

Planning Committee

Agenda Packet

November 21, 2017 |
Room 280
5:00 p.m. |

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission
Planning Committee Meeting Agenda
November 21, 2017 – 5:00 p.m.
CMGC – 2nd Floor, Room 280



Images from the DRAFT SouthEnd Vision Plan <http://historicsouthend.com/live/south-end-vision-plan/>

1. Call to Order and Introductions (5:00-5:10PM)

2. Old Business (5:10-5:15PM)

Approve October 17, 2017 Minutes. Attachment 1 (Action Required)

TODO Tasks

3. Ongoing Business

South End Vision Plan Public Comment (5:15-6:00PM)

Garet Johnson, Monica Holmes

The Committee will receive public comment on the *South End Vision Plan* and the *South End and New Bern Transit Station Area Plan Amendments*.

Place Types (6:00-6:50PM)

Garet Johnson, Kathy Cornett

Civic Engagement Committee discussion but no action required

4. TODO Tasks (6:50-7:00PM)

Attendance

Planning Committee Members Present: Chairperson Deb Ryan and Vice Chairperson John Ham and Commissioners Phillip Gussman, Victoria Nwasike, Keba Samuel, Cozzie Watkins and Nancy Wiggins

Planning Staff Present: Kathy Cornett, Alan Goodwin, Laura Harmon, Monica Holmes, Gareth Johnson, Julia Lund, Melony McCullough, Ed McKinney (Interim Planning Director), Grant Meacci, Amanda Vari and Jonathan Wells

Other Staff Present: Angela Hagerman and Tim O'Brien, City Real Estate

Others Present: Craig Lewis, Stantec; Cheryl Myers, Center City Partners and Terry Shook, South End Vision Plan Steering Committee

Welcome and Introductions

Chairperson Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m., welcomed those present and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Gussman and seconded by Commissioner Samuel to approve the September 19, 2017 minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Mandatory Referrals

M.R. #17-32: Proposal by the City of Charlotte to Acquire Property Located at 5516 Central Avenue

The City of Charlotte proposes to purchase a 3.8 acre parcel located at 5516 Central Avenue (Tax Parcel 103-021-02) for the City's Innovation & Technology (I&T) Department.

M.R. #17-33: Proposal by the Charlotte Fire Department to Purchase Land Located at Beatties Ford Road and Miranda Road for a Fire Station

The Charlotte Fire Department (CFD) proposes to purchase a 6.5 acre parcel of land located at the intersection of Beatties Ford and Miranda roads (Tax Parcel 037-411-23) in Charlotte's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction for a future fire station.

Chairperson Ryan asked the Committee if they would like to pull any of the mandatory referrals for discussion. None of the mandatory referrals were pulled for discussion

A motion was made by Commissioner Watkins and seconded by Commissioner Gussman to state that the Planning Committee has reviewed M.R. #17-32 and M.R. #17-33 and has no additional comments for the submitting agencies. The motion was unanimously approved.

South End Vision Plan

Chairperson Ryan stated that Commissioners Nwasike and Gussman attended the Transportation and Planning Committee (TAP) meeting. Commissioner Nwasike summarized the TAP Committee's discussion. She stated that the plan was well received by the Committee. She said that the presentation included information that had been previously shared with the Planning Committee. The TAP Committee asked why the plan focuses on South End when the area south of South End needs more help. The TAP Committee emphasized the importance of this plan addressing affordable housing. They praised the Steering Committee, Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP) and Planning staff for their work and recommended that the plan move forward to City Council.

Ed McKinney (Interim Planning Director) stated that he wanted to provide a quick update on the schedule and discuss amendments from this plan that will update existing area plans. Mr. McKinney introduced Terry Shook, South End Vision Plan Steering Committee Chairperson, and Craig Lewis, a consultant with Stantec.

