

WEST ASHLEY REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

September 13, 2023

The regular meeting of the West Ashley Revitalization Commission was held this date at The Reserve in Citadel Mall located at 2070 Sam Rittenberg Boulevard at 5:30 p.m.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Councilmember Peter Shahid, Chair, Councilmember Karl Brady, Jr., John deStephano, St. Andrews PSD, Jim Garrett, Diane Hamilton, Kenneth Marolda, Drell Parker, Charles Smith, Amiee Sutton, Mayor John Tecklenburg, Councilmember Keith Waring. **STAFF:** Molly Conner, Annexation Planner, Christopher Morgan, Planning Director and Eric Pohlman, West Ashley Project Coordinator.

Approval of Minutes from 2022 Meetings City Staff (January 12, March 9, April 18, May 11, July 13, November 9)

Approval of Minutes from March 8, 2023 Meeting - City Staff

Chair Shahid noted as there wasn't a quorum at that time to approve Items 2 and 3, they would move on Item 4 on the agenda.

Magnolia Area Character Appraisal: Request for Recommendation - Commissioner Kenneth Marolda

Mr. Pohlman said this was continuing the current move through West Ashley to categorize and research the history of the different subdivisions and neighborhoods that haven't had a character appraisal done. Those neighborhoods that have had character appraisals were Old Windemere, Byrnes Down and Avondale.

Mr. Marolda said they completed the Avondale Area Character Appraisal in November, 2021. It was presented to the Commission for endorsement and sent to the Planning Commission to be accepted as a resource.

After the completion of that project, they had a graduate intern who needed additional work. He had worked on Avondale and he requested West Ashley Connects as a non-profit. They provided another project for him and they chose Magnolia as it was directly adjacent to Avondale, relatively similar in character and age. He had been in touch with neighborhood president at that time, Bridget Lussier, who had expressed interest.

Mr. Marolda thanked those who helped with historic contributions: Commissioners Diane Hamilton and Charlie Smith, and Donna Jacobs, Theresa Tidstrom, Ina Bootle, James Ward, board member of West Ashley Connects, intern Joshua Petro and Mr. Pohlman, coordinator of the project.

Referring to page 7 of the area appraisal, Mr. Marolda noted the definition of the difference between the subdivision and neighborhood. The neighborhood boundaries were created in 2010 for the application to the Neighborhood Council, which was drawn up by Ms. Lussier. She intentionally included the commercial parcels, Magnolia Park and Community Gardens, which at that time had not been rehabbed into the community space of today, along with the Schoolhouse, cemeteries and part of the bikeway. It also included a church and the Goble property, which would be discussed later, to distinguish that from the Magnolia Subdivision, which was a single piece of land that was subdivided into part of the neighborhood.

Mr. Marolda indicated on page 10 the chronology of the history, which was similar to what was done for Avondale. In 1670 it was the Lord Proprietor's plantation. Much of the information here came from a work published by Ms. Hamilton in a book on Maryville entitled "The Audacity of A People". They broke it down to some condensed dates to give an overview of how the land evolved over time.

In a diagram on page 11, the existence of few features were highlighted as far back as 1823 that were significant:

- A cemetery noted on the plat was believed to be burial place of Dr. John Lining
- An old creek bed called Old Town Creek that currently have some flooding issues

Through the Civil War it remained a plantation and later was divided up around 1885. Mary Taft, who purchased the property after the Civil War, began dividing 10 acre tracts into smaller 50x100 lots. A significant portion was purchased by BSBI (Brit Shalom Beth Israel) Synagogue to be used as a cemetery. The gatehouse of the cemetery was believed to be the oldest remaining structure within the Magnolia area. A portion of the cemetery was also being used by Emmanuel Conservative Synagogue.

Mrs. Taft also sold off property largely to African-Americans but also to some Whites, Germans and Chinese. There was a mix of people who resided in the area. A church, Jerusalem R.U.M.E., was founded 1897.

Mary Matthews Just, a prominent figure in the area, died 1902.

In 1904, the first federal map showed the road structure. It showed Magnolia and Sycamore as existing, and a blue outline of the neighborhood as it was today. Mr. Marolda noted that the roads were very old roads.

As we move along in time, houses started to fill in and roads started to be built. What is Maryville today was the Town of Maryville. It was growing. The Seaboard Coastline Railroad was there and one can still see that creek with water coming into what was then farmland and a few scattered houses.

