

2022 Downtown Plan Steering Committee



Meeting #5: Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 24, 2022

Huntersville Town Hall, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Attendees:

Voting Members Nate Bowman Gatewood Campbell
 Sean Flynn John Foster
 Charles Guinard Lee Hallman
 Janelle Harris Elaine Kerns
 Bob Lemon Sarah McAulay
 Cindy Trevisan* Jessika Tucker

Ex-Officio Members: April Dunn Kathy Jones
 Diane McLaine Mike Russell
 Stephen Swanick

Town Staff: Dave Hill Jack Simoneau
 Tracy Barron Jackie Huffman
 Kim Strickland Bobby Williams

* Attended via Conference Call

- 1. Call to Order** – Chairperson McAulay called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. A recorded video of the meeting is available at:
<https://www.facebook.com/HuntersvilleNCTownGovernment/videos/downtown-plan-steering-committee-5-2-24-22/911237996192238/>
- 2. Roll Call** – Meeting attendance is noted above.
- 3. Approval of Agenda** – Charles Guinard made the motion to approve; Bob Lemon seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- 4. Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 9, 2021, February 3, 2021, and February 10, 2021** – Charles Guinard made the motion to approve the meeting minutes; Bob Lemon seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- 5. General Public Comment** – There were no speakers for public comment.
- 6. Greenway & Connectivity Vision** – Diane McLaine presented a series of slides explaining Greenway Connectivity and Downtown Planning, which can be found at:
https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_fd6a1c3d4bf447ef895c7922d60f48ed.pdf
- 7. Committee Discussion:**

- a. **Discovery (Phase 1) Information** – Dave Hill provided a brief review of the document provided by Shook Kelley, which can be found at:
https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_82828f08bab64e84ba007bd9ea78e560.pdf

Several Committee members spoke, providing the following comments:

- Show the Church Street Extension and new alignment (all the way to Brighton)
- Show the SEAM Trail
- Gilead entrance to Downtown is a major gateway
- Gilead widening to 4 lanes would not be favored
- Gilead median would take property away from adjacent owners; might be better to embellish either side of the roadway
- Discourage heavy industrial traffic in the Downtown
 - Talk with major truck traffic generators
 - Hambright – possible truck use?
 - Express access from/to Stumptown?
 - Traffic is heavy on Holbrook as well (Verhoeff bridge is anticipated)
 - It will be very difficult to reroute truck drivers
 - Trucks do not make pedestrians feel safe on 115
- Public transit – Clarify exactly what CRT is, and how it should fit into the Plan (define the differences between commuter vs. passenger rail)
- What other alternative forms of transit might be considered (hydrogen-powered, maglev, etc.) - technology is changing rapidly
- Where is the creativity and innovation? Add EV charging stations to the Plan
- Current infrastructure bill will fund charging stations
- Solar roofs – another innovative opportunity
- Main Street project – is there any way to reexamine the design; removal of parking will harm nearby businesses; the Town controls the project (not NCDOT)
- Should on-street parking still be allowed to count toward of-street parking requirements?
- Access, circulation, and parking in the Main Street vicinity will be of interest as the design process moves forward – some changes need to be made
- The Committee needs to look at transportation & transit in different ways; related technology is changing dramatically (i.e. – hyperloop, underground)
- Will consideration of a one-way pair (Main St. & 115) allow on-street parking? On-street parking may help to calm traffic and make pedestrians feel safer.
- Could Maxwell be pedestrian only?
- More housing is needed; the Downtown declined when households aged out, houses were torn down and never rebuilt
- Belmont was cited as having a downtown that was impressive – business owners said that primary visitation on weekdays was from people who work there; on weekends visitors come from outside Belmont
- Some housing types don't have to look like high density apartments and can fit into the Downtown
- Albemarle is seeing millennials returning to their downtown but live nearby rather in the center city - nothing in the downtown looks like an apartment

- Shook Kelley should talk with local developers who were unable to attract retail or grocery businesses to the Downtown to figure out why
 - It may be that Huntersville needs a staff person to work on economic development in the Downtown
 - The Downtown needs a niche – maybe it's the small town or village character that contrasts with mall or large retail centers
 - Paint the water tower; a park, beer garden, and amphitheater have been designed for that area
 - Belmont had old photographs on the sides of their historic buildings
 - Accessibility to the Downtown through greenways is very important
 - Improve Pottstown; honor its history – tell the story
 - An app for a historic driving tour in development could be expanded to the Downtown
- b. **Schedule & Process Revisions** – Dave Hill introduced a revised schedule and explained the reasons for the changes. The revised schedule can be found at: https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_e8b99a3dee774fe5837b17515bb21f74.pdf
- Lee Hallman made the motion to approve the schedule as presented; several individuals seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
- c. **Public Engagement** – Lee Hallman asked if the posters in Town Hall could be used to further engage the public; the answer was yes. There was no further discussion.
- d. **New Town Hall Sites** – Bobby Williams, Assistant Town Manager, presented several slides to explain the status of the New Town Hall project. Bobby's presentation can be found at: https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_c04802c22d664e49a91a62266312ec96.pdf. Bobby indicated that there is currently a six-month project pause. Three options were considered by the previous Town Board – all of them were located on the site in front of Town Center. A Town Hall Annex option, located directly north of the existing Town Hall, has recently been discussed. A question raised was if the New Town Hall needed to be in the Downtown. Bobby said that all options are on the table right now.

The Committee asked several questions related to cost, occupancy intent, ability to grow in the space, and appropriate location. There was also discussion about the future use of the vacant land in front of Town Center if the New Town Hall was located elsewhere. Staff indicated the Town has considerable control regarding land use and design if Town property is sold to a private developer. Stormwater was cited as a significant cost factor that should be considered. A mixed-use Town Hall building was mentioned as a possibility, including providing space for a library. The Town Manager has been authorized to make an offer to purchase property behind the existing Town Hall. That purchase could make connectivity to Veteran's Park and some civic space possible. A public-private partnership is still entirely possible. The Committee was encouraged to make a recommendation, if it feels it is appropriate, regarding the location of the New Town Hall.

Charles Guinard made the motion to suggest strongly to the elected officials that the New Town Hall be located within two blocks of the intersection of Gilead and NC 115. The motion was seconded by Gatewood Campbell. Motion carried unanimously.

Property along Maxwell was suggested as another siting option. Current property owners may be willing to sell. Some favored the idea of retail uses in the New Town Hall if located in front of Town Center. It would also hide the current parking structure. Shook Kelley should weigh in on all the ideas discussed tonight.

- 8. Open Committee Discussion** – Information was requested on how to contact the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library system to talk about a satellite library in the Arts and Cultural Center (the old library), status of the Fire Station and what could happen to that property, status of Discovery Place Kids, and public-private partnership possibilities for business owners that want to revitalize or create new space. A request was made to find out how far along the Main Street project is, and the extent to which changes could be made. Are there any public-private partnerships ideas available to recruit the type of retail that is not national franchise-oriented? Can additional levels be built on the top of the existing parking structure?
- 9. Adjourn** - The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.