

from the Mayor...December 2012

So here we are in December. My first year in office, along with four new council members, has gone by quick. Time has gone so fast, in fact, that we need a few extra weeks to get into our new City Hall. The final move-in date is December 18. Thanks for your patience.

We hope the new central location, access to city offices, and additional parking create convenience for everyone as we start the new year. Much greater than that, however, is the renewed “sense of place” that our remodeled building and adjacent city plaza will bring to our downtown location in the historic courthouse district.

Sense of place is simply defined as a unique space combined with experience that is desirable. For example, a packed Central Park in the middle of a concert, the Tiger Den hosting a barnburner, or the Courthouse lawn during First Friday.

Place strengthens those feelings of warmth and welcome when people consider settling into our community. Place attracts people. Place improves livability and becomes a community asset. Livability is now recognized as the key component to attraction, growth, and economic vitality of cities and towns. Economic developers tell us that if people like the assets and amenities of a city and they feel welcome, a city becomes more “livable.” Livability ranks number one for most young professionals deciding on a career. They will decide where they want to live and then find a job. It is the economics of place.

The key to placemaking is that it **must** be driven by the desires of the community, not the whims of a few. Planning for the infrastructure of new space is the function of the municipality. Creating a sense of place **must** be driven by *everyday citizens*. What “quality of life” elements are most important when developing place? Public art display, pedestrian and cycling connectivity, musical entertainment and performing space, spiritual atmosphere, residential options, green-space, recreational opportunities, neighborhood gathering options, public wi-fi, outdoor café or other dining option. *Creating an enjoyable, livable place, is the result of community input and action.*

In 2012, that community input was displayed. A multitude of public meetings and online surveys helped shape our sign ordinance, create solutions for downtown parking, and suggest connections and destinations for our soon to be finished bike/pedestrian master plan.

In 2013, visioning becomes important. A new comprehensive master plan will rely on community leaders and citizens to set the future direction of growth for our city. Also, in conjunction with the Warsaw-Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce, the City of Warsaw will host the Ball State University School of Architecture and Planning to look at several redevelopment issues in Warsaw that includes, among other things, future use options of the Little Crow Foods building and redevelopment of the Gatke industrial area. Placemaking. Other projects that will be driven by all of you include implementation of the new bike/pedestrian master plan, a boulevard connection from downtown to Center Lake, a community garden, projects promoting neighborhood identity, and others as they evolve.

Come downtown to the new City Hall. It’s a great place! We welcome your ideas and vision.