

Northlake

Northlake Area Plan Summary Notes

February 7, 2007
Advisory Group Meeting
Northlake Mall
5:30-6:30 pm

Advisory Group Attendees: Juanita Merritt, Phil Morosco, Alvin Avery, Bonnie Sampson, Ellen Serra, John Corrigan, Craig West, Katy Gray, Ron Withrow, and Walter Fields.

Staff: Tricia Rudisill, Claire Lyte-Graham, Melony McCullough, and Marci Sigmon.

Consultants: Ed McKinney (Glatting-Jackson) and Stan Harvey (Urban Collage)

1. Welcome and Overview

Ms. Patricia Rudisill (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department) began the meeting by indicating the consultants would be discussing progress made from the Monday, February 5th.

2. Eastfield Station Area

Ms. Rudisill introduced Ed McKinney with Glatting-Jackson. He began by giving a quick snapshot of the station area, identifying main roads, markers, and direction of the mall. He noted the Gandy development and identified the current station location. Mr. McKinney noted the focus is on the western side and briefly described ownership patterns. He commented that property owners are seeking to maximize development potential.

Mr. McKinney revisited the shaping of the land use concept by noting desires to capitalize on the park site, including relocation of a historic home dating back to the 1830s. He noted the proposed extension of the park and influence on organizing of development blocks. Mr. McKinney discussed the street network and setting a pattern for land use and streets, including maximizing parallel connections to Statesville Road. He noted that major thoroughfares are set but the local streets shown are proposed and not set.

Mr. McKinney stated that they are looking for more flexibility closer to the station to allow for higher intensity mixed use residential.

A few questions were posed regarding the station:

Have estimates have been done on maximum floor area and the number of units? Mr. McKinney indicated that they had been done and could be used as part of testing of impacts on infrastructure.

What about transit activity between the station and the mall? Mr. McKinney stated that Metromont had been considered for extension and connection to the mall for transit access.

What about the parking facility with regards to population density and parking availability? Mr. McKinney identified the proposed park and ride site, but he also indicated looking at mixed use and parking structure. Mr. McKinney also indicated that the work is currently focused on funding for the North Corridor. Once secured, work can officially begin focusing on design then a better understanding parking opportunities will be realized.

3. Northlake Pedestrian District & Regional Mixed-Use Center

Stan Harvey (Urban Collage) then began the discussion about progress on land use concepts around the mall. He reviewed the Regional Mixed-Use Center boundaries and identified recommendations for the Northcrest site, which include a hotel and proposed 4-story condominiums. He noted the development should look at incorporating the greenway. Mr. Harvey also commented that the goal over time should be for no outparcel development within the study area. The long-term goal should be to create a more urban environment.

In describing the study area, he then focused the discussion on the property to the North and immediately adjacent to Point O' Woods Drive. He noted there is a four story condominium proposal being considered for this location. He stated that Urban Collage reconfigured the site plan and oriented the buildings to front the proposed Dixon Branch Greenway. He also noted there was a need to focus more attention on the retail component of the project, which should be parallel with one of the entry's into the mall.

He then discussed the area around Northlake Mall. He noted that the movie theater helps start the "neighborhood center" idea, then discussed the outdoor extension of the mall, and identified CATS park and ride. He noted that the south western portion of the mall property would make for an ideal future location for longer-term office redevelopment opportunities given the proximity to I-77 and I-485. He also identified the Perimeter Woods development across Harris Boulevard and the need to make this area more pedestrian friendly over time.

Mr. Harvey then focused the discussion on properties north of the mall, which are envisioned to form a contained, walkable village. He explained that to create a walkable village access to the property would need to be given. A proposed solution (upon further, necessary examination) would be to follow CDOT's conceptual road alignment, which would extend the Hucks/Metromont proposed, future alignment across I-77 into the property north of the mall and connect with Northlake Centre Parkway. The road would possibly make a good separator between mixed use and office, which are being discussed as appropriate land uses for the area.

This village center would be similar to the transit station with the creation of a grid, but it would be affected by constraints of floodplain/creekbed. Uses would be residential short term. Mr. Harvey also noted where commercial and higher density residential should be concentrated.

According to Mr. Harvey, the area west of Northlake Centre Parkway would be appropriate for higher density residential with limited retail and office. Participants indicated a preference to have open space available on the western side of Northlake Centre Parkway, with buildings oriented toward the greenway.

Mr. Harvey indicated that a hybrid of urbanism is what is being proposed at and around the mall, within the context of a still suburban, auto-oriented environment.

Clarification on the bridge over I-77 at Alexanderana was requested, including whether or not pedestrians would be safe.

Mr. Harvey indicated there was concern expressed regarding scale for the village center above the mall. He discussed as related to feasibility for structural parking. He noted there was a lot of feedback on not wanting 10- and 12- story buildings. Mr. Walter Fields posed the question what if short term use is not non-residential? Surface parking versus structural parking was discussed, with the statement made on the link between density/intensity and structural parking, and needing density to justify parking structures.

The possibility of developing a SouthPark/Piedmont Center type development on Mr. Withrow's property was discussed, noting the lack of impact on residential development and its isolated location near the interstate. Development of this site as an "edge" city might benefit the mall and location would benefit from visibility and accessibility.

There was a lot of concern expressed regarding connectivity. Ms. Rudisill stated that staff is fully aware of the need for connectivity across I-77 and that what is shown is what has been able to come up with thus far.

The question was posed regarding what would generate a need for this connectivity. The importance of feeder roads was discussed as major roads will continue to get congestion.

Participants indicated that the area planning process is a good way to identify needs, such as an east/west connector.

Ms. Alysia Davis (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department) noted that when she was with CDOT (Charlotte Department of Transportation) there were several transportation and connectivity analyses done on the Northlake area, considering 20-30 years out. CDOT looked at interim road improvements.

Mr. Fields questioned how realistic it would be to achieve connectivity between certain streets/intersections. He also posed the question of how realistic would it be to creating a pedestrian environment off the interchange. Was there a model conveying this approach?

He expressed concern that drivers would not be able to get into the “pedestrian” mode after being in “driver” mode. Mr. Harvey indicated that there would have to be ways to promote pedestrian environment, including buffers/green, refuge islands, pedestrian signalization, gateway features, etc. However, this development would still be located adjacent to an interstate interchange.

The discussion ended with a question about whether or not all streets north of the mall would be public. Mr. Harvey stated these streets were intended to be public. It was noted that the ring road around Northlake Mall was a private road, and concerns were expressed as to if a public and private road should be connected.

4. Wrap Up and Next Steps

Ms. Rudisill concluded the meeting by announcing that the Advisory Group Luncheon was scheduled for Thursday, February 8th at 12:00 pm within the charrette space. The purpose of the meeting would be to give participants a “sneak preview” of what would be presented at the closing presentation that evening.