

**PLACE Design Task Force Minutes  
January 10, 2019 - 12:00- 2:00 p.m.  
Neighborhood Development Services  
Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor City Hall**

**Members Present:** Mike Stoneking, Chris Henry, Lena Seville, Andrew Mondeschein, Fred Wolf, Rachel Lloyd, Mark Rylander, Serena Gruia, Rory Stolzenberg, and Kathy Galvin.

**Staff Present:** Carrie Rainey, Amanda Poncy, Kari Spitler, Alex Ikefuna, Jeff Werner, Jay Davis, Emily Pelliccia, and Brennen Duncan.

**Visitors Present:** Frank Stoner and Sean Tubbs.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Stoneking called the PLACE Design Task Force Meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

**1. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC (5 minutes)**

None.

**2. NATCO REPORT OF OPTIMIZING LARGE VEHICLES FOR URBAN ENVIRONMENTS  
DISCUSSION (40 minutes)**

**Chris Henry:** Introduces the topic citing a recently published NACTO report that dealt with lane widths, right of way, and utility placement that can result in wider lane widths on a site plan. According to NACTO, this contributes to speeding, unsafe road conditions, and public safety issues. Would like to further discuss how lane widths can be narrowed in conjunction with emergency equipment like large trucks.

**Mike Stoneking:** Asks what the fire department's attitude is about downsizing and with the smaller truck question that constantly comes up.

**Jay Davis:** The fire code gives specific determinations of what can and cannot be done, and there's a lot of things involved in order to have compliance for the safety of the building and the public. We enforce the Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

**Emily Pelliccia:** We've come a long way with what happens internally and there are still ongoing discussions about how to deal with these issues. There are two things at play, which are getting to the incident and then operating once we arrive at the incident. Our ability to access buildings is critical and we are having the conversations internally and then assessing everyone's collective needs. We are constantly reevaluating the size of the trucks and how to right-size the response, but the technology for extrication is completely different from what we did 20 years ago and this new equipment takes up a lot

of space. About 5 years ago we figured out that we can start bringing that size down and fit it into a more compact vessel.

**Chris Henry:** Does fire and rescue collaborate with the City staff who are writing the standards and designs manuals? If the fire equipment is getting smaller can we have smaller streets?

**Brennen Duncan:** We talked a lot when we were developing Streets That Work. The 10 foot travel lanes are dictated by how much room vehicles need to pass. A 10 foot space is a standard parking spot and it could become a liability for the City if some were made any smaller. The fire department needs 20 feet of clear space to get around and move their equipment once they get there.

**Emily Pelliccia:** Reiterates that it is a complex issue because there are a lot of different variables to try change and make it different, but we tend to keep reverting back.

**Lena Seville:** If there are buffers for bike lanes, couldn't they be included in the 20 feet?

**Brennen Duncan:** They could be included, but the trucks just need 20 feet of clear space.

**Rachel Lloyd:** Asks if the statute only covers the horizontal dimension or if it puts any requirements on the box.

**Jay Davis:** The fire code is a state code so it isn't a statute, but it does cover the entire box.

**Mike Stoneking:** How frequently does the state code adjust to keep up with changes?

**Brennen Duncan:** It seems like it is updated every 5-10 years.

**Jay Davis:** The fire code we are currently in is the 2012 code and it took a while for the state to adopt the 2015 fire code. The City is in the process of adopting that as the city code, so we are a little behind on how we keep up with technology. As a City, we all try to ensure we are doing the best for the developers, community, and the citizens, and we are just working within a process that's lagging a little.

**Chris Henry:** Are there any existing streets right now that are less than 20 feet?

**Jay Davis:** Yes.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** More broadly, how do you handle noncompliant roads?

**Brennen Duncan:** We recently had an instance of this and we had to remove parking on both sides of the road because there was no access and it was a steep and curvy road. Notes that he would be in favor if the code stated that once parking has been reached a certain percentage, we no longer have the condition where there is a single lane road with parking on both sides.

**Chris Henry:** The tradeoff with that is that no one is getting hit on those streets because cars are moving slow. If you were to take the parking away, cars could go much faster.

**Jay Davis:** Notes that the streets that are still in that condition generally do not have access to buildings, so there are no pedestrians involved. They are probably in the same condition that they are in because they aren't accessed very often.

**Chris Henry:** The research NACTO presented recommends that we build a road that way.

**Mike Stoneking:** We used to relieve that congestion by having a series of streets and blocks so there are multiple access points. As we develop newer techniques of dead ends and single-entry neighborhoods, there are fewer options.

**Brennen Duncan:** We are working towards that, but the topography in a lot of places doesn't allot for it. When larger developments come in, we do look at ways to trim the mega blocks down.

