

## **Knightville Public Forum      July 26, 2018**

### **Welcome: Chair Peter Stanton**

Chair Peter Stanton opened the meeting and introduced himself. The purpose of this Committee is to look at the City by neighborhood in light of the Comprehensive Plan and to see how things are going and if changes should be made. For reference, they are looking at Knightville from the rotary down.

### **Review of Past Planning & Existing Policies: Tex Haeuser, Planning & Development Director**

Prior to the existing 2012 Comprehensive Plan, there was a master planning project in 2005 where the core activity was a design workshop, resulting in a Master Plan. The basic policies for Knightville have been consistent of wanting to realize its potential, getting traffic circulation changed, and to make it possible for more people to live in the area, thus giving more support for additional desired shops and services. They are trying to achieve a balance of a substantial number of residents living in the community with amenities within walking distance in Knightville and Mill Creek. They also want to advantage of the proximity and situation along the waterfront. The current operational policies in terms of land use are found in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Looking at the Plan, it divides Knightville into three parts 1) the Ocean Street/Cottage Road corridor, where more intensity of development is called for, 2) the letter street area, where preserving and protecting the neighborhood is important, and 3) the residential fringe along the cove, where there is more limited growth than #2.

### **Fore & Aft Planning Modules and Timeline: Tex Haeuser**

The Committee's work is contained in the Gantt chart, as shown. There is an open committee process; if you want to come to a Committee meeting on the third Thursday in Council Chambers, 6-8 PM, you are one of the group. Everyone is encouraged to come and participate.

They have divided the process into modules, as shown in the Gantt chart. Initially, they developed the planning process and worked on the survey. They have done some inventory in the area. The City's new Economic Development Director is leading them in asking which services are wanted, would be good in this area, and how they can influence things to get them here.

Parking is a situation that frequently comes up and has its own module. They will also look back to what they want to preserve in terms of historic buildings, features, and what general architectural design standards they want.

Zoning regulations—how do they want to tweak zoning to avoid some situations like they had with SPHA where the large building is suddenly taking people by surprise? How can they get more trust in the ability of zoning to protect a neighborhood but also how to adjust zoning so buildings that should be redeveloped can be?

Last is an infrastructure module, looking at improvements to things like sidewalks and transit.

This process is one of the public forums, but there will also be workshops with Council, along with an online presence. This process goes for a year and at the end they will work with the Planning Board and City Council on adoption of the study.

One difference between this study and others done by the Committee is that they haven't hired an outside consultant to help develop the plan and facilitate meetings. It may take longer to get things done this way

but they have been doing work through subcommittees. It's been a more interesting process and comes from the members more than it normally would.

### **Inventory: Tex Haeuser**

A zoning map was shown and reviewed. Village Residential mostly on the west side of Ocean, some also on the right. The Commercial C zone is a leftover from older zoning times. Village Commercial is the more intense and business-accommodating zone along Ocean. Newest is Village Extension around City Hall and Mill Creek Core for the shopping centers.

The Land Use Map was shown. They've expanded past Knightville to include Mill Creek at the Committee's request. Some of the particular uses include single-family homes, two-families, and multi-families with the number of units written in. There are parks, open spaces, and businesses with names written in. Vacant situations are shown; the mud flats that CMP owns are noted as so because they may have potential to have a boardwalk/wharf over them to support buildings or other uses.

### **Phase I Survey Results: Bill Mann, Economic Development Director**

The survey was open-ended to let people tell them what's important with the thought that they will come back with a follow-up survey. There were over 200 responses received between June 27 and July 24. They found that more surveys were completed when social media posts about it were made by the City.

Over half of the respondents visit Knightville regularly, one-third live in Knightville, and the rest own a business or are looking to invest. It was noted that details will be posted online.

The general theme is that Knightville is pleasant to live in. There is a close proximity to Portland, a sense of community, and it has great walkability. When asked how frequently they visit, 23% of respondents said daily, 45% said a few times a week, and 20% said once a week. Parking was a concern and area of opportunity. Alternative transportation was suggested to reduce traffic and parking. There is a desire for more trees, waterfront access, more green space, and more small businesses. It was noted that the parks are being visited. Cars are the most common means of transportation followed by walking and biking. People enjoy the shopping and retail, cafes and restaurants, and walking and biking. They enjoy the community aspect and feel it's a safe area.

