

2011 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Introduction

Under Indiana Code 36-7—14-13, the Redevelopment Commission must prepare an Annual Report outlining the activities of the Commission, the members, and the expenditures made during 2011. 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

In 2011, the Commission focused on completing the second Redevelopment Area II Plan for the Commercial Corridors. Both Tax Increment Financing and Tax Abatement will be allowed in that area, as well as within the first Redevelopment Area I in the Downtown. The second major focus was the development and implementation of a Façade Improvement Grant program for the downtown area utilizing bond proceeds from the downtown beautification project. One applicant and several other property owners were interested in the program. Interns from Purdue Calumet's Experiential Learning Program were hired to provide renditions of downtown buildings to increase interest in the program. Two other major projects included Highland Main Street Bureau and its Arts & Music Subcommittee, and the purchase of the Town Theatre located at 8616 Highway Avenue at the Lake County Tax Sale. Other accomplishments included the development of a business data base and a recommendation for storm water fun-off for small commercial properties. The following provides a monthly summary of activities.

January

January is typically the organizational meeting of the Commission and the following appointments were made to the Redevelopment Commission for 2011 by the Town Council: Greg Kuzmar, Michael Maloney, Bridget DeYoung, Tom Crowel, and Dominic Noce. Officers were retained from 2010 with Tom Crowel serving as President, Greg Kuzmar as Vice-President, and Dominic Noce as Secretary. The School Town of Highland co-appointments were Luanne Jurczak and Lawrence Vassar.

The Commission passed a number of resolutions including Resolution 2011-01, *A Resolution authorizing Compensation for Certain Employees to be Derived from the Proper Fund of the Redevelopment Department of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana*. This resolution authorizes payment to the Director, Recording Secretary, and Attorney. Resolution 2011-02, *A Resolution of the Highland redevelopment Commission Approving an Agreement for Legal Services to the Highland Redevelopment Commission for 2011*, provides legal services at the rate of \$175 per hour by Beckman, Kelly & Smith. Resolution 2011-03, *A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission Approving a Retainer Agreement for Financial Advisory Services and General Redevelopment Consulting to the Highland Redevelopment Commission for 2011*, provides a \$5,000 retainer for financial services from Cender & Company.

Lastly, Resolution 2011-04, *A Resolution of the Town of Highland Redevelopment Commission Further Amending the Declaratory Resolution and all Subsequent Amending Declaratory Resolutions that Established and Designated the Highland Redevelopment Area as Expanded from Time to Time*, was approved by the Commission. This resolution reduced the size of Redevelopment Area I for the Downtown by removing the northern most section of Indianapolis Boulevard from that Redevelopment Area. That section will be included within the new Redevelopment Area II for the Commercial Corridors.

The meeting schedule for 2011 was passed and goals approved for the year. They Goals are as follows:

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
GOALS FOR 2011

Urgent Goals for the Redevelopment Commission

1. Work with developers that have an interest in redeveloping/developing in the Town.
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 Areas I & II and the Economic Development Area to developers who will abide by our Design Standards in Redevelopment Area I 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. Initiate a Façade Improvement Grant program through Highland main Street and accept applications from businesses that will remodel or rehab their exteriors to meet the Design Standards.
7. Continue to work with local colleges and universities in our redevelopment efforts, especially in the use of the Experiential Learning Program and in joint grant proposal efforts.
8. Continue to develop an economic development website to clearly reflect the opportunities 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 our collaborative efforts with the public, non-profit, and for-profit sectors in order to accomplish regional initiatives for the betterment of 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. Continue to apply for funding opportunities whenever possible.
7. Continue to participate in the Highland Community Foundation to improve the quality of community life in Highland.

During the study session, Commissioners discussed a traffic safety issue in the downtown, storm water run-off issues, building standards for the proposed new Redevelopment Area II, and discussion of a pilot Façade Improvement Grant program.

