

Minutes
June 15, 2017
Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee

Present

Craig Piper, Chairman
Robert Foster
Nick Kjeldgaard, Avesta Housing
Tom Falby
Quang Nguyen
Peter Stanton
Marilyn Reilly
Barry Lucier

Staff and Guests

Stephanie Carver
Rick Harbison
Tex Haeuser
Marisa Turesky, Intern
Tyler Norod, Avesta Housing

1. Welcome

The following documents were provided:

- The agenda and minutes from the April 20, 2017, meeting
- The June CPIC meeting survey results and a memo from Stephanie Carver RE: West End Neighborhood Engagement/West End outline

Chairperson Craig Piper welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Adoption of the Minutes

Peter noted that his last name is incorrect in the adoption.

Bob Foster moved to adopt the April 20, 2017, minutes as amended. Quang Nguyen seconded. Unanimous approval.

3. Survey and Workshop Outreach Summary

Stephanie said there are still around 30 outstanding surveys they are waiting on. There were 235 responses so far. For a neighborhood survey, this is a good number. The original goal was 300.

Rick reviewed the results.

Question 1 showed the majority of respondents are living in the area as a renter.

Question 2, age, showed a fairly even distribution but skewed a little younger. **Stephanie** said this was consistent with Census data.

Question 3, gender, showed that there was more of a female response.

Question 4, race, showed that the majority of responders were white.

Question 5, household income, came in as suspected. This Census track was a higher percentage of lower income.

Question 6 showed that most responses came from Red Bank but there was a good representation from the different neighborhoods relative to their populations.

Question 7, the length of time living in the West End, ranged.

Question 8, the length of time the responded is planning to stay in the West End, showed most respondents plan to stay for several years. It was mostly evenly distributed.

Question 9, amount of people in the household, showed a fair amount of one-person households. This tracked with South Portland regarding the Census. **Marilyn** said this was interesting because most of the respondents were women.

Peter asked if it was skewed towards specific developments. **Stephanie** said there is interest in three or more bedroom units for families. They will dig more into the survey; it can be filtered.

Rick said it could be cross tabulated by neighborhood. **Peter** said that certain neighborhoods have their sets of problems and others have a different demographic and needs. Pulling them together averages towards the middle and things could possibly be more directed.

Rick said everyone agrees that they don't like the condition of Westbrook Street.

Nick said from Avesta's standpoint, the three- and four-bedroom units go quickly and wait lists are huge with a three or four year wait. These units are in Brick Hill Townhouses, the Heights, and the Cottages. A ten person family lived in one for 10 years before purchasing a home. These are 1800 SF for \$1200-1300/month. He thinks generally, they are about six person households.

Tom asked about the one and two-bedroom households. **Stephanie** said it will be filtered and they will gather data to match up how consistent these are. There could be a skew from who will actually answered the survey.

Nick said there were 20 responses from from Osprey and they're all one-bedrooms.

Question 10, how many school aged children live in the household, showed that about 30% have one to four or more school-aged children.

Question 11, how school aged children get to school, showed that they mostly take the bus, a family member drives, or they carpool. Walking or biking is the least popular and is a lower number than other parts of the City. The time of year depends on walking or biking as well.

Peter said he's seen a large group of children walking home along Westbrook Street by the golf course, waiting to cross. It seemed to be more than what shows in the survey.

Question 12, how often the responded uses the bus to/from the West End, showed that the majority is never but it is misleading. It shows one in four people take the bus fairly regularly. Every time he's been here he's seen people take the bus. **Marilyn** said she would filter this one and take the homeowners out.

Marilyn clarified that the "West End" covers more than this area. She lives here but doesn't live in this area. Heron Cove has some ownership.

Question 13, where respondents take the bus, shows downtown Portland, school, work, mall, other parts of the City, surrounding towns, and doctor appointments.

Question 14, what would make taking the bus easier/more convenient, showed more frequency and bus stops, faster, weekend service, direct routes, being on time, more safety, and bus shelters. “More safety” could be in terms of getting to the bus stop and feeling comfortable on Westbrook Street, traffic-wise. It was discussed that the bus stop near Dunkin Donuts may be a safety issue because of activity at the motels across the street. In terms of safety, the need for more street lighting, safety on the bus, and sidewalks in the winter were discussed. **Tex** suggested recommendations to include lighting and plowing sidewalks.

