

**RALEIGH APPEARANCE COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Special Meeting**  
**Monday, March 1, 2010**

**Members present:** Laurent de Comarmond, John Holmes, Andrew Leager, Cindy Szwarcokop, Ted Van Dyk, and Vincent Whitehurst.

**Members not present:** Elizabeth Byrd, Mitch Fluhrer, Jim Harris, Tyler Highsmith, Bang Le, Omar McCallop, Julieta Sherk (*excused*), Tom Skolnicki (*excused*), Stan Williams.

**Staff present:** Doug Hill.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chair Vincent Whitehurst, in Chair Tom Skolnicki's absence, called the meeting to order at 11:37 AM.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Diagnostic and Approach Report: Raleigh Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)**

Discussion highlighted a variety of report components and attendant implications.

Points raised included:

- The figures presented for building "footprints" need to be checked against what is actually buildable in the designated districts.
- In general, there are too many zoning districts proposed, especially among "mixed use" designations. Additionally, it should be made clear that "mixed use" *means* "mixed use;" e.g., office+retail, or residential+retail, or even better, office+retail +residential, and the mix should be mandatory where designated.
- Regardless of other form issues (height, density, use), connectivity must be assured.
- Regarding Context considerations, parcel-specific parameters for designating growth (i.e., change) areas are needed, with careful attention should be given to anticipated alternative transportation modes, and routes. Option 1 best matches the approach taken by the Comprehensive Plan – designating specific urban forms for specific areas, across the city. Providing more defined standards up front will ultimately simplify the development process.
- The "Essential Design Standards" list developed by the Appearance Commission should provide a basis for developing place-specific standards, much in the same way as the "Streets, Driveways, and Sidewalks" manual provides across-the-board guidance regarding street design. The Design Standards need to be addressed and applied in district-specific ways, in all zoning districts.
- In the Mixed Use Districts table, going from Neighborhood classifications' maximum "footprint" of 10,000 square feet to Community's 70,000 square feet is a big jump;

there needs to be more intermediate ground. Also, the term “footprint” is applied loosely – it should mean the total building, not tenant space size. District descriptions would do better to stay away from “footprint” designation altogether; building floor area should be a function of lot size, rather than zoning alone.

- It is crucial that parking be addressed in the district tables. The number of parking spaces required per use could negate the maximum number of stories designated.
- The amount of parking required should be proportionally reduced in relation to the distance of a given property from a transit route.
- District classifications should be more general, letting form be the driver rather than making the zoning code prescribe all functions within the envelope.

In addition, Tom Skolnicki provided in advance a set of comments on specific provisions within the report (see attachment).

Following discussion, Cindy Szwarcop noted she will bring these points, and the previously noted Essential Design Standards list, to the attention of the UDO Advisory Group at the group’s meeting on Wednesday, March 3. She also said she would forward bullet point summaries of all the Diagnostic and Approach Report chapters to Appearance Commission members.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the Special Meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.

## Diagnostic & Approach Report

Public Review Draft (2/1/10)

### Comments from Tom Skolnicki

February 28, 2010

**Some things that caught my eye in the report that I think are most important. In some cases, they are addressed directly in Chapter 9. In others, they are not, and I think they need to be reiterated for staff and Council to address and/or include in the new code.**

