

4. URBAN DESIGN

Introduction

Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, and the establishment of frameworks and processes which facilitate successful development.

Simply defined, urban design is the composition of architectural form and open space in a community context. The elements of a city's architecture are its buildings, urban landscape, and service infrastructure just as form, structure, and internal space are elements of a building.

Whether public or private in actual ownership, urban design comprises the architecture of an entire community that all citizens can enjoy and identify their own. Like architecture, urban design reflects considerations of function, economics, and efficiency as well as aesthetic and cultural qualities.

Some common urban design principles are neighborhood compatibility, pedestrian friendly designs, land use diversity and transportation diversity.

Process

Civic Alliance members reviewed public feedback on community issues and then met with or surveyed a number of key stakeholders in the community. After further research and discussion they decided on the following as key issues for this topic area. City staff provided technical support.

Statement 1

Vacant parcels, surface parking lots, underutilized and poorly maintained structures in the downtown have a negative aesthetic and economic effect on the downtown.

Facts and Supporting Information

- According to data collected in 1998, 9% of Downtown land was occupied by vacant parcels, yet structures only covered 26% of downtown land. (*Source: City of South Bend*)
- According to data collected in 1998, 2% of parcels contained buildings that were considered substandard and 27% of parcels contained buildings in need of minor repairs. (*Source: City of South Bend*)
- According to data collected in 1998, 11% of land in Downtown was utilized for parking. (*Source: City of South Bend*)
- Vacant and underutilized parcels disrupt the continuity of the urban fabric.
- Vacant and underutilized parcels create a negative image of the community.
- Buildings are being demolished in the downtown to create surface parking lots (temporary and permanent lots).
- The JMS, Jefferson Center and Lafayette Buildings are examples of poorly maintained structures.
- There is no Downtown Plan; as such there is nothing to specifically address downtown development issues.

Strengths and Opportunities

- The JMS, Jefferson Center, and Lafayette buildings, along with many other structures, are opportunities for rehabilitation to create new mixed use development and encourage small business on ground floor.
- Land is available for new construction.
- One single project in key location can have a high impact.
- Several commercially viable anchor properties are already in place from which to build upon such as Chocolate Café, the Vine and Robertson's Apartments.
- Change in attitude related to new leadership in the Department of Community and Economic Development, City of South Bend.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Higher density development can help in downtown revitalization.
- More private development will occur.
- Creates a positive image of the downtown.
- Enhances downtown walkability and safety.
- More opportunity for specialty businesses to locate downtown.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
- Building Department of St. Joseph County
- DTSB Land use & Design Committee
- Holladay Properties
- Place Builders
- Troyer Group
- 1st Source
- MFB Financial
- Common Council Member

- University of Notre Dame School of Architecture

General stakeholder reaction:

Stakeholders mentioned that there was a lack of firm plans for the reuse of downtown sites. They said that demolition of existing structures was always the first reaction - without firm commitments for new construction to start in its place. They identified that vacant parcels available for development are on the market for long periods of time. Most stressed on the need for predictability of an area to lure private investment.

Statement 2

The community lacks well designed and landscaped spaces throughout the city.

Facts and Supporting Information

- It is recommended that there be 6.25 to 10.5 acres of open space per 1,000 in population (*Source: National Recreation and Parks Association*).
- In the City of South Bend, 5.4% of land, or 1,374 acres, is open space. Since the City's population is 107,789, there are 12.7 acres per capita.
- New subdivisions by and large are developed without tree lawns, street trees or front yard trees.
- The East Bank Trail, continuous from IUSB (Twyckenham) to St. Joseph's HS (Angela), is one of few well landscaped walkways in the community.
- There is no central public city square to act as a gathering point for the community.
- The loss of the sight line from Century Center to the Courthouse with uncoordinated new construction in between (TCU, Leighton Plaza).
- Lack of a citywide comprehensive plan.

