

Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTN SAP) Advisory Group Meeting #5
Thursday, March 24, 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 PM
Crowne Plaza Hotel
901 N Fairfax Street – Washington Room

March 24, 2016 ADVISORY GROUP MEETING NOTES

FINAL

HOUSEKEEPING

A. OTN SAP Advisory Group Meeting #4 Notes: The Summary Meeting Notes for Advisory Group Meetings #4 were finalized with no edits and will be uploaded, as final, onto the OTN SAP Update webpage.

B. February and March Draft Subcommittee Meeting Notes:

The Advisory Group was handed Draft Subcommittee Meeting Notes for:

1. February 10, 2016 Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability & Transportation Subcommittee Meeting Summary Notes (Meeting #1)
2. February 10, 2016 Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting Summary Notes (Meeting #1)
3. March 9, 2016 Planning, Land Use and Design & Housing Subcommittee Meeting Summary Notes (Meeting #2)
4. March 9, 2016 Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Activities & Historic Preservation Subcommittee Meeting Summary Notes (Meeting #2)

SMALL BUSINESS INITIATIVES AND FOOD TRUCKS – ALEX DAMBACH,
PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

Prior to the start of the regular business, Alex Dambach, Division Chief of Land Use Services, Department of Planning and Zoning, gave a presentation on two City initiatives that the City is inviting the Advisory Group and the Public to provide input on.

Food Truck Policy Update

This past December, City Council adopted regulations to allow food truck vending at off-street locations such as commercial and recreational parking lots and farmer’s markets. These current regulations also allow food trucks to vend on-street if they operate as part of a permitted Special Event.

While adopting these regulations, City Council also directed staff to investigate expanding the program to allow food truck vending at on-street locations. The City has identified three potential on-street food truck locations, using criteria that provide a way to meet the demand for food trucks while minimizing impact to City streets. One of these locations is along the west side of N. Fairfax Street between Montgomery and First Streets inside the Old Town North Planning Area. The

others are along Eisenhower Avenue near Mill Road and along West Street near the Braddock Road Metro Station. Each of these locations would accommodate two or three food trucks at one time.

The City is currently seeking feedback on Potential Food Truck Locations at this [link](#). The deadline for submission is 11:59 PM on Sunday, April 3, 2016.

Small Business Zoning Amendments

City Council has requested that the Planning and Zoning Department research ways to improve the City's business environment. In response, the City is conducting a project to propose amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and its special use permit requirements that would help many types of businesses have a shorter and less costly review process than they now have while also ensuring that neighborhood concerns and community impacts from businesses are properly addressed. Many Old Town North business sites would be affected by this project. The Planning Commission will hold a Small Business Zoning work session on Tuesday, April 5, 2016, 6:00 – 7:00 PM, City Hall, City Council Workroom. Staff proposes to present a Zoning Text Amendment report to Planning Commission on Tuesday, June 7, 2016 and to City Council on Saturday, June 18, 2016. More information on this initiative can be found [here](#).

ADVISORY GROUP AND COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Question: There are several restaurants in this area, will food trucks be competing with small businesses and are they suitable for Old Town? **Response:** That is correct; there are several restaurants in the area. One restaurant, for example, is located directly across from the proposed Old Town North Site. Food Truck vendors are generally looking to eventually open brick and mortar locations and become a small business themselves. The Food Truck program is a strategy to enliven areas of the City, since many food trucks draw patrons from throughout the region and are helpful in activating sidewalk activity, but they also provide the business owner with a way to test the area before investing in a brick and mortar location.

Question: How will parking be impacted if food trucks are taking up parking spaces? **Response:** The City has done a parking analysis to determine which locations will have the least impact on parking and City streets.

REPORT OUT FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Subcommittee Chair David Speck reviewed the discussion items resulting from the initial Economic Development Subcommittee meeting held on February 10, 2016 (Meeting #1); he indicated that the primary outcome of the meeting was consensus to hold a Panel Discussion on April 20th that can help shape a Retail Strategy for Old Town North.

