

La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Plan

Public Kickoff Meeting Summary

November 12, 2014, 6pm to 7pm

Location: High Country Conference Center

Project Team members in attendance: Sara Dechter, Jennifer Mikelson, Tyler Shute, Andrew Hagglund, Dan Folke, David Wessel, Rick Barrett, Karl Eberhard, Jesse Dominguez, and Laura Bustamante-Myers

Approximate public attendance: 57 (a few individuals came but did not sign in)

Introductions

Sara Dechter, Comprehensive Planning Manager and the project manager, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the City staff present.

Jesse Dominguez, La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association President, presented his board members.

Sara Dechter reviewed meeting objectives, agenda and ground rules for the meeting.

Presentation

Sara Dechter provided 15 minute presentation on the process for updating the plan, the content of the plan, what needs to be updated and requesting feedback from the public about how to move forward.

Question and Answer

Q: Explain how plan is used once adopted and give an example.

A: A small area plan can be used in a number of ways.

- 1) Every rezoning case will need to have a finding about how the proposal conforms to the general plan and any applicable specific plans.
- 2) The Plan can recommend changes to City programs and policies that drive development and redevelopment, such as the zoning code, housing policies, etc.
- 3) The plan can be an educational source for developers and property owners that are looking to redevelop their property. Even if the property owner is not obligated to follow the plan's direction, the information is available and hopefully will attract individuals that are interested in the types of development that would be compatible.
- 4) The plan can be used in the City and County's budgeting process by identifying priorities.
- 5) The Plan can be used by the Neighborhood Association and other non-profits to apply for grant funding that assists with implementation of the plan.

Q: What do the orange circles represent?

A: There are orange circles on the Concept Plan slide that was presented at the public meeting on November 12, 2014. These circles represent areas of the neighborhood that have already experienced infill and redevelopment in the last three and half years.

Q: Who is responsible for deciding what is a historic building? How to deal with demolition of historic properties?

A: Typically, consultants hired by the property owner assess and evaluate properties as to whether or not they are historic through the preparation of a Cultural Resource Study. Any property can be demolished – property owners have the right to demolish their buildings. Whether or not it is historic, only affects the level of documentation required. If it is significant and if it has integrity, a Phase II Cultural Resource Study is required which entails complete documentation of the building prior to demolition. There is a one-year demolition delay provision if the City Council wishes to save a building from demolition.

Q: Will the plan include Coconino Ave?

A: Yes. The Neighborhood Plan has always included the Houses along Upper and Lower Coconino Ave. For some reason, the 2011 concept plan did not include a concept for the part of the neighborhood that is north of the railroad tracks. That will be a part of updating this document as we move forward

Q: How much involvement does the Council have in developing and approving this plan?

A: Throughout the process, the Council will receive reports on the progress and strategies for the project and we can hold working sessions for them at any time. There will be a working session with the Planning and Zoning Commission during the 90 day comment period and we can have an earlier one at any time in the process. For the plan to be adopted there will be two Planning and Zoning Commission Hearings and then they will make a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council will have a hearing on the plan and will adopt it by resolution, which only needs one reading.

Q: What are the streets/boundaries of this plan?

A: The northern boundary of the plan area is the alley north of Coconino Ave. The western boundary runs along the northern edge of the Mill Pond Apartments property and the western side of Arrowhead Village. South of Arrowhead Village, the western boundary follows Blackbird Roost. The southern boundary is Route 66 between Blackbird Roost and Milton. The eastern boundary is S Milton Road.

Q: Where is the floodplain in the area?

A: The floodplain is defined by the Clay Ave Wash, which enters the neighborhood at the SW corner of Clay Ave and Milton Rd and passes through the neighborhood on the south side of the McCracken Building, along McCracken Road and through the Arrowhead Village Mobile Home Park. The one hundred year floodplain impacts the neighborhood very broadly south of Clay Ave, but if the larger Rio de Flag process moves forward it would be significantly reduced. Maps of floodplain conditions can be provided at the January workshops.

Q: How was the boundary drawn, particularly the jog around Arrowhead Village?

A: Jesse Dominguez explained the neighborhood had determined the boundary through public involvement. Arrowhead Village was considered part of the neighborhood by participants but there was less concern about including the Saga Inn or the adjacent auto parts store.

Q: Can someone talk about/explain the proposed crossing under the railroad that would connect Florence and Walnut?

