

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY JANUARY 6TH, 2025

The Highland Redevelopment Commission ("Commission", "RC") met in person at Town Hall on Monday January 6th, 2025. The regular scheduled study session was called to order at 6:03 P.M. by President, George Georgeff.

Roll Call: Commissioners Phil Scheeringa, Commissioner Tom Black, Commissioner George Georgeff and Commissioner Alex Robertson Commissioner Doug Turich and Patrick Krull (non-voting) were present in person at Town Hall.

Additional Officials Present: Attorney Reed ,Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director, Kendra Hernandez redevelopment commission Assistant

Also Present: Several people were present from the public including members from the Park Board.

Commissioner Krull stated Mr. President, if I may. I also sit on the park board representing the school town. I'm looking at our council right now to make sure that doesn't create any violation because if it does, I will withdraw from the redevelopment perspective so that these gentlemen can sit here and represent the Park Board.

Commissioner Georgeff asked if he was a Non-voting member ?

Commissioner Krull answered I am a voting member of the Park Board.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked so you have a quorum with the Park Board ?

Commissioner Krull answered Yes.

To which Attorney Reed stated to have a nice evening and Commissioner Krull left the meeting

Chris Moore with NIES Engineering started a Presentation for the Main Square Fence Plan.

We've been looking at putting the fence around Main Square Park and the ideal fence that we were looking at was we modeled it after Griffith Central Park, and they've got a real heavy-duty fence with the brick columns going around there and so that's kind of what we're modeling it after the fence itself. We went around and looked at a couple of different options and there's different fences around in the area that we can compare it to.

The fence at Wicker Park is an aluminum fence, and the fence there is not a security fence. It's trying to keep people under control. If you want to get in and get out, you're going to be able to get in. You can hop over it if you want to get in there and try to damage it , you can damage it.

It comes down to the amount that we want to spend, and the configuration that we want to do so. The one at Wicker Park is an aluminum fence. It's not bad. If you grab it, you feel it. It's sturdy

enough. If you hit it with a car, it's going to bend. If you're trying to get through it, which you really shouldn't need to get through it, It's 4-foot fence.

The other fence that we looked at was a light steel fence, which is similar to the fence at Highland Christian. It's just a little bit lighter gauge. It's a steel fence. It's pretty sturdy, but and again, same thing and you think about it, anything that's going to hit it. If a car hits a fence it doesn't matter what kind of fence it's up there. It's going through it. The other thing that's possible to hit it is a heavy-duty lawnmower and the aluminum one It's not going to survive the light steel one, it's going to get damaged, but again, these fences are designed to come apart and replace the panels, so it doesn't really matter what one you go with.

It does take into consideration the cost, and then the heavier duty gauge steel is more of like an industrial type, which is what Griffith. It's a little over the top. I broke it down on the cost, estimate that I have here with you. To just kind of give you an idea and what I wanted to do, budget wise is we get numbers. I'm dealing with contractors. I put some contingencies in the items that we put on there. Including the fence panels and the concrete and the brick pillars, I added 20% to those costs right there again for budget numbers and then once I added everything together based off the construction standards that we're doing with the most strip that we have in there, which is basically a 4-inch-thick concrete ribbon curb that's going to go underneath the fence. That's a straight up construction cost.

It could fluctuate a little bit, depending on the configuration of how it's going to go in and how difficult it's going to be to install it It's still a construction number with the surrounding areas of the of site similar in sidewalk cost. The aluminum fence came in at an it's actually just under \$700,000. And then I added, 20% on top of that again, budget numbers the so the final all in cost is \$835,000.

The light gauge steel fence, it's just under 4% more. It depends on what you guys want to go with. it's a light gauge steel. It just depends on what you guys are going after. That one comes in at \$865,000, and again, that was only just under 4% more than the aluminum one, and then a heavy duty one similar to the one that's in Griffith and I was kind of surprised at the cost of that. It's just under \$1.2 million, and that is going around the park. There're 55 brick columns that we're going to put in there, and they're spaced out evenly. We tried our best to get to average between light poles on there, but in some of the areas that didn't quite work out, so we adjusted a little bit, but it comes to a total of 55 columns.

