

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

STUDY SESSION MINUTES

MONDAY, MAY 11TH, 2026

Members of the Highland Redevelopment Commission (RC Commission) met in person at Town Hall on Monday, May 11th, 2026. The Study session was called to order at 8:33 pm by President Alex Robertson.

Roll Call/Commissioners Present at Town Hall George Georgeff, Tom Black, Alex Robertson, Doug Turich, Commissioner Phil Scheeringa were present and Pat Krull, Non-voting member & School Town Representative was excused.

Additional Officials Present: Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director; Attorney John Reed , Derek Snyder and 1 member of the audience .

Redevelopment Plan with Greg Flisram and Derek Snyder :

Plan revisions & review process :

Derek Snyder brought up some issues that needed to be addressed with some of the designs that Greg made and needed to be revised .

Derek put together a list of comments, markups and actually had to bring it to the first draft and then Greg had some revisions and incorporated a decent amount of those but there's some that they still need to talk about of how we want it in the plan.

Greg has agreed to incorporate the agreed schematic changes and prepare a shortlist of feasible crossing options for design development.

Gateway signage & monumentation

Proposed gateway elements at Indianapolis Boulevard and Kennedy Avenue to provide branding: large span signs or monument signs at river crossings.

Practical trade-off: full physical gateway that implies a trail connection requires coordinating supporting infrastructure (trails/bridges) to avoid isolated "Welcome" signs that lead nowhere.

Recommendation: use lighter signage/monuments where crossing infrastructure is not yet feasible; place more substantive gateway treatments where safe, continuous pedestrian connections can be provided

The estimated cost is about 1.2 million . That's just my cost assessment for the construction , engineering cost is one and half million . Now if this feedline had not had breaks redevelopment essentially be the one that's kind of moving these out of the way but because we've had the breaks now it's on the waterboards to do list and we could do now is replace them and I guess the discussion was at the water board meeting to split the cost between the waterboard and redevelopment .

We found a way to move it as close to Kennedy as possible which maximizes the use of that property.

Encroachment : Land Survey of 2655 Garfield :

Derek stated 2655 Garfield, the Emcor site. I reviewed the survey that was prepared for that and found that two buildings were encroaching on a pipeline easement and so in that area, NIPSCO, they basically bought the old railroad but then beyond the limits of the railroad line and another 15 feet is an easement for pipelines. I'm not sure which pipeline it's for. Didn't look in that level of detail but regardless you're not allowed to have structures within that easement. they're looking at going call in 811 to mark where the pipeline is.

Attorney Reed asked roads and paths are ok just not structures?

Derek stated so one building has two corners that go, I think, like 5 feet into the easement. So that's building B, Building A, which is the office building, the part that encroaches is the second story. So it's building it has a cantilevered out. about 3 and a half feet. So that's one it's aerial encumbrance.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked How did these get built without that in too?

Attorney Reed answered it probably wasn't born then.

Commissioner Scheeringa I don't know when these buildings were built.

Commissioner Georgeff stated what you're saying what you're questioning is whether the buildings were there before the easements were in.

Commissioner Scheeringa answered Correct

Derek stated I don't well, they sent over the page from the flat book. I don't know if they'll check an email but that looked like a pretty old document.

Maria stated it was 1965

Attorney Reed stated there's a difference, I suppose, if they have the easement with

Several plan items (extra crossings, certain bridge/port solutions) were flagged as likely infeasible or premature for a concept plan.

Recommendation from multiple participants was to simplify those items in exhibits so future reviewers do not chase low-probability options.

The intent is to hand off a cleaner concept package that focuses on implementable recommendations and concluded with general agreement to simplify concept exhibits, remove clearly infeasible elements, refine terminology, and align cross-sections with utility and traffic realities.

The Commission plans a follow-up review to ensure the handed-off concept package is coherent, implementable, and avoids causing any further confusion.