Strengths and Opportunities

- Wide corridor streets allow development of medians without additional property purchases.
- For the eighth year in a row, South Bend has been designated a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation. There are 51 communities in Indiana designated as Tree City USA. This designation helps in getting a community started toward an annual and systematic management of its tree resources.
- DTSB, Inc has been involved in improving the look of downtown by the addition of planter, other landscaping and beautification projects.
- Jon R. Hunt Plaza, in front of the Morris is a community asset.
- Surface parking lots in some locations offer opportunities for creation of green spaces or public squares along with new developments.
- St. Joseph River is an asset to the community. Identified by virtually everyone in the City Plan public meetings & stakeholders.
- Potential for new direction with new leadership in the City's Community and Economic Development Department.
- The Riverside Trail project will start construction in 2005. The three phase project will create 3.2 miles of bikeway/walkway parallel to the river from Angela Blvd. to Darden Road on the west bank of the river. A ten feet wide bikeway/walkway is also programmed for the Miami Street widening project from Kern Road to Jackson Road. (*Source: City of South Bend*)
- DTSB's Landuse and Design Committee is currently working on Design Guidelines.
- Development guidelines within area specific master plans and Zoning Ordinance could address street and front yard trees.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Quality of life will be enhanced with more landscaped spaces in the city.
- Creates a better image of the community.
- Better balance of green landscaped spaces to paved surface.
- South Bend becomes a more desirable place to live and work and play.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County

- Building Department of St. Joseph County
- DTSB Land use & Design Committee
- Holladay Properties
- Place Builders
- Troyer Group
- 1st Source
- MFB Financial
- Common Council Member
- University of Notre Dame School of Architecture

General stakeholder reaction:

Some stakeholders stated that there was a need for Design Guidelines to ensure better development. Most stressed on the need for area specific planning. Many stakeholders mentioned the St. Joseph River as a natural asset and that it should be used to enhance the quality of life of the community. Stakeholders mentioned the positive work on the city's commercial corridors but felt that the progress was slow.

Statement 3

Demolition of existing buildings without firm plans or commitments for reuse of the site causes economic and spatial blight.

Facts and Supporting Information

- The Redevelopment Commission in South Bend is responsible for stimulating development in designated areas of the city. This is achieved primarily through acquisition, clearance, and disposition of land, public improvements, design review, and marketing in designated Redevelopment and Economic Development Areas.
- Demolition of buildings to assemble parcels has been the City's philosophy since the 1970's and remains so today. Example: Jefferson and Main, Jefferson and Niles, Studebaker Union Hall (former Dudes 'n Darlins building).
- Redevelopment is more often equated with demolition rather than rehabilitation and reuse of existing buildings.
- Rehabilitation adds more jobs than new construction, not because rehabilitation is more expensive, but because it is more labor intensive. According to the economic impact study done for the State of Michigan, rehabilitation projects have up to 70 percent of total project cost devoted to labor compared to 50 percent in new construction.
- Lack of a citywide comprehensive plan.
- Currently there is no Downtown Plan.

Strengths and Opportunities

- Incentives can be shifted to the redevelopment of existing buildings.
- Some buildings that have been rehabilitated include: Stephenson Mills, Central High School, and Robertson's Building.
- Urban fabric can be strengthened by filling in existing vacant land without having to demolish more buildings.
- Change in attitude related to new leadership in the Department of Community and Economic Development, City of South Bend.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Will help preserve historic buildings.
- More development in the inner city increases property tax income to the city.
- Higher density development gives pedestrians better experience in downtown.
- Urban fabric of the city is enhanced.
- Downtown and neighborhoods will have a more unique identity.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
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- DTSB Land use & Design Committee
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General stakeholder reaction:

Most stakeholders mentioned that the City does not put any priority to reuse of existing structures. Some stakeholders believed that the appearance of blighted buildings causes economic and spatial blight. They commented that sometimes eyesores need to be demolished so that the potential of the site can be realized.

Statement 4

There are inadequate visual and physical connections to the River, monuments, landmarks, parks and significant public venues.

Facts and Supporting Information

- There are no formal Design Guidelines for development in the downtown area. Few areas/neighborhoods have Design Guidelines.
- Absence of good terminating vistas in South Bend. There are no statues or monuments on major streets or paths that serve as terminating vistas.
- The Coveleski Stadium is tucked into the corner of downtown with no visual connection to the CBD with impracticable traffic patterns. Opportunity was lost by not integrating Coveleski better into the neighborhood.
- Sight lines to and from Century Center have not been capitalized upon or protected.
- There is no plan for signage in the downtown. Little signage exists identifying prominent locations.
- The Leighton Center is an example of new development that destroyed an important visual connection (Century Center to County Courthouse).
- Currently there is no Downtown Plan.

