

**Minutes of the Seven Corners Transportation and Land Use Task Force
May 14, 2013 Meeting**

Meeting called to order at 6:30PM
Mason District Government Center

Attendance:

Task Force: John Thillmann, Evelyn Haight, Mary Ellen Ward, Paul Byrtus, Devin Corini, Vincent Burke, Mark Silverwood, Jim Edmondson, Jim McIlvaine, Blake Smith, Martin Faga, and Pat Hoar.

Quality of Life Work Group: Nancy Verona, Kay Cooper, Carol Turner

Staff: Elizabeth Hagg (OCR), JoAnne Fiebe (OCR), Timothy Maher (OCR), Elisa Lueck (NCS), Michael Congleton (DCC), Bernie Suchicital (DPZ), Jay Rauschenbach (PA), Kris Morley-Nikfar (FCDOT), Mike Garcia (FCDOT) and Aaron Frank representing Supervisor Gross

Co-Chair John Thillmann introduced Loren Bruce, who works for the City of Fall Church. Mr. Bruce presented the Falls Church Eastern Gateway Concept Plan prepared by Virginia Tech students in 2009. The Eastern Gateway area borders the Seven Corners Study Area to the north. While the VA Tech study was not adopted by the Falls Church City Council, the City is currently studying the area and preparing a plan for its future development. Staff from the City of Falls Church believes it is important to coordinate the two study areas because they are geographically interlocked and they are strategically located close to the East Falls Church Metro Station.

The Falls Church Eastern Gateway Concept Plan includes three sites:

1. Koons-Syms
2. Eden Center
3. Roosevelt Area

Mr. Bruce presented an overall concept plan for each area including the goal of tripling the overall FAR from 0.39 existing to 1.65 FAR. Roosevelt Blvd. would be designed as a new Main Street. John asked Loren how he thought the City and County should work together. Loren explained that he intends to act as a liaison with the Seven Corners Task Force and that it will be a couple of years before the City adopts a new plan for the Eastern Gateway; thus, there is ample time to collaborate.

Public Comment Period

John Thillmann asked if there was anyone present who would like to address the Task Force:

- Mrs. Kay Cooper spoke and requested that the Task Force please consider a floating roundabout for the Seven Corners intersection to reduce problems and confusion at the intersection.
- Mr. Terrence Modglin, a long-time resident of the area, prepared a statement to the Task Force that Seven Corners is seen by many as a “no-man’s land” and that there are four challenges that need to be met to bring vitality, civic health, and commercial strength:
 1. Creative repositioning of our schools
 2. Better connection between residents of the area and local and state services

3. Improved public spaces
4. Metrorail service, or as a starting point, dedicated service to the nearest Metro stations

Administrative items:

- a. The Minutes of the April 9, 2012 Task Force meeting were approved without amendment.
- b. May 18th, Study Area Bus Tour: staff explained the tour logistics including departure time and where Task Force members will meet.
- c. The addition of the First Christian Church site to the Study Area.
- d. Michael Flood briefly introduced an ongoing study by the NVTC to evaluate transit alternatives for Rt. 7. He explained that the study is expected to be completed by October 2013, and he would like to return at a future Task Force meeting to present alternatives and get their preferences.
<http://route7corridorstudy.com/> and the public comment site---
<http://survey.wbanda.com/route7emp>
- e. The Task Force Community Design Charrette will be held on Thursday, June 27th and there is the possibility of adding an additional date on July 11th. There will no longer be a Task Force meeting on July 9th, but instead may be held on **Thursday**, July 11th.

Quality of Life Working Group: Presentation of the Final Report

The Quality of Life Working Group's final report was presented by member Nancy Verona. She explained that code enforcement is a topic that cuts across all of their themes and that the Working Group would like to see code enforcement be proactive instead of reactive. Also, they believe that penalties must be enforced.

Several recommendations were made for the study area:

1. Eliminate illegal signage
2. Improve residential and commercial property maintenance
3. Improve overall cleanliness and maintenance of the area
4. Ensure the pedestrian bridge is safe, attractive, and well maintained
5. Enhance the streetscape, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities
6. Improve and maintain bus stops
7. Seek greater cohesiveness and local commitment for the area encompassing Bailey's Crossroads to Seven Corners and work with the BCRC to determine what type of organization or group can be established to address these issues in an on-going way. For example the City of Fairfax has a Community Appearance Committee.

The group also presented several broader policy considerations.

Mixed Use Presentation 1

Bruce Leonard, Managing Principal at Street Sense, gave a presentation on mixed-use development that was a continuation of a presentation he gave the Task Force in January. He began by explaining that retail is not a catalyst for new growth, but rather it follows growth. A key point is that the immersive quality of retail is critical (consumers want an integrated and amenitized experience when they shop) and this can only be achieved through good design and the right amenities. Good design translates into higher retail sales and viability.

Bruce gave four examples:

1. UNSUCCESSFUL: D.C. City Center – retailers think it is too sterile
2. SUCCESSFUL: F Street in the District – Contextual with a mix of local and national tenants.
3. UNSUCCESSFUL: Shops at Wisconsin Place in Chevy Chase – Performs poorly (Annual gross sales = \$500/sqft) with all national brands
4. SUCCESSFUL: Bethesda Row – (Annual gross sales = \$1,500/sqft)

These examples show there is a strong correlation between good design and successful retail and mixed-used projects. Retailers are willing to pay a premium for the right kind of space/place. Another interesting development is that now retail tenants are being used to attract residential and office tenants. Previously, there was no relationship between the retail mix and other tenants. Another key point right now is that you cannot do speculative retail now and hope to fill the space.

Mixed Use Presentation 2

Fred Rothmeijer of MRP Realty gave a presentation on his experiences developing mixed-use projects in the Washington, D.C. region. He explained that there are several local factors that affect the market for mixed-use developments: the region is dependent on the government; there is a contraction in the office market because companies are demanding less office space; office users are going into nicer, greener buildings but taking up less space than before; he is seeing a boom in the multi-family rental market with a strong long-term demand for multi-family housing (although perhaps a shorter-term over supply); residential tenants are looking for less space but it must be in a walkable area and even better if they can also work there. For example, in Reston there is a premium for being in the Town Center.

Office Space in Reston:

- \$40-50/sqft rent in the Town Center
- \$20-30/sqft rent along the toll road

Mr. Rothmeijer explained that vertically stacking different uses on one site is a little more complex to develop because it is difficult for large investors. He asked the Task Force to consider how Seven Corners can fill a void in the market that other areas are not. He said to do this will probably require large land parcels.

It is also important to consider the cost to construct parking garages:

- \$2,000-\$3,000/space for surface parking
- \$15,000/space in a stand-alone parking garage
- \$30,000-\$35,000/space for parking garages on top of other uses
- \$40,000-\$50,000/space in a below grade parking

He identified a few things that he feels entice developers in the Washington D.C. market:

1. Large, underutilized parcels
2. Having a big anchor such as Target or a grocer
3. Having high capacity transit nearby
4. Being able to identify an underserved retail market

The Form-Based Plan Approach

The Office of Community Revitalization gave a brief overview of form-based planning and presented the form-based Comprehensive Plan for Annandale. John Thillmann suggested that a good approach might be that uses and development intensities are not limited for the Seven Corners area. Several Task Force members expressed concern about the approach because they are fearful it might prescribe the form of the building in too much detail. Thillmann stated that it is up to the Task Force to decide how much the Plan would prescribe these details.

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 11, 2013 at 7:00PM.

The meeting adjourned at 8:59 PM.

By Evelyn Haught
Secretary

Date