

Old Town North Small Area Plan Update (OTN SAP Update) Advisory Group Meeting #8
Thursday, September 29, 2016, 6:00 – 9:00 PM
Alexandria City Hall- Sister Cities Conference Room
301 King Street, Room 1101

September 29, 2016 ADVISORY GROUP MEETING NOTES

DRAFT 10.18.2016

1. Welcome and Acknowledgements

Advisory Group Chair Maria Wasowski acknowledged the passing of one of the Advisory Group members over the summer, Board of Architecture Review for the Old and Historic Alexandria District (BAR-OHA) Representative Vincent (Chip) Carlin. The Advisory Group was informed of Mr. Carlin’s passing when it occurred and a sympathy card was sent to his family on behalf of the Advisory Group; additionally, several members of the Advisory Group and staff attended the memorial service.

Chair Wasowski acknowledged the new BAR-OHA representative, Slade Elkins. She further announced that NRG Representative Steve Arabia has resigned his position from NRG to accept another job and, as a result, a new appointment to the Advisory Group will follow.

2. OTN Related Studies

City staff shared updates on the on-going OTN studies with the Advisory Group and the public. The studies are noted below and the link to the presentation describing the purpose and status of each can be found [here](#):

- Transportation Study
- Parking Study
- Eco-District Study
- Stormwater and Sanitary Sewer Management Study
- Historic Interpretative Catalogue
- Streetscape Improvements Catalogue
- Market Study

Parking Study Advisory Group and Public Comments

Comment: Is there a need to add a bullet that says “Promote partnership between the City and Private Properties for Shared Parking?”

Response: There are challenges for the City to make agreements with existing garages but it’s still an option we should pursue; the City can potentially have more leverage on the Power Plant Site.

Question: What if properties do not agree to participate in a Shared Parking Program? Is there a plan “B”?

Response: The City can explore additional tools to help make parking management in the area more efficient.

Response: Under the Waterfront Plan, many office properties expressed interest in opening up their garages for public use in the evenings and weekends especially. They indicated that it will be important to first see the demand in order to justify the cost of operation and management of the garage during such times.

Comment: Meter parking negatively impacts retail. Businesses on King Street complain about the metered parking.

Response: Meter parking often helps businesses by encouraging parking turnover and ensuring the most convenient spaces are available for their customers. Based on the turnover analysis, many of those spaces are not turning over, which leads us to believe they are being used by employees in the area rather than retail customers. A first step may be to extend the time restrictions or add restrictions where there are none to promote turnover. Metered parking should be a tool that is considered as a way to help manage on-street parking in retail areas.

Question: Have you considered dynamic wayfinding systems?

Response: City staff has done some research on new parking technologies.

Question: Can parking for retail be restricted for customers?

Response: That strategy is hard to track and enforce.

Question: Has the Robinson Terminal North (RTN) Parking Study been taken into consideration?

Response: Yes; the consultant used on-street parking data from the RTN parking study.

Question: Why is there a big jump in parking supply for the future land use? It is almost double the existing supply.

Response: The supply figure assigns the parking requirement for the proposed development based on the parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The parking consultant Fehr & Peers used the Urban Land Institute parking model to help model the actual demand for the future development considering that many uses can share parking.

Sewer and Stormwater Study Advisory Group and Public Comments

Question: Why isn't the City addressing the outfall at Pendleton Street (Outfall #001) first?

Response: Pursuant to a time-driven Virginia permit requirement, the City is currently addressing three outfalls tied to the Hunting Creek Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). However, while the Pendleton Outfall is not subject to that permit, the City is also endeavoring to address it. In that regard, the City is looking at a two phased approach, including: Phase I - (1) separation of sewer and stormwater for new development that will occur pursuant to or tangential to the OTN SAP Update process; and (2) installation of green infrastructure opportunities to help move urban stormwater away from the built environment, thereby reducing and treating stormwater at its source through plants, soils and other filters. Phase II – To build a

tank for temporary storage of the flows that travel through the combined sewer system until such time, during inclement weather, that it can be released to the treatment facility.

Eco-District Study Advisory Group and Public Comments

Question: Potential additional development will increase stormwater run-off. Are there measures that are being taken to reduce impervious surfaces?

Response: The Eco-District study looks at strategies to reduce run-off from new development. Some of these strategies include:

- Reducing impervious surfaces by utilizing permeable pavements
- Installing bioretention and rain garden facilities in private developments as well as the right-of-way
- Installing green roofs and rooftop gardens
- Maximizing tree canopy coverage

Remaining Related Studies

There were not questions on the remaining studies but again for an understanding of their purpose and status please refer to the presentation [here](#).

