

# Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning 2016

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**Community: St. Ansgar**  
**Minutes by Trees Forever Field Coordinator: Meredith Borchardt**  
**Date and Time: Tuesday, May 17, 2016, 3:00 pm**  
**Meeting Length: 1.5 hours**  
**Location: St. Ansgar City Hall**  
**Meeting #5, Transportation Meeting**

**Number in attendance:** 9

**Names of people in attendance:** Myrna Jorgensen and Karen Robertson (Visioning committee), Tami Woods (St. Ansgar City Clerk), Krista Rostad (Iowa D.O.T.), Richard Brumm (County Engineer), Chris Diggins (N.I.A.C.O.G.), Craig Ritland and Samantha Price (landscape architects), Meredith Borchardt (Trees Forever)

## **Meeting Summary:**

The meeting was held to map and discuss rules and regulations, future road construction projects, transportation related information, and funding opportunities that could impact Visioning projects. After introductions and some context on where St. Ansgar is in the Visioning meeting process we began discussing specific projects. The committee has not yet selected or prioritized final projects, so we covered a large brainstormed list. Here are some highlights from the discussion:

- Improve entryway signage on north and south – community signs need to be out of the R.O.W. on both locations (they currently are) on U.S. 218 (north) and County Road T-26/Highway 105 (south). Park department does the maintenance of plantings.
- Clausen Park – a high volume of surface runoff washes the mulch away that is the base for play equipment.
- Pedestrian connections to City Parks and walking trail – there are not continuous sidewalks in town; one focus area for improving sidewalks is 8<sup>th</sup> Street where people would go to get to the schools, pool, and walking trail.
- Railroad crossings – at the Transportation and Assets public input session, across all user groups, railroad crossings came up as a barrier. The railroad has improved the crossing on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (which isn't heavily used) and there is funding for the crossing on 4<sup>th</sup> (=U.S. Highway 218). The crossing on 8<sup>th</sup> is particularly rough and is heavily used by youth getting to the school, aquatic center, and walking trail, especially from a new housing development. If that were to be improved in the future, the city could coordinate with improved sidewalks along 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Designated crosswalk on Main Street in the southwest part of town- there is currently some faded striping and a yellow pedestrian crossing sign where it crosses 6<sup>th</sup>; we discussed options for improving this crosswalk.
- Pedestrian connection to golf course- Highway 105/T-26 will be resurfaced in the next few years and it is not in the plan to widen the road or pave shoulders; this could be a place for Share the Road signs; there are two bridges between town and the golf course; bridge expansions are costly.
- Pedestrian connection to Hamlin Garland County Conservation area north of town – there is a natural trail on private property that the Lions Club helped develop. It is

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open to the public for running events a few times a year. Karen helped us trace its location on the map. It goes west from town close to the river and Highway 105/T-26 before turning north and back east toward Hamlin Garland. We discussed the possibility of talking with the landowners about getting an easement to make this a public trail.

- Old Mill Road – at the Transportation Assets and Barriers public input session, a number of people mentioned this as a popular running and biking route. It will be resurfaced this summer. The paved surface is narrow and there isn't an opportunity to widen shoulders; we discussed adding Share the Road signs.
- Regional TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) funds administered by NIACOG – Chris brought a few handouts showing how federal transportation funds have been used in the region, and how they are allocated out into the future. There is a committee that makes decisions on how the funds are utilized; they tend to favor trail projects. Sidewalk connections within communities can also be considered trails and must be 10' wide if enhancement funding is used. TAP applications are due in February and notification goes to all municipalities ahead of the deadline.
- Grant writing assistance – NIACOG staff will provide grant writing assistance for larger grants such as REAP, State Rec. Trails, and CAT (Cultural Attractions and Tourism).
- Water issues – St. Ansgar has complicated and challenging surface water drainage issues that are strongly impacting the community. The city has ditch drainage infrastructure, and in some areas the ditches have been allowed to be filled in or culverts added which has decreased their capacity and added to local flooding. Runoff comes from adjacent farmland on the southeast side of town and the railroad funnels it to 7<sup>th</sup> Street, which takes a large amount of runoff during rainfall events. The elevation map used in the bioregional mapping process helped illustrate this flow. Development on the SE part of town has added more impervious surface and increased the amount of runoff. There is limestone near the surface in a lot of town, limiting the ability to dig deeper. There was a drainage project done in town after the 2008 floods in the SW corner of town to add some storm sewers. It has not been able to address the entire capacity of surface runoff. Adding curb and gutter would be very costly to the city and would not likely solve the water issues. A 10 foot wide buffer of native grasses and flowers will be going in this spring on the west edge of the farm field to help slow down runoff and limit corn stalk residue from entering the community as it did after an intense rain event in 2013; it will likely help but not solve the surface water issues. There are CRP programs available that would provide annual payments for 10 or 15 years to the landowner to convert the field from annual crops to perennial native prairie flowers and grasses. Visioning project plans will need to be sensitive to these surface water issues.

