

Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning 2016

Community: St. Ansgar
Minutes by Trees Forever Field Coordinator: Meredith Borchardt
Date and Time: Thursday, February 4, 2016
Meeting Length: 1.5 hours
Location: St. Ansgar City Hall
Meeting #2, Bioregional Mapping

Number of committee members in attendance: 9

Names of committee members in attendance: Bonnie Eustice, Barb Groth, Myrna Jorgensen, Daria Jorgensen, Tara Kramer, Bryan Mayer, Karen Robertson, Holbrook Schutjer, Devin Schwiesow

Meeting Summary:

We started with introductions and everyone shared one thing they remembered from our first kickoff meeting. To refresh on the Visioning program we reviewed a visual of the meeting process. The main task for tonight was to learn about the natural context that St. Ansgar is part of. To do that we used several maps that had information relating to vegetation, hydrology, history, land use, etc. The maps were grouped into three stations around the room and there were a list of questions to help prompt discussion and comparison of the maps. Three teams of three spent about 5-10 minutes at each station and rotated so everyone worked with each map. Afterwards, we spent some time in large group sharing highlights from each group of maps:

Historic Vegetation/Settlement Patterns/Present Day Land Cover/Present Day Vegetation

- Several people identified bogs on historic vegetation which are part of parks and natural areas today
- Some felt the river has changed course a lot over time, while others did not (comparing 1875 Andreas Atlas map to Present Day land cover)
- Many of the names listed on the 1875 map are still common family names of current residents
- A town of Newburg just NW of St. Ansgar was identified on the 1875 map and no longer exists.
- Since 1875 the town has expanded north and south to include industrial areas, new housing developments, and school ground.

Watershed/ Depth to Groundwater/Elevation

- The elevation map squares with local experience of having a lot of surface runoff from agricultural fields on the east come into town. A buffer of prairie grasses and wildflowers will go in on the east side of town this year to help more runoff soak into the ground. We looked at a poster showing how deep prairie roots go, and a slide of the roots of an actual 3-year-old big bluestem plant.
- The Highway (4th Street through town) basically is located on the border of the two watersheds that St. Ansgar is a part of.
- There is ditch drainage infrastructure – no storm sewers.
- People talked about the flow of a river west through town west along 7th Street to the after a flash flooding event in 2012.

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Urban Forest Conditions/ Strategies for Using Native Plants

- Maples make up about 60% of the public trees in town; future projects need to include other tree species
- Ash seemed to be clumped together- several within a block for example
- Downtown trees all identified as healthy trees- questioned by several who mentioned the town has struggled to get healthy downtown trees

We will share information from the maps with the design team later in the process, and it will help inform their work. Next we brainstormed project ideas; they are listed here in no particular order:

- Entryway signage
- Improve Clausen Park – landscaping, play equipment, etc.
- Better connections for pedestrians to get to parks
- Walking trail to golf course, downtown
- Community center
- Develop roadside park area near where new prairie buffer is going in- include picnic area, educational signage
- Angel Park –make more visible to the public, increase use

Finally, we did some planning for upcoming meetings. Tuesday, March 1 will be a committee planning meeting for the April public input session on Saturday, April 9. Committee members will bring ideas for people to recruit in these demographic groups- senior citizens/mobility impaired, parents, youth (jr. high, sr. high, recent graduates), active recreationists (bikers, runners, walkers, etc.). We discussed possible locations- parish center and school. Committee members will look into availability. Meeting adjourned at 8:00.