There is a tree on the northwest corner of the parking lot by the playground that we recommend taking out. Then we want to put in parking blocks with the fence is going to wrap around the parking lot and we want to put in parking blocks. If you don't put in parking blocks, the car is going to hit it, and it's not going to take a lot for a car to damage a fence even if you have a steal one, the car just rolling into bumps, it is going to damage it. So, you want to put in parking blocks.

We've got openings in strategic places around the park, specifically at the corners and the plan sheets, the way we've got it shown. I didn't detail every linear footage of the fence. I just identified the corners to kind of show you what it's going to look like with the configuration of it.

we can add more notes to this when it's ready to go. It's not ready for construction. It's just kind of showing you what it's going to look like and then when it goes for construction, we're going to have more information on there. the brick pillars are going to be and there is no lighting or electric in there. I know that we had talked about possibly doing that, but we can do that, but it's going to be an added expense. The other thing that is not included in this. I believe it would be on the Park. Correct me if I'm wrong to relocate the irrigation system around the edge of park. So that's not included in this, either.

There is a 16-foot-wide gate that we're going plan on putting over in front towards the northeast side where the Festival company comes in, so we'll be able to access that. All the other openings are just openings. There'd be man with an officer to make sure that it's control. But they're just regular open paths to come in and go out. We can put fence gates anywhere that we want. We can add a larger gate anywhere that we want, if we need to. The driveway over near, do it Fish Street. We just left that open again. We could put in a gate, and you can do it with an aluminum gate to where it's a 16-foot-wide double hung gate, where it'd be 2 8-foot panels that would open up to a 16-foot open area.

Commissioner Robertson asked How easily are the panels to remove ?

Chris Moore from NIES answered just a couple of bolts for the most part they're going to be 8-foot panels there. They can be adjusted a little bit when you're getting towards like a column, and you need to shorten it up a little bit, but for the most part depending on how you want to do it, and the gate style that we go with, and I would talk to the manufacturer a little bit more, and we want to have a couple of extra panels just in case one's damaged. Swap it out.

Commissioner Robertson What is the spacing of the post and are those removable ?

Chris Moore from NIES answered the posts are not removable. They're going to be concreted into the ground. I mean, anything's removable. Put a little bit of work into it but 8 foot, so it'd be an 8-foot panel mounted in between the posts, and then the break columns

Commissioner Turich asked the Commissioners what their thoughts on the angle of the fence on the side by the fountain. Is there any way we could look at and I know this is cosmetic, and maybe not a big deal, but leaving the fountain on the outside of the fence instead of the inside of the fence?

Commissioner Scheeringa said he wasn't opposed to it .

Commissioner Scheeringa then went to state that walked with Chris Moore about 3, 4 weeks ago we went and looked at all the different types of steel and aluminum. I think we kind of looked at that. Chris said, That's like the toughest corner because of the fountain.

Chris Moore from NIES stated we had originally had an opening in there, and Derek Snyder, from my office was saying that we wanted to get rid of the walkway, and we have an opening for the sidewalks to the fountain going in there, but we can configure it any way that you want. This is just the 1st shot at it.

Commissioner Turich stated My thought is, is with the fountain is you want to see that from Ridge Road unobstructed .

Commissioner Turich asked the heavy steel fence that you mentioned that Griffith had. Does that add any protection? Right? So, you, we talk about car. That's my biggest concern right now is creating some protection for our visitors at the Park from anything that would happen on Ridge Road or any of the side streets. So, if we had a vehicle that was traveling 35 miles an hour, and they ran into this heavy gauge. Would that prevent that car from going through?

Chris Moore from NIES I would look into it, and I hate to say anything. But I would say, No.

Commissioner Turich and that's why I'm just looking at like, what's the value of that really heavy gauge? If it doesn't add any safety protection.

