

Summary – Stakeholder Committee Meetings ▼

Preface

The following items were discussed during the Stakeholder Committee meetings for the Town of Smithfield Growth Management Plan and Comprehensive Transportation Plan update.

▼ Meeting Date

- Date: Wednesday May 02, 2018
Time: 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM
Location: Town of Smithfield Council Chambers

▼ Meeting Notes

Six focus groups were interviewed to identify issues and opportunities for Smithfield as it moves forward. The following is a summary of that knowledge, perceptions, and insight.

Developers, Builders, HBA, Land Planners, Architects, Engineers, & Surveyors

→ Positioning, trends, and perceptions

- Outside perception of Smithfield is less flattering than the reality
- Property values and sales volume are increasing
- Smithfield has tremendous potential
- Growth along I-95
- Relatively older median age (53 yrs old)
- School district lines have hurt Smithfield
- Cleveland and Flowers Plantation preferentially promoted by realtors, developers, builders, etc.
- Most homebuyers are looking for new construction
- No follow-through on improvement plans – Market Street streetscape

→ Transportation

- Concerns about parking and traffic on Market Street during certain times of the day; road diet and additional parking desired by some (3 lanes or 2 lanes with median)
- Downtown comments:
 - Speed limit not enforced
 - Retail operations complain about lack of parking
 - Parking especially lacking when court is in session. Police and sheriffs have no place to park.
 - Wayfinding improvements may help
 - County courthouse needs lots or a parking deck
- Opposition to realignment of Buffalo Road into neighborhoods

→ Town needs

- Increased water pressure, esp. in west Smithfield

- Fire hydrants have been colored that do not have enough pressure
 - Updated regulations. Example of Bella Square development. No zoning option for smaller lot homes with rear driveways.
 - Marketing and social medial campaign to improve the image of the Town (i.e. the original Johnston Count?)
 - Increased partnering with private entities for development; possibly relinquishing town-owned lots
 - Bring families downtown
 - Appearance
 - Appearance commission has done some plantings. In gateways. Especially along Market St. near downtown, west side of river and near Outlet Mall.
 - Welcome signs (i.e. like the brick ones in Apex)
 - Undergrounding utility lines was done in downtown, but need to make it more pedestrian friendly.
- Land use and growth issues
- Desire for zoning to allow higher density, without being apartments
 - Desire for reduced lot size requirements – min. 7,500 sqft lots recommended
 - Kelly Road extension will increase residential demand in that area
 - High growth areas:
 - West Smithfield
 - Kelly Road area
 - One or two other areas needed
 - Need increased coordination between Town and County in land development regulation
 - Joint representation on Technical Review Committee could help
 - Increase coordination between site plan approval (town) and water/sewer extension (county)
- Public safety
- Water pressure increase needed for fire safety
- Downtown housing and amenities
- Housing and development
 - Desire for improved housing and additional options
 - Infill development and targeted intervention for property rehab, incl. greenspace
 - Nonprofit or town intervention may be necessary
 - Incentivize new and infill development in downtown, need to make things fit with character of neighborhoods though
 - Town owns some lots, public/private partnership (PPP) opportunity?
 - Retail and Amenities
 - Need businesses to bring families downtown
 - Desire for improved park areas, incl. amphitheater
 - Increase marketing and visibility of greenway
 - Increase views and attractiveness of the river
 - Potential to improve west side of the river, as public park/greenspace

