

Thursday, January 26, 2012
Ocala 2035 Vision
Leadership Ocala Meeting
Training Room, Citizen Service Center

The following members were in attendance:

Ken Ausley
Jerome Johnson
Ira Holmes
Clark Yandle
Summer Gill
Ed Plaster
Grant McMahon
Paolo Mastroserio
Narvella Haynes
Ruth Reed
Fred Roberts

Staff

Tye Chighizola
Lisa Walsh
Mike Daniels
Kathy Crile
Jennifer Blair
Melanie Gaboardi
Peter Lee
Peggy Cash

Leadership Group members, consultants and staff members introduced themselves to new members.

Mr. Daniels reported that project priorities for West Ocala have been established, and \$200,000 was budgeted to proceed with the West Ocala Plan.

The City has contracted with MERJE to create a wayfinding system for Ocala and staff will address wayfinding at the same time it works on the West Ocala Plan. The wayfinding signage plan will include main gateways including a new city logo and branding. The downtown may have its own logo.

Mr. Daniels showed the 2035 Proposed Future Land Use Designations Design Map. He said a few changes have been made. All the parks have now been correctly identified. He also identified a medium intensity area in the southwest area of the City where it has been discussed that there is a lot of potential for development. It is where an existing industrial park is located. Another area was changed; the medium intensity area on the corner of NE 25th Avenue and East Silver Springs Boulevard was expanded to include the Albertsons. Other mixed-uses were removed and some medium intensity areas were changed to low intensity areas. The reasoning is that staff recognizes the fact that many areas of the City particular near I-75 interchanges will remain as predominantly auto-oriented uses such as gas stations and fast food restaurants. Trying to increase activity and require form based codes was determined to not be feasible in these areas. Mr. Yandle said there is a tremendous amount of traffic that heads north at the intersection of NE 36th Avenue and NE 14th Street. Mr. Daniels said the medium and low intensity areas can have the same types of uses.

Discussion ensued concerning green areas (public conservation), some of them being schools. Other schools were in purple as part of the neighborhood designation.

Mr. Daniels said staff is making changes to the existing transportation element. One issue is the idea of creating complete streets which address multi-modal movements. There is a new policy relative to complete street. There is another policy for road diets.

Road segments on SR 40 from NE 8th to MLK and on MLK from SR 40 to NW 10th Street were discussed along with US 441 from the base of railroad bridge to SW 17th Avenue. A diagram was shown of SR40 (from Magnolia Ave to Watula Ave). It is being proposed that existing signals be replaced with mast arms. A median with landscaping and pedestrian crossings would be added. Mr. Daniels said this is what Engineering has designed for this particular roadway. Mr. Mastroserio said he thought the plan was to add sidewalks and landscaping along the roadways. Mr. Daniels said the intent is to try and make interim improvements and come back later and add more sidewalks and landscaping which is more costly. Mr. Daniels said the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) has reviewed the plan and will vote on it at its next meeting. He commented that the City won't be able to move forward for at least a year. Mr. Mastroserio suggested making the medians smaller in anticipation of making wider sidewalks later on. If the plan is to provide a wider sidewalk, why is a wider median needed. Ms. Crile suggested that it might be provided for pedestrian refuge. Mr. Daniels said staff would like to widen the sidewalks. The plan is conceptual. The lane width is being reduced to 11 feet.

US 441 was discussed and it is intended that the roadway be reduced from 6 to 4 lanes. The concept was taken to TPO and they agreed to fund a feasibility study for the Florida Department of Transportation. Stakeholders along US 441 will need to be involved to find out what they'd like to see. It was noted that the section of US 441 that is currently 6 lanes wide is the section that would be reduced to 4 lanes. Mr. Lee said there hasn't been an increase in traffic for 20 years. He said it was pointed out at a TPO meeting by TPO Director Greg Slay that it would allow improvements at intersections that would make the roadway more functional than it is now. Mr. Lee said it would provide options for midblock crossings and improved pedestrian crossings at minor intersections.

Mr. Daniels said that another issue to address in the Transportation Element is concurrency. In the past, no new development was approved without concurrency. The state has removed the mandate and it is now up to local governments to make the determination. The City will still have a level of service standards. In some areas, the standards will be more lax to allow for less vehicular activity such as in the downtown.