Chris Moore from NIES It's a heavy-duty security and again, it's to keep people from damaging it. If you're going up there like, I said, you can grab your own fence, and if you put some strength into it, you can bend the panels and depending on what you're doing. I did a project in Hammond, where we put a fence all the way around it, and it came all the way down to a corner. It's one of those things when you get into the property, and you want to get out You're going to go through the fence. This was a 6- foot vinyl fence, and they did. But it was before the project got developed and the homes got built. But if you want to get through it, you can get through it. There's no reason to go through this, so you don't need that heavy gauge fence. I was hoping that the price would be a little bit lower. I mean, it's a heck of a fence. Yeah, but for that cost I would no.

Commissioner Turich stated I know a lot of conversation, especially in some of the Park board meetings, was about the different material, and one of them will rust, and the other will not rust right? The steel is going to rust over time. Right? That was the concern that you guys shared during the Park Board meeting.

Chris Moore stated the heavy duty one looks like it's really powder coating. It's got thick coating on that. And you go over there and look at that one, and there are chips and scrapes on it, and it hasn't been up there for very long, and it is showing signs of rust. But it's going to take a heck of a long time to rust through it, and I would think a little bit of touch up paint, and you'd be fine. But again, that's a real heavy- duty gauge. If you get down to the light duty gauge, if that starts to rust, it's not going to take a lot to get through that at that stage of the game I would have been going to deal with them. It's a little bit cheaper, but you don't have to deal with the rust.

Alex Brown stated the only thing that scares me about the aluminum is like you talked about it., we're talking about a 4-foot fence. You're going to have people try and climb it

Chris Moore from NIES stated It's possible and if you go over to the one at Wicker Park and you grab it, I mean, we stood on it.

Commissioner Scheeringa agreed and stated Yes, we stood on it and climbed it and it didn't bend

Chris Moore from NIES stated just to hop over it I don't think it will bend .

Someone from the Park Board said That's fine. I'd be perfectly fine with using the aluminum as long as the new panels are readily available to replace.

Chris Moore from NIES I would recommend having a couple of panels on standby.

Commissioner Georgeff asked if the one at Wicker Park is 4 foot tall ?

Commissioner Scheeringa and Chris Moore both stated that it was varying heights because of the angle of the road it goes from 4ft tall up to 7-8 ft tall .

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that he had went by Highland and it was already rusting and he also saw signs of rust at the Griffith one . Maybe that's something to work into cost 10 extra panels. I don't know.

Alex Brown from Parks stated Remember, the only reason there's even a fence over the last couple years is because Excise required it because of the alcohol. We went 35, 40 years without a fence. I mean, if you guys are still thinking of doing a DORA you don't even need a fence around Main Square Park . It's not going to stop a car. It's not the safety issue. It's tough to think about, but if this is what you want. What he needs tonight from you is just to go ahead to do the specs and get this thing out to bid, because if the desire is to have this again by 4th of July, they need to get going.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked So when would you need something from the Council to possibly put this out for bid.

Chris Moore answered So we're probably about 60 to 75% complete. With the design, we can finish the design. We have more than enough time. I would think that 30 days to get it out the bid. Yeah, we'll have plenty of time to get it done by the 4th of July. If we can get it out the bid by the beginning of February. I think we'll have no problem on getting that done by then.

Chris Moore asked Alex Brown If he had any concerns ?

Alex Brown stated The redevelopment would have to then schedule whenever the bids are open to approve the bids.

Commissioner Georgeff stated that we will have adjust the schedule.

Someone from the Parks Board started to talk about the security issue as far as cars going through it. In my mind it's always been more of keeping the kids in the park .

Commissioner Turich using the term heavy gauge and you know, talking about how robust it was. I was just asking the question if it's even possible. You're looking at a 42% difference between the aluminum option versus that heavy duty. That's a significant difference, I want to make sure we're doing the right thing. But I don't know if I can swallow a 42% increase in cost for the material. That's just my thought.

Chris Moore from NIES said I would say 10 more, maybe even up towards 20, 42%. No, that's crazy.

Attorney Reed asked about ongoing maintenance with the aluminum powder coat vs steel , Aluminum is going to stay like that pretty much. I never want to say forever, but steel is all unless it's stainless, which would be 82 million dollars going to corrode doesn't corrode right?

