

**MEETING OF THE
GREENSBORO PLANNING BOARD
January 21, 2015**

The Greensboro Planning Board meeting was held on Wednesday, January 21, 2015 at 4:03 p.m. in the City Council Chamber, 2nd floor of the Melvin Municipal Office Building. Board members present were: Chuck Truby, Chairman; Marc Isaacson; Steve Allen, Seth Steele, Day Atkins, Richard Bryson and Celia Parker. City staff present included Hanna Cockburn, Jeff Sovich, Mike Kirkman, Steve Galanti, Nicole Ward, and Sheila Stains-Ramp from the Planning Department; Cynthia Blue and Caitlin Warren from Neighborhood Development Department; and Jennifer Schneier, Attorney for the Planning Board.

Chairman Truby welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the procedures of the Planning Board.

MEETING MINUTES:

Mr. Bryson moved approval of the December 2014 meeting minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Isaacson. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

EASEMENT RELEASE:

- a. Proposed release of a portion of a 20' wide utility easement located at 3304 Morning Dew Road, as recorded in Plat Book 57, page 67**

Nicole Ward stated that the release had been evaluated by all involved utility companies, which had supported the request.

Mr. Bryson moved approval of the easement release as described by staff, seconded by Mr. Allen. The Board voted 7-0 in favor of the motion.

ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT:

- a. Affordable Housing Development RFP**

Cynthia Blue presented an update on the 2015 Affordable Housing Development program, in particular the Request for Proposals being put out to utilize almost \$1 million in funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the HOME Program. She noted that the funding includes the \$424,493 available in the budget and the carry-forward of \$518,497 from last year.

Ms. Blue stated that HOME is not an easy program to comply with, as there are long-term investments and the minimum affordability period for new rental construction is 20 years, so staff is looking at the sustainability of these projects as part of the underwriting process. She noted that compliance is assured for the affordability periods, generally, through loans rather than grants. Staff is looking to provide the gap-subsidy assistance that is necessary to make a project both affordable and sustainable. If a developer borrows a million dollars to construct housing he would need to set the rents at a rate to enable him to pay back both the debt service and maintain the operations. Staff looks to replace some of that hard-debt service with funds that can have softer debt terms and

subordinate financing that allows those rent levels to be lowered for the tenants occupying those units.

In this year's RFP process, Ms. Blue noted that staff plans to advertise and have the application packages posted on the City website by January 27, with the proposals due back to the City by February 24. The public information sessions will be held in early February. Developers will be at the March Planning Board meeting to present their projects. In April, Housing staff will bring the project assessment and funding recommendations to the Planning Board; the Board's project selection recommendations will then go to the City Council for a public hearing and award, projected for the May 5th Council meeting.

Ms. Blue stated that projects are assessed through a scoring criteria tool, such as included in the agenda packets, and through public input. She noted that Board members are invited to participate in that assessment process and that Mr. Allen has already indicated his desire to do so.

Ms. Blue stated that the goals of the Housing RFP are expressed through the scoring criteria and many of the adopted redevelopment neighborhood or corridor plans have housing components or goals that may be achieved through HOME funded development. She noted that staff will be looking for projects that use durable materials and incorporate energy efficiency for sustainability and lower tenant costs, and for locations with good access to services, jobs, schools and community facilities, which also improves the affordability for tenants.

Ms. Blue noted that funding dollars are limited and the City partners with other housing development funding sources wherever possible. The NC Housing Finance Agency is a major partner and the Federal Home Loan Bank has previously funded projects in Greensboro. The Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro and other non-profits are entities who can bring leverage to the table. The HOME Program includes a component of capacity building for local community housing development organizations through a set-aside of 15% of the annual HOME funding and other special types of financing. The City's five current CHODOs - Servant Center, Partnership Homes, Community Housing Solutions, East Market Street Development Corporation and Unity Builder - all have developed projects within the last three years. The HOME funds relate directly to the housing goals identified in the Consolidated Plan and other adopted City Plans which feature housing components.

Ms. Blue stated that revisions to the HOME Program rules encourage speculative single family projects and one of the challenges is to work with housing providers to create a better pipeline of qualified interested buyers and to restructure single family offerings to support more down payment assistance. She noted that those options will be looked at in the upcoming budget cycle; this RFP will be limited specifically to rental housing. She noted the threshold conditions included in the site analysis sections, such as energy and water sustainability, handicap accessibility, presence of adequate streets and utilities, any federal requirements (such as Acquisition and Relocation processes), and site and neighborhood standards. She noted that HUD does not encourage building new rental construction in areas with high minority concentrations, high poverty rates or other limiting conditions. They do encourage rehabilitation of housing stock in those areas.

