



MEETING MINUTES

Planning Commission

Thursday, December 20, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

Chair Julie Oyster asked for a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was taken, and the following members were present: Ms. Julie Oyster, Mr. Mike Linder, Mr. Larry Titus and Mr. Jim Rauck. Dr. John Dubos was absent. Others present: Kyle Rauch, Development Director; Kim Shields, Community Development Manager; Kendra Spergel, Development Planner; Stephen Smith, Frost Brown Todd; Mayor Ike Stage; Mr. Chuck Boso, City Administrator; Mr. Bill Vedra, Deputy City Administrator; Mr. Mike Boso, Chief Building Official; Ms. Laura Scott, Planning and Zoning Coordinator; Tami Kelly, Clerk of Council; Lt. Jason Stern, GCPD; Mr. Dalton Walker, Planning Intern; and Mary Havener, Development Assistant.

Review of the Grove City Town Center Framework

Mr. Kyle Rauch introduced the Town Center Framework. He stated that this was a result of previous efforts from the City in regards to an RFP which was issued for the old library site. Two responses for development were received for this site and this is part of that review process. A working group of area residents, business owners and other interested parties were convened to discuss the RFP proposals and it was realized that we needed to take a look at the bigger picture of all the other opportunity sites within the Town Center. Staff has been working with Landplan Studios to prepare this Town Center Framework.

Ms. Kim Shields proceeded to give a brief presentation of the plan stating that it was built off the previous planning efforts in the Town Center.

Ms. Shields highlighted the main objectives of the plan:

Objective 1: Preserve and Strengthen the Unique Character of the Town Center

Objective 2: Enhance the Economic Vitality of the Town Center

Objective 3: Improve Context, Connectivity, Circulation and Wayfinding to and within the Town Center

She proceeded to explain that the reasoning behind this framework was due to the amount of money that has already been invested in the Town Center area and the multiple opportunities for redevelopment which have been approved or are under review.

An illustrative plan was displayed depicting the key design elements of the plan; the key points of which were the First Street Promenade, the Columbus Street Extension and Plaza and the Off-Street Parking.

To wrap up, Ms. Shields displayed a graphic of an off-street parking analysis which highlighted parking statistics comparing the similar areas of the Town Center in Grove City, the Short North in Columbus, Old Hilliard and the Bridge Street District in Dublin.

Following the presentation, the floor was open for comments and questions for Staff as well as Mr. Dan Phillabaum of Landplan Studios.

Mr. Rauck asked how many of the approximately 80 parking spaces that were lost due to the development of the apartments behind City Hall were recreated in other areas. Mr. Rauch stated that when they planned the Broadway Station development, they lost 86 spaces behind City Hall; however, additional land was secured on the north side of Park Street and the majority of the lost spaces were recouped. Parking was also gained when the land was secured behind the new library site. Consequently, the city gained parking spaces in the Town Center.

Mr. Linder asked how parking can be gained on private property. Ms. Shields stated that they have spoken with the property owners of the private sites and many are very excited for the redevelopment. In a Town Center environment, there will most likely not be parking for that particular use on that lot. That's why we need to look at what's appropriate site by site for the potential of shared parking. For example, the Schoedinger site would most likely be all public parking, so it wouldn't be solely for what is happening on that site, but also for the other nearby businesses. They also looked at where parking could be properly disseminated throughout the area. Mr. Rauch continued to state that this framework is guiding the discussion so that when we have conversations with developers, they understand our expectations.

Mr. Rauck asked if some of these private lots would become City lots. Ms. Shields stated that the framework is just a guide and they haven't gotten into that level of detail; however, the desire would be to make as many public spaces as possible. This could result from obtaining an agreement with private owners that spaces on their lots would be available to the general public. Mr. Rauck stated that it seems much more financially feasible to have agreements with private owners rather than the City purchasing lots.

Mr. Linder asked how many crosswalks were planned for pedestrians along Broadway. Ms. Shields stated that this plan doesn't specify to that level of detail; however, this has been one of the challenges and they are attempting to gain clearer, safer crossing areas for pedestrians to cross. Columbus and Broadway is a prime area where it will need to be determined how to make that crosswalk as safe as possible. Mr. Dan Phillabaum, Landplan Studios, added that new signalized crosswalks are not being depicted in the framework at this point. They are showing; however, a conceptual four-way intersection at Cleveland Avenue to the west, by the current Schoedinger building. This could present an opportunity for a gateway to the Town Center coming from the north, where you might get a pedestrian crosswalk.

Mr. Linder stated that one of his concerns is how people will get across the street safely when visiting the Town Center area. Mr. Phillabaum stated that as more people start visiting the Town Center, awareness will develop and motorists will become more cognizant of where people might be crossing and adjust. Mr. Rauch stated that in the GroveCity2050 Community Plan, there are a couple of statements related to the thoroughfare aspect which give priority in appropriate locations. In the Town Center, we want to prioritize pedestrian movement more so than vehicular. Mr. Linder asked if there would be mechanisms in place that might redirect traffic away from the center of the Town Center.

