

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY NOVEMBER 17, 2025

The Highland Redevelopment Commission (“Commission”, “RC”) met in person at Town Hall on Monday November 17, 2025. The Special meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by President Alex Robertson

Roll Call: Commissioners Phil Scheeringa, George Georgeff, Tom Black, Doug Turich and Alex Robertson were present in person at Town Hall. Nonvoting Member Pat Krull was excused.

Other Officials present: Attorney John Reed, Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra
Redevelopment Director

Also Present via Zoom Call Greg Flisram from Kendig – Keast Collaborative and Phil Roth from American Structure Point

No Public Comments

Greg Flisram from Kendig -Keast Collaborative was introduced

Greg presented his Opportunities Analysis which is a summation of all the discussions and analysis and research that he’s done.

He has done several concept plans for individual sites namely

- Department of Public Works
- The Ultra Site
- The intersection at 81st and Indianapolis
- The area around the old Town Theater
- The Emcor site

He has talked to several different people like NIRPC, The Northwest Indiana Forum, The RDA (Redevelopment Authority), The South Shore, The Visitors and Convention Bureau and a number of regional brokers and property owners.

He has also been in touch with Phil Roth from American Structure Point who is doing the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Highland and they did a survey and the biggest response was that people were looking for a greater variety of businesses and restaurants.

He suggested that we need to add different housing types and more housing opportunities . We are in a great location the Chicago Metro MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) . It's an area of almost 10 million people and 30 fortune 200 companies and 18 universities.

Your big advantage, though, is that you're on the Indiana side, as opposed to the Illinois side. The Indiana side being generally considered more business-friendly, more affordable, and very desirable among looking to access the Chicago market, but don't necessarily want to be in the state of Illinois.

A big opportunity that I'm sure you're aware of that has some bearing on your community and these redevelopment sites is the extension of the South Shore Line. The Ridge Road station is about 2 miles from where you are.

Another big opportunity even if it isn't in the Town of Highland is the Hard-Rock Hotel and it promises to drive a lot of visitation to the region. We are kind of bookended by these two big things happening in your immediate neighborhood the Convention Center and the Westlake Corridor Project.

Developers and investors who really don't know Highland and why should they invest in Highland you just need to start mapping some of these things and it really starts to add up, besides the Westlake corridor and the South Shore Line and The Convention Center ,there are also 2 branch campuses and the state's top research facility . There is also the Indiana Welcome Center , Cabela's and Whole Foods .

As far as more in the town itself there's 200,000 cars a day on I-94. I know there are 48,000 to 36,000 on Indianapolis Boulevard. This is important information for specifically retail folks and folks in the hospitality industry.

He also stated there's a lot of retail in the region, so there's not a lot of upside that we can tell, but it also says, because there's more stores and retail offerings here than the people in these areas can support, tells us that you are basically an exporter of retail services. People are coming into this area to shop and then going home. the rise of e-commerce and Amazon Prime and, you know, bricks and mortar stores, the whole economy around that has changed to go to, you know, very high-end on one side that's located in a few very choice regional commercial centers within a metro, and then the budget, you know, the budget, Burlington Co. Factory type, TJ Maxx, Marshalls, no shame in that, but that's the discount market is the bigger segment.

We did kind of some projections as to where the retail market is going to go in the next 5 years or so and these are just this is an algorithm-based projection, so I guess I wouldn't read too much into it, but It says within Lake County. Now, specifically look at the \$94 million of additional spending.

The hospitality market has the highest occupancy rate in Indiana , there are a lot of hotels and with the convention center coming there seems to be an upside to the hospitality market meaning hotels specifically.

Market for the new corporate office space is really uncertain, there is not a lot of new big corporate office spaces being built and there is a lack of flexible office or co-working space.

There's a regional need for quality multifamily and townhouses and walkable mixed use, the term walkable mixed use is kind of a term but we'll talk a little bit about what that looks like is growing in popularity in terms of the people we talked with, and they mentioned a couple of them, specific projects in Valparaiso and Michigan City. We'll could talk a little bit about that what we're trying to accomplish here in these four redevelopment sites that are kind of bubbled out here is really to help define and landmark your regional presence. Right now, Highland doesn't have a strong regional presence. You get off the highway system and it doesn't really hit you in the face if you've entered Highland.

