

Attending

(Session 1) Will, Tom, Rochelle, Susan, Vanessa, Constance, Bonita, Dick

(Session 2) Constance, Susan, Rochelle, David, Sarah, Vanessa, Bonita, Tom

(Session 3) Will, Dick, Vanessa, Constance, Bonita, David, Susan, Tom, Pat, Sarah

(Session 5) Tom, Will, Susan, Constance, David, Bonita, Delores

Session 5 Notes

The Plan: Polish the document, publish as what we will vote on, and let neighborhoods and individuals know they can use the comments to submit their own comments.

Session 1 Notes

Do these areas cover what we want?

DEI asked to meet with Planning and was told Planning is concentrating on communities that weren't usually talked to, and never got back to DEI. Downtown is nowhere in the goals, and DEI is concerned about competition from a "new RTP"

Closing down public feedback on Feb 19

Former Planning Director Paul Norby led an award-winning Comp Plan for Winston-Salem, and it would help to have a workshop / presentation on what is a "good Comp Plan"

Housing and Neighborhoods

Many of the policies in the existing Comprehensive Plan are not there? They may go into the policies once the new plan is written, it may contain the older policies

Our impression is that Planning managed to shape what they were told into what they wanted to hear.

We don't want innovative housing just for innovative -- some of the objectives are more concrete than others.

We don't really argue about a lot of the objectives, but what is missing that we want. The thrust for equity is a good thing.

What does it take to protect neighborhoods, or at least create win-win solutions, from stuff that doesn't fit. What re-zonings are good and what are less good.

How can neighborhoods that haven't been organized be equally good at being able to achieve compatible development? Development next to a neighborhood can be very destabilizing (commercial pressures, gentrification, "unattractive stuff")

Does this support Nick Baker's ideas?

Mixed use can be very un-mixed (like a Sheets + townhouses taking a lot of the space) -- The development community just doesn't want to build to the ideal mixed use idea.

Thoughtful placement of commercial nodes, especially in the undeveloped parts of the county, so they serve without destabilizing the area. Diffusing the line by bringing in higher cost housing does increase value -- and drives out those who can't afford the new property taxes. People want to preserve their community that was connected by family, churches and schools. We want to bring back the concept of *place*.

The language is not always clear and could be set up either positive steps or more negative steps.

Transit amenities (benches, etc) in all neighborhoods.

Work more with neighborhoods -- how does the planning apparatus serve other than developers

They still haven't written regulations for "good residential design"

Regulations are not written to benefit "wealthy developers" -- getting rid of regulations just makes more opportunities for the wealthy to exploit. Small housing and co-housing are not bad ideas, but we need to do regulations to control them, not to throw the door open. Cost of housing is not because regulations are in the way, but the incentive is to build whatever someone will pay for. We don't have anything in zoning to build cheap houses (can't due to state law). We can mandate some smaller houses.

Developers are not building houses for people in Durham

Not saying "affordable housing" when it is scary to working-class neighborhoods and not putting "lower income townhomes near the lower income neighborhoods" ignoring their higher costs will increase property taxes of those that live there. But how do you create a pathway for people getting first foot into the housing market -- critical part of closing the wealth gap, getting a path out of poverty

Bragtown, Merritt-Moore and Walltown have been doing a lot of creative thinking and writing about visions for their neighborhoods which we should look at

Equity, Culture and Community Engagement

Obviously, need to use NIS's process more broadly across the city (Hoover Road Park, LED lights) -- not feedback but input, sharing some ownership

Needs to include Historic Preservation

Use the language of the Racial Equity Task Force -- identify and preserve historic places everywhere

Encourage members of the community to dialogue among themselves

There are tools like small area plans that are better at engaging the community. Need Community Planning like we have Community Policing

It will always be human nature to pay more attention to the developers who are in the office all the time.

