

AMSTERDAM/CHURCHILL COMMUNITY PLANNING KICKOFF

NOVEMBER 15, 2007



RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

The following individuals and organizations were key to making the November 15th kickoff a success: Walt Sales, Charlie Pipal, Dave Hoekema, Gene Bennett, Don Carlson, Elinor VanArken, Tim VanDam, Todd Kitto, Mary Jo Cole, Dean Sybesma, Carol Weidenaar, and Leroy Logterman helped prepare for the event and facilitate individual small groups. Mark Martello and George DenHartigh provided food. The Amsterdam Rural Fire Department provided the venue for the event, and Manhattan Bank provided tables and chairs. The Gallatin County Planning Department provided materials.

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BACKGROUND

This report describes the Amsterdam/Churchill Community Planning Kickoff held on November 15, 2007 and provides a summary of results. It also discusses the steps the residents of the Amsterdam/Churchill Community and Gallatin County should take to continue the planning process. Eighty residents participated in the event, which was designed to answer four questions: 1) What makes Amsterdam/Churchill a great place to live? 2) What are residents concerned about? 3) What should change or be different in the future? and 4) What should stay the same?

Eighty residents participated in the event, which provides a foundation and a direction for the planning process in the months to come. As residents at the event heard, this is just the first step in a community conversation.

PROCESS

The Amsterdam/Churchill Community Planning Kickoff was held on November 15, 2007, from 7:00 – 9:00 PM. A total of 80 residents attended (Appendix A lists all participants). Immediately after entering, all participants were asked to address 8 issues listed on the wall of the meeting room. Each participant was given three dots and asked to vote, one dot per issue, on the top three issues with which they were concerned. Results from the dot voting are as follows (the number indicates the number of votes received):

1. Planned growth (49 votes)
2. Agricultural lifestyle (45 votes)
3. Traffic and pedestrian issues (40 votes)
4. Land use compatibility (31 votes)
5. Community values (25 votes)
6. Emergency services (17 votes)
7. Sewer and water (14 votes)
8. School issues (9 votes)

Participants were also asked to fill in a historical timeline of the Amsterdam/Churchill area, from 1890 through the present. The community's timeline is as follows:

1890 - 1900

- Braaksma Family Farm founded (1890)
- John Weidenaar Family Farm founded (1890)
- Andres Wormser, Presbyterian minister, preaches to settlers: "Fill the Land with Ditches!" - First Kings. (1890)

1900-1910

- Ranger Dykema Farm founded
- John W. Dyk Farm founded
- Ecton Farm founded (1903)

1920 - 1930

- John R. VanDyken Farm founded

1930 - 1940

- Klompjen Farm founded

1940 - 1950

- Amsterdam Lumber opens (1945)
- B. Dyk starts farming (1947)
- B. Cok begins farming (1948)
- H VanderMolen begins farming (1948)
- Droge Farms founded (1949)
- L. Smit moved to Montana

1950 - 1960

- Henry and Mary Flikkema (1952)
- Kamermans move to Churchill (1953)
- Phil Flikkema starts farming
- Churchill Garage opens (later becomes Churchill Equipment)
- Siebenga Farm

1960 - 1970

- MJ Cole (Bozeman)
- VanderMolen Farm
- B-3 Dairy on Dyk Road

1970 - 1980

- Outhouse burned down
- Logterman
- D & K Braaksma
- D. Ypma to Churchill
- MJ Cole (Amsterdam)
- Jay Hansen (1976)
- R. Urich

- H. Faber started farming (1978)
- B. Cok Dairy

1980 - 1990

- Vern and Pat Droge start home
- Jim Byler (1984)
- D. Venema (1984)
- Swanson new home
- Ted Flikkema (1986)
- Gene Bennett helps fight Yellowstone fires (1988)
- H. Vandermolen to Churchill
- VanDyken Home (1988)
- Liz Flikkema (1988)

1990 - 2000

- Reese and Gail Miller
- Dan and Kelly Swanson
- ARFO Farmed
- Cook/English to Churchill (1993)
- Mark and Kelly Halle moved here (1995)
- Fowlers (1995)
- Kredit Electric opens (1995)
- Tony Jansma moved to Churchill (1996)
- Gene and Darcy Bennett moved to Churchill (1997)
- Dykema to Churchill from Portland (1997)
- Tracy and Angie Downton moved to Churchill (1998)
- Amsterdam/Churchill Bank opened (1998)

