

PLACE Design Task Force Minutes
May 12, 2016 - 12:00 p.m.
Neighborhood Development Services Conference Room

Members Present:

Acting Chairman: Rachel Lloyd, Gennie Keller, Scott Paisley, Paul Josey, Melanie Miller (acting as the BAR representative for Tim Mohr), Mike Stoneking

Staff Present: Missy Creasy, Alex Ikefuna

Call to Order

Rachel Lloyd called the PLACE Design Task Force Meeting to order at 12:00 pm

Agenda

1. Public Comments (5 minutes)
No public comments

2. 3-D Modeling Subcommittee Update (10 minutes)

Ms. Miller said Tim Mohr is supportive of using Sketch Up so it is accessible to everybody and we already have a starting point of the Sketch Up and it could be updated later.

Ms. Lloyd said we should fill you in on this because you may have thoughts and opinions. We have had discussions that have come out of different sessions. She welcomed the new member Mike Stoneking. She said we are missing quite a few members and we need to get new members for the ones who have rotated off.

Ms. Lloyd said on several different projects we have worked on, it became very obvious to us or became useful for the city to have some way of modeling the built form of our city in order to study current conditions and particularly to model potential changes with the code audit and zoning to be able to study the ramification of some of the planning changes. We had a big discussion a couple of months ago about what form the 3D modeling ought to take, whether it be something like Sketch Up, which is more illustrative, or something that is GIS based but is still 3-dimensional and data based linked. We now have a sub-committee made up of Mr. Josey and Mr. Mondschein to look at this, and to make a recommendation for a process, not necessarily recommending a software platform, but to investigate what the issues are in relation to NDS and to Council, and to suggest how the 3-D modeling might be used best and most effectively and what the benefits and constraints are.

Ms. Miller said another benefit is to show people what the current zoning can allow, because often people don't realize what the zoning is until a building is being proposed and then they are upset and the zoning has already been in place for two decades.

Ms. Keller said she'd like to add the Planning Commission to this report as well, either to have NDS put it on our (the Planning Commission's) agenda for a presentation once the committee has their work done, or they come during public comment and brief us (the Planning Commission).

Mr. Josey said right now it is not a report. We (the sub-committee) are meeting with Guoping Huang, an urban planner at UVA, whose class is going to model this using GIS. Mr. Huang has reached out to a number of City staff, Bart Pfautz (NDS), Mark Simpson (IT), Carrie Rainey (NDS) and Chris Gensic (Parks & Recreation) to discuss how the class can have a working overlay with what the City is trying to do, and how that can work as a public interface and if it can be 3 dimensional. All of our questions we raised initially in a meeting two or three months ago. We are planning that meeting on the 27th or 28th of May and right now it is just a small group. We are trying to get UVA to communicate with the City and this might be a spring board to communication with the County GIS Planners and maybe getting the County Staff to overlap their files. He said he is sure the County data is already shared, but that is a discussion that we will hopefully bring into this.

Ms. Lloyd asked what is UVA using, a GIS based program?

Mr. Josey said they are using a GIS based program, and one of the questions for discussion with Mr. Huang is could this data be used in QGIS freeware platform that anyone could use, or maybe it could overlap. City Engine requires too much energy for the service but that is a conversation with the City and UVA. Another question is whether the model UVA creates can be used by the City through their current platform, which includes a public platform on the City website.

Mr. Josey indicated these questions have not yet been answered.

Ms. Lloyd said it will be interesting to see whether the emphasis will be for a tool that the City staff ends up using, or is it more focused on public use.

Mr. Josey said he thought there should a platform that we could put the 3-D model online that could be clicked and added to the same way as the 2-D model is updated. He is not sure if there is a precedent in the City for that. He said that would be ideal if it could be something on the City's website that the public could use directly through the website browser.

Mr. Stoneking said it sounds like a lot of work has already occurred. If such a tool, could result in a design tool for making buildings and when people present buildings to the BAR they show their building in context, it would be very useful and that could be cumbersome so maybe that level of sophistication only occurs in overlay districts but data alone is less sexy than what it looks like.

Mr. Josey said what we like about GIS is it is an accumulative platform that could be used for the next 10 years or so and we were a little concerned about creating a sketch-up model even though that is a little more freewill but there is a lot of variation to how that is rendered that

could twist the facts or sometimes we think that adding flashy videos with people moving around and cars go, and people saywhat are we looking at?

Ms. Keller said it is distracting. Mr. Stoneking has a point about it having substantial applicability in the overlay districts and I would think one handle if you are going to approach the county is more continuity between city and county entrance corridors. She said she can see that in particular through an application where we can start to think of it as one corridor instead of two corridors.

Mr. Josey said that makes a lot of sense and graphically it would be great to show that.

Ms. Keller said when you are approaching Charlottesville you don't care which jurisdiction you are in.

Mr. Josey said it is for the betterment of both the county and city and there is not much to report yet.

Ms. Lloyd asked do you know how much the UVA folks are planning to accomplish?

Mr. Josey said he doesn't know, but it's free work being done to help the city.

3. Blue Ribbon Commission

Ms. Lloyd asked Missy Creasy if she had any information

Ms. Creasy said she has a copy of the resolution.

Councilor Galvin said to her knowledge PLACE doesn't have to nominate one of our own to be on the commission but they do want someone from PLACE to volunteer. Anyone that is interested can just fill out the application.

Ms. Scala said at the Historic Resources Meeting Councilor Fenwick said the Blue Ribbon Commission is expected to come together this summer, with Council making official appointments at its June 6th meeting. Three representatives from the city's PLACE Design Task Force, Human Rights Commission and Historic Resources Committee are expected to serve on the nine-person panel.

