

Ocala 2035 Vision Leadership Group Meeting

Citizen Service Center
Second Floor – Training Room
201 SE 3rd Street, Ocala, Florida

Thursday, March 23, 2017 - 11:30 am

Minutes Summary

The following members were present: Ruth Reed, Diana Schwartz, Steve Albright, Mary S. Rich, Grant McMahon, Ira Holmes, Todd Rudnianyn and Patrick Gilman

The following members were absent: Narvella Haynes, Bob Dumond, Ken Ausley, Clark Yandle, Fred Roberts, Paolo Mastroserio, Gilbert Martinez, Summer Gill, Ed Plaster, Michelle Partin and Reginald Landers

City Staff in Attendance: Tye Chighizola, Growth Management Director; Melanie Gaboardi, Revitalization Strategies Director; Peter Lee, Planning Director; Charles Rich, Senior Projects Administrator; Lisa Walsh, Economic Development Manager; Patricia Hitchcock, Planning & Zoning Manager; David Boston, Senior Planner / GIS Analyst; Gus Gianikas, Senior Planner; Nancy Smith, Senior Planner; Aubrey Hale, Urban Design Coordinator; and Jasmine Charlot, Part-Time Intern

The following items were distributed at the meeting: Legislative Action Alert handout and Transit Development Plan Survey

Mr. Boston called the meeting to order at 11:40 am.

Agenda Item #1: Proof of Publication

Ms. McKeever stated that the public notice was posted on the City of Ocala's website on March 17, 2017.

Mr. Holmes agreed to act as the Chairman for the meeting.

Agenda Item #2: Approval of January 26, 2017 Minutes

The January 26, 2017 minutes were unanimously approved.

Agenda Item #3: Housekeeping: Surveys are out!

Mr. Boston informed the group that surveys were sent out yesterday because the attendance has dropped and staff would like to see if there is a better time that would work for the members. Several people have responded and so far the majority of the people are okay with the current meeting time but would also be okay with something else as well. Most members also listed the times that works best for them on their slips. He encouraged all the members to complete the survey and list any times that they could attend this meeting. Acting Chairman Holmes suggested that staff reach out to the members who are having difficulty attending via telephone to find out why they are not able to attend the meetings. Mr. Boston concurred and said that staff would call them. Mr. Daniels stated that there has always been a struggle to find a suitable meeting time. At one point, the meetings were held at 3:30 pm but it was hard for the members because the meetings usually lasted until 5 or 5:30 pm and this sometimes interfered with them being able to pick up their kids from school.

Agenda Item #4: Transit Development Plan Updated (Mike's back!)

Mr. Daniels stated that he is now the Director for the Ocala / Marion County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). One of the things that they run is the SunTran bus system and as part of that every five years staff has to complete a Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the SunTran system. Basically, the TDP is a ten year strategic plan evaluating the existing conditions of the service and determine if there are any future needs that must be addressed. This plan is required by Florida Department of Transportation. As part of the process we look around at other communities' transit services to make sure that we are offering the best services and also look to make improvements anywhere possible to ensure that we are doing the best we can for the community. Staff would like to get plenty of feedback from the community. The TDP is not budgeted; therefore, TPO may only be able to fund only a portion of the services. The idea is to come up with the needs first and then go back to determine if they can be funded. Certainly it is a collaborative process not only in terms of getting a lot of community input but also working with our many partners like the city, the county, the state and federal government as well. The TPO has hired Tindale Oliver to do the plan and they have come up with a couple different formulas to look at transit and determine where transit is suitable. The first index they have come up with is the Transit Orientation Index which looks at the traditional ridership numbers by looking within the SunTran system at the typical riders. These are generally citizens who do not have access to a vehicle and may have some issues with ADA or some type of disability. This index really looks at the areas where the existing system would be most suitable. The highest areas are West Ocala and also further out near I-75. There are also several medium size areas within the city and county where SunTran could potentially expand its transit services. The second index assessment is related to the kind of traditional transit services and it is also looking at the potential for choice ridership. This looks more at the level of density and intensity within a community. Much of the area that is fairly dense is within the SunTran route but there are areas especially down south on SR200 for example, where you see very high levels of density thresholds where SunTran could potentially expand service. The existing six SunTran transit routes run predominantly within the city limits of Ocala. There are areas on 35th Street to the north and Silver Spring Shores in the county. The buses run 17 hours a day from 5 am to 10 pm and the frequency of the bus service is about 60 minutes; the fare is \$1.50 per trip. For a transit system this frequency is at the very outer edge of a successful time span. Typically, in the transit world they like for the frequency to be lower than an hour. Staff has conducted numerous outreaches to the public. These include mailing out and distributing rider surveys and non-user surveys; conducting several public workshops in East Ocala near the Walmart & at the Ed Croskey Center in West Ocala; holding three discussion workshops have been held with various government folks, social services folks and ridership. TPO has also tried to do a number of stakeholder and bus operator interviews. Both TPO and SunTran are using their websites to encourage public involvement and solicit feedback. Mr. Boston stated that he sent the survey out to this group via email on Monday. There were a lot of different comments. The majority of the issues were about having bus service on Sundays; increasing the frequency of the transit service; and the cost, accessibility & availability of the bus passes. The biggest area of concern is expanding the services to areas such as The Centers on 60th Avenue, Ocala 489, Department of Children & Families on 38th Street, US 27 & I-75, College of Central Florida, SR200, Marion Oaks, The Villages, West Ocala and more connections in Silver Springs Shores. The reason more should be invested in transit is because it will provide better access to jobs, more employee retention, increased personal mobility and also draw more businesses into the areas surrounding a bus stop.

There was a lengthy discussion about the background of SunTran, its expenses, the current routes and

ridership levels, the bus shelters, and the various options for expanding services.

