

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
June 7, 2010

Subcommittee Members: Council Member Sheryl Cole
 Council Member Laura Morrison
 Council Member Chris Riley

1. Citizen Communication (3 minutes to speak).

Jeff Jack spoke about the Comprehensive Plan's Phase II community engagement process and the exercise related to the placement of chips on a map to identify where future growth should occur. He said the participants have concerns that information from Phase I of the process was not discussed during Phase II. In addition, approved neighborhood plans nor the Barton Springs Zone were discussed in the exercise. He added that there has been no indication of what the economic impact of this future growth will be on the taxpayer, and there needs to be some hard data crunching before they look at future scenarios.

Council Member Cole requested information specific to what is recommended on the future growth map,.

George Adams, Assistant Director, Planning and Development Review Department, indicated that staff would provide a follow-up to her request.

Laura Morrison said it is important to sit down with staff and understand how the chip exercise is used, and stressed the importance of having buy-in from participants in order to have buy-in from the citizens at the end of the process.

2. Approval of Minutes from the May 3, 2010, regular subcommittee meeting.

Minutes were approved by a vote of 3-0.

3. Staff Presentation on Waller Creek Master Plan

Jim Robertson, Planning and Development Review Department, provided an overview of the Waller Creek Master Plan including staff recommendations and board and commission recommendations. He noted that every board & commission that reviewed the plan reacted favorably. He noted that there was a difference between the Waller Creek Citizens Advisory Committee and the Planning Commission with respect to affordable housing and preservation of the Lakeside Apartments which are housed in the Rebekah Baines Johnson building. Staff will recommend that there be no reduction in the amount of affordable housing in the planning area .

Sheryl Cole said there is a need for an expedited review process for development along the creek. Mr. Robertson said he would report back to the committee on an expedited review process.

Council Member Laura Morrison said there is a need to preserve affordability and diversity in the area, and to ensure that the area has housing that meets all income levels. She questioned how the affordability level can be maintained if the Lakeside apartments are not preserved.

Mr. Robertson said there are a few strategies that can be considered such as providing affordable housing at the publicly owned site, setting affordable housing goals in the Downtown Plan, a downtown density bonus program, and working with Neighborhood Housing and Community Development to create opportunities for additional affordable housing units.

Council Member Cole questioned the condition of the units at Lakeside. Mr. Robertson responded that although he could not speak to the physical condition, there is concern about providing adequate security to residents of the area, and the building has aging mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems. At some point, it will need a major upgrade.

Council Member Cole noted that in addition to affordable housing opportunities, the redevelopment of Waller Creek will also result in numerous community benefits. There was also discussion regarding the connectivity between bike, pedestrian and automobiles, environmental restoration, improvements to the bridges at 7th and 11th Streets, and future improvements to Waterloo Park.

No action taken.

4. Presentation by Planning Commission Executive Committee on Downtown Density Bonus Recommendations.

Jeff Jack expressed concern about the Downtown Density Bonus program and the entitlement benefiting the property owner instead of the community. He said a financial analysis is needed to determine the true recipients of the density bonus program.

Dave Sullivan and Mandy Dealey, representing the Planning Commission, summarized the stakeholder recommendations. Mr. Sullivan said they are looking for guidance with respect to the affordable housing issue, and there needs to be some standard operating procedures on how the program is implemented and the specific benefits that will be provided by the program.

Charlie Betts, representing Downtown Austin Alliance, stated they are comfortable with every recommendation; however, it does not make a clear cut recommendation on the structure of the density bonus itself, whether or not to maintain CURE as an option, and the 45' height limitation for properties in the warehouse district. He said the program should be structured as an incentive for developers to build more density because that is the most community benefit that can be achieved from development.

The long term additional density that is built, and the value it brings is more valuable to the taxing entities. The program needs to be an incentive, not a disincentive.

With respect to CURE, there will be projects that do not fit the parameters of a density bonus program. It is wise to allow the option as to whether a project is good for the city.

With respect to the 45' height limit in the warehouse district, he said the district is very valuable to the downtown area, but imposing a 45' height limitation is unfair. The transfer of development rights can be worked out, but development rights would have little or no value today, but without the city banking those development rights, it is difficult to blatantly take away development rights from a property owner without real compensation.

There was question about how these recommendations would be communicated to the Council, and it was agreed that the recommendations could be reported in the form of a written report.

No Action Taken

5. Staff Update on Barton Springs Pool

Robin Cravey, Parks and Recreation Department, presented the Barton springs Master Plan which focuses on improvements to the pool and pool grounds. He spoke about improvements to the bath house, removal of the gravel bar, the by-pass improvements, landscaping of the pool and grounds, and accessible trails to the pool on the south side.

Council Member Morrison asked if the pool would need to be closed for the bypass or gravel removal project. A PARD representative said the goal is to have the pool open during most of the work, and some of the work will be staged to minimize closure of the pool, but there will be instances where the pool will have to close for several weeks.

Council Member Riley questioned whether the master plan addresses bike and pedestrian accessibility in the park. The PARD representative said the master plan speaks specifically to the pool, and those issues would have to be addressed in a separate plan for the park, but it could be considered in the future.

No action Taken

6. Staff Update on Bond Package Process

Rob Spillar, Transportation Department, provided an update on the status of the Transportation bond package. He provided a list of mobility needs and a ranking of the projects. The package will not exceed ½ of the projected total debt capacity of \$85M. He noted that the proposals were balanced geographically, but are a little heavier east of I.H. 35. He explained how the projects were prioritized and the criteria for rating each project.

An Open House on the bond package will be held on June 17th. A full presentation on the package will be presented to the committee on July 27th, with Council action in August.

No Action Taken.