

Thursday, September 29, 2011
Ocala 2035 Vision
Leadership Group Meeting
Training Room, Citizen Service Center

The following members were in attendance

Paolo Mastroserio, Chair	Ira Holmes
Steve Albright	Jerome Johnson
Bob Dumond	Gilbert Martinez
Summer Gill	Ruth Reed
Narvella Haynes	Clark Yandle

The following members were not in attendance

Ken Ausley	Nancy Ledding
Jaye Baillee	Fred Roberts
Barbara Fitos	Todd Rudnianyn

The following planning consultants were in attendance

Curtis Ostrodka	Mauricio Castro
Bill Ray	Geoffrey McNeill
Billy Hattaway	

The following City staff members were in attendance

Mike Daniels	Greg Slay
Pete Lee	Lisa Walsh

The Chair opened the meeting at 3:14 pm.

Mr. Ostrodka introduced planning consultants and said the goal for the meeting is to review and comment on the Future Land Use Map and Designations, Transportation Corridors and the West Ocala Community Plan.

A 2035 Proposed Future Land Use map was displayed. An aerial was shown with an overlay of the proposed future land use designations. Mr. Ostrodka pointed out some of the low intensity areas along the corridors.

Mr. Lee reported that staff met with City Manager Matt Brower, Deputy City Manager John Zobler and Executive Director of Municipal Development Marc Mondell. Staff explained to City Management what the Leadership Group has been working on. Staff was encouraged by management to provide updates to City Council on a regular basis. Mr. Lee said an update will

probably be provided every other month. Staff has been working on the formation of multiple CRAs; one group has met. A presentation was made to the I-75 West CRA Advisory Group, which is an area beyond I-75 including the Magna property. There is a West Ocala CRA and there is an East Ocala CRA. There will be another presentation for engineers, land use attorneys, realtors and developers.

Mr. Daniels noted that a change was made from the original plan to add more neighborhoods in West Ocala. The existing locations of Friends Recycling and Royal Oak Charcoal are designated as Medium Intensity; they had been designated as Low Intensity. Increasing the intensity will encourage a more mixed-use form based development. Mr. Lee said that staff is cognizant of existing uses and doesn't want to infringe on property rights.

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, transitional areas between uses were pointed out. Mr. Castro said the city will be looking at how to create transition areas so that they flow together with neighboring uses, but maintain their differences. Form based code and design guidelines will come into play in these areas. Mr. Castro said friction can occur with transition between intensities. The building height and placement may be different. He commented that transition often times needs to happen in the middle of a block and not at the streets. A way to protect residential uses needs to be devised. In order to have a smooth transition at the parcel level, the transition needs to be looked at possibly by dividing a larger parcel into smaller parcels. The form based code will allow the transition to happen. Mr. Ostrodka pointed out there won't be a one size fits all. Each area needs to be specifically looked at. Mr. Castro reiterated that design guidelines come into play with transitioning.

Mr. Mastroserio asked if the consultants and staff are familiar with Gainesville. He commented on how Dollar General Stores and a new CVS Store are being built and how different they look based on design guidelines.

Mr. Johnson asked what the barriers are in Ocala. Mr. Castro said that with the form based code, 4 elements need to be applied to any development. They are building placement, height, design and massing.

Mr. Johnson referred to the requirement for water retention. Mr. Castro said each area needs to be looked at individually. Buffers may be needed and there are different techniques to deal with water. He suggested turning a constraint into a positive by using areas that may flood for buffers. The issue is that a legacy of standards exists. There are different ways to address the issues when a form based code is utilized.

Mr. McNeill said special districts will also dictate how issues are addressed such as water management. The guidelines set a basis and it takes time to develop them. Over time, the form of the City will change. There won't be one theme.

Mr. Ray said there are state and federal regulations, mandates and local regulations. Regulations were developed in the late 1970s that have been found to be a myth, but those are the current regulations. Society has changed but the regulations have not caught up. There are opportunities to introduce new concepts. Remember to look at the layers.

Transportation

Mr. Ostrodka reported that the Leadership Group went on a field trip on a Suntran bus and stopped at different points on various roadways.

A PowerPoint presentation including drawings of alternative roadway sections, illustrative of future built conditions was shown. It was pointed out that efforts to redevelop roadways must be coordinated with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Ocala/Marion County Transportation Planning Organization and must have community/business owner buy-in.