Business owners choose it based on its proximity to Portland and affordability. They felt welcome in the community. Limited foot traffic coupled with parking issues is a challenge for business owners. Entrepreneurs would like increased signage. Investors would like invest in both commercial and residential uses and felt current zoning rules may restrict their abilities to invest. Height of buildings and density of units were mentioned.

Historic sites include the Post Office and Thomas Knight Park, among others.

About half of the respondents provided their names and address and 105 people gave their email for follow-up.

### Questions/Comments

- The raw number for people interested in investing was 10-12.
- Do the responses allow the ability to draw conclusions?
  - It was not a scientific survey; yes and no.

- Southport Marine is a unique attraction of people from the outside. Between them and the Snow Squall, they think they've made a positive impact in the attractiveness of coming to Knightville because of access to the water and a popular restaurant.
  - It was asked if there's any thought to enhancement—marine supply, recreational facilities stores? Nothing was talked about in the survey. They are one of the calmest and safest marinas in the area. It's a plus that they shouldn't ignore—the recreational boating community is thriving and getting more popular. South Portland has some of the best marinas in the state.
  - The additional survey, given to members of the committee, had open-ended questions at the end. This is the type of information they are looking for.
  - People live on board over the winter. They think they have the niche on the beauty of the Portland scenery. Property taxes are almost nonexistent. It's a unique lifestyle that only they and DiMillos offer.
    - This has come up in Council workshops on tiny homes.
  - There was a suggestion for more transient slips in the area. There's room to expand on City property.
  - There was a discussion on dredging.
  - It was asked if there's a place in the area for kayaking. It's difficult to do from Thomas Knight Park.
    - It's possible to put a structure in the park with a rack and locks.
    - The marina has rowing shells and there's a rowing club. However, there are no rentals. As for liability, the boats are insured but you are responsible for the damage.
- What would a summary paragraph of the survey be?
  - In general, people love Knightville. More businesses would like to locate here. There would be investment interest for residential and business if they could make the economics of the investment opportunity work. Residents love being here; they love the intimacy of the area and would like more activities and things to do. They would like more entertainment and options, particularly in the winter. But don't let it spoil the quiet charm of the area. It's a difficult balancing act.
- There is no mention of restaurants or a marina on the bridge.
  - There is a sign that is in need of repainting; Bill hopes to do so this fall.
  - He suggested way findings. If there are businesses that would like to be involved, they should speak now or email him so they can put together a draft mockup.
  - Tex thinks way findings should be included in the infrastructure model. The history of the waterfront market was that some businesses were upset at the thought of losing traffic from the bridge and branded the area as a "Waterfront Market."
- There used to be a large Knightville sign in the area.
  - Bill asked for anyone who has historic photos to send them in.

### **Zoning Ideas to Date: Tex Haeuser**

The Zoning Subcommittee has focused on Village Residential zoning. They have some provisional thoughts, shown on the screen. In general, they felt that the zoning doesn't match lots and that they should make the properties conforming.

The subcommittee has talked about a 2500 SF minimum lot size. Density is currently on a sliding scale. The basic idea is a 6-4-2 plan: the "2" is the idea that each lot would have the ability to have two units. If

you have a larger lot, you get an additional unit for every 4,356 SF. Street frontage would go to 25 feet, except for 50 feet for combined lots. Maximum building coverage would be 33% for principal and 40% for all buildings. Side yard, principal buildings setback would come down to six feet. Minimum rear setbacks would be 15 feet. Minimum side and rear setbacks, for ADUs, would be six feet. Minimum side & rear setbacks for non-ADUs would be three feet. Parking would be 1.0 spaces per unit or less for smaller multi-family units, as currently allowed. There is a trend toward a smaller number of cars per family. Min off-street spaces, ADU would go to 1.0.

### **Current Projects (Skate Park, CMP, Big Babe's): Tex Haeuser**

Noted were the potential skate park, CMP with the Bright Line project, and a transmission tower that could be replaced because it's rusting. Big Babe's was approved but they don't have an amended application yet; indications are that it would be scaled back to a two-story building. The skate park has a separate committee and process.

