

PREMIER ISSUE

A TOWNE POST NETWORK PUBLICATION

PLAINFIELD

MARCH 2018

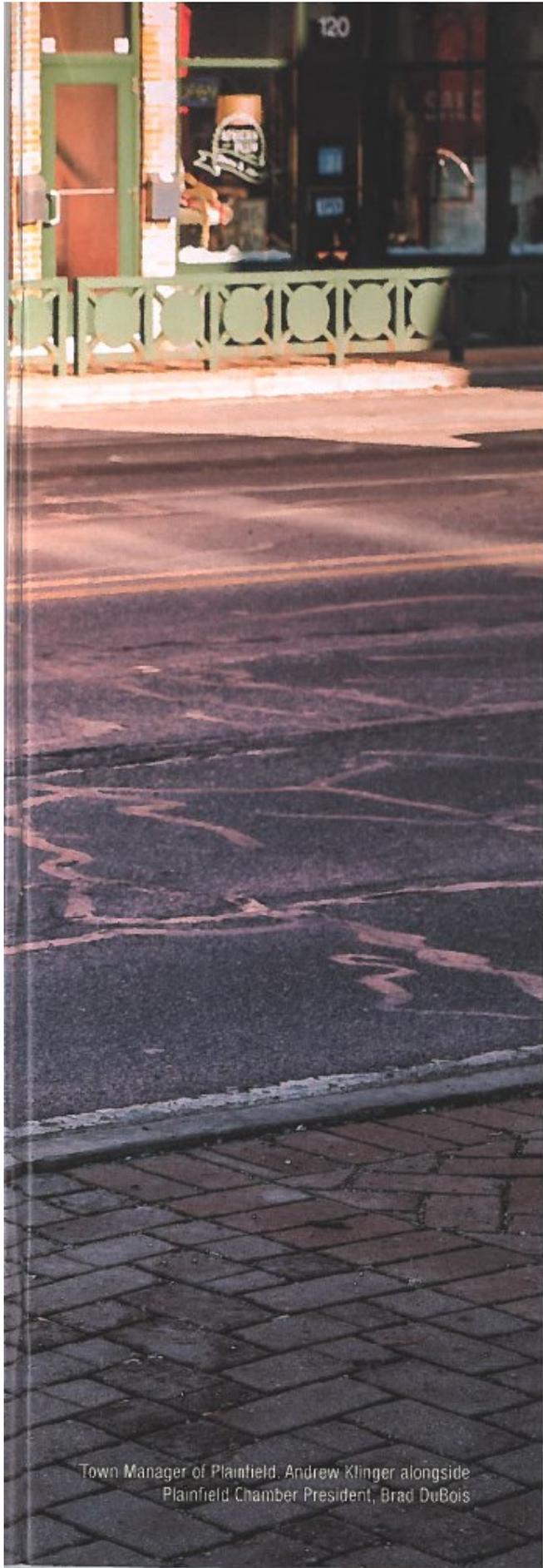
MAGAZINE

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POSTNET 5170
U.S. POSTAGE
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PlainfieldMag.com



Town Manager of Plainfield, Andrew Klinger alongside Plainfield Chamber President, Brad DuBois

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REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

Writer / Christy Hslinger-Ewing · Photographer / Brian Brosmer

A little over a year ago, a developer approached Andrew Klinger, Town Manager of Plainfield, and explained that he'd like to create a conceptual downtown redevelopment plan. Klinger and his team liked the idea but first embarked on a year-long process of asking the community for their input. Klinger held several public meetings and also posted on social media to garner feedback. The two biggest issues that came up include a desire to increase both parking and entertainment options in downtown.

According to outside consultants, downtown Plainfield has "good bone structure," meaning it has a nice core block of historic buildings that are already occupied by businesses.

"There aren't a lot of empty store fronts, so it's not a situation where we're creating a downtown from scratch or trying to resurrect a ghost town," Klinger says. "We have a good base on which to build."

The old Village Theatre, however, has sat vacant for 17 years. The public has voiced an interest in acquiring that space and putting it back into production, perhaps as a performing arts center.

"We want to create a village environment with a nice streetscape that's pedestrian-friendly," Klinger says.

Planners realized early on that US 40 makes that tricky given the 25,000 vehicles that pass through every day. Nevertheless, the thoroughfare is a lifeblood that acts as both a blessing and a curse. While it brings a great deal of traffic through the town, which is good for businesses, pedestrians struggle to cross the street.

"There's a fine balance that has to be struck because while change can be good, we want to ensure that the small-town feel is not lost in the process," says Brad DuBois, Plainfield Chamber President. "After all, that's why people move here — to get away from the hustle and bustle of big-city life while still having quick, easy access to big-city amenities.

