

# **Areas 3 and 4 LHA PC/CAC & PLH WG Meeting**

## ***Lee Highway Alliance Planning/Community Advisory Committees and PLH Working Group Meeting***

***(5/6/21, 7 PM – 9:30 PM)***

### **Area 3 Panel comments by topic:**

#### **Land Use**

Pamela G. – How can we create a pedestrian activated Main Street when all signs indicate retail square footage is shrinking? Retail does best when they are grouped together and our environment does too when you don't have to drive from one parking lot to another. Plan identifies orange areas with the red hatch as areas that must be designed/built for ground floor to be fitted for retail/retail-like spaces (like tall spaces, other utilities like electric). How do we set plan up to get a continuous storefront on both sides of Lee Hwy. and how can that continue up and past Glebe Rd.?

County Response: If you are going to walk from the LBCC to the Lee Heights shops that is just about a ½ mile, 10-minute walk. About same distance from Northside Social to Whole Foods along Wilson Blvd. Lee Hwy. is not a pleasant walk. Not proposing Clarendon but it is a more interactive streetscape, tree-lined, with wide sidewalks, cafes, banks, restaurants, stores, convenience stores etc. Service happens off side streets not off Wilson. It's possible for retail to happen that way if buildings are built to accept it and orient service activities off to side streets.

Dierdre D. – What impact would the Plan have on the businesses and residents near the Old Dominion intersection?

County Response: Not too many businesses there now. This would add new residents. More neighborhood for those businesses to serve. In cases where streets are moving around, we need to work through that and find the best alignment that would work best for those properties. There are always opportunities for a business and property owner to work something out that will allow businesses to come back into the new space. That's an individual property owner/landowner/business tenant decision for each of those locations. Having public spaces nearby, will help people stay longer and patronize the buildings over a longer period of time.

Sandi C. – What types of businesses in Area 3 are important to try to preserve and what type are important to try and encourage as new businesses?

- Pamela G. Response: Need flexibility because retail is under an industry change over the past 2 decades and pandemic hasn't helped. Food and beverage and service industry are doing great on Lee Hwy. We want to encourage County to make more ground level spaces for food production and maker spaces as part of the commercial category. A maker space can be small craft shops, 3D printing shops, small craft breweries, etc., that are environmentally safe.
- Ginger B. Response: Need to pay attention to our legacy businesses.

Ginger B. – Would you rather see more public facilities along the corridor? In area 3 most prominent is LBCC.

- Chris F. Response: At the Horizons apartments, where you are proposing a street, there is a green space that may be a dog park and it is probably intended for residents of the Horizons. I have used it before. There is a lack of dog parks and that is a nice amenity to have.
- Mike H. Response: Owned a dog bakery behind Lee Heights for many years. Rent got too high and had to move. In Old Dominion, we don't have a park you can walk to w/out crossing Lee Hwy., which is difficult. County has promised a park on the north side of Lee Hwy. for decades but have not gotten one yet.
- Bill R. Response: We have a growing population and will probably need more of all public facilities. A larger LBCC, larger green space. Wonder about the value of string type parks but support need for park north of Lee Hwy.
- Susan C. Response: Should consider need for new schools.
- County Response: Yes, working w/APS. Next step is to test the enrollment implication based on population scenarios, the kinds of school settings (and seats) that would be needed and how to meet those needs. County hasn't made a specific recommendation for what can happen at the Lee Center, however, a school site has not been ruled out.

Laura J. – president of GlebeWood CA. What type of housing would be allowed in GlebeWood and how does it benefit the neighborhood?

- Sandi C. Response: Concern over preservation of GlebeWood because it provides equity in housing at a lower price point, which we want to achieve.
- County Response: Scenario A would not change much from what is allowed there today. However, in this scenario the houses that have deeper yards can build a second unit to generate additional income. Scenario B provides greater choices for property owners. Homes would need to be purchased and

redeveloped. We want to know how comfortable the community is with change in that area. Most of you are familiar with the approved Children's School, which is north of the townhouses. The biggest challenge with that site, and others along Lee hwy., is the depth of those parcels. The depth is not sufficient to do the kinds of improvements we need along Lee Highway. In the Children's School site, the access will be off Lee Hwy. because the alley in the back is not wide enough to provide access off the rear. This means, we won't be able to have a wide sidewalk with continuous trees along the entire frontage. Undergrounding of utilities is also a challenge. The scenarios test the potential of the commercial properties long Lee Highway consolidating with some of the townhomes to regularize the size of those lots and improve the alleyway in the back. These are all trade-offs. If we want to improve Lee Hwy. by adding bicycle lanes, widening the sidewalks, undergrounding utilities and planting a continuous tree canopy, something is going to give. GlebeWood is an integral neighborhood on Lee Hwy. and we are not saying it should change, but want to be clear about the challenges we are facing there.