Chairperson Ryan said that it may be premature to go over the schedule, given the significant comments that the Committee has to share. She said that she does not know if she is ready to offer a recommendation. Mr. McKinney clarified that staff is not asking for a recommendation. He explained that staff would just like to remind the Committee of the next steps. One is for the Committee to receive public comment. However, he stated that the date does not have to be decided at this time. He said that he would like to discuss some options on how to receive public input and share how the schedule relates to the new Council.

Garet Johnson (Planning) stated that her presentation will be short because Commissioners Nwasike and Gussman covered most of her slides. She said that staff would like to review the adoption schedule which has lots of flexibility, recap the discussion with the Committee from the last couple of months, discuss the plan amendments and continue the discussion about the *South End Vision Plan* next steps.

Ms. Johnson noted that the Committee has been discussing the planning process since July and this is the third time it has been on their agenda. The plan went to the TAP Committee and they voted to send it to full Council for public comment which is anticipated to happen in December. Next month this Committee will continue to have dialogue about the plan and discuss if they are ready to have public comment in November and vote in December.

Ms. Johnson said that the TAP Committee will make a recommendation to City Council and then Council will vote on the plan. The new Council will receive public comment on this plan. Ms. Johnson added that some of this is tentative because the new TAP Committee members will have to be selected. She also said that Mayor Pro Tem Vi Lyles thinks the schedule seems a little ambitious.

Ms. Johnson reminded the Committee that the consultant, Craig Lewis, gave a presentation at their July meeting. The conversation focused on making streets safer for bikes and pedestrians; in addition to vehicles. The Committee also discussed how development interacts with the rail trail, how people get to South End and where they park if they drive there. Affordability was also a part of the discussion.

Ms. Johnson stated that Monica Holmes (Planning) reviewed the document with the Committee at their September meeting. It was noted that this is a pedestrian oriented area. The Committee spent a lot of time talking about parking for people visiting the area; recognizing not everyone will take light rail.

Ms. Holmes reviewed the amendments to the existing *South End Station Area Plans - South End Station Area Plan* (2005) and *New Bern Station Area Plan* (2008). Chairperson Ryan said that reviewing the amendments may be premature; unless the idea is to present the amendments and have the Committee comment on them later. Ms. Johnson confirmed that the Committee can review the information and comment on the amendments later.

Ms. Holmes explained that the draft *South End and New Bern Station Area* plan amendments include proposed land use diagrams to replace the recommended land use in the adopted plans. The amendments also include existing text and proposed text. The amendments cover three major categories: update to the adopted street sections, community design and retail streets. The street sections incorporate the corridor study that Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT) did on South Boulevard and South Tryon Street. It also updates urban streetscape design standards and incorporates tree grates and tree wells versus planting strips.

The second category is a community design chapter which is included in our most recent plans. In 2005 and 2008, when these plans were originally adopted, it was handled in a different way and there was not much depth given to the design section. This is taking the principles and putting them into policy which go into the plan amendment.

The third category is the retail street as defined by the zoning ordinance. Currently, if there is a retail street in Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), 50% of the linear street frontage must accommodate nonresidential uses, although, it could be occupied by residential uses. In order to enhance development, more streets are required to meet this standard.

Ms. Holmes clarified that retail street does not mean it has to be occupied by a retail use. It means that it has to be built to accommodate a nonresidential use, that could be a variety of things. The adoption of these plan amendments will implement this change.

Commissioner Gussman asked if the practicality of this will be defined later by the TOD. Mr. McKinney said this provision is in the TOD ordinance and in area plans with a series of streets. He added that this allows for the expansion of the standards to apply to more streets.

Commissioner Watkins asked if the plan amendment expands the definition of a retail street from what it is now to what it will include in the future. Ms. Holmes said that this information is for the Committee to review and that this information will implement a large portion of the vision plan.

Chairperson Ryan said that she thinks we are best served with policy rather than the elements on the text level. Mr. McKinney said that he would like for Terry Shook and Craig Lewis to answer some of the questions to help the Committee better understand the intent.

