

KEEP CARBONDALE BEAUTIFUL

Report on November 4, 2013 Town Meeting

On November 4, 2013, Keep Carbondale Beautiful* hosted a town meeting that asked the question, “**What would you do to make Carbondale more beautiful?**” The purpose of this meeting was to obtain input from local residents that could then be put into a report suggesting how these ideas might be accomplished. Feedback was also solicited online and at farmers markets. This report will be used by Keep Carbondale Beautiful to guide beautification efforts and is made available to residents with suggestions on who to contact to advocate for a specific initiative.

Participants at the town meeting voted for their top 5 initiatives:

1. Bury lines (phone/power) and use Streetscape planning (downtown and all around town)
2. Plant flowering trees at 4 major entrances to Carbondale (13 E&W/51 N&S)
3. Add plantings to medians (Mill Street and 51)
4. Conduct Sustainability Assessment for Carbondale (Whole city)
5. Create a Dog Park (in Carbondale)

Subsequently, all feedback was consolidated into 49 suggestions, which were grouped into 7 categories: Beautification, Plan Creation, Code Enforcement, Downtown/Streetscape Improvements, Pedestrian/Bicycle Connections, Public Spaces and Southern Illinois University. Keep Carbondale Beautiful hopes that this information is helpful to citizens and all of the constituents in Carbondale in planning for Carbondale’s beautiful future. Keep Carbondale Beautiful will continue to:

1. Promote beautification efforts,
2. Encourage responsible parties to act proactively,
3. Cooperate with community efforts where possible,
4. Coordinate volunteers in short-term, long-term and ongoing projects, and
5. Seek out funding for targeted projects

We hope that this Town Meeting will lead to a reinvigorated community effort to make Carbondale beautiful.

The Staff and Board of Keep Carbondale Beautiful,

Sarah Heyer, Executive Director

Board of Directors: Jerry Molumby, President; Andy Morgan, Vice President; Meghan Cole, Treasurer; Kris Schachel, Secretary; Sandy Litecky, Calvin Stearns, Chris Wallace, Tena Bennett, Melissa Camasta

Keep Carbondale Beautiful initiates, plans, and directs cooperative efforts in litter control, recycling, community beautification, and environmental education.

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Beautification

During the Town Meeting there were many comments directed at how Carbondale can be made more beautiful. Given the diversity of the comments received, Keep Carbondale Beautiful (KCB) will attempt to address each comment individually, or as part of a group if the comments are closely related.

“Plant flowering trees, and wildflowers galore, at 4 major entrances to Carbondale (13 E&W/51 N&S), more plantings in general”

“Soften the hardscape (So Ill Ave)”

“Add plantings to medians, and landscape the islands (Mill Street and 51)”

Beautification efforts that focus on improving the overall appearance of the community through landscaping and planting should be considered as a short-term goal. There are three components to accomplishing these efforts: labor, materials, and permission. KCB has effectively used volunteers over the years and could facilitate the planting of trees and plants. In some instances, the City may be able to assist with tree plantings. KCB receives some grant funding to purchase trees and plants and will continue to look for more grant opportunities. In collaboration with the City of Carbondale, the Carbondale Park District and/or Carbondale Main Street, KCB will assist in beautification efforts that occur in the Main Street service area. As planning develops the City of Carbondale would work with the Illinois Department of Transportation to obtain permission.

Selection of potential sites would be an early component of beautification efforts. Once the sites are identified, landscape plans could be drawn and cost estimates performed. With this completed, obtaining permission to perform the work would be sought. There should be efforts to utilize the resources available through SIU for landscape design. Native plants and hardy species requiring little to no maintenance should be utilized in order to reduce maintenance and upkeep. KCB may be able to coordinate the donation of plant materials through private individuals thinning out home gardens and/or potential donations from local businesses. Once established, these areas could be added to the Adopt- a-Spot program, with an emphasis on landscape maintenance.

