

Midtown-St. Albans Confirmation Group Meeting 8

March 2, 2020

Green Road Community Center, 4201 Green Road

Attending: Bonner Gaylord, Robin Hammond, David Jones, Ted Kunstling, Jevon Peterson (Duke Raleigh), Willard Ross

Staff: Jason Hardin

The meeting began at 4:05.

Hardin began with an overview of the agenda and a quick update on the current status of the project. The final report, *Walkable Midtown*, was published in early February, and a public comment period ran through March 1. He noted that the report is available online and in hard copy form at the Planning and Development office downtown and the Five Points Center for Active Adults.

Hardin briefly went through the report itself, focusing on the executive summary. The summary contains information about the process and the “Seven Big Moves” that convey the important ideas of the plan.

He noted that the report weaves public input throughout the document, including direct quotes from plan participants about their vision. An example included a quote in the summary that Midtown should be “The kind of neighborhood that can have the reputation for both the best restaurants in walking distance and the best trick or treating.” Gaylord said he lives in Ramblewood, which has many trick or treaters, which is the sign of a comfortably walkable neighborhood.

Hardin then described the input received during the comment period, which consisted of 26 comments from 12 respondents. Hardin noted that the commenters generally were supportive or asked questions rather than commended. He walked through and provided a response to each (note – comments are found in the presentation that is also available on the project page).

He noted that is a typical amount of feedback at this point in the process, when the major periods of engagement are complete. He said that some revisions could still be made to the recommendations before the report goes to City Council, at which point only Council could make changes. However, as significant amounts of input have gone into the report, and the recommendations that made it into the report all received strong support, major changes that run counter to that input would not be reasonable to make based on a few comments.

Hardin did recommend making changes in response to three comments, including:

- A statement that going beyond minimum ADA requirements should occur where needed to ensure comfort and safety, as that fits with the overall input theme of walkability and is the right thing to do.
- Including language about the role of citizens in initiating the area planning process.
- Clarifying that Quail Hollow Road is in two separate segments. He also noted that, as the segments are not planned to connect, renaming the southern segment would eliminate confusion.

The group generally agreed with those comments and recommendations.

Hardin then said that the point in the process has come where the group should make a decision about the “confirmation” that is part of its name. The primary task of the group, in addition to ensuring an inclusive and robust input process, is to ensure that the final recommendations align with the input received – the “confirmation.”

Gaylord made a formal motion to confirm the report and recommendations. Jones seconded. Group members then discussed why they felt the recommendations fit the input. The group noted that recommendations involved some compromises, which is the nature of this type of process.

The group then unanimously confirmed the report and recommendations.

Hardin then talked about next steps. He said that he is aiming to have the report on the March 17 City Council agenda, but that it could be in April. The item likely would be on the consent agenda, with little discussion, as the request is simply to refer the report and recommendations to the Planning Commission for their review.

Hardin said the target date for Planning Commission review is April 23, but that he would update the group and project page with firm dates once they are known.

The final portion of the meeting involved an explanation and preview of how the plan would become formalized and implemented. Hardin said that recommendations fit into two main categories – capital projects and policy, such as for rezoning. He said that a new “Midtown” section would be added to the Comprehensive Plan, and that existing maps in the plan, such as the Future Land Use Map and Street Plan, would be amended to reflect the plan’s recommendations. Action items for capital projects would be included, and potentially could be part of a future transportation bond or other funding device.

Lastly, Hardin discussed the outreach process for plan adoption and review. Once a date is set for Planning Commission review, notifications will go out to all properties within 100’ of where a change to policy is proposed. Staff will also hold “office hours” before the Planning Commission meeting so that residents or stakeholders who only have questions can get them answered easily.

Hardin said that he plans to provide updates about implementation to any group who would like them, including the confirmation group.

Hardin thanked all the members of the group for their ideas and participation, and stated that the planning process and final result was better for their work.