

Meeting Summary

Date: 9/28/2020

Time: 2:00-3:25

Location: Virtual Call

The first Zoning Task Force meeting was held on a virtual call on September 28, 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
Henry Hanna	Real Estate	SVN
Alyssa Hastings	Sustainability Coordinator	City of Salisbury
Andy Kitzrow		
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
Lynn Thomas	Salisbury University	Town of Easton P&Z
Amanda Pollack	Director, Department of Infrastructure and Development	City of Salisbury
Anne Roane	City Planner	City of Salisbury
Allysha Lorber	Consultant Team	JMT
Sarah Diehl	Consultant Team	JMT

The purpose of this meeting was to update Task Force members on the progress that has been made since the team's last meeting in June. This meeting was also to be used to get feedback on the overall direction that the re-write is taking and to allow for an opportunity for open discussion among the task force members.

The following items were discussed:

Recap from Last Meeting

- The last meeting was used to establish the need for a comprehensive replacement of the zoning code: what zoning encompasses, what it can accomplish, etc.
- Best practices analysis: areas of focus -
 - Updating a zoning code
 - Form-Based Code
 - Housing
 - Transit Oriented Development

- Critical Area Components
- Discussion summary
 - Need to encourage shift in uses in areas of the city
 - Downtown: continue to encourage connectivity between the University and Downtown
 - Form based code: code be applicable in many areas in the city, particularly in areas where we want to see large scale changes (Infill Downtown, Route 13 Corridor Development) – integrating that vision is especially important
 - Areas north of Downtown: encourage better connectivity, especially with the hospital and employment centers

Progress To-Date

- Allysha presented two quick poll questions to the task force:
 - Did you review the website?
 - The majority of the group had taken a cursory look before today's meeting
 - What are your thoughts on the framework?
 - 82% of members thought we are headed in the right direction, while others thought we were headed in the right direction but had some concerns.
- Achieving zone consolidation: Reorganization of Commercial and Industrial
 - Business and Employment
 - Mixed Use
- Fewer Residential Zones with more flexibility for a variety of housing types
 - ADUs
 - Smaller duplexes
 - Integration of housing types to be done in a cohesive way
- Preserving Neighborhood Character – keep the established character
 - Neighborhood Conservation Zones
 - Legacy Zones
- Institutional Development in Partnership with City Goals
 - The Hospital and University, among others
 - What happens with either can have a major effect on the city
- Clarify the role and function of open space
 - Increasing the number of zones here
 - Parkland
 - Environmental Protection
 - Urban Agriculture- brand new and an economic tool for the city
 - Crop production in a greenhouse at a commercial scale
 - Want to clarify the function that open space has

Review of Interactive Website

- The draft project website can be found here:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3bdb883bf83a42e393f2a1dd0a828943>
- Many of the details have not been worked out yet but this is a framework for how we envision the process.
- Goals as the new ordinances are written include:
 - Incorporate new land use types and development patterns from the City's Comprehensive and other recent area Master Plans.

- Improve clarity and predictability in requirements and streamline steps of the entitlement process.
- Consolidate and simplify land use zones.
- Integrate new land use typologies with a mix of uses allowing properties to have commercial and residential development together.
- Promote housing diversity offering more opportunities for seniors, student, middle-income, and affordable housing.
- Stronger requirements for environmental sustainability.
- Stronger neighborhood conservation and historic preservation.
- Stronger design standards for architectural features, site layout, landscaping, appurtenances, and parking.
- Allow flexibility for evolving technologies and innovations in the future.
- Formalize the City's annexation process.
- Questions –
 - Andy asked about the one in a million uses that might come up years down the road that do not fit in one of the consolidated categories? How would we deal with that “other”?
 - Allysha responded that we are trying to be less stringent in some ways, by defining things broadly and careful attention to the new language so that these new uses would fit within the framework. The difference might be zoning something by right or special exception. These are all things that we will be thinking about throughout the next steps.
 - Henry noted the history of Salisbury zoning and the process that was undertaken. He noted the how the industrial area in the north was born from residential. We need to be sensitive to how some of these changes have taken place throughout history.

