

Meeting Summary

Date: 6/22/2020

Time: 1:00 – 2:20

Location: Virtual Call

The first Zoning Task Force meeting was held on a virtual call on June 22, 2020. The following were in attendance:

NAME	SECTOR	EMPLOYER / ORGANIZATION
Bill Chambers	Chamber of Commerce	Chamber of Commerce
John Foley	Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee	Becker Morgan
Lynn Thomas	Salisbury University	Town of Easton P&Z
Henry Hanna	Real Estate	SVN
Alyssa Hastings	Sustainability Coordinator	City of Salisbury
Meredith Mears	Real Estate	SVN
Daniel Moreno-Holt	Citizen of Salisbury	Design Matters
Blair Rinnier	Development – Commercial	Rinnier Development Company
Nick Simpson	Developer – Residential	Simpson Builders
Amanda Pollack	Director, Department of Infrastructure and Development	City of Salisbury
Anne Roane	City Planner	City of Salisbury
Allysha Lorber	Consultant Team	JMT
Chris Jakubiak	Consultant Team	Jakubiak and Associates
Sarah Diehl	Consultant Team	JMT

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce Task Force members, outline expectations and project schedule, and present best practices research that will help guide Salisbury’s zoning code re-write. There was also an opportunity for discussion and for Task Force members to suggest other best practices that should be considered as the project moves forward.

City Planner Anne Roane kicked off the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for their time and commitment. She explained that Salisbury would be undergoing a complete zoning re-write, as the current ordinance was written in 1983. Since then, there have been a lot of changes to the city, particularly in current best practices and land use. She hopes that this zoning code re-write will help the city continue to grow in a more sustainable way.

Project Manager Allysha Lorber noted to the group that the meeting is being recorded and the presentation and any other materials will all be posted on the [newly created website for the project](#).

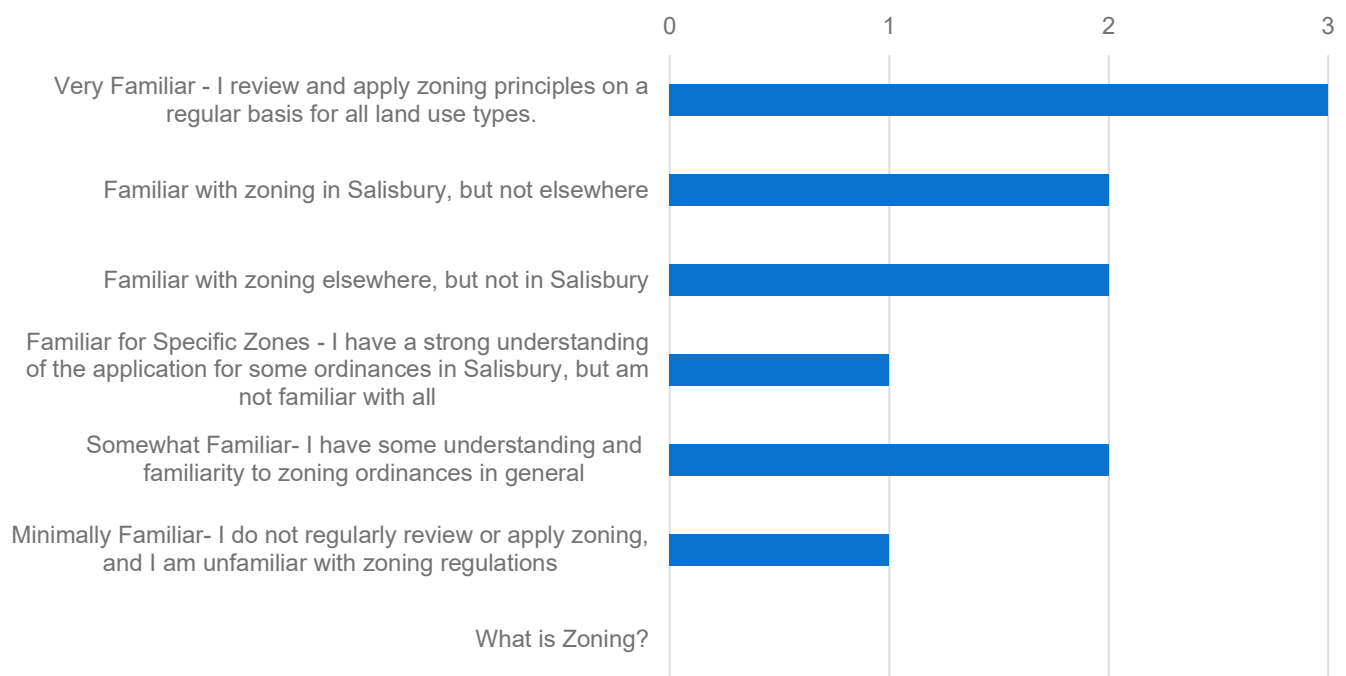
The following items were discussed:

Task Force Expectations

- Expectations of Task Force members include:
 - Meet periodically over the next two years to help define the vision and goals for new zoning
 - Represent your areas of expertise and stakeholder interests
 - Work collaboratively and in partnership with other Task Force members and planning team
 - Provide input to the planning team as the new zoning code is drafted
 - Share information with your stakeholder groups and networks – get other people’s ideas and point them to the website

- Results of Polling Question #1

How familiar are you with Zoning Ordinances? (Pick One)



Purpose & Goals

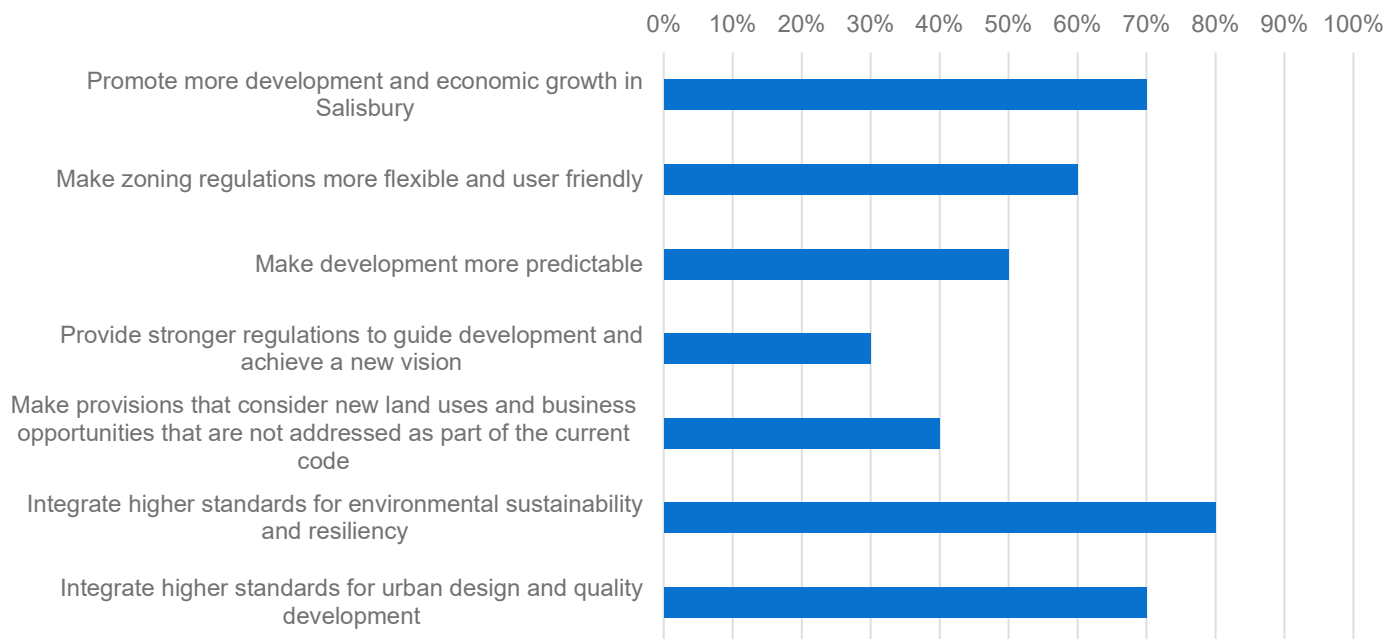
- The current zoning ordinance is outdated and cumbersome – it was written in 1983
- It includes 236 sections with multiple subsections and cross-references
- Contains 24 different zones with 21 overlay districts
- What do we want to accomplish?
 - Integrate new master plan elements – US 13 Corridor Plan, North Prong Park, Downtown Redevelopment
 - Make it predictable and flexible – make it easier for developers to work with
 - Currently many zones are similar- consolidate those
 - Strengthen environmental sustainability
 - No more amendments – starting over with a whole new zoning code