Key Contacts: Local Garden Clubs; Southern Illinois University School of Agriculture and School of Architecture; The City of Carbondale, Carbondale Main Street; Green Earth; and the Illinois Department of Transportation.

“More public art”

“Sculptures at the entrances of the City (51 and 13)”

Carbondale Community Arts (CCA), the Downtown Arts Coalition (a committee of CCA) and Carbondale Main Street (CMS) are currently working on initiatives to bring more public art into the downtown area. These efforts could also focus on the entrances to the community.

Key Contacts: Nancy Stemper with CCA at 457-5100; Meghan Cole with CMS at 529-8040.

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Beautification (continued)

“Create mural on building wall (between Amtrak and Bike Shop)”

The Downtown Arts Coalition has discussed the idea of commissioning an artist to do a mural here. They have formed a partnership with the SIU School of Art and Design and its graduate student RSO to help implement murals at various locations. The wall of the building was repaired last year but is already showing signs of deterioration. Before any work on a mural is performed, the wall should be repaired to ensure the mural can be preserved in good condition. Further deterioration of the wall could have a negative appearance.

“Clean up alley between Dona Camilla and Premier Lounge”

The City of Carbondale can require the space to be clean and free of litter. The City can also monitor any overgrowth that might need to be cleared. In coordination with CMS, landscaping could be installed near the sidewalk to beautify this area. The owner(s) should be contacted to gauge their interest in creating a more appealing appearance between the buildings.

“Add more trash cans (high traffic areas)”

The City’s Public Works Department installs and empties the public trash cans and recycling bins. The City would need to purchase additional cans.

“Eliminate or spruce up dilapidated buildings”

The City has made considerable progress on this issue over the past 10 years. Several old dilapidated buildings have been removed from the downtown area and structures are consistently being demolished in residential areas. As buildings become dilapidated over time, the City can address the issues through strict code enforcement. Overly dilapidated buildings that remain, including the Horizon Inn and the Veach station behind the mall, are being monitored.

Key Contacts: Carbondale City Council; Building and Neighborhood Services.

“Fill the Tuscan Lodge lot”

The Tuscan Lodge property is currently owned by the Tuscan Lodge organization. The City has implemented economic incentives that will assist in any new development on the lot.

Key contact: City of Carbondale Economic Development Coordinator, 457-3226.

“Revitalize Marberry Arboretum”

The Marberry Arboretum is owned and maintained by the Carbondale Park District. In cooperation with the Park District, KCB could help organize volunteers to assist in the maintenance of the park. The SIU Forestry Department can be consulted for proper tree maintenance techniques.

Key contact: Kathy Renfro, Executive Director of Carbondale Park District, 618-529-4147.

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Beautification (continued)

“Creative light displays (downtown and dark areas)”

This would be a great project for CCA or CMS, with permission from the City or private ownership, of course. CMS is working with the City’s Economic Development Coordinator on getting permanent lighting on several of the poles in the downtown area.

Key contact: Meghan Cole at CMS.

“Promote Adopt a Spots (busy roads)”

Keep Carbondale Beautiful currently maintains the Adopt-a-Spot program. KCB will continue to expand this program through the use of reliable volunteers and organizations.

Key contact: Sarah Heyer, Executive Director of KCB, 618-525-5525.

“Annual student trash pick-up”

KCB currently hosts the annual Carbondale Spring Clean-up Day. Many students and community members participate in this very successful event.

Key contact: Sarah Heyer, Executive Director of KCB, 618-525-5525.

Additional KCB Roles in Beautification:

Continue to advocate for creation of a more appealing Carbondale through creative use of design, light and art, whether in downtown, commercial or residential locations.

Advocate for more trash and recycling receptacles to reduce litter, especially in the downtown area.

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Plan Creation

“Create a master plan for downtown”

The City is currently working on the creation of a downtown master plan with the assistance of an advisory committee recently appointed by the City Council.