1. Page 11. Form-Based Coding. Third col. *"Form-based code application will be most appropriate in the city's designated Growth Centers and Corridors."* I agree, and think we should remind Council that the Appearance Commission has studied Gateway corridors in the past. The commission is well-suited to provide input and comment regarding which corridors should be so designated.
2. Page 12. Current Mixed Use Regulations. 2<sup>nd</sup> col. Following the conclusion *"The overriding problem with the Urban Design Guidelines is that they are advisory and are not mandatory."* Eliminate the caveat from this recommendation so that it reads, *"The UDO must incorporate the most relevant rules of the Urban Design Guidelines."* The caveat "To the extent feasible" makes the recommendation weak and vague.
3. Page 25. Last sentence. *"...unless Raleigh changes its approach to open space, the city may not be able to meet the demand for small neighborhood scale open spaces."* I agree, but don't see where the consultants make a clear recommendation for how to make this change in a significant way. The only reference to improve open space is to allow cluster subdivisions to provide space (p115.) That is not enough change. We need other mechanisms as well.
4. Page 26. Transitions. They heard us and seemed to have read some of our reports.
5. Page 31. Accessory Dwelling Units. Last sentence. Yes. As a follow up, the possibility of detached accessory units should be allowed in all zones that permit housing.
6. Page 75. Option 1. Citywide Context Mapping. I generally like this option, but would request some clarification. The graphic is too much of a continuum, and the text doesn't clearly state that the adjacencies are not limited to the order shown in the graphic or the text. For example, I hope that it will be possible to have a "Center" surrounded by "Rural" or "Estate" or "Suburban" context areas. Also, I hope that we don't end up with a map that doesn't allow "Estate" areas adjacent to "Urban" areas. Otherwise, we won't make much of a change from the status quo which has resulted in slow, painful, sprawling progression from high density to low density.
7. Page 76. Option 2. Stability/Growth Area Mapping. This is bad. This will result in lawsuits and endless NIMBY protests. It will be difficult to decide which areas to make "stabile" without it appearing to be arbitrary. Lastly, the improvements possible to the city will be severely constrained.

8. Page 76. Option 3. Urban-Suburban Mapping. Why bother with the new code if this is selected? This is the status quo. This seems to be like changing the limits of the Downtown Overlay, and encouraging PDDs and Shopping Center zones in all other areas.

9. Page 77. Mixed Use Districts. 3<sup>rd</sup> col. Last sentence. "However, in and around some of the city's newer neighborhoods on the urban fringe, these neighborhood-scale districts may focus more on promoting connectivity within and between sites, while allowing some amount of parking between the building and the street." I don't understand why this consultant, having sung the praises of "liner buildings" earlier would make this suggestion to put parking between the buildings and the street (unless this was telegraphed to them by someone?) Don't tools such as liner buildings make it not only possible to retrofit suburban shopping centers, but also make it possible for those sites to be more productive/profitable for their owners? If Raleigh wants to be a better city, it needs to take some bold steps. Retrofitting the strip mall layouts needs to be one of those bold moves.

10. Page 78. "...the city may not yet be ready to fully eliminate the suburban shopping center characterized by large parking lots between the building and the street." Who is "the city?" I suspect this is in response to advance complaints from some developers at the listening sessions about not wanting to change the status quo. Again, this consultant has shown that there are development models that can be encouraged by form based elements in the code, which actually will make the old beloved strip center not only look better, but will make more money for their owners. This should be removed from the report.

11. Page 79. Office & Residential Mixed Use. Would this zone allow some retail? If not, it should.

12. Page 89. Streetscapes. First sentence. "...it is important to have requirements for streetscape improvements for redevelopment along existing roadways." Yes. A must. However, the next paragraph mentions utilities. Utilities must partner in the redevelopment. Their involvement in the process must not be simply to say, "it will cost us and our customers too much to change our current alignments and easements." Existing utility alignments may need to change (horizontally or vertically) in order to meet the standards for streetscape improvements along designated corridors. The recent Falls of Neuse streetscape design is a case in point. Along most of that road, true street trees will not be planted because the electric utility is not a partner in the project, and was not asked to move or bury any of their power lines.

Page 101. PDD. What will this be combined with? Why keep the PDD? There seem to be an awful lot of new options created by all of the zones proposed. Is it really needed, and if so, how will it's use be limited to only address developments that otherwise would not be possible anywhere in the city? In any case, they should not be used for what many use them for today, which is to develop land in a way that is not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

**End of comments**