Chris Moore from NIES stated It doesn't corrode, but it can break down. You're going to have chemical reactions, the salt out on Ridge Road. Specifically, there is a chance that you're going to have some issues, and I can look into that to find out the longevity of it to see exactly what it is.

Attorney Reed stated a wrought iron fence, and about every 15 years have to pull off one panel at a time. Take them and sandblast them powder, coat them and bring them back.

Commissioner Turich So the difference between your aluminum and your light steel fence is only like it's 3.6%. But again, it goes back to that rust verses no rust ,I feel like the more we talk about it, and looking at the numbers, the 1st option of aluminum is probably the best option for us, cost and longevity.

Commissioner Georgeff stated especially with the avail, the salt on Ridge Road and everything.

Commissioner Robertson had some concerns and said I think that the amount of fencing that's being proposed could actually end up causing more problems than it's solving. because it's going to be really difficult to mobilize the park for future events. If there's this much fencing on top of the upkeep. I'm wondering if we could at the minimum, put in probably several 50-foot gaps, especially along Delaware. I like the fence going along Ridge Road, but you are going to need the Delaware side, 5th Street side, and especially the parking lot to get things in and out of the park during the fest.

Chris Moore from NIES answered It's possible, and I would look into a little bit more to where you can put like a fence post in. There is a temporary slide post, and if you need to get in there, say once a year, once every couple of years. You just take the fence panels down. You don't want to leave the gaps open, especially 50-foot gap, but it is possible to where you could do that, or you can put in more gates. But if you want to put in a 50-foot gap again, whatever you guys would like for us to do.

Commissioner Georgeff asked if we could do it with a couple removable sections ?

Chris Moore from NIES answered Yeah, just make it to where, instead of putting the post in the concrete, put a sleeve in the concrete and put a bolt or something like that at the bottom, disconnected. Pull the post out, take the panels off, and they can get in. And you're open. Okay? I like it.

Commissioner Turich stated My concern is I'm assuming where you have your gates, or where you have your cutouts for the driveway. You're not going to put your curb in there.

Chris Moore answered Haven't thought about that. You can still do it. It'll survive.

Commissioner Turich Okay, because that would be my concern if we did these sleeves. And then we had a heavy truck or a piece of equipment rolling over that curbing.

Chris Moore stated I do my best to try to design for what they're going to do, not what they're supposed to do, so just make it a little bit thicker, maybe even make it a little bit wider through there you can make it to where it had been a survive chart.

Commissioner Turich asked Commissioner Robertson Does that solve your concern?

Commissioner Robertson answered No

Alex Brown From Parks stated that Trevor knows what kind of equipment comes in and about and he was fine with all the openings

A member made a comment about the warranty and Chris said he can get brochures and information .

Commissioner Georgeff made a comment about the fountain and moving the fence .

With that there was more discussion and they moved to the conference room.

We then had a presentation by American Structurepoint given by Matthew O'Rourke and he is the Planning and Economic development group leader.

Matthew from American Structurepoint talked about how Structurepoint goes about comprehensive planning, what our process looks like those sorts of things, and share a little bit of insight with you. Just a little brief background on myself.

I've trained as an urban planner. It's what I have my education in 15 years in the Chicago suburbs doing this job in the public to the private consulting side. I really know a lot about what this whole process looks like. I've been through it on both sides. And with that I know we're getting a little pinched for time, but kind of wanted to demonstrate for you folks how we go about this process in a little more interactive way.

Matthew from Structurepoint asked the Commissioners Tell me one thing you'd really love to see. Come out of this plan like what's a big get for you?

Commissioner Georgeff said he would like to see improvements in pedestrian and traffic safety of infrastructure roads

Matthew asked if they were in bad shape ?

Commissioner Turich stated I think we've got some issues with our roadways, and we also have some opportunities with our sewer system and our drainage systems.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated he would like to see Parks and Rec improvements to be family friendly

Commissioner Robertson stated he would like to see sidewalks and overall walkability .