Mr. Rauch asked Mr. Phillabaum to explain the Columbus Street Plaza. Mr. Phillabaum stated that part of the conceptual design of the Columbus Street extension and the plaza is depicting some type of treatment or visual cues that show that people are entering a different type of space. This could be applied similarly on either side of Broadway within the Town Center and would introduce visual cues to motorists that they need to be more aware of their surroundings. Examples would be archways over the street, public art or the pavement could transition from traditional asphalt to a concrete paver on the streetscape itself so driver's would have a different textural cue that might create a rumble on car tires. Mr. Rauch reiterated that they are attempting to determine the best method that will ultimately give priority to pedestrians crossing the street. Mr. Phillabaum stated that planters being located close to the edge of the roads would be another viable treatment option.

Mr. Rauck stated that when looking at the Plaza idea, he's not completely comfortable with threading a traffic lane right through the middle. He asked if it would be possible to do away with the parking to the west of the west-most building and create an L-shape plaza on the west side where you would be able to drive along the edge. Parking could then be located by the building on the east side. He's also concerned about the load of traffic on the Columbus Street extension once the Beulah development is finished. Mr. Rauch stated that a traffic study was performed on the Beulah Park redevelopment and it showed a minimal increase in traffic along that stretch of road. Mr. Phillabaum stated that the City looked at the idea of circulating traffic around the perimeter, but it didn't seem as feasible. Mr. Rauch stated that several other concepts were reviewed and the plaza concept seemed to

be the best in terms of maintaining minimal traffic and still remaining flexible for future events. Mr. Rauch continued to state that ultimately, their goal is to have people park their car, get out and walk and experience the Town Center. Mr. Phillabaum added that in terms of the larger parking areas, they are purposefully sited at the perimeter because they would have the least visual impact and would result in a better urban design.

Mr. Linder asked if the 25 mph in the Town Center was considered a safe speed. Mr. Phillabaum stated that this is fairly typical and is low as he's seen for a state route through a city center area.

Mr. Rauck asked if there were any truck route studies performed and whether it would help to reroute at least one direction of truck traffic. Mr. Rauch stated that they have been looking at the long-term plan for this for some time and are still trying to determine the feasibility. Whatever solution they choose, trucks would need to cross the railroad tracks. If traffic is routed down Southwest Boulevard, to Demorest Road, there's a possibility of taking trucks down Grove City Road to a certain point and then turn them back to the south – perhaps through the Rubex property. This has been looked at as a possible future industrial subdivision. Through this subdivision, trucks could be taken across the tracks and back to 3C, which would be one new crossing over the tracks. Mr. Linder asked Mr. Rauch if they would have the trucks exit onto Grove City Road. Mr. Rauch responded that there are a number of trucks going to the Walmart Distribution Center on Demorest and Grove City Road and there's an existing industrial use on Grove City Road that is serviced by trucks multiple times per day. It's something that would need to be further analyzed.

Ms. Oyster asked for elaboration of Objective #2 A – the plan to streamline the review process. Ms. Shields responded that there have been changes in the past few years in Code to allow the Building Division to approve changes in the Town Center administratively to cut down on the red tape. The goal is to be as business-friendly as possible, while ensuring that improvements are appropriate for the Town Center. Through the new zoning code, there are some items that could be handled in-house rather than to be required to go through Planning Commission and City Council.

Mr. Rauch stated that Staff would welcome any feedback or comments on this draft framework so that final adjustments can be made.

Mr. Rauck asked which properties inside the yellow boundaries of the Framework, are within the city's inventory for owning. Mr. Rauch and Mr. Rauck discussed the map and the various properties under ownership by the City. Mr. Rauck asked if all the pieces were in place for the Columbus Street Extension. Mr. Rauch responded that the City is still finalizing agreements with both the railroad and the developer. The City has not proceeded with any type of land acquisition, as the development agreement with the developer is still being finalized. City Council has appropriated the funding for those land acquisitions, as well as the construction of the roadway. Mr. Rauch continued to state that the City needs to finalize its understanding of the utility impacts when the road goes through because it will disturb existing utilities. After that, the City will have a better understanding of what properties need acquired.

Mr. Rauck asked how many railroad crossings would be closing. Mr. Rauch responded that one would be closing at Grant Avenue.

Mr. Phillabaum added that the parking analysis that was done and the range of land uses that are shown are merely conceptual, and they are not exact. For parking calculations, he took what would be considered the more aggressive approach and showed more restaurants than would likely be supported in the Town Center, due to a very high parking demand.

Mr. Linder asked about the intentions of the Fifth Third building. Mr. Rauch responded that currently that building is being very under-utilized and the City has had conversations with various developers related to the property, but nothing has been finalized.

Mayor Ike Stage asked to speak to the item. He stated that the City has been working for many years to determine how to best utilize the Fifth Third site. He stated that it will require participation from the land owners, because they're the ones that will need to make it work. The desire for that site is to emulate the Matt the Miller site in Grandview.

Mayor Stage continued to thank the Planning Commission for their participation in reviewing this framework and to Dan Phillabaum for his work. Mayor Stage then gave a brief background of Mr. Phillabaum's experience.

Having no additional discussion, Chair Oyster adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.



Mary Havener, Secretary



Julie Oyster, Chair