February

At the February public meeting, Commissioners approved Resolution 2011-05, *An Exigent Resolution Providing for the Transfer of Appropriation Balances From and Among Major Budget Classifications in the Redevelopment Capital Fund as Requested by the Department Head(s) or Proper Officer(s) and Forwarded to the Redevelopment Commission for its Action Pursuant to IC 6-1.1-18-6*. This resolution will transfer funds in order to provide an additional \$80,000.00 for the Façade Improvement Grant Program. The total amount available for the program will be \$100,000.00 in 2011. The new Highland Main Street Bureau will assist with referrals to the program. The 2010 Annual Report was approved and a public meeting and study session for February 23, 2011 was scheduled.

This meeting will review and act on the Highland Redevelopment Area II Plan for the Commercial Corridors. Commissioners also approved \$500.00 for an Illinois marketing campaign through the Northwest Indiana Forum.

During the study session, members reviewed the "Storm Water Policy Recommendation for Small Commercial Lots Undergoing Redevelopment" document that will be discussed with the Sanitary Board Members, Redevelopment Commission Members, the Building Commissioner, and the Public Works Director at a future meeting. The Commission also discussed the Façade Improvement Grant program and the publicity necessary to make this program a success.

March

After the normal business meeting on March 9, 2011, Commissioners resumed their study session. Preparations for the up-coming Storm Water Run-off Recommendation meeting were discussed. The special public meeting scheduled for February 23, 2011 was cancelled due to further considerations regarding the Redevelopment Area II Plan. Commissioners continued to review the draft document and propose suggestions and changes. Three businesses have expressed an interest in the Façade Improvement Grant program and have received copies of the application.

During the study session on March 23, 2011, the Commissioners heard a presentation from Purdue Calumet intern, Morris Sims, on the Highland Business Contact Management Data base he developed for the Redevelopment Commission. The data base is able to sort the Highland Business License list by type of business, major geographic area, and by Redevelopment Program Areas such as Redevelopment Areas I & II, Industrial Area, Riverfront Development District, and the Economic Development Area. Commissioners also discussed the recent Storm Water Run-Off Recommendation Meeting. The document is now in the hands of a new committee made up of Sanitary Board and Building and Inspection Members. They will revise the document and forward it to the Commission for review and comment. Lastly, the Commission was asked to make a final review of the Redevelopment Area II Plan for the Commercial Corridors before the next meeting, so that the Plan can be approved and sent to the Plan Commission.

April

At the public meeting on April 13, 2011, Commissioners approved Resolution 2011-07, *A Resolution Authorizing and Approving an Elective Honorarium to Morris Sims, a Computer Technology Intern, in Support of His Assistance with the Development of the Format for the Redevelopment Commission's Data Base*. Mr. Sims will receive a \$500 stipend for his work. Commissioners also approved the Director's participation on Purdue Calumet University's Experiential Learning Advisory Council. During the study session that followed the meeting, Commissioners discussed the up-coming Pop-Up Gallery event scheduled for April 21, 2011 as part of Highland Main Street. The Pop-Up Gallery has three goals: to encourage developers, commercial realtors, and businesses to view a property that is for sale or lease; to display art to the public; and to provide a networking opportunity for business persons. The first location was at 2427 Ridge Road.

During the April 27, 2011 study session, Commissioners reviewed the final draft of a resolution establishing a new Redevelopment Area II Plan for the Commercial Corridors. Thirteen businesses have requested an application for the Façade Improvement Grant Program, although no applications have been returned, to date. Commissioners also discussed the Downtown Association's suggestion to transfer their assets to the new Highland Main Street organization under the Commission. A meeting between the two organizations will take place within the month. Lastly, Commissioners directed the Director to write a letter to the Fire Chief and the Building Commissioner requesting a site inspection of the Town Theatre located at 8616 Highway Avenue.

May

Commissioners approved the Artist Submission Guidelines for Pop-Up Gallery Events at the public meeting held on May 11, 2011. The regularly study session scheduled for May 25, 2011 was cancelled. During the study session of the 11th, Commissioners discussed hiring two interns from Purdue Calumet to provide façade renditions for buildings in the downtown area. Commissioners discussed several areas in Highland that are in need of redevelopment: Town theatre, Ultra Plaza, and the northwest corner of Main and Indianapolis Boulevard. Lastly, the Director updated the Commission on the “Shop Highland” program that is available on our website.

