

Streetscape Taskforce Minutes Tuesday, July 12, 2016 7:00 pm – 10:00 PM



Attendance

Bill Ackerman, Carly Aubrey, Kathy Philpott Costa, Barbara Cram, Kwafo Djan, Anne Norloff, Chris Norloff, Mike Novotny, Andrew Painter, Tim Stevens, Paul Stoddard, Dan Sze, Dennis Szymanski, Dave Tarter, Keith Thurston, Cory Firestone Weiss, Bob Young

Agenda

1. Decision Making Process
2. Group Membership
3. Approval of Minutes, June 14, 2016
4. Review
 - a. What are the City's adopted policies?
 - b. What are other places doing?
 - c. Taskforce concerns and interests from June 14 meeting
5. Interactive Exercise
 - a. Review draft streetscape materials

1. Decision Making Process

The group discussed how it should make formal recommendations. Options discussed include majority vote, super majority vote, and levels of consensus. The group discussed implications of working small groups and large groups. The time required to achieve consensus was also considered.

By vote of 10-4, the group decided to require a super majority vote of 60 percent to make decisions.

2. Group Membership

The group discussed how to handle the issue of group membership. The Charter identifies seats for members, alternate members, and other members. The Charter also leaves open the option for the Taskforce to reach out to other groups for input.

The group discussed the Charter intent of members versus alternate members. The group also discussed the Charter intent of reaching out to other groups and the “other” seats.

By unanimous vote, the group agreed that every Taskforce member should be able to participate fully in the conversion.

By vote of 7-2, the group agreed that there should be 9 voting seats, with the votes allotted to the Taskforce members identified in the Charter. This means one vote for each of the two Council representatives and one vote for each of the following groups Planning Commission, Economic Development Authority, Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation, Tree Commission, Village Preservation and Improvement Society, Chamber of Commerce, Environmental Services Council. This results in a total of nine voting seats.

The Taskforce Membership was established as the following. The group agreed that in the event all members from a group are unavailable, another alternate could attend, participate, and vote (assuming the alternate is substituting for a voting member).

Group	Voting Member	Alternate Member	Advisory Member
Council	Dave Tarter		
Council	Dan Sze		
Planning Commission	Kwafo Djan	Ruth Rodgers	
Economic Development Authority	Mike Novotny	Bob Young	
Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation	Steve Knight	Bill Ackerman	
Tree Commission	Dennis Szymanski	Kathy Philpott Costa	
Village Preservation and Improvement Society	Keith Thurston	Tim Stevens	
Chamber of Commerce	Rachelle Barimany	Andrew Painter	
Environmental Services Council	Cory Firestone Weiss		
Arts and Humanities Council			Barb Cram
Human Services Advisory Council			Anne Norloff Chris Norloff
Architectural Advisory Board			Diane Duggan

3. Approval of Minutes, June 14, 2016

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote, 9-0.

4. Review and 5. Interactive Exercise

During the review of previous materials and drafts materials, the following issues were discussed.

Solid (not walkable) versus Void (walkable)

The group considered the idea of walkable versus not walkable space in the streetscape and how that ratio may have to vary with the width of the sidewalk.

Guidelines versus Ordinance

The group discussed whether the streetscape standards should be defined by local ordinance or as design guidelines. Defining the standards by ordinance would make them legal requirements and increase predictability. On the flip side, the standards could be difficult to work with on lots of odd shapes or sizes.

The sense of the group was that the Taskforce should develop guidelines and advise Council as to which elements should be elevated to the level of an ordinance.

Setbacks

The group discussed the right size setback. Group members noted that in order to make space for different elements, a wider setback may be needed. Economic concerns were raised about the tradeoff between building square footage and setback size, and particularly that a large setback would need to be offset by allowing a taller building.

Updating Existing Standards versus Building from Scratch

The group expressed a desire to update the existing standards rather than begin with a blank slate.

The sense of the group was that the update to the guidelines should promote existing elements that are liked and make enhancements versus making drastic changes.

Walking Tour

The group expressed a desire to conduct a walking tour to inform their recommendations.

