

Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTN SAP) Advisory Group Meeting #7
Thursday, May 26, 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 PM
Crowne Plaza Hotel
901 N Fairfax Street – Washington Room

May 26, 2016 ADVISORY GROUP MEETING NOTES
DRAFT 6.6.2016

I. HOUSEKEEPING

David Speck chaired the meeting at the request of Chair Maria Wasowski. He welcomed everyone and turned the meeting over to staff for housekeeping and a presentation.

- A. OTN SAP Advisory Group Meeting #6 Notes:** There was one comment pertaining to the Summary Meeting Notes for Advisory Group Meetings #6. The comment related to the “Report Out from the Economic Development Subcommittee.” The comment noted the cost per square foot of retail space, indicating that the cost is often higher than what can be supported here and a suggestion followed to explore if proffers can be used to help support retail. The comment was included in Advisory Group Meeting #6 Summary Notes and the notes were finalized for posting on the OTN SAP Update webpage.
- B. Adjustments to Advisory Group Meeting Schedule as agreed to by the Advisory Group:**
- The June 23rd Advisory Group Meeting will be moved to June 8th at 7:00 PM, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.
 - The June 23rd Advisory Group meeting date will be utilized for a topical evening meeting as a kick-off to the Mini-Charrette.
 - The Mini-Charrette will occur on June 24th and June 25th. The June 25th date is a Saturday and official business for the Charrette will begin in the afternoon on that day.
 - More details about the Mini-Charrette will follow, along with a flyer for distribution to the community.
- C. Old Town North Community Partnership Farmers Market** - Staff provided a reminder that a Farmers Market sponsored by the Old Town North Community Partnership is taking place in the Montgomery Park parking lot at Montgomery and Royal Streets weekly on Thursdays, 3-7:00 PM. Margaret Townsend, President of the Partnership and Jack Browand, RPCA, were congratulated on working together over the past 5 years to plan and achieve this service for the community.
- D. Wednesday, June 1, 2016, National Building Museum – Art Lives Here** – Staff shared a flyer for this June 1st event at the National Building Museum that explores Investment Strategies for Creative Place making.

- E. [Old Town North Montgomery Park Concerts](#) – Staff shared a flyer for two jazz concerts, sponsored by the City, in Montgomery Park on Monday, June 27: Blues Concert. Monday, July 18, Bluegrass Concert.

II. DEBRIEF MAY 12, 2016 COMMUNITY MEETING

Staff reviewed the [public comments](#) from the May 12th Community Meeting indicating that they include helpful feedback, input and ideas. Staff also thanked NOTICE on behalf of the City for co-hosting the meeting. Further, staff requested Tom Soapes, President of NOTICE who sent comments following the meeting, to summarize NOTICE’s perspective on the meeting. He indicated he thought the meeting was productive and well attended. He expressed concern over the transition from the staff presentation to the keypad exercise indicating that it left many community members confused by terminology such as the terms “density” and “regulatory incentives.” He suggested it would be helpful to define those terms beforehand since some people might have an initial negative reaction to them. Other Advisory Group members and staff agreed. **Follow-up:** There was consensus that staff would produce a glossary of terms that can be available prior to the Mini-Charrette. It will be given to the Advisory Group, posted online and hard copies will also be available during the Mini-Charrette. It was suggested that the glossary be useful to citizens who come to public meetings. It should include some of the trade-offs such as density and parking to achieve the Plan’s goals and objectives.

Comment: Maybe start the Mini-Charrette in June with an informational session. **Follow-up:** Staff agreed that this can be done.

Comment: The glossary may be a useful tool for citizens in general.

III. PRESENTATION

A. Planning Tools

City staff made a [presentation](#) with an overview (pages 4-24) of some of the planning tools that the City utilizes starting with the City’s Master Plan which consists of 18 Small Area Plans for Alexandria neighborhoods, including the Old Town North Small Area Plan for the Old Town North community. It was indicated that each small area plan is generated through community participation, and the plan sets a long term vision for the given community and provides principles and goals, recommendations, and planning and zoning tools to accomplish the goals.

Accordingly, this part of the presentation also provided a reminder of draft principles and goals that came out of the Phase I-Plan Framework for the Old Town North Small Area Plan Update (OTN SAP Update). Further the presentation included a list of regulations by topical area that are addressed under the City of Alexandria’s Zoning Ordinance. Finally it provided a list of potential planning incentives (regulatory and financial), as well as the Urban Design Guidelines, that federal, state and local jurisdictions make available to help communities promote good planning.

ADVISORY GROUP AND PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comment: Under the financial Incentives, one incentive missing from the list is the City's Housing Trust Fund. **Response:** That is correct, and it should be on this list.

Question: In the 2016 Area Median Income (AMI) table, why is there an asterisk next to 80% AMI? **Response:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses a different mathematical formula to calculate the [80% AMI](#). It should have been included to the notes in the bottom. We will make sure to add it to the [final presentation](#) before uploading it to the OTN SAP Webpage.

Comment: The Washington Post published an interesting [article](#) on the cost of two bedroom rental units in Washington, D.C. During the discussion of one of our goals, we talked about making this area affordable to a broad range of income levels. According to this article, however, this goal is not easy to do, particularly when talking about rental units. We are seeing a rise in the number of rental units in the area; however they are very expensive and they end up pricing out a large group of people.

Question: Under the OTN SAP Update draft principles and goals, what is the City Council comments column? **Response:** The draft principles and goals tables include all suggestions and comments made by the Advisory Group, which are in green, the Planning Commission in blue, and the City Council Comments in purple. These principles were reviewed by all three entities and the community as part of the Plan Framework Phase I process, with input highlighted as noted.

Comment: Slide 23 which shows the typical hourly wage for various jobs and professions in the City of Alexandria emphasizes the need for affordable housing. It reflects that wages do not tie to the cost of housing here.

Question: Does the City's Housing Master Plan recommend locating low-income families in housing centers or dispersing them throughout the City? **Response:** The City's Housing Master Plan's goal is to locate affordable housing throughout the City with additional criteria to locate affordable housing near transit and job opportunities. Each new development is required to include an affordable housing component or provide in lieu contribution. Additionally, the goal for the OTN SAP Update is also to provide affordable housing throughout the plan area.

Comment: Sometimes there is confusion between public housing and affordable housing.

Response: Affordable housing includes public housing, subsidized affordable housing, and market affordable housing. Public housing units are overseen by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the local housing agency (in the City of Alexandria it is the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority [ARHA]). Both own and manage the public housing units. ARHA typically provides housing for families earning 30% or less of the AMI. The City's [Resolution 830](#) requires that public housing units be replaced one for one in the event of redevelopment or demolition. Subsidized affordable housing is housing where all or a portion of the occupant's monthly housing cost is paid for by another entity. These units can also be provided through developers. Market affordable housing units are those that are affordable for reasons other than subsidy, such as age or condition. The City of Alexandria's Office of Housing primarily

channels its financial resources to housing units that are typically available for families earning 40% to 80% of the AMI; but it also has programs to meet the needs of individuals or households throughout a range of incomes.

Comment: Sometimes there is a stigma attached to public housing and that needs to be taken into account. **Response:** New ARHA housing units are now integrated within mixed-income developments to help address this. The exteriors of the public housing units should be architecturally and aesthetically identical to the market-rate units so one cannot easily distinguish among them. In a past meeting, we heard how important this and other factors relating to the design and operation of mixed income housing is from Kevin Harris, the ARHA representative to the Advisory Group. Under this planning process, we should stress the importance of effectively blending the exteriors of mixed-income housing units, while also ensuring adequate internal design of the affordable units.

Comment: Agreed. That is what a lot of communities are doing now. In the past you could distinguish between what was public housing and what was not. Nowadays in new development it is harder to tell which units are public housing and which are market-rate housing.

Question: In the Project Brief, under the Housing section, a table showed that there was no affordable housing in Old Town North. Is that excluding ARHA? **Response:** The table showed that there are no Market Affordable rental units in Old Town North. Market Affordable units are those that are affordable for reasons other than subsidy, such as age or condition.

B. Place Making Discussion (Connecting the Dots)

Pages 25-27 of the presentation attempt to show how all the key pieces of this planning process should now begin to come together – based on the work of the Advisory Group Subcommittees and the community to-date – in a manner that promotes place making to achieve the draft goals and principles of the planning process.

ADVISORY GROUP AND PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comment: Under the place making, Slide 27, Cultural Arts should have its own bullet.

Comment: The purpose of this planning process is to get things right; however, what seems right at the moment might not be the case twenty years from now. It is important to look at what will stand the test of time which is a very hard decision. **Response:** There are certain architectural and urban design strategies that have proven timeless. For example, the City's street grid that has been laid out around 1749 is still being used today and that is because the blocks are meeting critical dimensions for building massing and pedestrian comfort. We can establish those things that have been proven successful and then look at ideas that push the envelope which can be a harder conversation.

Comment: The Metro Stage block provides vibrancy by having the arts, retail and dining all in one area. The OTN SAP Update should continue to support and increase this kind of vibrancy. Residential developments are not as vibrant. You hardly see anyone walking around.

Comment: All those elements and subjects can get overwhelming. It might be helpful to bring a visioning speaker to help us bring all those elements together. **Response:** We intentionally wanted to show the complexity of the elements being studied. As you suggest we do anticipate having speakers who can help us with this at the Mini-Charrette during topical night.

Comment: Would like to see emphasis on climate change and moving toward low to no-carbon emissions within the next twenty years. The word *sustainability* sometimes gets overused. It is important to seek more than that in specific ways for this effort. **Response:** Staff agrees; the Eco-District plan can help in that regard.

Comment: Important to remember that affordability does not only apply to housing, but to amenities as well. Also important to keep in mind that Plans are accomplished incrementally.

Comment: The City already has many plans and polices that address many of the elements shown on slide 23, place making, of the presentation. Important to leverage them to explore areas that may need even more attention.

Comment: Zoning will be an important factor since the City does not have authority over developments that can be done by-right. It is important to have the right zoning controls in place to achieve the Plan goals. In terms of the Arts Corridor concept, need to keep in mind that art installations do not have to be permanent.

IV. PLANNING OUTREACH TOOLS

Staff indicated that besides the Advisory Group meetings, there are resources that are on the OTN SAP Update webpage at www.alexandriava.gov/86032 that Advisory Group members can refer members of their respective stakeholder groups to in order to help ensure that the public is able to track the progress of the planning process. It was also stated that staff is available to come out and speak to smaller groups. As an example, it was noted that on May 25th, the Port Royal HOA invited staff to a small town hall meeting and staff was able to give them an overview of the process to-date, answer questions and talk about their building and the role it can possibly play as part of the proposed Montgomery Street retail corridor under the planning process.

Here are reference tools and meeting opportunities to help the public keep abreast of the process:

1. [OTN SAP Update Work Program](#)
2. OTN Advisory Group [Meeting Schedule for April through June 2016](#)
3. [OTN SAP Update - Framework for Community Engagement](#)
4. [OTN SAP Update Webpage](#)
5. [OTN SAP Online Comment Board](#)
6. [OTN SAP Online Information: Background, Advisory Group Meeting Materials, Polls](#)
7. Small Stakeholder Meetings hosted by Advisory Group Members

V. OTN TEMPORARY ART PROJECT

Diane Ruggerio, Deputy Director for the Office of the Arts, updated everyone on the status of the OTN Temporary Art Project. The Office of the Arts will be providing \$25,000 for a temporary art project in OTN. A Task Force consisting of members of the Arts Commission and representatives of the community, including some Advisory Group members, will be utilized to recommend the art and the artist. The type of project that is being explored for this area is artistic crosswalks. However, the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (TES) must first determine if artistic crosswalks are legal in the Commonwealth. The purpose of this project would be to begin getting people acquainted with how this area can be further defined as a creative place. An example of an artistic crosswalk recently installed in Chinatown in DC can be found [here](#). The Advisory Group will continue to be updated on the status of this project as we await the response from TES.

Comment: It may be that a sculpture in a park could serve the same purpose.

Advisory Group Attendance – Meeting of May 26, 2016

- Steve 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)
- Elizabeth Chimento (Community Representative)
- Austin Flajser (Property Owner)
- Herbert J. (Herb) Cooper-Levy (Community Representative - At Large)
- Carolyn Griffin (Community Representative)
- Kevin Harris (Community Representative – Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority Residents)
- Bruce Machanic (Business Representative)
- Carlos Mejias (Business 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)