

## **LONDONDERRY COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN UPDATE: CITIZEN WORKSHOP #3**

### **MINUTES OF THE October 24, 2012 WORKSHOP AT THE LONDONDERRY HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA**

Members Present: Leitha Reilly, Chair and Planning Board Representative; Marty Srugis, Vice Chair and Heritage Commission Representative; Joe Green, Town Council Representative; Lisa Whittemore, Budget Committee Representative; Mary Soares, Alternate Planning Board Representative; Bob Saur, Londonderry Trailways Representative; Deb Paul, Business Community Representative; Mary Tetreau, At Large Representative (North); Barbara Mee, At Large Representative (Central); and Russ Lagueux, At Large Representative (South)

Also Present: Town Planner Cynthia May, ASLA; GIS Manager John Vogl; Planning and Economic Development Department Secretary Jaye Trottier; and Brian Wright and Matt Noonkester of Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC)

L. Reilly thanked the audience for attending and introduced consultants B. Wright and M. Noonkester of TPUDC. They will be providing a brief presentation on the second and most recent draft of the Master Plan, after which comments and questions will be entertained. While this is the final public workshop, L. Reilly emphasized that it is not the last opportunity for public comment. In fact, the public hearing scheduled for the November 7 Planning Board meeting has been moved back to the Board's January 9 meeting. This will actually afford the public as well as Steering Committee members the chance to provide further input up until that date. Public input is essential, she said, in order to create a document that has "something for everyone." The next draft of the Master Plan is scheduled for delivery by TPUDC on November 17, after which the MPSC will meet at their regularly scheduled November 28 meeting to discuss final edits. The public is encouraged not only to attend that meeting and comment, but also the one immediately following this workshop. During tonight's meeting, the possible cancellation of the December 26 MPSC meeting will be discussed, given its close proximity to the Christmas holiday (see separate meeting minutes).

L. Reilly took the opportunity to respond to several different questions and comments recently posted on town related websites. Some inquiries were made regarding when and where this workshop was advertised. Notice, she explained, was posted on Wednesday, October 17 on the first and second floors at Town Hall as well as on the Town website. Announcements have been made at the six Planning Board meetings that have taken place since August, as well as at all Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) meetings during the same time frame. L. Reilly made additional announcements at School Board meetings with the exception of their October 23 meeting, for which she apologized. Comments made about the Master Plan Facebook page not being updated regularly were true, she said, but that is due mainly to a simple lack of resources.

M. Noonkester began the presentation with an overview of the plan and its components. Four hundred and fifty two comments have been collected from citizens, staff, and the

Committee since the first draft presented at the end of August. TPUDC has been and continues to incorporate those comments wherever applicable. L. Reilly pointed out that comments on a smaller scale (e.g. regarding typographical errors) have not all been addressed yet because of her direction to TPUDC to focus first on the bigger picture in order to produce the first and subsequent drafts in a timely manner for the public and Committee to review. M. Noonkester then reviewed the Common Vision; the expression of the community's overall shared beliefs and aspirations concerning their town. The six guiding principles of the document were then derived from the common vision, which in turn guide the more specific goals and recommendations found in the plan.

Using Londonderry's basic suburban development pattern as a foundation of existing conditions, TPUDC created an overlay of those lands comprising 14% of the town that currently conserved, either partially or permanently. (M. Noonkester noted the plan's recommendation for the town to set a goal of permanently protecting 40% of the town). With input from the public, particularly during Planapalooza, "Place-Based Centers" were then designed around those existing conditions. In order to achieve various ambitions in the plan if and when they are selected by consensus amongst residents, the implementation matrix added to this second draft identifies the actions needed to reach those goals. It also suggests, among other things, the means through which the actions could be funded, the body that would lead the effort, and the timing of the actions, ranging from near term to long term. A portion of the endeavors range from those that town policy makers must organize to initiatives that the Town has only partial control over, but for which they can advocate. The matrix also includes specific capital projects as well as more detail oriented plans and studies. The document also advises the accomplishment of several target objectives (e.g. a balanced budget, economic development), before embarking on any implementation.

