

MINUTES OF THE TRANSIT CENTERED DEVELOPMENT STEERING COMMITTEEFebruary 18, 2010

The Transit Centered Development Steering Committee held an organizational meeting on Thursday, February 18, 2010, in Room 213, Town Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Denise Nelson, Judy Hampel, Michael Vickerelli, Mary Dean, Daniel J. Pato, and Mary Young.

ABSENT: Robert J. Galello, Thomas Yemm, Michael Bingham, and Paul (Corky) Covino.

ALSO PRESENT: Steve Cecil, Dave Killeen (Town Planner), Yolanda Caldera (Program Director, Fairfield County Community Foundation), Collette Forbes (Observer from local College), Matthew P. Catalano (R-3rd District), Kimberly Meuse (D-7th District), Jason W. Santi (D-4th District) and Karen Forrest (Secretary).

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Denise Nelson called the organizational meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made to approve the September 24, 2009 minutes by Judy Hampel seconded by Mary Dean. Chairperson Nelson corrected the spelling and title of Susan McCauley, Chief Administrative Officer; otherwise, all in favor; the motion passed unanimously. A motion was made to approve the January 14, 2010 minutes by Mary Young seconded by Daniel J. Pato. All in favor; the motion passed unanimously.

INTRODUCTION: Committee members and visitors took a few minutes to introduce themselves and shared why they were attending.

CONSULTANT REPORT: Steven Cecil, AIA ASLA, The Cecil Group, consultant for the Transit Centered Development project, requested the Committee to share their thoughts/opinion of the Public Workshop #1 held on February 11, 2010 at the Baldwin Center. Members of the TCD indicated that they thought it was very good, a little chaotic, pleased to see the number of participants, great meeting, and controlled very nicely.

Mr. Cecil distributed a summary of the Public Workshop #1 findings, which are as follows:

Section I: Mapping Exercise:

Areas of concern/areas for potential improvements:

- Barnum Avenue
- Development at Brownfield and Superfund sites
- Industrial areas along tracks near Knowlton Street
- Waterfront is a resource
- Stratford could become a "right-priced" bedroom community
- Dispersed commuter parking – concentrate it to a few areas – possibly the areas between the Station and the Church or in front of Bally's
- Burlington Coat Factory
- Intersection of Barnum and Main has a number of vacant parcels
- Polluted land across the tracks from Stop and Shop
- Industrial land on Broad Street on both sides of the tracks
- Better connection to Paradise Green
- Development could occur along waterfront

- Neighborhood between Barnum Avenue and tracks from Broad to Main
-

Areas to protect/areas to maintain:

- Historic districts
- Theatre area
- Residential neighborhoods southeast, north and west of train station
- Cemetery will not change
- Preserve the shopping center off Main/opposite the Station
- Neighborhood between Barnum and the Railroad Tracks west of Broad

Questions to consider: As we consider development, do we want to focus on development that would attract people from outside of Stratford or do we want to focus on the needs of current residents? Stratford is changing but in what ways and what are the influential factors?

Section II: Potential Benefits and Drawbacks of TCD

Benefits:

- Could bring a more thoughtful pattern of development and a better organization of space
- Stratford will become a more convenient place to live and visit-it could become a destination
- The downtown will be enhanced – we will have a more vibrant downtown and business district
- It will be important to encourage facilities that attract and retain young people – more places like the gym and community center-to enhance the Town
- The underutilized industrial spaces will be revitalized
- Change could occur along Barnum Ave and Ferry Boulevard which will enhance the area and allow for additional residential options.
- If the future of the theatre is incorporated into the planning/development then more possibilities could open up
- Transportation improvements within Stratford could create a convenient network and help encourage people to explore different neighborhoods
- More residential options (options for renting and buying) for young people and families
- Improved parking options for commuters could be incorporated into the changes. This parking could be located in areas that would encourage people to walk past (and shop at) businesses on their way to the station.
- Business could be protected by limiting thru traffic in the Town Center
- Development will bring economic and ethnic diversity
- The carbon footprint will be reduced
- Increased opportunities for jobs
- Increase tax base relative cost
- Leverage Brownfield
- Reduce traffic at I-90 or other places in Stratford.
- Help meet affordable housing goals.
- Village style development
- High density residential
- Small commercial

- Farmers markets
- Walking/health
- Less Mark Jacobs more Jane Jacobs
- Keep businesses open downtown
- Stabilizing taxes
- Change demographics
- More frequent trains
- Mixing retail and apartments
- Increased security
- Less congestion on roads
- Improvements to the train station
- Recycle land and buildings
- Reuse of industrial buildings (Hudson Paper)
- Main Street traffic flow
- Reuse houses for commercial
- Quart of milk in downtown

Drawbacks:

- Traffic could cause pedestrian safety issues and dangerous locations.
- Parking problems for residents and business owners caused by commuters.
- The neighborhoods should be protected from noise pollution that added development could bring.
- Without the proper oversight the development might not enhance the Town Center. The process should ensure that the development is community supported.
- The pedestrian network should be protected to make sure that development improves the networks and does not cause barriers.
- More people/congestion/infrastructure/schools/cost
- Scale a tough sell
- Adverse impact on historic district
- Flooding exacerbation
- Process / legal costs
- Use of eminent domain
- Hurts business climate – cause adverse effects on businesses
- Avalon Bay
- Affordable Housing
- Change
- Chain Stores / Big Box
- Dramatic changes
- 4 store max
- Trains too crowded
- More people/what kind

TCD Committee members further discussed issues such as TCD means a “walking community”.

Mr. Cecil presented an arial map describing problem areas where positive changes would be desirable, what the neighborhoods are like, the historical district importance, waterfront property being an asset to the community (which needs pedestrian access). The TCD project has access to the highway, which re-enforces and creates opportunities to the community.

Further discussions were about the parking problems and traffic congestion around the train station and the importance of the sidewalks.

GENERALIZATIONS:

- focus on the fact that TCD in residential development (train service – home to work)
- increase new business/employment
- scale within the scope
- importance of historical neighborhood
- good neighborhood relationship
- parking deck size (non-residents) – 1400 people commute out of Stratford train station daily (highway being congested)
- need for parking management program (700 on the need list at this time) – Stratford resident commute from train station outside of Stratford because of parking issues
- bus service connection to TCD
- shuttle service to assist people to get to other areas in Town
- having highway connection is a double benefit for TCD
- Town shifting/changing to a younger community (younger family) vs. senior community

NEXT WORKSHOP DATE: Dave Killeen inquired as to the structure of the next workshop and requested Mr. Cecil to review how voting would occur during Workshop #2 which is scheduled for **Thursday, March 11, 2010**. Committee members agreed to circulate flyers/pamphlets advertising Workshop #2 through their own network. Steve Cecil will work on a new flyer. Dave Killeen agreed to draft a press release to see if the Stratford Star will again advertise this Workshop. Visitor Yvor Fernandez offered to provide assistance in using the social media to advertise upcoming events. A special note will be distributed to the local businesses in the area reminding them of said Workshop.

NEXT MEETING DATES:

Workshop Thursday, March 11, 2010

Meeting: Thursday, March 18, 2010.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made to adjourn by Michael Vickerelli and seconded by Judy Hampel. All in favor; the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Karen Forrest