

Town of McCandless Implementable Comprehensive Plan

Steering Committee No. 5 – Sept. 11, 2018, 7-9:00pm – Town Hall meeting room

Notes

- A. Jim Pashek reviewed the comprehensive planning process and noted that we have concluded Phase 1, which established the key issues. Tonight's meeting is the first steering committee check-in for Phase 2, which is "drilling down for solutions."
- B. Jim, Elaine Kramer and Heather Cuyler presented current work on the key issue solutions and asked the steering committee for consensus on the direction being taken on each. The consensus decisions and details from the discussion fills the following pages.
- C. What's next?
 - As mentioned, Pashek+MTR is beginning Phase 2, which identifies strategies for addressing the key issues, including step-by-step implementation guide. Tonight's discussion showed us we are on the right track, and we will keep going.
 - There will be a workshop on Active Transportation and Connectivity key issue on Sept. 12, involving professional planners, transportation experts, funders, aides to Sen. Vulakovich and Rep. Turzai, three members of the steering committee, and several citizen stakeholders. This will help provide detailed guidance on the tier 1 key issue of Active Transportation and Connectivity.
 - Next Steering committee meeting will be Oct. 9, 7-9 p.m. This will involve covering the key issues not discussed at Meeting 5 and conducting a second-round look at the key issues that were covered at Meeting 5.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY (tier 1)

The group heard an overview of the proposed active transportation/connectivity network priorities and **endorsed pursuing the three proposed corridors as the top priorities.** They are:

1. The southern portion of the north-south **Harmony Trail corridor**, between Pine Creek/Harmony Lane intersection and Wall Park
2. The east-west **Pine Creek corridor**, between Pine Creek/Harmony Lane intersection and North Park
3. A **Babcock Blvd corridor loop**, linking North Park-Kummer-Babcock-Corporate Center and also Babcock to North Park

The steering committee also raised these points:

- Try to also incorporate school campuses in the three proposed corridors – particularly joining Middle School campus and Library with the Babcock Blvd corridor
- Try to also add a Route 19 south – CCAC – Library connection (this could also be handled as part of the Redevelopment key issue)
- Look at Ingomar Road west of Route 19, where kids catch the bus, and people also walk to school, to work, the swim club and the grocery.
- Look at adding sidewalks in existing older plans
- The town has been considering sidewalk districts as a way of getting more built within residential communities
- Add data on vehicular, pedestrian and bike collisions to maps

COMMUNITY CENTER / REC CENTER IDEA (tier 1)

The group heard an overview of public input and research so far on existing facilities in the area. This included info on recently built community centers and their construction costs, and review of local private and non-profit physical recreation spaces. The group decided that before determining what space to propose, we have to determine what programs and programming space we need. The group said they needed more information on program offerings, gaps in program offerings, and property acquisition and construction costs of comparable centers, before deciding whether more space is needed or how much. Operating and maintenance costs would be determined based on building/space size.

Heather noted that the next agenda item is “programs and events,” and the two issues – space and things to do - should be discussed in context with each other.

The steering committee raised these additional points:

- Is it possible to get operating costs of other community/rec centers in the area. (Perhaps some will provide this, but financial reporting is different in each community so it’s hard to find apples/apples)

- Could programs be reviewed to identify gaps in what McCandless offers, and use that information to see how much space is needed, and what kind of space?
- Many members said that smaller, lower-cost, and simpler was the way to go.
- Comparisons should include Marshall and O'Hara.
- Some members suggested multiple satellite locations, and others thought that would be too expensive when considering need for property acquisition, construction, parking lots, and staffing and/or that satellites would further split and divide the community.
- Some members felt there's plenty of meeting space in the community when one considers CCAC, North Park, churches and LaRoche, but they also acknowledged that there could be gaps in programming and events and some unmet need.
- A Town-owned and operated community center could be unifying for the community and serve as a physical and metaphorical hub.
- Additional space could be added to an existing structure or could be newly built on Town-owned land. Toby noted that the town owns 199 acres of land, and most of it is greenspace and probably not developable, but no harm in looking at it to see. Also, portions of the Town Hall building could have a third floor added, structurally speaking.
- Northland Public Library used to maintain a directory of available space, and maybe what residents need is that inventory rather than additional space.
- Consider also reviewing Town policies, such as permitting alcohol. People hosting parties may not use a future McCandless community center if they can't serve alcohol at their parties.
- Note that banquet space currently is available at the Chadwick and Holy Trinity.

RECREATION PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS (tier 2)

The group heard an overview of public input and research so far on programs and community events offered in McCandless and comparable communities, and **endorsed the idea that the Town should move toward hiring a parks and recreation/activities director. The first tasks would be to identify gaps and create programs that meet community needs.**

The discussion is related below, but Jim concluded it by noting that back in the first quarter of 2018 – at the time of the community questionnaire - the discussion was all-or-nothing: either a huge new community-recreation center ... or no huge new community-recreation center. But now the steering committee clearly sees a middle ground that would provide some space plus carefully chosen programming. There are many variables remaining (which programs, the size and location of new space, determining financial capability, and respecting other service providers) but these all can be worked out as part of a continuing conversation.

