

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

City Hall Council Chambers
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, August 13, 2019
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Seth Bernard, Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, and Laurie Marchini.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey D. Rhodes, City Administrator; Michael S. Cohen, City Solicitor; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk; Kathy McKenney, Community Development Program Manager; Paul Kelly, CEDC Executive Director; Matt Miller, CEDC Economic Development Specialist; Eric Woolridge, Destination by Design

MEDIA: Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News

I. ASPIRATIONAL CIVIC MASTER PLAN BY DESTINATION BY DESIGN

Mr. Kelly provided an overview on how Destination by Design came to be hired by the CEDC to suggest ideas on how Cumberland can grow as a community and be opportunistic.

Eric Woolridge provided background on his firm Destination by Design, which is on the small side, and based in Western N. Carolina. He added they work primarily with transitional economies, focusing on quality of life – how to amplify walkability, downtown, trail system, open space, and natural resources as a purely economic development engine.

Mr. Woolridge's advised that his firm started off making tourist recommendations for Allegany County, and that his first impression of downtown area was that it needs housing, because you need local people supporting the local businesses, not just visitors, to be successful.

Mr. Woolridge provided a presentation of the Downtown Cumberland Civic Master Plan, saying it is purely aspirational, and is meant to be visionary and creative. He added that they have had multiple meetings with a diverse group of 27 stakeholders.

Topics presented and discussed were:

- Scope of Work – scenario – 15 year build-out; infill, connectivity, framework
- Streets – grid network; curb extension/bump-outs; streetscapes; access management
- Green Infrastructure – bike/pedestrian connectivity; civic areas
- Building Form – form-based vs. land use; pedestrian triangle; facade variety
- Transect – how to move from country into urban

- Housing and Infill – “X” units per acre; crosswalks; pedestrian signage; landscaping improvements, retrofitting shopping centers
- Fiscal Implications – tax value per acre - big spikes in City’s downtown environment-density needed

There was discussion regarding what type of additional housing is needed, and where specifically in relation to the downtown area. Mr. Woolridge advised that the City’s mixed use core is good for the downtown, but what is needed is more townhomes, or high-density single-family homes on the outskirts of town, but they have to be in the right place.

Key transportation challenges were discussed, and Mr. Woolridge advised that the South Cumberland area is in an identity crisis and it gave up its urban form a long time ago. He discussed possibilities with Canal Place connectivity, and re-developing Rose’s plaza as well.

Mr. Woolridge then provided conceptual graphics and a proposed land-use map with a breakdown of the different City areas (not for branding, but for communication purposes only):

- Canal Place South & Southern Gateway – awkward - roundabout concept could be viable
- Canal Place North – more significant roundabout – connectivity to Pershing – expanded parking
- Rose’s Plaza – extend N. George – downtown housing – QC Dr. streetscape improvements
- Downtown Core – achieve connectivity back to Towpath/Gap Trail
- Park St. & Cumberland Gateway – lose block structure – re-orientation around AMTRAK (improved AMTRAK gateway)
- Cumberland East – continue Park St. – turn into more of a real road– apply design principles to shopping area – Industrial Blvd. connectivity

Mr. Woolridge advised that 150 to 200 dwelling units are proposed – more or less, with the goal being a walkable neighborhood core. He discussed his views on housing; reduction and addition of housing stock, a workable, livable environment, what the market could be, and the Maryland Ave to Lamont area as being housing, but said commercial there could look and be appropriate as well.

II MOVING FORWARD

Mr. Woolridge discussed the goals moving forward as seen by his team:

- Long-term parking needs – Baltimore Street square footage realized over time; parking study needed
- Development Ordinance update? Developer engaging in a particular tract; City in a position to adopt revision?
- Capital infrastructure planning – Crucial to be driven by the City; public/private partnership

- Community branding – External *and* internal branding needed; change citizens' mentality of the City
- Detail planning + outreach materials – Detailed level needed if pushed into outreach materials for the private sector
- Gateway master planning & implementation – Opportunities for near-term successes; tourism aspects; low-hanging fruit at Gateway entrances

The presentation was discussed at length and Mr. Kelly advised M&CC to consider where we want to be down the road, and that the aspirational plan can be shown to developers. He suggested at some point at another meeting, M&CC vote yes as to plan moving forward.

Mayor Morriss added it was a lot of information in a short amount of time to absorb, saying that he could tell they put a lot of time and effort into the presentation. He advised that he saw a lot of good things in the presentation and likes the overall design, but wants a closer look and needs a little time to digest it all.

Community branding was discussed, as to how to change the locals' perception of the City. Mr. Woolridge advised the key is to get really honest with yourself, embrace the City and look to the positive. He added as branding is done, it needs to be embedded into the infrastructure so that everyone can be reminded of it. He also discussed place-branding vs. marketing to private sector, in regards to additional housing.

Mr. Woolridge advised he would package and send the file via Dropbox, saying that it was a culmination of his company's work and the committee's work.

III. ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m. into Closed Session pursuant to Section 3-305 (b) (4) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss proposals for the development of the East Side School site.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie A. Woodring
City Clerk

Minutes approved October 15, 2019