

Planning Commission Mini- Retreat
November 27, 2012
Notes

Commissioners Present:

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

Staff Present:

Jim Tolbert
Missy Creasy
Richard Harris
Willy Thompson
Brian Haluska
Ebony Walden
Mike Smith
Ryan Davidson

Ms. Keller convened the meeting at 4 pm and turned it over to Ryan Davidson who presented the report on the Capital Improvement Program. Following the report, Commissioners asked a number of questions and requested further information.

Ms. Keller asked if the Lee Park project would include repair of sidewalk in the park. MR. Davidson plans to confirm if this is a part of the project.

Ms. Sienitsky asked how the Tonsler Park renovations where being addressed with the funding noted. Mr. Davidson noted that funds are set aside in FY 15 and 16 with master planning already underway. He noted that the playground renovation recently completed was accomplished with other funds.

Ms. Green requested clarification on the bike infrastructure funding and Mr. Davidson noted he could get that information.

Ms. Sienitsky asked about the timing of Park Acquisition and it was noted that as property is available, the funds are used.

Mr. Rosensweig asked for clarity on how comprehensive plan criteria are used in the CIP process, details on the fire apparatus replacement and for further information on how the funding for McIntire Park will be used.

Mr. Keesecker wondered how the scoring sheets and funded projects compared. Mr. Davidson noted that it worked better this year than in years past with 4-5 of the top ranked projects receiving funds. Mr. Keesecker asked if staff could work with the GIS Coordinator (and GIS staff) to see if we could add a “push pin” to the GIS maps to show where the proposed CIP projects would take place.

There was a brief discussion about funding of the CIP, what happens if there are shortfalls, what happens to surpluses, and where does funding go if the project is not completed in the year funds are available. Staff provided responses to those questions.

Mr. Santoski commended the staff for all the hard work in getting information together. He noted that the process went well this year but he is concerned about whether the best projects for the City as a whole are truly being completed.

Land Use Discussion

The meeting then moved to the land use discussion. Summer Frederick from TJPDC will be our main facilitator for the evening. The following presentations were made:

- Introduction – Missy
- October 2012 City outreach - Ebony
- One Community project – Summer
- Joint Planning Commission goals – Summer
- City Land Use – Current activities – Brian
- 2006 Design Day – Missy
- Diagraming work – Kurt

Mr. Osteen noted that he liked the District and Centers map. He noted that the high density housing area at JPA should be reflected in this drawing

Ms. Sienitsky felt that the zoning and policies are in place but people may not understand the vision. The diagrams provide a good visual of what things could look like.

Mr. Rosensweig favored the Gateway/Node diagram. It shows a focus of density in the urban ring and that a high number of people want to walk to commercial amenities. It was noted that many were reluctant to have neighborhood commercial. It would be important to not have neighborhood amenities become destination centers. There was discussion over what a “center” is and concluded that centers are different for each person.

Ms. Frederick asked the Commission what was surprising from the information received from the public? The following responses were provided:

- Ms. Keller was surprised so many people were satisfied with the direction the community is going in. That confirms that refining the direction was the most appropriate approach. Mr. Rosensweig was surprised by this due to the community he works with and the struggles they have.
- Ms. Green wondered why people wanted more multimodal opportunities but also wanted more parking. That did not seem to fit together.

- Mr. Osteen noted that parking was a big issue and he was concerned about mention of the BAR
- Mr. Rosensweig like seeing that there was interest in accessible and affordable housing.
- Mr. Santoski noted that there is a desire for balance in neighborhoods. He also noted that we need a better network to get people around without people having to get into a car.

The conversation evolved to talking about more specific items.

Mr. Tolbert provided background on the Public Housing Redevelopment process as well as the Strategic Initiative Area activities and a new Strategic Action Team which has been formed to talk about work force issues. He also provided background on the Torti Gallas economic study findings.

Highlights from this conversation included a desire to locate housing in the areas near employment, identify areas of the city which need further study and anticipate conflicts and area transitions in advance.

Ms. Frederick then asked the following question to commissioners: Do you think the input you heard supports current Land Use policies?

