

Mayor's Parramore Task Force  
Master Planning/Zoning Subcommittee Meeting  
**Minutes** – Wednesday, January 14, 2004

The meeting of the Mayor's Parramore Task Force – Master Planning/Zoning Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, January 14, 2004, 6:00 p.m. at the Dr. J.B. Callahan Neighborhood Center. Chairman Derek Burke presided.

**Members Present:** Derek Burke, Chairman  
Bill Segal  
Dr. Tim Adams  
Juan Lynum  
Dr. Tommy J. Dorsey  
Brian Butler  
Desiree Sanchez

**Staff Present:** Kevin Edmonds  
Tanja Gerhartz  
Dean Grandin  
Joyce Sellen  
Charles Ramdatt

**Others Present:** David van Gelder  
Phil Cowherd  
Muhammad Lutfi  
James Q. Mitchell  
Shaun Fuchs

Chairman Burke opened the meeting at 6:07 p.m. with a welcome, opening remarks, introductions and review of the agenda. The committee considered the minutes of the January 6, 2004 meeting. Dr. Tim Adams made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Juan Lynum. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Burke did a recap of the Nine Charges from the Mayor. He noted that the subcommittee originally established their responsibilities as items three, five and nine.

Joyce Sellen initiated discussion on item number three (3) of the Downtown Outlook Matrix. She noted that it called for developments to provide various amenities that would serve the entire area including, but not limited to, site furnishings, recreational amenities and expanded green spaces. Chairman Burke stated that the subcommittee needed to tie things back to the matrix, if possible.

Discussion ensued surrounding the need for a business and entertainment district, which is item three of the Nine Charges. There are several issues related to this, including recommendations for the Centroplex. Chairman Burke asked where the City stands on the Centroplex/Division Avenue extension issue. Ms. Sellen provided an overview of the EDAW master plan for the Centroplex. She stated that continuing Division Avenue could be a factor in addressing movement around the new courthouse. She noted that two of the recommendations of the study were (1) the re-development of the existing Centroplex facilities including the construction of a new Expo Centre, and (2) the construction of a new arena or expansion of the existing arena. However, CSX has subsequently advised the City that it will not allow the extension of Division

over the railroad tracks. Without that critical component, it was unlikely that a new Expo Centre would be undertaken, at least as planned.

Phil Cowherd questioned whether entertainment in Parramore was discussed as part of the Downtown Strategic Plan. Tanja Gerhartz responded by saying that entertainment in Parramore is not part of the Downtown Strategic Transition Team charge and that only the downtown core was looked at for entertainment.

Brian Butler asked where would the new arena be built. Ms. Gerhartz mentioned that the sites that were looked at were the Pizzutti site, the Carolina/Florida Properties site and the site across from City Hall. Carolina/Florida Properties is the only site in Parramore.

Mr. Butler asked if there was enough residential in the Parramore area to support commercial development. Ms. Gerhartz informed the committee that more residential in the Downtown core and Parramore would benefit commercial development.

Dr. Dorsey stated that the group should discuss whether there is a need for more business and entertainment in Parramore. Bill Segal stated that Church Street should remain commercial, but said we cannot specifically dictate that it should be entertainment since the market place will dictate what happens there. Dr. Adams agreed.

Juan Lynum stated that he would classify a large portion of the businesses on Church Street as entertainment and that it should be sustained. He noted that it was one of the few African American areas for entertainment and it should have the same flow as the east side of Church Street. The Subcommittee concurred that there is a need for an entertainment district but cautioned that it will have to be more than just nightclubs. Ms. Gerhartz noted that all of the proper zoning was already in place to accommodate that type of entertainment area. She also noted that zoning was probably not an issue as to why the Church/Parramore district has not been re-developed.

Dr. Adams mentioned that incentives should be given to encourage African American businesses to move to Parramore. Mr. Lynum concurred and stated that the City has a role to play in offering incentives as a means to helping maintain the character of the area. Dr. Adams stated that the absence of incentives might be seen as a sign of disinvestment in the area. He noted the history of redlining in the area.

Mr. Cowherd responded by saying that it is time for Parramore to become color blind. Parramore should not be a place for incentives just for black businesses. Chairman Burked said incentives should be provided to encourage cultural and entertainment investment and that is very central to the community.

Mr. Lynum added that incentives are needed because African-American's don't have adequate resources. Muhammad Lutfi commented that if incentives are not given, African-American's should not feel insulted. Conversely, he stated that he, personally, would be insulted if he was black and was given incentives just because he was black.

