

Planning Commission Work Session

February 23rd– 5:00 p.m.

NDS Conference Room

Commissioner's Present

John Santoski - Chairperson
Genevieve Keller
Jody Lahendro
Kurt Keesecker
Allison Raucher

Staff Present

Missy Creasy
Brian Haluska

Mr. Santoski called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm

Agenda

Mr. Haluska provided the following overview:

The Planning Commission and City Council have been working on the procedures and prioritization of the small area plans identified in Land Use Goal 1.1 of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan following the approval of the plan. Several planning efforts are underway in some of the areas identified in the plan. The West Main Street area has a draft zoning amendment coming to the Planning Commission for further review in February, as well as a streetscape plan.

Additionally, there has been some mention of devoting resources to the implementation of the Strategic Investment Area plan in the coming year. Further progress on other small area plans has been slowed by other planning efforts that have been prioritized ahead of the small area plans. In September, the Commission discussed the elements of small area plans in an effort to make progress by focusing on Land Use Goal 1.2 of the Comprehensive Plan: "Develop common elements of a Small Area Plan as well as a planning process that is both consistent and can be molded to the unique character of each area." The packet for the September work session agenda is located here: <http://www.charlottesville.org/home/showdocument?id=34119>.

Staff looked to the previous planning efforts that led to the drafting of the Strategic Investment Area plan and the West Main Streetscape plan as guides for how future small area planning should proceed. Staff now suggests returning to the question of how to prioritize the small area plans listed in the Comprehensive Plan that have yet to be started. As a starting point for discussion, staff has created a decision matrix similar to ones used in CIP and other budget discussions.

Missy Creasy started by saying we hope to reach further conclusion on small area planning and provide information on Council priorities discussed at the February 4, 2016 Council work session.

Mr. Haluska provided additional overview of the small area planning packet materials.

Ms. Keller asked if the boundaries of one study area extend as far as Barracks Road.

Mr. Haluska said it is very specific that it is North of 250, from the area of the city line north of 250, where it goes on the east west axis is kind of left up to us as to how far you want to go down Hydraulic but he doesn't think it was envisioned to be past the Best Buy ramp. Barracks Road was never mentioned as a small area plan.

Ms. Keller asked if the "immediacy" category was established based on work and development; 5th Street Extended is an area with 5th Street Station going in and new work being implemented at Ridge and Cherry.

Mr. Haluska said that is still the Cherry Avenue corridor. When we looked at Fifth Street Extended, the road is all that is present in the City. He was looking at the broader stretch from Cherry Ave south to the city line and how much activity we have seen there.

Ms. Keller was wondering about bike ped and transit because it is going to be much more heavily traveled.

Mr. Haluska said Fontaine is a small little area, but is highly traveled. Roosevelt Brown is considered a large scope of work.

Ms. Keller said you wouldn't consider zoning changes until you got to the small area plan because we had been looking at neighborhood commercial that maybe Fontaine and Belmont are not necessarily addressing the same conditions any more if they ever were so does that mean we would not be able to address that until we got to the small area plan?

Mr. Haluska said if you read how this is laid out in the Comprehensive Plan, the goal that this all comes under has a very strong preference throughout the Comprehensive Plan to placemaking. Small area planning is intended to be a flexible process for each of these areas. That does not rule out zoning changes and if you see a pressing zoning need, it should be jumped up to the top of the list. He said that is where the "immediacy" category came in, trying to capture both of those things. We are actively trying to develop and trying to develop under code to what is getting us the best product than maybe it is not quite as urgent or maybe this is the time to do it. In looking at Fontaine, do you want to peel out the zoning and look at that as a small area plan. It could be a good planning exercise. It could include physical improvements, streetscape improvements, the small area plan or just zoning changes. In September, the process was to gather all of the information we could around that area and identify what are the

issues, what led to it being listed in the Comprehensive Plan and then start to suggest remedies. Maybe the zoning is fine but we need more development, additional development or maybe it's too much. He said for High Street that is a question, do you want to see development activity on High Street, how do you do that, do you accomplish it via roadway improvements, do you accomplish that via tweaking the zoning to allow for less parking, because the parking is making it impossible to develop those lots.

