Members of the Redevelopment Commission met with the Plan Commission at its May 5, 2010 meeting. That body indicated that they were in favor of the idea.

Circle Buick GMC from Schererville, Indiana, was interested in moving to Highland and requested tax abatement from the Town. The Commission approved a favorable recommendation to the Town Council after a presentation from the Director. She is the contact person for tax abatement requests for the Town of Highland.

Commissioners discussed the increase in the number of non-tax revenue producing establishments that are looking to locate in the commercial areas of Town. The Director stated that her office is receiving an increase in the number of requests and is concerned about the reduction in taxable income if too many non-tax revenue producing establishments locate in the commercial areas. The Attorney and Director will research this issue.

The Director reported that Highland is eligible to become a Main Street community and will begin the application process based upon the Commission's favorable response.

During the full Study Session in May, the Commission decided against multiple kiosk leases for a business at this time. The Commission will reschedule the June 2010 Public Meeting due to a schedule conflict.

#### June

The application for a Highland Main Street organization was reviewed. It included a mission statement, by-laws, and a work plan for the establishment of the Main Street program. These documents will be sent to the state's Indiana Main Street program for approval. Indiana Main Street provided a workshop on June 24, 2010 at Griffith High School. Commissioner DeYoung and Director Petro attended to gain additional information on the statewide program and possible funding sources for the future. During the July Redevelopment Commission meeting, Commissioner DeYoung reported on the workshop.

The Director updated the Commission on the tax abatement request from Circle Buick GMC. The Town Council has declared 2440 45<sup>th</sup> Street an Economic Revitalization Area (ERA) and in July it will act on confirming that area an ERA. The Council's next step will be to act on declaring the area an Economic Development Target Area, an area ready for retail tax abatement.

No full Study Session was held in June.

#### July

Commissioners reviewed and approved the 2011 draft budget for the Redevelopment Commission. The Director stated that the budget was reduced by 4% or by \$5,899.00 over the 2010 original budget. Attorney Green-Fraley requested information on the 2006 loan to Hammond for the demolition of the former River Park Apartments. Hammond is preparing to sell a portion of the area. She will report her findings back to the Commission.

*Resolution 2010-08, A Resolution of the Town of Highland Redevelopment Commission Determining the Amount of Assessed Valuation to Capture as of the March 1, 2010 Assessment Date in Order to Generate Tax increment for Distribution in 2011 to Satisfy Commission Obligations of Outstanding Debt Service and Lease Payments and Including Project or Program Costs Related to the Highland Acres Allocation Area and the Highland Redevelopment Allocation Area as Noticed to the Lake County Auditor* was approved. This resolution alerts the county auditor that the Commission has two allocation areas and that any increment within those areas will need to be captured and not distributed to other taxing units.

Commissioners approved a request to lease the Commission's lot on the southeast corner of Highway and Kennedy Avenues by Growlers Sports Bar for its anniversary celebration on August 28, 2010 for the amount of \$1650.00 with proof of insurance. Growlers had previously leased the lot for its anniversary celebrations.

Commissioners reviewed the returned surveys regarding the area included within the new Redevelopment Area for the Commercial Corridors, also called Redevelopment Area II.

No full Study Session was held in July.

#### August

Attorney Carol Green-Fraley reported back to the Commission regarding the questions about the Loan Agreement between the Commission and the Hammond Redevelopment Commission. She stated that the intent of the agreement was that the Highland Redevelopment Commission was to receive the first payment once the property was sold.

Commissioners received an update on the two tax abatements that have been approved. Bell Parts and Supply located at 2609 45<sup>th</sup> Street has finished the addition and improved the parking lot and façade. The abatement will begin in 2010 pay 2011. The new assessment after improvements will be certified in March 2011. Circle Buick GMC from Schererville, Indiana, has purchased property located at 2440 45<sup>th</sup> Street and will begin improvements once plans are approved by GM.

