

**Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission – Planning Committee  
South End Vision Plan Comments (4/17/18)**

This documents the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission’s Planning Committee review and comment on the Draft South End Vision Plan dated (9/19/17). This chart identifies the comments organized by the sections of the report with proposed draft updates (in red).

<b>Introduction</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Vision Statement</b> - Change Vision Statement to ... “of vibrant neighborhoods built along light rail transit” ...	Language will be revised to: ...“of vibrant neighborhoods built along light rail transit”...
<b>Winning City Principles</b> – Provide a reference to the <u>Winning City Principles</u> embraced by City Council, they would provide context for South End as a place with a <i>positive buzz</i> and a <i>shared story</i> , a diverse <i>15-Minute Livable Community</i> with <i>Affordable Spaces</i> , a <i>Big Tent Magnet for Millennials</i> and people with <i>Open Minds</i> where <i>Being Creative, Innovative, and Accepting of New Ideas</i> is the norm.	A description of the Winning City Principles will be added to the introduction section.
<b>Executive Summary</b> - The Plan is a long read and could use an Executive Summary specifically written for the decision makers who might not have the time to pull action items out of the text.	An executive summary will be added to the introduction section.

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<b>2.0 WHERE WE WANT TO GO</b>	
<b>1. Goals - Grow By Design (p.25)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Residential Frontages</b> – Image #5 (p.25) does not illustrate the goal of raising the first floor elevations of residential uses above the street.	Image will be updated to illustrate a good example of an elevated residential frontage
<b>Golden Triangle</b> – Image #4 (p.25) illustrates a key concept that deserves more discussion.	Language will be revised to provide a more explicit discussion and explanation of the Golden Triangle.
<b>2. Goals – Expand Our Mix (p.27)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Storefronts</b> – Image #4 (p.27) Does not effectively convey the potential and vibrancy of “shallow storefronts”.	Image will be updated to illustrate a better example of active, shallow storefronts.

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<b>5. Goals – Move, Connect, Network (p.35)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Street Types</b> – The scale and design of the streets and blocks in South End combine to form the pedestrian environment. The characteristics of South End’s streets require more description in this report. While a new South Blvd is envisioned, the other streets in the neighborhood are not reimaged, relative to width, parking, bike lanes, sidewalk width and tree plantings.</p> <p>The Street Type map should have a description and street sections of the 6 different types of streets that are mapped.</p>	<p><b>Additional language and street section graphics will be added to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the design intent and section of the street types proposed.</li> <li>• Clarify that additional analysis of the specific bike facilities, on-street parking, and/or lane widths will be necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0 HOW WE GET THERE: FOCUS AREAS</b>	
<b>The Vision for South Boulevard (p.42-43)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>South Boulevard Vision</b> - The illustration of a future South Boulevard (p. 42 and 43) shows a surface parking lot on South Boulevard being used for a food truck rally. Question why an unscreened parking lot on South Boulevard would remain acceptable in a pedestrian-oriented, main street environment.</p>	<p><b>Language will be added/revised to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the site specific design intent of this concept for the redevelopment of the Atherton Mill which includes the flexible use of this surface parking lot as a multi-functional plaza for public events such as festivals and food truck rallies.</li> </ul>

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<b>The Vision for the Gold District (p.50-53)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Mint Street Image</b> - Illustrative image of Mint Street (p.52) could use more description of the key components such as the bike lanes and the podium buildings.	Language will be added/revised to describe the key components of this image.
<b>Gold District: Key Changes/Improvements</b> - Suggest identifying where the proposed Gold Square and Gold District Museum are on the adjacent map. (p.53)	Annotation will be added to the map diagram identifying the location of the Gold Square and Gold District Museum.
<b>The Vision for Distribution/New Bern (p.58-59)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Distribution Street</b> – While the illustrative image of Distribution Street (p.50) is illustrating an affordable working neighborhood, question the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The incorporation of a street side, sidewalk adjacent loading dock. This is not ideal in supporting a walkable pedestrian environment.</li> <li>• The lack of a bike rack given that there is a bike illustrated leaning up against a wall.</li> <li>• Lack of on-street parking given that many of these streets are wide enough to incorporate parking.</li> </ul>	<p>Language will be added/revised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect that this image is specifically intended to illustrate the range of conditions that will result when existing industrial buildings are adapted and reused.</li> </ul>