Mr. Lahendro asked about Scope of Work and the draft list where staff laid out the process and the common elements of a small area plan. He said it is pretty extensive, so this is what you can use for the Scope of Work.

Mr. Haluska said that was primarily to address goal 1.2 of the land use chapter which speaks to there being a consistent recognizable process that each small area plan goes through. Council and the commission didn't want to make it so prescriptive so that there wasn't flexibility to say this small area plan we want to focus on zoning, this one on roads, this was an attempt to create a menu to what we are going to do. Step 1 is going to be a common step for all of these areas, demographics and whatever plans are out there, doing the background information to get an idea for what are those issues there, by doing the public outreach.

Mr. Lahendro said one of the first things to do is to access the character of the small area and every small area is going to have a different character or focus. He said he can see Rose Hill and Preston heating up too.

Mr. Haluska said this was written in January before the Booker Street rezoning and that has definitely lit a fire under that neighborhood. There is a site plan for expansion of the Pack and Ship building and said no one will come to a commercial property and the room was full because the interest in Booker has gone into other developments and the neighborhood is very interested in what is going on there. Rose Hill might not be accurately rated.

Ms. Keller asked how can we envision this analysis occurring. When we were meeting as a Small Area Plan committee we talked about an overall analysis what really does relate to what Kurt was doing and how these areas fit together and the overall strategy for these areas and we haven't done that yet. She asked how we as staff, commissioners and community get some of this done?

Ms. Creasy said we (staff) are going to be knee deep in SIA implementation and that is where Council is directing our efforts so we are going to be somewhat limited.

Mr. Lahendro said so this is still theoretical.

Mr. Santoski asked are we still trying to just rank what these small areas are at this point and say these are where we need to be focused.

Mr. Haluska said when the opportunity arises, these are the ones we would focus our attention on. Referring to Ms. Keller's question, he said he can see one angle, we have small area plans that are under way and we have West Main and the SIA and that maybe something to look at in the ranking of this as to how do these tie in to the existing plans because you could build off the work that's done there and there is definitely a transition into Cherry Avenue. There is some groundwork and some tie into that West Main plan that you want to keep going and so maybe you just work your way out from the SIA and West Main and make sure each links in as they go obviously edits. Potentially the horse is going to be out of the barn on Emmet.

Ms. Keller said isn't the horse out of the barn everywhere and we are sitting here talking about our priorities. She said the clock is ticking away and she would like to know what could we accomplish in two years instead of still trying to prioritize these because if we are not going to do them why are we even going to prioritize them? If we can only do one thing at a time and we are doing SIA, then she would rather review the whole zoning map and start looking a adjacencies and buffer zones so we don't have people in Rose Hill upset because the zoning isn't working for them or on Cherry or where ever.

Mr. Santoski said didn't we have a discussion about Cherry and Preston, West Main is right in the middle of that and we knew it was going to fall over into both of those areas and we are seeing that on Preston. He said there was concern that when you go down 10th Street either way and you start to see development and unless we are conscience of that as West Main continues to develop, Cherry and Preston will be developed in a way that we don't want it to be. Preston will start to develop and will fall in the Rose Hill.

Ms. Keller said exactly. We have had at least two consultants who said zoning is key, the Smart Growth people who were here on the grant last year and there is an email today from Alex to Kathy (She hasn't read yet) and the consultants that were called in on West Main in terms of the effects of rezoning and affordability were saying if you are concern about the adjacent areas and then your rezoning and the tax structure are key and the zoning is what we deal with. If we have concerns and see opportunities it seems like this is when we need to have that big picture and we are going to have quite a bit of turnover and we have new staff in the last couple of years and right now we have some experienced commissioners. It seems like this is the time to jump into what is manageable for us to do.