B. Wright next gave an overview of the comprehensive Master Plan update process, including the public outreach efforts and various studies performed by TPUDC that led to the creation of the infographics found throughout the document. The reasons for planning and the benefits it provides are explained, as are two perspectives that can be used to guide development within the town. Continuation of the existing dispersed pattern of development (a/k/a the trend development scenario) is contrasted with the "villages and corridors scenario" developed by TPUDC to better incorporate the needs and desires expressed by residents for such things as housing, work, walkability, and conservation. Because differing opinions will always exist within the six general guiding principles, TPUDC developed the "toolkit," which features concepts and actions that can be used to enact whichever goals are accepted by residents either now or in the future.

The plan itself begins, as most do, with a land use map which, in this case is a Conservation and Growth map. Existing suburban development is left as it is today, then the remaining land that is not currently conserved provides the background for the illustrated activity centers and character zones designed to guide future development while being mindful of sustainability. Illustrative plans present artist's renderings of the five proposed growth sectors in Londonderry (i.e. the villages and corridors). These kinds of visual depictions give residents the ability to come to an agreement on an area's development in a way a written description cannot. A section entitled "Community Facilities and Services"

provides recommendations on how those amenities should be organized when utilizing the Conservation and Growth Map. This is followed by the "Driving Success" portion on the plan which speaks to the aforementioned implementation activities. The recommendations and actions found there should ideally be addressed by a subsequent implementation sub-committee.

Questions and comments were entertained. Committee member B. Saur asked B. Wright to expand on the concept of "complete streets" for the audience. B. Wright explained that streets in Londonderry are incomplete in the sense that they do not provide access for multiple modes of transportation (e.g. through bike lanes, cycle tracks, sidewalks, etc.). L. Whittemore asked that form based zoning be defined. B. Wright stated that the town's current form of zoning is based on keeping different uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) apart and therefore does not have a deliberate outcome and can do relatively little to direct the nature of future development. Form based zoning (a/k/a form based code) instead focuses on the potential character for specific places and an intended outcome that is based on an overall vision agreed to by residents. It can be applied to what is existing in Londonderry as well as what the populace agrees is appropriate for particular undeveloped or underdeveloped areas. Regulations such as building setbacks and allowed uses that one would find in current zoning are then made specific to each character zone.

Eric and Mandy Mandlebaum, 17 Quentin Drive, asked how standards for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) would be addressed in the Master Plan. B. Wright replied that the ADA standards would be more appropriately dealt with in the town's zoning ordinance rather than amongst the broader concepts of a Master Plan. B. Saur added that the plan does discuss such notions as assisted living facilities as well as mixed use developments where housing, work, shopping, etc. are placed in closer proximity than is currently found in town. M. Soares commented that while assisted living facilities are mentioned in the Master Plan for the elderly, the same housing opportunities need to be addressed for students with special needs. Ted Combes, 23 Holton Circle, inquired about how the plan will encourage the town's younger generation to remain in Londonderry, both financially and through housing options beyond the conventional suburban development. B. Wright answered that the plan describes opportunities for the young through activity centers, housing choices, walkability, and mixed use residential areas that were a response to the needs and wants expressed by the youth of Londonderry.

Jack Falvey, 22 Cortland Drive, conveyed his impressions that this Master Plan "dictates development," will serve to limit individual property owner rights, and is more of a master plan for communities of new urbanism based on restrictive zoning. The recommended villages, he continued, are more suited to Derry than Londonderry. The Pettengill Road industrial village in particular would create an inappropriate combination of residential and commercial uses added to what should be a purely industrial area. That area, he said, should remain solely industrial since those tax dollars fund a high percentage of operating costs for town government and schools while requiring the smallest percentage of infrastructure. B. Saur noted that the Pettengill Road Industrial Village does not permit residential uses. The mixed use commercial component was a result of citizen input that revealed an existing inadequacy of commercial services to support workers in the various

industrial uses. C. May noted that the higher quality development created by the mixed use commercial added to the industrial use have been shown to actually create a greater increase in the tax base. Similarly, mutually advantageous scenarios where mixed use commercial uses are combined in higher density with residential zoning typically pose a greater return in taxes to the town. B. Wright explained that the proposed Master Plan is a vision document, that it does not command specific development. Any development is ultimately up to the consensus of residents. Concerns over what becomes law after this process, i.e. zoning, should be addressed if and when any changes are made to the ordinance as a result of the Master Plan.