Commissioner Wiggins said that she recognizes South Boulevard as the main street. However, she suggested that consideration be given to streetscaping along Camden Road and the street on the other side of South Boulevard because South Boulevard is a state road.

Chairperson Ryan said that is probably a good question for the consultant. Craig Lewis (Stantec) explained that South Boulevard is not a state highway. The state does not get to weigh in on this; it is a local decision. Commissioner Wiggins said that this is a real hardship for people who use South Boulevard to and from the city. Chairperson Ryan said that when it comes to transportation planning, creating a street network with options and a pedestrian centered place is important. Commissioner Wiggins thinks that South Boulevard should be the anchor because the rail line runs parallel to it.

Commissioner Gussman said that South Boulevard offers limited pedestrian facilities and there is a need to connect and improve pedestrian access. There are not many locations where he is comfortable crossing South Boulevard while walking.

Commissioner Nwasike asked how reducing traffic in this area will impact other areas. Chairperson Ryan said that is a good point and that it is reasonable to ask for this to be addressed in the plan. Commissioner Samuel asked if there is an easier way to connect to Interstate 277.

Craig Lewis said that there is no reference to reducing capacity along South Boulevard but the plan addresses improving overall safety. Travel could be slower. Chairperson Ryan said that she does not think there is disagreement but lack of clarity on some of the issues. Vice Chairperson Ham added that traffic on South Boulevard is a reality due to Charlotte's growth.

Mr. McKinney said that there are specific cross sections for South Boulevard and South Tryon Street in the handouts. He pointed out that the community and CDOT developed the recommendation of how future streets would look. Chairperson Ryan asked if there are any cross sections in the vision plan. She said that most vision plans include cross sections and that it is hard for her to vision without seeing the cross sections. Mr. McKinney explained that the cross sections handed out at this meeting are to be adopted and will implement the plan. Chairperson Ryan shared concerns about unprotected bike lanes in the plan amendments. Ms. Holmes said that is the existing East - West adopted cross section and CDOT was not comfortable changing it.

Commissioner Nwasike asked if South End is its own Municipal Service District (MSD) or is it a part of Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP). Cheryl Myers (Charlotte Center City Partners) said that South End is a MSD and CCCP supports their work plan that is sanctioned by the South End Advisory Committee. CCCP's work plan is sanctioned by the budget of the MSD. Once the plan is adopted, there will be implementation steps that will be added to their work plan. Ms. Myers added that CCCP will work very closely with the Planning Department, CDOT, and CATS, to implement the plan recommendations.

Chairperson Ryan said that City Council comments are fair and asked why we are planning this area when there are a lot of areas in the city that have not been planned at all. Terry Shook said that it is a fair comment but explained that this plan is being funded by the MSD. Chairperson Ryan said she thinks some of the plan specifics are vague.

Commissioner Wiggins said that she was on the Planning Commission when South End was started and that Tony Pressley ensured that there would be a funding source. Initially, Community Block Development Grants were used. The real driving force was neighborhood engagement. She said that Mr. Pressley understood the difference between vision and implementation. Mr. Shook agreed and said funding may come and go. The vision is important. Chairperson Ryan said the vision plan is

based on economic reality. Commissioner Wiggins said because the MSD has a funding base it can catapult things into action.

Mr. McKinney said that he would note that one of the issues is being clear about the implementation steps, who is involved and funding. Commissioner Gussman clarified that since it is a vision plan some of it is aspirational. Chairperson Ryan said that the pretty pictures need to be tied to economic reality; otherwise, we draw things that we cannot implement.

Chairperson Ryan referenced the CCCP & the City of Charlotte *South End Parking Study* (2013) that commissioners received earlier today. She thinks it is good and provides background on the plan. She noted that she did not see a parking deck in the document. Ms. Holmes said that it is a study on how to manage on street parking. Chairperson Ryan has concerns about the parking component of this plan and the recommended on street parking. Ms. Holmes said that there is a hierarchy of streets that governs parking. In the vision, the goal is to not have on street parking.