Commissioner Maloney and the Director shared information on conversations the Director has had with the owner of Ultra Plaza and possible courses of action to reinvigorate the Plaza. Commissioners also discussed the idea of presenting a Highland Redevelopment Commission Renovation Award for businesses that renovate their buildings. It will be considered at a later meeting.

The Director updated the Commission on the status of the Highland Main Street program. They also discussed methods of attracting volunteers and developing an application process for those interested in serving on Highland Main Street

During the full Study Session, Dan Botich from Cender and Company presented a draft copy of the Redevelopment Area II Plan. He reviewed various sections of the plan, including the introduction, statement of intent and purpose, commission authority, goals and objectives, boundaries for the Area, statement on statutory findings, budget, funding, and property acquisition. The Commission will need to decide which programs and opportunities they wish to pursue and include them in this twenty year Plan. The RC discussed the importance of the area becoming tax abatement and tax increment financing available. Pictures of each property will be included in the document and a list of property acquisitions by the Commission at some point in the future will also become part of the document.

#### September

The Commission formally approved the by-laws, mission statement, and application for Highland Main Street. The organization will become a sub-committee of the Redevelopment Commission until it is able to become free standing or become an organization under the Highland Community Foundation, which is currently being formed. Commissioner DeYoung will explore the possibility of providing a Facebook page for Highland Main Street.

The Director informed the Commission that only two of the twelve kiosks panels were still vacant. She also presented information on the Indiana Lake Michigan Coastal Grant program. The Commission encouraged the Director to pursue this grant opportunity.

Commissioner Kuzmar stated that he has secured two additional architects to join the Design Advisory Committee. This Committee oversees compliance with the Design Standards and Guidelines for the Downtown Redevelopment Area I.

During the full Study Session, Dan Botich from Cender and Company presented the results of the survey regarding a possible Redevelopment Plan for the Commercial Corridors. He also presented pictures on each property within the new Redevelopment Area II. Commissioners noticed areas that had a good commercial mix and were well kept and inviting; as well as, areas needing landscaping, sidewalks, and greenery.

The Director reported that Highland's Main Street program has been approved by the State. The head of the Indiana Main Street program will meet with the Commission before the end of the year to assess whether or not Highland has a sustainable group going forward.

A draft of the Indiana Lake Michigan Coastal Grant application was presented to the Commission for their review. It is due September 27, 2010.

#### October

*Resolution 2010-09, A Resolution Authorizing a Settlement Agreement Between Rodney D. Langel d/b/a Langel Realty, LLC, 2833 Highway Avenue, Highland, Indiana, and the Highland Redevelopment Commission* was approved. The Town Council, through its Resolution 2007-30, permitted Mr. Langel to encroach on a portion of the sidewalk of the public right-of-way to establish outdoor dining at his restaurant. In return, Mr. Langel was to reimburse the Town for the demolition of a concrete planter and plantings. Commissioner Maloney met with Mr. Langel and the Director to reach a settlement. The settlement called for a payment of \$3000.00 from Mr. Langel. It was subsequently approved by the Town Council.

Growler's Sports Bar would like to sponsor three events at their Highway Avenue location during 2011. Commissioners suggested that Mr. Chapman owner of Growler's write a letter to the Commission outlining what type of events and dates.

During the full Study Session, Commissioners discussed the flood damage control ordinance and how it could impede the redevelopment of the town. Commissioner Noce will meet with the Town's engineer to ask questions raised by the Commission. The Commission requested information from other surrounding communities on their storm water policies.

Commissioners discussed the procedure for triggering the design standards when a business wants to improve its façade. A recent example of façade change illustrated that the procedure needs to be reviewed by all concerned parties.

The Director has contacted Purdue Calumet's Experiential Learning and Internship programs. The purpose will be to engage students in the new Main Street committee. Commissioners reviewed two job descriptions initiated by Commissioner DeYoung: a Database Design Project Assistant and a Building Façade Design Project Assistant. The RC would like to provide students with real world experience while providing the Commission with assistance in developing the Main Street program.