Mr. Daniels concluded that quite possibly through the TDP, a plan can be developed for expanding the routes and increasing the frequency of the bus runs. Then the fees associated with those costs will reflect in receiving an increased amounts of money from the federal, state, city and county to cover the expenses. TPO is looking at ways to improve the transit system. Please complete the surveys and spread the word so that TPO can get input from the community that will help us to develop an extensive and feasible TDP.

Agenda Item #5: High Intensity / Central Core Zoning Ordinance

Mr. Boston explained that basically in the North Magnolia CRA area there are zoning districts that are inconsistent with the high intensity / central core land use designation and there is a little bit of low intensity land use density as well. The B-5, M-1 and M-5 zoning districts are all inconsistent with the high intensity land use designation and at some point in the future the city wants all of this area to be high intensity. In the meantime they are a lot of low intensity, commercial and light industrial sites that have zoning districts that are incompatible with the land use designations. The property owners cannot do much of anything with these properties except maintenance, upkeep and possibly some minor expansions. This ordinance allows for rezoning the designations to be consistent with the high intensity designation as long as they follow a certain set of design standards. The owners would be able to continue using the B-5, M-1 and M-5 zoning designations and also lower their minimum FAR requirement. This will keep the properties from having to be rezoned. Ms. Hitchcock is heading this up but feedback can be provided to any of our planning staff members.

Agenda Item #6: Midtown Catalytic Sites Activity

Mr. Boston indicated that this activity is going to focus on four catalytic sites: the fire station site; the parking lot next to the Sovereign building; the SunTrust site where the drive through is operating; Jimmy Walton site. The members split into two even groups. Each group picked a site and discussed what could be developed on the site to make it a catalytic site for that area. Group one chose the parking lot next to the Sovereign building and Group two chose fire station site. Mr. Rudnianyn acted as the spokesperson for Group two and stated that his group decided there were not keeping anything that already existed and they were going to develop the whole lot. The group decided to capitalize on the site being just across the street from the south end of the park and take advantage of the views by adding at the north end, maybe some mixed use residential or maybe two story town homes, condos or apartments with a possible third story right in the center. The residents would have the great location of being just across from the park. Further to the south on the lot, change the use and propose putting a ground floor on the south end and leave a bit of greenspace for the residential. Then put in some commercial retail on the ground floor that wraps around the entire block. Put in shops, restaurants, and businesses to activate the street during the day, evenings and weekends too. There maybe a couple opportunities to do a second or third level of shops and professional offices. Introduce some more residential further along the south side of the block with four, five or maybe even six story housing, like condos or smaller apartments, to take advantage of the views around the city and Tuscawilla Park. The space in the middle would be used for a single level covered parking garage and on the second level put in a courtyard and greenspace. Mr. DuMond acted as the spokesperson for Group one and stated that his group wanted to have people living in this area and activate the downtown, plus expand on the commerce. Since the building is kind of U shaped, the group figured to put the parking in the center, maybe one or two stories high, with some greenspace on the top level. Then commercial retail like restaurants and retail shops on the ground floor surface of the building. Including at least a couple of floors of residential around the perimeter. On the second surface put in some retail markets and

general shopping stores. The top level maybe a restaurant with a terrace and green space around the edges to give it a good look. The customers in the restaurant would be able to view the garage and community green areas.

Mr. Boston stated that the vision between the two groups was very similar with wanting mixed use and green space in both areas. This information is much appreciated and these ideas will be discussed with the MIG Consultants for possible incorporation into the Midtown Master Plan. The next Midtown Master Plan meetings are this coming Monday. The two public meetings are the City Council workshop at 11:30 am and the P & Z workshop on March 22nd at 5:30 pm. The MIG consultants will go over their ideas and interactions from the community including the four catalytic sites. Between now until the final plan is produced, staff will continue to solicit ideas from the community. Mr. Lee informed the group that the four catalytic sites will be reviewed in terms of some of the schematics, the preliminary conceptual design and other options for these sites.

Agenda Item #7: Downtown RaceTrac Update

Mr. Boston stated that staff did not think that a gas station was appropriate for this location because it did not fit on the site and the project was not in line with the vision for the downtown area. On March 20th the case went before the Board of Adjustment (BOA) and it was denied. The reason the BOA denied the project was because it did not fit the city's vision for the downtown area. Mr. Lee stated that the developers did not change their site plan to adapt for this smaller site even though they met with staff several times and were given numerous suggestions and options to make their development more fitting for this site.

Agenda Item #8: Upcoming Meetings

Mr. Boston reviewed the upcoming meetings listed in the power point presentation. Mr. Lee added that there will also be a Community Redevelopment Area Agency Board Meeting at 3:45 pm on Tuesday, April 18th in City Council Chambers.

Agenda Item #9: Comments / Questions

Mr. Chighizola stated that the Senate legislative bill is focused on restricting the functions of the Community Redevelopment Areas (CRA) to the point of elimination; restricting the CRA expenditures; and the timeframes of the projects. This is really a big concern for the city. Hopefully it is not all going to pass but most likely some of the reporting requirements will end up getting put into a bill. Mr. Lee stated that if this bill passes, the city would not be able to create any new CRAs or start any new projects after October 2017. Every CRA will stop by 2037. Mr. Chighizola stated that the House bill is not as restrictive. Ms. Gaboardi explained that the members can show support to the city by opposing both of these bills. Mr. Lee stated that there is a move in Tallahassee to limit or take away the ability of the local government to create new regulations. Mr. Chighizola stated that he believes that they are opposed because the tax dollars are staying in the CRAs instead of being able to be used statewide. Mr. Boston encouraged the group to read over the bill and to reach out to their representatives and let them know their opinions of the proposed bills.

Mr. Holmes adjourned the meeting at 1:10 pm.