

Meeting Notes

Meeting: Steering Committee

Date/Time: 7-9-15

Location: Jack Riedy Conference Room

Notes by: Laval Means

Attended by: Bob Wachtel, Bonnie Buckingham, Don Macarthur, John DiBari, Neva Hassanein, Ron Erickson, Collin Bangs, Ruth Reineking, Brent Hilldebrand, Bob Giordano, Michael Dorshorst, Mike Haynes, Jen Gress and Laval Means (staff)

Review Future Land Use Map

- Laval reviewed the proposed land use designation areas from the draft map dated May 28, 2015 along with the land use descriptions (distributed at the June 25th steering committee meeting) with an emphasis on areas with additional questions.
- Mixed Use descriptions included urban center, community mixed use and neighborhood mixed use. The group recommended adding an anticipated residential density to the description of each type of mixed use in order to create a consistent framework. The Community Mixed Use designation should refer to allowing residential high density (24 dwelling units per acre or greater). The neighborhood mixed use refers to allowing medium high residential (between 12 and 23 dwelling units per acre). The Urban Center should refer to allowing the residential high density as well.
- Correlations to existing zoning districts was discussed so that the group could imagine the type of zoning districts currently available and would remain appropriate for correlating land use designations. Most land use descriptions included more than one possible zoning district that would relate to the designation. This provides options for property owners if they propose changes to their zoning. Knowing about possible zoning districts gives us an idea on how the land use map can be implemented in the future.
- Laval pointed out that we don't need to strive for a zoning district to match every possible land use density. It's more important to know that there are a range of zoning tools available to accomplish the vision.
- Typically, rezoning is proposed by property owners but proposals to increase density have run into challenges through concerns over spot zoning and from neighbors through public testimony and protest provisions. A concern was raised that if there is no change from how rezonings have been done previously, what we are doing will never get realized. This plan should recognize the need to encourage the rezonings to fit with the designations.
- The act of developing this document, resulting in a current expression of direction should carry some weight. City Council could use the land use designations as a step forward.
- Development, for the most part, reacts to market demands, and changes to zoning need to be responsive to the private property interest. The private property owner needs to support any changes. Zoning is the benchmark, but rezoning should be up to each property owner.

- Concern was raised over waiting for property by property owner rezonings to implement the plan because it could take a very long time. There should be a prioritized action that strengthens the language of rezoning.
- Laval pointed out that the land uses need to be consistent with the broader vision and include a range of possibilities that can fit with existing zoning. The approach brings land uses in-line with most existing zonings and provides additional flexibility.
- The focus should be on the land use designations and the land use map, knowing that there are a host of tools available to implement. Zoning is the finer grain, if you're not the highest zone in that land use then the property owner can make a good case for rezoning.
- Were there areas with an uneasy match or suggestions for additional tools?
 - Many of the land use designations have one or more correlating zoning option.
 - Exploration of another residential zoning district to fit a mid-range density could be beneficial but developing zoning districts for every possible density is not desirable.
 - Further refinement of existing zones to fit the vision of neighborhood mixed use would help.
 - The proposed overlay concepts could use correlating zoning, especially for cottage industry.
 - One particular new tool to consider would be to introduce commercial districts with a lower height limit (through the intensity indicator).
- A unique problem is presented where land is unzoned and the designations are proposed to be further generalized, yet neighborhood plans are in place with greater detail. Citizens from the Rattlesnake have raised concerns over potential changes and they desire continued emphasis on the details that were generated from the more detailed previous plans and processes. Staff has developed a proposed approach for working with neighborhood plan designations in unzoned areas of the City. Until those areas are zoned, we recommend relying on specific neighborhood plans to provide additional land use direction.
- A point was raised that if the land is unzoned that is the perfect reason to be utilizing this plan and we shouldn't be stepping away from that by saying it's already handled by the neighborhood plan. To clarify, the general land uses presented through this map are the primary tool with additional weight (as a secondary tool) given to the existing neighborhood plan for unzoned areas.
- Staff is developing a process for updating neighborhood plans that will include creating a consistent approach and a template so all the plans are created similarly. Additionally, future neighborhood plans should not include a separate, more detailed, set of land use designations. Land use recommendations, in the future, need to stay at the community level.
- There will continue to be a process for doing growth policy amendments to the text or map, either small or large in size, along with the fact that we will be reviewing the plan every five years.
- For neighborhoods that are primarily residential, we are including the ability to support auxiliary uses such as schools, churches, parks and small neighborhood commercial services. The main difference between what can occur in most neighborhoods now and in the future is the neighborhood commercial services. It will be important to elevate that point as part of this review process.
- The node overlay is proposed as a way to emphasize a design direction with use and building relationship suggestions in certain concentrated areas. This is viewed as a form of proto land use where we can see whether development goes in that direction over time. The node overlay should be explored and identified through the broad community process (the overarching growth policy) and not through updates to neighborhood plans.

