

**PLACE Design Task Force Minutes**  
**September 14, 2017- 12:00 - 2:00**  
**Neighborhood Development Services Conference Room**

Members Present:

Rachel Lloyd, Mike Stoneking, Gennie Keller, Chris Henry, Scott Paisley, Fred Wolfe. Paul Josey, Kate Bennis, Andrew Mondschein

Staff Present: Alex Ikefuna, Missy Creasy, Carolyn McCray (Clerk)

Call to Order – Chairman Stoneking

Public Comment:

Member of the public: DVAC: not aware PLACE was looking at the Mall. She would like outside consultant to remove all of the trees on the Mall. Outside consultants come in and do not really know about the Mall. There was a plan to put benches on the Mall that no one talked to us about and then we had to lobby to get the benches out of there. We need to be involved in this.

Rachel: said before the city hires a consultant they should contact you, who are they, the City?

Member of the public: she wants to be involved in hiring somebody.

Mike: ask for a small group in the interview so that those concerns have a voice.

Lloyd: the whole CLR process a round table opportunity for all of the stakeholders of the mall to influence the management process so it's like the entire project has that as a component to it, the nature of the report is to look at historic preservation lens but there are other related management issues that affect the design and how it functions today for everyone that uses it. How the city decided to hire a consultant is a question mark. Talked about how it might be a non-Charlottesville group but still remains to be seen. UVA was responsible for the process.

Member of the public: even when you talk about maintenance we were promised certain maintenance when the brick was redone and that did not happen. Nobody even there that understands how to put sand down

Keller: Has been in Charlottesville her whole life since before the Mall was there and when it was being built and how it's evolved. Lots of people who are professionals in Charlottesville who are very wonky about cultural landscapes and the Halprin Mall is approaching 50 years old, it is probably a historic resource or at least a distinctive destination and a special landscape in the US. Impetus of all of this is that the Mall is not being treated as a significant design in its own right. There is a lot of attention paid to the walls of it and the design review process but not for its floor. Our impetus was exactly the same, it's had decades of being kicked around and treated as an everyday maintenance issue and problem it is time to have standards for it so that

decisions can be made. Didn't start as a full-blown Mall study, was really dealing with its historic fabric, its replacement fabric and what would be the decision making process moving forward, looking long term and in emergency situations. Maybe has gotten a little bigger. Would like to see it have a narrow scope in the beginning, just dealing with Halprin design circa 1975 and looking at issues of treating that as the historic resource that it is and how can you make accommodations that you need to make for contemporary situations. Lots of people want to be custodians of the Mall but this isn't the Mall as the aura of the Mall it's really the floor and the furnishings and the trees.

Member of the public: that's what's supposed to be replaced every couple years and then we replaced who was in charge of Parks & Rec and it didn't happen. Will get better support from us if we feel like we're at the table and communicating with everyone.

Henry: underlying have P & R.

Lloyd: We drafted a scope of work for that report and it included by name all of these stakeholder groups in and around the Mall as people who ought to be part of the landscape management discussion process. So downtown business is certainly itemized on that list

Member of the public: We have close to 100 members and a lot of property owners too so as a result of all the conflicts in the past year and a half we've actually been growing membership.

Stoneking: going to write that resolution soon.

### Belmont Bridge

Sal Musarra, Kimley Horn & Associates: asked if there's anything particular that the group wanted to spend time talking about before they run through presentation.

Been showing this every time they get together. Pointing towards October Council meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup>, next big step, if everything goes well there they will move forward, still in conceptual zone, haven't done any construction drawings, haven't picked out detailed materials, tree palettes are still broad, not at that level of design yet, can still take input.

Stoneking: will you come back to this group after approval during the design process?

Musarra: don't have specific dates and times, need to do that, need to continue to connect in the design process, want that to occur, needs to be collaborative

Starting with the open design issues, 3 of them that have been talked about the most. At-grade crossing just north of Graves crossing 9<sup>th</sup> Street there's been a lot of positioning on both sides, some people would like to get rid of it some people would like to save it. There was some momentum to keep it and do the pedestrian underpass. Our concern is a safety concern, generally does not meet safe design standards. Understand the convenience to the community. City attorney recently weighed in and said that from a liability standpoint the city could not support maintaining that crosswalk and so today outside of any other changes that's where we're going, with the underpass but without the at-grade crosswalk. Would make pedestrian and bike improvements to the south at that intersection, improvements at-grade at the north end at

the Market intersection, pedestrian underpass, additional vertical circulation, more bike and pedestrian circulation with the new design than there is today but that item of convenience is leaving the plan

Henry: asked where the next one is, how far south you have to go?