#### November

At the pre-Public Meeting Study Session, Town Engineer, John Phipps, and Building Commissioner, Ken Mika, met with the Commission to explain the Town's storm water policy and to address the concerns of the Commission regarding run-off requirements on small, one lot commercial sites undergoing redevelopment. Commissioners are concerned that our current policy may discourage small businesses from redeveloping small commercial lots due to the storm water policy. In some instances it may be cost prohibitive for small businesses to upgrade to the current level as described in the Storm Water Run-off Policy requirement. Surrounding communities allow some flexibility in their storm water policies to address these instances. The RC requested the Director to prepare a policy position paper regarding this issue.

The Commission approved a motion to authorize the President to sign a letter of recommendation to the Board of Zoning appeals regarding the sign variance request from Circle Buick GMC subject to receiving and approving the rendering of the sign.

Commissioners reviewed the first draft of the Redevelopment Plan for the Highland Commercial Corridors. The RC suggested that the term "blight" be moved to the bottom of the list of reasons to develop the Plan.

Indiana Main Street Director will visit with the Commission at their December meeting. The meeting was rescheduled due to conflicting schedules.

No full Study Session was held in November.

#### December

At the pre-Public Meeting Study Session, Shae Young-Kmicikewycz, Director of Indiana Main Street, and Mr. Gerry White, Northwest Indiana Community Liaison with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, met with the Commission. They briefly explained the Indiana Main Street program and announced that Highland is now the latest community to join the one hundred and two communities in Indiana that participate in the program. Indiana Main Street is able to assist local Main Street programs by providing trainings and information sharing on projects undertaken by Main Street communities; and if available, provide grants through the state's Downtown Enhancement Grants. She also stressed the importance of the Four Points of the Main Street approach: organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring. Commissioner DeYoung updated the Commission on the Business Data Base project utilizing a Purdue Student Intern, Morris Sims. Mr. Sims will convert the Town's business license list into an Access Data Base allowing the Commission to sort businesses by the Downtown Redevelopment Area (co-terminus with Highland Main Street), Highland Redevelopment Area for Commercial Corridors, and the Highland Light Industrial Area.

The Commission will explore the possibility of providing a Façade Improvement Program for the Main Street area. Guidelines and an application will be developed.

Commissioners discussed the prepared Storm Water Policy Recommendation for small one lot commercial sites undergoing redevelopment. Adjustments were made and will be forwarded to the Sanitary Commission.

The RC reviewed the letter sent to the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) regarding the sign variance request from Circle Buick GMC. The request was subsequently approved by the BZA.

Commission President, Tom Crowel, discussed a possible property swap between a downtown property and the former Bult Oil site owned by the Commission. The Director met with the property owner, but at this time he is not interested in moving his business.

No full Study Session was held in December.

#### REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEMBERS

At the beginning of the year, the following Commissioners were appointed by the Town Council: Greg Kuzmar, Dominic Noce, Bridget DeYoung, Tom Crowel, and Michael Maloney. The Director, Cecile Petro, was retained into 2010. During the January meeting the following officers were elected: President Tom Crowel, Vice President Greg Kuzmar, and Secretary Dominic Noce. The School Town of Highland co-appointments were Luanne Jurczak and Lawrence Vassar. Commissioners earned \$40 per month, except the President who earned \$50 per month for serving on the Commission. The Recording Secretary received \$600 for the year and the Director earned \$46015.04 for 2010.

#### PUBLIC MEETING AND STUDY SESSION MEETING DATES

The Commission met on the following dates:  
January 20, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
February 10, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
February 24, 2010 Study Session  
March 10, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
March 24, 2010 Study Session  
April 14, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
April 28, 2010 Study Session  
May 12, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
May 26, 2010 Study Session  
June 16, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
July 14, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
August 11, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
August 25, 2010 Study Session  
September 8, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
September 22, 2010 Study Session  
October 13, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
October 27, 2010 Study Session  
November 10, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session  
December 8, 2010 Public Meeting and Study Session

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