The town of Maryville's boundaries expanded to include this area. Most people think of it on the Ashley side of the river where the Seaboard Coastline Railway was, which was now the bikeway. But it extended all the way to the corner of Magnolia Road and Sycamore Avenue.

The Gobel house, a prominent house on Magnolia Road, was constructed 1925 on a 2 acre tract.

The Town of Maryville was dissolved 1936 by the General Assembly.

In a 1939 aerial image, the area was carved up into small farm blocks. There were some trees, small buildings, houses and the cemetery tract. A much more detailed plat survey that was commissioned showed lot delineations, some streets and the cemetery. It clearly showed the 50x100 lots from 1886 and it was very prominent in the Maryville area.

The Albermarle School was also created in 1944. It showed up on the aerial image taken that year. Today it is known as the Schoolhouse, where some of the Commission meetings were held.

Around the same time Leon Steinberg purchased 36 acres around the schoolhouse and around the cemetery to create Magnolia. Aerial photography taken in 1949 showed the construction of the subdivision in progress, a few roads and a few small buildings.

Mr. Marolda noted they could pass through the rest of the report as it was repetitive of what was done for the Avondale Character Appraisal - the age of the roads, roads ownership, multi-modal infrastructure, and St. Andrews Boulevard street section. He said they could back to any one of those in detail if the Commission wanted but it was just to show the diligence that was shown to the character in the area.

Architectural Styles

Under Architectural Styles, the neighborhood had two predominant architectural styles and a few other example of styles, but the predominate is ranch and minimal traditional, which was typical of that time period. They broke down the different architectural styles with definitions and examples from the neighborhood and provided façade materials.

They listed the façade materials. One primary façade material was vinyl siding and it was noted on the bottom that some structures might have more than one. They were trying to gauge the primary material. They also looked at height of the structures, lot coverage, units per parcel, and density.

The Gobel House - The Gobel House was unique architecturally as it resembled the King House, located on Avenue of Oaks on the Ashleyville side. Both were owned by very prominent White people who had moved into the Town of Maryville and the architecture was very similar. The owners purchased the land

from the same individuals so they believed they were sister houses and they were the only two remaining ones that were known.

The land the Gobel house is on is exactly eighteen 50x100 Maryville lots that comprised a two-acre parcel. That meant the Gobel family bought an entire block of this neighborhood to make their home.

Henry Gobel was a musician and was prominent during the Charleston renaissance. Mr. Marolda noted he believed the property was presented to the Technical Review Committee (TRC) for a recent subdivision of the land.

Albemarle Elementary School - Mr. Marolda commented they wanted to highlight the Schoolhouse because it received a Carolopolis award in West Ashley, which people don't usually think of West Ashley as having homes or structures worthy of this type of historic preservation.

It was originally a segregated school which was desegregated, and currently serves as the offices of the Charleston Parks Conservancy, which managed the community garden adjacent to it.

Marzluff Classroom – Mr. Marolda said this information was provided to him by Sue Griffin, a retired City employee who attended Albermarle School. She remembered this building, which was the special education classroom. The teacher, Elizabeth Marzluff, was renowned for the way she worked with students who had special needs. So they called it the Marzluff Classroom, which was how Ms. Griffith referred to it. It was a brick building that likely dated to the early 1920s.

Post Office – The only significance of the post office was it reflects the prominence West Ashley had grown to by the 1970's. There had been previously three post offices – one in Ashleyville, which was within the town of Maryville at the time, one in Avondale and one in Ashley Forest. This one represented the significant growth of the area.

Jurisdictional Boundaries

The entire neighborhood was within the City of Charleston. The land was originally within Maryville if you looked at zoning.

Racial Restrictions

When he created the Avondale Area Character Appraisal, Mayor Tecklenburg specifically asked about racial restrictions. So they made a point to include it in this document anticipating the question would arise for this neighborhood. There were more restrictions, not for the entire neighborhood as it was known today but for the entire subdivision that was created in 1949 and 1950. Any parcels that were divided as part of that project were subject to those racial restrictions. Any parcels that weren't part of that project were not - the Gobel House, the RUME church, schoolhouse, cemeteries and some of the commercial buildings.

Land Uses

Looking at how the land was actually used, not how it was zoned and not for future land use, but how it functioned. They separated out residential, civic and religious, park and green space, and commercial.

Future Land Use

Mr. Marolda noted the future land use map was taken strictly from the Charleston City Plan, 2021 Comprehensive Plan.