Also support for communities that may not have the experience in formulating what they want. Simpler words, taking time to make connections and understanding where people come from, avoiding "I know better"

We like the honoring and celebrating culture and community but it shouldn't be celebrating what is no more -- quit pushing out and erasing the Black community / sense of place

The present plan has a section on library (maybe other cultural things)

Transportation

Why does it say investment?

Black and low-wealth communities have paid taxes and not gotten their share back.

Amenities into low-wealth "investment" can either justify punching roads through or create base to increase gentrification -- maybe intentional is supposed to cover this

Sidewalks, shelters, etc. more evenly spread, but done in consultation with the community (do they want sidewalks or road widening)

It is a network to be looked at in general

How do all the goals fit together

Not just conduits but also places to be -- a streetscape -- plus protecting the places we want to get to (what's next to the road matters -- getting across street -- Alston widening should be last time we do it that way)

Need to be able to get where you need (and move stuff) to go without getting killed -- including sidewalks

Need to say “will” rather than “we want to”

Regional view

Need to be clearer about what is favored and what is lousy (gives no guidance -- current plan lets you find something to support whatever you want to do)

Getting buses to where they are needed -- including that as we develop further out, we need to make the new development accessible to those who need transit to live there, and flexibility to get where you need to go rather than all going downtown --

Need sidewalks and transit / transit amenities / protected transit stops and roads to growing areas that currently have so little (Cheek Road, for example)

Safety for school kids getting on buses (with more kids and more traffic in already dangerous areas)

Good that focuses on non-car transportation

Some needs are really clear, but smart investment probably means building in a mechanism for update as we see how covid has changed our habits

Not clear what the “no requirement for development” means -- that we aren’t getting sidewalks outside the immediate area of the development

How “incidents” are coded can get in the way of correcting the infrastructure -- a woman was killed on Junction Road that was not recognized being an issue with no sidewalks because she fell into the road

Hard to argue with 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th goals (like the fact that we are integrating where things are and how to get there -- reinforce that need thoughtful placement and sizing of nodes -- endless townhouse projects without grocery and other services and on inadequate roads just won’t work for us)

Need more collaboration among different plans (both to external entities like state and Durham entities like libraries)

Reducing parking to make affordable → need to make sure that have transit and services you can walk to. Combine various costs (housing, transportation, utilities) to get real affordability

Developers don’t want projects more than 100 acres because they need to get out in case there is a downturn

We have no local developers anymore so none of the money for building stays in Durham

On country roads that don't support much more traffic, we build lower density (and with no services so need to travel a lot to do anything), which never supports transit efficiently so we just dig holes deeper. We don't have long-term view of the the big picture.

Like the "interconnected options" and improved street connectivity -- but nice to know how they plan to implement. Currently have rules in UDO -- the new connections aren't always popular with where the traffic will go past Stubs out to a drop-off to 40' is ridiculous

Block lengths

Do we need measures to be stuck to?

We need to look at projects in bigger context (whether or not developer needs to do something, but planning needs to show how the project does or doesn't create issues / impacts / future investments required for the public at large to help making a decision about whether to approve re-zoning). We can require some nearby left-hand turn lanes, but can't ask for more.

Jobs

It isn't clear how we can make the jobs happen

Can remove some barriers (training to level up)

Can ask for living wage

Considerations for good planning -- if I need to work 2 jobs, need to have good transportation and nearby jobs (not to mention child-care drop-off), which affects land-use and transportation planning

The companies brought in with \$100K salaries just increases the demand for expensive housing -- what about working class jobs and mentoring to get into jobs?

Evictions will be huge fall-out from covid (and long-term black mark on credit, impacting job prospects)

What about work for people with physical and mental disabilities -- what Goodwill used to do.