### **Public Discussion**

- The zoning map shows Commercial C as purple and there's nothing commercial there except for the boat yard.
  - It allows higher density residential. There's also a welding operation. It was noted that VR used to be the Residential G zone.
- Martin's Point building update
  - There's nothing official on the sale.
- Big Babe's update
  - It appears that the economics aren't there as it was approved. The applicant has been open to saying she is looking to do something smaller. In order to do something different than approved, it needs to come to the Planning Board for a modification and amended approval. Until they see it, nothing is official.
- Will there be a design review? So many small residential properties have been severely compromised over the years.
  - They will work with the Arts & Historic Preservation Committee. They have begun looking at this.
  - You don't want everything "cookie cutter" but you want a reference to the past.
  - Options range from heavy-handed zoning, where people who want to make a change would need an approval from a Board, or providing education information to homeowners and providing architectural expertise as a resource.

### **Lot Sizes**

- With the current lot size at 7500 SF, making it 2500 SF seems like there would be an incentive to rip down existing homes. The way they're placed now, there's not room for another house on the lot.
  - The way 2500 SF came about was through talk of grandfathered lots of record. 2500 SF is more or less close to the original lots, so it was a reference point. From there, they talked about it creating an incentive for tear-downs so they talked about increasing the frontage requirement to create less of an incentive.
  - The intent was not to create a situation where lots could be subdivided; that would be disastrous. All of the lots in Knightville were created in the late 1800s/early 1900s. The intent was every lot down there is conforming. If you want to turn the property into two units you can, but not as a sub-dividable lot.

- Councilor Henderson remembers hearing real estate agents at the 2012 Comprehensive Plan meetings saying that they should tear down the houses on the letter streets and put up townhouses. This is not what she wants; on the lots that are empty it's nice to allow them to be used in their small nature but the houses on the letter streets are historic. Let's not have Knightville full of boxes.
- Townhouses are allowed; it came from the G zone which allows multi-families.
- At the subcommittee meeting, there was discussion of aggregation in building larger multi-units. They didn't hear anyone on the committee say they want to keep it all single families. They compromised.
- If most lots are 50 by 100 feet, you could go to something like 2800 SF and still have two units per lot.
  - Some housing stock is very old and they've struggled to put them back together. It could still fit into the neighborhood. Some homes are 130 years old and can continue to live on while others cannot—do they mandate that nothing can be torn down?
- There is confusion about what's being proposed in terms of two units per lot versus a two-unit house. What's being proposed is if you want two units on 2500 SF, you need 50 feet of street frontage for each.
  - The committee was thinking of allowing two units within one building; they were thinking of duplexes. You could take your existing house and rather than go to the Planning Board for approval for an ADU in the house, currently the only way you can get a second unit, you would have two units in the house, which is how a lot of houses were built. They haven't gotten into the details. The intent is that you cannot take a 50 by 100 foot lot and divide it and put two houses on it. This could be made clearer.
- In terms of garages, you could have a two-unit principal and an ADU in the garage, meeting these standards.
  - It would be three units throughout the entire VR.
  - If someone had a two-unit with a detached garage, many houses wouldn't be able to do it but a bigger than average lot might.
  - The idea was that you can have your house, you can have an ADU over garage, but you have to be able to park the cars. Your principal house could have two units but it's still a house.
  - They haven't fully pushed the limits and looked for loopholes.
- ADU is an accessory dwelling unit. They used to be called mother-in-law apartments. These are not restricted to family members. It's essentially a rental unit and a way to help people meet expenses.
  - In terms of expanding the lot with the number of units, ADUs do not count as a unit.
- In the 1980s there was South Portland Neighborhood Housing. People were able to afford repairs to their homes by making an apartment in their house. A lot of these houses have apartments; they're already two units and some are three.
- Work will continue on zoning.

#### Parking & Traffic

- Should they put more emphasis on particular areas and times or is parking and traffic a problem in general and everywhere?

