



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

East End Small Area Plan

Community Kickoff, Meeting Notes

Saturday, November 6, 2021

Stephenson Hall at Columbia Baptist Church, 103 W Columbia St

East End Small Area Plan Community Kickoff

The City of Falls Church Planning Division hosted a community kickoff meeting for the East End Small Area Plan on Saturday, November 6, 2021, in Stephenson Hall at Columbia Baptist Church. The ultimate objective of the meeting was to obtain public input to be used in the East End Small Area Plan which is currently being developed by staff.

As part of the breakout session portion of the community kickoff, staff rotated from table-to-table to host small group discussions amongst meeting attendees. Staff discussed the following planning & design topic areas for the POA at each table: Vision & Urban Design; Environment, Open Space, & Recreation; Land Use, Height, & Density; Transportation & Connections. Meeting attendees engaged with the topic's facilitator (City staff) while a scribe (City staff) captured their ideas on a flipchart. The following are a compilation of these notes transcribed by City staff at the November 6 community kickoff meeting.

Vision & Urban Design

Overall Vision

- Preservation of affordability
- Celebrate diversity: residential areas around Eden Center – Falls Green, Madison
- Scaled density that is compatible with what is there
- Lower building heights
- More green space; ties to permeability
- Sense of place through cultural spaces
- Retain scale and quaintness, even balance; example: no Ballston type of development

Mobility

- Larger sidewalks to incentivize walking
- Enhanced walkability and connections to Eden Center
- Sidewalk/pedestrian infrastructure on Hillwood

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- Complete the sidewalk on Roosevelt
- Cycling infrastructure improvements for safety
- Connecting bikeability to Arlington
- Shuttles
- Bus 28A is highly utilized
- Need more bus connection between Madison and core of City (Farmers Market, library)
- Shuttle bus connections (Sycamore, Roosevelt)
- Scooters, but need docking
- Negative impact of bike lanes down Wilson Blvd.
- Connection of West Broad to POA 5; visual connectivity through signage/gateways
- Public parking garages that provide shuttles (partnership with private entities)
- Retention of East Falls Church station; prioritize ridership
- Hillwood traffic concerns (between residential and major roads)
- Increased density raises concerns about increased traffic
- Closing Hillwood at Ring Road: decrease noise, increase pedestrian traffic; adapt streetscape to be accessible for residents

Eden Center

- Preserve Eden Center as a cultural center; for people from all over the area; people traveling to Eden Center for generations
- Improve sidewalks near Eden Center
- Gathering plaza at Eden Center; with trees; an event space
- Enhancements for outdoor dining; a square or permanent gathering space
- Playground for kids integrated into Eden Center; would complement gathering space
- More walkways in Eden Center
- Aesthetic improvements to Eden Center; beautification of Eden Center
- Security enhancements and lighting
- Underground parking; investment in underground parking
- Green space on top of parking garage
- Retention of small businesses; retain tenant leases for small businesses
- Add housing: affordable options, senior housing
- Hotel at Eden Center for job creation, to support small businesses
- Left turn at Eden Center is very dangerous
- Have separate route for delivery trucks to Eden Center
- Need more emphasis on pedestrian entrances and exits to Eden Center
- Little of Hillwood residents use shopping area; interest in additional mixed use

Land Use and Design

- Have a Farmers Market at the East End, on a different day than Saturday
- Need gathering spaces to hang out
- Pocket parks
- Streetscape improvements
- Signage to identify the area

- Improved lighting on Hillwood Avenue
- Beautification efforts to encourage pedestrian activity; lights!
- Visually pleasing bridges
- Recycling center at East End; glass recycling on East End
- Redevelopment of BP site (a hotel or garage)
- Concern for rent structure with redevelopment
- Redevelop corners for gateways
- Interest in solar power; solar panels

Environment, Open Space, & Recreation

Existing Open Space

- Difficult park access (Oakwood, Fort Taylor)
- Fort Taylor has a poor maintenance program
- Fort Taylor has poor accessibility, is unknown; not useful as it is; opportunity to teach art classes
- Fort Taylor is too small; unknown; covered with vegetation; needs more signage; we need to use the park space we already have; only park in POA
- Fort Taylor Park: open it up to higher visibility (Frady Park has good design)
- Enjoy walking in Oakwood Cemetery – stargazing; no sidewalk along cemetery
- Better utilize Oakwood Cemetery; needs better connections with multiple entrances
- Grades and trees in Oakwood limit sidewalk opportunities