A: The Florence-Walnut bicycle and pedestrian tunnel has funding but the estimate from the railroad on the cost of the work means there is a \$900k shortfall for the project. The City is working with BNSF to reduce the funding gap and there is some FUTS funding that just passed with the sales tax election (Prop 406) that can be used to fund this project.

Q: Based on what you said before, the plan doesn't have a legal basis; it's more an advertisement for what is desired?

A: It is both. There is a legal requirement for rezoning cases, annexations and conditional use permits to have a finding about conformance with the specific plan, but in other cases it would just be advisory and would not obligate the City or a property owner to follow it. At the same time, having a clear statement on desired conditions and compatibility will help to get attention from developers and property owners to promote good outcomes for the community.

Q: How/when does this plan have teeth?

A: Neighborhood or specific plans can be used in a number of ways. The plan is used to assist in land use decisions. For example in order to approve a rezoning request a finding that the request is consistent with both the general plan and any applicable specific plans is required. Neighborhood plans can also lead to development regulations. As shown in the "planning pyramid", development regulations found in the Zoning Code can implement goals and policies found in the general plan and a specific plan. As you move down the pyramid the goal, policy or regulation should be more specific. This can be tricky in Arizona with potential Proposition 207 issues. Specific plans can be used to set budget priorities based on goals and policies. Finally, adopted specific plans can assist with grants. Often applications will score higher if they are implementing an adopted plan.

Q: When did they change the height limit from 2-3 stories?

A: Staff present was not certain about when the current entitlements related to building height were put into place. Since 2006, it has become more difficult in Arizona to reduce private property entitlements that come from the Zoning Code without a willing property owner. The current maximum building height in the Highway Commercial (HC) zone is 60 feet, and in R1N - which is the primary zoning north of Clay Ave. - it is 35 feet.

Poster Session

Members of the public and staff broke out around the room to comment on goal and policy recommendations and the concept plan from the 2011 plan. They provided handwritten comments as well as red and green dots to indicate their questions, concerns and preferences about how the City should update the plan.

Comments about Goals & Policies

GP1 posters - Preserve, Redevelop, & Infill with Appropriate Architecture + Create Housing Milestones & Standards

1. How can commercial development address desired services?
2. No “net loss” of affordable housing units as a result of multi-family development
3. Any infill incentives must be accompanied by permanently deeded affordable units
4. Limit size of boarding house student development in keeping with goal of increasing percentage of home ownership.
5. Incentivize single family owner-occupied homes (preference for historic).
6. Land Trust
7. Overlay District: ok as long as it doesn’t squeeze longtime residents out or create gentrification. Encourage home ownership.

GP2 posters – Integrate Appropriate Urban Design + Increase Pedestrian Safety

1. Ped crossing at Clay Ave and Malpais.
2. Grade crossing = less costly than tunnel
3. Skybridge from Butler/Clay across Milton
4. Ped/bike tunnel would greatly improve transportation. Agree!
5. School zone speed limit restrictions on Clay Ave at Haven Montessori School (I know it’s a private school, but...)
6. Minimize cut-through traffic
7. Consider impacts of new/changing bus lines.
8. We do need ped crossings over Milton for older people and children. Crossing Milton right now is taking a high risk on your life.

GP3 posters – Build Upon Neighborhood Safety + Build Upon Neighborhood

1. SBDC no longer exists. Identify other partners.
2. Pedestrian friendly: Need to make certain neighborhood residents can safely cross old Rt. 66. That is needed in order for the area to be pedestrian friendly. Also, need to address traffic cutting through neighborhood to avoid Milton.
3. Hard curbs would make walking easier.
4. Discourage auto cut-thrus but encourage bikes and peds. Agreed!
5. Design and/or disallow “alley” only access to residents.
6. Money spent on roundabouts could have been better directed. They are silly in such a small neighborhood with low traffic flow.
7. There are no yield signs! (at roundabouts)

8. Community center: Fire station by Natural Grocers?

GP4 posters – Encourage Economic Development + Enhance Parks Maintenance, Design, & Connection

1. Keep Clay Ave as collector not main arterial.
2. Make it safe for children to cross Clay Ave to get to the park. Excessive vehicular speed and traffic due to vehicles cutting through neighborhood.
3. Important to get safe railroad crossing for pedestrians at Tombstone to Lower Coconino.
4. How dense? What do the residents believe will be “commercial” that is appropriate? Small cottage industry ok.
5. I don't like it. I feel that older residents are being squeezed out. Me too.

GP5 posters – Encourage Sustainability Projects + Boost Environmental Services with Local Projects

1. Can developers support pedestrian access and improvements (such as bridge funding with impact funds)?
2. Possible community garden at Milton & W Phoenix.
3. Can we include such sites (community gardens) on concept map?
4. Update drainage across Clay Ave at Malpais. Culvert is needed.
5. Work with NAU student orgs to help in clean up.

Comments about Concept Map

1. Commercial/Mixed Use: concerned about the height of what would be allowed. Some commercial could “dwarf” the neighborhood and increase traffic.
2. Need traffic controls and landscaping
3. People are not obeying the arrow signs (at roundabouts)
4. The roundabouts' lack of stop signs = conflicts with people and playing children
5. Overlay ownership, (private, BNSF, city) existing zoning rights, flood plain, and regional plan designation.
6. Can property owners downzone in the area between Clay and 66 and Malpais and Blackbird Roost to lessen the density of the wish? Is that an acceptable goal – Highway Commercial on Clay? Doesn't sound like a good idea.
7. Need a traffic study to see how many folks are entering neighborhood to avoid traffic backup at Milton and 66.

Parking Lot Comments

1. What are services residents want to see in redeveloped lots?
2. If someone comes to the city wanting to demo 2 historic single family properties, facilitate finding owners who want what exists.

Dot Exercise for Goals & Policies

- Community Gardens: Establish community gardens with irrigation and composting—possibly incorporate into future community center space. Explore options of diverting and storing stormwater to use as irrigation for community gardens in correlation to the Clay Avenue Wash flood control project (Rio de Flag – Army Corp of Engineers).
- ● Commercial Corridors: Plan for and design Milton Road, Clay Avenue, Malpais and Blackbird
- ● Roost as the commercial corridors in the neighborhood.
 - Designate:
 - Mixed-use density to include commercial, office and residential
 - Zone and allow for live/work units; Streetscape with emphasis on pedestrian activities
 - Public spaces including landscaping, public art and dark-sky friendly lighting
 - Parking
 - Circulation access into and out of the neighborhood
- ● Old Town Springs Park: The original Old Town Spring needs historical recognition.
 - Design & install a more pedestrian friendly entrance from West Coconino Avenue.
 - Add solar-powered dark-sky compliant lights inside the Ramada, powered by a motion detector.
 - Replace the over-grown vegetation with slope tolerant northern Arizona deciduous trees and perennials.
 - Plant shade trees on the south perimeter of the play area.
 - The east side of the park, next to the old town spring, needs to be user friendly.
 - Add on-street parking, bicycle racks and street lights to ensure pedestrian safety and access.
- Clay Avenue Ball Park:
 - Redesign parking to be more efficient
 - Allow pedestrian access from south
 - Shared parking with apartments to the south?
 - Install flushing toilet facilities (not a port potty)
 - Plant shade trees for playground area
 - Install dark-sky friendly lighting for evening games
- ● Pedestrian Friendly: A pedestrian friendly environment encourages walking and biking, creates an attractive streetscape, and produces positive street activity to create a safe atmosphere that discourages crime.
- Streetscapes: Work with the City of Flagstaff to enhance streetscapes, dark-sky friendly lighting and signage through City economic redevelopment or private property improvements. Streetscape improvements include, but are not limited to: curb, gutter, sidewalk repair or installations, crosswalks, street lights, street trees, planting strips and street furniture. Consider ‘Green Infrastructure’.
- Centrally Located Community Center: Establish a Community Center with meeting space for education and social events; a community garden shed and garden; and resources for local children, seniors and business growth. Actively research development opportunities as a standalone project or a component to a broader redevelopment project. La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association could assist with efforts by

establishing a business plans, exploring these options, and potential development partnerships. *Comment: Fire station by Natural Grocers?*

- Gateways: Develop two gateways into the neighborhood at the corner of Milton Road and Clay Avenue and at Route 66 and Blackbird Roost– with landscaping and a “La Plaza Vieja” sign that reflects the culture of the community.
- ● Active Public Participation: Through the use of Zoning Code regulation and the use of public participation, become the lead organization to which developers contact for neighborhood feedback and discussion on potential projects within the neighborhood to La Plaza Vieja.

FUTS Trails: Plan for FUTS extensions by a number of means, yet planning during the Rio de Flag flood control project planning, by the Army Corp of Engineers could ensure trails and streetscapes as part of this federal project.