Pauline Caron, 369 Mammoth Road, expressed her concern that while form based zoning states what can be done, it does not restrict those things that cannot be done. B. Wright replied that form based zoning is actually a positive approach because it not only states what is not permitted the way current zoning does in town, it also conveys what is possible in those areas that have been customized to reflect characteristics and needs deemed most important by residents. Rather than focusing developers solely on what is not permitted, form based zoning helps demonstrate to them what is feasible while regulating specifics to whatever degree residents decide upon. For this reason, if the town were to adopt some degree of form based zoning, it could potentially streamline the development process and encourage developers to bring business to Londonderry. Like all other concepts in the Master Plan, form based zoning is not mandatory. P. Caron also stated that the questions posed by TPUDC to the Town Librarian are not included in the current version of the Master Plan. B. Wright explained that TPUDC has not finished addressing all comments received, including those specific to the second draft. Some comments pertaining to various facilities, however, will be too specific to address in a vision document.

Ann Chiampa, 28 Wedgewood Drive, expressed her disappointment that the Master Plan Facebook page was not updated more regularly, especially since the Town website directs the user there for more information. She remarked that the Master Plan appears to act as a guide for the proposed development known as Woodmont Commons. In her estimation, it would result in a major transformation of Londonderry into mixed use developments that have been used in other parts of the country and may therefore not be applicable locally. On the ordinance side, she expressed concern that dead-end streets would no longer be allowed if complete streets principles were adopted. B. Wright clarified that some extensions of existing roads were suggested by residents living in those subdivisions to provide connectivity to proposed activity centers. B. Saur added that he has learned from the State Department of Transportation that the State would incorporate more opportunities for pedestrian and non-motorized access in areas like Exit 5 *if* the Town had the means in their zoning ordinance to address the ideas through such principles as complete streets. Rather than trying to preserve the character and history of the town, she believed that the plan seeks to redevelop existing areas and urbanize them with strict regulations and regimented aesthetics. She conveyed concern that residents in such places as North Londonderry were not notified about or consulted on the changes proposed for that area. She also expressed concerns over the Suburban Retrofit sketches, which she argued represented a change from the existing condition of buildings along the corridor, and the Town Center Recreational Village sketches which also represented change from existing conditions. B. Wright explained that the significant changes along Route

102 which A. Chiampa objected to were also a response to input from residents. In that case, liberties were in fact taken, but only to suggest transformation to the area most in need of change according to citizen feedback. In those cases where existing structures on private property appear to be replaced, the intent was only to demonstrate possibilities if and when those areas become available in the more distant future. Other areas such as the LAFA fields where various housing options were added to reconfigured recreational fields were actually met with approval from those involved with construction of the original fields. A. Chiampa also took exception to the document's assertion that those between the ages of 20 to 34 are the most likely to engage in civic activity and be entrepreneurial. According to her own research, those in their 40's and 50's are the most likely to volunteer while those in their 20's are least likely. B. Wright noted that the wording of the section she was referring to has been slightly amended to address the high rate of volunteerism in other age groups, but maintained that the demographic information was still accurate.

B. Wright thanked the public for their input and encouraged them to continue to comment on the draft. It is typical in most towns across the country, he added, to receive comments from both ends of the approval spectrum. The Master Plan document, however, is derived from a consensus of comments. Therefore if people find their comments are not made part of the document, it is only because theirs are in a very small minority. L. Reilly reiterated that the next draft is scheduled for submission by TPUDC on November 17 and will be available on the Town website shortly thereafter. The MPSC will meet immediately after this workshop and then again on November 28. The regularly scheduled December meeting will likely be cancelled (see separate MPSC meeting minutes) and the public hearing for and potential adoption of the Master Plan will take place at the January 9 Planning Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaye Trottier, Planning and Economic Development Secretary