

Planning Commission Work Session
July 24, 2012
Notes

Commissioners Present

Ms. Genevieve Keller (Chairperson)
Mr. Kurt Keesecker
Ms. Lisa Green
Ms. Natasha Sienitsky
Mr. Michael Osteen

Not Present

Mr. Dan Rosensweig
Mr. John Santoski

Staff Present:

Missy Creasy
Richard Harris
Michael Smith
Willy Thompson
Amanda Poncy

Ms. Keller convened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. and turned the meeting over to Ms. Creasy.

Announcements

Ms. Creasy provided the Comprehensive Plan schedule and draft review process. She then turned the meeting over to Summer Frederick from TJPDC.

Summer provided a report of the land use and transportation items that the Commissions expressed interest in reviewing from previous meetings and along with visuals including the land use map focused on those topic areas.

Discussion

There were four areas of the land use map discussed:

Woolen Mills

- Didn't really think this area was a City and County issue. Cooperation really needs to be thought about.
- The area has the following assets: a relationship to the river, historic resources, great views, and potential for adaptive use of the mill. County accesses sites through the city.
- In order to make the area a "River City" the term industrial needs to be understood.
- Remember the neighborhood concern about the future of the neighborhood and balancing present day industrial.
- Neighborhood feels there is a map error and defining that concern will help.
- Is there a difference between the north and south side of the tracks and do they have different potential?
- Elevation on the banks of the rail road tracks on Franklin causes concern
- Most of Carlton's industrially zoned area is business.

- If industrial is reexamined it could change to mixed use.
- Would not like to see the area returned to industrial, it wasn't really heavy industrial before.

Summary

Commissioners noted that any efforts made should be in coordination with the County since properties on the County side of the neighborhood have access through the City. It was felt that the focus should be on redefining the evolution of “industrial” in light of what it is in the present day and balancing those needs with those of the residential uses. A reexamination of “industrial” could lead to a mixed use designation. It would be ideal to coordinate land use requirements over the city/county lines.

It was noted that the industrial designated areas north and south of the railroad tracks could be treated differently due the elevations. Concern about the Franklin Street connection was noted.

L Shape Corridor

- 29 and 250 are totally different
- The L shape has no significant meaning. It was felt that the EC in the city and ARB in the County should coordinate regulations for Route 29.
- The topography on 250 has led to some concerns
- Some aren't ready to give up on L shape
- Will there be a link when Meadowcreek Parkway is complete?
- Would like to keep the L shape idea and not lose it. Feel the L shape area is evolving.
- 5th Street development may minimize having to travel to 29 in the future.

Summary

There was discussion about what the “L” shape encompassed. The Commissioners noted that the L-shape to them encompassed 29 – to University Ave through the Corner and West Main. It was determined that this was more connected to transportation options than Land Use. They also noted that the L-shape will likely change further as the 5th Street Commercial development evolves and travel does not have to occur as often on 29 for basic services.

Gasoline Alley

- City side is residential and change does not seem feasible.
- Should the future land use be different
- How would you get across Rio Road?
- The fringe might need buffering from the residential side
- There should be a linkage through the Belvedere subdivision to access the river
- Find a way for residents in the area to not have to get into their cars to reach services.
- Would like to see how people get to where they need to go; bike, walk, carpool etc.

- Would like to see maps with trails and railroad tracks

Summary

It was noted there was much potential in this area to enhance connections across Rio to allow for easier access to amenities to the North. There is potential in the future for small scale uses to buffer the residential area from Rio on the City side. There is a desire for this area to have safe multimodal access to services across Rio Road. Commissioners asked for maps to show the Railroad and trail system for future discussions.

River Corridor

- County has preserved a lot of green space in this area but much of the area on both sides is in the flood plain

Question was asked “what does river focus mean”

- Easy to get there, easy to stay there and have activity to do once there to spend time.
- A pedestrian bridge would be nice
- Some areas along the river could be upgraded and some left natural
- Industrial on the river seems strange. Could probably be redefined.
- With the evolution of High Street things could look different
- Where is the location of the pedestrian bridge on the Rivanna River. Sarah Rhodes from the PDC clarified the city county bridge locations as well as MPO proposed locations.
- Torn about having recreation and restaurant uses in this area.
- Restaurants near Freebridge would likely be the best location
- Need information on natural constraints as well as opportunities.
- Focus should be on development near 250, study the river and preserve what is there.
- City and County should form a kayak trip down the river(Lisa to organize).

Summary

Some of the ideas shared which could allow the community to be “river focused” include making it easier to access the river and have activity there so people stay a while. There was interest in having more development oriented activity (restaurants, etc.) closer to 250 while areas South remain in a natural state. There was interest in a study that would provide us with the natural constraints as well as opportunities. There is a desire to preserve what is there and find a way to experience the river from the river (as a recreational amenity).

The Planning Commission also noted that that Moores Creek, Old Lynchburg Road and Route 20 should be an area for dialogue with the County. They also have concern about Avon and the redevelopment of Blue Ridge Hospital.

Transportation

Multimodal-Ideas from Planning Commission and their definition.

- Would take 50 years of evolution to get to multimodal. Feel that bike lanes could happen quickly.
- It is ideal to be able to get to the same place in different ways by different modes. Find ways to minimize conflict and feel Cherry Ave is not good to ride bikes on.
- Paths have to be found that work.
- Cars, bikes and pedestrians need to all get along and be aware of each other.
- Think of how paths can be kept clear, think logistics and maintenance.
- Is there any data out concerning the Bike Application? It was noted that the data will be available in September.
- Would people get on buses and transfer or do they prefer door to door service.
- There are economic and life style choices that people make. We don't have the critical mass at this time for increased transit but can encourage its use through education.
- Is there a density of mass per acre that supports transit?
- Is CAT doing a study now on expanding routes? This study just began.

Summary

Commissioners spent some time working to define “multimodal.” Comments on that item included minimizing conflicts between modes, getting to the same place in a number of ways and variety of modes, cars and pedestrian aware of one another and coexisting safely. There was a brief discussion about transit and it was noted that there are some concerns about the density to support more transit as well as a discussion noting that people typically chose transit for economic or lifestyle choice. If one has the choice of a car trip, they are likely to take it over other modes to get from place to place most efficiently. The car remains at the top of the transportation hierarchy and this should be addressed.

Public Comment

Charles Battig left written comments that were distributed to the Planning Commission.

Charles Winkler-Tea Party Representative-Would like the Planning Commission to read an article and he will provide the link. The article challenges the relationship between density and reduction of vehicular travel.

Jim Moore-Hazel Street-Comprehensive Plan is general and suitable for current use. Transportation between localities should be coordinated. The current plan is too long. He stated there are potentially conflicting goals of discouraging car travel and increasing parking in the downtown in the current plan which should be updated. He also noted information on the pollution of buses and cars and that we don't have the population to support an increase in transit

Ms. Keller adjourned the meeting at 6:55 pm