Mr. Keesecker said one of the things noted in the meetings (Dan's idea) was there would be some kind of a tiered approach to different areas in town and some would have more intense study and some would have less but none of them would necessarily be left out of some more comprehensive thinking. At the time we were thinking that everything would get considered at some detailed level and another level of detail and then there would be some at the top who would get some intensive study and the pyramid would point to the top. In this matrix that we are trying to distinguish between the different areas and try to find out if there are two or three that we could pay a lot of attention to and the rest would wait their turn. What is the most urgent? He said in some ways he could see turning the pyramid upside down and say everything needs to

be addressed right now kind of broadly with a light touch but can't we express some overall vision for the city related to what we have heard and what the Comprehensive Plan says and if we can say that then you come down to the next level and say what is the character and the roll that each of these things want to play and what would help achieve that particular issues and one place versus the next? Rezoning might help over here. It seems that transportation and economic development study, "nobody lives there and the density is it's not like you are working in the middle of West Main and then you get down to the bottom of the one that going to have a tremendous amount of detail but it is just a little different way of going about the prioritization and we are going to filter down from the broader thing to the focused one and it is okay if it's the SIA when that pyramid leads to the SIA and we want to concentrate on that for the next year but at least not at the expense of having a road map of everything and another layer of a little more detail. He made a note of the overall strategy: Here's the big plan and the next level is these areas need to be addressed. Maybe it is rezoning on Preston and maybe it's walkability on Cherry and maybe transportation on Hydraulic and the bottom tier is SIA. He said he thought the matrix were fine and he likes the idea that we would have one and may be just to be able to add a column instead of "immediacy" which is a little bit reactive. He said it feels like Preston and Cherry are strategically important. He said there is immediacy at Hydraulic.

Mr. Lahendro said this is a once in a life time chance to add a green corridor through a waste land and turn it around. Existing information is there to help us, property transfers in the last two year, property ownership, site plans applications - things NDS knows about.

Mr. Keesecker said the first step is how can we make a better linkage and more connected green space. That is a manageable, definable problem you could start to tear into a little bit.

Mr. Santoski said VDOT is responding to some of the tree commission objections to the plan and making some changes and that is good news.

Mr. Keesecker said in the public eye the thing that is the most disappointing for him is that it is hard to get traction on either deciding on what the plan should be and then doing it and implementing it and it is almost like instead of these massive efforts that take years of brain damage to get through that everybody to might agree, 54% consensus and is just barely enough to go forward. It would be better if we could identify scopes of work within these things that are relatively achievable that are moving in the general direction.

Mr. Santoski said we should put focus on Hillsdale Drive.

Mr. Lahendro said there is existing information that is there that would help us like property transfers in the last two years, property ownership by developers in the small areas, building and site plan applications, things he is sure NDS knows about but may

not capture in the same place. He asked if that exists and would it be helpful with hot places and things we should be focused on.

Ms. Creasy said there is access to data but it is not so easy as to just push a button so we would want to be strategic in the types of data we are requesting and for what areas so that time would be used wisely.

Ms. Keller asked do we map any of that now. What if we wanted to find the hot zones where property is turning over or where there are boundary adjustments.

Mr. Santoski said this all sounds great.

Mr. Haluska said the short answer is no because the property owners, we don't even see them. We have to look into it according to the mapping. The building permits are not mapped. The site plans, they do exist but are little difficult to put on a map.

Mr. Lahendro said he was looking for a way to use data that already exists, not wanting to create extra work for staff.

Mr. Keesecker said the SIA is great because it provides that broad vision that ultimately is going to get broken down into what can be done in an 18 month cycle versus the next five year cycle versus the next 20 years. We have a city that wants to be linked up with each other; the corridors are important but ultimately those corridors need to lead us to places that we are trying to make better and the paths between those places better.

