

We have our future defined.....thank you!

Mayor Eric Haas

I am so excited to be entering my second term as Mayor of our great city! We have positioned ourselves to shape our future with implementation of the city's recently adopted "Community Plan". I am extremely proud of the response from our residents in the development of this plan. We had tremendous participation from hundreds of residents who served countless hours working in committees, attending public meetings, responding to surveys and supporting council & staff in developing this amazing document. We have memorialized the progress throughout the process on a dedicated website [www.ftthomascommunityplan.com](http://www.ftthomascommunityplan.com) and will continue to post the upcoming implementation efforts as well.

At our January 2<sup>nd</sup> council meeting, we were presented the final version of the Community Plan from our consultant team, lead by CT Consultants. They guided us through a comprehensive and inclusive process that allowed for review of existing conditions and exploration of possibilities that were all captured into this impressive plan. We are thankful for their leadership along with their professional partners, our talented and dedicated staff and most importantly our residents who participated in crafting this important planning tool for the city.

As we navigate forward, it will be important to have this same level of commitment and participation. I will work with council to lead the implementation phase, however; it will take our entire community to make it work. Support from our business community, civic organizations and citizens will be instrumental to our success.

There are many important and worthwhile projects and initiatives imbedded in this plan that will benefit our community. We have opportunities to continue our trails system, consider bicycle lanes, add amenities in our parks and maybe even develop new parks and amenities along our riverfront. We will be evaluating our city-owned buildings and determining the "highest and best" use for these facilities. There is potential to integrate new technologies and partner with other agencies or neighboring communities to leverage opportunities. We must evaluate our business districts and consider strategies that will support existing businesses and promote new business ventures, including potential for redevelopment. There are countless opportunities but also certain obstacles that need to be identified and managed.

The obvious challenges we will face is maintaining good stewardship of budget and overall finances. We will certainly be fiscally responsible to insure there is sufficient funding before considering any initiative or project that requires city funding. We will pursue any /all opportunities to bring outside resources to supplement any activity toward implementing the plan. It is important to recognize that all activity cannot be initiated by City Council or the "City". There are elements of the plan that may require other agencies to initiate and/or participate, including other governmental agencies and private developers. It is our obligation and our responsibility as stewards of our plan to embrace the opportunities presented by others. If we are approached by other agencies or developers with proposals that are consistent with our plan we should encourage their participation and embrace their efforts. This type of investment is necessary to maximize the success we hope to gain.

Recently, you may have heard about a potential redevelopment in the business district. You can see our Economic Development Director, Debbie Buckley's write up about her efforts over the last few years to help build our business district. It is very difficult for businesses to thrive in an area that is dominated by residential buildings on the entire west side of the avenue. This is an area that has real potential for redevelopment. This is something we've been researching and hoping for years, through more than one administration. I am grateful to so many folks who have worked to try to make something happen. In particular, Dan Gorman has worked tirelessly, inviting other developers to Fort Thomas to view our

business district and encourage them to be bold and present ideas to us. This is the closest we've ever been, and we are really appreciative and excited to see if a project can be designed to fit with the special character of our town and be a catalyst to spark more economic development. Our older residents are moving out of town because there are no condo-style options for them as they age. Standing still as this happens and many of our businesses in the CBD struggle to survive should not be an option. The planning process will include submittals to our Planning Commission and afford opportunity for public input where we can work together to decide what is best to serve our community.

I am confident we are going to move forward with our plan in a very positive way with many folks joining in along the way to make it happen. It has been rewarding and fun to see our citizens take such a great interest in the future of our city. I thank each of you that have contributed and challenge us all to continue with careful and meaningful progress to building that future!