The signage is there, but it's not very visible in some cases so you really need to define your physical presence from the highways through physical landmarking, entryway monumentation, rail links, and the like.

A second objective, number two there, is really to improve the approaches to downtown, specifically on the Kennedy Avenue corridor, through infill development, streetscape beautification, things like wayfinding or navigation signing, if you will and even reconfiguring the lane and that whole corridor in terms of what it could look like.

The third one is to really try to mend together a unified downtown. Your downtown is cleaved in half by this large gas easement. We need to figure out how to bridge that gap, create kind of a north-south stem of downtown using the town theater site and the potentially the Emcor site and really tie those two sides of downtown together which are right now completely separated from each other.

The fourth objective is really to through-connect in terms of, you know, you've got all these utility corridors to connect through La Porte Street. I know that's going to be a big task, a difficult thing, not easy to do, may take a lot of time but we need to work toward that but also connecting Osborne Street from the south into the Ultra site.

He stated we got to figure out a better way to get people to the park from, you know, the east side of the city, or the town, rather, into the park. There's not a lot of walkable options. Yeah, there's a tunnel under the Indy Boulevard, but, you know, it's not apparent how you get over there without, in some cases, either driving or taking your life into your own hands by getting over to the park from the east side.

It's probably a lesser priority here, but something we have to keep our minds on down the road, is to really brand Highway 41. Yes, it's kind of a utilitarian circa 1950s, 60s strip. Every city, every community's got one of these or more but we need to figure out a way to brand that area and to take it up from a design standpoint, realizing, of course, that it is a U.S. highway. We can't do much in terms of tinkering with the geometrics of the street, not that we'd want to, but there's certain things we can do kind of on the margin to make it a more pleasant place to be, and give it some identity.

Back in 2009 You adopted a Redevelopment District Plan Which is for their redevelopment the TIF area basically your redevelopment district and some early thinking had been put down on paper as to what development could look like. It's just kind of a quick study. I don't want to dwell on it too much. I don't want to criticize whoever put that together. they were trying to illustrate some zoning ideas and this was kind of an attempt to do that. I think this may be a little too dense for what the market would support but

some of the principles are some of the same ones that we're going to show you, because there's not a lot of land with a Sharp Athletic Complex on the interior of that site. There's not a whole lot you can really do with this site, other than to line the street frontage with new buildings and make sure it's connected to whatever happens in the middle of the site.

This is another one pulled out of the same Redevelopment District and then you also had a 2016 NIRPC did a corridor plan for Kennedy Avenue at a time when I think you all were still trying to save the town theater, and we're looking at creating an arts district around the town theater. But this, again, is a zoning graphic, not a plan graphic, so I don't want to say that a lot of thought went into, or public input went into this, these ideas. But it shows kind of the corridor being built out with, you know, buildings that are front of the street, parking behind, again, some very basic principles of urban planning, urban design, which is some of the same things we would recommend. This shows some parking structures on that highway. I don't know I don't believe that the market would support parking structures there. Some educational institutions may have them, but in terms of income-producing real estate, you don't see too many parking structures because it's insanely expensive.

He mentioned one of the biggest obstacles we have to deal with on all these sites are the utility lines that kind of collide together in Highland and really create kind of an east side, west side dichotomy, if you will, and it shows the, kind of, the some of the edges and some of the barriers that we have to overcome to kind of knit this town together and you've done a great job. I mean, you know, these a lot of folks look at these things as liabilities.

The Sharp Athletic Complex and the water tanks there, it takes a big bite out of what you may be able to do more creatively in terms of master planning this area but be that as it may it shows some of the same ideas, albeit, you know, maybe a little bit smaller scale than the zoning graphic that you produced back in 2009. He talked about a Sports Complex and the growing market but it would be privately run. RecPlex an indoor & outdoor facility that would take advantage of the sharp Complex and the bowling alley

He mentioned the new bridge that will be built on Kennedy Ave entering Highland and how great that it was and it was already funded. It will help announce and landmark Highland on Kennedy Ave when you drive across the bridge and was hoping to stimulate new development specially on DPW site. One of the biggest obstacles we have to deal with on all these sites are the utility lines that kind of collide together in Highland and really create kind of east side and west side dichotomy, if you will and it shows the kind of the some of the edges and some of the barriers that we have to overcome to kind of knit this town together and you've done a great job. I mean, you know, these a lot of folks look at these things as liabilities.