**Emily Pelliccia:** In terms of how we operate, there are two types of firetrucks. There are engines and ladder trucks and ladder trucks take up the most space. We staff two types of ladder trucks 24/7 and we keep certain trucks around because physically cannot turn on some streets with the some trucks, including the Downtown Mall.

**Brennen Duncan:** Notes that they need a 28 foot radius, whereas our Streets That Work looked at something closer to 15. We are looking at an effective radius where they can utilize on street parking space. It's not necessarily the curb line that has the 15 feet, but the outside wheel path needs it. We also have a City standard if we want to narrow the pedestrian crossing where we have the mountable curb option.

**Lena Seville:** Can the 20 feet that is needed include things like a center median like pedestrian island or does it need to be completely open?

**Jay Davis:** In order to do something like that, it couldn't include a grass median and it wouldn't have any trees because we'd need to drive over it. We haven't actually employed it yet though.

**Mike Stoneking:** Wouldn't pedestrians enjoy that crossing space if they were crossing a 4 lane road?

**Amanda Poncy:** It wouldn't be very comfortable or safe, but it is a stopping place.

**Rachel Lloyd:** Notes that they have used structural soil that met fire code in Albermarle.

**Brennen Duncan:** That might be possible, but there still couldn't be any trees. At minimum it would be a grass strip, which would be difficult to manage by Parks and Recreation.

**Lena Seville:** What if there was a raised buffer between the bike and vehicle lane?

**Brennen Duncan:** As long as they have the space, it would be doable.

**Mike Stoneking:** Notes that we are suggesting that we have all of these things within the 20 feet because they aren't a barrier to the fire and rescue team's operations.

**Brennen Duncan:** If there was a one lane road with a buffer and a bike lane with 20 feet, theoretically that would be fine.

**Chris Henry:** If 20 feet is the minimum, you'd still have to operate streets with less than that, so it is possible.

**Emily Pelliccia:** We could do that if we short jack a truck, but we have to compromise by losing range, height and distance.

**Andrew Mondeschein:** Notes that there are smaller vehicles out there that are used in other countries. Given enough resources and people, is it possible to bring in the smaller and less expensive trucks and try it out if it met the needs? It might mean having two smaller trucks instead of one large one, but there are trucks out there right now that work and are smaller.

**Emily Pelliccia:** The problem is the American Fire Service isn't manufacturing anything like this and it wouldn't meet the standards that the US has.

**Jay Davis:** We also don't know the consequences of taking something from one system that works and adding it into an entirely different type of system. As a fire marshal, if we are going to downsize the trucks and our ability to move around the City, we need to make the building safer before we ever get there. The tradeoff would be to upsize something else.

**Andrew Mondeschein:** There is very little that we can change right now and at this point it's all about the vehicle and the transportation standards because we want to make the streets safer. However, we need to find the pressure points and work with the American Fire Service to have new standards for the types of vehicles that are possible because they work in other countries. We can't do much until that changes.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** It seems like an incremental approach is needed to work on getting just slightly smaller vehicles. Is there flexibility to include extra fire standards within the building in exchange for the developer getting some kind of concessions there?

**Jay Davis:** The fire department is only one piece of the conversation and our response is to the access of the building. We want to be within 150 feet of all points of the building and a small house is no less important than large structures. Would like to see whatever is done to be uniformly done throughout the City so the same signs and resources are across the board.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Is interested in what determines a street and thinks that as long as bikes and pedestrians can get by, it would be successful.

**Jay Davis:** That technically wouldn't be considered a street, it would be an alley and we have them all across the City that are deemed as a pedestrian/bicyclist path.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** What would trigger the 20 foot requirement?

**Brennen Duncan:** If there is an alternative access with a street frontage where they can get to all of the buildings and that's where the 20 feet is, it would be okay to do something else in the other space. The key is that there needs to be an access point for fire, school, trash, etc. to get there if it's going to be considered a public street.

**Rachel Lloyd:** Notes that school buses and city buses take up just as much space as firetrucks.

**Jay Davis:** In some cases, the city buses radiuses are actually greater than that of firetrucks. Ultimately we want streets and buildings that are safe and we have to be able to move things in and out. There are concerns with identifying things as a primary, secondary and tertiary streets because if we have to access the building, it is primary to us.

**Chris Henry:** We are building a lot of new projects where we introduce cars and pedestrians to new areas, so we want it to be as pedestrian friendly as possible. Sometimes we run into code issues where the street has to be designed differently than you would have otherwise because large vehicles have to go through them. It would be beneficial if Charlottesville becomes an affiliate of NACTO because they are on the cutting edge on this for what could be possible.