Greenspaces

Backyard Park - Bridget Lussier, Magnolia Neighborhood President, wanted it known that Backyard Park was in the heart of the neighborhood and very important to the residents. It became a City park in 1973 but it originally platted in 1950.

Magnolia Park and Community Garden – It was shown on the 1826 plat. There was a cemetery area in the back of it. It was originally the schoolyard for Albermarle. It was redeveloped in 2013.

West Ashley Bikeway – Ms. Lussier intentionally included the bikeway within the neighborhood boundaries because the homes along it related to it and use it routinely for recreational purposes.

Tree Canopy Coverage – This was also included by Ms. Lussier's request. A slide of an aerial of the areas done by the City of Charleston shows the tree coverage over the streets and the homes

Wetlands – A slide was also included to show the wetlands.

Historical Trends

Magnolia neighborhood reflected a trend of agricultural to suburban land development where former truck farming plantations were converted to residential usage in the post-World War II era.

Roads on the interior of the neighborhood were platted as part of the subdivision while the major roads that formed the boundaries of the neighborhoods were owned by the South Carolina Department of Transportation.

The Magnolia Civic Club was formed around 1950 and became inactive during the 1970s as the original families from the neighborhood moved elsewhere and children moved out. This trend was also seen in Avondale where the civic club was created in 1945, fell into a period of inactivity when the many of the original families moved away.

Creek systems dated back to the colonial era.

Re-use of an antebellum plantation cemetery, probable John Lining site.

Backyard Park neighborhood park, comparable to Avondale's Arcadian Park, Wedgepark in Carolina Terrace, Godfrey Park in Moreland and the historic Invincible Park in Maryville-Ashleyville on the Ashleyville side.

When the subdivisions were created, all of these neighborhoods had little internal parks for residents.

They calculated the median average lot size showing Magnolia, Avondale and Maryville side by side.

Chair Shahid asked Mr. Marolda what was the recommendation he wanted to go forward for the survey.

Mr. Marolda asked the Commission to endorse it the same way they endorsed the Avondale appraisal when there a quorum was present so it could be passed to the Planning Commission.

Councilmember Waring asked Mr. Marolda if he could pinpoint when the Town of Maryville transformed into becoming Maryville on one side and Ashleyville on the other. He questioned if St. Andrews Boulevard had anything to do with it.

Ms. Hamilton said they couldn't answer that question. They haven't been able to find a specific bit of documentation when the division occurred. They thought as people worked and lived over time, when you gave directions to where you live and you wanted to designate your area, you would say you lived close to the Ashley River side. They were just speculating. They haven't been able to find any specific documentation.

She noted if you looked at some of the old plats, you would find example where Milton Grant's house was located, which was on the same street where Thomas Carr lived on Main Street, and check the deeds, it states the subdivision is Maryville even though it was on Main Street on the Ashleyville side.

Councilmember Waring asked how big was the Hillsborough Plantation.

Ms. Hamilton said the Hillsborough Plantation started at Main Street, extended to the Old Towne Creek and on the other side was Sycamore Avenue. It shot diagonally into Boundary Street, which was present day Diana Street. So they were looking from Main Street to Diana Street, and Old Towne Creek and Sycamore Street on the other side.

Donna Jacobs said Hillsborough went all the way to White Oak Drive, not Maryville. It was 550 acres.

Mr. Marolda said they felt that over time the size of the plantation changed. Tracts were sold off to neighbors. At the time it was subdivided it was about 550 acres. That extended to about White Oak Drive. Previously it was larger than that but at the time it was subdivided, that was about the size.

Chair Shahid asked who was involved with this.

Mr. Marolda said historical background information was provided by Ms. Hamilton, Charlie Smith, Ina Bootle, Donna Jacobs, Sue Griffin, Joshua Petro, graduate intern who pulled the information together. James Ward, board member of West Ashley Connects, Theresa Tidstrom, and Mr. Pohlman.

Chair Shahid said the Gobel property still maintained a good portion of its foot print. Developers have tried to come in, unsuccessfully, to redevelop that land. When Bridget was president of the neighborhood association, she was adamant about it. He questioned if there was something else they could do to put a preservation marker to preserve that area. He was curious as to the history of the family who built the house.