‘Complete Streets’ (planning for how greenways work with bikes, creeks, trails, roads, highways, looking at wheelchair traffic, foot traffic, vehicle traffic, etc)

The concept of complete streets is gaining momentum around the country as communities place a greater emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The goal behind ‘Complete Streets’ is to create a safer and more inviting environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. JCHD recently hosted a ‘Complete Streets’ training at the Carbondale Civic Center, and community leaders and City staff were in attendance.

“Conduct Sustainability Assessment for Carbondale”

A Sustainability Assessment is something the City’s Sustainability Commission might want to investigate. Without understanding the complexities of the plan it is difficult to determine the amount of resources necessary for this undertaking.

“Water retention structures (all medians and parking lots)

The City requires storm water detention to be incorporated into all new construction. However, pre-existing sites that were constructed prior to the City’s regulation may not have any type of storm water detention system. In most cases, storm water systems cannot be retrofitted on an existing site. Excess pavement along the medians should be discouraged and in some cases removed.

“Create a northern bypass for trucks (north of Carbondale)”

The creation of a bypass has been discussed in the past but was found to be unnecessary as most truck travel is traveling to Carbondale and not through the community. This is based upon an origin/destination study conducted by IDOT.

“Conduct Compassionate Cities campaign”

This could perhaps be a project for Nonviolent Carbondale.

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Code Enforcement

“Adopt standards/guidelines (form based code) for infrastructure (all over)”

There are many standards already included in the Carbondale Revised Code (CRC) which address this issue. Many deficiencies in the code were corrected with the recently adopted update to Title 15 of the CRC.

“Mandatory recycling with steep fines”

The City currently encourages recycling but there is no fee for not participating. The City Council would need to adopt regulations establishing a fine.

“Fresh paint (on houses with peeling paint)”

The City’s Building and Neighborhood Services Division monitors the conditions of homes and will issue a notice if a home has peeling paint or other code violations.

“Enforce littering fines”

The City enforces littering and monitors the issue on a daily basis. Most areas are addressed through code enforcement.

“Reduce amount of household garbage”

There are several ways the amount of trash could be reduced, whether through an expanded recycling program or higher fees for trash pick-up as opposed to recycling. The City Council may explore options in this area.

“Ban electronic billboards”

The City recently adopted regulations to address the size and appearance of electronic billboards. The new regulations should help minimize the glare associated with electronic signs.

“Enforce litter enforcement with foot patrol”

Litter is monitored on a daily basis by the City’s Neighborhood Inspectors. If there are problems with litter, anyone can contact the City and the issue will be addressed.

“Reduce noise pollution and improve the audible landscape (everywhere)”

This would probably fall on the City police (motorcycle noise, loud parties). Contact City Council.

“Enhance the streetlight inspection process (all over)”

“Reduce light pollution”

This would be the City’s job to have street lights face the sidewalk to reduce their distraction to drivers; it would require new street lights to be purchased and installed. Contact City Council.

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Downtown/Streetscape Improvements

“Bury lines (phone/power) and use Streetscape planning (downtown and all around town)”

The presence of overhead power lines can be a major detractor for many areas of the community, particularly in the downtown area. The cost associated with relocating these power lines is excessive and will require a major commitment from the City.

“Educate the public about streetscapes and how their town could look”

This education process could be done through the City, but also through CMS, CCA, and KCB. Pictures always help. This type of public awareness campaign could be developed and launched within six months.

“Angle parking downtown”

The City would need to change parking, and would probably need to look at how the lots are laid out. Contact your City Council.

“Eliminate parking meters”

The parking meters downtown serve a dual purpose. The revenue generated from the parking meters helps fund future parking lot improvements. The meters also help ensure that parking spaces will be available throughout the day as vehicles may not take up a space for the entire day, and thus reduce the amount of parking available. The meters charge a nominal fee of \$.25 per hour and should not be cost prohibitive for most consumers. This is an issue the City’s Downtown Advisory Committee will be commenting on in the near future.

“Beer and wine garden and outdoor dining, especially downtown”

The City currently allows sidewalk cafes with the issuance of an Encroachment Permit. There are issues that need to be resolved with IDOT to further expand the presence of outdoor dining in the downtown.