- **Proposed Steps for Retail Analysis and Strategy:** Subcommittee Chair Speck indicated that at the February 10th Subcommittee meeting, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP) staff and City staff defined a Catchment Area that includes Old Town North, Old Town, Braddock, Del Ray and Rosemont for an Old Town North retail analysis. Staff presented the Subcommittee with data for the Catchment area on: Households, Age, Education, Income,

Employment, Industry Designations for Civilian Population Age 16+, and Daytime Population. Staff also reviewed data on Traffic Counts, Commercial Sales, existing Land Uses Mix, and Mobility Factors for the Catchment Area, as part of the staff presentation. The presentation of this analysis is online as part of the Subcommittee materials and can be accessed [here](#).

- **Retail and Commercial Panel Discussion:** Subcommittee Chair Speck further indicated that the Subcommittee has requested staff to pursue a Retail and Commercial Panel Discussion to help analyze the current and future commercial and retail markets for Old Town North.
 - **Date** - April 20, 2016
 - **Time** – 4:00 – 6:00 PM
 - **Place** – Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, 401 Wythe Street
 - **Panelists** – Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, Retail Broker, Commercial Broker, and Asset Manager

ADVISORY GROUP AND COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Question: The discussion seems to be focused on retail, but what about office and other uses?

Response: The panel discussion will also focus on commercial uses.

Question: With the desire to achieve and maintain a balanced land use mix in Old Town North, how do you recommend addressing market changes? **Response:** We are hoping to gain insight from real estate professionals to help address that question at the Retail and Commercial Panel Discussion on April 20, 2016 so everyone is encouraged to attend. Generally, small and medium sized commercial entities do not want to be the ones taking risks; a large entity is needed to create the critical mass. The US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is a great example. When the USPTO opened their campus in Carlyle it fueled a much faster commercial and retail growth.

Comment: A balance of commercial and residential creates a strong retail.

Question: What is the projected population growth in Old Town North? **Response:** The City is in the process of generating growth projections. The [OTN Project Brief Document](#) contains past and current demographics (pages 9-11), and the [February 10th Subcommittee presentation](#) contains some current demographics as well; however, more work is needed to complete future projections, but that work is underway in Phases II and III of the overall planning process.

Comment: There are areas of opportunity in Old Town North to create after hours gathering places which makes this planning area exciting to study.

Comment: A lot of the land use discussion is market driven. Currently the market is heavily residential. It will be important to look at transitions between uses. **Response:** The updated Urban Design Guidelines that will be developed as part of this process will assist with that.

Comment: Some of the issues discussed in this community also overlap with City-wide issues such as office to residential conversions. Old Town North will be looked at within the context of some of those broader City-wide studies. The Alexandria Economic Development Partnership in conjunction with the City is currently studying the conversion issue and will take this community

into account as part of that as well as other communities which strive to maintain a balanced and healthy mix of uses.

REPORT OUT FROM THE INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Subcommittee Co-Chairs Maria Wasowski and Scott Barstow reviewed the discussion items resulting from the initial Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability & Transportation meeting held on February 10, 2016 (Meeting #1).

Transportation

Co-Chair Maria Wasowski shared a number of key opportunities related to transportation that staff reported on during the [February 10, 2016 Subcommittee meeting](#). She indicated that these opportunities are being developed further in Phases II and III of the overall planning process. The opportunity areas include:

- General streetscape improvements (sidewalks, landscaping, environmental features)
- Second Street potential improvements with possible widened sidewalks, tree wells and environmental features
- Options for the trail are being studied for feasibility, **including viability of transit**, environmental and recreational options
- Greening of streets – such as Royal Street
- Potential expansion of street grid to connect to NRG
- Potential conversion of one way streets to two way (Madison and Montgomery)
- Parking and transportation studies are being pursued

Comment: Did not hear about improvements to Fairfax Street which is currently heavily trafficked and is not welcoming to pedestrians. Also, have found Madison and Montgomery Streets to work very efficiently as one way streets. Not in a hurry to see them converted to two way streets unless there is a good reason for it. **Response:** Fairfax Street Improvements are being addressed under the Planning, Land Use, and Design & Housing Subcommittee as well as the Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Activities & Historic Preservation Subcommittee. There is a concept being explored that could potentially convert part of Fairfax Street as an Arts Corridor with streetscape improvements and the possible installations of art on both private and public properties with cooperation and support of private property owners of course. In addition, as part of the Transportation Study mentioned earlier the City will include an analysis to study the feasibility of converting Madison and Montgomery Streets to two way streets. No decision will be made until further analysis is done and the findings available for review.

