

North Valley Pike Corridor Strategic Plan
Third Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting
May 11, 2010

Summary

On May 11, 2010 the North Valley Pike Strategic Plan held its third Citizen Advisory Committee, the last one scheduled prior to a public open house set for June 23, 2010. The meeting began with a presentation of the draft plan elements and draft Entrance Corridor Overlay District. The meeting presentation and all related draft documents/posters are posted on the project webpage here:

<http://www.northvalleypikeplan.org/citizen.htm>

Following the presentation there was group discussion. The main discussion points are recorded below. Some points were posed as questions and answers provided, while some responses will take further research investigation by the consultant team. Other points are posed as general comments or suggestions for the plan.

- **What is a typical block size in cities and towns?** *Answer: Average is 500 feet, but variable from 200 on the small size to 800 on the large.*
- **What happened to the option for a two-lane only without median to cemetery and in commercial mixed use area?** *Answer: All scenarios considered at the March CAC meeting presented a raised median to improve auto and pedestrian safety as well as preserve roadway capacity. According to an analysis of crash data in seven states, raised medians reduce crashes by over 40 percent in urban areas and over 60 percent in rural areas. In addition to safety, controlled access helps to preserve roadway capacity. To preserve safety and capacity of Route 11, and keep it functional as a two lane facility, access management is needed via a raised median with controlled access points. The plan narrative will be updated to help further illustrate the need for and benefits of roadway sections and strategies proposed.*
- **Is there enough right-of-way for the proposed street sections?** *Answer: In terms of right-of-way, all the proposed sections in the plan are slightly larger than existing average rights-of-way, which tend to be average 85-95 feet based on initial parcel lines in County GIS data. It is assumed that additional right-of-way would be needed in the future for either more automobile lanes or more multi-modal improvements such as paths, sidewalks, bike lanes/shoulders. This plan proposes to maintain Route 11 as a two lane facility with improved multi-modal options for biking and walking choices. This is made possible by the creation of a parallel road facility to handle future traffic increases. A more detailed survey/investigation than is included in this study will be necessary to determine the actual right-of-way needed, including additional easements for grading cut and fill slopes.*
- **Why do they leave 18” strip between curb and sidewalk and doesn’t this require too much maintenance and cost?** *Answer: Correct, strips between curb and sidewalk are not generally useful if less than 3’, especially along a main roadway where larger equipment is typically utilized for maintenance. The intent of this strip is to provide a safety buffer for pedestrian comfort.*
- **What does “light industrial” mean?** *Answer: The difference between industrial and light (or flex) industrial is that the former has greater potential for a nuisance such as odor,*

noise or visual impact, while the latter is generally lighter or lower nuisance potential employment or manufacturing.

- Overall this plan is heading in a good direction, such as the character areas approach, the bike and pedestrian considerations, etc.

General Discussion following Entrance Corridor Overlay District Discussion

- Is there shared parking in the ECOD? *Answer: Original zoning may be more permissive in some cases, but will check this in the next plan draft. The draft proposed ECOD would allow shared parking which would provide greater flexibility to developers and also limit the amount of actual paved surfaces.*
- The building orientation/setback suggestions are for future buildings, existing development is not bound by the future rules.
- Consider loading areas and functionality in locating buildings and site design.
- There was discussion around the pros and cons of an Architectural Review Board (ARB) and whether or not this level of review/enforcement for architectural standards is what works best for Rockingham County. The current recommendation of the plan is not to implement an ARB, but does not exclude this as a future option. An ARB would need a much more detailed design standards manual than the current proposed design guidelines.
- The group reviewed the plan maps, the illustrative map, the character areas conceptual map and the proposed ECOD comprehensive plan exhibit map. There was discussion about the alignment of parallel road going through farmland and extending too far west. It was explained that the line was drawn where it was for topographical reasons, namely to fall points west of the ridgeline and to provide adequate spacing from Rt 11 and the 251 interchange. This parallel facility is also something that will be built only in the long term, in cooperation with the owner/developer of that land, and only after development occurs and improvements along Rt 11 are made. The team would explore if the road could be aligned in areas closer, perhaps along existing unpaved road. It was noted that the existing spur road is a residential drive.
- The plan should carefully consider the “ends” of the new parallel facility and how this ties into and relates to other roads such as Rt 11, Mt. Clinton Pike, Gravels, etc. They should be designed to avoid bottlenecks.
- Roundabouts are recommended where appropriate in the plan. They do require right-of-way and are not ideal in the more community mixed-use setting. The benefits of roundabouts is they are low maintenance, safer (lower fatality rates where accidents do occur) and they maintain a steady flow of calmer traffic.
- Is the illustrated roundabout off of Exit 251 legal? *Answer: The consultant team will consult with VDOT and amend the illustrations accordingly.*
- Trees are good but do consider safety and sight lines when placing them. Consider sight distances on entrances and specifying lower limb height of the trees. Type of trees that limit sight should be considered such as evergreens or conical trees. However it was also observed that shade trees have good value, so that a mixture of tree types should be encouraged.
- The “Big Box” portion of the ECOD was discussed and it was recommended that larger footprint stores should not be disallowed, rather discouraged. Perhaps larger footprint stores could be allowed where appropriate with some provisions about orientation and location in specific character areas.

- Why are fences set back 3' from the lot, is it access or maintenance? *Answer: This was provided to ensure easy and convenient maintenance of fences by property owners.*
- What is the proposed residential density of mixed use zones? *Answer: New Mixed Use zones in Rockingham County are proposing densities of 8-12 dwelling units per acre with a higher mix of residential and commercial uses.*
- The plan should be mindful of other historic properties besides Smithland.
- The plan needs to emphasize the need to provide a future connection from Route 11 to Smithland Road, which connects this area to commercial and school destinations east of I-81. This connection could cross Route 11 north of the existing Smithland Road intersection, and it could loop southeast and then back to Smithland Road before it crosses I-81. The group sketched this on the display map.
- The question of the future railroad realignments through the area was raised. *Answer: Rail realignment issues will be flagged in the plan as a long range regional concern, but that the proposed alternatives from the 2005 feasibility study are already dated by recent developments and this strategic plan needs to proceed with plans that address the safety, capacity and livability of the vision expressed for the Route 11 corridor.*

Next Steps

- The project consultants will further refine the draft plan elements in preparation for a public open house.
- CAC members are encouraged to tell friends about the upcoming open house and to help other members of the public understand plan exhibits and elements.
- Next Project Event:

Public Open House on the Draft NVP Strategic Plan

When: Wed, June 23, 2010, 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Where: The Community Room
Community Development Department
Rockingham County Administration Center
20 East Gay Street, Harrisonburg

Project Website: www.northvalleypikeplan.org