

North Valley Pike Corridor Strategic Plan Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting

November 18, 2009

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On November 18, 2009 the North Valley Pike Corridor Plan held its first of three Citizens' Advisory Committee Meetings. The meeting was held in the Community Room at the Rockingham County Administration Center in Harrisonburg. Thirteen of the seventeen Committee Members were able to attend, and those not in attendance were mailed copies of the materials presented. The night began with a presentation of the draft Existing Conditions Report. The purpose of this report and the presentation was to provide the Committee with information about the corridor. This draft report is available on the project website, along with the presentation given by the consultant team that evening. The remainder of the evening was spent discussing and affirming the summary and outcomes from the first public workshop, and examining those results in the context of the existing conditions information presented. The main discussion points covered were:

1. What are the priority functions of the corridor?
2. What should be the general appearance of the corridor?
3. What features should be added to the corridor?
4. Potential points of agreement or conflict?
5. Affirm the draft vision statement that was composed based on feedback during the September 15th kickoff meeting (see below).

The notes in this summary reflect the Committee's discussion, and the issues they felt were most relevant, important or that needed further consideration. Importantly, there was general agreement in the summary vision statement that was presented. This vision statement for the corridor was composed from input during the September 15th Kickoff Meeting. The few comments made to it have been incorporated in this updated version:

Vision Statement for the Future of the Corridor (11-18-09)

In 2035 the North Valley Pike corridor is an attractive, vibrant and beautiful place to work, live, and visit, and functions as a dynamic new arm and northern gateway to Harrisonburg. New high technology jobs exist, and new retail and commercial centers. Well planned new residential areas nearby make for a viable mixed-used corridor with live and work opportunities, shorter commutes and bike/walk to work options. The Route 11 corridor is a safe, free flowing commercial corridor with carefully planned access points. The community is served by a more highly connected street system with new service and connector roads providing more mobility choices, not just for cars but have biking and walking facilities. Trucks and industrial traffic now have safer alternative routes on appropriately designed roads that do not impact residential areas. The corridor overlay ordinance that emerged from the plan respected the rural to urban transition. Farmland and important historic areas were considered as quality new development occurred in this growth area of the County. Design guidelines ensured that development was aesthetically pleasing, and clear standards exist for such things as signage, landscaping, and buffering, as well as street and site design.

A summary of all the discussion points and issues raised follows. The project's next steps were to complete the existing conditions report and post it to the web, begin work on drafting a future conditions memo in preparation for a March 2010 CAC#2 meeting.

Flip Chart Discussion Notes from CAC Meeting #1

General Discussion

- Question regarding the number of lanes of widening ? [A four lane, divided highway with a median]
- Where are these improvements in the priority chain?
- Overlay comprehensive plan land use map over the zoning map to compare.
- Sewer capacity vs. demand – implications as to the extent of line extensions, service area, and development intensity.
- Melrose/service road – has become a de facto by-pass
- Make sure VDOT staff knows about these meetings

Key Questions and Discussion

1. What are the priority functions of the corridor?

- Commercial and industrial on east side of Rt. 1
- Small business and residential on west side
- Commuter route
- Smithland road south – gateway to tech park and city
- Truck stop not appropriate – whole route is a gateway
- Calm traffic to slow speed but keep traffic flowing
- We don't want to see "adult" uses – prohibit through regulations
- Signs are important – no flashing signs, etc.
- No "mini-malls" [strip centers]
- What uses will support the need for sidewalks?
- The road serves a lot of functions – it's a *transitional* zone from city to county
- Need a common denominator or common theme to tie the corridor together, like trees, etc.

2. What should be the general appearance of the corridor?

- Agricultural heritage
- Bury the wires
- Plant trees, landscaping.
- "Well-grounded rural area" – clean up "dumps" and messy areas
- You'll need restaurants, etc., to serve future industrial site employees – how much? Must be well-designed.
- Farmer's Market
- "Industrial" – the county park is not industrial – it's a research and technology park

- “Clean industry”
- What about existing zoning? some land is already zoned industrial.
- Emphasize industrial/commercial on the east side, along I-81.

3. What features should be added to the corridor

- Lots of folks want to live closer to where they work, and this will increase
- Can mixed-use fit into a rural gateway?
- Widening to five lanes is not feasible – would take a lot of houses
- Why not change characteristics of the road we have? – Maybe add a median with trees instead? (access issues but problematic trade-offs]
- Has VDOT designed Rt. 11 as an alternate route for I-81?
- Road connectivity (choices and new connections vs. widening – is widening the only option? Consider the impact of new roads on farms and farmland – be sensitive.

4. What Features should be Preserved in the Corridor

- Smithland property
- Farmland and fields along Rt. 11 – many farmers don’t want encroachment
- Agricultural and Forestal districts [are a good tool]
- Taking of land for public improvements [condemnation is rare; usually land conversion is done by choice of the owners and sellers, rather than by the government].

Agreement and Conflict

Points of general agreement among CAC members present:

- Preserve the general rural character of the corridor as a transitional gateway to the City.
- Accommodate additional new development.
- Improve the aesthetic quality of land use and development.
- Calm traffic along the corridor; encourage mixed-use development.

Points of potential conflict among CAC members present:

- Extent of regulation – need to strike a reasonable balance.
- Total amount and intensity of new development and the geographic extent of development encroaching into farmland.
- Truck traffic – desire to Limit conflicts with truck traffic, yet truck-oriented businesses exist and the corridor is currently a high-volume truck route.

Review of Draft Vision Statement

(Note, the revised vision statement appears at the front of this summary.)

- Strike “restaurants and hotels” – redundant with “commercial uses”
- “Full-service” was suggested, but rejected as being confusing and sounding like “truck stop”
- Strike “viable” – the term *farmland* does not need any modifier.
- What about connector roads? These could be good or bad – need to be more precise.