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Pedestrian/Bicycle connections

“Bike paths with green spaces (connecting the community E & W, between districts)”

The City is currently designing a bike path that will connect the Town Square with the University. This path was funded with two separate grants from IDOT. The path is expected to be completed in 2015.

“Greenways trail signage”

The Carbondale Park District is responsible for maintaining the greenways trail that runs near Piles Fork Creek. The Park District could work in cooperation with the City’s Public Works Department to produce new signs.

“Pedestrian Overpass at Main and Oakland”

The intersection of Main and Oakland is located along a state-controlled highway and any modifications would need to be completed by IDOT. Given the complexity of designing an overpass that meets all accessibility standards, there is little possibility of this project being completed. Crosswalks do exist at this intersection.

“Bike racks and bike rentals”

Installing additional bike racks in the City can be accomplished through both public and private efforts. The City has installed several bike racks in the downtown area but additional racks are still needed. The City also requires that all new construction must include a bike rack located at least 25 feet from the front entrance. Although this requirement has increased the amount of bicycle parking available, it does not affect pre-existing developments. Keep Carbondale Beautiful could work with the Chamber of Commerce to inform businesses of the benefits of providing bicycle parking. KCB may also be able to partner with Carbondale Main Street and the City on a bike rack grant program similar to the grants CMS provides for building improvements. The grant could cover the cost of the bike rack (approximately \$200-\$300), and the City could install the rack at the City’s expense. This could be a way of increasing the amount of bicycle parking downtown in areas where business owners actually want it.

“Increase accessibility”

The City and IDOT are working to improve accessibility in many areas of the City. Current efforts include the installation of new sidewalks, repairs on deteriorated sidewalks, and intersection improvements.

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Public Spaces

During the Town Meeting the following comments were made expressing a desire for more public spaces:

“Create a Dog Park in Carbondale”

There is a functional Dog Park in Riverside Park in Murphysboro. This could be a model for either the Carbondale Park District or another organization to follow and implement.

“Create playground in Arbor District”

Many of the public spaces within the City are maintained by the Carbondale Park District with the exception of the Plaza located downtown and maintained by the City. There are other public spaces owned and maintained by Green Earth Inc., but these spaces are for conservation rather than for the development of actual parks. The creation of a dog park and a playground in the Arbor District could be administered by the Carbondale Park District. The dog park may be the easier of the two to create as the Park District already owns property that could potentially be utilized. The model used to create the dog park in Murphysboro may provide guidance. A park within the Arbor District would require the Park District to obtain property and develop the site. There may be substantial cost associated with this effort.

Key contact: Kathy Renfro, Carbondale Park District

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Southern Illinois University

During the Town meeting the following comments were submitted that relate to Southern Illinois University.

“Renovate existing community/SIU ties”

“Rebuild SIU physical plant/remove smoke stack”

“Tear down dorms”

Southern Illinois University is a state-run institution and is therefore not subject to the City’s zoning, building, or any other requirements. The SIU Power Plant produces steam which is used to heat campus buildings, produce chilled water for cooling, and to generate electricity. The power plant supplies a significant portion of the University’s energy demands and presumably saves the University a significant amount on energy cost. In addition, the power plant is available for research and development, hosting both state and federal projects. Additional information on the power plant can be found at http://www.crc.siu.edu/research/SIU_powerplant.pdf.

The demolition of dormitories on the campus of SIU has been in the works for the last couple of years and will continue in the future. The University has already demolished the triads which included Wright Hall, Boomer Hall, and Allen Hall. The University has plans to demolish the Brush Towers in the future. Plans call for the development of new dormitories that meet the demands of today’s students. Information on the future of the University’s housing can be found in the Housing Master Plan adopted in 2011. This document can be accessed at http://www.housing.siu.edu/system/documents/72/original/2011_Master_Plan.pdf?1330033908

Key Contact: The Chancellor’s Office, 453-2341

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