Musarra: Intersection with Garrett Levy and Avon 9<sup>th</sup>

Henry: still the same number of crossings as there is today

Keller: can still cross there, just crossing underground

Musarra: understand our charge is to do really strong lighting, to make it interesting, and underpasses of that nature work, the more activation you have at the street, day 1 won't be as good as it will year 1 when development continues to occur in the superblock area, the more people on the street the more destinations you have it'll become more popular, as it becomes more popular the kind of activity you don't want tends to be limited.

Second design issue is Grave Street assessment. Coming out of Grave Street today you can go in all directions the proposal is that you would no longer be able to make the left turn southbound move. It is unsafe from a traffic standpoint. It affects traffic operations. It can back things up and cause congestion. Initially did not have left turn in but conceded and studied and are comfortable with the left turn in. Can do everything you can do today just can't do left turn out. Conversation was what impact it has on the broader network. City transportation staff are doing a study to reverse the flow of traffic on Monticello. Get a one-way flow going east-bound on Monticello and a one-way flow the other direction and they converge at that Levy intersection. Allows you to get back out and make a turn at the intersection so can get all your movements that you need here. Agreed to look at the outside of the bridge project, outside of scope. Traffic is a system. Bridge project is not going to solve all of the circulation issues in the area or the parking problems. City understands that, have to continue to broaden the scope. Have to look at how reversing the flow impacts everything else but looks like potentially a good solution or interim solution.

Henry: asked to confirm that Monticello Road is 2-way

Musarra: it is 1-way here

Stoneking: for someone from Graves to make a left onto Avon

Musarra: explained how that maneuver would have to be made.

Stoneking: how has National Optronics responded to this

Musarra: have been having dialogue, some concerns, pilot project will help this

Stoneking: surprised how many trucks National Optronics and other businesses in that area move in and out every day

Musarra: did count, were not as heavy

Henry: lefts turning out of the existing Graves were 6-10 in the peak hour. Throughout the course of 12 hours there are about 100 lefts turning out. Otherwise all the vehicles can make the same turns. Would be shifting about 100 cars over the course of most of the day

Musarra: third issue was vertical circulation on Water Street. Had to do with the curb design that puts the stairwell on the west side. Going to change this so that the stairway on the east points the other direction. Can move vertically on both sides, can move east and west without engaging with traffic. From an ADA standpoint everyone wants as much accessibility as possible. Studied ramp configurations that would get ADA accessibility from the ground up to the pavilion mall and physically the only way it was possible is the take down the existing structure wall that holds up the pavilion and push it back and construct another one, about a 2 million dollar item. Right now the whole design is in project budget, if we went that direction it is over budget and there are unknowns about what happens when you take down a structural wall of that character and try to rebuild it. Ramps are not cheap and not attractive. Everyone has across the board supported understanding that that's not a feasible option

Henry: asked to dive into intermediate level walkway, referred to as a mezzanine, seems suspicious

Musarra: mezzanine is essentially a mid-level parallel system to being on the sidewalk. Can go up or down the stairs, walk on the sidewalk, go up and down the stairs and accomplish the same thing. More of a convenient way

Stoneking: asked couldn't you just add a second stair that goes the other direction along the left side that goes up so you have a V-shaped stair from the landing and omit the parallel system. One of the stairs going down to the bottom.

Paisley: looks like Cross-Bronx expressway solution that's a place to hang out and not in a good way

Keller: asked what vertical clearance from the mezzanine to the bridge

Musarra: about 12 feet, will feel open but need to light it, not inviting unless you do it well

Paisley: with ADA compliance, would it be feasible instead of the staircase to ramp that?

Musarra: there is not enough room, have studied that

Paisley: stairs are familiar things, raised hallway looks unfamiliar, an odd urban choice

Musarra: going back to the process, still at the point where we can make those kinds of adjustments if that's the will of the crowd let's do the right thing

Lloyd: asked if people in wheelchairs and people on bicycles will be on top

Musarra: today on this end reality is that for mobility impaired will have to take same route you have in the past. With a bike, will have bike runners everywhere we have stairs so will at least be able to take a bike up and down everywhere we have stairs. In a wheelchair you'll have to take same route as in past to Market and around

Paisley: ADA component here is really important if there's a way to do it.

Henry: if you don't have the crossing at Graves for someone in a wheelchair or pushing a stroller you have to go down to Levy to go back up which adds another 5-10 minutes so fear that people will just cross at Graves anyway.

Keller: John Santoski is an advocate for disabled population and felt that this was an acceptable solution and actually thought it leveled the playing field to have to go to Levy because everyone would need to go there not just the disabled population

Stoneking: if it's 2 million dollars to make the mezzanine space ADA compliant do we have a number for the dollars it would take to create an ADA access from the tunnel back up to the West sidewalk.