Chairperson Ryan asked is there any street in South End that will ever again allow on street parking. Ms. Holmes said if this is adopted, no. Chairperson Ryan said that is not how she reads it. Ms. Holmes acknowledged that the text needs to be clarified to read more clearly.

Chairperson Ryan said that she is not good with asking the city or county to donate money for a parking deck because she thinks eventually they will become obsolete. She thinks there are ample decks in Center City that people can use and then take the light rail to South End.

Commissioner Nwasike said thinks this plan provides a good balance for cars and other modes of transportation. She noted that efficient public transit is not available everywhere and the plan builds in the possibility for other forms of travel. Parking garages and parking places could be turned into parks or other uses later. However, for now they provide a good balance of the reality that parking is necessary for a lot of people and it says it in the plan. It also addresses why some people do not take transit, bike or walk to work. She thinks parking is necessary to make sure more people can get to their destinations quickly. She added that currently, the density is not high enough and the plan recognizes the need today.

Chairperson Ryan said that someone could come from the University area, park in a free parking deck and take the train to South End. Commissioner Nwasike said that's accurate. Then she explained that if she has to pick up her kids, go to the doctor and go to the hair salon she cannot use transit to do that. Therefore, she does not think that transit is a reality for her and a lot of other people yet.

Chairperson Ryan said it is similar to the conversation we had about whether or not South Boulevard is pedestrian oriented or a through street; it's a conversation about whether or not we provide parking in a pedestrian oriented district. Commissioner Nwasike said she thinks this is a vision and it is going to get there. However, she suggests taking into account the reality that exists now.

Commissioner Wiggins said that parking spaces can be gold mines. There could be a requirement that some of the revenue from parking go to the MSD or there could be condo parking spaces.

The discussion continued with the pros and cons of allowing parking, including how parking could potentially be a funding source. Mr. McKinney asked Mr. Lewis and Mr. Shook to explain the rationale for the plan's parking recommendations.

Mr. Lewis said that the language in regards to parking needs to be clear. The intention is not to build more parking but to utilize what we have more efficiently. He believes parking will be around for some period of time and thinks there may be a need for a separate parking deck that is shared. Mr. Shook stated that Maryland has had a municipal deck since the 1960s. Mr. Lewis recommends maximum parking standards and better use of spaces.

Commissioner Gussman referenced a municipal parking study. This study allowed the free enterprise to build a municipal deck and capture parking deficiencies. Commissioner Wiggins said that is what she was referring to - the condo method. Mr. Lewis said that we do not have maximum standards and the market is still building spaces because financiers are requiring it.

Commissioner Wiggins said millennials do not particularly want to own a vehicle, but there are people who need a vehicle. If someone can buy a space in a municipal lot that belongs to them, then you have more space to build residential and nonresidential uses.

Chairperson Ryan said that she supports fewer retail streets so the ones we have are really intense. She supports good stoops and entrances to residential buildings. Mr. Shook said that he thinks we need to have the absolute best retail streets possible. There is no teeth in South End to get good design. The market will guide where retail goes. Chairperson Ryan said she thinks that emphasis on great streets is more important than retail. She said that she wants to be careful about the dependence on retail and as a result, the possibility of having vacant spaces on streets. Commissioner Wiggins said you can take the same space that people would consider retail space and make it a very good facility for architects, offices and other businesses to add vibrancy and activity.

Chairperson Ryan said there is a policy statement about city wide cultural facilities in South End. She said Charlotte's policy has been to place all cultural facilities in Center City. She said that she thinks the reason that you place a football or baseball stadium in the middle of Center City is because of parking and accessibility. A museum makes sense but she is hard pressed to come up with a cultural facility and suggested that this be clarified. Mr. Shook said he agrees with her about the stadium and said a library could be an option. Chairperson Ryan agreed. Commissioner Wiggins said when South End really got started there were good arts and crafts businesses and wonderful galleries that encouraged lots of activity.