New Green Space

- More green spaces, gathering spaces, trees
- Closest playground is in Arlington; no walkable park space
- A large park is valuable; smaller spaces more feasible: space for trees, pedestrian crossings, seating areas, park benches
- Need authentic green space, actual grass, not just a stretch of turf
- Rooftop gardens/parks/playing fields
- Opportunistic “park-like” space: birdhouses, wild flowers, wildlife
- Creating streams using stormwater/mini park space; add benches
- Playground at Eden Center for families while dining
- Eden Center “inside-out” parking on the inside; prioritize flexible event space for community gatherings
- Design rear of Eden Center for park space – replace parking
- Splash pads: connection to water
- Mosaic District a model: flat green space, movable seating, outdoor dining
- Need space, like amphitheater, for events
- Mobile stage
- Venue for artists to perform
- Signature Theater in Shirlington as example of small community space
- Potential redevelopment is an opportunity for open space; higher FAR to create open space
- Use parks to highlight Native American history: connections to our past
- Safety concerns connected with parks and playgrounds

Mobility

- Inconsistent sidewalks (accessibility)
- Shouldn't need to drive to go for a walk
- Everything is isolated; poor connectivity
- Would prefer a more walkable POA, with more dining and shopping connected to East Falls Church Metro
- Live less than a mile away but it's difficult to get there other than by car
- Need an easy way to walk through the area; sidewalks are inconsistent
- Need wider sidewalks, safer crossings
- Need a greenway
- Need pedestrian access from back of Eden Center; have to drive, even if you could walk
- Difficult and unpleasant to walk through Eden Center parking lots
- Bicycle access is intimidating along busy streets
- Need biking infrastructure
- Ring Road: good idea for pedestrian/bicycle interests addressed
- No protected/dedicated bike lanes; need to be able to live without a car; getting to Metro by bike
- Concern of East Falls Church Metro closing; it's a lifeline for those without cars to work; locals plan lives around it

Trees

- No street trees; it's unpleasant to walk in summer
- Improve streetscape vegetation
- Need more street trees; better tree maintenance (trim dead branches)
- Clarify arborist's role on tree preservation, reviewing private actions; tree maintenance
- Preserve large trees in single-family tear-downs
- Put street lights in the trees

Miscellaneous

- Slim Roosevelt with lane reduction; a complete street with on-street parking and wider sidewalk
- Avoiding through traffic
- Avoid driving on Wilson Blvd. because traffic is chaotic; cars not stopping, just pulling out
- Maintain Little City charm and quaintness: buildings 6 stories maximum; something is lost in redevelopment
- More benches! As part of transit and safety (eyes on the street)
- Benches along Sycamore and Roosevelt
- Continue Broad Street streetscape through the East End
- Farmers Market on different day than City Hall
- Screening for Public Storage

Land Use, Height, & Density

Overall

- Fear redevelopment could push businesses out, with higher rents
- Keep it quaint! Don't want it like Ballston

- Like the current life style
- Do not change the fabric and nature of the community through over-development; integrate existing uses

Residential Issues

- Concern that Eden Center is too much of a focus; emphasize residential, lived experience (Madison)
- Leave existing neighborhoods as-is; affordable, smaller home opportunities
- Affordable housing: rezone to protect affordability
- Keep the area affordable for existing residential
- Focus on family housing (condos, larger multi-family apartments)
- Protect existing adjacent residential
- Need transitional buffer between commercial and residential
- Preserve and add affordable homeownership opportunities
- Family-size units for sale, not lease

Height

- Like a lower height – 7 story height is too high
- Lower the height – nothing higher than 7 stories; bank building in Fairfax County is too high; VA Tech study is too high
- 6 stories is OK
- Like adding height to Eden Center – residential above commercial

Land Use

- Density puts too much pressure on public services and schools, roads and traffic
- Flexible zoning to allow for all possibilities
- Car dealerships? How to make them better? Make a plan for redevelopment. (Bill Page at Annandale and Rt 50 is a good example: parking garage, retail frontage, not a sea of cars)
- Mixed use on BJ's lot, but only 6 stories
- Opportunities for mixed use? More residential
- Mixed use is good, with more affordable housing for families and young people
- Integrate senior housing with mixed use
- Senior housing is needed
- Mixed use condos (?) to accommodate small business and residential ownership
- Hotel is desirable
- Phase out industrial uses for other opportunities
- Concerns about zoning mechanisms and implementation of changes
- Oakwood: concerns with impact of mixed use on parking and transportation
- Stormwater: seating around streams
- More green space and outdoor public space
- More beauty, streetscape improvements
- Integrate sustainable and social guidelines into the plan (e.g., LEED, Envisions)
- Develop green space near Roosevelt
- Enhance public spaces

