

PLACE Design Task Force Minutes
April 20, 2017- 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
NDS Conference Room

Members Present:

Mike Stoneking, Chairman, Fred Wolf, Vice Chairman, Scott Paisley, Paul Josey, Gennie Keller, Andres Pacheco, Kate Bennis, Councilor Kathy Galvin

Staff Present: Carrie Rainey, Alex Ikefuna, Carolyn McCray (Clerk)

Call to Order

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

Agenda

1. Community Engagement for the Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Keller said the Comprehensive Plan was last updated in August 2013, and councilors want the next review to be completed by the summer of 2018. She said every five years we are required by the code of Virginia to review the Comprehensive Plan. Since 2013, several new buildings have been constructed on West Main and in other locations across the City, prompting concerns about whether the City is becoming too dense. Groups such as the Legal Aid Justice Center and the Public Housing Association of Residents want more voices to be heard as the City pursues redevelopment of the Strategic Investment Area, including development of a form-based zoning code. City Council directed the Planning Commission late last year to come up with a strategy to engage the community for the plan review.

Ms. Keller said the strategy was approved by Council, but Vice Mayor Wes Bellamy had a number of issues with the engagement strategy, adding that Vice Mayor Bellamy wanted more groups to have a say in crafting the plan. The City has been reaching out to individuals and groups that the Vice Mayor suggested, and earlier this week held a meeting which only three of the contacted individuals attended.

Ms. Keller said they did attend but Planning Commissioners and City staff outnumbered the public because there were three staff people, four commissioners and three members of the targeted group.

Ms. Keller said the feeling among many of us on the Planning Commission is that we need to be upfront that we're going to make mistakes, and this an organic process. We are going to try our best to engage the public to the extent we can. But community engagement should not be used to prevent things from happening or to stall them.

Ms. Keller said earlier this week, councilors approved the transfer of \$100,000 from the capital improvement program budget's reserve account to a line item specifically created to help pay for the Comprehensive Plan update. In the budget adopted earlier this month, City Council allocated more financial resources to community engagement. They set aside \$110,699 for a new position in the Department of Neighborhood Development Services for community engagement, placemaking and design.

Ms. Bennis asked if that position could take on some of the work of the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilor Galvin said that is one of the duties of the new position, as well as implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. She said the person hired will have to have the context required to understand development in the city.

Councilor Galvin said in the past we've had a process divorced from facilitators who do not have the content knowledge for that which they are facilitating, so you get disconnects, misunderstandings and disjointedness in public meetings.

Ms. Keller said neighborhood associations can get the ear of City Manager Maurice Jones through quarterly meetings. However, she said many in Charlottesville distrust the government and have decided to opt out of the system and not to share information about city-led meetings with their associations. While we are inclusive with all the groups we know about, we also have to find other channels because sometimes groups don't trust the City.

Ms. Lloyd said it can be very difficult to get people engaged. We do neighborhood emails get maybe 50 percent clicks. Not everybody is reading. When we aggressively tried to court a whole neighborhood to come to a picnic, it literally took hand-delivering a flyer to every single door in the neighborhood. The chapter for the community engagement strategy should have information on the ethical considerations that should be made by decision-makers. That's where I perceive there to be a big gap, and I think that's the root of a lot of disengagement.

Councilor Galvin pointed out that advisory bodies do not make decisions and are limited in what they can consider when making recommendations. She said the Planning Commission and the Board of Architectural Review are not legally able to talk about decisions about land management and, therefore, development from an economic standpoint. The only ones that can are the City Council. For instance, a plan to create a historic overlay district for a section of the Woolen Mills neighborhood appeared to be heading toward approval. The Planning Commission recommended the idea in November (2016), at which time several residents began to make arguments against the idea. The request has been deferred.

Ms. Keller said citizens often wait until the public hearing because otherwise you're just letting out your ideas ahead of time. Why spend a lot of time and energy, when you can wait until it matters?

