

**PLACE Design Task Force Minutes
October 27, 2016 - 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Basement Conference Room**

Members Present:

Mike Stoneking, Chairman Kate Bennis, Fred Wolf, Vice Chairman, Scott Paisley, Paul Josey, Tim Mohr, BAR liaison, Clarence Green, Rachel Lloyd, Ginny Keller,

Staff Present: Matt Alfele, Missy Creasy, Jeanette Janiczek, Carolyn McCray (Clerk)

Call to Order

Chairman Stoneking called the PLACE Design Task Force Meeting to order at 12:00 pm.

Agenda

1. Public Comments

Bill Emory said in 2005 the Woolen Mills neighborhood wrote City Council suggesting the establishment of zoning overlay to help us maintain the character of our neighborhood. Since 2007, Woolen Mills, Fifeville, 10th and Page, the Martha Jefferson neighborhoods provided City staff and the Planning Commission with input on a process to craft a historic conservation overlay district code, and that was approved. On November 9th (2016) City Council and the Planning Commission will hold a joint public hearing to consider a historic conservation district overlay for 60 acres of Woolen Mills neighborhood. The Rivanna Rive goes through the southwest mountains, we believe this is an important asset to the City from a recreation, cultural, tourism point of view, and many stories can be told by the Woolen Mills neighborhood. We have slaves buried in our graveyards and a pre-historic Indian graveyard right down the hill, and a lot of mill workers are buried there. I hope you as individuals or as a group weigh in with the bodies to which you advise. I hope you will feel that the conversation district overlay of Woolen Mills Village is a good idea. It was called out in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan under the urban planning section as a goal. I hope you all will consider this.

2. Hillsdale Drive Extension project

The construction of a mile-long extension of Hillsdale Drive is underway, but members of Charlottesville's PLACE Design Task Force said Thursday that they should have played a greater role in overseeing its design.

Ms. Janiczek gave an overview of the project:

The Hillsdale Drive Extension project (Hillsdale) objective was to create a new, multimodal connection parallel to Route 29 for local traffic to improve access and transportation choice for the corridor. Hillsdale will provide a three-lane roadway between Greenbrier Drive in Albemarle County to Hydraulic Road in the City of Charlottesville. One section will narrow to two lanes to minimize conflict between two existing buildings and their current uses. On-road bike lanes will be maintained north of Greenbrier Drive. South Greenbrier Drive, a shared use path will be constructed on the east side of the roadway and a sidewalk will be constructed on the west side. A traffic signal will be installed at the intersection of Seminole Court. A roundabout will be built at the intersection of Zan Road. Landscaping and lighting will be used to blend the project and its new multimodal facilities into the surrounding area.

Lighting – 114 pedestrian lighting fixtures will be installed on this approximately mile long length of road. They will be located behind the sidewalk on the west side and between the shared use path and roadway on the east side. A certification was granted by VDOT to use the City Standard for Residential Lighting to ensure a uniform look from previously installed lighting on existing Hillsdale Drive as well as ensure ease of maintenance by City crews. Street lighting will be installed at the new signalized intersection of Seminole Court/Hillsdale Drive as well as the roundabout at Zan Road.

Landscaping – A landscaping plan was created to ensure native plantings that could thrive in this area were used. The project has created partnerships through coordination efforts to install enhanced plantings that will be maintained by private property owners while the Parks Department focuses its efforts on the approximately

Ms. Keller said we lost the opportunity to comment on the kind of roadway we'd like to see but we would now like to have an opportunity to come up with guidance to direct the kind of redevelopment we would like to see. PLACE was created in 2012 to advise the City Council and the Planning Commission on urban design issues.

Ms. Janiczek said Hillsdale is creating a new connection that is parallel to U.S. 29 but also introduces multimodal opportunities through this new corridor. It also provides the City an opportunity to help encourage economic redevelopment as a wonderful side benefit. The first part of the extension was built as part of the Whole Foods Market in 2011. The road will travel north from its current southern terminus, past Homewood Suites and up through the Seminole Square shopping center. We've removed three storefronts to accommodate the road. A new bridge is being constructed now. It goes through the Post Office property and Pepsi Place and continues on. The speed limit will be 25 mph and there is an 8- to 10-foot shared-use path on the eastern side of the road. A traffic signal will be installed at Seminole Court.

Several PLACE members questioned why they were being briefed on construction now as opposed to reviewing it before blueprints were finalized.

Mr. Josey asked how we can get these types of projects before us earlier so that we can actually add input versus getting a presentation.

Ms. Janiczek said the project was developed through stakeholder meetings that predate the existence of the PLACE Design Task Force. She said this happened before you; the design has been around for five years.

Ms. Janiczek said the PLACE group will be consulted as part of future design for public projects such as the Belmont Bridge replacement. For that project, the Virginia Department of Transportation currently is reviewing an engineering and design contract with an undisclosed company.

Ms. Janiczek said the Hillsdale project is trying to create a pocket part in the county, including a landscaping plan with landscaping maintained by the homeowners, not Parks and Recreation. Pepsi does not want to move and the post office says they're going to do something.

Ms. Janiczek said we are planning a federal crafted powder color coating, and dry stacked materials for the Hillsdale project bridge, but it doesn't have to be, we can try something different. The bridge will continue a recent design motif of impressed, stone-like shapes on concrete parapets and abutments. Such patterns now exist on bridges on the John W. Warner Parkway, as well as along the new sound walls on U.S. 250 built as part of the so-called Best Buy ramp. She said the shape and the color is the only thing different.

Many took issue with the technique.

Mr. Mohr said it's the use of the stamped concrete everywhere on the bridges and the retaining walls where it has no structural differentiation; this blanket spray can of stone as it were.

Ms. Keller asked if the PLACE Design Task Force could request changes to the pattern, Ms. Janiczek said there is a contract with Fielder's Choice Enterprises. Anything that we change from construction documents is going to be an additional cost.

Ms. Keller wanted to know when the aesthetic decisions were made.

Ms. Janiczek said they were finalized six months ago.

Ms. Keller said it should have come before the PLACE group because similar projects, such as the sound walls, have appeared before them.

Ms. Keller said we were able to influence that and I have to say I feel like that this body, which exists for this very reason, has been bypassed. This body exists to upgrade and enhance the public realm, and what's more public realm than this? I think we should have been consulted.

The group also discussed how the land around Hillsdale Drive Extended will be used in the future, particularly around Seminole Square.

Ms. Janiczek said Great Eastern Management Company is looking to update their buildings in Seminole Square to do some refreshing. The City's vision was moving buildings closer and having street frontage kind of like what we did with the Whole Foods, where we tried to push it towards Hydraulic Road. That needs to be done in conjunction with private property owners.

Ms. Lloyd said it certainly doesn't seem that the zoning that is in place now is likely consistent with street frontage buildings.

Ms. Keller said that there is no concrete timeline for when the zoning might be changed. The City is salivating about redevelopment opportunities but, to the best of my knowledge, there is no real push to changing that. I keep hearing that any changes to Charlottesville's zoning code have to wait until an audit of the code is completed. The reality is that, by the time we do the code audit, anyone that wants to grab this redevelopment opportunity would have done it under the existing rules.

Ms. Lloyd said the right thing to do is ask City Council to have a design role in this. We should be a stakeholder. There are many moments on the design where we have to weigh in.

Mr. Ikefuna said we will set something up, and tell the consultant next time to present to this group as well. There are a couple things being discussed, an information team meeting with the consultants up to this point is scheduled, but I cannot make discussion to this group.

Chairman Stoneking said he is very excited to get that information and is eager to help.

Adjourn 2:00 p.m.