



NOTES

Plan Commission Meeting We Make U City

DATE: March 30, 2023

TIME: 6:00-7:30 pm

LOCATION: Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Gascon, Victoria Gonzalez, Ellen Hartz, Mark Harvey, Peggy Holly, Patricia McQueen

COUNCIL LIAISON PRESENT: Jeff Hales

CITY STAFF: Mary Kennedy, John Wagner

CONSULTANT: Sarah Kelly

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Plan Commission members were welcomed by Peggy Holly.

Sarah Kelly outlined the purpose of the meeting:

- To share and discuss a draft conceptual framework map; and
- To discuss critical questions to inform the future character and land use map.

2. ADDITIONAL MAPPING FOUNDATION

Sarah Kelly presented some of the additional mapping that has been conducted since the preliminary existing conditions analysis was shared, including:

- Private subdivisions
 - Add some complexity to the way recommendations can be delivered and make up a substantial portion of the City
 - Will overlay with character and land use in the future
 - Code enforcement still available in these areas
- Vacant properties
 - Broke down into residential and commercial.
- Parcels by year built

- Not much has been built in the past several decades, which is unsurprising given slow regional growth.
- Need to determine how to handle areas of the city where flooding is an issue.
- Parcel construction years are cross cutting between the wards. There is some continuity between wards in character that can be built upon as a unifying factor.
- University City owned properties
 - Important when looking at opportunities
 - When making recommendations for new aggregation efforts it is important to understand current conditions

1. DISCUSSION OF FUTURE LAND USE DIRECTION

Sarah Kelly presented the draft Conceptual Framework map to the committee. This is a high-level depiction of opportunities in the City derived from:

1. What we have heard from the public;
2. Analysis and mapping planning NEXT has done; and
3. What planning NEXT has heard from the Plan Commission, stakeholder interviews, and Council.

It is a foundation for the next phase of work, which will focus on character and land use.

The Commission discussed critical questions organized around some of the key concepts on the map. Following are the questions and comments made by Plan Commission members.

Activity Nodes

Questions

- Do the potential locations for activity nodes make sense to you?
- What kinds of uses and activities do you want to see in the activity nodes?
- What should the characteristics of civic activity nodes be in light of potential flooding?

Plan Commission Comments

- Is it a basic criterion that a node has to already been zoned for commercial at a corner or can we just say that this area doesn't have anything and something should go there?
 - Looking at area that is around Groby and Kaufman Park – not a node
 - In Third Ward west of Pennsylvania there is only one node.
 - Olive is great but if you don't like Chick-fil-a, don't want to walk down to Olive, or don't feel it's a good gathering place there should be other options.

- Answer – The zoning code will have a major overhaul after comp plan so determining new nodes is not restricted by current zoning; this is a 20-year plan that welcomes creativity.
- We should add City Hall, other government buildings, and schools as civic activity nodes since they get high traffic.
 - The area around these places could be commercialized, already getting high traffic every day.
- Heman Park Community Center, Centennial Commons are already existing public nodes.
- There is more commercial near Schnucks and Heman Park Community Center, and an apartment going in on Pennsylvania that could serve as a node.
- The Third Ward doesn't have a café or donut shop, nodes would have to be on Olive – not a lot of corners because all residential.
- The potential commercial area where old convent is in the Third Ward – rezoned to mixed use about a year ago and has sat idle.
- If we start adding a lot in the center/east it leaves northwest corner empty – Is that ok?
- The area east of major development on McKnight and Olive could be development area.
- The flood mitigation area in northwest corner could be open space at some time, could put coffee shop across – if there were a node near Fogerty Park.
- Some concern that building coffee shops sends message of gentrification. Think about other uses like a hair braiding salon.
- Nodes that are less commercial and more gathering places should be considered, e.g. park with high traffic that has potential for commerce but doesn't have to be.
 - Need to ask residents what they need/want in their vicinity?
 - Workforce development center, cooling center, post office, etc. are all possible uses.
 - It is really about identifying the right land for the node and leaving the decision of use to the neighborhood.
- Consulting firm for Housing and Third Ward Revitalization Task Force is starting soon, utilizing popups and community engagement to see what people want.
- Trailnet's St. Louis County Action Plan for Walking and Biking shows a percentage of the population with no access to motor vehicle in NW corner of University City between 6-62%.
 - How do we provide better access to basic services?
- MetroBus service is very limited in some places.
- A node near Millar Park is appropriate because this is another big blank spot.
 - Public pool should be here.
- A bus stop would be an attribute of a node.
- Olive and Midland could be better utilized than it is.
 - Could expand park.