Replacement of water line on Kennedy Ave :

Derek from NIES talked about the replacement of the water line on Kennedy Ave and how they feed in to the pump station coming from Hammond to boost the pressure with pumps and send it out pumps .

The red lines are where the current feed lines are located in the drive aisle in front of public works basically right in front of each curb line and they are 45 feet from Kennedy Ave. So it is up a good amount of real estate if you try to redevelop it . Once it gets to the middle entrance , they go to the east and angle over through the parking lot and you see the patch where it broke right after we did the parking lot and there have been several more since then .

The blue line is the proposed alignments to bring it closer to Kennedy Ave .The furthest blue line from Kennedy Ave would essentially 12 feet from the right of way and the interesting thing about this section is the sidewalks are 5 feet from the right of way . You cannot have a sign within 10 feet of the right of way so this really doesn't hinder future developers plans to have a sign for their development .

If we keep the feed lines where they were now or kind of in between you have tied their hands . Now the spot where you needed a sign is occupied with something you can't put a sign on.

That's the plan and when we get to the pump station we have a set of going diagonal through the parking lot just a straight shot to where they enter the pump station and so the section with the blue lines we couldn't have a building and things on that but there are a lot of utilities behind Plaza Lanes Bowling Alley .

Condit is too close for a new signal; Garfield could accept signalized crossing and stamped treatment.

Some intersections currently use split phases and offsets (e.g., the Kennedy/Laporte area) that cause congestion and safety concerns; reconfiguration is needed to remove the offset and improve operations.

Bridge at Laporte & Kennedy reconfiguration

Laporte Street extension and a bridge concept were shown as a conceptual crossing; the team noted the bridge footprint reduces developable island area and must be refined.

Extending Laporte to Indy Boulevard will add traffic; recommendation to reconfigure Kennedy and Laporte to eliminate the current offset and reduce split-phase congestion.

Two options to address the Kennedy/Laporte offset were identified:

Acquire and relocate the post office to gain right-of-way on the south side, or reconfigure Laporte about 300–400 feet east of Kennedy (this would remove north-side parking near turn lanes).

Design Concepts & Redevelopment

Ideas to repurpose existing sports facilities and maximize building footprints; Exhibit layouts are generally well organized internally.

Some conceptual dimensions as shown are not constructible without adjustments; The Commission agreed many details are illustrative and require engineering refinement.

Goal is to avoid treating Highland as a high-speed pass-through; designs should signal drivers they are entering a pedestrian area

Plan status & scope

The plan was framed as a concept plan and not a construction-level document; schematics show potential footprints and visuals.

95% of the work discussed will be handled at the design unit level; many graphics are reuse of previous-plan snapshots with no change.

The group emphasized avoiding overly prescriptive or technically detailed labels in the concept materials to prevent misinterpretation by future boards.

The outlook is to pare down infeasible elements so the handed-off plan is clearer for implementation.

Streets, aesthetics, and community impacts

Visual relief and gateway character are important: the plan should include street right-of-way treatments (trees, plantings, decorative elements) rather than unbroken asphalt and four lanes.

Power-line and pump-station corridors limit tree locations; exact planting plans will be refined during design development.

Community engagement is necessary where trail alignments pass residential properties to address parking, privacy, and access concerns.

Medians are the primary streetscape element under discussion; where feasible (e.g., Little Calumet River to 81st South) medians can include trees and landscaped strips.

Two primary cross-section palettes were discussed (a 60-foot side and a 50-foot taper) these shift where medians and lanes sit but the core streetscape intent remains.

Certain medians cannot be provided where long turn lanes to highway or Condit/Condit-to-highway movements exist; length of medians depends on future redevelopment and intersection layouts.

Show medians on updated exhibits and flag locations constrained by utilities or turn-lane requirements.

Utilities & NIPSCO

Many power poles south of the Sharp Athletic Complex are old; NIPSCO's capital replacement plan is unknown and could pre-empt or duplicate project work.

