

City of Fairfax, Virginia
City Council Work Session Meeting



Agenda Item # 4

City Council Meeting 12/02/2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

FROM: Robert Sisson, City Manager *rs*

SUBJECT: Discussion of Downtown Charrette follow-up and next steps

ISSUE(S): To review the recommendations from the Downtown Charrette and discuss next steps and priorities for implementation.

SUMMARY: The City of Fairfax and George Mason University hosted a three-day planning workshop (or charrette) from November 6 to 8, 2014 on the downtown area and its connection to the university. The workshop, facilitated by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, included topic and background reviews, issue identification and small group discussions, visioning and feedback sessions, and recommendations presentations. Participants discussed and identified solutions for issues related to transportation, land use / historic preservation, economic development / retail / cultural arts, town-gown relationships, and housing. At the conclusion of the charrette, the consultant team provided a series of recommendations related to each of the discussion topics. Subsequently, staff has evaluated the consultant's recommendations and organized them into an implementation program for City Council review and discussion.

FISCAL IMPACT: None at this time. If implemented, the recommendations from the Downtown Charrette propose various operational and capital expenditures.

RECOMMENDATION: Review the list of recommendations and discuss next steps and priorities.

ALTERNATIVE: Postpone the discussion to a future date.

**RESPONSIBLE STAFF/
POC:** Bob Sisson, City Manager
Brooke Hardin, Director of Community Development & Planning

COORDINATION: Community Development & Planning; Economic Development; Human Services; Parks & Recreation; Public Works

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment A: Original Consultant Recommendations
Attachment B: Draft Consolidated Staff Recommendations

Original Consultant Recommendations

A. Transportation:

Immediate Action

- Late Night Public Access to Mason Shuttles
- Restripe University Dr for Bicycle Lanes
- Stripe University Dr Neighborhood for Bike Lanes
- Real-Time Parking Counters at Mason Entrances
- New Directional Signs Approaching Old Town

Short-Term (2-5 years)

- Old Lee Hwy Bicycle Study
- Bike Parking in Garage, Old Town Park, Mason Garages
- Bike Share Station at Bike Nodes
- Mason Shuttle Stop in Old Town
- Study County Bypass Routes
- Develop Mason Buildings on University Dr (w New Streets)
- Street Extensions
 - New Streets with Massey Building Removal
 - Extend North to Church

Long-Range (5-10 years)

- Add Public Parking in SE Corner Development
- Surf Shop to Become “Restaurant on the Green”
- Street Connections with Redevelopment
 - Safeway Center
 - Crossroads Center
 - Courthouse Rd to South St
- Signalize Sager Ave & Chain Bridge Rd

Very Long-Range (10-20 years)

- Rail Connection – Mason to Metro through Old Town
- Implement County Bypass Route(s)
- Judicial Dr Extension – Chain Bridge Rd to North Street

B. Economic Development, Retail, and Cultural Arts:

Near Term:

- Refresh the Downtown Coalition working with the City's Economic Development staff and the Economic Development Authority with an initial focus on marketing existing Old Town/Downtown businesses and cultural activities and on business recruitment
- Adopt appropriate zoning for Old Town/Downtown allowing for a mix of uses, densities, and building types – diversity in all things!
- Create clear standards and design guide lines to have greater control over building appearance.
- Consider creating topic based working groups between Fairfax and Mason.
- Continue to encourage downtown merchants to accept Mason Money and carry Mason gear.

Mid Term:

- Look for near term opportunities to add housing in the "Downtown" area
- Consider re-focusing the current cultural arts programming to include more entertainment activities targeted to all age groups (under 21, 20 somethings, and on up)
- Create a "lesson plan" for Mason students to learn about city activities and offerings.

Long Term:

- Consider creating a more formal Business Improvement District
 - Marketing and promotion
 - Landscaping and beautification
 - Programming events
 - Business incubation and technical assistance
- Look for opportunities to incorporate Mason performing arts in Downtown.

C. Housing:

Near Term:

- Conduct working sessions with City Council on affordable housing
- Adopt Affordable Housing Work Group Recommendations providing policy framework for Proffer negotiations
- Work with non-profit developers to identify sites for either new construction or rehabilitation of units affordable to households with incomes below 60% AMI

Mid Term:

- Prepare comprehensive affordable housing strategy focusing on production as well as acquisition and rehabilitation through zoning and other planning “best practices”

D. Land Use and Historic Preservation:**Short Term (1-2 years):**

- Discuss planning with the County
- Continue working with Mason on sites in Downtown
- Coordinate Mason Campus Plan with Downtown concept
- Create design guidelines for new Downtown
- Coordinate plans with historic district & buildings in Old Town as a part of the larger Downtown
- Complete zoning code revisions for new Downtown
- Complete a wayfinding study for City of Fairfax & coordinate with Mason
- Incorporate sustainability throughout planning and development process
- Include storm drainage, urban forestry, green building principles and alternative energy sources/solar energy.

