

M I N U T E S

YUDW project no.: YUDW-181

Date / time: 6 December 2018, 7:00 pm ~ 9:00 pm

Place: Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School

Attendees: Bennett (BJ) Bernblum, HRIC Chair
Bonnie Reemsnyder, HRIC & Old Lyme First Selectwoman
Alan Plattus, YUDW
Andrei Harwell, YUDW
Gioia Connell, YUDW

Distribution: Steering Committee

Prepared by: Gioia Connell, YUDW

Attachments:

Items:

Introduction:

- Approximately 70 people in attendance, from show of hands a third to a half were at the first meeting in January.
- Bonnie Reemsnyder, Old Lyme First Selectwoman, opened the meeting by reintroducing the committee, the project, and YUDW.
- Discussed meetings, committee process, and work in the area to date (beautification work cleaning and clearing viewsheds in October).

Process and Plan Review:

- YUDW Director Alan Plattus summarized primary principles and interests identified from previous meeting (summarized in full in Halls Road Community Meeting 1 Breakout Session document).
 - Evaluation of Halls Road as a ¼ mile radius, making the space walkable.
 - Desire for autonomous but connected area.
 - Need for legible gateways.
 - Pedestrian oriented but auto reachable (park and walk, parking lots in back).
- YUDW Project Manager Andrei Harwell, went over the long-term visioning design.
 - Scheme is a composed of a number of elements, including gateways, streetscape, multimodal trail, new public spaces, public art,
 - Looking for feedback from the community about which of these elements the community likes and wants to see incorporated into the final plan.
 - Connecting the scheme to the landscape and river can provide a unique sense of place
 - Incentives and changes to zoning can allow private developers to redevelop their sites, over time, to transform Halls Road into more of a Main Street environment, potentially with 3 story mixed use buildings close to the street.
 - Halls Road can be narrowed, with frequent cross walks and fewer curb cuts, both to reduce speeds and for pedestrian safety
 - Shared parking between non-simultaneous uses (residential and

Halls Road Improvement Plan
Old Lyme, CT
Yale Urban Design Workshop

commercial) is a key to increasing density.

Feedback Session:

Of the comments given in the following open session, some were directed at specific elements of the plan, but many were about the planning process itself and why/how it would proceed.

- Some concerns were centered on how property taxes will be impacted by redevelopment. Committee members responded by stating that this project is expected to help diversify the tax base and keep existing businesses healthy, not to increase the mil rate. The committee attempted to clarify what state opportunities exist and how they can leverage and draw private investment.
- Some expressed concern about the future of retail, given internet shopping, and the viability of retail spaces. The committee and other community members responded that the main street style retail and entertainment is one of the most attractive today, as it creates a sense of place and community.
- Stresses on parking and septic were brought up. Response was that factors will need to be taken into account through design and regulation.
- Other questions centered on the planning process and how it works. Creating plans are part of a process for getting investment, or mandated by the state. Bonnie mentioned that grants covered 80% of the Hartford Avenue redevelopment thanks to a preplanning process. Planning for public funding is a function of towns and cities. Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes (specific statute specified here but not in the meeting) requires each municipality to adopt a plan of conservation and development (POCD) at least once every 10 years.
- Concerns expressed about how CT DOT's plan to widen I-95 (repeated from first meeting) will impact the area. Jon Curtis, committee member and Regional Planner at Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments, stated that the transit plans for this area are several decades away.
- Some asked for clarification on rumors that a developer had already been selected. It was clarified that this was not the case.
- Some attendees were concerned about maintaining a small "New England" scale for the buildings. Suggestions for precedents to look at included Lincoln, MA, Farmington, CT, or Washington, CT.
- Several attendees brought up a concern about losing the grocery store. Most leases are 10-30 years, Big Y lease is 5.
- Several community members wanted assurance that existing business interests on Halls Road were being protected. Bonnie stated that the committee has actively tried to engage with business owners in the area. It was stressed that the intent is to motivate business to make changes, but that they cannot be required to do anything.
- Essex Savings Bank is planning a renovation of their Halls Road branch for 2019, and will gladly coordinate with the Halls Road planning process (repeated from first meeting).
- Several community members were excited at the idea of additional businesses in Old Lyme, such as places to eat, stay, and recreate, instead of having to leave town.
- The community and the committee discussed zoning (e.g., Berlin, CT's restrictions on building) and the need to balance zoning with appropriate development.
- Many were very excited by the opportunity to create housing stock for older residents looking to downsize, as well as for adult children looking to remain in or move back to town.
- Community liked the idea of short-term implementation for things like beautification, sidewalks, pedestrian bridge, and public spaces.
- The Emerald Necklace was brought up as a good precedent to connect development to ample greenspace.
- Final words focused on this as an opportunity to create the Old Lyme that fulfills

Halls Road Improvement Plan
Old Lyme, CT
Yale Urban Design Workshop

residents' needs now and in the future.

End of minutes