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<b>4.0 IMPLEMENTATION – 10 KEY INITIATIVES (p. 62)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Implementation Strategy</b> - The Key Initiatives describe the “Why”, “How” and provide References. In many cases, these categories are overlapping resulting in too few actionable strategies. Suggest the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus the “how” for each initiative to ensure actionable strategies are identified and clear.</li> <li>• Identify the agency/partner responsible for implementation of each initiative.</li> <li>• Provide maps where possible when text references specific locations or projects.</li> </ul>	<p>Language will be revised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus and clarify the strategies and identify responsible agency/partner for implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Implement new regulations to ensure a high quality public realm (p.66)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Parking Design</b> - There is a reference to parked cars being wrapped by occupiable buildings and/or screened from view. On Planning Committee, we have been trying to get rid of “cars behind bars” at street level. In a pedestrian oriented district, simply screening cars should not be acceptable.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed approach in this Plan represents a strengthening of our current standards as regulated in our TOD Zoning Districts.</li> <li>• These standards would significantly limit but not completely eliminate the exposure of parking decks at street level and the need for screening.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Trees</b> – Consider if the streetscape tree requirement is robust enough relative to both size and spacing in a pedestrian environment.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current requirements for street trees and tree spacing as regulated in the Charlotte Tree Ordinance.</li> <li>• The proposed approach to streetscape and furnishings.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Attract cultural facilities/venues (p.67)</b></p>	
<p>Commission Comment</p>	<p><b>Draft Update:</b></p>
<p><b>Cultural Venues</b> - There is a policy statement here that new <i>citywide</i> cultural venues should be located in South End. That point probably deserves discussion.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That new cultural venues are envisioned as appropriate in South End given its role as an activity center.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Co-working</b> - There is a statement suggesting that, <i>Creative co-working spaces and artist studios are equally critical</i>. Agreed. But this is simply a statement and not a strategy. How should this be accomplished?</p>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of these policy statements is to document and clarify the vision and intent. In some cases further research and discussions with partners and stakeholders will be necessary to define more specific actions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Incentivizing Spaces</b> - There is a reference to <i>Developers of new buildings should be encouraged (and incentivized) to include a proportion of their projects for adaptable, creative uses</i>. Agreed. But again, this is simply a statement and not a strategy. How might this be accomplished?</p>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of these policy statements is to document and clarify the vision and intent. In some cases further research and discussions with partners and stakeholders will be necessary to define more specific actions.</li> </ul>

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<b>5. Preserve and provide affordable workplaces (p.68)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Affordable Housing</b> - While the recognition of affordable workplaces is good, there still must be a discussion of affordable living in transit oriented neighborhoods. This plan offers the opportunity for a discussion of income diversity.	<b>Response:</b> The discussion of affordable housing and income diversity is described in the Goals Section (p.28)
<b>Building Preservation</b> - There is a statement that small buildings are being demolished because it is easy to do so, when in fact, they are being demolished because of the increased value of the land on which they are located.	Language will be revised to clarify and describe the economic forces in play that are spurring redevelopment.
<b>Building Preservation</b> - There is a discussion of preserving older buildings through a variety of means. If the goal is to protect the scale and cost of the neighborhood then strategies seem a bit too generic. A conservation district may be a better solution, and there should be urgency in that consideration.	Language will be revised to clarify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of this initiative to protect the scale and affordability of neighborhood.</li> <li>• Focus the strategies on potential land use and/or design overlay recommendations.</li> </ul>
<b>Live/work</b> - There is a statement to encourage the provision of live/work “artist-in-residence” studios in <b>each</b> new building. This strategy is potentially onerous and one that needs far more refinement.	Language will be revised to clarify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of these policy statements is to document and clarify the vision and intent. In some cases further research and discussions with partners and stakeholders will be necessary to define more specific actions.</li> </ul>