N Washington Street Standards

Group members expressed the following thoughts about the N Washington Street Standards

- The space is too narrow for the large style bio-retention planters
- The bio-retention planters are too deep
- Bio-retention planters have been successful in other places, and it may be necessary to see what other places are doing

Number of Streetscape Districts

The group discussed how many streetscape districts the City needs. Staff presented a draft based on existing policies showing four zones: W Broad Street, N Washington Street, S Washington Street, and mixing zone around the intersection of Broad Street and Washington Street.

The group wanted to have fewer zones to promote a stronger sense of identity for the City as a whole. Staff discussed created multiple zones to create multiple districts to aid in wayfinding efforts.

The sense of the group was that the City's should have a single zone with one set of guidelines for all of the commercial areas.

W Broad Street Standards

Building off the idea of a single district, the group discussed what is working and what is not working with the W Broad Street standards.

When asked for a staff perspective on recent issues implementing the standards, Paul Stoddard provided the following feedback

- Bus shelters: Shelters have been difficult to fit into the streetscape, both horizontally – allowing 30' of clear space for use of both the front and rear door of the buses and vertically – staying out of the pedestrian walking space.
- Furniture Styles: The defined furniture styles and colors have not historically been followed, so it leaves staff in the position of have to choose between the adopted guidelines and precedent.
- Planter locations: The size of raised-edge planters have been difficult to accommodate in some situations leaving staff to find hybrid solutions.

Group members noted the following about the W Broad Street Standards

Cross Section

- Like double rows of trees at the Broadale
- Space in front of Debo's is too narrow
- Remove concrete space/gap between the edge of the planters and the curb
- Keep barriers between the pedestrian space and the automobile traffic
- Promote walkability, need at least 20' setbacks for more flexibility and a 10' clear space for walking
- Need to limit encroachments into the walking space
- Setbacks should be larger than 20' and/or buildings should stepback on upper floors to allow for larger trees

- Allocate space as follows: 4'-8' (building), 10' (pedestrian), 6' (amenity) for 20'-24'.

Street Furniture

- Keep same street lights and mast arms
- More furniture is needed
- Don't need furniture in all places, the sidewalk is for walking
- Near bus shelters, control trash and add more furniture
- Space light poles further back from the curb to protect them from automobiles and trucks that jump the curb
- Control newspaper boxes and magazine stands

Tree Pits and Plantings

- Keep large planters
- Need structures / soil under sidewalk to increase soil volume
- Protect tree areas with edging to guard against foot traffic, salt, and dogs
- Remove planter edging
- Raise planting edging to allow them to be used for seating
- A green look should be maintained
- Additional, small scale planter areas along building faces should be provided
- Trees are outgrowing their planters, a smaller species should be selected
- Have more frequent trees
- Get rid of irrigation boxes

Materials

- keep brick sidewalks
- Changes in paver color should indicate the difference between moving space and still space as called for in the N Washington Street guidelines
- Consider concrete sidewalks with banding to reduce maintenance needs
- Treat utility and manhole covers to make them blend in

Flexibility and Maintenance

- maintenance funding needs to be provided

- Business owners and/or property owners should be allowed to maintain the streetscape in front of their buildings
- Standards should allow for diversity

Other

- More shelter from the sun and rain should be provided
- Add more pedestrian crossings, including midblock crossings
- Orient ADA ramps with crosswalks. Do not direct them into the travel lanes
- Use ground level entrances, do not raise them with stairs / disconnect them from sidewalk
- Allow flag/blade/projecting signs
- Utility lines should be undergrounded

Other Business

Co-Chairs

The group discussed creating Taskforce Co-Chairs. The responsibilities of the Co-Chairs include communicating with staff and prioritizing issues for discussion.

During the Discussion a concern was raised that creating co-chair could lead to additional meetings when the group is on a tight schedule to deliver recommendations.

The group voted 7-2 to establish Mike Novotny and Keith Thurston as Co-Chairs.

Additional Meetings

The group discussed whether additional meetings would be needed. Staff raised a concern that the group needs to (1) make a referral to Boards and Commissions, (2) incorporate feedback, and (3) make a recommendation to Council before the group sunsets at the end of the calendar year. No decision was reached.

Arborist and Tree Commission Feedback

The group asked for feedback from the Arborist and the Tree Commission regarding where trees should be located within the planters if the planters are moved closer to the curb.

Walking Tour

The group expressed a desire to hold a walking tour.