Paisley: Heights are almost insurmountable from a ramp perspective. Can't have ramp for more than 30 feet before needing a landing which just keeps adding up

Musarra: when ramps get that long people in wheelchairs even get dissuaded from using them. Would like to have more accessibility but have studied it quite a bit

Mondschein: Same issue on the south side where the stairs at the west side of the underpass. Ramp length had to basically go the entire length to Garrett and then back which it would actually be a longer distance than going to Levy

Stoneking: were elevator towers explored at either end

Mondschein: would be space if someday Charlottesville felt that it could maintain its infrastructure

Musarra: would be a significant architectural element, can make them open and glass so they feel safe but it's money and maintenance

Keller: could those be identified on some drawing that this is a future option

Musarra: could look at that and see. If its nothing more than narrative that says in this particular locations in the future if you felt like that's something you want to do. There is an elevator in the transit center

Keller: would be an interesting thing to add to way finding websites and brochures so that people know where to go

Musarra: have a diagram that will be updated, this pedestrian diagram. If we do a pure pedestrian route and ADA accessible route that diagram needs to be updated a little bit but that would be helpful. Railroad fencing, may have to have it, BAR said they like it as a design element, Product is a fairly transparent product, create some contouring to it, added something to the bridge elevation

Mondschein: liability issue for the trains, want to protect infrastructure, might be worth the fight if thinking about walking across bridge and think of you're in a place within a bigger place which is the city and the views and the connections that might be afforded by not having that barrier however transparent. Think it's worth the fight until we lose in court or something. If you show them that we can do it they're going to become more intractable

Many: agree to push not to do it

Bennis: look into one thing, as a psychotherapist when suicide is easier the rates go up, would be something to look into

Josey: asked if there's a suicide prevention group in town that would have a more informed opinion

Bennis: wondering whether it's a height or train concern

Keller: John Santoski said that this is a reasonable solution

Henry: asked about elevators on each end. Look at adding an elevator in the future.

Keller: discussed public art on the bridge

Height of the bridge 23-24 feet from the railroad.

Stoneking: the first rendering white clean line, what are we looking at. Is it concrete

The Steering Committee narrowly endorsed maintaining the existing pedestrian crosswalk north of Graves Street on 9th Street by a vote of 5 to 4. Other boards such as the Planning Commission, Board of Architectural Review, Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Tree Commission generally feel the convenience of the crossing outweighs safety concerns. We have heard both vocal support for the maintenance of this crossing from the public as well as comments that support its removal. However, staff and our technical consultants cannot recommend nor support maintaining the mid-block crossing.

A pilot project is also under consideration by the City, separate from the bridge replacement project, to “flip” the direction of a single block of Monticello Road, to allow vehicles to turn onto Monticello Road and then onto Levy Avenue to access the signal at Levy/9th Street. This is moving forward through upper City management and then will proceed with communication/coordination between the neighbors and neighborhood before being instituted as a demonstration project.

### **Vertical Circulation North of Water Street**

Both sides of the bridge will be connected by stairs to a mezzanine and then to Water Street. The Board of Architectural Review suggested the eastern staircase be oriented to the east (instead of west, to the Transit Center). Steering Committee, Tree Commission and Bicyclist/Pedestrian Advisory Committee all supported this concept.

A ramp was under consideration from the bridge to the mezzanine on the east side of the bridge which could be constructed ADA-compliant. The connection from the mezzanine to either the Downtown Mall or Water Street could not meet ADA standards due to space constraints and the amount of height needing to be overcome. The ramp was eliminated from consideration by the Steering Committee due to cost of design tradeoffs needed for construction. The ramps are 2 million dollars.

### **Building Height Discussion:**

Zoning Ordinance Height Measuring:

1. Place unanimously voted to recommend the following changes to the Zoning Ordinance on how to measure height:
  - a. In urban conditions where buildings abut (or nearly so) the sidewalk and/or property line, height shall be measured from the street upon which the building faces. Lot boundaries without street frontage will not be considered when measuring height. (See elsewhere in the ordinance for transition requirements at those conditions). If multiple streets are involved, each street will generate its own result(s). Corner conditions remain to be resolved with this approach and the Ordinance should remind readers of other transitional requirements affecting height.
  - b. Buildings will be measured at the median point of grade along each principle building façade segment. If the building presents only one façade segment there will be a single point of measure at the median grade along that façade. If the building steps in height, multiple points of measure will be established at the center of the several façade segments.
  - c. Community Engagement/Government Accountability

### **Additional Public Comment**

Stated preference for no railroad fencing  
Emphasized need for lighting levels across the project

Maintain existing pedestrian crosswalk north of Graves on 9<sup>th</sup> street

Keller: Design for the bridge experience not the pavilion experience, flexible benches experience.

Mussara: Some people are happy and some are not and how do you move through that engagement. We have not finished.

Lloyd: said it might be better grades.

Invite person from Roanoke as a guest.

Adjourn at 2:00 pm