

Speakers:

- Donna Bailey – Parks & Rec + Environment
- Jason Hibbets – Urban Form / Growth Framework, Land Use + Transit

Donna Bailey – Mayview Road

DDNA Introduction

Good evening, my name is Donna Bailey and I live on Mayview Road. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the latest draft of the City's Comprehensive Plan. I am here to speak with Jason Hibbets on behalf of the District D Neighborhood Alliance. Our district's neighborhood residents have spent many hours reviewing and commenting on the previous draft. I would like to make some general observations and comments specifically on the Parks and Environmental Protection elements of the new draft.

First I'd like to call to your attention that it is our experience that the public has not had time to fully digest and develop comments on this latest draft. We did our best to put together comments to meet the January 31st deadline, but the change log wasn't available on line until Saturday, just five days ago. Given the size, scope and importance of this document, we feel that this hearing comes prematurely and does not give us adequate time to prepare thoughtful comments in response to the changes staff has made, or not made, to the draft plan.

An example of this is one of our team members requested basic information about the Parks element on January 7th, thinking that this would provide plenty of time to get the information and comment by the Jan. 31 deadline. Not only did we not get the information requested in time to comment on the last draft, this information was finally received only YESTERDAY (3/18/2009). This information involves a key table in the Parks chapter that is one of the foundations of system-wide park planning: Table PR-1 now on page 169. It makes it particularly difficult to comment usefully when full information isn't made available to the public. We intend to follow and be engaged as this process continues, and hope that our comments will be considered even after tonight.

Parks & Rec

In reading the current draft, we've learned new important information that we feel should have been presented earlier in the process. In January, we were told in writing by Parks Department staff that this new Parks element would replace the current Parks Plan that was developed in 2004. Given the vast amount of resources going into this City-wide effort, and the fact that approximately five years had gone by (which is the standard amount of time for Parks System Plans before needing updating), it seemed appropriate for this to take place. Now, though, the plan says on page 167 that the City's Parks Department intends to update this element again later this year. This is inconsistent with what we were told in January and frankly seems wasteful given the cost and time involved in revisiting this plan. We respectfully request that you reconsider this unnecessary expenditure of tax dollars and staff and citizen time investment given the fact that we've just been through this process, and instead project a date of 2012 to begin a full update to the plan that you have before you.

We would like to sincerely thank the planning staff and consultants for integrating some of our comments into the new draft. These include things like adding the need for walkable Neighborhood Parks and providing best practice management and stewardship of natural resources as a "major issues" in the plan overview; making the Park Search Areas map more readable; and adding additional background information about park classifications. We would like to note that District D has quite a few Neighborhood and Community Park Search Areas and ask that you be aggressive in acquiring land in our district to serve these identified park needs.

Some issues that we continue to be concerned about relative to the Parks, Recreation & Open Space chapter are: park maintenance, our city's continued shortage of walkable Neighborhood Parks, the need for a Nature and Wildlife Preserves classification for parks, regional coordination for athletic facilities, and a policy commitment to meaningful community involvement in park planning. We will provide you with more information about this soon, as our time before you tonight isn't adequate to address these issues.

Environmental

Relative to the Environmental Protection element, we would again like to thank staff for making a strong effort to address many new environmental issues and concerns in this draft plan through an element devoted to this topic. We appreciate that the Greenprint map has been amended to include Significant Natural Heritage Areas, but still have concern that the Greenprint should play a more important role in guiding development in our city. We also feel that the public and stakeholder groups should be involved in the development of the Green Infrastructure Plan, not just staff and citizen advisory board members. We remain concerned that this plan does not adequately address the issue of real sustainability in terms of our water supply and capacity and hope that you, our city leaders, will ensure that we will not grow beyond our ability to provide basic services such as water for all of our residents. We also would like to re-emphasize the importance of the protection of our floodplains from development.

Thank you again for your consideration and attention. We look forward to working with you over the coming months to refine this document.

Jason Hibbets – Ramsgate Street

The District D Neighborhood Alliance provided a good percentage of comments from neighborhood leaders from across District D, many of those comments had a net positive on the plan and strengthened it. Making the comprehensive plan a better document.

Urban Form / Growth Framework

We still believe that the "Draft Growth Framework Map" should reflect the 3 major watercourses and therefore most sensitive environmental areas; the Neuse River, Crabtree Creek. and Walnut Creek. Just as the Growth Framework Map illustrates where we wish to develop and the intensity of that development, we need to show the areas we want to conserve.

Because this plan hopes to set the vision for how we should develop in the future, it needs to do a better job of describing what these new "growth centers" will be like. The plan should better distinguish between City Growth Centers, Transit-oriented Centers and Mixed-use Community Centers. Give us a better description of how they are different. Pictures and drawings would help. The same applies to the corridors, especially the Urban Corridors and the Multi-modal Corridors. Is the only difference the type of transportation alternatives that would serve the corridor? What about the look of the corridor, the width of the right of way, the type of development along the edges, and the overall scale of that development.

Land Use

- The Future Land-use Map should show future Greenways (openspace), just as it shows future retail areas.
- The CBD is not about single family, residential neighborhoods. We request that the western edge of downtown east be moved to Boylan Ave.
- The appropriate designation of the west side of Oberlin Rd. in the Cameron Village Area is Office and Residential Mixed-use. This is closest to the existing recommendation in the Oberlin-Wade Small Area Plan.

Transit

Concerns:

- Better connection of secondary hubs to transit stops
- Circulator language should be updated to include residential markets and not just park and ride lots
- Inconsistency on parkways:
 - We still recommend that Western Blvd., west of the Beltline be designated as a Parkway, as well as Jones Franklin Rd. Also, Wade Ave. from Oberlin R. to Capital Blvd. should be designated as a Parkway.
 - N-S green street on the east of downtown: Blount or Person Street to complete that grid.
- Opportunity lost for a transit stop @ Farmer's Market / Dix Campus

Transit continued, positives:

- STAC plan now included
- Huge proponents of Complete Streets (now with more graphics)
- Glad that our feedback was accepted on general items like:
 - quality transit,
 - event based routes,
 - defining shared parking,
 - durable crosswalks, and
 - litter control language added

Last note – echo the comments of others that we are pleased with the plan and look forward to continued involvement.