When they were addressing the rezoning of that property on Winston Street where they wanted a child care facility, that was also the home of Isaac D. Peek, a prominent South Carolinian who was on the Highway Commission. He noted there were interesting pockets of different locations of houses throughout West Ashley, including these. Most he thought were built within the same timeframe. He questioned whether the Peek house was built around the 1920s.

Mr. Marolda said it was built 1939. He submitted a PIF (Preliminary Information Form) form to the State Preservation Office for 1332 Ashley River Road. They determined its eligibility for the National Register for Historic Places based on the significance of Isaac Peek and the age of the house. He was a prominent historical figure. He built Avondale, South Old Town Acres, St. Andrews Boulevard and helped get water across the Ashley River. He did many prominent things for the community.

Chair Shahid thought this area was very special and the location of it was desirable. The City had plans for Ackerman Park to include a more permanent structure for the West Ashley Farmer's Market. They were working with Grambling on redesigning the Sycamore property, which had been stuck in neutral for some reason.

He was glad Mr. Marolda didn't say the Post Office was significantly important from an architectural standpoint but it was significantly important as to the prominence of government involvement in the area. He learned in one of his public administration classes when you wanted to spur development, the push was to get a post office located. When you located a post office, you had to put in a road. If you had a road you had access and you hope you would find a retail store or something where people would come that had a need. So coming to a post office was historically a very early form of development in government and private sector working together to insure development of a particular area.

Chair Shahid called for a motion that they accept the recommendation from Mr. Marolda and his staff to adopt and recommend the appraisal go forward to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Smith moved for approval. Ms. Hamilton seconded the motion.

Mayor Tecklenberg said he, Councilmember Waring and Chair Shahid just attended their budget committee meeting. They had the Planning Commission report for their budget request for next year. It included funding for an architectural, historic and cultural asset inventory survey for West Ashley and it would tie in with this appraisal and the Avondale appraisal.

Councilmember Waring asked Mr. Marolda to go back to the page where the building that was subject to being lost on the Albermarle School site and share his comments on the status of the building now that Councilmember Brady and Mayor Tecklenberg were present.

Mr. Marolda said they believed this building was initially built in the early 1900s, probably as a homestead. They had some documentation of who might have lived there. When the Albermarle School was created, it was used as a special education classroom. The teacher was Mrs. Marzluff. Sue Griffin, who worked for the City for many years, attended Albermarle and remembered that building being in use. She said Mrs. Marzluff was renowned for her work with these special needs children. He found newspaper articles talking about how wonderful she was in this role. Ms. Griffin mentioned it was her wish that if this building was ever to be reused or rehabilitated, it should be named or in some way this woman should be honored for her contribution.

The building was sitting there in a state of abandonment. He had thoughts about what could be done with it and shared it with several people in the community.

Councilmember Waring felt they should set aside some money in this budget to stabilize the building. He felt it shouldn't take that much.

Mayor Tecklenburg said he walked around the building after Mr. Smith brought it to his attention when they did the cemetery approval. He spoke with the people with the Charleston Parks Conservancy to see if they had some use for building that they could propose for it. He said to get a roof on it first.

Chair Shahid said there was a motion and second on the floor.

The motion passed unanimously.

Councilmember Waring asked if the motion included they stabilize the building.

Chair Shahid said they would retract and add as a second motion that the inclusion of the recommendation was the City allocate enough funds to stabilize the building and he added study appropriate uses for it.

Councilmember Waring seconded the modified motion.

Chair Shahid said they were going to retract a little bit with the modifier and the amended motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Shahid called for a motion for approval of the minutes from 2022 meetings – January 12, March 9, April 18, May 11, July 13 and November 9, and minutes of March 8, 2023, and he entertained a motion to consolidate items 2 and 3.

Mayor Tecklenberg moved for approval. Councilmember Brady seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Design Review Board (DRB) Demolition Criteria - Mr. Pohlman

On March 8, there was a motion to request that City Council to consider reviewing procedures within the existing boards the City had to expand protections and get stronger demolition guidelines for the West Ashley area, create an inventory and find out which of them was moving forward through the budget.

Since then, he, the DRB and legal staff had been working to figure out ways to better clarify their definition of demolition within the West Ashley area. What this amendment sought to do was create clearer standards for the review of demolition requests as well as provide boards better guidance for those older structures that didn't rise above the test for greater than 50 years of age.

A version of this was presented to the Community Development Standing Committee about two to three weeks ago so they knew this was going to be coming before them.

The current DRB demolition guidelines were:

- Architectural and aesthetic features of the structure
- The nature, the quality of the structure including its architectural fabric
- Any historical significance, the nature and quality of the surrounding area
- The structure's contribution to the overall streetscape of the area

These guidelines were weighed against something defined as being 50 years so it had to be reviewed to see if it should be demolished.

What the Commission wanted to change it to something much clearer:

- The structure would be deemed to contribute to the historic character of the area if the structure was at least 50 years and if one of the following applied

It now clearly laid out what it needed to be weighed against when someone was considering whether or not they could demolish a structure, there was a better set of regulations to weigh it against.

Also, if the structure was at least 50 years or older and none of the above applied, there was still a test against whether or not it could be demolished for other reasons such as physical integrity or if good faith efforts had been put forward to preserve it.

In addition, something they noticed was frequently when something was submitted, it was posted in front of the building about 7 to 9 days ahead of time. That doesn't give the community very much time to come forward with history because a lot of times that was how staff was finding out about the history of these structures in West Ashley was the community who had been in the area come forward with it but it was a real rush to get it into staff and then all of a sudden it was back and forth at this board.

Instead what this does is state it had to be posted at least 15 days prior. This sets it on two rounds for DRB. If it was submitted by the time of the first DRB review of the month, it won't be heard until the second DRB meeting of the month. There was much more time for the community to fact check the criteria that was submitted to staff and let staff know while giving the staff time to being depth research as well.

This was presented to Community Development on August 17th for direction. Some questions were raised regarding including language about economic factors. Columbia and Savannah had economic factors where it was deemed that if the structure would not have reasonable return it could be demolished. The difference between Charleston and Columbia was the land value in Charleston. Very few structures would actually be termed to have good return on it so should that be part of the language. The Committee felt that made the process clearer for the applicant.

Concerns were raised about affordable housing and conflicts with demolition on that one. Staff felt that might be something to further look into.

Planning Commission will review a draft of the ordinance in October. If Planning approved the draft it will go forward to City Council for first reading in November and if there were no big revisions, it would go on to second and final reading in December.

Mr. Marolda noted sometimes the best way to solve a problem was to look at how other cities with similar problems solved them. He thought taking into account the economic considerations of the developer was very productive as oftentimes the City got stuck with a development they didn't like because they felt frustrated that the process hadn't considered the viability their project person faced.

He said projects like the historically inventory Mr. Pohlman mentioned earlier provided the context for DRB to make decisions and evaluate the value of the properties. If they were talking architectural significance, and there was one house remaining, or two houses remaining if they were talking about the Gobel house, in all of West Ashley that were from this time frame, the board should treat that differently and they needed to have the knowledge to do this. So these types of surveys, and hopefully a more comprehensive one, would give them the information to make those decisions.

Mr. DeStephano said the house he lived in was built 1976. If he wanted to rip the garage off, he had to go through a DRB process that would continue to prolong an already prolonged process when you're talking about any kind of construction, especially in the context of revitalization. It seemed they were adding a

layer to an already complex revitalization redevelopment or just a development. He felt some concern there. For an urban area like West Ashley, 50 years might be too aggressive.

Mr. Pohlman said this was for the commercial Design Review Board corridors only. Unless the house was on the commercial design corridors it wouldn't be taken into account right now. It did pertain to residential houses that were on the corridor.

In reference to 50 years, 50 years was in line with the National Park Service and the Department of Interior. That was where they began classifying historic at and this was where staff pulled from. That made it defensible and keeping in line with national standards. In the Old Village in Mount Pleasant, if it was built before 1935 it was considered historic. They just went to the national standard of 50 because it was being considered slightly arbitrary as to why they chose that date.

Mr. Pohlman added that was in terms of the profession of historic preservation, something they were struggling with because 1973 was considered historic now. He pulled up a map from the March meeting and everything inside I-526 was 1973 and older. But with the other elements in here that it was weighted against was where it helped counterbalance it.

Councilmember Waring agreed with both Mr. Marolda and Mr. deStephano. Mr. deStephano spoke in terms of his residence but at the last meeting he and Councilman Moody spoke in terms of where we were now. Citadel Mall was opened January, 1981 so it was 42 years old. The City had rezoned high dense apartments, even including an office building that could be 15 stories tall. In virtually a snap of a minute, the mall complex was going to be 50 years old. So you had to have some kind of exemptions for commercial developments like this.