Strengths and Opportunities

- The community has many assets like the river, existing trails, and historic neighborhoods that need to be built upon.
- Kevin Lynch (Image of the City, 1960) defines a method of analyzing physical and visual connections in a place. Five elements are important for people to form a mental image of a place: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Kevin Lynch's analysis can be used to identify visual connections in South Bend's downtown.
- City Plan offers opportunity to develop policy for urban design: define community's special sight lines, monuments, gateways etc and create plans for their protection and enhancement.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Better visual and physical inter-connectivity within the community.
- Will create opportunity for developing more public open spaces.
- Sense of place is enhanced as special visual and physical assets are recognized.
- Continued improvement of existing assets

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
- Building Department of St. Joseph County
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- Troyer Group
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General stakeholder reaction:

Stakeholders mentioned that appropriate recognition was not given to local landmarks, parks, monuments, and significant public venues. Many recognized the lack of recognition of Urban Design principles in planning for areas in the city. Many stakeholders identified the river as a local asset, yet few visual connections exist to it.

Statement 5

Parking structures in the downtown lack visual appeal and are mostly designed for single use.

Facts and Supporting Information

- There are 11 parking garages in the downtown area (DTSB, Inc. boundaries). Three of the above parking garages are owned by the city. A fourth was recently demolished and the City expects to replace it.
- Single use parking structures and surface parking diminishes economic vitality as well as visual appeal.
- Some parking garages in the downtown are dual use structures (parking and retail). The trend throughout the nation is for multiple use parking structures (example: parking, retail, office and residential uses all in one structure).
- Currently there is no Downtown Plan. (*Source: City of South Bend*)
- Lack of Design Guidelines in the downtown.

Strengths and Opportunities

- As old garages are replaced, new ones can incorporate multiple uses.
- Existing garages can undergo façade improvements.
- Surface parking lots can be redeveloped with buildings/garages.
- Construction of garages in key locations could facilitate rehabilitation of problem buildings.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Increases opportunity for economic development; increased tax base.
- Improved pedestrian experience when retail is developed on first floor of parking garages.
- Helps in downtown revitalization and image of the city.
- Offers opportunity for small specialized businesses to locate downtown
- Creates higher density development by mixing uses in one structure.
- Enhances downtown density and cohesiveness.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
- Building Department of St. Joseph County
- DTSB Land use & Design Committee
- Holladay Properties
- Place Builders
- Troyer Group
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General stakeholder reaction:

City officials mentioned the Walker Parking study that was being conducted to help determine the current and future need for the number of parking spaces in the downtown. Stakeholders said that large expanses of surface parking counter a vibrant urban fabric. Surface parking disrupts the visual character of the community and creates a barrier to pedestrian circulation. They spread out land use and encourage less dense urban areas.

Statement 6

Major arterial streets into the city need better streetscapes, visual enhancements and recognition as our community's front doors.

Facts and Supporting Information

- Some new development like IVY Tech and the Juvenile Justice Center is suburban in nature and does not enhance the streetscape.
- There is no official plan for Guide Signs in the corridors. Guide signs show route designations, destinations, directions, distances, services, points of interest, and other geographical, recreational, or cultural information.
- Some of the major Arterials in South Bend are: Cleveland Road, Edison Road, Ironwood Road, Lincolnway, Main Street, Mayflower, McKinley Highway, Michigan Street, Portage Highway, Prairie Avenue, Sample Street, South Bend Avenue, SR 933, US 31, Western Avenue. (*Source: MACOG*)
- There are no Design Guidelines for primary arterial corridors.
- Primary entrances to the city, such as Main, Michigan, Lincolnway West, and Western, have a number of abandoned buildings and empty parcels.

Strengths and Opportunities

- Started in 1998, the Commercial Corridor project was initiated by Mayor Stephen J. Luecke. The corridor project is an effort to improve South Bend's key entryways into the city. The following corridors are recognized as commercial corridors by the City of South Bend: Western Avenue, Portage Avenue, South Gateway or Michigan Street, Lincolnway West and Miami Street. Each corridor was awarded an allotment of money to spend appropriately, according to its needs (*Source: City of South Bend. 2004. www.ci.south-bend.in.us*)
- Yearly allocation of dollars for corridor improvements has increased over the past 2 years.
- Each corridor has some unique character.
- Each City designated Commercial Corridor has an organized volunteer group of local businessmen that helps in their plan development and implementation.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Creates a positive image for tourists and visitors entering the city.
- There is a sense of entrance or exit from the city.
- Enhances the sense of place.
- Will help enhance the look and feel of corridors into the city.
- Each corridor will be unique in nature.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
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- DTSB Land use & Design Committee
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- Troyer Group
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General stakeholder reaction:

Stakeholders agreed that there were no formal gateways to the city and that had a negative impact on visitors to the community. They indicated that the city's gateways were not easily identifiable for travelers entering or exiting the city.