Ms. Keller said we have inherited this corridor structure from previous eras. How do we get an overall vision of our entire city and its edges and connectivity?

Mr. Santoski said it refers to roads so we would need to change the language to move away from talking about roads, talking about Cherry and Roosevelt Brown. What else would we be talking about, Tonsler, Fifeville, the hospital, calling it something else? What is the place where we are establishing in order to, like Rose Hill and Preston? Part of the reason we are concerned about them is because of the large corridors of properties that could be re-developed, but if we are looking at it as gathering places or points of interest, then we need to change the language that we use in talking about it and stop talking about it being 5th Street Extended and talk about that being Willoughby or Ridge Street.

Ms. Keller said we are seeing our first interstate exit that is developing in the interchange model that we are seeing nationally. That could be a trend and that concerns her. Can't we do better than that? We just rung our hands forever and say we can't do anything about it because it is zoned that way and they have the right to do it, but can't we direct what we want and where we want it so that in an era that when we are having so much out of town development coming in, we can set the standard for what we want. She is tired of having people, when she goes places say how can you let that happen? I

say well it's the zoning and they say why you don't change it. She said we are in the process of doing that in one or two places. What is our vision?

Mr. Haluska said the list started with one, Woolen Mills and it was because of the ongoing issues and the request for zoning and re-zoning review out there. He said Woolen Mills has been asking and asking so let's go through a process and give them some results.

Mr. Santoski said the chart is in the packet and it does lay out all of the different areas.

Mr. Keesecker said Lisa Green's comments said concerning different tools like transportation and rezoning, would the area need a form based code, complete overhaul, greenway and Bike-ped connection and then streetscape improvements, or is there any public space in this area. Maybe call it pocket parks, so it could be as little as tree planting. Just put a program in play and plant a bunch more trees.

Mr. Keesecker stated that Mr. Haluska has definitely made this matrix look simple. It's encapsulated in some degree all of the conversations we have had and he has boiled it down to the things that we have been struggling with. We could argue about the scores of some, why some things are not on the list and why some things are and it is based on the diagram that we have in the Comprehensive Plan so he said he was ready to roll with this with the understanding that we would be able to make it better or tweak it as we can more articulate our vision. It feels like we should have something on the books. When decisions and priorities come back and we say we are going to put some staff on taking the next thing off of the list that we would have the list there and it could be used.

Mr. Keesecker said the reason for wanting small area plans in the first place was the Comprehensive Plan has goals that are sometimes hard to prioritize. So by having small area plans, we were hopeful that we were going to concentrate and try to accomplish some things in this small area or move forward with some ideas that generally accomplish a lot of Comprehensive Plan goals in the small area plan process.

Alex Ikefuna said sometimes in a small area plan you have an area where you have problems, it might be quality of the housing stock, traffic, infrastructure, a prime area for a neighborhood development plan or small area plan. He is not sure but you need the information before you designate that, because it is the other way around you should look at existing conditions before you do this small area plan because if you look at Rose Hill neighborhood the level of income, the level of opportunity, traffic data, crime rates and things like that to justify the develop of small area plan; the data may not be available.

Mr. Lahendro said what if we spent a ½ day with the neighborhood people selecting two places with staff looking at the character of what is there?

Mr. Keesecker and Ms. Keller said take the top five and go for it; they were both for doing that.

Mr. Lahendro asked if staff could pull together property transfer information for over the last two years in Woolen Mills and developers and corporation who own the land in Woolen Mills.

Ms. Creasy said we would need a more compact area, we talking about 100's of properties.

Ms. Keller said we would need a check list, a more structured way of doing this.

Mr. Haluska said we can't give you an answer for that at this time as it would need consultation with our GIS staff.

Mr. Keesecker said it would be handy in terms of data collection to limit it by making one 11x 17 piece of paper and it had the current Woolen Mills description in it, the zoning map, and a couple columns of data points that could be building permits for a certain amount of time and rental versus unoccupied housing.

