Danville's
Past - Present - Future
A Community Conversation

Community Conversation Notes

Group: Danville Public Schools
Community Input Forum

Conversation Date: November 28, 2011

Participants: 18

The following information was contributed by attendees of the School Board's quarterly Community Input Forum, including parents, parent-teacher organization activists, school administrators, and Board Members.

What are Danville's treasures – the things (whether physical places or intangibles like community character) you love about the city and want to see continued, protected, or improved as Danville plans for the future?

- Dan River -- its scenic and recreational opportunities
- River District -- its potential for providing retail, housing and recreational activities
- Bike trails and walking trails
- Ease of travel -- streets are not congested
- Libraries
- Colleges -- Danville Community College and Averett University
- High quality public schools
- Work of youth organizations
- Numerous programs available for senior citizens
- Resources provided by foundations, including the Danville Regional Foundation, Community Foundation and Virginia Tobacco Commission
- Civic organizations -- their charitable efforts and serving as ambassadors for the community
- Landscaped medians and interchange garden sites -- makes the city an attractive place
- Historic district -- offers a large collection of beautiful Victorian houses and churches
- Public safety -- makes Danville a safe place in which to live
- Danville Regional Airport -- its transportation services and role in economic development

What are the community's unmet needs – things not now in place that would improve the general quality of life in Danville or the business environment?

- Greater awareness of community assets
- Expanded mix of retail and grocery stores and restaurants -- more choices, especially upscale
- 24-hour computer center for general public use
- More jobs
- More opportunities for youth
- Educational alternatives for expelled students
- Additional cultural events
- Improved roads and highways to bring more traffic through Danville
- Expanded regional airport for commercial transportation or provide van shuttle service to major airports
- Expanded passenger train service, promotion of existing train services
- Prayer for city to bring about greater change

What are the opportunities that, if seized upon now, have potential to contribute to a better quality of life or business environment if used wisely?

- River District -- move forward with redevelopment and create more residential units there
- Education of children -- providing a better schools-to-home connection
- Focus on youth -- providing more activities and inspiring youth toward greater achievement through the use of mentors and role models
- Aggressively pursue existing Tobacco Commission money while it's still available
- Stronger show of police presence
- Achieve greater public awareness of resources such as programs and activities
- Promote the concept that police officers and firefighters are friends and role models
- Provide more training opportunities for small businesses enterprises and entrepreneurs
- Move forward with homeowner and home rental inspections programs
- Improve job and vocational skills
- Blight removal -- increase efforts

What are the top priorities the City of Danville should focus on during the next fiscal year? What strategies should be used to implement these priorities?

River District revitalization

- Continue on with planning and development as an attraction for more business and industry
- Push for more housing to increase number of people living in or near downtown

Education

- Continue to fund the School Division at the level the City has for the past several years and increase the level of funding when possible.
- Continue supporting high quality education, public and private
- Work in partnership with the public schools and Danville Community College in communicating to everyone (the citizens of Danville) that there is nothing more important than an education and an educated work force
- Work in partnership with Averett University, Danville Community College, and Danville Public Schools in training/retraining citizens to future employment needs
- Stay in contact with business that are willing and able to train young people and the unskilled to help them be more employable
- Support schools and youth programs, particularly those involving mentors and role models
- Provide better diverse forms of education, whether through the arts, music, dance, extra-curricular activities, etc.
- Encourage the parents of the children to motivate their children to work diligently to get a good education and to respect their teachers and elders
- Work with neighborhoods and organizations to support education
- Provide a place for troubled youth to be punished for small crimes, give youth a choice
- Start more vocational training programs, for example, a culinary training program
- Use Tobacco Commission funding to promote education and after school programs

Youth

- Allot funding for programs geared to our young people; consolidation of programs such as the “No Bell” should be on the City’s radar
- Provide technology training for youth and community project opportunities for youth

- Create a youth think tank and invention program; publicize and promote existing entrepreneurial programs, but start them younger (middle and late elementary school) to think like entrepreneurs.
- Keeping young professionals and college graduates from leaving
- Increase funding to Parks and Recreation Department for after-school summer programs
- Establish an outdoor swimming pool for youth in the summer; not everyone can afford the YMCA or private pools