Draft Zone Overview

- The draft is based on what the parcels are zoned today or other existing master plans
 - Residential
 - High density residential – no more than 4-5 stories for the most part
 - Medium – combination of single and multi-family housing
 - Neighborhood Conservation – looking at preserving the character.
 - Mixed Use
 - Mixed use will be targeting the main Downtown corridor area and the mall
 - Discussion: Merry added a comment on the mall as mixed use, noting a trend where malls are being repurposed into distribution centers, warehouses, etc. We really need to think about this area and what might happen to that area in the long run. Seeing warehousing/logistics industry as some of the most successful right now.
 - Per Anne, there have been applications for text amendments for what is allowed in those zones.
 - While it might be nice to have housing there, realistically long term it could be warehousing,
 - Henry agreed- this is definitely something we are seeing across industries. There are a lot of changes being proposed, particularly with development downtown
 - Allysha added that we need to think about retail and what we want the experience to be. If we want the mall to be shopping and warehouses, the retail that will be there will that convenient for the workers there and less of a destination.
 - Merry noted many companies are looking for smaller buildings to use and the convenient location of the Salisbury mall make it very attractive for potential as a warehouse use.

- Daniel expressed concern over the mixed-use aspect: there is a shallow market for mixed use development, we might be showing too much redevelopment. Are there areas that are included that could be mixed use flexible but also allow for more traditional retail development?
 - Allysha agreed, perhaps we pair back some of the mixed use and integrate the flexibility element
 - Daniel added that the corridor needs the form-based development, particularly around the university. Perhaps the area that is around the hospital could be more flexible. College Park is an example of this large-scale attempt at mixed use development that has not been totally successful yet- the mixed-use development is not focused, there is no true downtown.
 - Daniel also noted the area between the university and downtown in Salisbury is very attractive to developers, really need to focus on these areas and that density going north would be good for pedestrian access to an extent.
 - John Foley agreed and that while we do have a highway speed bypass around the city, the Route 13 corridor could be looked at as a bypass around to different nodes- it becomes a express route to get around in the city between the important nodes.
- Andy expressed that we do not want to create a handcuff 20 years from now where development can be restricted by new leadership by zoning that is too specific to what is currently going on. Text amendments can solve that but that is what is going on today and not favorable.
- John suggested that we look at a one or the other approach.
- Henry added that planned residential districts were born from desire for more flexibility - as a way to create mixed residential and bring in some commercial – (in particular the farm property in the north of the city). It seems to be well positioned if living in NE to get to the highway and regional shopping
- Business and Employment Areas
 - Allysha noted that based on today's conversation, perhaps the mall area would be better suited in this category.
 - General and Highway commercial development
 - Daniel noted the commercial landscape is definitely difficult to predict
 - Andy brought up a question regarding private schools and how they are zoned?
 - Per Allysha, could be institutional, could be commercial, depends on how the code is written.
- Institutional
 - To be expanded upon – there might be more areas that we need to consider, particularly if there are areas the hospital and university that are expanding.
- Legacy Zones
 - The purpose is to preserve the character of planned developments
- Open Space
 - Adding new spaces (for example around North Prong Park) and there could be additional areas to add particular around the waterfront
- Agriculture
 - Is this appropriate in industrial setting or should it be in its own group? This would be commercial scale crop production, much more than a community garden.
 - Discussion:

- Henry noted that there is a movement of agriculture into urban areas – particularly with aquaculture and new growing techniques that increase efficiency and employ people that are within walking distance. We could encourage this to happen in multiple areas of the city.
- John added that Detroit is the largest urban farm in the country. It brings a softer effect with decreased pesticide use and provides many jobs for those who need them the most.
- Henry sees it being positioned as a use that could be incorporated into several area and have a positive effect on neighboring areas.
- Daniel noted that looking at the purpose will be helpful in figuring out how it is written. What are the goals of integrating this into Salisbury?
 - Henry noted that many smaller companies are looking for smaller spaces
- Nick brought up concerns about nuisances to neighbors through the agricultural process and making sure this is considered throughout the process.
- John stated that we need to look at the future of agriculture and that it is moving to organic uses- a good model to look at is in the Netherlands and how they integrate the two uses.
- Daniel suggested that we have special exceptions for the residential side and then have separate set of regulations for the industrial setting

Next Steps

- The team is currently coming up with initial framework – will make tweaks to the website based on today’s conversation within the next week.
- Next steps will be beginning to draft code
- Anticipating the group will meet again in January but the team will be in communication in the meantime. Be on the lookout for updates, draft language that we will be looking for feedback on, etc..
- Hoping to have most of the code written by spring 2021 and the map available by this time next year.
- 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.