A sketch of an alternative roadway was shown for SR-40 through the downtown. It included a 4-lane roadway. Mr. Hattaway said that there was a discussion of putting the roadway on a "diet" and reducing it to three lanes, but due to traffic counts, it probably isn't realistically possible. To increase safety, the best thing to do is to reduce speeds. Over time the curbs could be pulled in, which would probably be at the City's cost; FDOT would probably not be willing to cover the cost. Grants may be available in the future. Mr. Hattaway suggested narrowing the lane widths down to 10 feet. He said a chapter in the Transportation Design for Livable Communities addresses the issue of reducing the cross distance, and speed. Mr. Martinez pointed out that the sidewalks are 10 feet wide and the buildings are up against the sidewalks. Mr. Ostrodka noted that the buildings are taken into consideration. Mr. Hattaway pointed out that the sense of enclosure helps with reducing speeds. He briefly discussed redevelopment efforts in Lake Eola and how people are traveling at a lower rate of speed due to the environment. Mr. Yandle confirmed that the proposed changes are from Pine Street to NE 8th Avenue.

It was discussed that the lane width on North Magnolia is 11 to 12 feet. It narrows as it comes into Harry's Restaurant. Mr. Ray noted the large parking lot (former Chamber site near Harry's) doesn't create a sense of enclosure and people drive above 25 miles per hour, the posted speed.

Another sketch was shown of the same roadway with trees planted in the median. Mr. Ray said FDOT probably would not ordinarily allow this. Mr. McNeill said to take into consideration the

pattern and design. It isn't so much about the landscaping. It is about the business front and the shade provided by the trees. Mr. Ostrodka noted that tree wells make it more urban.

Another sketch was shown for an alternative roadway on Pine Street (US441). The potential of a road diet was looked at with reducing it from 6 to 4 lanes. Redevelopment would have to take place over time. On-street parking would create friction and slow traffic. Mr. Hattaway said he is a bicyclist and bicyclists will use the local street network. Not every roadway can be designed to accommodate bicyclists. With on-street parking, buffers are needed if bicyclists are on the roadway. He has been hit while on a bicycle by people opening their doors. He cautioned to be more judicious with the location of bike lanes. There are a lot of north south networks existing in the City that can be utilized by bicyclists. Mr. Hattaway said that specific routes would be identified in the way finding system. The roadway volume needs to be evaluated in terms of determining the appropriate routes.

Mr. Hattaway referred to barrier curbs, which have been determined to not stop a vehicle. A curb does not provide protection. Reducing the speed is what matters – below 35 mph. The width is measured from curb base to curb base in the low speed urban environment. Wider lanes encourage higher traffic speeds regardless of the speed limit.

A sketch was shown of an alternative roadway for a section of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Mr. McNeill suggested putting it on a road diet and creating a main street section with narrowing it to four lanes with on-street parking and landscaping. This is something that can be done in other special districts. Each one will have its own plan and sense of place. This particular proposal comes from discussions concerning the West Ocala plan. He pointed out that it is a much more pedestrian accessible street. One side of the street would be residential and the other would be commercial. Mr. Lee pointed out that the character of the existing area is more residential. Mr. McNeill said there are existing small lots.

Mr. Johnson asked what the impact would be for delivery trucks. Mr. Hattaway said delivery trucks will be able to use the roadway. Mr. McNeill pointed out that larger trucks usually do not deliver to smaller businesses.

Mr. Albright asked if there is a way to keep from having so many lines/wires for signalization. It was briefly discussed that the City doesn't use mast arm signalization because of cost. Billy suggested that roundabouts can be used also. Mr. McNeill pointed out that a mast arm signal light at a gateway intersection may be appropriate.

Mr. Lee noted that when the presentation was made to the City Manager he asked about the "wired mess". He said staff can only make recommendations to City Council. Mr. Albright

suggested that if the public saw the benefit, there may be more of a willingness to use mast arm signalization.

It was noted that mast arm signals were just installed at the intersections of US27 and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and NE 36th Avenue and NE 21st Street.

Ms. Haynes said it would be nice to have a roundabout at that gateway into the area. Mr. Yandle said he'd like to see roundabouts used as much as possible, but they need to be sized correctly. Mr. Hattaway said they also need to be designed properly. He commented that Florida is very behind other states in the development of roundabouts.