Crime and public safety perceptions

- Cut other things if necessary in the budget to strengthen and grow our police force -- put more police on the streets
- Have more police in "trouble areas," as well as having them involved in educational programs so that people have the viewpoint that "Police are our Friends"
- Encourage police officers to take on a higher visibility and develop closer relationships with the public
- Open a domestic violence victim shelter that can serve not only certain members of the families but the entire family (including the violator)
- Better serve rape victims by hiring a nurse to administer rape kit/procedures for victims
- Create jobs and stop the violence

Blight eradication

- Make City attractive; continue with median planting
- Focus on City Beautiful and Master Gardner programs

Miscellaneous

- Recruit an upscale grocery store to Danville
- Find a way to harness the energy of elderly people to give them useful work that gives them purpose
- Provide more elder-oriented activities and choices
- Provide more opportunities for citizens to come together -- Danville is a very segregated city; form an entity to coordinate among the ages, races, economic levels, etc.
- Help citizens to be able to live more comfortably and eat healthier; the City could partner with medical facilities and eating establishments; it could further partner with builders and building supply sales places
- Build a homeless shelter for family youth (male and female)
- Restore commercial airline service to Danville

- Increase positive information about the city through all media; increase the amount of and ways to inform the public; local and beyond, about the good things that are going on here already
- Provide space to report citizens of the week, teacher of the month, fireman of the month
- Seek options for Danville Utilities customers to save money
- Danville being the City of Churches, should ask all pastors to start a prayer session for the future of the community; Danville needs to come together under one big tent to praise, worship, and conduct citywide revivals
- Rely on Isaiah 41:10 (Fear thou not; for I am with thee be not dismayed; for I am thy God I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with thee), Jeremiah 33:3 (Call unto me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest) and Isaiah 40

What sort of choices and tradeoffs are we willing to make, especially in this era of economic challenges and budget shortfalls?

Note: Rounding errors may affect totals.

Service Area	% Vote	Budget Options
General municipal services	52%	Raise property taxes as necessary to maintain current municipal service levels
	19%	Reduce service levels as necessary to maintain current property tax rates
	29%	Combine property tax rate increases and service level reductions
Police protection	80%	Raise property taxes as necessary to maintain the current level of police protection
	5%	Reduce police protection levels as necessary to maintain current property tax rates
	15%	Combine property tax rate increases and police protection level reductions
Fire & emergency medical response	53%	Raise property taxes as necessary to maintain current fire and emergency medical response levels
	21%	Close one of Danville's fire stations in order to maintain current property tax rates
	26%	Combine property tax rate increases and service level reductions
Support of the pre-K through 12 public education system	76%	Raise property taxes as necessary to maintain current educational service levels
	0%	Close a school and reduce educational service levels to maintain current property tax rates
	24%	Combine property tax rate increases and educational service level reductions
Industrial development & recruitment	50%	Raise property taxes as necessary to develop industrial sites and buildings and recruit new businesses to Danville
	25%	Put industrial development and recruitment on hold for the next few years in order to maintain current property tax rates
	25%	Combine property tax rate increases and more modest industrial development efforts

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Service Area	% Vote	Budget Options
River District revitalization	53%	Raise property taxes as necessary to construct new riverfront parks and landscaped sidewalks, restore blighted buildings, and recruit new businesses to the River District
	21%	Put River District revitalization efforts on hold for the next few years in order to maintain current property tax rates
	26%	Combine property tax rate increases and more modest River District revitalization efforts
Blight eradication	47%	Raise property taxes as necessary to demolish hundreds of abandoned, dilapidated buildings and impose stronger code enforcement measures to combat building and property blight
	21%	Put blight eradication programs on hold for the next four years in order to maintain current property tax rates
	32%	Combine property tax rate increases and more modest blight eradication efforts
Parks, trails & landscaping	53%	Raise property taxes as necessary to maintain Danville's parks, landscaped street intersections and rights-of-way, and trails
	21%	Close some parks and reduce maintenances service levels as necessary to maintain current property tax rates
	26%	Combine property tax rate increases and maintenance level reductions
Streets	61%	Raise property taxes as necessary to maintain current street conditions
	22%	Reduce street maintenance as necessary to maintain current property tax rates
	17%	Combine property tax rate increases and more modest street condition reductions

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Service Area	% Vote	Budget Options
Recreation & culture	53%	Raise property taxes as necessary to maintain recreation programs, community centers, and the branch library
	26%	Reduce programs, hours of facility operations, and/or close community centers and the branch library in order to maintain current property tax rates
	21%	Combine property tax rate increases and service level reductions