Councilmember Waring noted they have had enormous problems trying to revitalize the mall. His understanding was there was more consolidated ownership. So he hoped and pray, because he was from West Ashley, as was Ms. Hamilton, that they have flexibility. If an open concept comes, as Mount Pleasant has, to this mall, he wouldn't want 50 years aspect to be a hindrance. But he didn't want to have as an unintended consequence the additional bureaucracy. There were certain areas that needed to have exceptions.

Chair Shahid asked Mr. Pohlman to pull up the jurisdictional boundaries of DRB. As part of the Daniel Island, it exempts a huge part of West Ashley. It was rather limited jurisdictionally.

Mr. Smith didn't think the proposed changes were intended to disallow any building over 50 years to get approval to be demolished. It just made clearer the things that should be considered when approval was requested. This helped to define those things you consider but it didn't mean everything over 50 years would get an approval.

Mr. Pohlman noted the DRB's jurisdictional boundaries were colored purple on the map. It held itself to the major commercial corridors, which were highlighted in green. It came up on the upper peninsula area, Daniel Island, Cainhoy, James and Johns Island.

In response to a request by Chair Shahid, Mr. Pohlman listed the corridors west of the Ashley River:

- Sam Rittenberg,
- Old Towne Road
- St. Andrews Boulevard
- Dupont Road
- Savannah Highway
- Wappo Road
- Orleans Road
- Henry Tecklenberg Boulevard
- Glenn McConnell Boulevard
- Bees Ferry Road

- I-526
- Main Road
- River Road
- Maybank Highway
- Central Park Road
- Folly Road
- Folly Road Boulevard
- James Island Connector
- Harborview Road

He mentioned the map was out of date so Magnolia Road only went up to the Avondale commercial area at Savannah Highway. It didn't span the entirety of Magnolia Road.

The other corridors were:

- King Street
- Meeting Street
- King Street Extension and I-26 on the Upper Peninsula
- I-526 on Daniel Island along all of the interior roads there
- Clements Ferry Road.

Mr. Smith said he wanted to reiterate that it had always been part of their mandate for higher density housing and the type of developments they have been proposing was all in the high ground commercial corridor and those defunct shopping centers. The conversion of the defunct shopping centers to housing and communities that function was the highest priority. That was what the plan called for.

Councilmember Waring said he understood. He didn't want unintended consequences to be additional bureaucracy for the person trying to make that conversion from what is to what we would like to see.

Mr. Marolda said the example that came to mind that hit all of these points was 829 St. Andrews Boulevard where you had a defunct shopping center that was essentially three parcels and probably the oldest building on St. Andrew Boulevard was the gas station building now being used a used car lot. That building dated probably from 1950 to 1949. It was well within that 50 years but he didn't think there was anyone there or anywhere else who would argue that the historic value of that building should hold up the development of that shopping center. There was no criteria that would mandate that.

There were some examples that were very clear where it was just a cinderblock box. It wasn't historic or architecturally nor culturally significant otherwise but because it was in that corridor, it should go.. It shouldn't hold up revitalization, as Mr. Smith was saying, to higher density. He thought that example was a very clear one they could all relate to.

Chair Shahid said there were very few and very precious properties within the DRB corridor map they needed to be concerned about protecting and maintain the character. The guiding principle of Plan West Ashley was they don't upset the character of the neighborhood. The Gobel house and the Blake house would fit perfectly into that criteria. Balance was the key issue here and making sure they were able to accomplish and avoid those unintended consequences.

Sumar Street Redevelopment

Mr. Pohlman said on April 4 there was a presentation - City Council ad hoc group. The majority of the meeting was held in executive session. City Council debated the business talking points that were being developed in terms of the developer and where things were going. When the meeting came out of executive session, no action was taken.

At the June 20th City Council meeting, they presented three alternatives for design. One had an underground parking deck, another had an above ground parking deck and the other had surface parking only. All three had the commercial, civic and greenspace as part of them.

There was a vote taken for support of the underground parking deck to move it forward. The vote was tied and the motion failed. There was a motion taken for the above ground deck. The motion was deferred and sent to the Community Development Committee.

At the Community Development Committee meeting on July 20th, it was presented again and debated out. There was a motion to recommend to City Council for Planning staff to look at Plan West Ashley to develop an option that included a civic center, greenspace and an accompanying parking lot for those two uses.

The Community Development Committee reported to City Council August 15th. At that meeting City Council did vote on the motion as reported out. The motion passed.