If NIPSCO replaces poles on its own schedule, ratepayers could end up paying twice; team recommended coordinating with NIPSCO early and presenting a core plan to align timing.

Water mains run down the center of the road in sections; this constrains median and tree placement and must be resolved during engineering.

Intersections & Crosswalks

Stamped/colored asphalt treatments should be limited to signalized intersections; team agreed do not place stamped crosswalks at non-signalized locations.

Trail crossing options

Engineering notes: existing tunnel(s) are about 1,500 feet from proposed bridge sites; to clear Indianapolis Boulevard a bridge needs ~300 feet of ramp length for elevation change.

Safety/community factors: tunnels are less preferred (perceived safety concerns, especially among women); pedestrian bridges are more marketable and can boost adjacent real estate value.

Outcome view: show 3–4 potential crossing locations in the plan and prioritize via site-level feasibility and cost analysis.

Constraints & feasibility (levee, property, utilities)

The levee wall and utility easements limit space on the town side; building a continuous levee-top trail would require substantial property acquisition and addressing grade changes (0.25 ft/ft).

Pump station and Nipsco power line: the northeast corner will host a large fenced pump station and high-voltage transmission corridor, restricting building or roadway connections there.

Water main program: water main replacement is on the capital program over the next 5–10 years trenching for mains disturbs curb/sidewalks and creates an opportunity to integrate trail elements at minimal extra cost if coordinated.

Financial reality: constructing multiple full bridges is unlikely to be affordable; focus on affordable, high-value connectors and phased implementation with partner jurisdictions (Hammond Little Calumet).

Recommended alignment & tactical proposals

Prioritize crossing infrastructure that maximizes regional trail continuity at lowest total cost: favor Hammond-side bridge(s) where existing trail infrastructure reduces the required new trail length.

For local connectivity, pursue a pedestrian bridge linking the Ultra site to the park as a near-term, marketable improvement to spur redevelopment.

Where levee or private-property constraints make levee-top trails impractical, return the trail to public streets Lincoln resurfacing and water main work present a logical overlay of improvements.

Consider locating a lower-elevation bridge over the Cady Marsh (north side) to reduce ramp heights and property impacts and to space crossings to draw users into safer paths rather than congested commercial areas.

the pipeline there.

Derek stated that's a big issue if we decide to kind of rehab that space for public works or what have you rather than tearing it down and building new.

Commissioner Georgeff stated don't think you'd have to move the building. There's garages in Brantwood on the NIPSCO easements that they've identified.

Derek went on to say Well, I mean, they depending on the pipelines, even NIPSCO has full rights to require the removal. I know Buckeye has come through and take ahead people take down pools, fences, sheds, even if it's been there for years,. So this is I guess you are going find out when that building was built was it built before then? but it's 15-foot wide, strip of land and only to be used for transportation, distribution of gas, used for light, heat, and power.

It says, "Grantor Reserve Grantors reserve the right to use said strip of land not inconsistent herewith but no buildings or structures shall be erected or placed on said strip of land by grantors." And the grantor is higher elector because they granted the easement to NIPSCO. So that's the issue.

Commissioner Georgeff asked so the issue is whether they constructed it after that agreement or if they were there before the agreement because it says. "You'll not construct." They may not have constructed a building. It may have been there

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that's my guess is arguably that building's older

Derek stated it's something that needs to be figured out if you are going to try to reuse that building or rehab it.

Commissioner Robertson stated I don't want to say that we're inheriting the big issue

Derek stated the pipelines have sat silent for a while, but then there became a big push to clear rights-of-way and make sure for safety.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated but if we have that agreement, then we can prove that we were there first or that building was there first.

Derek stated although the language could be argued doesn't say, "No, no buildings shall be erected," like in the future it's, "No buildings shall be on it." So you could argue it both ways of whether it's preexisting or future .

Attorney Reed stated I think everything'll be done in a timely enough fashion to get it done and it doesn't have to be with these things. You want to be as specific as possible. Like, you heard the push-pull with their it's like, "Well, why not put it in there?"

