

DEVELOPMENT BOARD OF THE CITY OF LEBANON

Board of Directors Meeting / Lebanon City Hall

Thursday, June 22, 2023 at 10:00 am

Board Members present: Jessica Fain, Dean Adams, David Penuel, Sean Dozier, Mike Moscardelli, Will Hager and Paine Bone

Board Member absent: Susie James and James Bryant

Advisors present: Lebanon Mayor Rick Bell, Randall Gross (Randall Gross Development Economics/Nashville), Sarah Haston (Lebanon Economic Development Director)

Lebanon city councilors present: Camille Burdine (Ward 3)

The Industrial Development Board's (IDB) first meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Bell promptly at 10:02 am

Mayor Bell: Thank you to all members of the board for their time and introduction of Randall Gross, Economic Development consultant.

Sarah Haston: Stated that recruitment of new businesses into Lebanon continues to be very important to us and the community. We need to be proactive but require guidance to make good decisions. We have used Randall Gross before for research, specifically on growing our downtown. We've had great wins but want to continue to be very strategic. It's important for us to define industrial (manufacturing vs. distribution) and be smarter in our growth through defined clusters of business. Thank you to everyone for their time this morning.

Randall Gross: Lebanon is at an exciting juncture. It's important to clarify who we are as a community and continue to make wise decisions on our future direction. What I have done is collected various data from focus groups, surveys and interviews – and then “marry that together” with previous work I've done in the city. Here is a look at some key data points (please see Randall's attached presentation)

Key takeaways from Randall's presentation:

- Lebanon has seen a +15% growth in our labor force (available people – based on age and physical condition - within a city to work)
- Most growth of our workforce has come from the north and east
- We have a lack of skilled trades (which is also a regional issue)
- Household incomes are stagnant: we need jobs that pay well to cover the increase in housing costs
- Focus Group/city advantages: Nearly 50 local businesses owners stated that are biggest draw is our “Small Town Feel”

- Focus Group/city disadvantages: need to diversify our business base (too much manufacturing/distribution), we need more amenities, and that 30% of them plan to expand
- They want to see us move faster, make it easier to start new businesses and link CU and the downtown square
- Downtown: we have a key corridor of the Sinking Creek greenway that we should make more attractive to draw people to farmers market and include a walkway to CU
- Sparta Pike needs a hotel to increase the Expo as a destination and marketable advantage in the community
- Target industries: IT, online retail, professional tech and administrative jobs
- Our current business clusters include transportation (warehouse/manufacturing), construction, food/agriculture, medical, and packaging
- Highest economic returns based on JOBS: manufacturing, office, research/development, retail, and warehouse
- Highest economic returns based on INCOMES: research/development, office, manufacturing, warehouse, and retail

Visioning discussion after presentation:

- Jessica – we need more direction on overall sequencing (timing) of our planning so we can prioritize best approach to growth
- Camille – questioned status of office space (which is down -20%) in regional, compared with current wage levels in area
- Randall – we need to stabilize our manufacturing arena – because demand is not fading – can we increase local suppliers and employ residents to make things cheaper here
- Jessica – we have lower poverty levels here because our housing prices are too high, and we’ve just moved people/workers out to more rural areas
- Randall – our downtown is our BRAND. Let’s get with Kim Parks at Historic Lebanon to review the master plan and see where we can move office space upstairs or out, tighten up the square’s current zoning and apply for more grants for walkability, streetscapes, and infrastructure
- Randall – this will allow us to increase our nice places to eat, create a “destination” place for Lebanon and increase our population and household income (which these numbers could incorporate tourist information).
- Sarah – Our zoning in industrial is currently only “light and heavy” which needs to be more detailed
- Randall – other cities put % caps on industrial sectors – and because we don’t have that the demand shift continues to come our way
- Will – let’s stop looking at warehousing
- Mayor Bell – I meet regularly with other mayors and Franklin’s mayor always gets the HQ office space and we get industrial – we need to change that. And we have big buildings with not a lot of people working in them. We need to change now so Lebanon is different in 20 years.

- Randall – so many options for incentives that you can offer – façade grants, business assistance, financial programs, revolving loans. There are really no downsides to these offerings
- Randall – update zoning, differentiate business sectors, offer density bonuses
- Sarah/Will – “GC” general commercial is very vague, and we are currently stuck in it. Need to be proactive and not reactive. Let’s sharpen it up and not be so broad
- Randall – Time to define your TIF district, before we have a project, and use future resources to get new businesses here in Lebanon
- Randall – we need to develop Lebanon’s strategic growth plan – which includes recruitment, maximizing our capacities, leveraging current assets (branding/marketing) along with quality of life: parks etc.
- Mike – yes, our strategic plan should center on our retail amenities and touting our quality of life
- Camille – what’s slowing us down is that we have no ready building or land (site-ready) areas. Those building/land for sale are privately owned and owners asking excessively high prices
- Randall – to group: throw out some descriptive words for our city: small town, quality, site-ready, safety, amenities, healthy, opportunities, vibrant, welcome, accessible, community, educated, connected
- Sarah – time to close the meeting. Please ask questions. Call me anytime. Everyone should feel comfortable to move forward because we are ready
- Jessica – I’d like more city information on requirements, etc so we know more about what our non-negotiables are.
- Sarah – yes, and let’s look at late July/early August for additional training on city’s future land use and zoning.

Notes submitted by: Jennifer Hartlage, Economic Development Coordinator, 6/23/23

Jessie James
12/20/23