

Midtown-St. Albans
Confirmation Group
April 23, 2019 4 p.m.
Green Road Community Center

Members attending: David Jones, Stephen Brechbiel, Ted Kunstling, Stephen Sposato, Donna Rosefield, Alicia Barfield, Bonner Gaylord, Robin Hammond, Lee Hilts, Willard Ross, Stephen Brechbiel

Staff attending: Jason Hardin, Sara Ellis, Hannah Reckhow

Consultants: Joe Seymour (VHB), Don Bryson (VHB), Larry Zucchini (JDavis), Maggie Connor (1 over 1)

Other attendees: Patrick Martin, Eric Braun, Larry Helfant

Meeting began at 4:05 p.m.

Jason Hardin started the meeting off with introductions.

Maggie Connor went over the agenda for the meeting. Sara Ellis provided an update on the outreach activities to date.

- Added social media outreach, including #midtowncrushmonday every Monday highlighting interesting facts and features of study area. We welcome suggestions or ideas!
- Acknowledge confirmation group efforts, including connections, event ideas, etc. Always welcome more ideas on how to get the word out!
- Overview of upcoming meeting events, including three larger events, one meeting in Spanish, a handful of pop ups. Larger meetings have revolving format confirmation group suggested.
- Outreach includes postcards, govdelivery, facebook, fliers to businesses, press releases in English and Spanish.
- Presentation was given to City Council worksession on April 9.

Q – Are we keeping track of all these events? Do we have a target? A pie in the sky goal is 10% of study area. Our goal is always to bring out more people than the last round. We have a large database contacts and activities from throughout process.

Q - We didn't categorize participants to track how they use the area last time; will we do that this time? Yes, we want to do that this time through sign in and survey.

Connor asked if there are any lessons learned from last round of meetings we should keep in mind.

- Do you feel like you are able to localize concerns and exactly where they are relevant? It would be important to know very specifics of these concerns. Will you be giving the opportunity to react about solutions? Yes, absolutely. We're trying to present options to get feedback on and have a conversation.

- We posted on Next Door last time, and that covered almost 8,000 homes. We should do this again, ahead of each event to keep it fresh in people's minds. Definitely! It's meaningful when people get something from someone they know.

Hardin mentioned the Issues and Opportunities Report, summarizing the technical analysis and work so far. It will be available online soon.

Connor gave an overview of workshop content. Materials will acknowledge that some people are just starting to participate and haven't seen previous information. Framework will look at the big picture on traffic, natural systems and nonmotorized transportation, transit, development, any others. There will also be room to discuss areas of more detailed exploration, areas that warrant more detailed look.

Midtown Moves or traffic will focus on congestions, non-local traffic, access management. Approach is to increase road connections to build a more balance network, build capacity to cross I440, protect neighborhoods. Access management is beneficial in situation where there is limited right of way to work with. Don reviewed I440 crossing options. Group members commented on marking greenways on maps for consideration.

Midtown Green and Blue or natural systems will focus on flooding, pedestrian access, bicycle facilities. Approach is to improve stormwater capacity, increase pedestrian and bicycle network, and address pedestrian and bicycle safety. Options include expanding greenspace around Crabtree Creek, provide additional access across I-440, and combining improved greenway access and green streets to complete a pedestrian and bicycle loop.

Midtown Moves or transit will focus on poor pedestrian access at transit stops, connectivity's impact on transit service, congestion impact on transit service. Approach will be to add to street network, improve pedestrian access, and address congestion. Group members commented that traffic and transit both can worsen each other.

Midtown Living or development will focus on previous developments that preceded infrastructure improvements, lack of housing diversity, impact of suburban development pattern. Approach will include focus on context sensitive development, role of infrastructure, mix of uses. Visional preference survey is a likely tool to initiate conversation on development.

Q – Is there a way to understanding if bicycle or pedestrian user are choosing the mode or if it is a mode of last resort? Will people switch from driving to other modes in bad weather? Ideally, good infrastructure is good enough even in rain. Downtown is a good example of role of infrastructure and network. It adds to quality of life, not only transportation.

Q – Education for multi-modal routes will be important. Regarding flooding, are you looking at building codes? Fill can exacerbate problem. The City has already increased restrictions for building in the floodplain, but recommendations could come out of this plan that look at higher standards for this area.

Hardin asked if the topic presented seem well connected to principles presented at last meeting. Group members generally agreed that they did.

- Flows well, and well related to comments we received. You can see the connection. Is the expectation that traffic can be addressed quantitatively by this process? Principles mention safe and reliable transportation, those are quantitative and qualitative. There are things that we

can't solve, for example backup from crashes on I440, but we can chip away at other elements of travel.

- Eric shared idea that transit doesn't aim to solve congestion entirely but improves quality of life. Sounds like we can improve terminology so that we are managing expectations about outcomes from these solutions.
- Will content include friction between development and infrastructure provision? We can touch on it. We want to come out of this round with a clearer idea of which ideas resonate with people.

Connor discussed ideal outcome of meetings. This includes which solutions are like or disliked, but also the perceived risks, costs, public benefit and community choice.

Q - When you have maps with areas highlighted, how do handle interest and concern from residents that live in those areas? Make sure that vulnerable populations are there to respond to content, but also not hurt or confused by seeing their neighborhood identified on a map? Yes, we need to be very honest about what these materials represent, I would love to hear your thoughts but avoiding the conversation is not good. The idea is 'Don't come to me after the fact.' You don't want it to seem like things are happening to people. No surprises. We can stress that it is alternatives testing and empower people to share contrary opinions.

Connor discussed workshop format. Presentations on the hour, five stations with interactive exhibits.

Q - Is there going to be a corner where intro presentations will be held to not compete for noise? We'll look at setup of locations.

Boards will have highlight information, there will be a markup map and station feedback station.

Q - Dots and comments induce interest, is there a way to get a balanced view of opinions? Stations will be staffed to add guidance. Writing detailed notes can help too. Longer stations will hopefully allow more folks to participate.

Q - What will be presented in 15 minutes? The big picture framework, not specific details.

Group members commented that projects that are already in pipeline need to be clearly separated. Clarity in what individuals are responding to and can affect. 'Infrastructure' as we've been talking about it means roads, but many people think of water and sewer and stormwater. Project team can clarify what is being discussed. There was a discussion of locating affordable housing. This is a complex topic, research has found that segregation is not helpful. Group members gave recommendations to reach out to Raleigh and Wake County Economic Development staff.

Ellis mentioned that who comes out to events will shape this guidance as well.

Hardin reviewed next steps for confirmation group and project. The next meeting will be in June.

Meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.