Statement 7

The established urban fabric of many neighborhoods has not been recognized, maintained and enhanced.

Facts and Supporting Information

- According to the Neighborhood Development Guide (2001), there are 34 neighborhood organizations in the city. Each organization has a distinct boundary. (Source: *City of South Bend.2001. Neighborhood Development Guide: Progress through Partnership. Section ii.*)
- The combined area of the 34 recognized neighborhoods in the city is approximately 7538 acres. Based on the City of South Bend Land Use Map (1998), Residential related uses occupy approximately 12382 acres. Therefore, recognized neighborhoods cover approximately 60% of all residential uses. (Source: *City of South Bend*)
- New residential development inside the city limits is suburban in nature. Example: South East neighborhood development.
- According to Becker and Kelly (2000), transportation changes such as street widening or closing have an impact on surrounding land uses. (Source: *Becker, B., & Kelly, E. 2000. Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan. p137*)
 - South Bend example: The closing of Juniper/ Eddy Street as a primary north/south corridor to Notre Dame could potentially shift traffic to Twyckingham Street, which could have a negative effect on this strong residential neighborhood.
- “Spot” developments harm adjacent areas such as unplanned, increased traffic flow; inconsistent use of land that devalues existing nearby uses and blockage of longterm cohesive planning opportunities.

Strengths and Opportunities

- There are some neighborhood organizations in the city with area specific master plans.
- Plans exist for commercial corridors and redevelopment areas within the city.
- Existing infrastructure can be tapped. Many brownfield sites in the city can be redeveloped.
- South Bend has some established strong historic neighborhoods.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Owners and developers are sure about their investment.
- Public interest grows due to increase in confidence in the development planning process.
- South Bend’s sense of place is enhanced.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
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General stakeholder reaction:

Stakeholders commented that new development has not respected the traditional street grid layout and its consequent transportation patterns. Some said that new development and street alignments are given preference over established street patterns destroying the character of the neighborhood and diminishing our sense of place.

Statement 8

Area specific master planning efforts in the city fail to anticipate impacts on adjacent areas and beyond.

Facts and Supporting Information:

- According to the Neighborhood Development Guide (City of South Bend, 2003), there are 34 neighborhood based organizations in the city. Each organization has a distinct boundary. 8 of these neighborhoods have neighborhood plans. (Source: *City of South Bend. 2003. Neighborhood Development Guide: Progress through Partnership. Section II*)
- The City has 5 commercial corridor plans, 6 redevelopment area plans and some other area specific plans.
- Some area specific plans are developed with little involvement from residents and key stakeholders.
- According to Becker and Kelly (2000), transportation changes such as street widening or closing have an impact on surrounding land uses. (Source: *Becker, B., & Kelly, E. 2000. Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan. p137*)
 - *South Bend examples:*
 - The closing of Juniper/ Eddy Street as a primary north/south corridor to Notre Dame could potentially shift traffic to Twyckingham Street, which could have a negative effect on this strong residential neighborhood.
 - The proposed realignment of Lincolnway West will significantly alter views to the downtown as people enter South Bend from St. Joseph Valley parkway.
 - Century Center parking lot cuts off Jefferson Street and disturbs the downtown grid pattern.
 - Development in the downtown has not respected the traditional grid pattern of blocks. There are large expanses of surface parking and the St. Joseph River is not very accessible.
- As traffic patterns are shifted, land use along routes has become more auto-oriented.
- There is no citywide comprehensive plan to guide area specific planning efforts.

Strengths and Opportunities

- The City Plan process offers opportunities to set policy regarding future area specific planning efforts in the city.
- Some neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and redevelopment areas have master plans.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Individual area specific plans, guided by a citywide plan, will help in making good land use and development decisions.
- The city will have better cohesiveness among various neighborhoods.
- Development will be coordinated and its impact on other neighborhoods will be realized.
- Transportation and land use planning will occur in relation to each other.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
- Building Department of St. Joseph County
- DTSB Land use & Design Committee
- Holladay Properties
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General stakeholder reaction:

Stakeholders mentioned the lack of a citywide plan to make decisions. Many mentioned the absence of urban design principles in making decisions regarding development. They said that little attention was given to the impact a project would have on its adjacent uses and that transportation and land use decisions need better coordination.