Chairman Burke reiterated that Small businesses/minority-owned businesses are needed in Downtown and Parramore. It would bring more diversity. What's good for the east side is or should be good for the west side. Desiree Sanchez noted that her key concern is that not enough is being geared towards the Parramore community residents and mostly to the tourists. She added that small businesses could thrive if they maintained their local character. She offered the

example of how condominium developments attract a certain market demographic. She emphasized that businesses were needed and not just nightclubs. Mr. Segal added that bar/restaurant segment should be the last to be incentivized as they are the riskiest segment of retail.

*Recommendation: After much discussion, Chairman Burke reaffirmed that the Subcommittee agrees that the City should support incentives for business and entertainment in Parramore.*

Ms. Sanchez reminded the group that they are here to bring business and entertainment back to Parramore and not to decide who lives in the neighborhood. Mr. Van Gelder stated that the main issue preventing business development is still crime. Mr. Lufti agreed. Mr. Butler stated that the Task Force is trying to reach a balance – whether it is encouraging skyscrapers or single family homes.

Mr. Segal suggested having cultural events in Parramore and encouraged a concert series or other events. He added that the events could be concentrated on cultural/entertainment venues on Church Street. Mr. Segal also mentioned that Church and Central are ready for commercial use based on existing zoning. The Subcommittee continued discussing the potential of cultural events in Parramore.

*Recommendation: After deliberation, the Subcommittee reached a consensus that it would recommend that a concert series be established for the Parramore area and that the Cultural Corridor designation be expanded into the Parramore area with Church Street as a focal point.*

Dean Grandin made a presentation on parks/open space. Mr. Grandin stated that while there were no deficiencies in the Community Park category, the Parramore area was in need of neighborhood parks. Chairman Burke questioned whether the Central Pond space was calculated as part of the study when reviewing deficiencies. Mr. Grandin stated that the one-acre space around the pond would be categorized as a community park and not a neighborhood park. The Chairman noted that the Downtown Outlook Plan contains a recommendation to provide for additional acres of park. Mr. Grandin stated that two small parks of two to three acres would be desirable in civic or residential areas of the neighborhood. The report uses 2003 data for the analysis and conclusions.

Mr. van Gelder noted that only one bid had been received for the Federal/Otey Place RFP. He suggested using the land for parkland and perhaps placing the northern pond on the site. That would provide the City with a northern pond site without using eminent domain. Mr. Segal added that the large Oak trees would make it a good site for a park. Chairman Burke asked what were the negatives for making the area a park. Ms. Sellen responded that City Council had directed the area to be developed residentially and that a commitment was also made to the Callahan Neighborhood. She also noted that the City had committed to including an affordable housing component based on the community's recommendation. Ms. Sellen commented that that Federal Otey was purchased specifically with the idea of building a residential development. Chairman Burke asked Ms. Sellen to determine if some of the property can be utilized as a park. Mr. Grandin added that the site might be large enough for both a park and residential. Mr. Butler stated that the study may be outdated and that the Subcommittee might want to consider in its deliberations.

Chairman Burke noted that the Subcommittee has reached consensus on two recommendations regarding the deficiency of neighborhood parks in the area:

1. *The City Should acquire more land to be designated as parks space, and*

2. *The Federal/Livingston/Otey Place area should be reexamined for park development, in combination with residential housing.*

By agreement, the Subcommittee agreed to defer the discussion on property acquisition to the next Subcommittee meeting.

James Mitchell mentioned that the City owns the lot not being maintained on Randall Street. Phil Cowherd made a recommendation to make the railroad right-of way as a park/bike trail. Dr. Adams made a recommendation that there is a need to have computers put in the Parramore area Community Centers that were not restricted for special use. Staff will find out from Families, Parks and Recreation if there is a policy regarding the above.

Mr. Segal recommended that the City advise all agencies working on Parramore projects to place them on hold until the Parramore Task Force completes its recommendations.

Mr. Mitchell also mentioned that the City owns vacant property on Randall Street that has not been kept up. Ms. Sanchez noted that attendance from the community had not improved from moving the meeting to the evening from the morning. Mr. Van Gelder suggested moving the meeting to City Council Chambers and airing the meetings on Orange T.V.

Chairman Burke announced that the next meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2004 at 6:00 p.m. at the Callahan Neighborhood Center. There being no further discussion, Chairman Burke concluded the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

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Derek Burke, Chairman

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Kevin Edmonds, Recording

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