



Citizen Advisory Group Meeting

August 4, 2009

Draft Meeting Highlights

Citizen Advisory Group Attendees: James Baysinger, Scott Bovit, Madeline Campos, Elizabeth Cribb, Martha Edwards, Walter Fields, Thomas Fortenberry, Karla Hammer-Knotts, Jeff Harper, Lester Harrell, Virginia Keogh, David Marren, Linda McCaw, Laura Miller, John Moore, Walter Neely, Derrel Poole, Shelley Schiff, Bart Shaw, Jeanne Smith, Annmarie Spiegel, Gina Storeholder, Chris Thomas, Ann Voortmans, Frank Voortmans, David Wiggins, Don Woodruff, and Monica Zeleznik

Planning Commissioner: Claire Green Fallon

Staff: Alberto Gonzalez, John Howard, Crissy Huffstickler, Melony McCullough, Alysia Osborne, Bryman Suttle, Jan Whitesell, and Brent Wilkinson

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Melony McCullough, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department staff, welcomed advisory group members and asked everyone to introduce themselves and share their interest in the Steele Creek area. She reviewed housekeeping items, meeting ground rules, and explained the advisory group's purpose and role.

Background Information

Mr. John Howard, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department staff, provided background information on the Steele Creek area, gave an overview of what to expect from an area plan, and summarized adopted policies and information that will help guide the plan development process. He explained that an area plan provides the framework for future growth and development, serves as a policy guide for elected officials in making land use, zoning and capital investment decisions, and is a shared vision for a community. Mr. Howard also shared information about existing land use and zoning as well as demographic changes that have occurred in the City, County, and study area.

Policy Framework

Mr. Howard explained how the City of Charlotte's *Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework* is the guiding policy for developing land use recommendations for area plans. He noted that this policy is designed to concentrate higher intensity development and redevelopment in areas where existing infrastructure can support it. He then explained how this policy affects the Steele Creek Area and how it will help shape the recommendations.

Charlotte's Growth Corridors are five elongated areas that extend from the Center City to the edge of Charlotte. Steele Creek is located just outside of the South Growth Corridor. Centers are focal points of economic activity. The Steele Creek area has three activity centers: Westinghouse Boulevard, Whitehall, and Steele Creek Road / Hwy 49. The remainder of the area is located within a wedge area, wedges are large areas between growth corridors, where residential neighborhoods have developed and continue to grow.

Plan Development Process

Mr. Howard briefly discussed the area plan development process and the previously adopted plans that cover this area. He stressed that citizen's feedback will help to develop a vision for the area and to build the foundation for the area plan. Highlights from the public input exercises at the public meetings in June and the online survey can generally be categorized into the following areas: environment, transportation, land use choices, public facilities, community character, housing quality and public safety. A complete summary of the public input results are available on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department's website at www.charlotteplanning.org.

Group Exercise

Ms. McCullough provided a summary of the public input received to date (online survey, values exercise and the likes and dislikes exercise from the June public meetings). The lists of items were categorized as an opportunity or constraint and organized into the following categories: land use, community design, transportation, public facilities, natural environment, and public safety. Meeting participants were divided into three groups and asked to review the information to help staff determine if the summary list is representative of the opportunities and constraints identified thus far in the plan development process. Participants were also given the opportunity to add to the list of opportunities and constraints and then given dots to prioritize the list. Near the end of the meeting, each group shared how they prioritized the list with the larger group. A summary of the group exercise results is provided below (see the link below to view each groups full exercise results):

Group 1

1. Access along Youngblood Road at fire station near South Tryon Street
2. Restrict industrial area spillover from industrial edge
3. Preserve some agricultural areas
4. Public safety agencies work with better coordination
5. Preserve and protect residential areas

Group 2

1. Neighborhood preservation, limit expansion of industrial uses
2. Access to the Catawba River
3. Traffic congestion
4. Transportation options, more biking and walking facilities
5. Growth Management

Group 3

1. Greenway connections to major land uses (retail centers)
2. Transportation improvements, traffic congestion mitigation, traffic calming, intersection improvements, road widening, accessibility to I-485
3. Develop greenways
4. More bicycle and pedestrian facilities along major streets, particularly to major land uses
5. Mixture of housing types, more options

Meeting Questions and Answers

The following information summarizes questions and answers from throughout the meeting.

