



MINUTES OF THE EMBARK RICHMOND HIGHWAY ADVISORY GROUP

On October 24, 2016 the Embark Richmond Highway Advisory Group (AG) held its eleventh meeting at the South County Government Center, Room 217, Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309.

AG Members Present

Bruce Leonard
Walter Clarke
Carlos Heard
Vernon Lee
Earl Flanagan
Dale Johnson
Frank Cohn
Rodney Lusk
Chris Soule

AG Members Absent

James Migliaccio
Rebecca Todd
Tim Sargeant

Guests and County Staff Present

See attached sign-in sheet.

Call to Order

Mr. Clarke called the October 24, 2016 meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Administrative Items

Approval of Minutes from September 26, 2016

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes for the September 26, 2016 Advisory Group meeting. A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

Conceptual Massing Diagrams

Hybla Valley CBC

Tony DeLorenzo, Office of Community Revitalization, discussed precedent images to illustrate a diversity of housing types that could be accommodated. He presented the concept of a central core mix of uses with office along Richmond Highway and the Great Street leading up to a large institutional use that could be a school site. Residential uses

are also concentrated along the Great Street. Environmental buffering to Little Hunting Creek serves as a community amenity. Connecting Huntley Meadows to the built environment is a unique concept to the Hybla Valley CBC. The conceptual massing also includes a 3 acre park fronting Richmond Highway that includes full size field. Parks and recreational facilities needs are calculated based on the projected population.

A comment was made that the Audubon mobile home park abuts some of the proposed multifamily residential buildings and that the future of the mobile home park is uncertain. A comment was made that the use of parks as a buffer between the mobile home park and the proposed development was a positive element of the design.

A comment was made that including precedent images of different types of park spaces would be helpful in illustrating how they function within a larger context. Marianne Gardner, Director, Planning Division, replied that this is at a high level concept and that staff will take the feedback from this meeting and look more closely at impact analysis and the types and sizes of parks that may be needed. A comment was made that having one large park may be a disincentive to achieving redevelopment at the scale shown in the massing, and that a strategy of smaller parks around retail might be more realistic so barriers to redevelopment are not created. A comment was made about Savannah, Georgia as an example of a community with a number of 5-acre parks.

A question was asked about whether staff will illustrate the transition from the existing conditions to the future vision illustrated by the massings. A discussion ensued about what will happen when market demand starts to increase and pressure on property owners increases for them to sell or redevelop. A comment was made that this initial concept is helpful but flexibility should be included to allow a developer to move forward.

A comment was made that there is a substantial amount of retail in Hybla Valley, and that a fair assumption would be that the existing amount of retail should be maintained with the conversion to a mix of uses. Reducing the amount of retail to 600,000 square feet could be problematic. In addition, using Potomac Yards as an example, 50 percent of the retail are large anchors. The distribution of anchor retail should be tested. A question was asked about whether any of the proposed development would be located within the Little Hunting Creek floodplain. Mr. DeLorenzo replied that the floodplain was avoided.

A comment was made that the importance of the park shown in the massing should not be underestimated. The park creates a sense of place and the community sees it as their park. A comment was made that parking recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan amendment should be flexible with regard to type of parking.

A comment was made that the arrow at the end of the proposed avenue should encourage a connection to Buckman Road. Cars using Ladson Lane will have to go to

Richmond Highway to access Buckman Road. The arrow at the north end of the existing Fordson Road should be removed, because it implies that northbound traffic will be able to access Richmond Highway at that point. Tom Biesiadny, Director, Department of Transportation replied that the massing is conceptual, and that the arrows are intended to illustrate that there are ways for cars to get back onto Richmond Highway.

A comment was made that the programming of open space with multiple types of uses on a seasonal basis could create more places that people want to enjoy. The recreational needs of millennials should be considered.

Woodlawn CBC

Mr. DeLorenzo summarized the conceptual massing by explaining it includes 15 new blocks with an overall lower intensity of development than in Hybla Valley. The concept also includes substantial re-vegetation of resource protection areas (RPAs) as part of an integrated mixed-use development. The central core mix of uses follows a similar approach as in other CBCs. Office, residential, and primarily ground floor in-line retail uses.