"I can be home from a Pacers game in less than 30 minutes, or be to

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Brad DuBois, Plainfield Chamber President

the airport in 15,” says DuBois, who agrees with Klinger that it’s place-making that draws people to communities.

People love Plainfield because it’s got a park system that is second to none. In fact, Hummel Park is the largest township park in the state. Plus, folks can walk to just about anywhere within the town on a trail.

“That’s a huge draw,” DuBois says. “I see people drive into Plainfield with bicycles to get on the trail to ride. Others run, rollerblade, and walk their dogs.”

Plainfield also has a tremendous school system.

“Hendricks County is very fortunate to have all five school systems that are very good,” DuBois says.

And then there are the awesome community events, which include the Fourth of July Festival that draws an estimated 10,000 people to Hummel Park for the fireworks display. In addition, in late July the Chamber puts on ‘Play’nfield in the Park — a performing arts festival held in Hummel Park that exposes folks to live theatre, ballet, orchestra and music. They also have food trucks, bouncy houses, puppet shows and a library book truck.

The Chamber holds an annual parade in September that coincides with the Quaker Day Festival. Then there’s the Plainfield Farmers Market, held every Wednesday from 4-7 p.m. throughout the summer.

“Our Market is the only one I know of that’s on grass and in the shade,” DuBois says. “That’s pretty nice on scorching hot days.” The Farmers Market includes 40-60

vendors and draws well over 8,000 people every season.

The greatest draw to Plainfield, however, are the people. Time and again, the community has pulled together in times of need. For instance, last summer when Hurricane Harvey decimated Houston, a local business owner approached DuBois with a request.

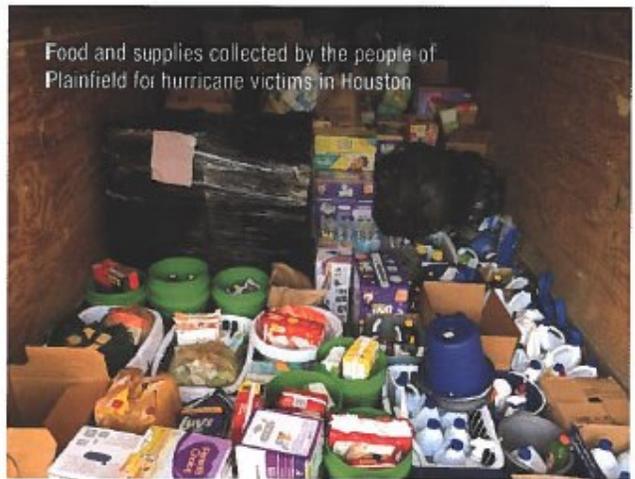
He said, “I have a semi-trailer. Can you help me fill it?”

DuBois kicked it into high gear with a social media blitz to rally the community. Within a couple of days, the semi was filled to the brim with food, water, diapers, rubber gloves, boots, blankets, baby food and more.

“The people of Houston were without anything because everything was



Andrew Klinger, Town Manager of Plainfield



Food and supplies collected by the people of Plainfield for hurricane victims in Houston

underwater," DuBois says. "It was astounding to see how everyone came together so quickly to offer support."

Because Plainfield is already so wonderful, Klinger and DuBois are eager to make it even better. That's why in this plan they are addressing Plainfield's aging infrastructure, citing issues with utilities, drainage and roads. After so many years of resurfacing roads, they get built up and up to the point of losing curbs and sidewalks. In addition, future plans look to try and pull the creek back into downtown.

"On the other side of the creek we have great green space, existing trails and the pedestrian bridge, but we'd like to tie in both sides of the creek between 40 and Franklin Park," Klinger says. This would grant the community better access to green space where they could host various events.

The conceptual design also includes the creation of something similar to a Georgia Street in downtown Indy where traffic can be blocked off to facilitate pedestrian-friendly events. They also want to produce better east-west connectivity than what currently exists.

"It's our hope that everyone will find a place within this new development," says Klinger, who promises that they will take good care of business icons such as Flap Jack Pancake House as well as historic buildings and residences.

Consultants anticipate that the full build-out of this long-range plan would involve a three-phase process spanning 15 to 20 years. Phase 1 — public infrastructure improvements — will commence shortly as will an expansion to Town Hall, since a number of employees are currently

working in hallways and in spaces that used to be closets.

"This conceptual downtown redevelopment plan is a guide for developers so that if someone says they'd like to build something here, we can show them our vision," says Klinger, noting that a building up on US 40 might stand four stories high, whereas buildings in residential areas would consist of low-density cottage homes, courtyard apartments or two-story duplexes that would blend into the existing landscape.

"Our hope is that now that we've been given the green light, private developers will come alongside of that public investment that the community is making into downtown," Klinger says.

For more information, visit townofplainfield.com.