June

At the June 8, 2011 meeting, Commissioners discussed leasing multiple kiosk panels to one business. During the public meeting, the Commission approved leasing three kiosk panels to Hobson and Scott. The Commission approved a special public meeting to be held on June 22, 2011 to approve the new Redevelopment Area II Plan for the Commercial Corridors and to approve amending the current Redevelopment Area I Plan for the Downtown. At the study session of June 8, 2011, Commissioners reviewed the condition of North Indianapolis Boulevard and prepared for their upcoming meeting with a representative of Strack and Van Til, owners of Ultra Foods located in that area. Also, Commissioners reviewed the first application for the Façade Improvement Grant program from Mr. Hal Slager, owner of property located at the 8715 and 8717 Kennedy Avenue between Highway Avenue and Jewett Street.

On June 22, 2011, the Commission met in a special meeting. A public hearing was held and no comments were received by the public either written or verbal. The Commission then approved Resolution 2011-08, *A Resolution of the Highland redevelopment Commission Confirming a Resolution that Amended a Redevelopment Area in the Town of highland, Lake County, Indiana; amended the Redevelopment Plan for the redevelopment Area and Amended the Allocation Provisions of the Highland Redevelopment Allocation Area Specific to a Boundary Modification*. This action amended the current Redevelopment Area I Plan for the downtown, essentially removing the northern section of Indianapolis Boulevard from the current plan in preparation of its inclusion in the new Redevelopment Area II Plan for the Commercial Corridors. The new plan will be taken up at the next public meeting in July. Also approved was Resolution 2011-09, *A Resolution of the Town of Highland Redevelopment Commission Determining the Amount of Assessed Valuation to Capture as of the March 1, 2011 Assessment Date in Order to Generate Tax Increment for Distribution in 2012 to Satisfy Commission Obligations of Outstanding Debt Service and Lease Payments and Including Project or Program Costs Related to the Highland Acre Allocation area and the highland Allocation area as Notice to the Lake County Auditor*. This resolution allows the Auditor to capture Tax Increment Financing from the two allocation Areas for the Commission. At the same meeting, the Commission provided preliminary approval for a Façade Improvement Grant for Mr. Hal Slager’s property located at 8715 and 8717 Kennedy Avenue. During the study session, Commission members discussed the recent meeting with representatives of Strack and Van Til. A future meeting will be held once the Commission is able to gain additional information about the North Indianapolis Boulevard bridge removal.

July

During the public meeting of July 13, 2011, the Commission approved Resolution 2011-06, *A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission Declaring an area in the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana as a Redevelopment area, Approving a Redevelopment Plan for the Redevelopment Area and Designating and Declaring the Redevelopment Area as an Allocation Area for the Purpose of Utilizing Tax Increment Financing to Implement*

the Redevelopment Plan. This resolution established a new Redevelopment Area including the major commercial corridors. It provided a plan for redevelopment and made the area a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) area.

Commissioners also approved the lease of the Commission owned lot located at the southeast corner of Highway and Kennedy Avenues for an anniversary party by Growlers on Highway (2816 Highway). The lease was for a one evening event at a cost of \$1650.00.

Commissioners approved the law firm of Green & Kuchel to serve as counsel for the Commission. Attorney Carol Green-Fraley will continue as Commission Counsel.

During the study session, the Commission reviewed façade renditions provided by the two Experiential Learning Interns from Purdue Calumet. Commissioners also reviewed the preliminary application for a Façade Improvement Grant from the owners of Traditions Restaurant located at 2739 Highway.

At the study session of July 27, 2011, Commissioners discussed progress with potential Façade Improvement Grant program projects. They also discussed other properties in town that were in a state of disrepair and steps that have been taken or could be taken to remedy the situation. Commissioners directed the Director to write a letter to the Building Commissioner asking for the Building and Inspection Department to investigate potential code violations at the Town Theatre.

August

Commissioners requested the attorney to investigate the tax sale status on the Town Theatre. A draft budget for 2012 was approved and forwarded to the Clerk-Treasurer's office. During the study session, Attorney Green-Fraley outlined the steps needed to move forward with the tax sale. Commissioners also reviewed a letter received by the Commission regarding steps taken to date at the Town Theatre by the Building Commissioner. Plans for a new façade at Traditions Restaurant were reviewed by the Commission. Councilman Mark Herak joined the Commission to discuss the 2012 budget and the status of some properties in town, including Chela's located at 3325 45th Street and Finkies located at 8835 Kennedy Avenue.