The Department of Public Works site. This is the one we just showed you and again no great masterstroke of urban planning design here because we're really limited in terms of the amount of developable space with the sharp athletic complex and the water tanks there, it takes a big bite out of what you may be able to do, like, more creatively in terms of master planning this area, but be that as it may, it shows some of

the same ideas, albeit, you know, maybe a little bit smaller scale than the zoning graphic that you produced back in 2009.

He showed a graph with a new building and with a tower treatment and architectural element to it off of Kennedy and the riverfront and a line of buildings with mixed commercial and mixed use that line on either side of Kennedy Ave

On one of the slides he showed a blue box and explained that it could be a second-tier development and focused on sports entertainment market and he wanted to make sure everyone understood it's a privately built and run as an example he showed RecPlex an indoor -outdoor facility that would take advantage of the Sharp Complex and the bowling alley .

It would include indoor batting cages; gymnastics training or swimming types of things and Purdue has a whole campus of this kind of stuff but you also have the Lincoln center and this would be privately run .

The Sharp Complex would be built out to show a couple soccer fields, another baseball field and some concession amenities .

It also showed the water tanks as an architectural element with a canvas or public art on it.

On the northern tier along the river there could be tech offices or they could be town homes because it is a very shallow strip of land , either of these would work . Even a corporate office with some sort of architectural feature would landmark that corner .

The Ultra site in the first phase could be retail or big box retail or mixed-use buildings with some retail on the ground floor and offices and housing above that would both align along the utility right-of-way, but also the street front at Indianapolis Boulevard.

Unfortunately that's the world we live in and as I said before I don't think the market for structured parking is there and I think anybody who'd want to build it would be looking for the town to subsidize all if not most of the cost of that.

This is again a first phase but we want to make sure that whatever gets developed here can be expanded and be adapted to when the market starts to change, and so, watch yet, before I get there, this is the scale and quality of kind of what we would see happening and so instead of big box or large format stuff. Smaller stores stuff on the second floor could be offices could be could be housing, but definitely more of

an emphasis on walkability less of an emphasis on huge parking lots and trying to decentralize some of the parking a little bit.

One of the slides he showed was about if La Porte Street gets extended through and how that development could be filled in fleshed out. Some of the surface parking goes away and would be replaced with structured parking over time as the market changes. Some of the green spaces could be a little bit bigger and this model could be adapted and even incorporate the good parts of the shopping center, the antique center. You don't know how long that's going to last, but this could accommodate that building being there for a very long time, or if that building goes dark, you know just extending the same development pattern along the utility right-of-way there. So again more walkable maybe a little denser less emphasis on the big parking lots. Having a street and sidewalk system internal to the site not just a sheet of asphalt that you have now but some sort of street or lane system that makes it more walkable, incorporates some stormwater management techniques and it's just kind of more of a place I guess enclosed place than what you have now.

This is a kind of a different somewhat, you know, ambitious version of it, what it could look like. This is probably looking at it now too dense. You know there's not a parking. The parking here is all on new streets you know front-end parking long streets.

I think what's interesting here is that, the yellow you see on the edges showing like even townhouse development built into this. I don't think it makes sense on the south part of this, but on the north part that's facing the DNR property, it may make some sense. So this is kind of you know if parking structures weren't an issue what would we do here if everyone was walking and taking Uber, or taking a bus or riding on their bike.

The upper story of condos, apartments, lofts, flats, whatever you want to call them and a much more emphasis on green space incorporated that into parking lots and walking paths and the like. More emphasis, too, assuming you know some of this would go into parking structures, service parking would go into parking structures at some point

All these images that you're seeing are of old shopping centers or mall sites that have been adapted, this model, where some of the stores were torn down, some of the parking was gotten rid of and turn into parking structures in some cases, and just fill them with green spaces in others and then moving over to the town theater block and the Emcor site, you know, again, no masterstroke from a planning standpoint. What do we need to do to infill this area, connect the street system and create more of a walkable neighborhood So we would see mixed use, and I think this is some of the same ideas that the developers talked about even? Some mixed-use development on the Kennedy-facing core, and then in the inside, more townhouse development. This shows kind of a senior complex backing up to the substation.