- Eden Center needs a facelift, rear parking lot (not like Mosaic)
- Rear parking lot (Eden Center) needs improvements for safety, road concerns

Mobility

- Traffic is a huge problem
- Parking lots: need to find an alternative (underground)
- Impacts on Hillwood Avenue – density will make traffic worse
- Major concerns with the Ring Road
- Shuttles for the whole City, with parking
- Add connections for pedestrians, up W&OD Trail
- Underground parking
- Underground parking and pedestrian walkway/bridge

Miscellaneous

- Integrate City and Fairfax County
- Local government funding support for improvements; renovate private businesses in Eden Center through loans and finance programs

Transportation & Connections

General

- Connection challenges with all the different road networks
- Need better access to park areas and open space
- Need connectivity to residential areas

Pedestrians and Bicycles

- Area needs to be more walkable
- More walkable and bikeable for safety
- Separated bike and pedestrian ways
- Unsafe for pedestrians to cross highways
- More, better, and wider sidewalks
- Bike Share at Eden Center- yes, there is interest in having a Bikeshare station there
- Protect bike lanes; increase Bike Share locations; better Bike Share locations
- Multi-modal public transportation: senior access issues, safety concerns, traffic speeds, stormwater along sidewalks. Can we include the stormwater with the sidewalks?
- Crossing over Route 50 – bikes and pedestrians only; better than Broad Street
- 7 Corners: need safer connection; not sure about the plan for the Ring Road. The streets are very wide near Seven Corners, and the cars travel quickly. Can we make these streets more like Arlington?
- Access to 7 Corners is difficult
- Can we add speed tables on Roosevelt? The cars speed on this street
- Need a pedestrian/bicycle bridge from 7 Corners to Eden Center
- I think that would be costly. I would request a signal or crosswalk near this location.
- Wider sidewalks and new ones to connect to Broad Street and Oakwood Cemetery

- Also sidewalks on Roosevelt Street and adjacent to the Cemetary. Lighting is also requested. It is dark at night now and I don't feel safe walking in some areas.
- Scooters: Can we restart the scooter pilot? Yes, people can have scooters in the City, but they are not allowed to be on the sidewalk right now.
- Bike lanes on Roosevelt- those are in the street. Can we have bike lanes that are raised and next to the sidewalk? Or that have some sort of barrier from cars
- Entrance to Eden Center with the dragons on Wilson Boulevard- There are many crashes at this location, including those involving pedestrians. Can we put a signal here, or provide some other solution for improved safety at this location?
- Wilson Boulevard itself needs some work.
- Communication- Can the City provide more communication to residents about transportation options in the City? There are new facilities and services, but residents may not know about them.
- Can we prioritize pedestrians? It seems like even bicyclists get higher priority than pedestrians.
- Desire for a shuttle that connects to Eden Center and the EFC metro, or a shuttle that connects Eden Center to other areas of the City.
- Need more parking at Eden Center. A lot of people drive in from out of town and we need a parking garage there. There is also not enough parking for the condos and apartments, as people visiting cannot park on Roosevelt Boulevard.
- Crosswalks- would like more opportunities to cross the street in the area.
- Can we put bus bays in the Eden Center so that buses can stop there at official bus stops?
- I live on Hillwood Avenue- the truck traffic is terrible. There are cracks in my yard and house, I can feel the vibrations. I would like the trucks to travel not on Hillwood. The City tried to get the trucks on Route 50 at some point but they said it didn't work with the overpasses or the weight of the trucks.
- The City did a lot of work near Roosevelt and on Hillwood, but it didn't really solve the issues. Can we take width from the medians, and give that to pedestrians and people on bikes?

Vehicle Mobility

- Shuttle service: Metro to East End; safety at night, need frequent service
- Connect better with Metro
- Need a frequent shuttle service with Metro
- Need a shuttle/bus stop inside Eden Center
- Need a public garage
- Eden Center entrance is unsafe; traffic accidents there
- Hillwood traffic speeds; needs a total redesign with focus on walkability and bikability
- Keep trucks out of residential areas

Miscellaneous

- Make Eden Center more unique (sic.) with signage, wayfinding, directions
- Can we add wayfinding at the EFC metro, and from downtown Falls Church?
- Multi-use, senior access
- Need better education on how to get from Point A to Point B – a website with transportation options, wayfinding signs