Infrastructure & Environmental Sustainability

Co-Chair Scott Barstow reviewed items discussed by the Subcommittee pertaining to environmental sustainability, with much of the discussion focused on a possible Old Town North Eco-District and the importance of using that concept to improve performance in the areas of sustainability. The following was summarized:

- The City's Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) supports the idea of an Old Town North Eco District; the primary intent is for Old Town North to be a high performer relative to environmental goals, particularly those within the City's [Environmental Action Plan](#).
- In 2009, the City Council approved the [Environmental Action Plan](#) which includes a range of goals and targets that this planning process can pull from to create measures for an Old Town North Eco-District. Such goals and targets include:
 - Establishment of eco-sustainable neighborhoods
 - Development of a holistic transportation system
 - Integration of energy efficient construction
 - Promotion of green infrastructure
 - Inclusion of systems that monitor ecological efficiency of buildings
 - Creation of City-wide civic sustainability and educational materials and strategies
 - Creation of a green fiscal policy
- EPC will submit a letter to the OTN SAP Advisory Group identifying some targets for areas such as the following and suggesting designation of Old Town North as a pilot project to promote them:
 - Renewable Energy
 - Green Building (The City's has a [Green Building Policy](#) approved in 2009 which establishes standards for new public and private development that requires a Development Site Plan (DSP) or Development Special Use Permit (DSUP)).

ADVISORY GROUP AND COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Comment: Not comfortable with calling Old Town North an Eco-District if a portion of the area is under the combined sewer shed. **Response:** The Combined Sewer Overflow is a priority for the City and a solution can be worked as part of the OTN SAP Update.

STAFF PRESENTATION – PLANNING, LAND USE AND DESIGN AND HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING #3

Staff gave a presentation on the main topics discussed at the March 22, 2016 Planning, Land Use and Design & Housing Subcommittee Meeting (Meeting #3). The presentation is located [here](#) and it is online and it includes:

- (1) **Urban Design Guidelines Initial Discussion** – The 1992 OTN SAP included Urban Design Subareas. Also, one of the recommendations in the 1992 OTN SAP was for a set of Urban Design Guidelines. Those guidelines were developed and approved in 1994. The Subcommittee is encouraging an update to the 1994 Urban Design Guidelines as part of this planning effort and tonight’s presentation by staff included a review of some of the topical areas to be addressed to ensure the use of best practices and other more recent changes in urban design, construction technology, architectural design, and more that have occurred since 1994.
- (2) **Arts Corridor on part of N. Fairfax Street** – The Charrette proposed designating Old Town North as an Arts District. That process comes with a number of challenges so as an alternative the Subcommittee is encouraging designating part of North Fairfax Street as an Arts Corridor. In that regard, staff verbally expressed a concept with the potential for artistic streetscape improvements and possible art installations on private and public property with of course the cooperation and assistance of property owners for any art on private parcels.
- (3) **Development Sites Analysis** – Based on concurrence by the Subcommittee, staff presented an overview of known and potential development sites in Old Town North including sites that are being assessed for potential zoning and/or height changes. Those potential changes are limited in number.
- (4) **NRG Concept** – Based on concurrence by the Subcommittee, staff gave a presentation on potential Open Space, Land Use, and Building Scale concepts for the NRG site.
- (5) **Housing Master Plan Policies** – Staff reported that the Subcommittee came to consensus on a list of policies and zoning, programmatic and financial tools from the Housing Master Plan that the Subcommittee is recommending be included for implementation in Old Town North:
 - Pursuant to Section 7-700 the Zoning Ordinance, allow an increase under the Density Bonus Program from 20% to 30% as part of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Update.
 - Utilize Resolution 830 for a one to one replacement of the Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority (ARHA) units, preferably placing them on site.
 - Apply the City’s longest term of affordability (40 to 60 years) for affordable housing.
 - Explore opportunities for affordable housing development, including artist housing, throughout the plan area.