There're some good models of this in the region you don't have to go very much farther than Pullman, Illinois, to see, you know, this kind of style of living

and construction you know this is very attractive to a lot of folks. A lot of its attached housing, but you mix in mixed housing types, some apartments, some townhouses, you can have a very walkable area, and take advantage of the great trail that you have around the edge of it.

More examples of housing types we think belong, or could belong, in the area, not necessarily on this site, but in the general area, including on the Department of Public Works site, again, some of the housing along the trail system, some of it's detached, triplex, fourplex, and some of this could be owned could be condominiums, or could be rental and then last but not least well actually last and least is the corner itself of Kennedy Avenue and Highway Avenue.

Where you've got a big parking lot, a gas station, and a public parking lot. This, this intersection really kind of vexes me, because it's really what real estate people call your 100% locations, where your two main streets intersect, but, you know, you don't have any sense of that you've arrived in downtown and even though if you go right or left it's actually pretty nice. This intersection right now is pretty raw and pretty uninviting.

I think you have to make some of this other stuff happen first before you can get these kind of small infill projects to go. But it'd be able to set a stage or create some expectation that you've arrived downtown, and these could be infill sites that are part of the latter phases of development, and so what I have in mind here is like you know, this is so the graphic on the lower left shows the entry to Kennedy Avenue looking south, coming into your main four corners and there's really nothing there that tells you you've arrived anywhere or it's not very inviting.

That elevator tower on that building there, you know, great sign opportunity to welcome people to downtown Highland continue some of the streetscape stamped concrete treatment that you already have, and your different nodes of downtown on the east side and the west side and continue that into this intersection. There's not much you can do with that big Ridge Road overpass but things like up-lighting it, can do a lot to make the community more attractive, and even some communities that have this issue do some creative stuff with hanging art or pendants over the intersection itself decorative lighting and the like to really you know to landmark and set off this intersection.

We didn't spend a lot of time on this. This is because I know you've all been talking to a developer on the Coach USA site but we do want to mention that this is a gap in the town's trail network that could be filled, and we think it'd be a great opportunity for you know, a new pedestrian bridge, to connect over to the trail that would be serve double duty as a pedestrian bridge but also as an archway to tell people hey you've arrived in Highland.

He knows that because he thinks the site does present some challenges from an access visibility standpoint. But these are some of the development types I could see happening on this specifically if you all got or the developer was allowed access to an easement to 81st Street to get a controlled intersection. I think if they get a controlled intersection at 81st Street the opportunities on this site multiply pretty dramatically and this is kind of the development types.

I would see small office buildings and the upper left is a co-working office, small medical buildings, technology company, that kind of thing. And you have a lot of this in the region, so this is the just across the river into Hammond, where the Hampton Inn is there you have 3 small office buildings, and I think one of these buildings is actually a co-working office, so we would see potentially more of this kind of stuff on that Coach USA site and then the publicly owned strip to the south, we believe you just keep it green. We don't think you should develop this at all. I think one of the nice things about Highland, it contrasts you with your neighbors, is that you come over the bridge there from Hammond, and you enter

this kind of greenspace area, and it really provides a lot of visual relief, and creates a nice contrast with some of the surrounding strip development. If you were to develop this we really think that you know you should develop the back end of this for housing overlooking the golf course.

As opposed to the frontage, because the frontage, you're probably you're just going to get most likely, strip development. You know, more of the same of you know, the Buffalo Wild Wings, the fast food restaurants, gas stations and the like are going to want to be there, which is not to say you couldn't get another small office building there, but to me, it's just not worth developing this site. All the earthwork and having to redo the drainage and stabilize the site it just doesn't seem as really worth it to us. So, we would keep it green, but if you were really intent on developing parts of it, it could, on the back end make some fairly attractive housing opportunities.

Finally the south part of Indianapolis Boulevard, Highway 41, which is pretty, right now, pretty utilitarian, pretty raw. There are things you can do kind of on the edges to make that experience driving down, up and down that street a little nicer, even though it is a U.S. highway. You can do things with decorative lights, you know, decorative street signals, those mast arms, stamped concrete patches of green to really take it up a little bit. And we did this, we helped Valparaiso many years ago, do something similar along Highway 30, if you've been down there lately. At one point a little more civilized now with decorative lighting on it.