So it might you know, and a lot of times, it'll say, "Whenever you apply for a zoning variance or a rezone or any kind of special permission, special use permit, it always there's always a little catch in there that says, 'Oh, and by the way, it needs to conform to the town's current master plan or redevelopment guide or whatever it is.'" and so you really do want it to be as accurate as possible. I mean you know is I don't want to say wishful thinking but it's food for thought as opposed to being like ultra-specific but like Derek's said, I mean, a lot of these things, "Hey, this would be a great idea to have here except it's \$2 million to move a fiber optic cable.

Don't do that but those things are kind of written for in a perfect world where everything had its highest and best use. Here's what the town would like.

But sometimes it's impractical with utilities and but it's the vision that's important. I think it's, it's captured but like everybody said, and I think the language was really specific. You're specifically saying, "We're going to do this." but that matrix is important.

It's getting hurried. It's, "Here's how long this should take." and somebody needs to take a lead in this area. It's prioritizing it and that's important. Identify a timeline, a funding source, who's going to who's going to take the lead.

Commissioner Scheeringa commented what they're talking about is the Emcor Hyre property being on the easement

Derek stated It looks like from the assessor site the layout and the dimensions of the building that's shown on the assessor's property card matches that. So it's the same building A. and basically the main office building was built in 1966 and then the pole barn, there's two corners. The corner of the pole barn and then the corner of that smaller lean-to essentially coming off the pole barn.

Attorney Reed mentioned that the main roof does cantilever out. That's like the main office building right there.

Derek stated the only part of the main building is that cantilevered roof. Where everything else in the building's not in it. So whether they care about that the structure's not technically.

Attorney Reed stated I can talk to the title company has an attorney too, and he explain it and say, "Can you know, will you will you sign over this exception or not?"

Derek stated that easement was 1966 in July, same time the building was built. It's probably the same time

Attorney Reed stated maybe that was the deal was you can't put a structure on it, but you can, you know. Maybe they forfeited an air right or something.

Derek added the pole barn one that's further to the north and west, that's the one that does

encroach about 5 feet . I mean it's not on the pipeline but it's within the easement .

Commissioner Scheeringa asked when was that building built? Who authorized the permits to build it?

Derek answered 1989 for the main part, and then there's stuff in 1991 and 1996.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that's an issue, right? That's technically we're liable for authorizing the permit for doing that then ?

Attorney Reed stated I'll talk to the title company attorney and see if we'll waive those documents.

Commissioner Georgeff stated in the very beginning, we were responsible for allowing it.

Maria stated that's true .

Attorney Reed added it's not unimaginable that there could have been a private agreement between the owner of the easement and the company. "Hey, can you give us permission to and it didn't get recorded. I looked at a road dedication today that was done as a reporting stamp of 2001 for a road in Schererville and it doesn't show on any of the maps.

It just never the traffic department just didn't draw it and it was a nightmare find. I mean these things happen all the time. Documents don't get recorded or the reporter, drafter, auditor, assessor doesn't pick it up. Doesn't make a change to the GIS. We'll get to the bottom of it.

The title company will insure over the encroachment or the party we're encroaching on will say here's an exception from here but as long as the title company's satisfied and they'll insure our title that's marketable then we don't plan on using those buildings anyway but we'll find out where it stands. I would find it very hard to believe that it didn't have some sort of authorization to it.

Legacy Grant :

Commissioner Robertson talked about the 2 quotes he received from Teresa Liken She is on the tree board and she's a landscape architect and the other is Sawdust . One quote was for \$1500.00 and the other was for \$3000.00 . We just want to generate a plan that we can use to quote and go after this grant for the gas station site .

We'll definitely have to talk with them if we want to move forward with either of their quotes to hone in exactly what's going to be on the site . They threw together some quotes because we don't have a lot of time to get the plan and grant submitted and then hopefully

we get something that Derek can look at and price out.