Last night at the September 12th City Council meeting, it had been requested to go back to the Community Development Committee for further direction and clarification to staff. As part of this process, there might also be Traffic and Transportation Committee or Real Estate Committee to further the process along.

Mr. Pohlman added part of the motion from the Community Development Committee asked for to be looked at from Cosgrove Bridge down to Sumar Street as part of the redevelopment project.

St. Andrews Public Service District Update Requested by Commissioner DeStefano

Mr. de Stefano said the PSD acquired the former Piggly Wiggly site on Parsonage Road with Greenbelt funds from Charleston County about 4 years ago. They began planning for their new Fire Station 3 to replace the old fire station that was literally sitting in the marsh on Highway 61. The building project stalled during COVID and they picked it back up about a year and a half ago.

The County approached them about housing an EMS unit in the new fire station 24-7. They had to go back to their plan with Trident and Coast Architects, their design and build partners. They redesigned it and they were literally there. The design review had been approved from both sides and if permitting went as planned, they wanted to remove the concrete. They were advised by the County that wasn't a good idea at this juncture because it would require a complete set of stormwater permitting and they would have to put in a permanent stormwater system, then go back and tear it out two years later for the station.

The good news was everything was well under way and they were moving forward very quickly. They were expecting to go to permits and reviews quickly. They did maintain the property and respond immediately to any complaints if there was an event. The call goes straight to them and was handled immediately.

They would have a new fire station in about 18 months. The remainder of the property would be on-site water retention as well as greenspace. Their new environmental service building, which they moved into almost a year ago, was up and running. There were three automated trucks on the road.

Mr. de Stephano said they were also in charge of street lights, not all of them but some of them. They were in the process of working with Dominion Energy to replace the old halide bulbs with LED bulbs. They were more efficient and lasted considerably longer. If anyone had any questions, he said to call him directly or Christie Holderness, District Manager.

Chair Shahid said they were keenly aware of the unsightly portion of the old Piggly Wiggly site on Parsonage Road. There was a lot of work done to get control of that property and demolish the grocery store. The City contributed some Greenbelt funds to help the project along. He understood that a Parker's Kitchen/Gas Station was planned on the corner for that area.

Mr. de Stephano said there was at one time there was but that has disappeared. They weren't aware of any activity on the corner. Their concern was the 4.2 acres adjacent to it. It was the deal at one time but he thought, for numerous reasons, that whole plan was pulled and they were in agreement. The last he heard was something might be in the works they weren't aware of.

Chair Shahid said Plan West Ashley had specific designs for that corner that tied in perfectly with what the PSD wanted for that – greenspace, retention pond, placement of the fire station and the EMS station fit nicely with that. He questioned if there was some kind of coordination they could work with to try to get control of the property.

Ms. Holderness said their teams reached out to the current owner. It was never sold. They retained ownership.

Mayor Tecklenburg asked for further input or explanation of the greenspace and the water retention behind where the fire station would go. As an example, the City was finally putting out for bid their water retention project in Shadowmoss. Even though it was a water project, it included a playground and walking trail. The City's goal was to make water retention areas as park like as possible. He didn't know how far along the PSD had come with their plan but he wanted to encourage active and park like features for that retention area.

Mr. de Stephano said retention was job one. HLA was handling civil work on the site and they had shown them some cool "Central Park" like renderings. It would be a passive greenspace, which meant they won't have jungle gyms or that sort of thing, but there would be a walking path of sorts. They haven't gotten into the weeds that far yet because they were more concerned about getting their firemen out of the marsh. But it would be more of a passive type neighborhood greenspace.

Chair Shahid asked Mr. Pohlman to include Mr. de Stephano every other meeting or third meeting to get updates.

Mr. de Stephano noted he could come every couple of months to give an update.

Public Comment Period

No one formally signed up to speak.

Mr. Pohlman said there was one comment submitted by Anthony Bryant.

Mr. Pohlman said Mr. Bryant's comment was something along the lines of several different Magistrate Courts of South Carolina dealing with Dominion Energy's rate increases. Mr. Bryant mentioned his Bryant group was filed with the City of Charleston.

James Ward, a retired professor from the College of Charleston where he taught preservation, thanked Mr. Marolda for his report. In reference to the comments regarding the 50 year rule, he said the 50 year rule was just a point of beginning, which triggered a discussion about whether or not a place was worth keeping. The whole essence of preservation was what Mr. Marolda was driving at in his report – to try to define more carefully what authenticity was for West Ashley.

