



Stakeholder Group Meeting Summary September 28 & 29, 2015

The third round of Old Town Neighborhoods Plan Stakeholder Group Meetings was held on September 28th & 29th with members from both the Eastside and Westside Stakeholder Groups. The meeting agenda is listed below, with the majority of each meeting devoted to review and discussion of the results from the online visioning survey conducted over the summer.

Agenda:

- Review & discussion of online vision survey results
- Brainstorming vision ideas & statements
- Discuss next steps for the Old Town Neighborhoods Plan

Online Vision Survey Discussion

The online survey was comprised of three sections including transportation and mobility, land use and transitions, and character and compatibility. A total of 292 respondents completed all three sections, with additional responses recorded for individual sections. The summary below is modeled from the stakeholder group discussions and ideas after reviewing questions from the survey. A copy of results of individual survey questions may be downloaded from the Old Town Neighborhoods Plan webpage.

Demographics

- Reviewing survey responses shows that fewer college-age students (18-24) and renters took the survey than is representative of the overall demographic characteristics of the neighborhood.
 - Many students were gone over the summer when the survey took place & have also been more difficult to engage throughout the Old Town Neighborhoods Plan process.
- A high number of survey respondents indicated their primary travel method in the neighborhoods was by bike. Some felt this number felt higher than their experience.
- The number of responses represents approximately 2.5% of the study area population, and members cautioned applying the results as fully representative of the neighborhoods.

Transportation & Mobility

- Surprise there were not more transit users – some speculated the lack of service in the core of the neighborhoods and general ease of getting around with other modes limit transit usage.
- Parking inconvenience promotes walking & biking from neighborhood residents when traveling Downtown from the neighborhoods.
- Parking issues were not included in the survey, but most agree general impacts of spill-over parking particularly in the fringe areas of the neighborhoods should be addressed.
- The online survey and group discussion indicated strong support for bike/pedestrian improvements along the arterial corridors and a potential road diet. Survey comments and a follow-up question also indicated a preference for more focus on parallel routes as a means to improve bike/pedestrian infrastructure along these corridors.
- Many also agreed with the number of comments to examine better wayfinding, especially for bikes, as well as better enforcement for vehicles and bikes within the neighborhoods. Many anecdotes and personal experience with infractions.

- General agreement with the overall impression from the survey that travel and mobility works well for the most part in the neighborhoods, but there are improvements many would like to see, focused especially on enhancing bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

Land Use & Transition Areas

- Lots of comments in the survey and discussion at the meeting about the growing importance of addressing impacts from short term rentals such as VRBOs & AirBnB.
 - Investors purchasing properties specifically to rent out & reducing affordability.
 - Overcapacity of buildings / new people every day.
 - Neighbors feel awkward reporting on other neighbors.
 - Feels like the impacts come at the expense of the rest of the neighborhood.
- Discussion of how it may be appropriate for continued change in the buffer areas, but as they are intensified, they would need their own buffers themselves – there is a balancing point.
 - Buffers may not be wide enough to serve their intended effect. Areas immediately adjacent to single-family homes need different standards than sites along a major road.
 - Some could see the transition areas for more development or potential solution to the supply-demand imbalance in the neighborhoods that are causing rising prices.
 - Many shocked at the prices in the transition areas & neighborhoods (e.g. Library Park Townhomes)
- Strong agreement on the results of the question about preserving the single family neighborhoods largely as they are now.
- Accessory Dwelling Units seem like the most inoffensive approach for some added density and to ensure the neighborhood has smaller, more affordable units available.
 - Worried if standards are relaxed, people will simply rent them out as AirBnB – may need to be other restrictions on their use.
- Some positive sentiment for some possible neighborhood services, but only where existing non-residential uses have been located or specific locations. Worry that people expect another Beaver’s, but what if it’s just a national chain store? Can’t regulate only for local.
 - Many pointed out proximity to services isn’t an issue – downtown and commercial along neighborhood edges are generally close by.
 - Also an equal portion do not think any non-residential should be added to the neighborhoods; it’s not needed & the impacts are too great.

Character & Compatibility

- Conversation about the need to define what ‘diversity’ of styles and design mean to the neighborhoods. Many value diversity, but within a large range, and there are examples of recent construction outside this range that may detract from the character of the area.
- Design while important may still be a secondary issue than size and scale (lot coverage) – similar comments and responses were seen in the survey.
- After discussion, roof-structure was identified as another important aspect to design specifically for compatibility.
- Some would like the new information presented in the Design Guidelines to become standards.
- Still an ongoing neighborhood issue, and there is a wide range of responses that the City should do more for design in new construction and opinions that as private property the City should not interfere.