A comment was made that as in other CBCs, office is not a leading use, in order to get office need retail uses to incentivize the office uses. Office comes later, and should be clustered more tightly. A question was asked to consider whether building heights are designed to avoid towering over the Woodlawn Plantation. A comment was made that it appears as if intensity is being reduced, as we work our way down the corridor.

A comment was made that the Resource Protection Area (RPA) could accommodate passive recreation facilities. A comment was made that some of the passive park uses seem to be placed on top of proposed roads.

A comment was made that thought needs to be given to adding workforce housing and a mix of housing for employees. If we want a live/work/play environment we need to be sensitive to pricing. We need to ensure a mix of housing and affordability. Being at Fort Belvoir should be a consideration in achieving these goals.

Transportation Briefing

Transportation Analysis Background and Existing Transportation Conditions

Tom Burke, Department of Transportation explained the purpose of the transportation analysis, the process, and expected outcomes. He provided an overview of transportation modeling and some of the existing conditions in the corridor.

A discussion ensued about the process and methodology including the assumptions for car-sharing services like Uber and Lyft, weekend traffic, and the incorporation of external traffic from places like National Harbor.

Funding and utilities

Tom Biesiadny, Director, FCDOT stated that the process for developing funding plan is multi-layer puzzle, and the goal is to match funding sources with projects. Different funding sources have different requirements. There are number of funding sources at the federal and state level and the county's Department of Transportation has a dedicated team to secure funding for transportation projects. He presented information on the costs of the BRT system from Huntington Metro to Hybla Valley and the widening of Richmond Highway from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway to Napper Road.

Utility relocation

Mr. Biesiadny provided details about the challenges of utility relocation and the increases in design and construction time and project budgets. The Advisory Group expressed appreciation for the information presented. A discussion ensued about whether to underground utilities along the entire corridor or just in the CBCs. A question was asked at whether there is a decision point about whether the AG needs to take a position on this matter. Mr. Biesiadny replied that the Department of Transportation continuing to research this matter and expects to get examples from around the country this fall.

Advisory Group update on community feedback

Motion made to skip to public comments. Motion approved.

Public comment

More trees are needed along the corridor as well as contiguous green spaces. There is an appreciation for more green color on the maps which was not evident at previous meetings. Increased tree cover will increase quality of life and attract businesses to come here.

Comment was made to taper building heights to RPAs and existing conservation areas. A question was asked about whether there will be additional opportunities to drill down to streetscapes. Elizabeth Hagg, Office of Community Revitalization, replied that there may be an opportunity to use some grant money could look at streetscapes further. Different types of cross sections are being developed that illustrate tree cover and placement.

Comment was made to add a Measure of Effectiveness (MOE) for preserving and adding tree cover. Comment was made that trees and power lines are not compatible.

A question was asked about the size of the superblock in Hybla Valley. Mr. DeLorenzo replied that it is 650 by 600 feet.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Items recorded on the flip chart:

Comment or Question
Add precedents for different types of parks for future presentations.
The percentage of retail comprised by anchor stores should be tested when the massings are refined.
Showing parks as part of the massings is very important, creating sense of place and new residents will take ownership.
The type of parking should not act as a deterrent to new development.
Several types of recreation spaces should be considered, not just soccer fields.
A broader discussion of open space should take place at future meetings.
The Avenue in the Hybla Valley massing should be connected to Buckman Road.
The Avenue in the Hybla Valley massing where it meets Fordson Road should maintain the existing southbound access to Richmond Highway but no northbound access.
Illustrate the transition from existing conditions to future development and phases in between.
Office no longer a leading use, retail use is needed first to amenitize office uses.
Affordable housing and mix of housing types should be an important part of the Comprehensive Plan recommendations.
Building heights should taper towards RPAs and conservation areas.
Preserving and adding tree cover should be an additional measure of effectiveness.