Mr. Santoski said maybe the Cherry/Roosevelt Brown area would be a good area from Blue Ridge Commons over to Main Street, up to 5th street down to 10th street, or narrowly define it. Let us look at that. It should be more walkable in terms of being able to look at the space. We could meet with the Fifeville neighborhood.

Mr. Keesecker said if our goal is to help make a suggestion to staff to be able to prioritize the small area plans, it seems to him the time it would take to visit enough of those to feel confident in maybe ranking the top three-five, it might be more helpful to look at the map and identified using this information with the idea that you know you are going to investigate up to three. We have to clear about four of five of these that are likely candidates, then we identify the two or three we want to visit and then we could limit and could ask staff if we could arrange to go see those and if we don't see them physically as a group, we could say everybody go visit those and the data sheets which maybe could be compiled as a packet of materials on Roosevelt Brown, a data sheet on Hydraulic, Woolen Mills and generally talking about the same subject matter. He said he could go visit all three or we all could go visit one together and have a group conversation and get to the point that all we are trying to do is make sure that we are recommending the top one and know what two and three are going to be and get a better sense of the ones down behind it. Because ultimately what we are going to find is we can make as many priorities as we want but time is limited. Either the Comprehensive Plan says something about an area and we think it is out of date or it says what it says or the things happening in those areas is not moving toward the vision that is already on the books.

Ms. Keller said since so many of these are entrance corridors, we should look at the visions for the corridors as well.

Mr. Keesecker said we haven't really done that in a formal way.

Mr. Santoski asked how long will it take?

Mr. Keesecker said he is almost positive that Mr. Tolbert said if we systematically look at what is said about each of these areas, some of them we won't disagree with in terms of what in the Comprehensive Plan says and it is up to us to try to figure out what's the information that would help us to understand if the current development.

Mr. Santoski asked would we be better off just picking one place and using it as an example and then after we have done at least one that might be the highest priority we can apply what we learned to the rest of them. He said we spend a lot of time talking about it and theorizing about but we don't exactly put our feet on the ground and do anything about it.

Mr. Santoski said if it is Cherry and Roosevelt Brown, let's take the areas where we would like to know what is going on here and how often do the buses run here, what kind of houses are here, what has been bought and sold recently. The Woolen Mills area, just close to the river is what we want to know. He said it is like the eyeball test - just look at what is there and visualize what could be there. When a project comes up we would have a better understanding as we make a recommendation to Council.

Mr. Keesecker would like to visit all three places.

Mr. Lahendro said can we take it one at a time or do you want to see all of that information at first.

Mr. Keesecker said if there was less information with three places, he would want to visit all three places at the same time.

Mr. Santoski said if we visited Cherry, Woolen Mills, Roosevelt Brown, and Emmet, what are the five things you would want to know about each of those places. This is the area we are going to define it as and take a half a day and go see them or two or three hours for each place.

Mr. Lahendro said we need at least two or three hours for each place.

Mr. Keesecker said we would if we were doing the plans for them but we don't need that much time to be able to distinguish between which one was the higher priority.

Mr. Santoski said asked the Planning Commission to give five things that we should be looking at in an area.

Mr. Keesecker said it would be handy if we linked it back to some of staff's categories: Immediacy, Scope of Work and Linkages to other planning efforts and name what those are. We could ask staff to look at Woolen Mills and say the scope of work there is complicated because we would anticipate that it would involve a rezoning and river front

planning. Other considerations could be permits for the last two years in this area, transfers have happened, building permits, site plans, and developers.

Mr. Haluska said it is similar to the critical slope tour with a booklet of all of the PUDs.

Mr. Santoski said we should do the 3 priorities. Mr. Santoski said he finds this real useful because it makes you think about the city in a different way and its corridors, neighborhoods, gathering places; we should be looking at it like that. He said the University fits into it like that, so in looking at Cherry and Roosevelt Brown, it has an impact.