Question 15, which topics to focus on, showed that the majority of respondents said roads, particularly Westbrook Street. **Tex** asked what was meant by “housing.” **Rick** said it’s mostly the expense. **Stephanie** said the affordability and the diversity of housing in terms of size. “Other” meant more activities in general, for seniors and children. There were also concerns about security and recommendations for beautification and bringing the school back.

Marilyn mentioned more purposeful collaboration between the community/rec centers for trips and the possibility of having bus pick-ups in the West End.

Tex spoke about the possibility of security guards at night. **Peter** asked if that is something the City is willing to do in all neighborhoods. The Committee discussed “eyes on the street,” meaning more eyes make it feel more lively and people are less likely to commit crime, and a neighborhood watch.

The Committee discussed crossing guards.

Question 16 asked what is most liked about the West End. Most respondents like the convenient location the most. **Tex** was surprised to hear this; **Quang** said many people work in or near the mall. One response showed “restaurants” and **Craig P.** asked if restaurants was part of “convenient location.” **Rick** said yes, specifically proximity.

Question 17 asked what is least liked about the West End. Road conditions was number one. After that, the most popular answer was no critique at all.

Stephanie added that a lot of this echoed what she’s heard from one-on-one conversations, which will enhance some places where there are more general answers. There are a lot of comments where people gave freeform comments and they will go through those comments to find trends. She reiterated that this was one piece of the process and of the overall formula for recommendations.

4. Plan Framework and Next Steps

Stephanie reviewed her summary memo. She said that engagement was a different approach than usual because they felt they would not get a robust attendance typical workshop meetings since there are a lot of working parents and people that may be here more temporarily. Their approach was to go into existing meetings and meet with stakeholders invested in what’s happening in the community. She thinks it’s been successful. Although the budget was constricting, she’s happy about the relationships they’ve made.

She discussed the workshop last month. The attendance wasn’t where they wanted it to be but people there were engaged. They had good conversations despite with the venue. All of staff that worked on the plan participated in one way or another.

At this point, they’ve worked on beginning the written part of the plan. They are looking at coordinating with the Avesta project, which has moved their timeline up severely. They are

aiming for a basic draft in July with a strong amount of feedback. It will be an evolving draft and the plan is to bring it back in August as a solid draft.

She would like people to look at her memo and bring give feedback. She read the draft vision statement aloud, which summarizes what they've heard in engagement services. It is meant to be aspirational and will inform where they take zoning language and other policy pieces.

Marilyn said the west end is more than this area; the part of the statement that says Westbrook Street is the center of this neighborhood may not be correct. **Stephanie** asked how to brand this neighborhood. **Tex** agreed this is confusing and said this neighborhood identifies themselves as the "West End Neighborhood." The Committee agreed that there is the "west end" of the City that encompasses the "West End Neighborhood" area they've discussed.

Craig P. said that one part of this is to make the neighborhood attractive citywide. He wants "visitors" to mean residents' visitors but also citywide. **Stephanie** said that's a good point and she's struggled with connectivity outside of the neighborhood.

Stephanie read the objective categories. She read these aloud.

Next steps include a loose draft in place by July because Avesta needs a finished document. They are trying to align this plan to help Avesta's application.

Tex said that a specific objective needs to be made for safety. He recommended combining 3 ("build and maintain a comprehensive trail network") & 6 ("enhance community services and amenities"), specifically including trail networks. Safety would be lighting, filling gaps in street, and neighborhood watch.

Peter asked about beautification; a place for plantings such as trees along Westbrook.

Stephanie reviewed the outline. She thought there may want to be consistency between this plan and the Mill Creek plan and used the Mill Creek plan as a guide. The written portion will include information on the history of the neighborhood.

They would like to have something solid, with incorporated feedback, by the end of August. **Tex** said in terms of zoning, he will make an effort to work with Stephanie to try to be able to bring a ready zoning ordinance to the Council the same time as the Master Plan.

Eben spoke about ways to present to the Council and suggested starting the conversation in their communication section. **Tex** said they need to work with the City attorney on the conditional zone that exists in Brick Hill.

Stephanie stressed that the vision is most important to her at this point. She appreciates any suggestions and comments.

5. Triangle Parcels Project

Tyler Norod, Avesta, spoke about Avesta and gave an overview of funding, including the points system. Avesta is experienced and usually scores well. He is excited that they are able to dovetail with a Master Plan; this usually doesn't match up. He discussed that there seems to be issues with safety, walkability on the street, and trying to make Westbrook be a neighborhood centerpiece through the Opportunity Alliance or Le Variety—a neighborhood center. A tricky part is a lot of subsidies don't pay for things that aren't housing.