Ms. Blue noted HOME funds require commitment within two years and expenditures within five years, so there needs to be enough committed funding to meet those requirements. Only projects that have all of their financing in place by June 30th can meet the definition of a valid commitment so those projects are looked at as a priority. The HOME Program also requires that 15% of each year's annual allocation be awarded to community housing development organizations and those requirements must be met or exceeded.

Mr. Atkins suggested that staff may want to advertise through the Home Builders Association to increase exposure and possibly interest in the program.

In response to a question by Mr. Allen concerning promotion of rehabilitation in low income areas, Ms. Blue stated that the site and neighborhood standards are a federal site location analysis tool; the definition of minority concentration area and low income concentration area are the 2 pieces left undefined by HUD. By the most recent census date the City is about 50% white, 50% non-white, and staff defines an 'area of minority concentration' to be an area where 75% of the residents are non-white. The HUD definition of 'low income' is where a majority of the people are under 80% of median income and a 'high poverty area' is one where 40% of the residents are below the poverty line. Census tracts that are low income and greater than 40% poverty rate will be considered low income concentrations.

b. Presentation on 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan Process

Planning Manager Hanna Cockburn introduced Jeff Sovich to make the presentation for the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan.

Mr. Sovich provided the background for the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan process, and spoke to the role the Planning Board would have in its consideration and adoption. He noted that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires those receiving federal housing funds to prepare a Consolidated Plan every 5 years, which is to document the type, scale and distribution of housing needs within the jurisdiction. He stated the Consolidated Plan also sets the direction for the City's Capital Improvements Program, provides a framework for the more detailed plans also required by HUD, establishes public policy direction for housing and community development activities over the course of the Plan, helps coordinates the work of several City departments, sets benchmarks to measure the progress against, and provides guidance and support for various partner agencies. He noted that data compilation and analysis of conditions and trends over the past 5-10 years has been done, as a base for understanding the severity of need for the various housing and community development activities in the City.

Mr. Sovich stated the public launch will be February 4, the Plan draft will be at the Planning Board in March with a final draft presented in April, and the Council will receive it for public hearing and adoption at their first meeting in May. The Plan is to be submitted to HUD no later than May 15.

Mr. Sovich noted that an on-line survey and the contact information for the involved City staff would be available on the City's website by the public launch.

c. Lawndale Drive Corridor Plan Process

Planning Manager Hanna Cockburn noted to Board members that the agenda package included Lawndale Drive Corridor Plan Phase 1 (Cornwallis to Cone Boulevard) materials. She noted that the public comment period would close the first week of February, and the final draft would be presented at the February Planning Board meeting. If recommended, it would go to City Council some time in March.

d. Update on Guilford County Hazard Mitigation Plan Process

Planning Manager Steve Galanti stated that Guilford County is now in the process of updating the county-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan, as required by state and federal governments and tied to

funding to respond to emergencies and hazard mitigation, such as flood insurance programs. He noted a copy of the current Hazard Mitigation Plan and the consultant's presentation had been forwarded to the Planning Board, and that a consultant has been hired to identify the hazards within the County and what techniques can be used to make those hazards less severe. The consultant will catalog all hazards that can affect Guilford County and assess what techniques can best be used by jurisdictions to lessen the risks.

Mr. Galanti noted that the materials referenced a website and survey to which Board members were invited to respond. Updates will be provided as the effort progresses.

Mr. Bryson suggested that information concerning this topic may be inserted in resident's water bill to be able to reach more people. Steve Galanti thanked him for this suggestion.

e. 2015 Housing Summit Invitation

Planning Manager Steve Galanti noted that the Housing Summit was scheduled for Wednesday, February 25, and a registration form was included in each member's packet. He asked that any Board members interested in attending the Summit contact him not later than February 9, so staff could get everyone's registration paid for at the same time.

PUBLIC HEARING (Recommendation):

College Hill Neighborhood Plan

Planner Jeff Sovich introduced the President of the College Hill Neighborhood Association, Dr. James Keith, to present the draft Plan.

Dr. Keith noted the many changes made to the version of the Plan brought to the Planning Board in July, 2014, which resulted from an enhanced public input effort as requested by the Planning Board.

He outlined the additional efforts to collect comments and concerns from residential and business neighbors, such as open houses at neighborhood venues, outreach efforts at the Tate Street Festival, and the Plan website and online survey available there. He noted the extended process that has been involved, with the initial public launch having taken place in January, 2009, and that notification of the present hearing before the Planning Board as having been sent to all residents and all owners of property located in or within 600 feet of the College Hill Neighborhood Plan boundaries.

