



Beecher Jr. High Students Envision Beecher in 2040!



On Wednesday, December 19th, 2018—amid the final countdown to winter break—Beecher Jr. High students took part in two 30-minute focus groups as part of “Beecher 2040” – the Village of Beecher’s Comprehensive Plan. Big shout out to Principal Mike Meyer for helping coordinate the event, even giving students special permission to miss regular class times! Thanks to Ms. Mary for sharing the library space, and to the students who participated!

To get the ball rolling, Erin Cigliano, Senior Planner and Outreach Specialist with Teska Associates explained the basics—what a Comprehensive Plan is and why hearing from the community, including junior high students, is so important. She then asked the students to introduce themselves and share a few words about Beecher:

What word comes to mind when you think “Beecher”?

- Home...Friendly...Happiness...Orange!
- Small....Tiny...Boring...Quiet
- Farm...Corn
- Old-school
- Busy (Route 1)
- Different (from neighboring communities)
- Buddy’s Drive-In (lots of love for Buddy’s!)

It's All Good... Just Sayin'...

With the creative juices flowing, post-its were distributed and attention directed to two big orange boards titled "It's All Good" and "Just Sayin' ". Students were asked to use the post-its to share 2 things they love about Beecher (It's All Good) and two ideas on things they want to see in Beecher (Just Sayin'). Once their ideas were down on paper, students brought them up to the large orange boards in the front of class for all to see and reflect on.

"Beecher Brainstorm" — the Mind Map!

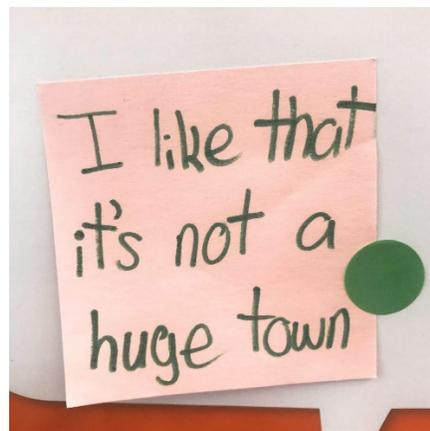
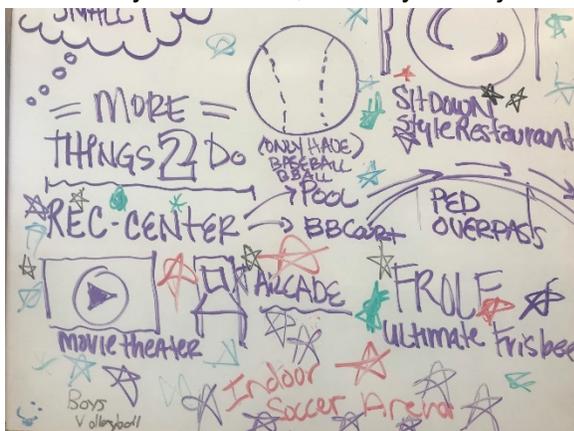
With so many talented brains gathered together, Carol Brobeck, Planner with Teska, facilitated group conversation centered on the comments. As the students discussed their ideas in more detail, Erin Cigliano graphically recorded and connected the ideas on a white board. The mind map focused on the aspects of Beecher that students love, and the areas that could use a little TLC. A large, aerial map of the Village was also made handy for the students to refer to which they took advantage of—noting needs and opportunities geographically!

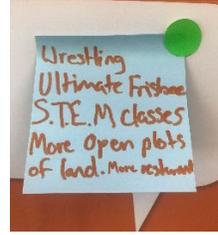
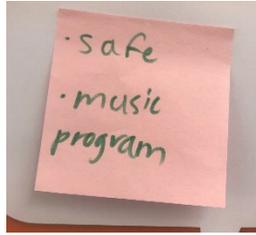


Students expressed their love for local eateries—Buddy's, Sophia's and the Princess Café—meeting up with friends at their homes and neighborhood parks and playing sports of all kinds.

Beecher in 2040? They envision their community with expanded opportunities for recreation, including places to play sports and be active all-year round, more restaurants that are "not too expensive" and more places to shop at home for clothes, sports equipment and more.

Within just a few minutes, it was clear that Beecher students **love** the small, quiet, friendly community of Beecher, *but* they'd like just a little more to do and see at home.





"I'm seeing a ton of comments related to sports—which sports does Beecher need a space for?" asked Carol. Both groups had some big opinions about sports—which they wanted to play, where they needed a space to play them, and when—all-year round. And we didn't only talk soccer, basketball, softball, and football...Beecher students want to stay active in the snow too, "I wish Beecher had a big hill to sled down in the snow—my family goes to Goodenow Grove, but I wish we had something here." Other ideas included:

"Connect sidewalks in the neighborhoods."

"Crossing Dixie Highway is hard—it's so busy."

"Some neighborhoods don't have any parks, so we have to walk farther to meet friends."

"Everything feels the same—some diversity in restaurants and activities would be great!"

"There are already some restaurants and businesses along Dixie—I would just like to have more."

"A Recreation Center could go here, in this big open space [Cardinal Creek Golf Club]"

Ready, Set, Vote for Your Favorites!

Following the group brainstorm and mind map, the students voted for their favorite ideas and top needs using dot stickers on the post-its and adding asterisks to the mind map. Crowd favorites included: more shopping and restaurant options in town, sports (if it involves a body or a ball, it was popular!), closing sidewalk gaps, and increasing park access in neighborhoods.