Ms. Scala said the BAR is not a named group but the BAR will review any proposed change to the statues because they are in ADC Districts. The BAR is not named because of the review role.

Ms. Keller said Rachel (Lloyd) would be an excellent representative.

Mr. Paisley said unrelated to the topic itself is an example to how few people are here today, the timing is difficult because so many people are in full swing with their daily lives right now.

With everything we end up talking about, he has interest in this topic and he's involved with the Belmont Bridge committee which is going to go back into swing shortly.

Ms. Lloyd said the members from PLACE are supposed to represent some of the issues we deal with like urban design and other placemaking. She might consider applying but it would be helpful to have the key things from PLACE that we think of being the main issues that need to be represented to the commission from our point of view. The PLACE member is supposed to be representing something related to our bigger mission.

Ms. Keller said the way she sees it the reason to have someone from PLACE on the committee is to represent public design and public space. She said it is important to her that whoever represents PLACE should understand that the city is beautiful and some of the impulses are design, as well as social, cultural and historical impulses. She said why were Lee Park and Jackson Park developed at that point and time. How does that work with the broad continuum of what is happening now on Jefferson Street in the early 20th century with the development of a hotel and tourism, and re-building of churches on that street. How does it all fit together? Ms. Keller said it is important to her that the members understand that they represent them nationally and for the region. She said she thinks Rachel will do that.

Mr. Josey said someone should look at how the parks are changing in urban environments. Those parks were designed as a memorial to one person whereas now parks are green spaces valuable to downtown. Maybe the sculpture should be moved to a more allowable and flexible park space that is useful for the community, where people will go to and use; whereas Lee Park is barely visited.

Ms. Miller said she volunteered the PLACE committee to look at renaming the West End of the downtown mall; Vinegar Hill Park designated it as an urban park and is part of the [Halprin] design. It can't be executed exactly how he would draw it because the Omni is setting on a part of it.

Ms. Creasy said to email the entire PLACE commission group and let them know about the time frame and the application.

4. PLACE Process Discussion

Ms. Lloyd said we need to review the annual project list and we can make recommendations to NDS. She asked if there is enough time to get on the annual calendar for a work session on the CIP that would be great since PLACE should be on the list.

Ms. Creasy said we don't know about the funding yet.

Ms. Lloyd said Jim Tolbert (former NDS Director) said we are going to rebuild those sidewalks at the FLATS, can you guys give me some recommendation on that.

Mr. Paisley said the original consultant for the West Main Street Project was trying to re-visit the code. It would be so much simpler if the private sector really knew what the game board

was supposed to be instead of it being open ended negotiation with the City. He asked for information on why the form based code was not adopted before.

Ms. Creasy said an evaluation was done of the zoning in the West Main Corridor and the evaluation denoted that form based code would take away from the historic district and a decision was made on Council's end to keep ADC district in this location and try the form based code somewhere else. Form based code is still on the plate and we don't have any resources that are dedicated to moving forward at this time.

Ms. Keller said it is a process. When people become more knowledgeable about the idea of form based code, they can think about how it presents certain challenges in an area that was already designated as an overlay district.

Mr. Stoneking asked what those challenges are and is it not possible to have a form based code in an ADC?

Ms. Creasy said the consultant and literature note that the ADC is going to be your stronger land use tool.

Ms. Keller said because of what we've learned it might be a really good tool for portions of the SIA.

Ms. Creasy said that is possible.

Mr. Paisley said your department is truly over-loaded and we hope we can become a group you guys can use us as a sounding board to think about the bigger picture.

5. Downtown Pedestrian Mall

Ms. Scala said the mall is part of the Architectural Design Control District and any changes to mall theoretically should go through the BAR. Sometimes the BAR is left out, like when they first purchased the benches. She said previously the mall wasn't considered really to be a building but I think the current BAR has made a real effort to make sure that anything that is done on the mall is consist with the Halprin Plan or at least that's the goal. She said recently the BAR had reviewed the benches. Parks and Recreation replaced some of benches and they had some concerns about homeless people and bought a lot of benches and started putting them in and they didn't think that the BAR would have an opinion about them so now they want to replace all of the chairs. They did come to the BAR for permission before buying the other benches.

Ms. Miller said things like the benches the BAR should review any changes since in 1985 Parks and Recreation put in a lot of benches, replacing the chairs with the benches. The mall is in a National Registered District, and more attention should be given to the mall.

Ms. Miller said the city has to provide a map showing the current location on the Downtown Mall of all the existing benches and chairs, and to research a possible replacement chair with a

back, made of wood and metal. The BAR may want to keep some chairs with backs in addition to the backless benches.

Mr. Josey said the Charlottesville Mall is a beloved space that everyone loves and goes to, and taking care of those trees should be paramount to the mall's success. He said the assessment found tree base and paving conflict is the most serious and immediate threat to the long-term health of the trees and proposed removing the cast iron grates and steel plates at the base of trees along the mall. The oak trees expand at about ½ inch per year and the grates and plates are cut to expand the space for the trees as they grow. The assessment found that when the grates are cut with a saw to make room for tree growth, often times the saw cuts into the trunk of the tree. There are funding issues associated with recommendations for tree maintenance because there is no funding in Parks and Recreation budget to specifically pay for maintenance of mall trees.

Ms. Keller said Vinegar Hill Park at the east end of the farmers market and middle was central place. We will have a meeting with Ms. Beth Meyers, Mr. Bob _____, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Scala, to talk about why was it demolished. A walking tour with a main marker or two in the end of the downtown mall and that is really the historic resource between the Whiskey Jar ends where the plaza meets to Water Street, because of the Omni that was recommended in the 70's.

Ms. Keller said Ms. Meyers is head of the Center, maybe the Center could provide a landscape plan for the mall.

Meeting Adjourn 2:00 p.m.