Commissioner Black stated he would like to see some more businesses with a continuity to them. We bring in some additional businesses, maybe to expand the downtown area. But they're not staying with that same fifties look, but staying with something that's uniform for sure.

Matthew from stated This is already starting to evolve into a pretty great list. And part of what we're going to do in this process. Part of how we do is have a lot of conversations like this. It's a big part of what we do, either with groups like this stakeholder groups community what we start to see here.

There're some themes blowing up in in this one. What I'm really starting to see, or just really quickly see, is kind of just reinvest in what we already have. Make sure our assets are here that they continue to become part of it. Right? That's kind of one theme that we hear about this. And

as we go through the process. And that's what this board's all about. I kind of want to just kind of think through that as a theme.

We have a 3-phase process what we like to do. We call it educate, explore, and empower and what that looks like is especially educate, educate all about data gathering. Do we go and have a lot of these conversations? We do open houses. We talk to the public and get data census data, all those things and I know some of this work's already been done. So, some of it sometimes it's just assimilating into what we've already heard what we know. It kind of represents things like this.

We hear a lot of different things, and we had to start to try to think through what that means for the community, what we're hearing, what are we prioritizing? Because, as you go through this process, a comprehensive plan, it's always going to have a land use map statutorily required that you look at your public infrastructure for those things. That's what makes a comp plan. But as they've evolved over time they start to incorporate other ideas and thoughts housing, pedestrian connectivity, business development, economic development. We're going to start to hear from the community a lot of these things.

Our second phase we call explore. It's all about bouncing these ideas off our steering committee off community off the people we talk to because we want to start bringing all these little data points. We want to start condensing them into teams. We kind of see they're starting to get organized. We're not there yet. At this point what we're doing is giving you the land use maps and our steering committees. We're talking a lot about what these themes are. We're starting to talk about policy recommendations, but we haven't quite got all the way yet, but we call it explore because we want iterative. We want to have a lot of conversations. We want to hear from everybody what it is you're thinking and if we're getting it right, you know our steering committee groups like this. You're talent experts. We can never replicate that. You have a lot of corporate knowledge.

We quite frankly want you to tell us when we're getting it wrong. That's really important to this process, too, that all happens here before we start putting our ideas into policy recommendations and strategies.

We call that last phase of power. It's all about empowering the community. Take all this input. We put a lot of time and thought into how we're getting here. We talk to the community a lot. What we really want to do is come up with really robust strategies that are going to help you solve these things we started talking about over here.

Now, most comprehensive plans. You get to the end. They'll probably be 50 to 70 strategy items that come out of that. We like to take that a step further. I mentioned my public sector experience. One of the things that I would I would be dreading to hear is that my plan just sat on a shelf because I know what it's like to be on the other side of that. Have a plan. It's like, Well, this is nice, and it's got some cool things in it. But we we're having trouble implementing it. We take the top 10 to 15 of those strategies that come out of this process. We turn them into what we

call our critical path strategies. And I know you folks can't read that all the way over here. But what this is we'll take one of those strategies.

We come up with actionable steps. We'll put them in order for you. We'll talk to our engineering structure point. We have a lot of other disciplines. We'll lay out for you exactly how to get that done and we're talking about the near-term strategies, maybe 5 years and less.

We're going to tell you what other parties need to be involved with that. We're going to identify funding and funding sources. We're going to give you a document. You go to those last pages and look at those 10 to 15 critical tests. I just say, all right, this is this is what we're going to work on. Next to accomplish all these goals and things that we've assimilated into these themes throughout the process.

Matthew from American Structure point went on to say I talk a lot about public engagement this is one example of it, and one of the reasons we wanted to be on board this evening is. you get a feel for who we are when we go through this work. We're not just doing power points. We're not just doing anything. We're going to bring a whole mix of strategies because we want to get out to your community and to our stakeholders and really get them engaged and energize and educate them about this process. We have a number of techniques. We do that. Here's some photos of them.