Michelle W. – Why does the mustard color area not show mixed use and only shows multi-family?

County Response: Today it is residentially zoned. The intent is to cluster the business between LBCC and Woodstock in that ½ mile stretch. There is also opportunities for it to happen where the La Union market is today.

Laurel W. – My understanding is that GlebeWood is a historic area.

Sandy C. response: It is a historic area on the National scale by the Secretary of Interiors. Very important. But it is not designated as a local historic district in Arlington, which is where the legal teeth are to protect it.

Bill B. – McDonald's next to LBCC. The County has had discussion about changes they want to make. It may be useful to have an outline of each side's discussion to see how process works and how difficult it is sometimes to reach consensus, or not. Application has been pulled.

Ginger B. – Can you talk about some of the ways that we can diversify our housing choices and achieve our housing goals?

County Response: There are many housing types that are not currently available or with enough supply along corridor, so by allowing and incentivizing m-family and mixed use it increases supply which is good for affordability. With those projects there is greater capacity to set a portion of those units aside at different price points., particularly in Scenario B. For affordable housing developers, it

means they can build more affordable units. If a single family home is converted to a two-family home or small m-family building, that are similar in scale, it can provide more opportunities to increase housing supply. To meet the goals, we will probably need a little bit of all those ideas and not rely on a single method. We will also be looking at the regulations to make sure we can promote those types of housing.

Michelle W. – In other parts of the County, like C. Pike, there are very specific rules that if you have a certain amount of affordable housing in your property and meet the other regulations, then you can get a certain amount of extra height. This is a very clear set of rules that developers can work with for a specific number of blocks. One way is to set up the rules ahead of time, instead of having them be uncertain. All of the types that are on the list are important to have. What do the housing in the yellow color look like? Is there opportunity to consolidate there?

County Response: Housing in the yellow color are similar in scale and form to the s-family that is there today. Redevelopment can happen lot by lot, or a few lots at a time. An example is replacing a s-family with a two-family on the same lot to increase the supply. County would not be discouraging consolidation of the lots.

## Transportation and Connectivity

Richard P. – How will a redesigned street be an improvement and how will it protect walkers and bicyclists and transit riders?

County Response: We have a corridor that prioritizes vehicles and doesn't provide amenities or securities to pedestrians or bicyclists. We are looking to provide buffers for them and make crossing Lee Highway easier. We are also looking to calm the street by taking away the free right movement. This is when vehicles can make a free right from one street to the next, at a high speed, which is never good for pedestrians. The redesigned street would create more space for waiting for the bus and trees to improve shade.

Richard P. – What kind of new bus system will be required to reduce automobile vehicular trips and encourage transit-oriented development? 15 minutes headways is terrible. We have it already. We need 12 minutes.

County Response: There is a symbiotic relationship between increased densities and the bus system. As you increase density you need more transit systems, because we don't want to generate more car trips. At the same time we need the bus system to be able to have density. goal is multi-modal. Now people are getting in cars for short and long trips. If we make it more walkable, the short trips will be

possible by foot and bikes (1/4 mile). Bus system will need to be more attractive than other options – waiting environment to get bus needs to be much nicer. Bus needs to come more often (every 15 min) and be predictable. Need to make moving east-west and north-south, to get to RB corridor, as smoothly as possible during congested times. Buses need to be more frequent, more comfortable and mode of choice at congested times.

Richard P. – For the panel, do you support lot consolidation to establish a parallel street network and a uniform and cohesive Lee Hwy. streetscape in this area?

- Chris F. Response: I absolutely think increasing connectivity has a lot of wins. As a transportation planner when we do studies of cut-through traffic, half of the time, 90% of the number of cars are people from the neighborhood. More streets doesn't necessarily lead to more vehicle traffic, it just distributes it and if streets are well designed, it civilizes it. I absolutely support lot consolidation to increase connectivity in street network.
- Chris G. Response: This is an iterative plan and will take many years to realize, but think lot consolidation and expanding these parallel streets will be critical to that. C. Pike has been successful at creating these parallel streets and they have a much more critical situation because they are almost at complete capacity on that route. Not the same on Lee Hwy. but we will need those in the future. It doesn't have to be just one thing either. It should be all modes.

Sandy C. - Is the County, because of Vision Zero, talking to VDOT about reducing the speed limit on Lee Hwy to 25 mph from 30 mph? Is County looking seriously at BRT or just in improving the bus system?