Mr. Rosensweig initiated a discussion concerning the programing of school buildings. Since this was not on the agenda this evening, this item was placed on reserve for a future discussion.

There was agreement that change is going to occur but the rate of change people are comfortable with varied. Many appreciate the small town feel of our community. Some question the additional density when the transportation linkages have not been put in place. There was a brief discussion about housing of University students and employees. Mr. Tolbert provided background on the ordinance and policy changes and outlined some of the charge of the PLACE committee.

The group convened for dinner. Following dinner, Ms. Frederick provided a recap of the earlier conversation and turned the time to Mr. Haluska who presented the draft vision statement for comment. The Commissioners provided comment on the statement and directed staff to revise the language.

Commissioners were then split into small groups to review the draft goals and objectives. Following the group work, the following reports were given.

Group A – Mike, Natasha, Kurt Staff – Mike and Missy)

One of the issues this group raised dealt with the conflict they felt existed between the language in the zoning ordinance and the goals established within the land use plan. An idea was raised to create an additional map, separate from the required Land Use Map, that would translate the vision of the land use plan illustratively. The group thought creating this map could be achieved by categorizing the existing land use goals geographically.

The goals were reorganized into these general categories:

1. Visionary and ordinance related
2. Neighborhood related
3. Place – broader than just one neighborhood – moves into the places they go regularly
3. Regional – to involve the broader community

The group decided to revise the language of the first goal in effort to ease the direct attention given to the zoning ordinance. The revised goal would read as follows:

Goal One: Develop a land use plan that promotes mix of uses desired by the community.

Furthermore, the group believed that objectives 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 could be adopted under goal one. In addition to these changes, the group added two objectives for consideration:

1. Dense walkable development should be located around employment centers
2. Identify areas within designated corridors for higher priorities

There was mention of making sure the River is addressed in the plan.

Group B – Lisa, Gennie, John, Dan (Staff - Willy and Ebony)

The following are areas where there was general agreement with Group A:

- Less focus on the Zoning Ordinance changes
- Move the current Goal 3
- Include “walkable” language
- Identify opportunities within existing corridors

More detailed comments include:

Goal One: Promote a walkable mix of uses desired by the community.

1.2: Remove “without rezoning property.”

Add an objective that pertains to maintaining a zoning ordinance which helps accomplish the goal.

Add objective 3.2, excluding “proximate to the Downtown.”

Goal Two: Create, preserve and strengthen the protection, preservation and wise use of the City’s natural, historic and architecturally significant environment.

Add objective 3.3

Add goal four and its objectives.

Goal Three: Replace market place with “economic center.”

Remove 3.2 and 3.3

New Goal Four: This goal should focus on identifying new opportunities as well as identifying opportunities in existing transitional areas.

Other Thoughts:

Too much focus on the zoning ordinance.

Like the language of “vital centers.”

Need more transit and transportation related language.

Look at possibly adding economic and housing language.

Mr. Keesecker noted there are “opportunities” in the neighborhood, PLACE, and region which can be pointed out.

The small group work was summarized by the following: less focus on the zoning ordinance, walkable focus, there was consensus on “scaling” the chapter (visionary, neighborhood, place, region), use positive language, and identify areas and opportunities.

Staff will take comments and integrate them into the next draft.

Geographical Areas for Focus

With time remaining, Commissioners commented on the map of areas where there is awareness that study is needed. The following areas were added for consideration: River Road, High Street/Martha Jefferson Hospital properties, Route 250 and North of the City, McIntire/Harris/Allied area and the full Ridge Street 5th Street Corridor.

Mr. Tolbert noted some of the work that is currently underway. Commissioners requested an updated map with the areas above added with indication whether a project is underway (with details on what is occurring) or whether it is a priority to look at in the future. This will be provided with the next draft of the chapter.

Mr. Keesecker thought it would be helpful to think about what would be defined as a successful result for neighborhoods, places, and the region.

The meeting moved to public comment.

Mr. Bill Emory read a statement providing history on the Woolen Mills area and noted that there needs to be a buffer between residential and high intensity uses.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm