

SEVEN CORNERS AREA VISIONING WORKSHOP II

Monday, June 18, 2012

NOTE: There were a number of current issues raised by participants throughout the meeting that could be addressed in the short-term:

1. The “Shopping Corners” escalator needs better way-finding signage;
2. Provide a lane-by-lane map of the seven corners intersection for people new to the area so they are not confused;
3. Hillwood to Route 50 was recently repaved and the new lane striping is not correct - results in a dangerous situation;
4. Above-grade pedestrian crossing at Patrick Henry/Route 50;
5. Community needs to be informed about land sales, new development, and ongoing maintenance projects;
6. Establish a Property Maintenance Area and enforce it. This should be a multi-lingual process.
7. There are a number of outstanding safety issues – Bus stop at Culmore;
8. Make signage Bilingual;
9. There should be sweeps to remove signs. Enforcement with fines which could be levied to pay for the sign removal program. Enforcement of zoning violations is also important; and
10. Need to clean up area first before change can occur (Falls Church to Skyline area was mentioned).

PART 1. Presentation and Discussion of Results of Workshop I

A. Comments from participants on Community Strengths/Likes

- Although “walkable/easy to walk to” was mentioned in the strengths list, Seven Corners is NOT walkable in the current environment and should not be described as such.
- A strength not mentioned is that this is an “International Tourism Destination” and is an important center for the area’s Vietnamese population.

B. Comments from participants on Dislikes/Areas for Improvement

- Would like to see an increase in the variety of commercial uses
- County and state agencies need to work together on this project not just the immediate area localities.
- Several participants noted that there were a number of contradictions between the likes and dislikes where groups saw the same issue as both a liability and an asset. One attendee expressed, “there may be contradictions in the details but there is still consensus on the improvements that are needed.”

PART 2. Presentation and Discussion of Guiding Principles and DRAFT Vision Statement

A. Comments on the Guiding Principles

- Public art should be incorporated

- Urban design should be of “good quality.” A recent example of this is the new Rockville area.
- The seven corners interchange should be first and foremost. The predominate focus in this vision and principles is on improving pedestrian, bicycle, and transit. Cars are only described as a problem but there is no mention of an effort to improve the roadway network. There needs to be more emphasis on vehicle movement.
- Surface parking is described as a problem but we need to maintain parking for our businesses.
- Seven corners needs an economic driver – could be medical (benefiting from its proximity to Inova Hospital) or community center, etc. Other commercial areas in Fairfax have a focus which is needed for success.
- The current appearance of many businesses is a problem that must be fixed before any economic development can take place. Vacant stores are a particular problem. A beautification/upkeep program should be implemented.
- Some of the residential/garden apartment areas (Seven Corners Apartments) are prime redevelopment opportunities for developers.
- The seven corners road network is a problem.
- Safety should be highlighted as an issue. There needs to more safe areas to play.
- If it is organized properly, Seven Corners could be developed synergistically
- ***One participant explained that six years ago he was involved in a master planning effort that looked at connecting Bailey’s Crossroads to Seven Corners via a series of civic uses and restaurants. This could create an “International Avenue.” (participants cheered). Participant is happy to share the document/plans that resulted from this effort with the group.***This was reiterated in several proceeding comments.
- It would be easy to connect Bailey’s Crossroads and Seven Corners with biking/walking paths because there is room to do this now.
- The area could become known for “destination biking”.
- The area is lacking ordinance, enforcement, and standards for uniformity. This should start with litter pick-up.
- Replace Guiding Principle #1: *“Continue to be an inclusive community that celebrates its ethnic and income diversity as a magnet for commerce, engagement, and interaction.”* (Steve)
- Guiding Principle #3: *“Provide a well maintained mix of retail...”* (Steve)
- Add to the end of Guiding Principle #6: *“...and attractive as well, with clear directional signage for both parking and destinations.”* (Steve)
- Guiding Principle #8: Remove first sentence (Steve)
- Replace Guiding Principle #9: *“Encourage high-quality design that is environmentally sustainable and economically open to the community.”* (Steve)
- Seven Corners should be redeveloped with a “Phased-In” master plan approach which will help bring in neighboring communities.
- We will need to attract outside developers to help with the redevelopment process.
- The term “Attractive” should be mentioned
- The term “Phasing” should be mentioned

B. Comments on the Vision Statement

- There are several mentions in the statement referring to an “urban environment” but we should emphasize the “small town” feel.
- “Urban” does not have to be negative. You can have village-like aspects in an urban area. We should fool ourselves into thinking that we can go back in time.
- “Gateway” is not just to Fairfax County. This statement feels biased.
- The statement does not specifically address the interchange and how vehicles can be better accommodated.
- Emphasize “historic” aspect
- Change “gateway” to “destination”
- Are we trying to fix up the existing development or raze and start over?
- The vision statement should be crafted in a way to attract developers and new development projects.
- Seven Corners should be seen as “transit point” not “transit hub” at this point.
- Remove “transportation hub” from the vision statement. Replace the phrase: “gateway to Fairfax County” to “destination”. (Steve)

PART 3. General Comments and Questions

- The community is going through a market shift. We need to explore the marketplace concept.
- Implement the master plan in phases. The first phase should include marketing for the area and general clean-up such as removing unwanted signs (political ads and other sorts).
- There is a great deal of concern about the future loss of the Williston Center. It is a needed public facility.
- The community should be kept informed through-out the entire process.
- What is the incentive for developers to redevelop their property? Ex: Saul, Williston
- What is the status on the County’s negotiation with the Transportation Board regarding signage?
- Who is responsible for compliance on signage in areas where VDOT is not the enforcer?
- What is the timeline to incorporate this vision and master plan into the comprehensive plan?
- The community needs to better understand the process going forward.
- There is a need for transparency related to 1. New development; 2. Clean-up; and 3. The Vision/master plan process.
- Participants need to be kept informed.
- What mechanisms are available to incentivize developers to invest in the Seven Corners Mall.
- Is the county capable of performing economic modeling to better understand current and future market conditions for Seven Corners?