At the August 24, 2011 study session, the Redevelopment Area II Plan for the Commercial Corridors was discussed. Commissioners reviewed comments from the Plan Commission and Town Council. A public hearing and final approval of the plan was scheduled for the September 14, 2011 meeting. Commissioners also discussed goals for 2012. Commissioners also discussed progress with the Façade Improvement Grant program and the upcoming tax sale. Before the meeting and during the Highland Main Street meeting, Pat Popa a member of the Downtown Association, presented Highland Main Street with a \$3113.49 check because the Association has disbanded. The Redevelopment Commission accepted the check with grateful thanks. It will be utilized for downtown improvements.

September

Commissioner met on September 14, 2011 and approved Resolution 2011-09, *A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission Confirming a Resolution that Declared an Area in the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana, as a Redevelopment Area, Approving a Redevelopment Plan for the Redevelopment Area and Designated and Declared the Redevelopment Area as an Allocation Area for the Purpose of Utilizing Tax Increment Financing to Implement to the Redevelopment Plan* following a public hearing. This resolution confirmed the new Redevelopment Area for the Commercial Corridors and made it available for Tax Increment Financing.

Commissioners also approved Resolution 2011-10, *A Resolution Authorizing Compensation for Certain Employees to be Derived From the Proper Fund of the Redevelopment Department of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana and Authorizing Compensation for Morris Sims in an amount not to exceed \$500.00*. Due to changes in state law, interns are considered employees and a new resolution needed to be passed in order to provide a stipend to him.

Commissioners passed Resolution 2011-11, *A Resolution Amending the Acquisition List for the Redevelopment Plan of the Town of Highland Dated May 28, 1997, as Amended*. The Town Theatre and the Theatre parking lot were added to the Acquisition List. The Commission also requested the Attorney and Director to proceed with negotiations to purchase property located at 8616 Kennedy Avenue and 2804 & 2808 Garfield Avenue.

Commissioners also approved a Supplemental Agreement with Cender & Company for an amount not to exceed \$3000 for general financial services for 2011.

During the study session, Commissioners discussed the 2012 Goals, the Façade Improvement Grant program, and Highland Main Street.

During the special meeting scheduled for September 23, 2011, the Commission approved the purchase of property located at 8616 Kennedy Avenue and 2804 & 2808 Garfield Avenue, not to exceed \$100,000. The Commission also approved Resolution 2011-12, *A Resolution by the Highland Redevelopment Commission Requesting Town council Approval of the Designation of an Economic Revitalization (Property Tax Abatement) Area for the Redevelopment Area II for the Commercial Corridors*. This resolution would allow tax abatement in the area designated within the Redevelopment Area II for the Commercial Corridors. Under Public Comments, Mr. Robert Phipps of Hammond, Indiana stated that he was also interested in purchasing the parking lot owned by the Town Theatre at the tax sale.

Commissioners met on September 28, 2011 for a study session to review the successful tax sale purchase of the Town Theatre. Commissioners discussed the stability of the roof and the building as a whole. They also discussed the Façade Improvement Grant program and a letter of support for Traditions Restaurant located at 2739 Highway Avenue as it appears before the BZA. A draft letter will be prepared for the next meeting.

October

At the October 12, 2011 meeting, Commissioners approved a Letter of Recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals in support of Traditions Restaurant's appeal (located at 2739 Highway Avenue) to encroach upon the public right-of-way in order to provide outdoor dining.

The Commission discussed the status of the Town Theatre located at 8616 Highway Avenue and the recent purchase at the Lake County Tax Sale. The Commission paid \$16,791.92 for the theatre and \$11,000 and \$185.53 for the two-parcel parking lot.

Reports from Highland Main Street were discussed at the study session.