I want to get into this but right now but one of the things we have to do is we have to fix your zoning ordinance, because right now you've got two different rule books, two different zoning ordinances that affect these redevelopment corridors and Kennedy Avenue and Indianapolis Boulevard. We need to fix that, we need to merge it make it consistent internally and then do some tweaks to this Corridor Avenue sub-district. This is really important because you really can't have two different rulebooks, two different zoning ordinances.

The thing that was adopted in 2009 is being treated as an overlay district but it's really not how it's written. So you've got two competing dueling zoning ordinances that affect this area and it can really set you up for a lot of developer frustration, but also litigation down the road. So we really recommend, and we'll have some recommendations as to how to fix it.

We believe that you should adhere to something similar where it's based on construction costs, or achieves assessed values with the idea that bigger projects get a bigger incentive some other incentives include ground leasing of town-owned sites, and at some point, we would suggest doing a driveway buyout program on Kennedy Avenue, because you have a lot of redundant driveways a lot of houses still on Kennedy Avenue that have both driveway access and rear alley access and it really impinges upon the capacity of the railway system. So we have a lot of public improvements, and one of the beauty things about this, you may scratch your head and think, oh my god, you want us to do all these things, it's going to cost

a huge fortune and yeah it will, but you have increment or you know, new revenue in each of these bubble areas that can help pay for or offset the cost of those improvements. One of the big ones that we don't have time to talk about tonight is you know a major beautification initiative on Kennedy Avenue.

It's really hard to get quality investment to want to come to a community unless the community is not you know willing to invest in itself so what we're suggesting that you do is do some of the same things you already have done downtown, which are great.

Your TIF balances are doing really well, so this is a projection, or rather, how your TIF has performed. So it seems to be doing really well. So the dark green is the allocation area for the redevelopment corridors, and the light green is everything else. You guys have been doing a good job of accumulating money, and so I would recommend talking to your public finance people to see, you know, potentially what kind of bond issue could this support to do a major beautification effort along Kennedy Avenue, and some of these other things we talked about this is just a style palette and I'll end it there so that was a lot. I apologize for going over but that's kind of some of the early thinking that we've come up with, and again, this is this early stuff. We haven't put a ton of time into this in terms of thought or design, so you're not going to hurt our feelings. If you think it all is horrible, we should start over. I will say, though, that given the odd shapes and limited sizes of some of these sites.

We can't just do every anything there. The sites really are constrained area-wise and through some of the things, either utility easements or, you know, water tanks, or sports complexes that have to stay so you can't really do you know do anything so you know earth-shattering on these sites. It's kind of pretty basic urban planning urban design.

Attorney Reed asked I saw the market analysis with how many millions are spent in various sectors of the economy in Lake County. Do you see that any parts of that are saturated, so to speak at this point I mean is grocery fairly saturated? Are hotels fairly saturated? I'm just wondering at what time at what point are you cannibalizing?

Greg answered I just want to emphasize we didn't have the research to do a full market study but the retail gap leakage analysis that American Structure Point put together show that you're fairly saturated I guess I'll put it succinctly. Which means that there's not a lot of upside for new retail but it also says that because you've got more stores than the population within those areas need or could support, it says that because you don't have a lot of vacancy that you're actually having people come into your region to shop that don't live in those areas, or coming in. The region is a retail center and I suspect that is the result of you know Indianapolis Boulevard and some of these other commercial corridors, like Highway 30 you get a lot of shoppers coming in from other places in the surrounding area to shop in this region.

Attorney Reed stated it seems like when we have a new grocery come in, not necessarily a Whole Foods, because that's sort of a different market altogether, but it seems like when and if another, you know, a store that was not there before pops up, it eats into the others, and then you're going to see a closure potentially and that, it's like the Ultra site. There's nothing I think scarier than having a large box store empty because it's so hard to do anything with that parcel without really tearing it down and starting over.

Greg answered Yeah, we don't know about the grocery market. It does say that their grocery market there's upside to the grocery market. It's called food at home. food at home is the largest segment. That is, again, grocery, it's also takeout, right? Because that could be takeout, restaurants, Uber Eats, that kind of thing. You know obviously people need to eat and that's one of the services that you know e-commerce hasn't no pun intended, eaten into because you food has to be prepared fairly close to typically where it's

consumed. So that seems to be an opportunity area. We don't have any more granular data on that than what you see here though.

