



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: February 17, 2015
Agenda Item #: II – e & f

TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Rawls Howard, Director of Planning and Inspections
THUR: Susan Parker, Town Administrator
TITLE: Future Planning Items – Strategic Planning Session

After reviewing the history and documentation of the Bike/Pedestrian Plan, the Vision Plan, and the Overlay District, I have come to the following conclusions and recommendations for moving forward with these items in addition to the Town's planning efforts as a whole.

Some observations that I have made from my review that I believe to be factual include:

1. The Town has an adopted (March 2009) Bike/Pedestrian Plan whereby some of the implementation components contemplated in the original plan have been amended since the original plan's adoption. We are currently seeking grant funding to update.
2. The Town has undergone a small area planning effort called the "Sunset Boulevard Vision Plan" that was not ultimately adopted by Town Council. After reviewing the plan, it appears there were components of this small area plan that directly conflicted with the adopted Bike and Pedestrian Plan. In addition there appeared to be items found in the plan that were not in favor for Town Council's ultimate approval.
3. Due to the Council not adopting the Vision Plan, it was desired to instead form an overlay district which worked to implement some components of the Vision Plan.

Some conclusions I have made based upon my observations of the processes involved and regarding the Town as a whole include:

1. Current planning has resulted in plans and planning efforts becoming conflicted and confusing with each other; resulting in some planning efforts not coming into fruition and causing frustration on the part of the citizen's and governing officials.

2. By changing adopted plans in a piecemeal fashion, obtaining grant funding for projects could be hindered as what the Town is applying for is not what the granting agencies have accepted within the adopted plan. (e.g. NCDOT)
3. The Town lacks an adopted comprehensive “blueprint” for future growth that ties a commonly-accepted and adopted philosophy to implementation of objectives and smaller planning efforts.
4. In addition to the Vision Plan, Bike and Pedestrian Plan and other efforts, the Town is due to update its CAMA Land Use Plan in 2015.

My recommendation is that the Town immediately work to consolidate these smaller efforts into a master planning document or comprehensive plan. Comprehensive Plans are typically THE master document from which all subsequent planning efforts in a municipality stem from. Comprehensive plans work to provide the “big picture” framework whereby smaller planning efforts such as those the Town have been undertaking are reviewed holistically and have more merit. In addition, the comprehensive plan works to tie implementation efforts into the Town’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

I believe that the appropriate course of action is to hold off on any future smaller planning efforts and work to incorporate the existing documents and efforts into a larger planning process. This does not mean not implementing currently adopted plans, but not moving forward on future planning efforts. This will help avoid redundancy, confusion, and provide a path for all future planning efforts. My requested allocation for a Comprehensive Plan is \$100,000 and would take between 1 to 1.5 years to complete.

Being that the proposed overlay district is a regulatory mechanism and not a policy consideration, staff will move forward with the Planning Board to cover some basic concerns for the corridor and its function and appearance via that route.