Realtors, Appraisers, Large Landowners

- Positioning, trends, and perceptions

- Railroad tracks and the river compress the town
 - Residential component by the school is important
 - Lower-end housing in south Smithfield
 - I-95 is important, brings people to town. Need to improve user experience.
 - I-795 may hurt Outlet Malls
 - Relative attractiveness will rise along with Raleigh property values
 - Lagging school system is an issue
 - River and greenway are attractions
 - Inclusive park (Miracle Park) is an asset
 - Community college average age decreasing; also focuses on workforce training
 - School system is an issue. Should schools become magnets.
- Transportation
- Roundabout at Outlet Mall must be re-designed
 - Flooding at underpass is a barrier
 - Localized traffic congestion concerns
 - Localized parking concerns - old hotel; parking for County offices; Johnston Street
- Town needs
- Targeted business recruitment
 - Housing renovation and/or rehab program
 - Gateway enhancement and more parks (i.e. Knightdale Station Park as precedent).
- Land use and growth issues
- Focus on downtown
 - Increased stormwater regulations hamper development
 - Opportunity for light industrial on west side of town
 - Growth will be in services, travel, tourism.
 - Need to address dead shopping centers west of town.
- Johnston Community College Trends / Needs
- 12,800 students annually. Does not include 80-100k visitors at auditorium.
 - Traffic bottleneck when class gets out. And during events.
 - Moving current light, right in at arboretum and right out at current light.
 - New entry is in plans, but not funded yet. Could be 3-5 years.
 - Tart building, going dark in July. Want to open a new facility, student success center. Auditorium will go dark for 1 yr. 2019, reopen those.
 - Working to increase enrollment, classes and options.
 - Engineering program, growing. Building a new building.
 - High school program, near Market Street end.
 - Round out areas of campus, create a place. Beautification is a focus.
 - Howell and sun, 3000 acre property. Devils racetrack road. Rifle range and pistol range. June 18, tactical training facility dedication on June.
 - Want to see activity and vibrancy become a gateway to the city. Extend outlets / commercial. Need gateway near college. Concrete plant to Zaxbys. Missing piece in built form.

- Community college. Avg. age going down. Want more of a college experience. Some more demand for student housing.
- Downtown housing and amenities
 - Downtown revitalization needed, vacant lots and warehouses.
 - Dated housing is an issue.
 - Renovated properties are attractive more so than houses that need to be renovated
 - Downtown land value is about \$4/sqft
 - Mudcats owner creating a restaurant downtown
 - Housing and development
 - Desire for more residents downtown. Maybe senior housing.
 - Differences of opinion on Old Hotel. Some want to keep it. Some think it would be good for parking.

Utilities, Emergency Services, Public Works

- Positioning, trends, and perceptions
 - Utility improvements going on around Booker Dairy Road extension
 - Water line extension along Durwood Stephenson Highway will increase water pressure, goal is to complete by next year or year after
 - Fire insurance rating recently lowered
 - Flows downtown are an issue; requires calculated fire service response
 - Putting together a fire response plan. Working with utilities on this.
 - Working with the county. Tanker task force. Bringing in from other parts of county. Quarterly training. Has improved response time.
- Transportation
 - Traffic speed bumps reduce EMS response time in south Smithfield at Johnston Street and 3rd Street. Tort law claims a concern.
 - Roundabout at Outlet Center presents minor difficulty to navigate. Too many routes, roundabout small.
 - Driveways to nowhere... Concrete medians an issue.
 - Backup from community college front and back entrance.
 - 2-3 times a year. Problem on 70 or I-95
 - Localized traffic concerns – Community College entrances
 - Occasional flooding on US Hwy 70. Southeast Area Study identified a new 4 lane below grade crossing. Have stormwater cleanout program that has helped with flooding issues recently.
 - Localized pedestrian accommodation concerns
 - Wilsons Mills Road, people walking to a church. Don't drive a car on Saturdays. No sidewalks.
 - Booker Dairy Road, no sidewalks
 - Durwood Stephenson bridge is a concern.
- Town needs
 - Update paving standards
 - New police satellite station or remodel under consideration
 - Possibly redirect Powell Bill funds to sidewalk improvements