Ms. Creasy said we will spend some time trying to digest and put it into something.

Mr. Lahendro said that they are not trying to make more work for staff so to let them know how difficult and how practical it is to obtain the data.

Mr. Santoski said we have to get out there and do something and in the end it may be the same as if we didn't, but at least we will feel like we did something about it.

Mr. Keesecker said on the scope of work, it would be handy to list the things that are typical scopes of work like maybe there are 10 things that we as a city do to make places better and at each of the three places we see the sushi menu at tapas and we click on these three but at each time we can see the other 10 or 12, tree plantings, sidewalk improvements, there are a number of things that can be done.

Mr. Lahendro said Woolen Mills has a neighborhood association. Does Emmet and Cherry/Roosevelt Brown? Cherry/Roosevelt Brown has a sub-committee in that neighborhood that is focused on that corridor right now and Cherry Avenue in particular in the neighborhood association, there is a group that is focused on that corridor and they have students doing work on that. Emmet is business owners and the manager of housing behind Seminole Square.

Ms. Creasy outlined the Council Priorities outlined earlier in the month:

- West Main Streetscape
- City/County Courthouse renovation project
- Implementation of the Strategic Investment Area Plan
- The Housing Authority Redevelopment – a new Executive Director
- The Landmark Hotel/The Buford Middle School Renovations

A Developers open discussion roundtable will occur tomorrow morning to allow for additional community feedback.

John Frazier - President of the Woolen Mills Association said he appreciated all that was said tonight and invite all of you down the street to visit. We would love to show you around. We are looking forward to your evaluation and Bill likes to refer to it as

place-keeping and that is a great way of looking at it. Come and see what could be there now and how things could move forward.

Bill Emory said he is real heartened that you guys are still talking about the Small Area Planning and a comprehensive look at areas is important. We are having all of these budget meetings, we don't have any money, and we can't spend any money on that and so back to Ms. Keller's thing about using the vending to suit our purposes. He remembers in 2008 when Woolen Mills was trying to work on some IPP designations talking to Kendra Hamilton who lived in the house next door to the monstrosity on Booker and she would say we can't work on these zoning issues in Woolen Mills because we have them in Rose Hill. That brings up Ms. Keller's comments about the adjacencies in zoning you always want to do them all over town. Brian made a map that shows where all of the adjacencies are. Maybe if we can't do Small Area Plans intermediate steps would be to take a class of adjacencies that wouldn't be considered good zoning practices these days and address the whole class at once. Since Ms. Hamilton said we couldn't do anything about it in 2008, two things on the waiting list on Dale Avenue have been destroyed. The community is engaged but the neighborhood has not had a whole lot of hand in it. We have done what we can in Woolen Mills and we have been coming to Council since 1980 when the neighborhood association was formed but we do have some B1 and B3 zoning that is in the river corridor and potentially that could change the vision or do we have a vision for the river corridor. It would great to have a vision to begin to get some land use map and zoning changes to preserve what is arguably the city's most popular part.

A lady spoke having been in Charlottesville most of her life that it is alarming when people react when they see something going up and state how did this happen and what she sees is the bigger buildings going up and higher density marching right down Market Street. She said Woolen Mills has been very good maintaining the borders because of their neighborhood association and they have been on it for years and years but we haven't left Meade Avenue yet but it is coming. Because we haven't seen it yet she is afraid we are going to fall to the bottom of the priority list. Once things begin happening it is going to be harder and harder to stop. The danger is always imminent for us and once it starts it's really hard to go back from that.

Travis Pietila, Southern Environmental Law Center, said he wants to lend support for the idea when you are looking at the Emmet Street small area plan that when it comes to Hydraulic figure out what kind of transportation improvements will be needed. A first step of this is to look at Hillsdale Extended.

Adjourned at 7:00 p.m.