Again, the entertainment and recreation this is something that kind of surprised us and was confirmed by but also voiced by some of the economic development folks who said that this is a we think it's a growing and it's a focus area of the local economic development community, and it's made more realistic by, or added, strength by the convention center and specifically, what we heard, talking to the CBB, was that people, you know, who go to conventions want to bring their families along need some sort of family-friendly entertainment, to who don't want people who don't want to gamble all day or aren't into that. What do they do?

Commissioner Scheeringa asked Do you feel that housing can grow within the town? Do you think that would succeed the townhome style? I know you showed a lot of pictures of that do you feel that that would succeed in our downtown?

Greg answered Yeah, I do and that was confirmed by some of the broker-developer types we talked to said there's actually a lack of that kind of thing you know, that we need to have more options that we, the region, they were talking about Highland specifically but the region needs more housing options. That included things that maybe weren't as expensive as a single-family home, but also for people who are aging and don't want to downsize their living situation or maybe they're commuting to Chicago on the new South Shoreline having quality housing options that include, you know, new single-family, detached, attached, and, you know, apartments are something that and it's what's being built now. If you drive around the thing that is being built mostly everywhere right now is housing because we have a nationally shortage of it.

Quite honestly, there's not a lot of new retail being developed because the market is not what it used to be. Offices aren't really being developed because everyone's going to smaller space and so teleworking that trend is here to stay. Yeah, some corporations are still developing space and using space but they're using a much smaller footprint than they used to. So that doesn't seem to be a big growth market unless you really niche it and create a, you know, tech office space, a small technology park you know co-working space, medical office and that kind of thing. So those things all seem to be things that we think would work there and I think that the brokers, developers that we talked to believe would work.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked do you believe along the bike trail you want to be as close to the bike trail, right with that type of development.

Greg answered Well, I think there's two places where it really works. It could work up on this is the DPW site assuming somebody doesn't come and want to take that whole site and use it for some sort of recreational sports privately run for-profit, taxable. That that strip of land along the, just south of the levee would lend itself to either some small technology offices maybe some co-working space or potentially townhouse developed style development and I think the again the picture on the lower right there is kind of you know could kind of capture that a little bit. But yeah, stuff that's actually oriented to the trail. The trails would work really well we think both the riverfront but also the bike trails the Erie-Lackawanna Trail as well.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked in the downtown area ?

Greg answered yes and spoke about different style of housing one was attached housing and stated it was very attractive to a lot of people and the density would help make downtown more vibrant . Someone once told him the best retail strategy is a housing strategy and he believes that

Commissioner Scheeringa the struggle with redevelopment and TIF type funds is your return on investment is lower in the State of Indiana because it's 1%

Greg answered yes

Commissioner Scheeringa you have to make sure it's cost effective that you are going to get the return on your investment

Greg answered yes and I know you've had discussions with some developers here. I don't know what kind of subsidy they'd be looking for, if any, to do this kind of thing, but whatever they would do. You know, you should make sure that somebody's looking over their construction budget and their pro forma to make sure they're not I'll put it bluntly, not just getting over on you, in terms of, you know, we have a, you know, we have a \$10 million gap, you need us to pay, you know, \$5 million to be able to do this.

Show us those numbers. Where's that would assume you've got a gap in your financial stack that needs to be filled. Let us see what that where that is. We would see this as being market rate housing, too, I mean, which is not to say some income-restricted units couldn't be included in it, but, you know, we envision this being majority market rate.

Commissioner Robertson asked what are the next steps ?

Greg answered we want to talk to you offline in closed session, because we may have already generated some interest in some of these, well, one site in particular, but the idea would be to take these concepts, these rough concepts, and get your feedback, and it doesn't have to be tonight, but, you know, maybe wait a week, maybe Maria could collect comments and tell us what you don't like about them, or what you do like, and we can polish these up. Some need to you know, the more you look at these things, every time I look at them, it's like and this is always what happens with design. You look at it a third, second time, or fourth time, and you say oh, I wish I would have done this different. So we would polish a few things up.

You know, make it look more realistic maybe do some 3D-style renderings of what this would actually look like and feel like and then kind of Tina, move it forward, and then really, at this point, drill into .The less, you know, romantic parts of this, which is really implementation and you know these four bullets.