Getting job skills into trades, community college programs

Also being fair about security deposits -- need programs to help people out in these areas -- important to lift people into home ownership

Need a whole “good governance” section -- the rules are often fine, but how we do them is not so good, not having enough people for example or having someone to guide you through it. We make these rules (mixed use that 751 South) that then get manipulated to get what the developer wants

Training incubators

If “flexibility” means more investment in high-wealth areas “sucking oxygen” out of investment in other areas or having bad quality as “good enough” in low-wealth areas, that isn’t good. But getting innovation (food trucks, child care) into areas that don’t have services nearby. Whiff of the snotty idea that reducing regulations creates opportunities for “the needy” -- which never gets there. Better is innovation centers, mentoring programs like the Baltimore ice-cream truck, incubators

Environment

No such thing as small-scale and affordable grocery stores -- there’s no new grocery stores on east side of town because at least Publix goes where the existing ones are

Not a lot of options in the developing areas in eastern county -- nothing shopping there and want to see the plan that includes all the community needs, needs to be community planning

Could Planning be required to do an annual report on how we are doing and within the re-zoning report, what is the service infrastructure / plan for what is being proposed (sort of like they report on schools, water, etc.)

There aren’t regulations on farmers’ markets -- limits are what the shopping centers allow. Local food is expensive because farming is expensive. Land being expensive limits doing creative low-cost stuff

Lot of “planning pabulum / jargon” in the section. We generally like the objectives but wonder about the teeth

After last recession, much less “conjoint” development -- phases that include residential and business components -- too much risk if they have too much debt with too much land -- can’t look to development community to do an leadership on getting services where needed

Olive Branch area -- needs the pump station to make develop-able which now that we are putting in a pump station, we need development to pay for the pump station, but now we need to pay for roads somehow or do very low development, protect the stream buffers, and get services locally

Ideas about doing support for innovation (training, innovation hubs, etc.)

Overlap of recreation green space and open space, open spaces need to be into heart of new development. Green space shouldn't be just the required stream buffer

Affordable housing needs trees as much as higher-wealth areas, need to protect / re-plant trees (native species). Making tree coverage more equitable across the city (cleaner air, cutting AC bills, etc.) Trees can feel like a luxury, but is necessary. Contradicts the drive for more density which neutralizes plan since can argue whichever objective you want at the time. Need to figure out the "if" when trees outweighs density

Want community input and equity into the trees added (which kind -- so right for the space and community needs and not in the path that people are walking in)

Wording says we want equitable investment -- which could mean "get rid of all the trees"

Lots of things we are doing already about pollution, but there are some new programs we could look at, like reducing idling of cars in school driveways

More granular zoning districts so for highly-polluting industrial, it can't go near housing (and one way that we get cheap housing is to put it on cheap land, and land is cheap where the nearby uses are nasty.

Having an objective for clean air and water (and land) is great for the many health-fragile people in the community.

Clustering was supposed to save the green space, and never get around to protecting the green space that was saved, so it gets used in the next development.

Re-use and re-development make sense

The 3rd section was about pollution and the 4th is more about regulations like stream buffers

Not clear what specific should be done about climate change

Should help (not minimally impact) low-wealth, through things like energy efficiency for customers delinquent on power bills

More buried utilities in older areas would be resilient

Lead abatement as well as asbestos, take household pollutants more seriously

Community-building as part of the resiliency

Public Spaces

Treating reserving land for parks and community centers (and other public goods) as seriously as reserving roadway is done -- mostly parks since 1950 can't be walked to -- places to meet are important -- a Braggtown Center at the old school would be great

More community-ownership and share of control -- ability to plan events and make decisions

We used to better a programming in community spaces -- do more at keeping the minds out of the devil's workshop -- more community centers so could have more diffuse programs, able to get to without driving

Are smaller facilities economic? Does sharing functions help make affordable? Mobile facilities like library bus?

We haven't been good at doing fun events at the public plazas we have -- when create them, need to think more about how to use them. Can we use the spaces we have better (schools, for example) -- one-time, conversion of old playing fields, or adding a few amenities to make the space more useful to the event (some benches that would be nice for walkers and also provide a setting for entertainment).

More spaces for commemoration of people we want to honor. These would help define a neighborhood and enhance it, but need to be well planned (example, Sandy Creek memory grove)