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<b>6. Construct the Wilmore Centennial Park and other green space (p.69)</b>	
<b>Commission Comment</b>	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Open Space Terminology</b> - Consider the term “urban open spaces” vs. “green space” to acknowledge that not all community spaces are green.	Language will be revised to use the term “urban open spaces”.
<b>Livability Principles</b> - A reference to the Planning Commission’s Livability Principles would be especially appropriate in this section.	Language will be revised to include a reference to the Planning Commission’s Livability Principles, specifically regarding open space.
<b>Park Needs</b> - There is a discussion about the need for parks within a quarter mile of all homes. A map showing how many quarter miles there are in South End would be helpful as a means to calculating how many parks are actually needed if using this metric.	Language will be revised and/or a graphic added to illustrate the existing context and need for open space in South End.
<b>Park Size</b> - There is a discussion of how big a park needs to be to accommodate a certain number of people. Has a calculation been done to quantify the size/amount of open space needed in South End?	Language will be revised to focus on desired open space characteristics, location, and use rather than a specific calculation of acreage needs.



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<b>7. Construct a new crossing and transit station near Hawkins/Rampart (p.70)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Illustration</b> - This is an idea new to this plan and it deserves a before and after perspective.	This new pedestrian crossing is currently being designed by CATS and further station feasibility needs to be conducted. An illustrative image of these concepts would be premature considering the technical issues that need further consideration.
<b>Map Graphic</b> - The map graphic (p.70) that identifies the location of the proposed pedestrian crossing and station needs additional clarification and annotation to make a stronger argument for this project.	Map Graphic will be updated and revised to clarify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and quantify the length of gap between pedestrian crossings in this area, the relationship to adjacent stations and spacing, and the uses and activities that would be connected.</li> </ul>
<b>Terminology</b> - The text refers to a legal crosswalk. Should the adjective be “designated” or “marked”?	Language will be revised to use the term “designated” crosswalk.
<b>8. Increase greater densities at the station areas (p.71)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Increased Density</b> - This is an important argument that needs more conviction. The goal is to create the sort of urban vitality that can only come when lots of people live in a small neighborhood. The density goals in the TOD Zoning Districts are modest, and are being exceeded. It would be good to have a map of project densities in South End.	Language will be revised to document actual project densities in South End in order to make the case that density expectations are exceeding TOD Zoning District minimums and should be increased.

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<p><b>Winning City Principles</b> - This section offers the opportunity to reference the 15-minute neighborhood idea from the City Council’s Winning City Principles.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to include a reference to the Winning City Principles, specifically regarding 15-minute neighborhoods.</p>
<p><b>Corridor/Station Intensity</b> - There is an analogy used of a desired “spine” of density along the light rail. Suggest that the concept is would be more accurately described as a “swollen vertebrae” around the stations to emphasis the focusing of intensity at stations.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to better describe the intent of focusing and increasing density at stations.</p>
<p><b>Development Reference</b> - The reference to Buckhead seems out of place. If the intent is to suggest that there is a longer-term opportunity for higher towers in South End, there is probably a more direct way of stating that.</p>	<p>This reference will be revised or eliminated.</p>
<p><b>Urban Form/Towers</b> - There is a reference to South End becoming <i>a line of glittering towers</i>. Is this a shared visual reference? Density does not necessarily mean towers, and towers do not naturally result in a pedestrian oriented place. If towers are a goal, then we need to introduce a typology of street level podiums with towers set back from the street per the Vancouver model.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to add/clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of this reference is to establish the concept that buildings taller than the current TOD Zoning District standards of 120 feet will need to be considered if the goal is to increase density.</li> <li>• That development of increased height and intensity will require equal attention to the street level pedestrian environment.</li> </ul>