- Staff should check the correlation of node overlay on Brooks Corridor with the midtown transit-oriented planning process.
- Concerns were raised that the Node Overlay description reads like it is too intense. The description should be revised to support a range of development types and not just an “intensive” concentration of office, retail and residential.
- Laval described the draft description and limitations on the mapping layer for the urban agriculture overlay. She worked from the description presented a few meetings earlier where the group indicated interest in exploring the overlay tool to emphasize and encourage agriculture use. The description also recognizes where urban infrastructure exists like proximity to primary roads, where areas are paying for sewer service extensions, where parcels are too small to reinforce agriculture opportunities, where development is entitled, and where development potential exists.
- Factoring out areas based on the above description leaves the proposed overlay to be explored in the Target Range area, and small areas in the Rattlesnake and Grant Creek. Laval questioned whether the overlay really is a useful tool.
- Several members felt that the resulting overlay is too limiting and doesn’t convey the message of the agriculture value, use and heritage of the area. It should generally convey where the agriculture resource is left in our community and how we can identify them to protect the resource. Additionally, state law requires that agricultural use has to be addressed as a primary review criteria for subdivision proposals.
- The overlay and development potential can go together and doesn’t have to be a limitation to development potential. Areas where urban services are proximal, planned and even paid for could be encouraged to cluster development. The overlay reinforces the focusing inward concept by concentrating development in certain areas while supporting production of local agriculture.
- Collin’s concern is that this sends the message that property owners can’t develop on their parcels or will be severely limited. Many property owners have had to work with increasing limitations on their land. With these limitations comes the concern over being able to develop housing affordably. Collin voiced his concern over this layer impacting the cost of housing. The more restrictions that are put in place the greater the potential for development to be more costly. The same area that is viewed with agricultural opportunities is one of the main developable areas for work force housing.
- The overlay can function as awareness of good soils and areas used for agriculture. But how it is used and perceived needs to be considered. What does it mean to people within those areas and how does it restrict them? Members of the group felt the overlay should be viewed as guidance and not a discouragement.
- Laval felt the concept of describing the agricultural overlay has expanded from the earlier focus group work. We need to think about how this balances with being within an urban growth area. Showing an urban agriculture overlay actually reinforces focusing inward and why the urban core should become more dense (on balance with conserving open areas and agriculture). However, working with existing services already planned for the area and recognizing where development currently exists should also be a consideration. When you look at how much of the Mullan area is already developed or developing, is this overlay really helpful?
- Many members agreed that the representation of the overlay needed to be expanded and not sifted for areas within the special improvement district or near roads, etc. It should be where agriculture is occurring and where there are good soils.

- Programs to fund and buy agriculture land for the general public use and benefit should also be explored. Purchasing land for agriculture use is a key way to ensure the land will remain in agriculture.
- Since there was considerable debate regarding how much of the area to show as an agricultural overlay and what factors to use, Laval proposed developing an action item to study ways to preserve urban agriculture on balance with maintaining development opportunities rather than continue with the overlay concept.
- The majority of the group felt that showing a larger area of agricultural overlay is consistent with the focus group interests and we should continue and see what the council does.
- Staff is committed to addressing the idea. We need to settle on the appropriate size, exclusions, and description. Staff will show the larger area of prime and state soils for areas with parcels greater than 3 acres in size with exclusions for where development is established.
- The group also reviewed a revised description of the urban agricultural overlay. Laval raised concerns over the revised description sounding too regulatory. Suggestions included deleting the first sentence and not using the portion that refers to mitigations, etc. We should emphasize clustering as a desired pattern and make sure the description encompasses the highlights about the resources.
- The description needs to stay general and visionary but with enough information to convey how it will be used.
- The group debated whether to limit the overlay concept to particular parcel sizes. The original concept was to apply the overlay in areas where parcels exist greater than 3 acres in size. Several options were considered and no specific direction was provided. Staff will continue to work with the 3 acre size minimum.
- Staff will take a stab at redrafting the land use description, map the larger area, and look at the action items for what is already identified.

Review Prioritize Action Themes

- Laval directed the group toward the draft “Prioritized Action Themes.” There are seven main themes with associated actions that received higher votes but also were consistent with early emphasis of issues from the listening session process, the value statement work, and the open house dot exercise
- Staff may develop a reference to the general grouping of agencies that could take lead on particular policies. Agencies will be reviewing the document for additional corrections.
- Staff pictured the prioritized themes being described at the front end of the chapter and the detailed tables of action items placed at the end of the chapter. The group preferred retaining and repeating the action statements to provide a level of support for the summarized action theme and liked the way the draft themes document is developed now.
- The group identified some edits to the document that included:
 - Change the climate change action theme to put the emphasis on the climate change component.
 - Action 1.3 add the word “implement.” The revised statement would be: Identify best practices and implement policies that discourage automobile dependence.
 - The action groupings should include a set pertaining to state lobbying or legislative changes to make it clear and easy to refer to.
 - Establish a grouping for actions where the city should be advocating for state legislative changes. An example is the need to change State law to allow community solar.

- Develop an action for “site planning that considers solar access.”
- Clarify action item 8.16 that refers to Mountain Line and the point about examining fees and financing.
- Clarify action #3.7.
- Change 3.4 “ . . . efforts to ~~advance~~ address climate change, carbon neutral . . . “
- Add the words “continue to” to the front of item 2.25, since we already have a “fair, thorough and open community process . . .”

Next Steps

Staff has been incorporating the edits and developing full chapters of the document with about 1 ½ months of writing still to do and agency review. They anticipate some additional refinement of policy statements (at the goal, objective and action level) that brings the voice and approach from all the focus groups into one consistent approach without changing intent. The last steering committee meeting included suggestions for additional ideas for the Vision Statement. Staff still needs to incorporate those ideas and has some additional refinement to do. The group agreed to check in with Neva on the refinement.

Staff will let the Steering Committee know when the document is out for review which should be sometime around the beginning of September.

The Planning Board sub-committee on Climate Change trends is hoping to have information ready to be able to add to the document in the future.

Last, but certainly not least:

***Staff greatly appreciates all the time, efforts, ideas, and comments from all the participants and encourages continued tracking of the process for this project. Steering committee members are especially encouraged to provide comments and public testimony when the plan is forwarded to Planning Board and City Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm