

Old Town North Small Area Plan Update (OTN SAP Update)

Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Transportation Subcommittee Meeting #1

Wednesday, February 10, 2016, 4:00 – 6:00 PM
City Hall, Room 2000

DRAFT MEETING NOTES (02.19.2016 DRAFT)

Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Transportation Subcommittee

- Co-Chair Scott Barstow
- Co-Chair Maria Wasowski
- Steve Arabia
- Elizabeth Chimento
- Jeff Strup

This meeting consisted of two parts:

- (1) Transportation Planning
- (2) Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability

TRANSPORTATION

The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services' Planning staff reviewed slides for this part of the [presentation](#) which highlighted key transportation themes, opportunities and challenges from Phase I (Plan Framework/Visioning Phase) of the Old Town North Small Area Plan planning process. The slides also identified implementation strategies to address the themes, opportunities, and challenges with the strategies organized along an implementation timeline of near term (present to spring), mid-term (spring to summer) and long term (summer to winter 2016). The Subcommittee provided comments on the themes, opportunities and challenges and the phased strategies and timeline for addressing them.

Transportation Analysis Discussion

Question: Will the parking study include a macro and micro analysis? **Response:** Macro and Micro analyses are typically done for transportation studies and are not applicable for parking studies. We will be doing a parking utilization study for the Old Town North planning area. A transportation micro analysis is typically done for individual development projects; however, when it's a bigger study area, such as OTN, a macro study is typically utilized.

Question: What is driving the conversion of Madison and Montgomery from one-way to two-way streets? **Response:** This is an item in the City's Long Range Transportation Master Plan; additionally, it was discussed during the Charrette as an idea to explore.

Comment: Connectivity to Washington Street is challenging especially having two one-way streets and First Street that doesn't go all the way through.

Comment: We need to have District 2 decals. **Response:** There is a separate City parking study group that is addressing this issue.

Question: Is Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) still considering building a 230kV line that will emanate from NRG? **Response:** Yes; the City is waiting for DVP to return with more information about the need for the line and substation. A DSUP (Development Special Use Permit) would be required so community input would occur if the line and a substation are pursued by DVP. [Subsequent to this Subcommittee meeting, [DVP announced](#) that it plans to file a formal application with the VA State Corporation Commission in summer 2016.]

Question: Are we going to have a recommendation for local streets and collector streets? **Response:** At this point we know which ones are local streets and which ones are collector streets in Old Town North unless new streets are introduced. It has been done in other Small Area Plans and can certainly be included in the OTN SAP Update.

Comment: There is a need to determine which streets would be applicable for possible extension. Also, connections in the northern area along the Parkway, and for crossing the Parkway near the rail lines, need to be explored for bicycles, pedestrians and a potential trolley.

Question: What is the benefit of railbanking? **Response:** Railbanking is beneficial because it transfers the responsibility to the City without the rail company having to deal with the complex matter of ownership that is typically associated with rail tracks. If the tracks were to be removed and the area used as a trail, the rail company would typically be responsible for removing the tracks while the City would be responsible for maintaining the trail.

Comment: The idea of keeping the tracks and using them for a light rail is something that was identified and suggested during Phase I (Plan Framework/Visioning Phase) and should be explored.

Comment: A transit corridor along the rail lines would add additional complexity. **Response:** The City will study the feasibility of a transit corridor further over the coming months.

Question: What land uses are being explored for large redevelopment sites to help with impact analyses? **Response:** The City will make some land use assumptions that the traffic studies can be based on.

Comment: We need to look at improving the connection of Old Town North to the Parkway. Currently the entrance to the neighborhood from the Parkway is awkward.

Comment: For the mid-term transportation analysis, can we look at shared parking? **Response:** We need to find the current parking capacity and through that study we can look at potential shared parking spaces.

Question: Would the traffic study include the northeast? **Response:** Traffic counts would include Route 1 and further south along the Parkway.

Question: Will the traffic study include information about critical intersections and how to improve increased connectivity? **Response:** Yes; the transportation study will look at those issues.

Comment: For the long-term analysis, we should consider future auto use and how people are getting to and from the Metro.

Next Steps for Transportation: A draft Work Program will be developed to further address how the transportation strategies can be addressed via the discussed timeline.

Public Comment: The public comment is intertwined in the above comments.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Office of Infrastructure and Environmental Quality staff gave a brief overview of the outcomes of the Charrette relating to Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and the Eco-District concept (See the second part of the presentation identified through a hyperlink on page 1). Staff presented some of the strategies that the City currently has in its tool box that can assist with the implementation of an Eco-District such as storm water requirements, the City's Green Building Policy, energy efficiency measures, water quality measures and carbon footprint reduction. The presentation also included new potential short-term, mid-term and long-term goals to help OTN become an Eco District. The Subcommittee was requested to provide comments related to this information.

Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability Discussion

Question: Is the term Eco-District designated by a federal agency or third party? **Response:** No; we do not believe there are currently federal requirements or copyrighted restrictions on the use of the Eco-District term; however, we will confirm that. We are looking at OTN as a pilot program for implementing an Eco-District. It would be based on criteria such as the strategies and goals above and if it works we can look at implementing it City-wide.

Comment: If the label Eco-District does not have defined and associated criteria or measures then maybe we should find a different name for our effort. **Response:** The advantage of calling it an Eco-District signals to development that we expect more than the current baseline for green building.

Question: Is there a big cost associated with pursuing an Eco-District? **Response:** Yes; there would be an incremental cost; however, it is a benefit to the community and provides a return on investment.

Question: Are there resources to take advantage of? **Response:** There are some grants for planning purposes. We can look into incentives such as the Green Building Policy; however, we are currently not aware of existing programs.

Comment: There is payback for being energy efficient. Long term return creates significant energy savings.

Comment: Eco-District should be applied to the entire planning area and not a specific site. Maybe it can be applied on projects of a certain threshold. Flexibility is important as we go through the testing phase. Also, keep in mind that people do not always want to pay for an Eco-District and the market may not be there for it; however, we can certainly think about sustainability. Virginia is currently not very friendly to renewable energy strategies; however, there is a bill in the legislature to move it along.

Question: Have we looked at other model communities that are applying the Eco-District concept? **Response:** Southwest DC is going through the same process with respect to an Eco-District.

Comment: Consider using cisterns for rain water collection that can be used by fire trucks.

Question: What is the City most deficient in besides storm water? **Response:** Since Old Town North lies in a Combined Sewer area, Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) is of high priority. Alexandria does better than other cities in energy especially since energy usage per capita tends to be lower in urban environments. We need to collectively, along with the Subcommittee, look at priority issues that we need to address.

Comment: Tree canopy is important and it ties to green infrastructure and storm water management. **Response:** This is also an item that we are studying as part of the streetscape enhancements under the Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Activities category. The City's goal is 40% tree coverage. We need to study the feasibility of having the same goal in Old Town North since it's an urban area.

Next Steps for Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability: Staff will work to confirmed priority strategies and further developing strategies and goals for moving this concept forward. It will also confirm whether there are established criteria for Eco-Districts, and staff will work with EPC to determine if another name might be more practical.

Public Comment: The public comment is intertwined in the above comments.

Next Steps for the Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability & Transportation Subcommittee:

- (1) Report out to the full OTN SAP Advisory Group on March 24, 2016
- (2) Hold a second Subcommittee Meeting on April 13, 2016, 5:00 – 7:00 pm, with the location to be confirmed.