Mid Term (2-5 years):

- Coordinate streets and Massey demolition with County
- Plan new West and South Street with County
- Plan North and Main Streets at West
- Establish sites for development at North & Main at West
- Consider development on north downtown site(s)
- Discuss south downtown plans with property owners
- Create plan for south downtown with Mason
- Study Performing Arts venues in Downtown and Mason
- Work with Mason on OLLI, south downtown, and the performing arts venues

Long Term (6-20 years):

- Develop south Downtown sites north of Armstrong
- Develop north Downtown sites south of Layton Hall
- Plan and complete development with County at West
- Plan and complete new eastern Downtown streets
- Plan and complete development on sites along connection routes to Mason
- Continue to plan and develop infill sites in the historic Old Town

Draft Consolidated Staff Recommendations

Recommendations	Area of focus	Lead	Timing	Notes
Immediate (0 - <2 years)				
Create topic based working groups between Fairfax and Mason	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts	City / Mason	Underway	Coordinate land use/historic preservation, transportation, and economic development/retail/cultural arts through working groups, assigning responsibilities for specific actions
Provide real-time parking information for campus garages	Transportation	Mason	Underway	App for smart phones
Provide focused marketing of CUE routes that serve Old Town	Transportation	Public Works / Mason	Underway	City and George Mason completed joint transit study (including Old Town area) and will monitor capacity to serve City and University riders
Facilitate activities with the Downtown Coalition	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts	Economic Development	Underway	Coordinate business retention and recruitment, marketing, and cultural activities with the Downtown Coalition, Economic Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and Parks & Rec
Encourage downtown merchants to accept Mason Money and carry Mason gear	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts	Mason / EDA	Underway	George Mason working with downtown merchants; Economic Development Authority providing terminals
Adopt appropriate zoning for Old Town/Downtown allowing for a mix of uses, densities, and building types	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts and Land Use	Comm Dev & Planning	Underway	Zoning Ordinance Rewrite in progress with expected adoption in 2015
Refocus current cultural arts programming to include more entertainment activities targeted to all age groups (under 21, 20 somethings, and on up)	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts	Parks & Rec	Underway	New programs and events planned or in development
Evaluate late night public access to Mason shuttles	Transportation	Mason	Under review	Feasibility to be evaluated
Incorporate sustainability, storm drainage, urban forestry, green building principles, and alternative energy sources/solar energy throughout planning and development process	Land Use	Comm Dev & Planning	Ongoing	Include items in topic based working group discussions

Recommendations	Area of focus	Lead	Timing	Notes
Coordinate planning and evaluation of potential development sites with Campus Plan	Land Use	Mason / Comm Dev & Planning	Spring 2015	Commence effort through topic based working group; conduct outreach with property owners; incorporate into Campus Plan and Comprehensive Plan
Conduct working sessions with City Council on affordable housing and review affordable housing work group recommendations	Housing	Human Services / Comm Dev & Planning	Spring 2015	Continue ongoing discussions and evaluation of affordable housing policy
Stripe University Drive (4200 block) for bicycle lanes or sharrows	Transportation	Public Works	Spring 2015	Staff assessment of options followed by installation
Initiate Old Lee Highway Multimodal Planning	Transportation	Public Works	Spring 2015	Conduct planning study for corridor
Discuss planning with Fairfax County	Land Use	Comm Dev & Planning	Spring 2015	Coordinate land use and transportation discussion with County and George Mason
Conduct bicycle parking assessment and needs study	Transportation	Public Works	2015	Staff assessment of locations and rack installation
Create a "lesson plan" (University 100) for Mason students to learn about City activities and offerings	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts	Mason	2015-2016	George Mason to coordinate with City on topics and speakers for class presentations
Design/construct improvements on Old Lee Highway based on adopted recommendations from multimodal planning study	Transportation	Public Works	FY 2016	Consider funding in FY16 CIP
Install bicycle infrastructure on University Drive (Armstrong to Layton Hall)	Transportation	Public Works	FY 2016	Traffic study and design funding requested in FY16 CIP
Implement bicycle sharing program for University and Old Town area (City)	Transportation	Mason / Public Works	FY 2016	George Mason considering funding for implementation of program
Short Term (2 - 4 years)				
Implement coordinated wayfinding program with Mason	Transportation and Land Use	Public Works	FY 2017	Includes directional signage approaching Old Town and bypass signage around City
Create design guidelines for downtown	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts and Land Use	Comm Dev & Planning	FY 2017	Evaluate requirements for design guidelines after the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
Prepare comprehensive affordable housing strategy and work with non-profit developers to identify sites for construction or preservation/rehabilitation of units affordable to households with incomes at 60% and below of area median income	Housing	Human Services / Comm Dev & Planning	FY 2017	Pursue funding to prepare strategy and use strategy to facilitate affordable housing production
Create Business Improvement District in Old Town area	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts	Econ Dev / Downtown Coalition	FY 2017	Business Improvement District to promote self-sufficient marketing/promotion, landscaping, events, and business assistance

Recommendations	Area of focus	Lead	Timing	Notes
Update Comprehensive Plan for Old Town area, north and south downtowns, and development sites	Land Use	Comm Dev & Planning	FY 2017	Establish plans for specific development sites and concepts for the entire downtown; coordinate with George Mason
Develop Downtown Transportation Network Plan	Transportation and Land Use	Public Works / Comm Dev & Planning	FY 2018	Study and plan street extensions, signalization, public parking, and transit access
Mid-Term (5 - 9 years)				
Add housing in the downtown area	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts	Comm Dev & Planning	5-9 years	City-Mason land use working group begin working on housing opportunities in near term
Develop sites in north and south downtowns and infill in Old Town	Land Use	Comm Dev & Planning / Mason	5-9 years	Implement recommendations in Comprehensive Plan and Campus Plan
Design and construct new street extensions	Transportation	Public Works	5-9 years	Implement recommendations in Downtown Transportation Network Plan in conjunction with redevelopment
Long Term (10+ years)				
Study venues and incorporate Mason performing arts in downtown	ED/Retail/Cultural Arts and Land Use	Mason	10+ years	Coordinate with Parks & Rec; incorporate into long range plans
Continue to develop sites in north and south downtowns and infill in Old Town	Land Use	Comm Dev & Planning / Mason	10+ years	Continue to implement recommendations in Comprehensive Plan and Campus Plan
Continue to design and construct new street extensions	Transportation	Public Works	10+ years	Continue to implement recommendations in Downtown Transportation Network Plan in conjunction with redevelopment