2000 - Present

- Curt and Rhonda VanDyken family moved back to Churchill (2002)
- Huttingas moved to CRC (2002)
- Sybesma moved to Churchill (2003)
- Carlson's moved to Churchill
- Bennetts move to Churchill proper
- Knox's move to Churchill
- David and Jackie Flikkema
- Bruce and Debra Gourley
- Ike and Kim Dyk moved back to family farm

After the entry exercises, participants were served sandwiches before seating themselves at small group tables, with approximately with approximately eight people per table. Walt Sales, resident of the area, welcomed everyone to the event and gave a brief introduction.

After Walt's introduction, the County Planning Department gave a brief presentation on changes the Amsterdam/Churchill area has seen. The presentation also discussed how the planning process can be used to break the cycle of crisis management often caused by rapid growth and change. The premise behind the planning process, and the kickoff meeting, was threefold:

- Diverse residents can sit down as neighbors and discuss shared values
- Shared values and informed discussion can improve the quality of local discussion
- Stepping back from the crisis of the day and focusing on the big picture can allow these discussions to happen and will, ultimately, lead to better decision making.

After explaining the brief history of the planning process and the reason for the meeting, each small group was asked to respond to three questions:

- 1) What makes Amsterdam/Churchill a good place to live?
- 2) What should change or be different in the future?
- 3) What should stay the same?

The process for each question was the same: participants first responded to the question individually by writing their responses on index cards. After approximately 5 minutes of working individually, participants shared all responses with their table. A facilitator was present at each table to help sort answers into categories and to help discussion. After approximately 10 minutes of discussion among table members, each table member was given three dots and asked to vote on their top three responses. Those responses were then shared with the larger group and posted on the wall.

Note: The workshop produced a significant number of responses. To save space, these responses have not been reproduced here; to see all responses, visit the Planning Department's webpage at www.gallatin.mt.gov/planning (long-range planning: neighborhood plans, or ask the Planning Department for a hard copy).

SUMMARY

The responses to the small group questions exercises reveal a broad level of agreement on the values and goals of the community, with some differences in perception of how to attain those goals. Results from the meeting provide policy direction and point to a next step in the Amsterdam/Churchill planning process. Overall, the following themes emerged:

Values

Small Town Values, Rural Character, and Quality of Life. Many of the responses focused on the small town and church-oriented values held by residents. Many people remarked that the community was a great place to raise a family, and the strong presence of the church and quality schools added to the overall sense of good values. Quality people and their neighborliness, care

and respect for others, low crime, and the quiet, calm way of life were all discussed as important values for the area which contribute to making Amsterdam/Churchill a great place to live.

Agriculture Heritage and Wide-Open Views. Many community residents noted that the agricultural nature of the area added significantly to the quality of life of the area. In addition to lending a strong sense of history to the area (note the reference to the founding of several family farms in the timeline), many residents appreciated the open spaces and views that active farms provide.

Goals: What Should Change? What Should Stay the Same?

As participants looked ahead at potential changes, a variety of themes emerged. In general, residents felt that the values expressed above should be retained, while also improving the quality of planning for the future and exploring the range of tools to implement goals.

Infrastructure. Numerous residents cited a need to address several infrastructure needs: an improved road system and road safety; a way to address pedestrian and bicycle needs, including sidewalks, throughout the community; and public/community water systems.

Increased Local Control. Many residents expressed strong support for the promise of community involvement and grassroots democracy, and one of the top priorities discussed by participants was an interest in increasing local control through better planning. Additionally, tools such as zoning and incorporation were also brought up regularly, with many participants expressing a willingness and desire to explore options necessary to ensure that development occurred with the community's values in mind.

Agriculture and Rural Lifestyle. Numerous residents expressed a strong desire to keep family farms in business and preserve the agricultural land, lifestyle, and heritage that helps define the Amsterdam/Churchill area.