ADVISORY GROUP AND COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Comment: The Potential Building Heights Map for NRG changes the initial expectation of buildings stepping down in height from the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GW Parkway) to the Waterfront. However, it seems that because of height restrictions under the Old and Historic Alexandria District, where buildings cannot be more than 50 feet in height along the parkway, the building heights on the NRG site will be rather stepping up from the GW Parkway to the Waterfront.

Comment: The improved Potential Building Heights Map shown in the presentation based on feedback during the March 22, 2016 Planning, Land Use and Design & Housing Subcommittee Meeting shows a better range of scale that will allow for flexibility on the NRG site in the future.

Question: Are there discussions on bike safety, particularly on East/West Streets such as Bashford Street and Slaters Lane? **Response:** A Draft Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan will be presented to Planning Commission on April 5, 2016 which includes a proposed bicycle facility on Slaters Lane and Madison Street as well as a neighborhood bike way on Royal Street.

Comment: Is there a development timeframe for the NRG site? **Response:** There is still a long process that involves the subdivision of the parcel between NRG and PEPCO which also needs to go to Planning Commission for approval, and for NRG to acquire site control. With respect to existing structures, discussions about demolition and redevelopment will most likely occur at the same time.

Comment: Is there an idea of how much additional open space will be on the NRG Site? **Response:** As noted, the concept for NRG is at very high level with a lot of unknowns remaining. The Potential Open Space Concept Map shown tonight for the NRG Site therefore reflects the possibility of some expanded open space into the NRG site, west of the existing fence along the Waterfront, and it is anticipated that there would also be open space as part of the future private developments. *However*, staff cautions that everything relative to this site is very preliminary so numbers relating to open space and many other aspects of the site will be subject to many factors to come.

Comment: The NRG site is also next to a large park which is Daingerfield Island.

Comment: The group of buildings that include Canal Center, Transpotomac Plaza and the Crowne Plaza Hotel provides a potential for a synergy that can be linked to the proposed Arts Corridor along Fairfax Street and streetscape improvements along Second Street.

Comment: It looks like all we are doing is keeping the existing public and affordable housing in the area. Can we get numbers on how many additional affordable units we can bring to Old Town North? **Response:** Whenever public housing units are demolished, we want to ensure that the same number of units are replaced on-site. ARHA's plan is to create mixed income communities through redevelopment so a broader range of incomes will be introduced. There are also opportunities for additional affordable housing within future development sites in Old Town North. For example, the Edens development on the ABC/Giant site will be adding nine affordable units.

Comment: How will Resolution 830 be applied to the Hopkins-Tancil units? **Response:** There are 108 units at Hopkins-Tancil. If 108 units are demolished, under Resolution 830, all 108 units will need to be rebuilt onsite, if possible, along with market rate units to help subsidize the cost of rebuilding the ARHA-owned affordable housing.

Advisory Group Attendance – Meeting of March 24, 2016

- Maria Wasowski, Chair (Planning Commission and Transportation Commission)
- Steven Arabia (Property Owner Representative)
- Scott Barstow (Environmental Policy Commission Representative)
- Anna Bentley (Community Representative – At Large)
- Chip Carlin (Board of Architectural Review – Old & Historic District)
- Herbert J. (Herb) Cooper-Levy (Community Representative - At Large)
- Austin Flajser (Property Owner)
- Stephen Goodman (HOA/Community Representative)
- Carolyn Griffin (Community Representative)
- Kevin Harris (Community Representative – Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority Residents)
- Marie McKenney Tavernini (Urban Design Advisory Committee)
- Carlos Mejias (Business Representative)
- Jesse O’Connell (Park and Recreation Commission Representative)
- Thomas Soapes (Community Representative - NOTICE)
- David Speck (Alexandria Economic Development Partnership Representative)
- Jeff Strup (Property Owner Representative)
- Marie McKenney Tavernini (Urban Design Advisory Committee)
- Christa Watters (Community Representative – Homeowner Associations/At-Large)