Meeting adjourned about 4:30.

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**Community: St. Ansgar**  
**Minutes by Trees Forever Field Coordinator: Meredith Borchardt**  
**Date and Time: Tuesday, May 17, 2016, 6:30 pm**  
**Meeting Length: 2 hours**  
**Location: St. Ansgar City Hall**  
**Meeting #6, Review of Assessment Information**

**Number of committee members in attendance: 6**

**Names of people in attendance:** Myrna Jorgensen, Daria Jorgensen, Karen Robertson, Bonnie Eustice, Brad Mayer, Tara Kramer; Craig Ritland and Samantha Price (landscape architects), Meredith Borchardt (Trees Forever)

## **Meeting Summary:**

Tonight's meeting provided an opportunity to review all of the assessment information gathered to date and had two primary goals. First of all, there is a huge amount of information (including local geography map, bioregional maps, transportation assets and barriers workshop, and this afternoon's transportation meeting) so taking some time to reflect on it all should allow more time to digest and understand it. Secondly, reviewing it will be a way to introduce the community to the design team. Landscape architects Craig Ritland and Samantha Price joined us for the first time tonight, so we began with introductions. Craig mentioned this will be the 40<sup>th</sup> community that he has worked with through the Community Visioning program. Their I.S.U. student intern will be starting in June and focusing on St. Ansgar Visioning for the summer.

We began with the local geography map, created at our first committee meeting in January. Some local highlights included a stagecoach stop, new construction of an elementary school near the Junior High and High Schools, the heavily used walking trail, and Clausen Park. Next we moved around to the original three stations that were set up around the room with groups of the bioregional maps in February. Some key discussion points that committee members reiterated:

- 4<sup>th</sup> Street (U.S. Highway 218, the main business district) is situated on a ridge top, between two watersheds, revealed on the watershed map. To the north surface water drains through Clausen Park and then toward Grain Millers; to the south it drains along 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The elevation map illustrated the water flow from farmland on the east side of the community into and through town on its way to the Cedar River.
- On the urban forest cover map, the percentage of maples (~55%) was surprising. Another 12% of the community's public trees are ash and vulnerable to the Emerald Ash Borer. The value of having healthy trees and lots of shade has come up at several Visioning meetings to date. On May 25 at 12:30 at City Hall, DNR Urban Forester Matt Brewer will share results of a recent inventory and management plan for St. Ansgar's public trees (in parks and in the parking area between sidewalk and street.) All Visioning committee members are welcome to attend.

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- On the 1870's settlement map, there were many property owners' names that are still familiar ones today. Committee members elaborated on the town's history. It is named after Saint Ansgar, a Danish monk. The Rev. Clausen was a Lutheran pastor who was instrumental in founding First Lutheran Church and the community in the 1850's, as well as many other churches in the area. First Lutheran Church remains the oldest Lutheran Church still in continuous use west of the Mississippi River.

Next we reviewed information from the Saturday Transportation Assets and Barriers workshop. Five large posters were created by Iowa State University partners to summarize and analyze the data. One told about accessing the results on [www.communityvisioning.org](http://www.communityvisioning.org). The others told about barriers, preferred routes for walking and biking, desired improvements, and included quotes from participants. The posters primarily compared responses from the seniors' focus group with that from the Visioning committee, which were the two groups with the most participants.

Finally, we summarized the transportation meeting which was held earlier in the afternoon. A pretty lengthy discussion occurred related to the community's surface water runoff issues, which will impact Visioning projects. Upcoming transportation projects include the resurfacing of Old Mill Road this summer, and Highway 105 in the near future. There are some options available to improve the crosswalk on South Main Street. NIACOG administers regional TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) funding which could help fund some of the potential Visioning projects. NIACOG staff also will provide grant-writing assistance for larger grant programs.

Next we planned for upcoming meetings. The next committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 7 at 8:00 a.m. at City Hall. Committee members will use the information reviewed tonight to choose areas of focus for the design team, ideas for projects, and define how those projects should look and function. Those that are available to stay after the meeting can show the design team around the community on a tour.

Following that meeting, an open house design workshop will be held on Thursday, June 9 beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Rescue Center. This is a work day for the design team, and also a chance for the public to interact with them and be involved in that work. Meredith and Myrna will work on tools to publicize the workshop. An end of the day presentation will be held at 5:30 for the design team to share progress made during the day. Committee members are welcomed and encouraged to stop in during the day and also at 5:30. This day is just the start of the design process, which will be on-going throughout the summer. The committee will have an opportunity to review the project ideas before they are finalized, probably sometime in July.

Meeting adjourned about 8:30.