Chairperson Ryan mentioned affordable workplaces and a conservation overlay. She said that the plan could address affordability as a carrot. Mr. Lewis said no one has done this very well, but a lot of communities are dealing with this issue and so we are treading new ground in many ways and we have to think creatively about it. Consideration could be given to setting maximum development intensity and building styles, as well as specifying use restrictions for both affordability and adaptive reuse of current structures.

Commissioner Nwasike asked how does affordability work and if it is done in this area. Chairperson Ryan said this is chartering new ground on exactly to how to make that happen. There are a lot of people who want to retain the character of a place so that it is a place where people want to come. How to actually do that is a challenge. Mr. Lewis added that it is really important to have a lot of public engagement opportunities. We have heard an overwhelming desire for affordable space. This is a city wide issue that needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Wiggins said it is important to recognize that some of the people who work in South End, NODA and other communities do not make enough money to live there. They have to drive one or two hours in order to get to work. There needs to be some vertical affordable housing so that people who work in the area can live there.

Commissioner Nwasike agreed that we should not forget about affordable housing and the opportunity to be inclusive. Commissioner Samuel added that affordability is an ambiguous term to most people. Affordability might mean to sell at 80% instead of 100%. It may mean that 10% of units meet some definition of affordability. Affordability can come in so many different forms that we need to use some creativity on how we incorporate it.

Chairperson Ryan said that she does not think the plan makes a good argument on how many parks should be located in the area. She thinks the plan should highlight the new station and the new crossing because it is a huge deal.

Chairperson Ryan expressed concern about the design guidelines. She said there are commissioners on the full commission who are concerned about what the buildings look like. She thinks the design review committee is a good idea. She would like to talk about building length instead of block size because it can be regulated. Mr. Shook agreed to make sure that this is addressed. Mr. Lewis said that people are building much longer buildings to circumvent the subdivision regulations.

Mr. McKinney said that some of the guidelines may have gotten lost in the detail of the intent. The intent is to make sure that we get great streets. In regards to the building length, the intent is about scale and urban form of the streets and blocks.

Chairperson Ryan said we have so few pedestrian oriented districts in Charlotte and there are not many places where we can encourage our pedestrian qualities. We have a chance here and she is pushing for it to be better. Mr. Lewis said this could lay the ground work for other communities.

Chairperson Ryan said the plan encourages but does not require front stoops. She does not want blank windows. Mr. Shook said that is the intent and they will make sure it is clear.

Chairperson Ryan had a comment about the image on Page 59 showing a loading dock. Mr. Lewis said that they went back and forth about this image during the planning process. They drew this image three times. When the original image was presented to the community, they said it showed too much change. They wanted the image to show buildings that adapt to their needs, include low cost flex space and reflect what is going on there today with some upgrades.

Chairperson Ryan said that she was in New York on Friday and most of the loading docks had been made into pedestrian walkways. The vast majority of them do not remain as unarticulated loading docks. She thinks the plan should discourage loading docks. I hear what you are saying - you went back and forth. I just think you need to go forth again.

Chairperson Ryan commented on the images on pages 42 and 43 that show the parking lot with food trucks. Mr. Lewis said the image reflects what is there today. Chairperson Ryan suggested placing a building in the foreground with a plaza.

Mr. McKinney stated that there is the opportunity for the Planning Committee to receive public comment on the draft plan in November while staff addresses what they heard tonight. He said that the alternative is to continue more in depth conversation on issues from tonight at the November meeting and receive public comment in December. Chairperson Ryan asked if the Committee receives public comment on area plans. Mr. McKinney answered yes. Chairperson Ryan stated that she thinks it is a good plan but she just wants it to be a great plan. It was the consensus of the Committee to receive public comment on the draft *South End Vision Plan* and *South End Station Area Plans - South End Station Area Plan (2005) and New Bern Station Area Plan (2008)* plan amendments in November.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.