

# Phase one of Bardstown overhaul plan complete

Remaining three steps due in stages by April 15

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“Let’s invent a steamboat tonight. Let’s write a song that will still be sung 100 years from now. Let’s build a cathedral,” Rick Hill told 110 people Wednesday night. With those opening words to widen the thoughts and broaden the scope of attendees’ minds, he set about creating the vision for a new Bardstown.

Hill, owner of Village Solutions, led a community meeting at the Old Stable restaurant to relay the research his company had compiled. He will use the input the group detailed on maps of the city for their wishes of a revitalized downtown. The project will be complete by mid-April and is a plan for success, Hill said.

“The thing that gets me most excited about this city is the original design from more than 200 years ago,” he said. “The beauty of the layout is wonderful. Downtown has so much potential.”

Hill is also passionate about Bardstown because he grew up here. He has numerous ties to the city and his past life as an artist and painter is still noticeable in the very restaurant in which the meeting was held. He created the large paintings that are dominant on the inside walls in 1975 when he was 22.

The entire project will cost \$94,000. The funds will come from city and county coffers as well as donations from area businesses.

He is confident in the system after successfully partnering in the past with cities like St. Paul, Minn., and Miami.

Hill has said at several meetings about the project he is providing a “cookbook for downtown.” Once it’s complete all residents need to do is “put it in the oven and bake it” to be successful.

Among the things Hill said are assets in the revamping of the city include 70 percent of the population in the county live in non-traditional households. That means single persons, un-married couples, childless households; empty nesters, etc. live in seven out of 10 homes instead of the traditional parents and children setup.

“This opens the city up for more downtown dwellings. We can have apartments and condos for people who will want to live in them,” Hill said.

The crowd listened to statistics for about an hour and saw a PowerPoint presentation about the city’s available space and current configuration. Hill then set them loose on the maps he’d brought.

After nearly two hours of meeting, drawing, discussing and planning, the dozen maps were hung on the walls of the restaurant. Members of each group explained their wish list to the crowd.

Among the recurring themes of many groups’ maps were for a small grocery store, restaurants, clubs, clothing stores, parking, children’s museum and condos. Many also cited a need to relocate and revamp several areas including that of the U.S. Post Office.

Hill said he would take all the plans and study them along with the numerous design ideas and distill them into a useable theory by next month.

“This is a necessary part of the process,” he said. “This research and idea development is important before the first shovel is put into the ground.”