- ● Enhance existing and future FUTS trails by:
 - FUTS Underpass at Florence needs to be a well-designed and beautiful bridge.
 - Adapt Rio de Flag flood control project into landscaped FUTS trail through neighborhood.
 - Create FUTS trail landscape buffer along railroad tracks.
- Landscaping: Encourage private and public property landscape improvements with drought tolerant Northern Arizona trees and shrubs. The community members may be able to partner with local nurseries to work on annual end of year tree/plant donations & volunteer planting in conjunction with Neighborhood Beautification Days. See recommendation 7.2
- Increase public art opportunities: Potential redevelopment project may present an opportunity for open artist’s studio space and community art classes —working with Coconino Community College and Flagstaff Artists Coalition. Every Urban Design and Gateway project should incorporate public art.
- ● Pedestrian crossing at Route 66 and Blackbird Roost: Route 66 is an Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) roadway, and designed for high traffic at high speed, thus crossing poses a personal risk. Many La Plaza Vieja residents cross at this location to access shopping and Northern Arizona University campus.
- ● Railroad underground pedestrian passage at Florence: The planning for this passage is underway with the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) Masterplan, and grant money has been secured to match local and federal money. BNSF Railway has indicated that the passage will be built when the Rio de Flag flood control project is going under the railroad tracks ¼ mile east of the Florence Street location.
- ● At-grade BNSF crossing at Globe: Many people illegally cross at this location daily, and making the crossing safe would benefit all involved. BNSF has indicated it would not pursue this type of crossing. The neighborhood has indicated it would prefer to leave this goal, as the illegal crossing will mostly remain a permanent fixture, and to make it a safer crossing would be in the best interest of all involved.
- ● Milton Road under-crossing: An under-grade crossing of Milton for pedestrians and bicyclists at or near Malpais Lane would be a direct access from the Northern Arizona University campus into and out of the neighborhood.

- Traffic Calming: Traffic calming on Phoenix and Clay Avenues, such as curb extensions, street trees, center island narrowing or pavement texture, as well as a sidewalk maintenance program is needed to improve pedestrian and bicyclists safety. To be coordinated with Streetscape Improvements
 - ● Infill Incentives: Create an infill incentive district, in which policies, outreach and education is geared to encourage the right type of architecture, infrastructure and landscaping. Infill Incentives, as allowed by Arizona Law, could be upgrading sewer and water mains in anticipation of greater built densities of whole blocks; amortizing water and sewer taps; and assisting with infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalks and curb cuts.
 - ● Historic District: Create local historic district and create incentives to preserve older homes and buildings.
 - ● See Phoenix's 'Adaptive Reuse Incentives'.
- Overlay District: Develop an Overlay District for Plaza Vieja, under a Form Based Code to designate the 'core' higher density corridor and node (community center), medium density mixed-use infill, and lower-density historic preservation housing district. ●
- Adopt Architectural Guidelines: Adopt a few crucial Architectural Guidelines to enhance what is already in the Zoning Code and apply them to residential and commercial infill and redevelopment projects.
- ● Front Porches and entrances
 - Appropriate building materials
 - Residential landscaping requirements
- ● Increase Home Ownership: Establish a housing goal of 40% ownership, 60% rental occupancy.
 - ● La Plaza Vieja currently maintains 10% ownership and 90% rental properties. This ratio presents a challenge in promoting a strong sense of community. Using many available tools through the City of Flagstaff and the non-profits, such as Bothands and Habitat for Humanity, the ratio of both residential and business owner occupied can change.
 - ● Historic Preservation: Increase historic preservation opportunities. Property owners may tap into rehabilitation and historic preservation incentives to assist in preservation efforts. Groups of historic property owners may want to work together in submit an application for a preservation grant to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) through the local Historic Preservation Officer at the City of Flagstaff. There is also rehabilitation funding available with the tools noted on page 42.
 - Mobile Home Redevelopment: Work with the property owner to develop a plan for mobile home park betterments.
 - Tier one - to install a sidewalk and street trees along Blackbird Roost.
 - Tier two- replace uninhabitable structures with habitable ones; install play area for children.
 - Tier three - complete redevelopment plan, but ONLY with residential relocation plan.
 - ● Property Maintenance Ordinance: The City of Flagstaff will work to establish an abandoned property policy and absentee landlord policy, as allowed by Arizona State Statutes. These may be more applicable as a Property Maintenance Ordinance.

- ● Senior Housing Assistance: Create and promote a Senior Housing Assistance Program, by way of education, assisting with tax programs, rehabilitation assistance programs and other programs offered by existing non-profits.