- Increased coordination between enforcement and downtown business association
- Land use and growth issues
 - Some new residential developments lack adequate access points
 - Growth around Kelly Drive is a concern. Buffaloe road approved subdivision with 2 entrances, but no stub streets. 300 unit subdivision. Access would be improved if stub streets provided.
 - New utility user growth anticipated on the north side
- Public safety
 - Parks not unsafe. Walmart parking lot is a big concern.
 - Illicit drug use on the rise, although crime rates dropping. Rates dropped 24% over last 18 months
 - Vehicle crashes
 - Durwood Stevenson. Speed limit coming out of 210.
 - Approached state to graduate from 45 to 35 then to 25.
 - Galilee Road in ETJ, diversion off road crashes.
 - Barber Road at big curve. Near big farm. Rd. at split. Departure collisions. Out bound.
 - Fire Staffing
 - 20 full time FF
 - 19 volunteer
 - 2 part time fire inspections
 - 1 part time admin
 - 2 stations
 - 5 engines, newest last year. Oldest, mid 90s model. 91 model ladder truck.
 - 2000 model heavy rescue
 - 2006 model light rescue.
 - Police
 - Recredited through CALEA. Policy manual that they follow that meets guidelines
 - Considering expanding police dept. Satellite building or extension to remodel.
 - 3 and 5 year CIP.
 - 43 sworn and 5 part timers.
 - Need a speed device and volumes. Avg speeds, medium speeds, high/low
 - Replacement for trailer.
 - Public works
 - 26 employees
 - Drainage, sanitation, recycling. Fleet maintenance, 1 person. Not emergency vehicles
 - Appearance. 7 cemeteries and ROW.
 - Facility maintenance.
 - Assist with streets and paving
 - Powell bill expenses. Contract out paving. 1 city mile a year.
 - Pavement condition survey recently. Maps will be updated, etc.
 - Venture drive repaving was a huge project. Base issues. Undercut needed. \$700k project. Not powell bill \$.

- Powell Bill typically does not go to sidewalks, but it could. Talking about that. Town survey said that sidewalks were a priority.
 - On radar
 - Equity Drive, major commercial area. Movie theatre, hotels. No curb and gutter. No sidewalks. \$1.2-1.5 m. FDR, overlay. Plan is to add sidewalks on inside perimeter.
 - Could be special tax or town paid project.
 - Future CIP project for drainage projects. Site survey yesterday. Utility fee for stormwater on the horizon.
 - Need to update standards.
 - Base course needs to be thicker. Asphalt needs to be thicker.
 - 8/2 is standard, 10/2 needed.
 - Have residential pavement standards, even for larger areas.
 - Utilities
 - Feed county water at different spots. Buffaloe Road, Jones Brothers
 - Forcemain feeds into county facilities. Water meter on the south too.
 - Process of approval
 - ETJ Town has first right of refusal of service.
 - Anticipating growth on north side.
- Downtown
- Pedestrian crossing signals on Market Street do not work
 - Parking is an issue. Narrow lanes. Get rid of parking.
 - Or one lane both ways. One lane is a concern – fire dept.
 - One mirror gets taken out a day.
 - 25 mph. 35/40 is the normal.
 - More parking needed...Esp. for police/sheriff
 - Parking enforcement, on and off. Depends on Downtown Bus. Association does not want it, then someone complains.

Schools, Institutions, Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

- Positioning, trends, and perceptions
- Good recreational facilities, esp. at SRAC
 - Events and programming are a success
 - Swim lessons, fitness, birthdays
 - Weights, arts, pottery, painting, basketball, racquetball
 - Joint use agreement with high school
 - Miracle league field and inclusive playground
 - Private/grant funded
 - Very well received.
 - New rec center. 909 East Lee street. Old Pool, closed.
 - Could put splash pad near new community center or downtown.
 - Goal is a park facility within 1/2 mi. of every resident

- Reduced sports field capacity – lost softball fields. At same capacity as 1978.
- Johnson park renovated last year; other parks scheduled for this year, incl. accessibility improvements; park maintenance is a priority...impacts economic development
- Partnering with Community College for expanded facilities offerings
- County health assessment underway. Issues are Transportation, access to care, physical activity and obesity
- Events
 - Ham and Yam jam, Friday night
 - Wed night before thanksgiving, thanksgiving eve.
 - River Rat Regatta, July 14th
 - Christmas tree lighting
 - Three Little Pigs Triathlon.
 - Daddy daughter dance
 - 6 or 8 5ks on the greenway.
 - Senior games
 - 250k people not including spectators
 - Work with DSDC
 - July 4th fireworks
 - Christmas parade, lighting
 - Grinch Run. 5k in December. Bring a new toy for administration.
 - Wine walk

→ Transportation

- Active Routes to School.
 - 6 yr program. 1 year left after this year.
 - Ed Johnson SRTS director
 - Programmatic side of safe routes
 - Nicole covers 8 counties
 - Start walking programs and biking programs
 - Goals is to get them to move more.
 - Walkability audits
 - Cooper Academy and Four Oaks Elementary
 - Got sidewalks for Cooper Academy
 - South Smithfield elementary
 - Bike club
 - Into walking
 - Media event next week for bike to school day.
 - Can put us into contact with principal

→ Town needs

- Will need a Community Park in the future
- Update of older parks is a priority
 - Johnson park renovated last year.
 - Bob Wallace, JC Kiddee park renovate this year.