You know, say it strongly enough, you need to get your zoning ordinance sorted out. Two different you got your online zoning ordinance, which says one thing, and then you have this 2009 overlay, we call it an overlay district but it's not really written that way. This redevelopment district, and those things aren't internally consistent. They say different things, they have different permitted uses in them, different

design standards that could really set you up for a lot of problems down the road and it's going to be one of the first things that turns a developer off if they have to deal with two different role systems.

So one of the things is really getting that fixed. That's not really part of the scope of our work. We have people on our staff that do that stuff and we'll make some recommendations but that really does need to get fixed. It needs to be modernized, reorganized digitized, and it needs to be you know accessible and understandable by developers looking at this and then create an incentives policy you in terms of what are we going to offer? So developers have, you know, not a guarantee of what they can get if they want to develop at high level, but at least some predictability in terms of what they can expect if they make a certain investment. So I have a scaled incentive policy that says if you, you know, invest from, you know 10 to 20 million, this is the incentive that you can expect, if it's 20 to 30 million, this is what you can expect. Have it stepped up, so we're really rewarding bigger investments with bigger incentives and then you know really understand what you have available within the redevelopment, the TIF.

To find out what can you really issue a bond, and to pay for you know a major street improvement on Kennedy Avenue? It seems to me you can and I think you've probably done that before with the highway avenue corridor and some of the public improvements, I would assume you've bonded for that.

So we're saying let's do something similar here on Kennedy Avenue but we really need to know what kind of bond issue or how big of a bond issue could support that revenue stream could support now.

Philip Roth from American Structure Point was explaining what a comprehensive was and what it details

A Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document to inform decisions related to land use and development for the community including future land use, transportation, sustainability, housing and the economy over the next 20 to 30 years. The Comprehensive Plan typically falls under the purview of the Plan Commission, but you as the Redevelopment Commission also have a role in the implementation

Phil went on to explain how a comprehensive plan is used. It serves as a roadmap for future land use and development decisions and includes a land use map to visualize long-term growth. It can identify critical path strategies and helps the town to compete for grant funding and other financial resources. It can also establish benchmarks to measure progress and success over time. A Comprehensive Plan is not zoning

He explained that the Stakeholders both within the Town Government and without town government would have a role in the implementation of the plan. There are 3 phases to this project, the first being to educate by this he has gathered data met with advisory groups and stakeholders and completed an existing conditions report. We are now at the end of phase two which is to explore and examine land use, what the initial concept and visions and goals and the drafting of the Comprehensive Plan.

He spoke of the existing conditions and the declining population and most of the housing is older single-family homes and there is very little room to grow and we are seeing single family units transition to rentals. What are the needs for the housing market in the future. These trends point to a need for diversified, attainable, and, in many instances, senior-friendly housing options.

We've spent a lot of time discussing already how economically Highland functions as a regional retail hub, much of that strength comes from a few categories, but it's still worth noting. At the same time, older commercial corridors and downtown buildings need reinvestment. Land is limited and mostly built out, which means that your major opportunities for future development are coming from redevelopment, hence your interest in redevelopment and Greg's study. Now, I agree wholeheartedly, by the way, with his recommendation on the zoning ordinance and looking at some of those regulatory tools.

I want to make clear is that, in communities that are largely built out, zoning and subdivision regulations tend to have a weaker wool because they aren't used day-to-day as much. However, when you have redevelopment, as Greg notes, those types of tools become very important. You know development is a risky endeavor and developers don't like uncertainty. They don't like not knowing whether they're meeting the requirements of your code or not.

Mobility and infrastructure are major themes. You have parks and trails as key assets, but many facilities are aging, like water, sewer, stormwater systems. Flood-prone areas and traffic safety concerns are also... need to be factored into future land use decisions.

We had a variety of stakeholder meetings in the community, and I can give you more detail on who we met and why, but it's worth noting what some of the perceptions of these stakeholders are. This is contrasted with the public to whom we spoke and stakeholders really valued the strengths that Highland has to offer, particularly parks, schools, and community events. There's a solid base of neighborhood stability and strong regional access. People value the community's identity and want to preserve it while improving transparency and communication from local government.

