

MINUTES
OF THE
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

Date: July 31, 1997
Time: 11:30 a.m.
Place: Planning Commission Offices, Main Conference Room

Roll Call

Present:

Gilbert N. Smith
Councilmember Stewart Clifton
William Harbison
James Lawson
William Manier
Ann Nielson
Stephen Smith
Marilyn Warren

Absent:

Mayor Philip Bredesen
Arnett Bodenhamer

Others Present:

Executive Office:

Jeff Browning, Executive Director and Secretary
Karen Nicely, Assistant Executive Director

Community Plans Division:

Jerry Fawcett, Planning Division Manager
Chris Hall, Planner I

Also Present:

Marlin Keel, Public Works
Mark Macy, Public Works
Phil Ryan, Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order.

Mr. Gary Everton began the meeting by presenting the recommendations contained in the draft Subarea 9 Plan update. He noted the plan placed a strong emphasis on supporting current efforts underway to develop residential neighborhoods. He cited Hope Gardens, the Cumberland high rise on Church Street, and the proposed development of Rolling Mill Hill as efforts that should be supported. In addition, the plan suggests developing loft residential units on the unused upper floors of existing buildings in the CBD. The concept plan, he noted, also envisions the area between 2nd Avenue and Lafayette as a mixed use area with an emphasis on residential. Fifth Avenue is designated as the "Avenue of the Arts" on the final concept plan due to the art and performance related functions presently located along this street and the potential for future arts related uses. The planning team suggested special banners, urban design features, and other marketing tools be used to reinforce this concept. A key component of the final plan, which is relevant to the whole subarea, is the concept of pedestrian friendly streets. Streets should accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles, and Mr. Everton identified Franklin Street, Demonbreun Street, Broadway, 2nd Avenue, Hermitage Avenue, and 5th Avenue as especially important. In order to improve accessibility to and within the subarea, the final concept plan recommends supporting the efforts aimed at utilizing existing

rail lines for commuter rail. To capitalize on commuter rail stations and to further facilitate movement within the subarea, the concept plan suggests the downtown trolley system be expanded and that links or nodes be established with the commuter rail system. Intermodal stations where people could transfer from commuter rail to trolley would be located near Bicentennial mall, the Riverfront Park, and at the landport. The expanded trolley system would feature a business loop, as well as a neighborhood loop, which would link Rutledge Hill, Church Street, and the North Nashville neighborhoods. The concept plan's future vision for the east bank includes a variety of uses that would enliven the area beyond game and event days. In the area surrounding the Bicentennial Mall, the plan envisions a variety of mixed use functions that will provide people intensive uses to enliven functions along the mall. Another key element of the concept plan is the recommendation of a public greenway along both sides of the river. A recommendation carried over from the original plan and reinforced in the update is the reinforcement of the core. The plan recognizes that the city's core could be much more dense and recommends directing high density development to the existing central core and encouraging a diversity of medium to low scale uses surrounding the higher density core. Other recommendations include: improvement of street gateways; protection of important view corridors (views available to the Capitol from the north and west approaches to downtown); the retention of the Shelby Street Bridge as a pedestrian and trolley connection to the stadium and East Bank; the continuation of Riverfront Drive north and south from the stadium; the illumination of bridges over the river; the establishment of a public school in Rutledge Hill, possibly the Howard School site; and the development of an entertainment zone around 12th and Porter.

After Mr. Everton finished outlining the recommendations of the final concept plan, Gary Hawkins, a landscape architect and member of the consulting team, spoke about open space and green space in the plan. He emphasized the importance of focusing the attention of the city back to the river. He explained that many cities across the country are undergoing the process of rediscovering their urban rivers and reintegrating these amenities back into the fabric of urban life. A major step in revitalizing the river corridor would be the implementation of current plans that recommend a continuous public greenway on both sides of the river. He then discussed the importance of establishing parks and open space throughout Subarea 9. In particular, he noted that parks should be established on Rutledge Hill and in Hope Gardens to serve the growing residential population. He also spoke of the need to develop more greenspace in our core area. He noted that, at present, most of the open space in the core is simply areas left over after the construction of a building and that more concerted efforts need to be undertaken to establish useable green and open space. A discussion ensued about the parcel on Rutledge Hill that was designated as green space on the concept plan. The question arose as to whether the commission can approve something that says one day a particular parcel will be greenspace. Gary Hawkins stated that the Downtown Partnership's Invisible River Subcommittee faced similar issues when doing a planning study of the River corridor.

After Mr. Hawkins finished speaking, Mr. Richard Fulton discussed the market conditions as well as implementation strategies that could be employed in the subarea. He stated that the market forecasts in the 1991 plan were pretty much in line with what had occurred in the subarea and that these conditions were not expected to change much in the near future. The only residential development constructed since 1991 is the 290 unit Cumberland Towers and all new office space added since 1991 can be attributed to Cummins Station. In order to improve these conditions, Mr. Fulton recommended that product type and price be diversified for both office and residential. He recommended that a mid to low rise office product in the 80 to 150,000 square foot range might appeal to some companies who do not want to be in the larger towers. This type of product is seen in many of the suburban markets. For residential development, he recommended that housing of various types and prices be provided, particularly high end housing that would appeal to executives. This type of housing could act as a stimulus to attract new office development since CEOs tend to like their homes to be located near the office. The subarea had experienced negative absorption in retail since 1991 with the loss of Castner Knott and the closing of the Church Street Center. In order to turn this around he emphasized continuing efforts to support residential development. Overall strategies included focusing efforts on one area at a time in order to promote residential development. He stated it was important to create a critical mass and demonstrate a market demand. Strategies that could be used by Metro include tax increment financing, land writedowns, land banking, the use of design guidelines, and the provision of amenities such as green space.

Following Mr. Fulton, Mr. Everton discussed the priority development areas of the plan. He discussed 5th Avenue, Church Street, and Franklin Street. Much discussion centered on Franklin Street and the two alternatives. Commissioner Harbison stated that he would be in favor of hearing about positives and negatives of each alternative. Other commissioners also wanted to know more about the two choices. Mr. Marlin Keel offered to hold a workshop to explain the alternative that Metro had chosen.

There being no further business, upon motion made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary

Minute Approval:
This 21st day of August, 1997