Mr. Stoneking questioned how City Council could be required to make decisions consistent with community engagement. How do you propose binding City Council to perform and vote based on some measuring tool of input? We are a representative democracy in that we don't do everything by referendum for a reason.

3. Guest Speaker - Ekatarina Makarova, Sociology of Public Spaces

Ekaterina Makarova is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia. Her research interests include urban sociology and anthropology, space and culture, sociology of consumption, sociology and anthropology of socialist and post-socialist societies, sociology of religion, and social change. Her presentation focused on the following items.

How might visual design serve the project of democracy, the downtown mall and the pavilion?

Pleasures and Costs of Urbanity

- Openness to unassimilated difference (vs. community or individualism) being together but a community
- We want a sense of order
- As a form of sociability, civility, trust “ the eyes in the street” abide by certain rules
- As a form of democratic citizenship
- Equality of status vs. equality of income

The Making of Public Space

- Who produces and defines public space?
- Who and through what means – exercises control over space?
- What makes specific spaces democratic or non-democratic? Why?

To what extent does the success of public space depend upon exclusion?

- Public space is produced through conflict, contradictions, contestation, and negotiation
- How conflicts are addressed?
- No single overarching “public space”

4. Lighting Study Committee Update

Tim Mohr said Paul (Josey) and Andrew (Mondschein) looked into lighting using UVA as a resource, perhaps a one source solution similar to the 3-D modeling work, and getting some buy-in from the different divisions of the school. We are considering how we might fund or define this project so we move forward so that we won't have to ask the City to foot the bill or combine with the University or as a public/private venture. We covered some ground in terms of current lighting codes and new standards of lighting codes and it is based on 3,000 lumens per fixture and that was fine back in the day of halogen and florescent but with LEDs the amount of lumen you can pump out per LED, you are way over that really fast. It

really should be about how much light you are putting down on the surface and the quality of light, the glare and color control. We are just starting to scratch the surface but it was a very interesting meeting.

Councilor Galvin said this is very timely because of the update of the zoning ordinance. She asked didn't the Smart growth people had a section on lighting.

Mr. Mohr said there's also West Main and there has been a discussion on lighting in that regard.

Councilor Galvin said the consultant team (for West Main Street) is recommending lights and they are going to be recommending lights based on current best practice, but it could inform them the zoning ordinance moving forward.

Mr. Mohr said what we particular talked about is that Edinburgh is now in its second generation of light code based on light zones. Different parts of the city are treated in a different manner. Downtown is a much different type of lighting zone in terms of distribution compared to the residential areas. They also address intersections and streets. Just from a safety standpoint, it was well intention but mis-guided. One of the reasons for this is lighting the intersections at night is a wild difference, and without proper light, it makes it very difficult to see pedestrians. It doesn't have to be a lot of light but it has to be a steady light with high contrast. Trying to deal with it comprehensively would be a great thing.

Councilor Galvin said the Comprehensive Plan update is focused on the future land use plan and to make more documents that talk about areas of growth, preservation. There could be a companion map that reinforces those areas, because lighting will vary depending on where you are; a neighborhood conservation area, or a mixed use high pedestrian volume zone.

Ms. Keller said the public safety people want to weigh-in. This is an opportunity.

Mr. Mohr said the other thing is a great nexus between the arts and science. In the last 10 to 15 years, they have really come a long ways in terms of the lights impact on it from a diagonal standpoint. People with epilepsy are extremely vulnerable to frequency of light and it has a lot of ramifications that affects all sorts of disciplines. It is kind of odd that there is a luminating society of engineers but there is really not an academic discipline that is aligned with it.

Councilor Galvin said she doesn't see any immediate action on this because this needs more study and needs to be integrated with other policy items.

Mr. Mohr said he is trying to get a core group together and he would like Tony Edwards of Neighborhood Development Services involved.

Adjourned 1:55 p.m.