**Rachel Lloyd:** If everything is stipulated by a code, we should think creatively to come up with other design treatments that can be done to cause drivers to slow down.

**Brennen Duncan:** That kind of thing works better than just narrowing the street because narrowing the street comes with its own set of problems.

**Chris Henry:** The tradeoff is that we lose things like sidewalks in areas that are supposed to be pedestrian friendly locations if the streets are so large.

**Brennen Duncan:** With the practicality of public streets, we get funding from the state based on the width of the street. If it narrows too much, we will no longer get funding for maintenance.

**Lena Seville:** Notes that this has a lot to do with pedestrian safety and making it safer for people to walk and bike to get around the City.

**Jay Davis:** Shares that they look at pedestrian safety with every development and project that comes forward. Safety is always a huge consideration and one of the primary goals.

**Rachel Lloyd:** Given that the fire department is trying to be flexible and adaptive to new standards and safety concerns, we need to understand that the code is the code. However, there are other things can do outside of the box to slow traffic down.

**Carl Schwarz:** We have existing streets that are substandard that we can get to, but they are mostly smaller structures. Asks if there has been any thought to tying in the zoning code to the width of streets where we can have substandard roads, but only for neighborhoods with buildings under a certain height.

**Mark Rylander:** When we think about going outside the box, there is a safety need for the expectation that drivers all see the same things to calm traffic. How do we teach drivers to react to all these creative ideas?

**Frank Stoner:** Notes that localities are not compelled to adopt all parts of the code. One possible solution would be to not adopt some of the provisions that are creating the problems. There may be insurance implications to that, but there are localities that don't adopt all provisions.

**Emily Pelliccia:** It would open Pandora's Box if we start going down that road.

**Chris Henry:** As a task force, we are trying to determine best practices and there might be some best practices that are not being used in Charlottesville, so we should do more research on that.

**PLACE recommends that the City consider joining NACTO. A small city like Charlottesville requires a cost of \$7250, which is a small cost for the benefits. More information can be found at <https://nacto.org/membership/>.**

### **3. MINNEAPOLIS' SHIFT FROM SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISCUSSION (40 minutes)**

**Mike Stoneking:** When it comes to single family zoning, some communities are considering eliminating or modifying it and we would like to discuss what that transition might mean to us in Charlottesville.

**Rory Stoneking:** It should be called single family only zoning, because nothing about changing it means that people couldn't build single family houses.

**Rachel Lloyd:** This would mean transforming R1 zoning to R2 or R3 through a variety of methods and demolishing the single family houses on the lot and then rebuilding something like a duplex.

**Rory Stoneking:** It could be a variety of things and there could be empty lots in R1, but it is changing R1 to allow more. In theory you could demolish it, but you can already do that now.

**Lena Seville:** Right now there are places where you have to have such a big lot that it wouldn't be affordable, but if you could put multiple units in that one space it would be more affordable.

**Andrew Mondeschein:** Notes that a form-based code is critical if you want to make this transition possible because you can do a lot in something that looks like a house to regulate the volume but not the density.

**Mike Stoneking:** What about mixing the forms?

**Lena Seville:** Mentions that even though the topic is on single family zoning, Minneapolis has done many things to address the racist origins of zoning.

**Mike Stoneking:** Is the primary advantage to this change affordable housing?

**Rory Stolzenberg:** The inclusionary zoning ordinance is not so much for the R1, but rather for the denser parts. It's important for housing affordability and distinct from subsidized or regulated affordable housing. Splitting up the land among 2 or 3 units reduces the cost of land in each unit.

**Lena Seville:** We don't want to concentrate poverty. Some parts of the city that were not considered high value now are by doing this and there is a push to make them mixed income. This may not fix the problem, but it opens the door to make some of the higher income neighborhoods mixed income rather

than just the low income neighborhoods. There is a tendency to want to fill as much buildable space that you can and if it's only going to one person, it's going to be less affordable.

**Mark Rylander:** The value statements and goals are honorable, but it tends to jump into some unsupported cause and effect statements with the relationship between space, cost and class. History aside, we are tasked with carefully looking at the assumptions being made that a change in zoning will provide. A form-based code can solve a lot of these questions simultaneously. Simply adding more units to an expensive neighborhood won't just make it affordable.

**Andrew Mondeschein:** Thinks it would put development and commuting in the middle of the region rather than on the edges, which has a lot of advantages. We should consider what it would take to increase the population in R1 areas.

**Chris Henry:** The holdup is that it would affect property value, traffic increases, etc.

**Kathy Galvin:** Notes that Atlanta's zoning and comprehensive plans are very concerned about maintaining inclusive neighborhoods. They do both through proper tools and they are not mutually exclusive.