Proposed Royal Street Bikeway Advisory Group and Public Comments

Steve Sindiong, Acting Division Chief, Transportation & Environmental Services, gave a presentation on the proposed Royal Street Neighborhood Bikeway that highlighted the project goals of improving safety and access to both pedestrians and bicyclists through creating calmer streets and providing attractive and greener streetscapes. The proposed bikeway does not add any bike lanes to Royal Street. No traffic circles are being proposed and no stop signs will be removed as part of the design. Some of the characteristics of a neighborhood bikeway such as improved signage and markings, traffic calming measures, green infrastructure, and safer intersection crossings. The presentation is located [here](#).

Comment: Bulb-outs on King Street pose a danger to bicyclists.

Response: The sharrow markings on Royal Street are proposed to be close to the middle of the travel lane and away from the parking lane so they will not conflict with bulb-outs.

Comment: Bicyclists in the middle of the travel lane will anger motorists who will be trying to pass them. There is not enough space for bicyclists and motorists.

Response: Currently, Royal Street does not have a large traffic volume, and shared lanes are commonly used on local, lower volume streets such as Royal Street.

Comment: Bulb-outs will not slow traffic any further because there are currently stop signs at almost every intersection.

Response: In addition to traffic calming, bulb-outs accomplish a number of other improvements, such as providing more space for green infrastructure which reduces impervious surfaces and

reducing the crosswalk distance at intersections and providing better visibility of pedestrians, making it safer for pedestrians to cross.

Question: Why not improve the existing Mt. Vernon Trail and widen the path to make it more comfortable for walkers and bicyclists?

Response: The plan is recommending a widening of the trail along the rail spur. There is no continuous designated off street trail through Old Town as part of the Mt. Vernon Trail, and therefore, a north-south street connection is needed. Union Street is currently designated as the street connection for the Mt. Vernon Trail. Because of the congestion along Union Street, there is a need for another north-south parallel route that provides a connection to the trail, and also provides a way for bicyclists to get to other destinations within the City.

Comment: Mt. Vernon Trail is a running/walking path and there is currently a lot of conflict with bicyclists on that path. Royal Street is a good route for bicyclists but we need to look at options to make it more effective.

Comment: It might be a good idea for the City to hold a field trip to a similar neighborhood bikeway as the one proposed for Royal Street.

Response: The City can look into that.

Question: In my travels abroad, I have seen stop signs designed for bicyclists. Can we install something similar on Royal Street?

Response: On Union Street, there are signs targeted for bicyclists that alert bicyclists to stop at all stop signs. These can be considered for Royal Street as well. In addition, we can look at specific bicycle stop signs at the intersections.

Comment: Instead of prioritizing Royal Street as a bikeway, disperse bike traffic on all streets.

Response: There are designated bike routes throughout the City. There is a need to alert and route bicyclists to accessible and convenient routes, such as Royal Street.

Comment: We should look at state laws on photographing cars at stop signs the same way it's done for traffic lights. This would reduce violations and force cars to stop at stop signs.

Status of the OTN SAP Planning Process

Staff indicated that we are now in Phase IV of the OTN SAP Update planning process, where we are completing draft policy statements for each planning category; the policy statements will become the basis for Plan Recommendations:

Phase I (Plan Framework – Vision, Goals, Objectives and Concepts) – Completed in December 2016, with extensive input from the Advisory Group, Community and staff, followed by concurrence by the Planning Commission and City Council to proceed to Phases II and III.

Phases II and III (Study and Testing) – Significant progress was generated by the Advisory Group from January to June 2016 as it organized itself into Subcommittees, by planning category, to study and test key concepts developed under Phase I for the given planning categories. All Subcommittee meetings and activities were open to the public with materials online, just as all Advisory Group meetings and activities are open to the public with materials online.

Phase IV – Based on findings and next steps identified through Phases II and III, the Advisory Group, with community input began developing policy statements for each planning category at the end of June 2016 and staff continued to work on them over the summer with input from representatives of the Advisory Group in late August. The draft policy statements are now before the Advisory Group for further input and they will become the basis of Plan Recommendations for Plan Development in Phase IV. (Summer/Fall 2016)

Phase V – Public Review Process for the Draft Plan with approval anticipated in winter, and implementation to follow (Winter 2016-2017)

OTN SAP Update Plan Release

Because several related studies such as the Transportation Study and the Sanitary Sewer Study are still ongoing, the City is recommending that the OTN SAP Update be released in chapters. A draft schedule for September – February 2016 was distributed to the Advisory Group as part of tonight’s materials and to the public. Hearing no objections, staff will proceed with this approach of releasing the chapters as they are ready for public review and input. This approach will allow sufficient time for public review and input.