- County Response: Yes, we will look at reducing the speeds and are talking to VDOT about this. We are looking at ways to make bus system more rapid, improving headways and making it more predictable. Also looking at improving waiting environments. What we don't have is the right-of-way to dedicate lanes for buses only, all of the time. But we are looking at making the outer lanes a bus priority lane at peak times in key directions.
- Chris F. Response: We do have the right-of-way, we just choose to use the lanes for vehicles. In the future, we might decide to reallocate one of the vehicle lanes to bus only, all of the time. This plan, however, is not considering a significant road diet.

## Public Space and Stormwater

Sandi C. – What do the scenarios explore to improve stormwater management and result in less flooding in Waverly Hills?

- County Response: There have been numerous discussions with DES and crunching numbers to identify where in stormwater network we need to make improvements. This will help us figure out, along Lee Hwy., what we can do to make their job easier downstream. For example, finding the right locations to intercept that water at the top of the watershed and detain it. In other cases, creating more permeable surfaces or reducing impervious surfaces. Worked with DES to identify those locations and that's what the stars on the maps are showing. Where Woodstock park is, at 20<sup>th</sup> Rd., there are pipes that run under 20<sup>th</sup> and Albemarle. These are the headwaters of one of the tributaries of Spout Run. Almost all of the land east to Lorcom drains down and through 20<sup>th</sup> Rd. and Woodstock Park to Waverly Hills. The proposals in the scenarios help complement the work that is being proposed at Woodstock Park. The County is actively looking at all kinds of solutions, to augment the work that is being proposed at Woodstock Park, including additional storage and improvements to stormwater system upstream of Woodstock Park. That should help Waverly Hills.
- Sandi C. Response: We understand the vault at Woodstock will handle 85% of the flooding problem. Are these other improvements that are being proposed on 20<sup>th</sup> Rd. to handle remaining 15% of the flooding problem?
- County Response: We have capacity issues in the pipes upstream of Woodstock Park. They didn't experience the kind of catastrophic flooding that Waverly Hills did, but there are still issues that we would like to solve up there. There are trade-offs that we can get if we can get additional volume in other locations. We may not have to be so reliant on Woodstock Park and have more resilience in the system, which will help us long term. Plan is for 2050 and we want to make sure we have an adequate system that protects neighborhoods downstream. We are looking at all options. Without this plan, all development will be by-right and because so many sites are already impervious, there will be no way for the County to get additional improvements. Improvements along 20<sup>th</sup> Rd. would be beneficial, will augment/supplement what we are doing in Woodstock and will make a much better system overall for the County.
- Sandi C. Response: Waverly Hills likes the idea of the vault at the bottom of the park and have already agreed to it. Worried that to handle additional 15% and get other improvements, we are talking about 10 story buildings. Don't think

the community would want that as an exchange. More reasonable is 5-7 stories. Neighborhood would be more comfortable with that.

## Building Heights

Mike H. – Thank you for the detail in the presentation and helping us to begin to understand trade-offs between lot consolidation and building heights. Obviously, they are linked and I guess it becomes a question of scale. For the panel, do you support allowing additional building height in this area (w/sensitive transitions) to support additional community improvements to road, stormwater, walkability and parks?

- Chris G. Response: This is the best tool we have for redevelopment, public amenities, stormwater and other improvements to the area. Replacing surface parking lots with buildings that store water and place parking in the building is a huge public amenity. Density and height go hand in hand and is a tool used by the County. We want to make sure it's in the right spot and it's in the right height. It's a great incentive to tip it over to the point where it makes economic sense for a developer to come in and improve and create some community benefit. It also helps to solve missing middle and affordability in the area. Perhaps we should consider a blend between Scenarios A and B, there are obviously trade-offs. We should get into the physical model of it so everyone is comfortable with it.
- Deidre Response: With respect to our neighborhood, I don't believe there is any amount of community benefits that would justify 10 stories, particularly at Lee Heights. Lee Heights is at one of the highest elevations in the area. There are 10 stories at the Horizons, which makes more sense because it's a lower topography, more in a hole. Community would be opposed to that height at that site. In the 2016 Visioning Study, the community was considering 4 to 6 stories. 10 stories were never on the table.
- County Response: The reason for showing that height in this area is because of the amount of open space that is being shown and the way the street grid is being shown to come through. Height can give the owners the flexibility to do those things. We understand it can be a cause for concern and that is why we are putting it out there for people to discuss it. A lot can be accomplished with Scenario A too. We understand that there has been discussions in the past and that the community has different expectations. There are a number of different opinions and tolerance for change. We are looking at the issues more closely now – stormwater, Old Dominion intersection needs to be improved (for bicycle and pedestrian safety), lack of connectivity, not so great aspect of Lee Hwy. There are a number of issues compounded in that one spot. To resolve them,

major land consolidations need to occur for all of those things to align. We are not necessarily saying that is the only way to go, but we are being clear and transparent that there are a number of things that we want to accomplish and we don't think it's going to happen only with 5-7 story buildings everywhere. We still have to do more analysis and we are just trying to be forthcoming that there a lot of challenges and we may have to look at the possibility of allowing a little bit more height to accomplish the number of improvements in that particular geography.

