

Concord United Committee
Tuesday, March 26, 2024
Room 330 and Zoom Room 6:00 p.m. EST

Members Present: (19 + Liaison)

In-Person: Raeshawn Palmer (Liaison - Community Engagement Coordinator), Amos McClorey, Ann Fleming, Bertram Hinton Jr. (co-chair), Bob Anderson, Cindy Hanson, Douglas Carroll, Greg Mills, Ingrid Nurse, Lamarie Austin-Stripling (co-chair), Michelle Joshua, Quinton Locklear, Rayshion Sashington, Robert Kirk (co-chair), Sandra Torres, Tina Boyer, Wendy McConnell

Virtual: Jaymond Bryant-Herron, Kay Tembo, Theresa Scott-Stills

Members Not Present: (5 + Liaison)

Aimee Steele, Cecilia Plez, Gracie Galloway, Jaime Brown (Liaison), Roy Hawkins

Visitor(s): (2)

Steve Osborne (Guest Speaker – Planning Director), A.J. Clark (Community Contributor – Logan Community Assn President)

Call to Order: The Meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Robert Kirk.

Discussion:

- Minutes for February to be distributed along with the March Minutes for approval during the April meeting.
- Moment of silence in remembrance of Lyndia Gabriel, a member of Concord United and Logan community resident, who passed away on March 20th, 2024.
- AJ Clark spoke about Lyndia as active and an activist in the community and her funeral will be held at Barber Scotia chapel. Robert Kirk thanked A.J. Clark for his words and said that Concord United Committee has sent flowers in her honor.

Rev. Bertram Hinton introduced guest speaker, Steve Osborn, Director of Planning and Zoning, to give a general overview of the function of his department and any barriers or opportunities as it relates to the food desert in Logan community.

- Planning & Neighborhood Development Department has multiple divisions
- Downtown Development division was created when Concord Downtown Development (nonprofit) which was absorbed by the city after Covid hurt them financially. They still have nonprofit status.
- Economic Development that partners with Economic Development Corporation (EDC). When companies are interested in coming to Concord they work with EDC and we help when they get into zoning details: incentives, water, sewer, access roads, traffic, stop lights.
- Urban Design includes an architect and urban planner who plan the boulevards (e.g., Bruton Smith & Concord Mills) that can be fragile should either Concord Mills or the Speedway falter. Task is to strengthen and keep the boulevards strong to withstand any changes in trends.
- Zoning & Plans – we give zoning clearance for residential things like building a house or adding a deck and also work with commercial and industrial properties
- Board of Adjustment does current planning – hears appeals but we hardly ever meet because we can usually resolve issues before they come to appeals.
- Planning Commission handles rezoning issues and any special or conditional use permits. If someone wants to rezone their business, a case report is prepared, and a supermajority will pass or fail the change.

Anything less than supermajority goes to City Council which hardly happens, and outcomes can be appealed. Concord has special legislation that gives Planning Commission this power.