Community Values. Community values rose to the surface as a top priority for almost everyone. The church, the schools, the family oriented atmosphere, and the community pride shown by residents were all discussed as something the Amsterdam/Churchill community needs to consciously nurture as the area grows and changes.

Next Steps

At the close of the meeting, a number of participants signed up to serve on a steering committee. That steering committee will begin following up on the workshop by distributing this summary to everyone who participated. The steering committee will then consider the results of the workshop and begin consolidating responses into policy statements to be discussed at community workshops in the following months. Those workshops will develop larger goals and policies of the Amsterdam/Churchill community and begin to identify implementation actions for the community and the County to take.

It is important for residents of the Amsterdam/Churchill community to understand that implementation of a community plan will require three tools. Both of these tools will be explored in upcoming meetings.

- 1) *Partnerships.* A partnership is just what it says: an agreement to a specified course of action between two groups. In this case, partnerships can be made between Gallatin County and, for example, Montana Department of Transportation. Other examples could be between Gallatin County and the Amsterdam Fire District, or the County and the Amsterdam School District (unless Amsterdam/Churchill is incorporated, the County will need to be the active agent).
- 2) *Investments.* One of the most important topics identified by participants were infrastructure issues such as roads, sidewalks, and public water. Exploring these investments could require a significant investment in both the time and the energy of Amsterdam/Churchill residents.
- 3) *Requirements.* Some of the most immediately applicable tools to putting a community plan into action are requirements. Often, requirements take the form of development standards which new development would have to meet (also known as zoning).

Staying Involved

The steering committee meets every first and third Monday of the month from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the Amsterdam Fire Department. Anyone in the community is welcome to attend. Over the next several months, the Steering Committee will continue to host community-wide meetings to address issues and concerns expressed by the community and to discuss implementation strategies. **The next large community meeting, called “From Dialogue to Action”, will be held on January 22, 2008 at the Manhattan Christian School library.**

The steering committee and Gallatin County are committed to ensuring all landowners are involved and actively steering the community planning process. For questions, contact Walt Sales at 570-2128 or Warren Vaughan (Planning Department) at 582-3130.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS

1. Marlene Vandyken
2. Rod Vandyken
3. Robert Urich
4. Cart Smit
5. Mark Kredit
6. Gene Cole
7. Carl Vandermolten
8. Harold Vandermolten
9. Al Bos
10. Fred Stremler
11. Geri Stremler
12. Liz Flikkema
13. Raymond Knox
14. Dan Swanson
15. Wes Kamerman
16. Bob Ungersma
17. Charles Siebenga
18. Jack Huttinga
19. Ev Huttinga
20. Jay Hansen
21. Suzanne Ender
22. Jim Ender
23. Barbara Dykema
24. Brenda Darby
25. Michael Darby
26. Vernon Droge
27. Patricia Droge
28. Tony Jansma
29. Del Vandenberg
30. Gail Richardson
31. Stan Cook
32. Ike Dyk
33. Cindy Elliot
34. Joyce Flikkema
35. Candace Mastel
36. Bruce Gourley
37. Kelley Halle
38. Henry Flikkema
39. Amy Braaksma
40. Erika Braaksma
41. Jack Vandermolten
42. Ted Flikkema
43. Jim Byler
44. Tim Dyksterhouse

45. Leon Smith
46. Day Smith
47. Jim Swets
48. Charlie Pipal
49. Don Carlson
50. Leroy Logterman
51. Willi Logterman
52. Tim Vandam
53. Gene Bennett
54. Dean Sybesma
55. Sylvia Dewy Ypma
56. Dewy Ypma
57. Reese Miller
58. William Cok
59. Bob Kamerman
60. Dick Dykema
61. Gert Dykema
62. Tracy Dowton
63. Karen Braaksma
64. Doug Braaksma
65. Harry Eloise Faber
66. Eloise Faber
67. David Flikkema
68. Jackie Flikkema
69. Keith Venema
70. Matt Kimm
71. Bill Kim
72. Walt Sales
73. Matt Flikkema
74. Carol Weidenaar
75. Elinor Vanderark
76. Mary Jo Cole
77. Mark Martello
78. George Den Hartigh
79. Dave Hoekema
80. Ranger Dykema