1. What is the source of the Steele Creek population data for 2000 – 2008 providing that a census has not been completed since 2000?

Staff Response: An American Community Survey is conducted via mail every few years to acquire population projections. The estimated population is based on the number of dwelling units in an area (using the tax parcel data) and also take into account residential building permits issued within the area since 2000. To these staff applies census persons per household and vacancy rate for multi-family and single family housing units. The projections take into account a demolition factor of 0.9 to account for new buildings that replace old/demolished buildings.

2. Will City Police, Fire, Parks and other public agencies be involved in the planning process?

Staff Response: Yes, the planning process includes city and county staff from several departments.

3. Will the plan identify additional opportunities for institutional uses within the plan area? Palisades has a 100 acre site for schools that was approved in 2000.

Staff Response:

The 100 acre school site is not part of Palisades rezoning, but it is adjacent to the site. Area plans typically do not specify locations for institutional facilities. However, institutional uses such as schools are allowed in most zoning categories, including residential districts under prescribed conditions.

4. Does City Council and County Commissioners approve land use, accessibility, and public facility projects?

Staff Response: City Council approves land uses by establishing zoning and by considering petitions to change that zoning, and by adopting future land use policies contained in area plans and district plans. Council also approves City-funded public facility projects (e.g. police and fire stations, sewage treatment plants, park & ride lots, etc.) in three ways: first as part of the City's Capital Investment Plan, second as part of the City capital budget, and finally Council has the authority to approve the purchase of land and the contracts for design and construction of these facilities.

The County Commission has relatively little land use authority in Steele Creek, beyond designation and acquisition of land for County-owned facilities (such as parks, libraries, and schools). Typically the County plans for these facilities is reflected in the future land uses contained in area and district plans adopted by City Council (see above). Similar to City Council, the County Commission has authority over the location of County-funded facilities through adoption of the County Capital Investment Plan and capital budget, and finally with the authority over land acquisition and the design and construction contracts for developing the facilities. (It should also be noted that the Board of Education also has authority over siting and development of school facilities.)

5. Will the Catawba Riverkeeper be involved in the plan development process?

Staff Response: Yes

6. Will the area plan include social services? Who plans for shelters?

Staff Response: No, the Department of Social Services usually provides those types of human services.

7. Can the plan dedicate/designate property for future greenway development instead of a piece-meal approach to greenway development?

Staff Response: The Steele Creek Area Plan may recommend property dedication for greenway development. Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation will be heavily involved in this process and assist with the identification of appropriate areas for greenway development. The Park and Recreation Master Plan serves as a roadmap for the Park and Recreation Department. In addition, The Master Plan reflects citizens' desire for more parks, recreation and nature preserves. The proposed 10 Year Master Plan for parks and recreation addresses how to meet growing needs and growing population in a rapidly urbanizing County over the next five and ten years.

8. How does the City/County assess the need for an area plan or whether an existing plan is still good?

Staff Response: Annually, Planning staff conducts a plan assessment process to determine which areas are selected for plans. This is an analytical process used by staff to assist in determining where future planning efforts are needed. Anyone can request that an area be considered for an area plan or plan amendment. Some of the considerations include: previous plan recommendations; requests from elected officials, citizens, staff, or others; development pressures; major changes in how land is used/redeveloped; population growth; and changes in environmental conditions.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Ms. McCullough wrapped up the meeting by explaining the next steps, which include a second advisory group meeting to discuss the environment and a draft vision statement. The meeting is scheduled for September 3, 2009; however, the location has not been finalized. Two weeks before the meeting, advisory group members will receive a meeting notice that includes the location. The information will also be posted on the Planning Department's website.