The grant is two-tiered. So you first apply and there's a long I went through that application, but it's you know let's say 100 people apply, of that they may shortlist 30 of them. So you got to jump over this first set of hurdles first to move on to the next stage. So this first one isn't going to be as detailed in terms of having all the details on their visually. Cost is just having a good budget that's not exorbitantly high, but well-supported but it's not going to have to be like my engineer's cost opinion level.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked which was more expensive one and is it the best option?

Commissioner Robertson stated they're both solid options in, in certain respects. So the Sawdust people are a little more artsy. so it just depends on what route you want to go, or you say, or you do both and see what either, you know, both of them come up with. Teresa is a landscape architect. She's done some stuff in town and neighboring communities. I'm not I'm not sure what we're going to have to work with either of them.

We're going to have to have conversations and make sure that we have things that are feasible on the site.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I think all of us said two weeks ago that we're happiest with that gazebo type thing with the picnic table that had the chargers built in with the solar panels. Like, they can build around that. Which one's willing to build around that type of thing? I think we all were kind of like, "That's pretty cool."

Commissioner Georgeff stated bring in a food truck or something like that

Commissioner Robertson stated told both of them that, you know what I'm thinking with this site, um, after feedback from you guys, feedback from the community as that being a food truck site. I don't personally see it being a good thing. We don't want to look at that site as an anchor redevelopment site.

Commissioner Georgeff stated I don't think it's a food truck there every day but on Saturdays?

Commissioner Robertson stated what I told them is in the plan at least have some flexibility so that if at some point it ever made sense to park a food truck there would be space for it. I'm not talking about running power so that someone could plug in.

We'll have to figure out irrigation and water if there's going to be plantings there but try to make it as low maintenance as possible. Well, I think all the people that's going on site because really, you know, if you think about it over, yeah, at the end of this redevelopment plan, uh, comprehensive plan, hopefully over time, 10, 15, 20 years, as Kennedy Avenue changes and maybe we get some more developments over there, we don't have anything too permanent at this gas station site so that maybe it makes sense to put some sort of mixed-use thing there or whatever.

You know until then we're almost banking the land eliminating the light and making it look good. we're just going to pick this one in our pocket and not do anything with it because we want something to happen." Make it look nice. If we can get the grant to do that our investment is minimal. So we need to do something but I told them to just be flexible.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated So less than \$5,000 to have them both draw up something and see if we like either one.

Commissioner Robertson stated they would each do two concepts. We don't have a lot of time for, uh, uh, revisions .So they could they could each do two concepts. I think they could work together. I even had them talk to each other like, "Hey, you know, you're a landscape architect. You guys do more of this artistic stuff. If it made sense for you guys to work together they talked and they each decided to submit their own proposal.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked if it had to be done by June 7th ?

Commissioner Robertson stated They need to be done quick so that we can get a quote. And if we do need to at least revise some things on there for feasibility, um, you know, they're not going to be able to redo the entire plan, but we'll, you know, I'll be in communication with them as far as I'm sure questions are going to come up. But we want to have at least, I would say, two weeks at a minimum to make sure that we can get some numbers down on this thing.

Everyone agreed it would be nice to get the Grant

Next steps & decisions :

The Commissioners decided to have both designers submit concepts and to evaluate which concept(s) best fit feasibility and grant criteria.

Agreed timeline: allow 2 weeks minimum for designers to complete deliverables so the team can gather quotes; target submission before June 7.

Designers will be asked to prioritize feasible, low-maintenance solutions and to leave flexibility for occasional community uses.

The immediate objective is to finalize concept drawings and budget support so the application can pass the first-tier screening and move to the next stage.

Meeting Adjourned at: 9:37pm

Duly Passed and Resolved by the Highland Redevelopment Commission,
Highland, Lake County, Indiana, this 22nd day of June 2026, having passed by a
vote 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

Highland Redevelopment Commission

President

ATTEST:

~~Secretary~~ *Attoms-in-Fact*