Statement 9

New construction is often favored over the adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Facts and Supporting Information

- Historic structures include downtown historic buildings as well as historic homes in neighborhoods.
- According to a study (2003), new edge development requires the expansion of basic infrastructure and services such as roads, water, sewage, utilities, and fire and police protection. In contrast, by rehabilitating historic neighborhoods and downtowns growth is experienced without the corresponding incremental cost. (*Source: GroupSmith and Betsy Czark & Associates. 2003. Strengthening Communities Through Historic Preservation*)
- Historic buildings in the city's center as well as in other parts have been demolished in recent years.
- New development generally does not occur on previously used and developable land.
- Sprawl development consumes city taxes in the form of new infrastructure and provision of other services such as fire and water, while existing infrastructure lies unused and in decline.

Strengths and Opportunities

- Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana has regional office in South Bend and is involved in preserving historic structures in the city.
- South Bend has an adopted Historic Preservation Plan.
- Rehabilitation adds more jobs than new construction, not because rehabilitation is more expensive, but because it is more labor intensive. According to the economic impact study done for the State of Michigan, rehabilitation projects have up to 70 percent of total project cost devoted to labor compared to 50 percent in new construction.
- Due to the nature of rehabilitation work, it relies on local craftspeople and suppliers. New construction involves more off-site assembling that uses fewer workers and is often done out-of-town or even out-of-state. The income earned by these local workers and trades-people has a multiplier effect on the economy since those same workers and business owners spend their money locally.
- Tax incentives are available for the renovation of existing buildings.
- The city has some historic neighborhoods: (*Source: Historic Preservation Commission. 2005*)
 - The following are Local Historic Districts: River Bend, North St. Joseph Street, Riverside Drive, Taylor's Field, West North Shore Drive, East Wayne Street, Edgewater Place, Lincolnway East.
 - The following are National Register Districts: East Washington, Howard Park, South Michigan Street, St. Casimir Parish, West Washington, Chapin Park, Leper Park, Singer Manufacturing and South Bend Lathe, Muessel Drewry's Brewery and the Downtown South Bend Historic Multiple Use District.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- Preservation / Rehab of historic structures will increase inner city density.
- Rehabilitation opportunities for small business owners are increased.
- Preservation of buildings allows residents to take pride in the city's history.
- Sense of place is enhanced.
- Historic buildings are preserved.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
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- DTSB Land use & Design Committee

- Holladay Properties
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General stakeholder reaction:

Stakeholders mentioned that a number of historic structures in the downtown had been demolished to make room for surface parking lots over the past several years. Some stakeholders commented that buildings torn down without firm plans for replacement were a waste of money and created large visual holes in the streetscape. Stakeholders further said that the diversity of size and type of construction has been eliminated and replaced with larger single minded designed buildings.

Statement 10

A lack of effective building and development design guidelines has negatively impacted the entire urban fabric.

Facts and Supporting Information

- Some neighborhoods have design guidelines which are ineffective.
- Pedestrian oriented commercial and retail options have been disrupted or eliminated with suburban style surface parking lots.
- Set backs of buildings do not respond to the street. There is very little consideration given to the relationships between the buildings.
- The city center currently has fewer historic buildings than it did 20 years ago.
- There is no official design review process for development in the downtown.
- The entire city is not divided into districts or neighborhoods with Design Guidelines to preserve their character and form.
- The traditional grid pattern of development has not been maintained in new development.

Strengths and Opportunities

- DTSB, Inc.'s Landuse and Design subcommittee has been working on downtown Design Guidelines for some time.
- There are some plans in place for East Bank, Monroe Park and CBD. They just need to be followed.
- Residents are sensitized to both the need for, and the value of, comprehensive, long term planning for mutually beneficial uses of land.
- Relatively well organized grid of streets including wide traffic ways capable of handling substantial volumes of traffic without sacrificing, with proper enhancement, visual appeal.
- New Zoning Ordinance outlines some guidelines for development.

Benefits of addressing the issue

- New development in downtown and neighborhoods will be more traditional in nature.
- Will create a positive image for the city.
- South Bend neighborhoods will have unique character.
- Will produce predictability of future uses and appearances of structures.
- Developers will have to follow adopted design guidelines in new development.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were consulted:

- City of South Bend, Division of Economic Development
- Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County
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- DTSB Land use & Design Committee
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- Troyer Group
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General stakeholder reaction:

Stakeholders agreed that in general there was a need to apply more urban design principles to new development in South Bend. Design Guidelines would help in creating a more cohesive urban fabric. Some stakeholders mentioned the Design Guidelines for the downtown that DTSB's committee has been working on for a few years but agreed that the existing informal review process was ineffective.