**Rachel Lloyd:** UVA students use a lot of units in Charlottesville. If we increase lower costing apartments, UVA students will quickly absorb them because their population is increasing.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** We can't control the number of people at UVA and they have a quota to meet. All of those people live somewhere and they are going to be using residents' units anyway.

**Rachel Lloyd:** They take up more single family homes and apartments, but UVA isn't putting up more student housing. The policy direction should be to put pressure on UVA to house more students.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Students don't want that so they would go outside anyway. How would it benefit the City?

**Fred Wolf:** This is just one way to return units to the pool of available housing.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Proposes building more housing in the traditionally student areas of off ground housing.

**Mark Rylander:** If we think of a single family neighborhood where houses can be broken into 3 units, owner occupied units become rentals with multiple people. Some of the pushback comes from trying to maintain a certain character of houses and yards. It's not based in economic exclusionism or racism, it's simply a typology of a house that's owned and occupied.

**Mike Stoneking:** Advocates to reduce the minimum lot size.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Understands keeping the built form of the neighborhood, but why does it have to be owner occupied?

**Mark Rylander:** Notes that it has to do with speculation.

**Serena Gruia:** The conversation should be about how to create more homeowners and there are social issues at play in doing so.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Students are the one social group that operate differently and are distinct in the community, which is why it makes sense to keep them bottled up in a separated area.

**Chris Henry:** We should look to see if there are neighborhood that we want to preserve and let other ones adapt in this way. If the code is changed globally, there will be a lot of unintended consequences.

**Kathy Galvin:** Atlanta looked at unintended consequences by looking at the principles they wanted to go by in terms of growth, development, and preservation and looked at the audit to see where they didn't align. This would then inform the zoning change. Right now we are using a transect approach.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Would like us to think about what we should let in the built form and if it's okay to have two families instead of one family, as the Minneapolis example only changed the density.

**Lena Seville:** The background of homeownership is about segregation and discrimination.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Encourages members to review Commissioner Solla-Yates's research on that issue.

**Rachel Lloyd:** If homeownership is the goal and we want to fit more homes in, then the zoning isn't necessarily going to go from R1 to R3, but the lots are smaller.

**Lena Seville:** Low income people are much less likely to afford home ownership and we also need rentals in order to have affordable housing.

**Mark Rylander:** Doesn't think anyone is suggesting that the goal of single family zoning should be pushing for the homeownership side. It becomes a question of figuring out what is appropriate to do where.

**Kathy Galvin:** Attached single family homes vs. detached single family homes should be desirable across the board because we don't want to confine people to certain types of housing.

**Rachel Lloyd:** Notes that the Land Use Plan is still in flux and she would like to see the plan have high intensity of mixed use nodes all across it, which helps increase density and it doesn't feel bad spatially.

**Mark Rylander:** It might be useful to take a section of the map that has the adjacent low density area and study it to show how this might work

**Sean Tubbs:** Notes that we should proceed cautiously because we live in a market that has lot of potential for wealth. Homeownership is crucial and we need to be building those efforts, but we need to keep an eye on the individual transactions that are occurring every day throughout the City.

**Rachel Lloyd:** Notes that there has also been a lot of predatory purchasing where people will buy houses from people in economic distress that is just enough for them to accept the offer.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** It looks like that is an education issue that could be solved without too much difficulty with the help of realtors.



**Kathy Galvin:** There is a capacity issue and we should be trying to expedite the 12 small area plans we currently have.

**Jeff Werner:** Notes that in order to solve the affordable housing issues, it's going to take community investment and it's going to take a lot more than just changing the colors on the map.

**Lena Seville:** What do you think of the increasing density on transit corridors? The values of homes on main roads seems to be lower, which seems like a good place to put higher density.

**Jeff Werner:** Transit corridors change routes all the time and it's easy to do the analysis, but it might take a closer look at things.

**Rory Stolzenberg:** Agrees with Jeff on how to solve the issues and states that the goal of changing the R1 areas is about having the problem stop getting worse with those with higher incomes that way we can make an investment on the people that need it the most.

**PLACE recommends the City open a conversation with UVA about student housing, with a long term goal of housing more students on campus (and not in city properties).**

**PLACE also requests city staff prepare a memo or presentation that describes the status of small area plans. Subsequent request should include the status of the code audit, land use plan, and other zoning-related initiatives so that PLACE has a context for making recommendations on housing and density.**

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS (30 minutes)**

None.

#### **5. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC (5 minutes)**

**Frank Stoner:** Notes that the difficulty lies within the middle and we have a better chance of solving the problem at the end. This isn't going to be resolved just by up-zoning from R1 to R2 because just because a cheap house would still cost about \$100,000 and by the time it is torn down and you pay for the land, it is back at \$400,000.