- Paul H. Response: This is our neighborhood and I don't see the height in Scenario B being acceptable to the community. There are projects just across the Ballston Metro that have recently been approved by the County Board that are 7 stories. Street grid, I don't see that as a benefit to our community that is affected by this height. Finally, there has to be a CIP strategy over the next 10 years and beyond. We have to have a strategy that funds these improvements not just community benefits.
- Richard L. Response: As a resident of Old Dominion, I am really surprised with the proposal for up to 10 stories around Lee Heights. I recall in the outreach sessions and charrettes that everyone said no more than 4 or 5. Who proposed up to 10 stories? Disappointed County is doing that despite the comments of the community.
- County Response: These are not alternatives and we are not asking people to choose. These are scenarios, possibilities of the types of development that can occur. The purpose for testing them is to understand the impact and benefits that could come from the types of development scenarios that we are testing. This is only to facilitate a very broad and open discussion with the community on these topics. There are a number of different points of views and over the last 3 years, since the process started, we have heard from several in the community that they support transit-oriented development that are a little bit higher. Maybe that sentiment is different from what we heard in the discussions during the visioning study. We are not dismissing that height is a concern. We just need to facilitate a real discussion that talks about the benefits, impacts and the realities. These are studies that are being done by the County and the consultants. No single person at the County is proposing these heights. This is a team effort between the planning team and the rest of the staff team working together, as a group, under the guidance and consultancy of AECOM, our planning consultant.
- Ginger B. Response: Everyone is reacting to the fact that the Lee Heights Shops is a beloved place. I have always joked that if we get the Lee Heights Shops wrong, I will be the most hated woman in Arlington. I know 10 stories are on

- the table but are there ways to identify what we want to preserve and are there ways to incentivize enough that avoids the destruction of the shops?
- County Response: The plan for Lee highway is not requiring or suggesting to remove the Lee Heights Shops. At the moment, that site is not historic, there is nothing that forces it to stay where it is and how it is. The property owner has the right today to redevelop that site and build up to 4 stories. We are not dismissing the concern about height, but please understand some folks in the community do support more height. We are hearing both sides and at the moment we are only trying to understand the feedback and clarify what the priorities are. That's what this process is about. We are starting that conversation.
  - Sandi C. Response: The LHA has adopted guiding principles that were agreed to by all of these neighborhoods and they talk about low- to mid-rise development. The Waverly Hills CA neighborhood conservation plan also talks about that. These have not changed. No one in the neighborhood has asked for that kind of change. Don't think it's only about the Lee Heights Shops. The neighborhood does not want the scale of Ballston (10 stories) on Lee Highway in this area.
  - Chris F. Response: Ballston has many 20+ story buildings. Mid-rise development is an area where I think there is a lot of wiggle room. For me, I am interested in considering what the benefits could be to the neighborhood of having more neighbors with more density. I understand that not everyone feels that way.

## Lee Heights Shops

Mike H. – It would be more productive if we look at the question the opposite way. Everyone thinks of the maximum height that is being proposed and thinks about it as close as possible to where they live. That's the least constructive way to look at it. So the question should be, are there places that don't abut single family areas where 5 and 7 stories would be tolerable? I think about the island across from the Lee Heights Shops where the 7-11 is. It could support a lot more density. No residential and not blocking anyone's sun. we want all the services and improvements but don't want the level of height that would be required. It's going to be we will get less services and when we talk about height, it is how much less services do you want. Are there areas where we can tolerate more height? I think the Lee Heights Shops are an example of what we can make the whole corridor if we are careful, thoughtful and plan it right. If we don't plan it and just say no, we get haphazard by-right development.

Ginger B. Response: should look at TDRs to put density where it makes sense.

## Community Improvements and Benefits

Paul H. – What kind of community improvements/benefits should the communities request to meet the impacts associated with growth? From my perspective there are other funding sources for things like transportation and stormwater. In my opinion open space, which requires land and is expensive, tree canopy, and affordable housing are less tangible and less easy to fund through other sources. We will have a prioritized list that I hope is a list that goes beyond the 458 other site plans that have been approved by the County and thinks outside the box for what can be done in regard to community benefits. There must be a CIP strategy over the next 10 years and beyond to fund the vital improvements in this area. Mid-2022 County will approve the CIP.

### **Area 4 Panel comments.**

There was not enough time to discuss Area 4.