We do traditional open houses. We do virtual. Now, thanks to Covid, we kind of had to learn to do that. In fact, this you see here looks like a town Hall meeting. It's actually our seat geek site, which is a virtual town hall. It's essentially all the same boards, all the things you'd normally see at a town hall, except put it online. People go there at their leisure. We can leave this up for a month. Leave it up for 2 weeks, however long we want. But if you follow the QR. Code. This is an active one. I don't know how good zoom lenses are these days. They might restrict, or anybody else, but we could get there do that? We do a lot of online surveying. But most importantly. I wanted to point out a couple of these other pictures as time has gotten more constricted for people. Everybody's busy on a Tuesday night. It's hard to come out to an open house. It's 6, you know. Maybe on a Tuesday we've really started going where what we call the people are.

A couple of examples is this is myself working at a truck or treat event down in Southern Indiana on a Sunday. We make sure we were there, because we're doing a park plan. We're better to talk about a park system than at a park event in a public park and we're actually doing a strategy for so it's very important. We talked to all age groups, all people. We found that this is the most effective and efficient way to do that.

It's very important. We talked to all age groups, all people. We found that this is the most effective and efficient way to do that. We come with a booth. We'll go to an existing event. It's already advertised. We're there, we'll talk to it. There's another example here of us at a fishing Derby on a Saturday morning on a great day in Sister Row Lake community going to a fishing Derby just made a ton of sense we showed up there, in addition to all those other things we do and that's how seriously we take public engagement, because none of this works, unless we get these ideas and thoughts and approach out to the community. One other thing. I did want to highlight really quickly.

We started. And this is something I brought from the public sector, learned it doing restaurant week promotions where we don't just throw stuff on social media, we actually pay for placement. We pay for ad placement. It's a kind of a way to insert our announcements into people's timelines, and it's very cost-effective way to do it doesn't take much money wise to do it. But you can see here in Posey County. We ran an ad for about a week, advertising our survey and almost 52,000 people we saw.

We know that because Facebook told us that that's how it works and it reached somewhere a little less than that. Or this means people had actually interacted with it looked at it. And we got this survey response up to almost 500. Since we've been doing this we've seen a dramatic increase in our survey results. It's probably gone up to 300% on large. I think our best one was for an SS4A. And I know we're currently working on one of those here in Highland.

Where shall we go? We got almost a thousand results. This process really works getting the word out, and we do it again because it's so important to us. One last thing I did want to highlight before we wrap up. I talked about our critical path. Strategies like, I said, we don't want these to be plans to sit on a shelf. These are all examples of different items at different scales that started as a plan with us. And then we went through this process and ended up, you know, helping people get funding to reinvest in mainstream roads funding to help redo Main Street facade.

We were here. We love to build a relationship with communities we work with and we put these in the plan, and then we were here to help the whole way out. I think our biggest and most well-known example of that is, if you're familiar with the Speedway, and where the speed the actual motor Speedway is, we did a downtown plan right across from that in 2009, when you can see the before and a half years kind of an industrial areas, high vacancies, not a lot of activity. We put this plan together and kept working with Speedway until we've now seen around 400 million dollars of public private investment includes the big roundabout out front of the main gateway. Now a lot of those businesses and hotels you're seeing on Main Street.

All kind of wrapped up, started with ideas like this, but mostly it started because we went through the proper process. And so, if I could highlight anything for you this evening, it's that we. We have this well-defined process to go out and make sure the community sees this and this isn't our plan. I like to say we don't have pride of authorship per se. This is your plan. We're just here to help you articulate that and help put it in the right framework and it meets the State statutes.

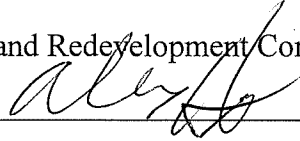
Commissioner Turich stated he liked it and it was like night and day with the presentation and the communication.

Commissioner Georgeff stated he was glad to have them there and it was very informative .

Meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm

DULY PASSED AND RESOLVED by the Highland Redevelopment Commission, Highland, Lake County, Indiana, this 24 day of Feb 2025, having passed by a vote 3 in favor and 0 opposed.

Highland Redevelopment Commission



President

ATTEST:



Secretary