Mr. Hattaway had a photo of a roadway in downtown Winter Park that showed a grassy median with light poles. He said there is a park on one side and suburban development on the other side. The curb face to curb face is 12 feet and the turn lane is 9 feet. There is no edge line. The median is 12 feet wide and has live oaks in it. It's a four lane roadway in a low speed environment.

Downtown Core

Mr. McNeill said the downtown core needs to be identified. He explained how malls are constructed with an 800 foot corridor to a major store before the corridor changes direction. He noted that the same things can take place in the downtown with catalyst locations. The business environment depends on the central location. Mr. Ray said it is a challenge to get pedestrians to walk to a store. An interesting and compelling pedestrian environment needs to be there for a downtown to work. Mr. McNeill noted that with one-way streets 50 percent of the business is lost because those going the wrong way won't usually turn back. He said it was asked and no one really knew why there are one-way streets. Mr. Hattaway stated that one-way streets cause business deaths; one-way streets also tend to be faster. From a way finding perspective, people not familiar with the streets can become confused. Around the country, one-way streets are not really a benefit. There is no legitimate reason for them. It actually increases the distance it takes for people to get somewhere. Mr. Dumond noted that there were one-way streets at the College of Central Florida, but changing the roadways to two-way streets was the best thing that they ever did.

Mr. Yandle noted that people cannot turn left if traveling from the west on SR40. Mr. Hattaway pointed out that it is also an issue with emergency vehicles. Discussion continued concerning how one-way streets made it very difficult to get to certain locations.

Mr. McNeill noted that connectivity in the downtown is vital. He said there is a need to create some strategic locations with acquisitions to create connectivity. He said it needs to be

determined how the downtown can be knitted with the Tuscawilla Park area. Catalyst business locations are vital, but need connectivity to the surrounding area to be successful.

Mr. McNeill suggested that SE Osceola Avenue with the railroad tracks is a street that needs to be maintained and not turned into a linear park. Utilizing the railroad for a trolley was discussed as a way to connect the downtown and Tuscawilla Park areas. Mr. McNeill suggested that the bigger picture needs to be looked at. The decision shouldn't be based on the most immediate solution, or financial issues. Mr. McNeill noted the value of property with being located on a roadway versus if the roadway were removed. The downtown needs to be safe, accessible, friendly and vibrant. Mixed uses will attract more and more people to the downtown.

Mr. Mastroserio said he didn't see anything different in the proposals being discussed at this meeting from what the Leadership Group has been proposing. Mr. Yandle asked if the downtown has what it needs to attract people to the downtown. He had concerns with whether the Leadership Group was heading in the right direction with what currently exists in the downtown. He noted the barrier of SR40. He would like to see a way to extend past the downtown area. Mr. Ray remarked that the "hodge podge" of connectivity is an issue.

Mr. Ostrodka noted next steps in addressing the transportation issue. He said that meeting with FDOT to begin discussions is the first step. Preparing policies for complete streets and road diets for the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element is next. The next step is the preparation of typical roadway section design standards.

Mr. Yandle asked for a consensus of the group in removing the barrier of one-way streets. Leadership Group members were in agreement that the issue needs to be addressed. Mr. Lee said that staff will take the proposal to City Management.

Mr. Yandle moved to direct staff to approach the subject of making Magnolia Avenue and 1st Avenue two-way streets. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Mr. Hattaway recommended Lawrence Lewis, who has worked on this issue.

Mr. McNeill reviewed the purpose of the West Ocala Plan (as shown in the PowerPoint presentation). He said there have been a lot of discussions concerning what is missing. There is a vibrant history and the area is tending to lose its sense of community. He said there needs to be a basis of where it has come from and to where it is going. Roadways have divided the community. He proposed creating parks and trails to reconnect and restore focal points within the community.

Mr. McNeill outlined the major organization components in special districts as shown in the Power Point presentation. He pointed out each of the areas on the map, noting that gateways and

corridors are important. He said that pedestrian crossings north and south need to be addressed. There is a projection of a parks and trails plan. Mr. McNeill stated that the Plan will be the basis for specific policy recommendations. Ms. Reed said she is very comfortable in the direction the plan is moving toward, and Mr. Johnson agreed.

The next steps were reviewed (as shown in the PowerPoint presentation). Mr. Ray urged Leadership Group members to be at the City Council meeting when the Plan is presented to Council. Mr. Lee pointed out that this Plan is a template for future plans.