This opened a forum for people to talk about what kind of place they were looking to have, not that they didn't want anything new. The whole idea was the history and culture of the place gets wrapped into its future so that we won't lose track of who we are. That was what preservation was all about, create something for the future so that we could stay on track and create something meaningful over time.

Barbara Bernard, Carolina Terrace, said she lived on Coburg Creek. While she was sitting in her house several miles away she heard that there was a discussion at 5:30 p.m. regarding West Ashley's drainage. She hoped this was the right place at the right time.

Chair Shahid said the Commission had a very thorough update in either January or February of this year from Matt Fountain, director of the city's Department of Stormwater Drainage, who went through the stormwater projects dealing with stormwater issues throughout West Ashley. City Councilmember Appel gave an update at City Council last night about flooding by the library. If there was something specific she was looking for, they could direct her to the Stormwater Department.

Mrs. Bernard said it would be regarding Coburg Creek and the culvert that doesn't supply the water under Highway 17 that comes up into her yard.

2023 Plan West Ashley Update

Mr. Pohlman said they had a monumental year this year. It's been five years and they were to start taking a deeper look into it and relay what was and wasn't working in terms of Plan West Ashley. He had PDFs

and hard copies of the plan. He asked the Commissioners to look it over and tell him what they felt needed amending and if he had missed anything. They were currently at 74% of the items in Plan West Ashley that was either being worked on or has been completed. There were other items that were up next. He broke it down by chapter and made it very easy to read.

92% of the items in Community Design and Development were either completed or underway. The easiest one under that was adopt Plan West Ashley. They have a West Ashley Community brand and identity. They were also coordinating implementation activities with Charleston County.

Under Transportation, 68% of the items were being worked on or have been completed, such as Ashley River Pedestrian Bridge, guidelines for West Ashley Greenway, district wide transportation management studies have been completed in different areas. They were continuing to upgrade crosswalks and sidewalks all around the West Ashley area.

54% of Resilient Infrastructure, was completed or underway:

- Greenbelt purchases along Church Creek
- FEMA purchases in the Shadowmoss area
- Recreational needs assessment in the new parks and recreation master plan
- The City's stormwater development codes have been updated
- The Dupont/ Wappo drainage standards were adopted
- Continual support of the West Ashley Greenway master plan

77% of the items under Affordable Housing had been worked on or completed:

- Funding and implementing stormwater infrastructure in Church Creek and Dupont/Wappo
- Assessment for affordability needs
- Adjusting zoning to allow more affordable housing options
- Encouraging diverse housing options where the goals in the Comprehensive Plan were laid out such as where it could go, how it could go
- And they were moving forward in the zoning code rewrite with broadening that out, additional tools to expand opportunities.

Under Economic Development, 74% was being worked on which ranged from:

- Promoting West Ashley strengths
- Marketing and networking goals for targeting industries
- Citadel Mall planned unit development
- Cross-developmental coordination in economic development projects
- The expansion of MUSC and other medical facilities in the area.

Mr. Pohlman said he had been compiling this information since 2018. He asked the Commission to let him know if there was anything outdated.

Mayor Tecklenburg said at the Budget Committee meeting this afternoon, the Planning Department was proposing for next year's budget a planning all way to concept design of Rethink Sam Rittenberg, which was a multi-jurisdictional effort.

They needed to include the Department of Transportation (DOT), the County, the Public Service District, all jurisdictions that touch Sam Rittenberg from one end to the other and still rethink the whole street. He noted when he drove down from Charlestown Drive back to Highway 61, as wide as that right-of-way was, there was no sidewalks and no safe place for bikes and pedestrians. He said if they were going to realize further aspects of the Plan West Ashley, they needed to figure out what they're going to do different with Sam Rittenberg.

Since the time the plan was approved, DOT officially adopted the complete streets policy last year. . He said it was time to put it to a test. If it is a DOT street let's go through the process and come up with a design. DOT would put their money where they mouth was and make Sam Rittenberg a complete street for the City. If City Council approved that funding for that planning effort, they would like to engage all of their partners to do that.

Chair Shahid said part of that Rethink Sam Rit. included timing on several intersections along Sam Rittenberg and Old Towne Road as well. He was happy to see his pet project on Orang Grove Road and Sam Rittenberg would be addressed.

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, November 8.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Marcia L. Grant
Administrative Assistant II