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<b>9. Manage parking as a district (p.72)</b>	
<b>Commission Comment</b>	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Publicly Funded Parking Decks</b> – This concept may be inconsistent with the goal of creating a pedestrian oriented neighborhood and counter to the likely reduction in parking needs currently underway with the development of automated vehicles. Question the notion of a publicly funded parking lot in South End.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to describe/clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of this initiative is to articulate that there are a number of ways to manage parking as a district-wide resource rather than development by development.</li> <li>• “Pooling” parking needs into shared decks/locations is just one strategy and could be accomplished by better utilizing existing decks and/or building new decks.</li> <li>• That any strategy should carefully consider the notion of public funding for parking considering other priorities and the changing dynamic of parking needs as impacted by the development of automated vehicles.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education/Parking Management</b> – Consider an educational campaign that helps people understand where they could park for free along the light rail and then take transit into South End.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strategy that focuses on education and “travel demand management” that encourages alternative modes of transportation including transit, bicycling, and car share/ride services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Regulations</b> - Leave parking minimums and maximums to the market.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify that a reconsideration of parking standards in the TOD Zoning Districts should include the review of minimums, maximums and provisions to encourage and account for shared parking.</p>

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<p><b>Regulations</b> - Leave the accommodations for shared parking and charging stations to the market. Consider amending the Urban Street Guidelines to accommodate these new means of mobility.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify the public and private roles and responsibilities for the provisions of shared parking and electric vehicle charging stations.</p>
<p><b>10. Embed art into everything (p.73)</b></p>	
<p>Commission Comment</p>	<p><b>Draft Update:</b></p>
<p><b>Why</b> - This section is redundant. If there are barriers to public art happening, then state what they are rather than elude to them.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to focus and clarify.</p>
<p><b>Strategies</b> – Consider more concrete strategies such as loosening of sign ordinance language to allow for more expression, or a requirement that 1% of the budget for new construction in the neighborhood go towards making art.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to focus and clarify.</p>
<p><b>Winning City Principles</b> - This section offers the opportunity to reference <i>Open Minds, Being Creative, Innovative, and Accepting of New Ideas</i> from the City Council’s Winning City Principles.</p>	<p>Language will be revised to include a reference to the <b>Winning City Principles, specifically regarding 15-minute neighborhoods.</b></p>

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5.0 IMPLEMENTATION – DESIGN GUIDELINES	
Purpose (p.74)	
Commission Comment	Draft Update:
<p><b>Purpose</b> - The purpose of the Plan and its design guidelines are to serve as a springboard and testing ground for the city’s efforts to overhaul our comprehensive zoning policy. Suggest the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a discussion or reference to Place Types and the vocabulary used to construct them.</li> <li>• Include diagrams to explain text.</li> <li>• Ensure the example guidelines will achieve the desired affect or be possible in the existing real estate market.</li> <li>• Better incorporate the Planning Commission’s TOD Priorities to draw a clear relationship to the example guidelines.</li> </ul>	<p>The purpose and intent of the design guidelines will be revised to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relationship to the on-going work on Place Types and Unified Development Ordinance.</li> <li>• The relationship to the Planning Commission’s TOD Priorities.</li> </ul>

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<b>1. Preserve Flexible Workspace Buildings (p.75)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Residential Encroachment</b> - Do we need to protect old buildings from “residential encroachment” or do we need to find a way to preserve the scale, massing and affordability at the street level?	This policy discussion will be removed from the Design Guidelines and incorporated in the Key Initiates Section under “Preserve and provide affordable workplaces” (p.68).
<b>3. Building Length and Proportions (p.76)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Building Length</b> - The discussion of building length and proportions might better be accomplished by regulating block size. In the example guideline, the maximum building length is 250 feet. That size will still allow Texas Donuts to be built and require a block almost 300 feet long, a length not ideal for a pedestrian oriented street.	Language will be updated and revised to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the intent of creating a walkable pattern of streets, blocks and building form.</li> <li>• Describe the role of the Subdivision Ordinance in regulating streets and blocks.</li> <li>• Describe the intended scale of blocks in South End that supports the proposed guideline of a maximum 250 foot building length.</li> </ul>

