

Mayor Report - Mike Pitchford, Village of Elsay

This will probably be a different sort of message than has typically come from Elsay in the past. Contrary to the usual focus on historic buildings and activity, I am proud to be part of a board that is looking toward the future to develop economic growth and become a part of the vitality of the region. While this does not mean we no longer are dedicated to the preservation of our community as this will be referenced farther into this report, it does represent something of a sea change in attitude and investment. Probably the most critical element of this redirection was the initiation and recent adoption of our Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan was initiated in late 2016 and adopted in the fall of 2017 identifying four primary goals. The first of these is to Create Conditions for Economic Development Including Building and Sustaining Relevant Partnerships. Second is to Refresh and Rebrand Zoning Ordinances. Third is Infrastructure Update and fourth is Update Village Communication.

The following is a brief list of actions we have taken to address these goals.

Create Conditions for Economic Development Including Building and Sustaining Relevant Partnerships

In July of 2017 we finalized purchase of the Mott Building, a historic structure that has descended into a seriously challenging state of disrepair. Since then, utilizing village employees we have completed outside restoration and gotten the building to the "presentable" state and are starting to attract interest in potential restaurant partners. Recently, a new investor has purchased a house and will be opening another B & B. This building was on the market for a number of years. Additionally, the number of residences for sale has fallen to two, a big improvement over the past. We have initiated a plan to coordinate current and future infrastructure improvements with a color code. It doesn't sound too sexy but we're painting the town brown and it has achieved certain continuity throughout the village that is notable. In addition it will provide a theme that we can apply to our trail and park development going forward. Speaking of trails, we have just begun the planning for a trail starting at the river road along the creek up to the Fountain Park, approximately ¾ of a mile. This will tie the village together for visitors and provide a place for exposure to not only the historic buildings but include exposure to the wetlands and forest. More to come later.

Refresh and Rebrand Zoning Ordinances - The Board of Trustees is initiating a complete review of the Zoning ordinances to address one of the primary concerns raised by participants in the questionnaire, difficulty in interpreting the ordinances. This has been a problem for not only our residents and Zoning Board members but has resulted in a concern of potential new buyers. Our intention is to do all we can to streamline and simplify the ordinances while protecting that which we have invested so much in to date.

Infrastructure Update - Another critical concern raised in the questionnaire was the increased exposure to flooding from the three creeks that meet in Elsay. We have completed major investments in creek management and established an ongoing schedule to address creek and drainage issues.

Update Village Communication - We have developed a web site, escapetoelsah.org, to coordinate and promote current information as well as provide a site to view various activities in the village. We have restructured our budgeting process to be more specific allowing us to keep on top of expenditures but also allow residents clearer access to activities. Plans are still being developed to move to a paperless system of reporting.

I hope that you can sense a note of excitement in this report. I cannot underemphasize the importance of working with a board that shares this excitement and level of commitment and my deep appreciation to them.

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