- Community Development – Some local but mainly federal and state funds for affordable housing, new construction, renovate houses (adding ramps or roof for senior houses). We partner with WeBuild, Habitat. Sometimes we partner with church groups to buy materials for project (handicap ramps etc.).
- Logan Map on Screen (insert image)
- Logan is the largest community by far (population ~ 4000) and has great access to roads and proximity to downtown but does not have a significant road through the neighborhood in relation to food access.
- Why don't we have a downtown grocer? Years ago, Food Lion explained how grocery economic markets works when they look at the trade area and draw a circle (maybe .5 or 1 mile), then look at competitor's circles and see how they overlap. Food Lion is on Warren C. Coleman Blvd., on Branchview Drive, and on South Union Street creating some overlap in their service gap in their trade area and it's hard for a competitor to break into that market.
- Downtown Raleigh got their first grocer with population of approx. 9000 people and downtown Charlotte got a Harris Teeter or Publix and were close to that same population.
- A larger grocer like Food Lion isn't going to build in a neighborhood because they want the right traffic counts, visibility, and a strong trade area.
- Then look at the next market level under the larger grocers for instance Mid-tier grocers like Aldi's is still problematic because they also look at population, demographics, walkability, and traffic counts. The economic thought process becomes apparent how we end up with food deserts like in Logan and Gibson Village and why it's not likely to change.
- Example in Charlotte where the city has provided a building and (????) on a corridor or boulevard. However, the market to make the margin needed to be profitable is higher than larger grocers and may require higher priced groceries even if the grocer is subsidized to go there.
- Another example from 3 years ago, Dollar General wanted to buy a parcel at the location on Lincoln Street (main road through Logan) where WeBuild is currently building townhomes on a city-owned parcel. The property needed to be rezoned, so the first thing Steve Osborne did was to call A.J. Clark to see if this is what the Logan Community Assn. wanted. There are pros and quite a few cons to having a Dollar General. The Logan community board members met several times with the city and ultimately decided they did not want the Dollar General. These are the types of businesses that would locate within the community but there's risk with that type of business (you know what I'm saying).
- Creating farmer's markets on a small scale is an option.
- There are 2 projects we're excited about. The first is on McGill Ave. where we're hoping to develop a small market that's affordable to farmers and other produce providers on a small parcel. The other project is creating an incubator where residents would go through Cabarrus County's Flywheel program to learn how to run a restaurant, then go to the incubator parcel (also on McGill) to get cooking classes with a full restaurant-style kitchen. Then if someone wanted to make the best, let's say, tacos, there would be space for them to start their business. They could go on to become a chef at local restaurants or open their own business. We acquired the property relatively cheap. Congresswoman Adams secured a federal grant for \$687,000 and coupled city funding, we now can go after USDA funding because it's a food desert we can get economic development funds for job creation.
- The problem in Logan, compared to Gibson Village projects, is the lack of parcels that have visibility on east/west streets (only options are Cabarrus Ave. and McGill).
- Probably only 2 opportunities in Logan: B1 owned by First Missionary Church & Logan/Shankletown owns 2 parcels and the Smith family. B1 is a neighborhood-based zoning
 - In April, we are sending a text amendment to the Planning Commission who will consider recommending to City Council to remove tobacco/vape shops from downtown (in B1, C1, and C2). We prefer these types of businesses to reside in true commercial corridors not in neighborhoods.