Potential Issues to Address

- Ensure equal protection and due process

- Strengthen plan submittal requirements/clarify the development review and decision-making process: there are currently shortcomings in current zoning about the level of details that are expected to be submitted and reviews. The current decision-making process sometimes lacks predictability and we need to have clarity as to why the Board of Appeals or Planning Commission made the decision that was made. Why was there a denial if there was one? What needs to be done to get that approval?
- The City Attorney will be reviewing to make sure the appeal process is appropriate
- Incorporate annexation procedures into zoning regulations – this is already being done in many other places.
- Non-conforming uses: we recognize that some uses will become non-conforming and will not be permitted where they are now. Will work through issues about what is conforming and what is not.
- Plan and Policy Implementation
 - District boundary map changes – new zones may be developed
 - Form based approach – at least in parts of the city
 - Land use types are changing – will see mix of uses
 - Parking and landscape requirements – build on established parking requirements and develop stricter landscape guidelines
 - Coordination with Critical Area Update – these elements should be directly incorporated into the master plan and should be considered across the city.
- Results of Polling Question #2

**What do you hope to achieve with new zoning in Salisbury?
(Pick Multiple)**



- Discussion: *Interesting that “Integrate higher standards for environmental sustainability and resiliency” is the top answer – why did you pick that? Is flooding occurring more frequently?*
 - John Foley stated that it is pretty apparent that this issue is a reality that we need to face sooner than later. While it may be an abstract issue for the majority of the public to grasp right now,

enacting policies and seeing the issue addressed in the form of development and growth will help it become less abstract and more tangible. People need to see policies that are enacted in the built environment to see the results, and when the public is on board it is easier to maintain the energy of something like this moving forward.

Schedule

- Handful of meetings over the next 2 years
- A lot of information will be made available [online](#).
- We will be meeting again in the fall to brainstorm and review recommendations for the structure of the zoning code.
- Series of meetings in Winter/Spring 2021 to look at specific areas: downtown, residential, etc.
- Final meeting in Spring 2021 to look at environmental regulations, industrial and agricultural areas, etc.
- Final steps will be refining maps and code language to get ready for adoption
- Review of Work to Date
 - Initiative kick off meeting was held in Fall 2019
 - Consultant team has been assessing current zoning and looking at best practices from other jurisdictions
 - [Analysis of Zoning Best Practices](#) can be found online.

Best Practices Review

- Included in the memo: updating a zoning code, form-based code, housing, transit-oriented development and critical area components
 - These examples will be useful as Salisbury works to undergo a comprehensive replacement of the entire zoning code.
- Incorporating New Area Master Plans – it is the goal to bring all these plans together with the new zoning.
 - Adopted since 2010:
 - Downtown Redevelopment Plan
 - North Prong Park
 - Route 13 Corridor Master Plan
- Increasing Predictability: Form Based Code
 - Form Based Code is not currently utilized in Salisbury
 - Many updates in other jurisdictions are incorporating form-based code elements into their zoning codes
 - Form Based Code dictates what development and the landscape looks like. It is all about the form and design to make sure it fits within the community and the desired vision.
 - Form Based Code would be a good fit for downtown Salisbury
 - Case Study Example: Downtown Chattanooga
 - Utilizes conventional and hybrid form-based code
 - Form Based Code used for the downtown core area
 - Code is very illustrative and dictates specific form requirements within each of the areas.
 - Tables are helpful to find what you are looking for and are easy to use.
 - Meredith Mears commented that she appreciated the illustrative and easy to read nature and agreed that this is something that should be considered when rewriting Salisbury's zoning code.