The concerns we heard cluster around infrastructure, traffic safety, and aging commercial corridors, again all things that you've already heard from tonight. Several single-family areas are seeing an increase in rentals. The lack of land for expansion is putting extra pressure on redevelopment and reinvestment. So you have these structural challenges that the town is trying to cope with and stakeholders want to focus forward, especially on corridor downtown reinvestment, housing diversity and the redevelopment of the large underperforming sites that we've already talked about. There's also strong support for safer multimodal streets and for using incentives more strategically with clearer return on investment.

There were 5 themes that rose to the top across nearly every data source. Reinvesting in corridors in downtown, improving mobility and safety, expanding housing choices, strengthening quality of life assets, and maintaining fiscal responsibility.

We took these themes and we started to take a look at how the goals and objectives for the community might respond to all of this. We're looking at goals as a way to take the themes and define actions that lead to more concrete kinds of programs and projects and outcomes. The new goals that we're coming up with are intended to meet all of these requirements almost on a one-for-one basis.

We want to add explicit goals for downtown and corridor reinvestment. We want to introduce housing options as a standalone goal.

We think that mobility and safety deserve attention as a core element within the goals and objectives, as well as expanding quality of life to include a couple things that, you know, maybe 20 years ago wasn't talked about as frequently and then again adding fiscal responsibility as a guiding principle.

It's difficult to do a traditional land use design, where you're saying Area A should be residential, Area B should be commercial. Simply because, as a built-out community, most of those uses are set, and where they aren't set, is where you're having very focused redevelopment efforts, which is what Greg and KKC are doing.

What we did with our steering committee is we did an exercise where we looked at land use policy. That is, what are the areas that are unified by a common need for town intervention, if one exists? we've, identified 5 different types of areas. The redevelopment areas, where, which aligns with the items that Greg is doing, where we think there is potential for, you know minor increases in, in housing or commercial uses. Vulnerability, areas where we think there might need to be some attention paid to in terms of Public facilities or Property values in order to make sure that, declines don't, in property values don't continue precipitously.

There are corridor and district areas that we thought where we think there are shared needs and perhaps some need for identity. This kind of matches up with Greg's recommendations on gateways, and trying to come up with some, visible sense of identity for particular areas and basically anything that didn't fall into one of these four areas was judged to be stabilization.

In terms of most of the town, you can see that it falls in this stabilization category. Kennedy Avenue, Indianapolis Boulevard, there are these areas for these districts, but particularly at the south side of the town, where you have these large, functionally obsolete commercial areas, as well as a number of Residential areas that seem to be isolated. These seem to be some possible areas where we would want to designate a particular study area and take a look at those conditions. You know based on property values we did define a few areas of concern that we thought might be vulnerable areas. This was based, again primarily upon property values, examination of property values relative to the rest of the town. The redevelopment areas that Greg was talking about are already noted on here and then we've identified some corridor areas and residential areas that might have some potential for infill development.

We've had 3 steering committee meetings thus far. Our intent is to have a fourth one, perhaps in December, and then come out with the second phase of our public outreach, as I mentioned. I'm trying to ask the public if they think we've gotten everything correct. Again, that's rocketing through everything. Again, I can take time now or at another meeting to get more detail, but I'm certainly willing to spend as much time as needed to help you feel comfortable with the recommendations, the plan and the direction that it's headed.

One of the Commissioners mentioned that it sounded like they still needed a little more work and they can do another presentation after the new year

Phil Roth asked of any of the Commissioners seen anything that surprised them and they answered No

One of the Commissioners mentioned that it was a very good idea to bring in Kendig Keast and how they did a great job and thanked Commissioner Robertson and Maria for finding them

Attorney Reed also noted I love when they show, like, real-life examples that are somewhere, and you're like, it gives you such a better feel for what it shows what's working but I kind of get looking at an overhead of do this, but when you see the physical buildings it makes a big difference.

Commissioner Scheeringa mentioned how he liked the way Kennedy Ave looked with the center lane and having green space and some lighting .

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned by President Robertson at 7:55 PM.

Duly Passed and Resolved by the Highland Redevelopment Commission, Highland, Lake County, Indiana, this 26th day January of 2026, having passed by a vote 5 in favor and 0 opposed.

Highland Redevelopment Commission



President

ATTEST:

Secretary