- There was a development proposal that fell through.
- Blackberry Ave and Hanley Rd – if there weren't a fence around that property in the SE corner where the high school is it would be a lot more inviting.
 - High school uses the field for football practice.
- There is some interest in developing potential civic activity notes through nonstructural means.
- There aren't any purple dots north of Olive. Along Olive facing Heman Park is a development area, could put mixed use there.
 - The economic development strategy calls for higher density housing there but the challenge lies in floodplain area.
 - What if bottom floors of buildings in flood plain areas are open/parking because flooding is inevitable? We could explore building types to accommodate flooding.

Focused Growth and Redevelopment

Questions

- Are these appropriate locations for potentially higher intensity development?
- Where higher intensity is desirable, what should its character be to ensure compatibility with the surrounding context?

Plan Commission Comments

- Do we need to have both enhanced corridors and focused growth/redevelopment?
 - Answer—Corridors are also addressing flow of people using different modes of transit, centered on roadways. Maybe there is a way to make them more similar graphically on the map.
- Focused redevelopment is primarily located in residential areas – Should we be looking at residential density?
 - If so, area north of Delmar makes sense but area on western side goes too far, should really stop at McKnight and go north to Olive.
 - Might be hard to sell increasing density north of Delmar near the park.
- Look at St. Louis County building quality grades in addition to age of buildings to get a sense of actual quality.
- North & South Rd intersection w/ Delmar going up the hill has been redeveloped with multi-family, focused growth could extend to this area.
 - Lots of new developers as well, already rezoned for multi-family.
 - Hard to push into middle of city near Groby, close to downtown Clayton.

Flood Mitigation Area

Question

- *How can we begin to define potential future character within these areas?*

Plan Commission Comments

- If we wanted to have more dense housing in areas that have been flooded, could you put buildings on pylons that you could park underneath?
 - There are five built on Pennsylvania that are well done.
- The buildings may look great but are you going to lose your house or your car or have to wait 2-3 days to get back to work?
 - On Pennsylvania the issue is flash flooding so it might not last very long, but losing your car is a serious concern.
- It seems obvious that vacant lots should be converted to green space with trails/walking paths.
 - Everything on Vernon needs to go and the City should put in a retention pond.
- Trailnet has pretty specific ideas with respect to green spaces and the different kinds (recreation, stormwater management, etc.).

Mixed Use Districts

Questions

- *Are these districts shown in the right locations?*
- *What should be similar or different between these districts in terms of character as they evolve?*

Plan Commission Comments

- The character of the Asian businesses on Olive is essential and a tremendous asset to the community. This kind of ethnic and funky area is endangered. Finding a way to preserve that while enhancing physically (currently looks horrible in some places) should be a high priority.
- Asian Business Association has a dream that those businesses would be concentrated for a district with higher density of those with shared parking lot, green in the middle.
- One of the issues with Olive and its vibrancy is that it's owned by the state. However, the state is redesigning Manchester Road with improved streetscape, curbs, and sidewalk.
 - When you drive east that's the only part of Olive that is ADA compliant.
- The death of the Tivoli on Delmar means there is no entertainment in the City. People will use it for restaurants but nothing else.
 - Could be part of Olive redevelopment to create entertainment district to keep people there for the entire evening.
- Area in the far west enhanced corridor is ripe for development, small businesses could be pushed further east.

Community Stabilization

Question

- Is it desirable for these areas to develop with a similar character to surrounding areas or are there different goals/opportunities in these areas?

Plan Commission Comments

- In those areas where is a generational shift, vacant lots could become community gardens (decreasing density).
- Don't want to focus all young families and affordability in Third Ward, spread throughout the wards.
- Both focused growth/redevelopment and community stabilization zones could offer multifamily and mixed income opportunities.
- Need to add density to areas far outside of floodplain that are connected to accessible public transit – right ways to do it that are appealing to more people.
- Are there neighborhoods south of Olive that need to be stabilized?
- Some of these areas might actually be a chance to decrease density – combine lots to improve flood mitigation through greenspace, increase value – not getting enough people to actually fill density in every place.
 - It is reasonable to assume that University City will have similar population in 40 years. Our task is more about changing distribution.
- Look at places where lot sizes are so small you can't have a tree.
 - Start working on minimum lot size.
 - This will also impact challenges with heat.
- There is no need to put a different name on why yellow areas are experiencing certain challenges – this is about reinvesting in areas that have historically been redlined and we can be clear about that.

3. NEXT STEPS/ADJOURNMENT

Sarah Kelly explained future steps in the process.

1. Refine Conceptual Framework Map
2. Continue public engagement
3. Develop Future Character and Land Use Map
4. Refine objectives and draft preliminary actions

On April 20th there will be an in-person Advisory Committee meeting. The meeting was adjourned.