- Consolidation of Zones: Prince George's County, Maryland
 - Old code was cumbersome
 - This code in particular was a much larger re-write in general but ultimately was working to achieve the same things we are looking for in Salisbury
 - Simplified 1,200 uses to ~250
 - Utilizes many graphics to explain the process – helps community members understand the process and how the changes will affect them
 - Implements zones based on character and is all about the activity that is going on there and less about Euclidean land use types. For example: neighborhood activity center, town activity center, etc.
- Strengthen Environmental Sustainability
 - Until recently, all Critical Area approvals went through the county and not the city. New zoning will incorporate this process.
 - Case Study Example: Critical Area Management Program, Baltimore City
 - Urban jurisdiction with a tidal waterfront like Salisbury
 - Baltimore City program provides mitigation options that are more suitable to the industrial or urban context
- Strengthen Design Standards
 - Need to incorporate standards into the code and make them law so that development maintains a cohesive character throughout Salisbury
 - Best Practice examples include illustrative graphics that make it easy to understand
 - Lighting is particularly important for public and traffic safety; also has environmental consequences
- Simplified and More User-Friendly
 - Case Study Example: City of Cambridge, Maryland
 - When Anne Roane was the Planning Director in Cambridge, she worked to draft and implement the Unified Development Code.
 - This code combined many of the standards and specifications concerning zoning and road design, etc. into one unified code
 - One of the most important aspects: the form-based code elements for the downtown and waterfront area
 - Lessons learned throughout the process: while a lot goes into the re-write of the actual code (determining building heights, lot coverage, character development, etc.) there is also substantial effort needed to incorporate additional elements sections into the code such as definitions, allowable uses, etc. to ensure that it is clear and user friendly.
 - The approval process must also be streamlined
 - The process began with a large and cumbersome zoning document, but it was able to be greatly reduced by the elimination of the duplication of standards.
- Relation to the Comprehensive Plan
 - Salisbury's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2010. Typically, the Comprehensive Plan precedes zoning revisions. In this case, the current Comprehensive Plan is still relevant, and only minor updates will be needed when the next update occurs. That is anticipated to begin in 2022 when new Census data is available. The City wishes to move forward with the zoning rewrite before the next Comprehensive Plan update to put the regulatory framework in place that supports the type of new development envisioned in previous plans.

- Discussion: Thoughts on Best Practices and Other Ideas
 - Meredith Mears expressed the need to be mindful that we do not get too locked into strict regulations. We will need to find the right balance to make sure that we do not end up disincentivizing development in Salisbury.
 - Daniel Moreno-Holt commented that the shift to Form Based Code is great but uses are still important and we should encourage shift in uses in areas of the city. He also commented that one of Downtown's biggest challenges at the moment is that there are not enough people living there.
 - John Foley brought up the University of Salisbury and commented that any University presence Downtown is good.
 - Daniel agreed but that the University is just far enough away from Downtown to make it challenging to make the strong connection between the two.
 - Nick Simpson added that through his work he has noticed that the University seems reluctant to continue the link to Downtown but recognizes that it is coming. We should keep this in mind.
 - Henry Hanna commented that he has worked with the University and has spent decades to get the University to understand why it is important to have that connection. The University is currently going through their own planning process. He agreed that they might have some reluctance and we will need to be sensitive to that but would also like to see the encouragement of that connection. We also need to be sensitive of what the new costs of this connection might be.
 - Lynn Thomas commented that he is interested in the Form Based Code components and believes that there could be applications of it in many places throughout the city, particularly in places where we want to see large scale change in the area, such as along the Route 13 Corridor. Perhaps the connection between Downtown and the University would be a great place to start, as we would be most interested in the quality of the development and not necessarily the uses.
 - Areas north of Downtown:
 - John Foley commented that from an urban planning perspective, socio-economic history coupled with the automobile has killed the Downtown. If we focus all development on the north side of the city, it might further hinder Downtown. The Rail with Trail is a great opportunity to utilize the connection and steer people away from automobile use.
 - Amanda Pollack added that it would be nice to see the Route 13 Corridor Study incorporated as the city has been unable to do so thus far. It would be nice to picture this area as an attractive corridor and that north Salisbury seems very disconnected from the rest of the city.

Next Steps

- Allysha will send links to the Best Practice Memo and master plans that were referenced to the Task Force
- Consultant team is wrapping up Phase 1 and continuing to look at the current zoning code and identify where things are lacking and where zoning could be strengthened.
- About to start Phase 2: drafting the new code. The Task Force will be able to read and share thoughts throughout the process
 - Phase 3: Develop a new map
 - Phase 4: Update Salisbury's Comprehensive Plan
 - Note: typically, comprehensive plan updates happen before re-zoning efforts. The comprehensive plan acts as a road map for new zoning. However, in this case the comprehensive plan is more up to date, and it made more sense to update zoning first. The Maryland Planning Commission is recommending that jurisdictions who are due for

a comprehensive plan update between now and 2022 to wait until 2022 because the new census data will be out.

- If Task Force members have any thoughts or questions based on today's presentation or the zoning rewrite in general, please send them to Anne (aroane@salisbury.md) and she will make sure they are passed on to the consultant team.