

Town Hall Meeting – The City of Hawthorne

Date and Time: May 20, 2023, 11:00a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Where: Shell Elementary School; Hawthorne, FL

Attendees: 43 Community Members

9 Commissioners and Staff

1 Facilitator

53 Total

Welcome and Introductions by Mayor Jaquelyn Randall

Introductions: Vice Mayor – Patricia Bouie-Hutchinson

Commissioners – Tommie Howard

Randy martin

City Manager – John Martin

City Clerk – LaKesha McGruder

City Attorney – Audrie Hoehn

Administrative Assistant – Rebekah Thorick

Facilitator – Edith Gandy

Visioning

- Society and Demographics
 1. Mass influx from other states and countries
 2. #1 destination for relocating – Ocala and North Central Florida
 3. Housing costs – move to rural areas (lower housing cost) and multigenerational housing
 4. Need for internet connection
- Technology Scientific Advances
 1. Working from home
 - Average spent on internet in Hawthorne is lower
 - Companies no return on investment
 - Advance Satellite Solutions – Wireless Florida
 - AT&T hub in Hawthorne
 - Broadband fully funded
 2. Charging Stations – bring in customers and increase economy
- Stakeholders Expectations
 1. People passing through Hawthorne utilize – websites, social media services ex. Yelp, snapchat
 2. Means of reliable communications (older generation may not have Facebook)
 - City website – suggestion, develop a community corner
 - Library – advertisements can be posted on their bulletin board
 - Announcement on water bill
 - Email communication channel
 - Signage on 301 to attract people (Citizen comment, “Chamber of Commerce should be responsible”)
 - Signage on Hawthorne Trail
 3. Want small town feel but “need” chains stores to increase tax base
- Economy
 1. Interest rates are higher
 2. Inflation
 3. Wage growth is not keeping up
- Politics and Government

1. Put pressure on county
 - Growth on westside of the county
 - Do not want to develop because of wetlands
2. What do we have that people seek out?
 - Sell our environment
 - Founding of Hawthorne, as a “resort” community
3. Increased homeless population
4. Dumping garbage
 - Hitchcock’s plaza: email Jen – shoppingcenterhawthorne1
 - Family Dollar is closing for Remodel – May 22nd to June 5th
 - Questions, comments, concerns – Email John Martin citymanager@cityofhawthorne.net

Strengths

- Strong and resilient caring people that have strong faith and empathy
- Location highway 301 and 20
- Accessible leaders willing to listen
- Success of athletic teams
- Produce wonderful men and women
- FPL – cheaper power rates in comparison
- Proximity to outdoor sports venues

Weaknesses

- No local newspaper
- Part of Alachua County
- More police presence
- Nothing for young people to do
- Limited tax base
- No active code enforcement
 1. Too many vacant buildings
 2. Revitalization of historic 221st Street
 3. Do not want to adopt Alachua Counties regulations

Opportunities

- Involve more channels of communication (better publicize)
- Create an identity – city’s history
- Messaging
- Be in charge of our definition of the city
- Re-evaluate who we are and where we want to be
- Need a grant writer
- Support local businesses
- Greater police presence
- County is squashing opportunities
- Saturday, June 3rd Melrose African American Festival

Threats

- Lack of county support
- No growth
- Not enough amenities that people want

Strategies for Economic Development

- Bringing businesses into town and retaining them
- Housing
 1. Vacant buildings
 2. Help lower income families and elderly for free
 3. Need for dense housing
 4. CRA – downtown facelift
- Infrastructure and Roads
 1. Crosswalk
 2. Transitional walkway
- Recreational development
 1. HAP – no shade
 2. Have to drive there, not convenient to walk.

Things do not want changed:

- Consequences of development
- Beautiful, quiet, lovely place (rural nature)
- Festivals, sense of community

Things City can do more of:

- Be more involved, more visible
- Agenda and minutes for meetings
- Better communication

Things City can do less of: No comments

New Ideas and Initiatives:

- Community Park
- Community “walk” (also called art walk)
- Brochures with maps (Chamber of Commerce)
 - First done by the Chamber of Commerce
- Small tourism department
- Community Foundation reestablished in 2022
 - Meet the 1st Tuesday of the month at the First United Methodist Fellowship Hall
 - Next meeting June 20th at noon
 - Sponsor Christmas Festival
 - Next Meeting June 12th
 - First United Methodist Fellowship Hall
- Mat Surrency spoke about the potential for growth and development - \$10,000.00 for festivals from Alachua County tourism
 - The Community needs to get involved and then stay connected

Final thoughts - Next Steps

- Develop a mission
- Implement a Strategic action plan

Notes taken by: Rebekah Thorick, Admin Assistant