The steering committee raised these additional points:

- Going by sheer numbers of programs and events (which show that McCandless lags behind comparable communities) may not give the full picture since CCAC and LaRoche are both in McCandless and offer many programs. However, on the other hand: Residents of neighboring communities also have access to CCAC and LaRoche programs, but those communities nonetheless offer their own programs and events.
- McCandless has numerous sports leagues and organizations that offer programs for children, which lessens the demand in McCandless. However, on the other hand, other communities also have sports leagues and organizations and nonetheless still offer programs and events.
- It would be a shame if a local community center with Town-run programs drives local businesses out of business. On the other hand: Would the relationship have to be competitive? Why not a partnership!
- Northland Library serves five communities. The library collaborates with them all to provide programs in community centers or other spaces. The library considers itself a partner that can take some of the weight and expense off communities and complement their own local offerings.
- Toby explained that approximately eight McCandless staff members currently work on recreation and events programming. So the Town currently is paying for this work, just divided up between several people. He also noted that he requested a rec director position in 1984 and was told it wasn't needed, but now it might well be needed.
- Other members noted that if this is part of eight people's jobs, the approach is, by definition, not cohesive, as it would be if one person were doing it. In addition, if residents in the community don't know what's on offer by the community that is probably partly because the programs are not handled by one person.

REDEVELOPMENT – BLAZIER DRIVE (tier 2)

The steering committee reviewed an update on this site by looking at local and contextual maps and was asked what they'd like to see happen there.

The area is part of the Pine Creek riparian system. The eastern parcels – former Trader Horn to the former Ballys Fitness Center – are under agreement with a developer who will bring a sketch plan for the site to the Planning Commission in early October. The center parcel is owned by the Port Authority for a park & ride. The western parcels (former Rave Cinema) are privately owned and the town is aware of no plans for development. The center and western parcels are in the 100-year floodplain, so their future use is regulated.

The group agreed that the developable parcels need to celebrate and support the stream system and include the proposed multi-purpose trail. There also was agreement that

development – which is market-driven – should be some form of mixed use, though there were different opinions on exactly what that would “look like.” Bruce explained that the developer will propose assisted living but that other aspects of the project are not yet defined. It is at the “sketch plan” stage, and the community can learn more and also provide input at the planning commission meeting in early October. There should be further discussion about the nature of this development after the October planning commission meeting.

The steering committee raised these additional points:

- The steering committee discussed the possibility of returning the floodplain parcels from pavement to a wetland park for citizens that would include the proposed multi-use trail.
- If citizens understood everything we’re talking about here, they could provide more meaningful feedback about the development proposal. What kind of education is the town providing to help citizens understand and participate at the planning commission meeting?
- The developable parcels should be a beautiful piece of property that looks great. It should be developed responsibly.
- Could it include the community center and return the rest to nature?
- It should be a version of McCandless Crossing that has housing, entertainment and shops but with less confusing vehicular circulation and more greenspace, and generally lower-key.
- Mixed-use housing should be mixed-age housing
- Bruce and Toby explained that the parcels are zoned to allow assisted and independent living and mixed use but not skilled nursing. They said there continues to be demand for more housing for older people, including for adults living in McCandless who want their older parents nearby.
- Assisted living is fine but let’s put other things there too, such as small shops
- Can we devise a way to raise some of the land above the floodplain by adding floodplain elsewhere?
- Take the Rave site back to nature, and put in some sort of mixed uses at the developable site.
- More support for independent mom-and-pop businesses like if you walk through downtown Volant.
- Something that helps make McCandless a destination – brewery, music venue, amphitheater

- The open spaces in the proposed developments could potentially include amenities such as trees, walkways, fountain, play area, seating, shade, gardens, plants, dog-friendly area, bike racks, concessions.
- A LEED certifiable development would be desirable.
- Toby and Jim reminded the group that land development is market driven. Therefore, whatever is built has to be profitable for the developers or there's no reason for them to be doing it. The leases, sales, etc have to pay for development. This is why developers often reduce greenspace – it isn't financially productive like retail or housing would be.
- Bruce noted that he will suggest at the October planning commission meeting some kind of agreement in which the developer is granted permission for more housing density – more units per acre – than is currently allowed for this area in return for acquiring the Rave site and returning it to nature. Some kind of creative agreement like that.

REDEVELOPMENT – SOUTH RT. 19 (tier 2) – to be addressed at next meeting

IDENTIFYING WITH THE COMMUNITY (tier 2) – to be addressed at next meeting

GREENSPACE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (tier2) – to be addressed at next meeting

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