During the October 19, 2011 special meeting, Resolution 2011-12, *A Resolution of the Highland Redevelopment Commission to Approve an Application by Mr. Hal Slager d/b/a Triangle Equities, LLC for a Façade Improvement*

Grant for Property Located at 8715 & 8717 Kennedy Avenue was passed. Mr. Slager has already completed a roof repair and removed the Mansard roof.

At the study session of October 19, 2011, Commissioners discussed the Town Theatre (8616 Kennedy Avenue) and any further action that may be needed.

November

Commissioners approved an advertisement for Highland in the periodical, "Resource Guide for Trade Industry", not to exceed \$300.00. The Commission also cancelled the regularly scheduled study session of November 23, 2011 due to the Thanksgiving holiday. The study session will be held on November 30, 2011, instead. Commissioners were introduced to Darlene Barron who has expressed interest in Highland Main Street. Her focus will be on the Rookery.

During the study session following the public meeting, Commissioners discussed progress with the Town Theatre. Appraisers and a roof inspector have been contacted and are beginning their appraisals of the building and parking lot. Once that is completed, an offer will be made to the owner. Commissioners also discussed additional goals for 2012. One goal was added: to explore the possibility of providing a façade improvement program for smaller projects under \$10,000.00. An Arts & Music Subcommittee for Highland Main Street was also discussed and approved. The purpose will be to increase the visibility of the arts in Highland and work with downtown businesses.

On November 30, 2011, the Commission held a study session. Goals were reviewed and more detailed information was added for Goal #1, which requested a listing of properties that are considered vacant and blighted. The Commission also discussed acquiring quotes for the repair of the Theatre's roof. Three quotes will be obtained before contracting. The Director presented a tax abatement request from Culver's Restaurant to be located at the southwest corner of Ridge Road and Cline Avenue. Suggestions were made to the Economic Development Commission that will review the application before going before the Town Council. Lastly, Hammond has offered to repay part of the loan that was contracted with them in 2007 for the demolition of the former Kennedy Avenue Apartments. The Commission's attorney will meet with Hammond's Redevelopment Commission's attorney to discuss the matter.

December

Councilman Bernie Zemen attended the Commission meeting on December 14, 2011 to discuss the Town Theatre. The Commission was unable to utilize its own funds on the property because it was not the owner and tax dollars cannot be expended on property not owned by the Commission. The Commission requested assistance from the Town Council. Councilmen Zemen stated that he would discuss the situation with the Council. Goals for 2012 were approved and the study session of December 21, 2011 was cancelled due to the holiday.

During the December 14th study session, members discussed the Façade Improvement Grant program. Owners of Cakes By Karen located at 8632 Kennedy Avenue provided two designs for improvements. Commissioners reviewed the designs and comments from the Design Advisory Committee headed by Greg Kuzmar. Further talks with the architect will take place regarding the Commission's suggestions. Mr. Hal Slager, owner of 8715 and 8717 Kennedy Avenue and the first Façade Improvement Grant applicant, requested to be reimbursed now and stated that he will complete the landscaping in the Spring at his cost. The Commission reviewed the application guidelines and decided that all projects must be completed before reimbursement can occur.

Highland Main Street President, Bridget DeYoung, discussed several items related to Main Street. First, she stated that three local restaurants were participating in a coupon program to be given to high school musicians. If this program works well, future coupon programs will be tried. Secondly, Main Street will be organizing a Sports Partnership Subcommittee with businesses to encourage people to come downtown to celebrate sporting events. Lastly, a third Pop-Up Gallery is scheduled for January 12, 2012 at 2645 Main Street, Suite C.

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 \$45,995.04 for 2011.

PUBLIC MEETINGS AND STUDY SESSIONS IN 2011

January 11, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
January 26, 2011	Study Session
February 9, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
March 9, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
March 23, 2011	Study Session
April 13, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
April 27, 2011	Study Session
May 11, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
June 8, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
June 22, 2011	Special Meeting
July 13, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
August 10, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
August 24, 2011	Study Session
September 14, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
September 23, 2011	Special Meeting
September 28, 2011	Study Session
October 11, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
October 19, 2011	Special Meeting
October 26, 2011	Study Session
November 9, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session
November 30, 2011	Study Session
December 14, 2011	Public Meeting and Study Session