- Notice the C2 & CU at bottom of the map which are apartments. A few years ago, we took apartments out of C2 zoning because we were losing valuable prime real estate to apartments.
- The investment in downtown is great because it will provide jobs within walking distance of Logan
 - Few businesses are headquartered downtown: Zipline, a sponge company, 2 new restaurants, Flywheel (retail lab, entrepreneur center).
- Appropriate B-zonings in Logan would be neighborhood-based businesses: Accounting office (?), Barber shop, etc. Many Logan churches are zoned as OI (Office/Institutions) zones and RC (older designation).
- Robert Kirk asks how someone can get a gallon of milk if they do not have transportation in Logan? What would be a solution?
 - Steve Osborne explains there's no magic bullet. Find a ride or catch the transit.
- Bob Anderson asks about historical city zoning ordinances that prohibited businesses after the riot in early 1970s. Are any of these ordinances still in place and, if not, is there anything else the city can do to allow businesses to go into Logan?
 - Steve Osborne said he could not speak if any of that occurred, but he's been here 35 years and everything the city has done with regard to businesses [during his time] has been done in partnership with the community. Logan is the single most dialed-in neighborhood, and is sensitive, and comes with a tremendous network of members providing input to what is going on in their community.
- Lamarie Austin-Stripling asked Mr. Osborne to explain what type of businesses were those that were shot down.
 - B1-zoned parcel on Lincoln St. was going to be a small convenient store. The hours of operation, lack of parking, and the sale of alcohol resulted in it being declined by the Planning Commission. More appropriate use of that parcel might be a coffee shop, accountant's office, or barber shop, etc.
 - Liaison of the Logan community is an employee of the Planning Department. We reach out to established communities and neighborhood HOAs to get feedback on decisions.
 - Small B1-zones in Logan create opportunity for small shops/businesses because it is walkable and don't need a lot of parking.
 - Farmer's Markets are very seasonal and have to be convenient and economically viable for the small local farmer and important to find other uses for the space when market is out of season.
 - The city sent out a few architecture renderings showing how the building on the Smith property could be spruced-up by adding roll-up doors to add small restaurants, coffee shops, entrepreneurs, and farmers can set up.
- Sandra Torres referenced corner stores and bodegas that are all around the city and asked if there is anything that prevents them from going into these neighborhoods?
 - Mr. Osborne asked for an example [Lupita's on Cabarrus Ave.]. Most of Cabarrus Ave. is C2 (general commercial). C1 could allow for this type of business and B1 is more limited.
 - First matter of business is finding property owners who want to partner/sell, then comes the matter of working through zoning and working with the neighborhood.
- Amos McClory states that 2 of those parcels listed on the map have my name on them. He recalls that 72 of the exclusionary ordinances went away under the leadership of Mayor Scott Padgett. About two years before he left office, he removed all of them. The new mayor after him did not inherit them and the new city manager said that if Logan could find someone to build a business that the city would not block it. Prior to the riot we had a variety of stores, is there no grandfather clause to allow those people to go back?
 - Mr. Osborne explained that he did not recall the city rezoning commercial property from commercial. I do recall property owners rezoning their commercial property to residential. It can be financially hard to get a commercial property to work but a duplex or single-family home would be much easier financially.

- The will to develop is driven by the private sector. This is true with the C2 property I mentioned that is easy to build apartments and lease those out on Cabarrus Ave., but to put up 10,000 sf of commercial property and find viable tenants for it is much harder.
 - Typical parcels are 50ft wide, so if you acquired 3 parcels that would be 150 ft wide by 100 ft deep that might be large enough for a grocery store. Then you would have to have the plan with the right use, neighborhood support, and finally the zoning. It's a lot of work and not easy.
- Amos McClory mentions that Logan doesn't have roads to support commercial trucks down most of our streets to deliver inventory. Most are too narrow.
- Mr. McClory challenges the notion that Logan's grocery market is completely covered by those marketing service areas. They are still left out.
 - Mr. Osborne contended that yes some of it is still left out but posed that with what remains in that donut, is there enough of that market that a developer would be willing to invest?
- Amos McClory mentioned that public housing located in Logan is slated to be demolished and replaced. The same walkability problems will exist for the people who occupy those new public housing units and getting access to meet their basic needs, but nobody knows what the plan is for public housing. I believe the city owns this land, is there some opportunity to build the new units so that it leaves space to have commercial? That's the most land available even if the street problem still exists.
 - Mr. Osborne responded by saying perhaps this could work, especially if it's a mixed-use concept where commercial is on the ground and residential is above. **He likes the idea.**
 - McClory suggests even if go on the outskirts down beyond the park where there's vacant property between Caldwell Park and Silver Hill that could be used but still challenging to get to from a commercial standpoint.
 - Mr. Osborne says the ideal location is Lincoln Street (main corridor) because small delivery trucks can make the turn and get to Hwy 601.
 - Mr. McClory and Mr. Osborne agree that parts of Georgia run all the way down and could work for commercial trucks.
 - Mr. Osborne stated that the city is working on repositioning public housing starting with the Wilkinson Court sites first. My gut tells me there's no real commercial opportunity at that site but my gut does tell me it makes more sense to do something with mixed-use commercial at Lincoln St., Logan or Chapman(?). To reposition the blocks where public housing currently is, will be the next phase after Wilkinson Ct. project.
- Mr. Clark explained that the majority of stores were mom & pop stores at one time. The area where the city has suggested a local farmer's market is the focal point for the Logan community. There used to be Logan High School, a cab station, and a swimming pool. I don't see anyone wanting a small business between those houses, and there's no on-street parking. The B1 where you see the OI, there used to be a store on the corner which also had George Washington Carver Library and later that property was sold. Behind First Missionary there's a piece of property still left that's about 30x30. Nothing can really go there. The only other option is the redesign of public housing as Amos mentioned. Since public housing backs up to Caldwell Park, Lincoln Street is the street. That's the way in.
- Most people ask what's going to happen to the people in public housing? What's going to happen to the people if we accomplish bringing in a store?
- Salinial Group was at the Logan monthly meeting about the repositioning last night to talk about Wilkinson Homes public housing. They are coming back next month with an update on the design. We had a packed house. Our seniors and ADA group with limited mobility need the right amenities and improve walkability.
- Robert Kirk thanked Mr. Clark and Mr. Osborne for joining us and we expect to plan subcommittee work after tonight.
- Rev. Hinton summarized that it may not be so much a zoning issue as it is space. And with the space that's available it will require a redesign for public housing which could create another problem. We have some major hurdles because putting a plan together now would be counterproductive if we know