- Foulmouthed has resulted in evening parking on A Street. There's concern that they will see more when Big Babe's opens. However, they've also heard there are times of the day where most of the streets are empty.
- With Big Babe's at the end of C Street, there is concern people will naturally park there.
- Characterizing living in this area could be seen as "someone with their foot full on the gas and full on the break." Parking and traffic doesn't seem to be a problem to some. At some point you need more accelerator than brake. Do they want to be a little village that doesn't change or build dynamism?
- There are problems on B and E Streets. There is a four-story building in this area that has a parking lot but people park on the street up to driveways and you cannot get out safely.
- Some members of the Committee want to protect their assets. They are not against development but some businesses don't have parking for employees and they park on the streets. There are issues in the winter with plowing. When Big Babe's opens they will do wonderfully but residents will suffer because of the cars—noise and parking. Councilor Rose once brought up the idea of resident parking. Businesses need to thrive but why not have resident parking from 6PM-6AM?
- The idea of marking spaces on the streets was discussed. If it's a simple and cost-effective idea, it could take some issues off the table and they could focus on other aspects.
  - Tex thinks it's something they could think about and try. A lot of parking problems are site-specific. They have to be careful about where they put the first space, what they do on C Street, and how to stagger cars in the winter. However, don't they want some nightlife? There are some noises that go with it but for if you want to go to a restaurant, people have to be able to park on the streets. There is also an added problem that the City does not have the resources to enforce it.
  - If striping happens, it should be on all of the streets. There is an issue on D as well.
- The idea of bump outs and trees on C Street was discussed.
  - This could create the benefit of traffic calming but public works would hate it.
- The removal of diagonal parking has left some businesses with less customers. They haven't spoken at these meetings but they are feeling the impact. They are talking about bringing in more businesses but they're losing businesses because of parking. Businesses should be talked to.
  - This raises the question of more municipal parking.
  - There is municipal parking on Waterman and the Post Office lot after hours, but there's no signage.
  - There is parking behind Smaha's and visitor spaces in another lot that are not well-marked. People don't know they are there.
  - It's been said that some people won't shop at Smaha's if it's turned to two-way; that's saying you're not a loyal customer unless you can park in front of the store. Are they going to reconfigure everything again to accommodate a couple of businesses? People should find a spot and walk down the road. No one wants to hear their property is being taken for a parking lot. There are more than enough spots to accommodate additional businesses in the area—it's about perception.
  - They need to talk about marketing, the walkability of Knightville, and signage. They need to show where parking is. Business owners could agree to have their employees park on the outskirts and keep the side streets clear. They could promote parking on the

outside and walking. This is how you could market it. If they start thinking this way and build a plan rather than looking at each problem, it can be done if you bring all parties together.

- This adds to the healthy community concept.
- For businesses—does it have to be parking for your customer or any customer?
- There is no parking enforcement in the evenings. No parking on the streets after 8PM was discussed.
  - Some feel uncomfortable cutting down accessibility and ease of parking downtown. If they're going to develop, there will be a little bit more inconvenience. This comes with having more around. If they don't want car doors or beeping or hearing loud talking, that's a different kind of village. Some people would like more growth.
- Do they want to change?
  - It's important to put the question on the table—do they want to grow? Can they do this without noise?
  - Tex said the redevelopment potential was discussed and was rather limited. Buildings with potential to be changed is small. It's not a lot of change. Some buildings probably should change—there are some old, tired buildings. They're used to them but it's a low standard. He would say from the City's point of view, this is more than just a residential neighborhood. It's a district for the City, a village downtown with more potential than what it is.
  - It's nice to see ground-up people from the local communities and doing things on a scale that doesn't expand the housing crisis.
    - Tex said the alternative to the expensive penthouse is to allow a few more units. Some people here are living in new development since the bridge occurred; it's nice to see new people come in and participate.
- Way finding signage was shown. The signs included the time it takes to get places; this could work with parking.

The next CPIC meeting is August 16<sup>th</sup>. If anyone has ideas, let a Committee member know. From tonight, projects could include a subcommittee on striping designation, more about looking at routes from parking to businesses—lighting, sidewalks. The infrastructure module will include signage. Also, a second public forum is planned.