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<b>4. Façade/Material Detailing (p.77)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Façade Design</b> – Question whether the guidelines suggesting the change in surface plane by inches or decorating a blank wall will accomplish the desire to create a lively pedestrian street. The focus should be more about creating an occupied street edge than about the aesthetics of the buildings.</p>	<p>Language will be updated and revised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the intent of creating buildings that both occupy the street edge and ensure appropriate design articulation.</li> <li>• Update these guidelines to be consistent with the direction of the draft language for TOD-A.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Ground Floor Activity and Uses (p.78)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Ground Floor Activity and Uses</b> – The guidelines rely on retail and restaurants to create street level vitality, suggesting that neither office nor residential uses should occur on Main Street Frontages. Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An argument could be made that the need for retail space is decreasing with online shopping, and may not be offset with increased residential densities.</li> <li>• A strategy that creates street level vitality through other types of land uses. Stoops along wide sidewalks can have that affect, as can office space if individual offices are not located along the street.</li> </ul>	<p>Language will be revised to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of use and design expectations for the street types identified in the plan. The intent is to identify a variety of ways to activate street frontages while ensuring key streets such as Main Streets are occupied by the greatest level of activity.</li> </ul>

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<b>6. Ground Floor Design (p.80)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Entrance Heights</b> - Question whether the height guidelines accomplish the desired pedestrian environment that is envisioned. Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrance heights are given for three different kinds of streets yet, there are no diagrams to illustrate the ramifications of those requirements.</li> <li>• A five-foot-high stoop on a sidewalk is not necessarily affective in creating a vibrant walking environment.</li> <li>• Would a converted loading dock on an existing building be allowed under these guidelines.</li> <li>• Consider allowing for a building to be setback with a small garden in lieu of vertical separation.</li> </ul>	<p>Language will be revised/updated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include images and/or diagrams to that illustrate the range of heights and ramifications of the requirements.</li> <li>• Clarify exemptions for the reuse of existing buildings.</li> <li>• Include small gardens, patios, and other horizontal separation as an alternative to vertical separation.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Entrances (p.81)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<p><b>Large Retail</b> - The 50 foot minimum spacing of tenant entrances does not take into account large retailers like grocery stores.</p>	<p>Language will be revised/updated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the intent of the 50 foot spacing is to promote liner buildings and additional retail traffic. Larger tenant uses are allowed, but along Main Streets entrances are intended to be more frequent.</li> </ul>



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<b>8. Residential Frontage Details along Mixed-Use/Transitional Streets (p.82)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Residential Frontage</b> - The explanation fails to recognize the stoop/porch as a device to activate the street and the guidelines seem too vague. Stoops are encouraged but not required.	<p>Language will be revised/updated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect the requirement and design of residential stoops and porches.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Parking and Driveways (p.82)</b>	
Commission Comment	<b>Draft Update:</b>
<b>Structured Parking Facilities</b> – Clarify the rationale of setting back parking decks 30 feet from the sidewalk on Main/Signature Streets. There should be no allowance for above ground level parking facilities visible from the street in a pedestrian district.	<p>Language will be revised/updated to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the intent of the setback requirement is to ensure that no parking is visible from the street along Main Streets and Signature Streets.</li> <li>• The proposed approach in this Plan represents a strengthening of our current standards as regulated in our TOD Zoning Districts.</li> <li>• These standards would significantly limit but not completely eliminate the exposure of parking decks at street level and the need for screening.</li> </ul>