Dr. Keith described the review of conditions, assets, trends, the infrastructure deficiencies and housing needs, and the concerns cited as impacting the quality of life in the area. He noted that eventually a shared vision emerged that tried to respect the various perspectives and situations. He summarized the comments received as: encouraging a greater proportion of owner-occupied housing; of conversion of informal apartment houses back to single family dwellings as feasible; and most importantly the desire to ensure that all dwellings be appropriately maintained, inside and out, as safe, healthy and attractive places to live, whether rental or owner occupied. These principles helped guide and refine development of the Goals, Strategies and Actions that form the heart of the Plan.

Chair Truby opened the hearing to public comment, asking that those in favor of the proposed Plan speak first.

Speakers in support of the proposed College Hill Neighborhood Plan were:

Dr. James Keith referenced several letters he had been asked to share with the Board that were in support of the revised Plan, received from people who were not able to attend the hearing, as well as a supporting petition signed by some of the business community.

Marjorie Bagley stated that she and her neighbors felt the neighborhood offered many benefits to be protected and promoted, especially the walkability of the area. She noted there have been several efforts to renovate and rehabilitate residences in the area, making all of the homes appear much more inviting.

David Hammond noted that a lot of work and improvements have taken place in this area, making it a much better place to live, and stated his support of the revised Plan.

Bill Moore, Lyddan Powlowski, Cindy Shepherd and Janet Frauman each stated their strong support for the new Plan.

Virginia Haskett commented that she had lived in the neighborhood all her life and witnessed the many changes that have taken place. She stated that College Hill is now a very beautiful neighborhood with a variety of residential types. She is very happy with the revised Plan.

Tom Carron stated that he had completely restored his home, as have some of his neighbors. He stated his pride in the neighborhood, that he felt it a great place to live, work, play and retire, and was very happy that the City was working with the residents in this way. He also stated that he supported the revised Plan and hoped that there could be more redevelopment for affordable housing in the area.

Clara Kelly stated as a long-time resident she found College Hill a great neighborhood and hoped the Board would support the Plan.

Joe Weebie stated that he has been involved in the crafting of the revised Plan since the beginning and he strongly supports it. He feels College Hill would become a model neighborhood for the City.

Dan Curry stated that he believed the revised plan addressed many of the issues and concerns of residents in this neighborhood. He pointed out that for an area to have the mix of single family, multifamily and a variety of neighborhood businesses brought many strengths and stated that having both public and private investment was key to transforming neighborhoods. He stated he hoped the Board would support the Plan, especially the Strategies and Actions related to the work relative to street and traffic concerns with GDOT.

Speakers opposed to the revised Plan were:

David Little stated that he has heard disdainful comments by area homeowners regarding rental residents in the area and this is unsettling for him. He stated he felt additional revisions were needed to address current issues in the area.

Doris Yates stated that Plan needed to address parking issues in the area. She noted that off-street parking is a problem because houses are so close together, so this causes a demand for on-street parking, while the streets are very narrow and it is hard to get through a street when people park on both sides. She noted she is not necessarily against the Plan after hearing some of her neighbors speak, but she felt more input on some of these points would be of benefit.

Hooker VanDusen stated that he had concerns about the way the map shows multifamily versus single family and thought the actual use of properties rather than their future use should be shown. He stated he agreed with earlier comments regarding quality of life and parking issues.

Michael Jackson stated that he owned homes in this area and wants good renters in them, that he felt the proposed Plan does not address the actions to be taken by the City and University to nurture growth and maintain the neighborhood and community. He stated he was concerned that his rights and protections could be violated by some portions of the Plan, that he thought there would continue to be excessive traffic and a lack of parking, and increased foot traffic and loitering. He stated that UNCG should build another parking deck to alleviate some of the parking issues in the neighborhood and on Tate Street.

Hauke Kelly stated the he thought another hearing and more interaction with residents was needed, that he believed a lot of people had not participated or provided their input.

There being no other speakers the public hearing was closed.

Chair Truby stated that he felt the revised Plan was a good compromise for the neighborhood and he would support it. Mr. Allen stated that the revised Plan was much more favorable to the neighborhood. Mr. Bryson asked that staff and stakeholders continue to communicate with each other in an on-going manner. Ms. Parker asked for clarification on the diversity that the Plan was intended to support; she also asked that efforts be made to improve the relationships between the landlords, renters and property owners. Mr. Atkins pointed out that there needs to be more work between GDOT and UNCG in regard to the traffic and parking concerns that continue to be a problem in the area.

After a short discussion among the Board members, Mr. Bryson moved to recommend approval of the revised College Hill Neighborhood Plan, seconded by Mr. Steele. The Board members voted 7-0 in favor of the motion.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR ON ITEMS UNDER PLANNING BOARD AUTHORITY:

None.

APPROVAL OF ABSENCES:

Chair Truby acknowledged the absences of Mr. Martin and Mr. Mossman, which were approved.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Schwartz
Planning Director
SS:jd