the major hurdle is land. The larger issue is putting businesses in small spaces. In terms of rezoning processes, if there was a property that was identified on the outskirts of Logan that might be a decent option, is there any possibility? Are there any hard stops? I see an I1 property on Corban, if there was idea to pursue something there, would there be potential there to rezone?

- Mr. Osborne says yes there is a possibility, especially with neighborhood support. The I1 property is one of the former Cannon Mills properties [Plant 2] and used to be the Depot. That presents a smaller opportunity like what the Liles have done with Gibson Mill mixed-use property. Currently has a number of small businesses and storage already operating inside it. Looks vacant but is cheap space. It's not under any redevelopment plan.
- Mr. McClory notes that Dover's Grocery store was bought by Cooperative Christian Ministry, they bought both sides.
- Ms. Austin-Stripling asks if there are any hard no's with cannot be rezoned codes?
 - Mr. Osborne explained that if you had a very narrow residential street and a property owner wanted to rezone as commercial, it likely would not be approved it is not viable. Logan and most of downtown, from a land-use standpoint, is urban which supports a lot of small and mixed-use projects. If you had a small mixed-use with residential above, you can fit four apartments and commercial below.
- Michele Joshua added that maybe we could convince the Food Lion to create like what Walmart has done with the Neighborhood Market. We understand that the land use is limited. Maybe our approach should be broadened.
 - Mr. Osborne asked us to keep in mind the Walmart Neighborhood Markets have mostly closed nationally.

Next Steps: Robert Kirk explained that Co-chairs have a lot to consider with our regard to our direction and will get back to everyone as we ask for your patience. Lamarie Austin-Stripling explained that there are four confirmations for the trainings offered. Rev. Bertram Hinton announced that next month's meeting will be virtual, and a Teams link will be emailed as well as the February Minutes.

Amos McClory motioned to adjourn with a second by Quinton Locklear at 7:11. Next month's meeting will be April 23rd on Teams (virtual).

Minutes prepared by Wendy McConnell, Secretary.

NOTE: Please sign on the next page.

eSigned via SeamlessDocs.com
Lamarie Austin-Stripling
Key: 95757f1c-f1f9-4fd7-8cfa-514e5b2c0efd

10-01-2024

Lamarie Austin-Stripling: Co-Chair Concord United Committee

Date

eSigned via SeamlessDocs.com
Robert Kirk
Key: e3ffc8eb-588a-4e0c-ad12-d51b68f7e8f7

10-01-2024

Robert Kirk: Co-Chair Concord United Committee

Date

eSigned via SeamlessDocs.com
Bertram D Hinton, Jr
Key: 1307c6c2-fc74-4f4b-9b21-b57f6c509cae

10-01-2024

Bertram Hinton: Co-Chair Concord United Committee

Date