Mr. Daniels said another element to address is the Recreation and Open Space Element. He said the comprehensive plan needs to be consistent with the Ocala 2035 Vision Plan. Language to connect parks to residential areas and to make sure level of service standards are met. He noted that objectives are being added for a cultural element in the City to encourage more art in the City.

A brief discussion ensued concerning Tuscowilla Park. Ms. Crile said there are always park rangers and police officers in the park. The issues to address in the Park are not illegal issues and they're hard to control. She noted that some picnic tables were recently removed from the park to see if there is an impact.

Mr. Daniels reviewed West Ocala Project Priorities as displayed in a Powerpoint presentation.

The West Ocala Steering Committee wants to move forward with the above named projects. There was a conference call with Mr. Robert Gibbs, of the Gibbs Planning Group, who will proceed with the market research analysis for the siting of a grocery store in West Ocala. A site is to be determined for the community garden/open air market, which is to be up and running by the summer or fall.

Five areas were identified for bus shelters. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard pedestrian connections are being looked at for decorative lighting. City staff including Engineering staff are meeting to address the issues including mast signals and underground utilities. Staff has met with the College of Central Florida, but they're on the fringe of the redevelopment area. Mr. Lee said most of the improvements are in the public realm.

Mr. Daniels referred to the proposal for wayfinding. Gateways into the downtown, on I-75 corridors and into some of the neighborhoods are going to be addressed. Bus shelters would be designed to be consistent throughout the City. MERJE has done a lot of work in other cities (a list was shown). Their process in branding a City through its wayfinding program has worked in other cities. Various pictures from other cities were shown.

There will be three meetings with MERJE. Timeline for completion is this fiscal or calendar year. Physical signage is not a part of this phase. Designs and locations are a part of this phase.

Ms. Crile noted that the Downtown Business Alliance is going to want to give its input.

The next step will be the form based code.

Mr. Daniels showed the next steps in a Powerpoint Presentation.

The intent is to bring the comprehensive plan to the Planning & Zoning Commission in January and February for discussion and public hearings.

The focus in 2012 will be revisions to zoning ordinances and adoption of a form based code along with specific regulating plans for specific areas.

Mr. Lee said staff is going to need the critical thought and feedback from this group throughout the process. He said the City needs to be very careful not to take property rights away. It is going to be difficult and staff is under a mandate to move forward quickly. The City and the Leadership Group need to reach out to the public. There will be less concern with the use than the built environment. It is hoped that the Code will be easier to use.

Ms. Reed asked if there are any ideas that Leadership Group members can share with the community to determine whether they're liked or not. Mr. Daniels responded that the community garden and shelters are moving forward soon. Mr. Lee cautioned that the shelters may need to wait for the wayfinding program to get underway.

Mr. Yandle reminded everyone to be patient with staff and cautioned staff to consider everything carefully.

Mr. Lee said there are a lot of changes going on. He said the railroad is going to be available for the Magna property. He wasn't certain about reducing Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to two lanes. Mr. Daniels said that is why a conceptual plan hasn't been done. He said the planning consultants are in favor of reducing the number of lanes on the roadway, but the community is not. Mr. Lee suggested that the goal can be accomplished with a safe pedestrian crossing, narrowing the four lanes, and slowing traffic down.

Mr. Yandle asked how far improvements will be made east of Magnolia. Mr. Lee responded that it will be to NE 8th Avenue. He said the roadway is broken down into many sections – he considers it to be from 8th to Pine Street and then from 2nd to Watula Avenue as the heart. Mr. Yandle said there are issues with heading north. Ms. Crile asked to consider NE 8th Avenue for a road diet. Pedestrian crossings are needed. Mr. Roberts thought that NE 8th Avenue was to be a feeder to the downtown. Mr. Lee said the idea is to enhance the experience of coming into the downtown. Coming down NE 8th Avenue there should be a sense of place and

change that you're entering the downtown. Mr. Lee said NE 8th Avenue has a lot of capacity and the trips are not there on the roadway.

Ms. Crile said there is a reception for the Reinvent Tuscawilla judges on March 9th. The proposals will be on display at the Discovery Center.

Mr. Johnson said he is working with community legal services and distributed a brochure.

The next meeting is February 23rd (4th Thursday of the month. Mr. Lee said a collapsed zoning map may be brought to that meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:52 pm.