He discussed numbers and stated that they need about 50 units to score well and make the project financially feasible, and to provide things on the first floor. He spoke about street trees, safety, and walking on streets. They've talked about on-street parking and bump-outs in the sidewalk to protect pedestrians. On-street parking also tends to slow cars. There are a lot of things that could change but generally they need around 50 units.

In terms of timeline, he explained that you typically apply in October but with changes in the federal level, the market for low income housing credits took a nosedive. There is no sense it will change soon, so Maine Housing has a deadline of November to get an application in. Awards come in January. One point you get is town approvals—knowing they give money to a project that is ready to go can earn points.

Stephanie clarified that if November is the date, they need an adopted plan by November and zoning as well. **Tyler** said yes. **Craig P.** asked what the gap is between current and proposed changed zoning. **Tex** said density and height.

Tyler said they are looking at three residential floors and one bottom floor for things like Le Variety and the Opportunity Alliance. The drawings shown are still the general plan. A constraint is parking and they are looking for creative solutions. **Peter** asked if there is excess parking on Brick Hill.

Tyler believes so. As for height, retail floors are typically taller than residential but economically they crunch you down so they can spread money out. A trouble is that the application comes once a year and if it isn't chosen, it doesn't mean the project ends. They are optimistic and excited because this is a project they want to move forward with. Fixing up Westbrook scores high internally.

He explained that the project would be long-term managed. Because of the tax credits, you can't sell it for 15 years but they don't ever try to sell. Tax credits require you to be affordable for 15 years and usually that's not the only subsidy you have, which can go longer.

Eben discussed the local neighborhood controversy with the Housing Authority. He doesn't think the neighbors felt "not in my backyard," but the height was the practical matter and there were questions about how people in the neighborhood felt imposed upon. He wants them to be aware; this is a different situation but the Council will have it fresh in their minds.

Peter said he would like to see a really positive experience, a great proposal that's well thought-out with neighborhood input. **Marilyn** suggested bringing the plans/ideas to community suppers. **Eben** said when people feel like they have a choice, they will feel more engaged. **Peter** said he liked that they worked in community amenities, particularly an established amenity, into the architecture.

Tex said it's important to remember they have a local business person as a partner in the project. He asked how much it would help for the City to do an affordable housing TIF. **Tyler** said that is huge, one of the biggest points you can get is a TIF. It also helps with other things such as amenities.

The Committee discussed more about TIFs and CDBG funds. **Tex** said CDBG funds are freed up a bit; **Tyler** said they don't get a point for these like a TIF but if they know it's coming, it buys down the construction part and helps in the end.

Eben said it may be ambitious to create a new TIF. There is a Brick Hill, TI, and Long Creek TIFs. He wonders if those projects could work. **Tex** suggested amending Brick Hill.

The Committee spoke about how the City could help if it's mutually beneficial.

Tex said by next meeting they should have a sense of make or break.

Stephanie asked for a basic bulleted list of some aspects of the application from Tyler. Eben asked for something similar for the Council. **Tyler** spoke about issues such as helping to connect sidewalks to bus shelters. **Rick** said that was a top priority.

Tex mentioned that Doug Howard in Public Works is aware of the need to improve Westbrook Street. He wants to see how plans for the project line up before doing so; Sebago Technics did surveying work and he had them expand that work to do more of Westbrook and to include this project. There are preliminary efforts being done.

Craig P. asked about the "point" of the triangle section. Tyler clarified that they do not own that portion; Stephanie clarified that David's focus is to work with Avesta on the façade and he is tasked with the parcel with the concept that at some point in the future they could "green" that spot.

The Committee discussed the timeline and procedural work. **Stephanie** said she will have the draft to the Committee for review about a week before the July meeting. She would like comments about the vision within the next couple weeks.

The Committee agreed to hold the July 20th meeting. Because of difficulty with schedules in the summer, meetings after that date will be discussed.

6. Comments from the Public

None

7. Round Robin

Craig P. said they will need a Chair for July meeting.

Rick met with Olde English Village management and did a site walk of the Long Creek trail. They talked about the opportunity to close the gap. It went well and haven't heard back yet.

8. Adjournment

Bob Foster motioned to adjourn; **Barry Lucier** seconded. **Unanimous approval.**