Comment: On the [Draft Schedule](#), the Planning Commission Work Session date in January is the 5th not the 9th.

Response: That change was subsequently made as reflected on the online version.

Draft OTN SAP Update Policy Statements

The Advisory Group received copies of the Working Draft Policy Statements for the following Planning Categories in advance of tonight’s meeting; the draft policy statements are also online [here](#):

- Economic Development
- Planning, Land Use and Design
- Housing
- Open Space, Recreation, and Cultural Activities
- Historic Preservation
- Implementation

Next Steps - While there was some discussion during the meeting of these policy statements, it was decided that since the draft OTN SAP Update will be released in chapters, Advisory Group members will individually review the draft policy statement further between now and the next Advisory Group Meeting on October 27th. In the meantime, the following comments were expressed:

Working Draft Policy Recommendations Advisory Group and Public Comments

Community Facility Space Comments

Comment: The community facility should be public with enough usable space for meetings and other activities.

Response: Representatives of the Advisory Group met on August 29th and requested that that particular policy statement be strengthened to ensure that it is understood that community facilities should be multi-purpose and available to the public. That change is reflected.

Comment: The MetroStage Theater is currently not used frequently on Mondays and Tuesdays. The community can utilize the theater if there is enough demand.

Implementation Comments

Comment: The 1994 Old Town North Urban Design Guidelines was a small 16 page document. Now the City develops Urban Design Standards and Guidelines that are over 100 pages such as the set developed for the Oakville SAP. Is there still a need for the Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC) if we have an implementation committee?

Staff Notation: The notion of a possible implementation committee – if this is something that the Advisory Group decides would be useful to recommend -- would be to assist with a given, time-limited purpose in identifying and attracting innovative uses to NRG. The other tasks that would occur during implementation could be undertaken by staff with periodic updates to the Planning Commission, City Council and the Community for input and review.

Comment: UDAC's function is reactive to the development projects that it reviews. It seems that the proposed implementation group's responsibility is to sculpt what OTN would look like and where those innovation uses would be located.

Comment: UDAC members are a mix of businesses owners and residents. This composition is necessary to make both users work together.

Comment: It is not the Advisory Group's mission to determine the fate of UDAC.

Comment: The advantage of UDAC is that citizens come to those meetings and get a chance to see the proposed plans. Without UDAC, citizens will not have a chance to see those plans and the City will lose its connection to the public. UDAC may need a large reset but not necessarily a sunset of the group.

Comment: The Planning Commission has been asking City staff to bring development plans early on to work sessions and into a public forum.

Comment: There are parts of the City that do not have an urban advisory committee. In those cases, City staff utilizes civic associations to bring development plans to the public.

Comment: The Edens project is a good example of getting community input early. The developers came to the NOTICe civic association a year before going to Planning Commission and City Council.

Comment: An implementation group should look at implementing regulatory tools and incentives to encourage implementation of the plan vision.

Comment: It seems that the implementation group would function more like a marketing group. Can see the value in that kind of structure. However, that's not what UDAC is about. For example, the Kingsley project initially intended to locate the loading dock across from the Alexandria House. The residents were able to participate in UDAC meetings and UDAC pushed for moving the loading dock on to St. Asaph Street.

Comment: Would hope that we do not wait for property owners to move forward with only their ideas about innovative uses for the area but rather, instead, the Community is proactive in helping to identify those uses.

Comment: The Power Plant Site will be difficult from a transportation standpoint. We need to start thinking creatively about transportation.

Response: As you may recall, the Charrettes started identifying possible street extensions into the site as has been shown. Also, there has been discussion by the Advisory Group of exploration of a rubber wheel trolley to help connect that area to other parts of the Old Town North and to other adjacent areas.

Comment: Requiring a street grid on the Power Plant Site is a given. The site is also north enough to be close to the future Potomac Yard Metro. Need to think about new transportation modes.

Comment: AEDP should be working with property owners on what kind of development and uses will go on the Power Plant Site.

Comment: A marketing group seems redundant to AEDP. The responsibility should go beyond AEDP and have an advocacy component.

Comment: The City should look at incentives to attract businesses and retain them in the City.

Advisory Group Attendance

Maria Wasowski

Scott Barstow

Elizabeth Chimento

Herb Cooper-Levy

Slade Elkins

Austin Flajser

Steven Goodman

Carolyn Griffin

Kevin Harris

Bruce Machanic

Carlos Mejias

Jesse O'Connell

Thomas Soapes

David Speck

Marie Tavernini

Jeff Strup

Christa Watters