- Making accessibility improvements soon.
- Improving the Smith Collins park soon.
- Recover from loss of positions in the Parks Dept.
 - Current staffing is: 1 director
 - 2 programmers
 - 1 admin
 - 3 maintenance employees
 - SRAC Staffing is:
 - Center director
 - Programmer
 - 2 aquatics
 - Admin.
- Land use and growth issues
 - Parks affect economic development
 - Growth opportunity on west side of town
- Downtown housing and amenities
 - Potential splash pad downtown
 - Amphitheater as social/cultural center for downtown
 - Address the river
- Funding
 - Fee in lieu, operating from general fund

Neighborhood Leaders, Citizen Boards, HOAs

- Positioning, trends, and perceptions
 - Not a lot of well-paying jobs, opportunity
 - 16 to 22 year olds feel like they need to move out of town
 - Too many rental units in west Smithfield
 - Access to parks and recreation is auto-dependent
 - Stormwater management is a concern
 - Lack of mixed use development
 - Entrances to Smithfield create negative perception for visitors/investors
 - Lower cost of living fueling residential purchase decisions (esp. relative to Clayton)
 - Stigma regarding Smithfield/Selma schools
- Transportation
 - Poor access to Outlet Center
- Northern Ward
 - Hopeful for residential development
 - PUD approved. Townhomes, condos, SF homes. Some commercial needed.
 - Want a connection to the greenway
 - New development required to do sidewalks
 - New road projects will get sidewalks.
 - Would be nice if sidewalks are connected.

- Diverse age groups. Walk/runners. Students that walk from Neuse Charter School to shopping center
- Last 1000 ft connections to the greenway from subdivisions.

→ East Smithfield

- Community meetings in 7 churches
- Lots of rentals
- Responsibility of landlords and vice versa
- Maintenance of lots
- Vacant lands, etc.
- No access to parks due to no vehicles
- Elderly housing is a need and issue.
- No homes for seniors near shopping.
- Very limited public transportation
- No mixed use, too much heavy commercial
- High speed roads, no transitions, no buffers (i.e. not a tree between homes and businesses)
- Bad drainage issues. Need to get the water moving.
- Young people have to work 2, 3 or 4 jobs at retail and restaurants
- Avg rent is \$700-800 per month
- Senior that need major work to homes.
- Lack of lease agreements is an issue, ends up in code enforcement office
- Housing and infrastructure need to be addressed
- Stormwater education also needed. Lack of curb and gutter is an issue.
- Curb and gutter not required in the code...
- Entrance ways should be “pearly gates” need better gateways.
- Should be consistent entry and signage. Theme with parks and rec is a good precedent.
- Good access. But not to outlet center.

→ Town needs

- Housing rehabilitation program
- Infrastructure updates and maintenance
- Gateway enhancements (i.e. off I-95)
- Billboards are sign pollution, esp. on I-95
- Town-wide wi-fi
- Targeted recruitment of seniors and Millennials
- Marketing and outreach about programs and amenities
- Diversity task force
- Seniors and millennials should be a target.
- Improved communication and community awareness
 - No community newspaper in Smithfield any more.
 - No one knows about programs.
 - Johnston Lee Harnett community action.
 - A library downtown and sary arts center with wifi, but hours are not advertised.

- Land use and growth issues
 - Additional residential and commercial growth needed
 - Revisions to zoning map, including mixed use/flexible zoning
 - Smaller yards and condos may appeal to a lot of folks who work in Raleigh
- Precedent / goal
 - Matthews outside of Charlotte
 - Salisbury or Goldsboro as a precedent with what they've done with their downtowns.
 - Wilson (mixed use growth) or Edenton (same size, unique character)
- Downtown housing and amenities
 - Desire for businesses to stay open later
 - Invest in and enhance the downtown area

Transportation

- Kelly Road Extension: Contract let. Complete in April of 2019 or so.
- Interchange: Will let in 2020. Public process starting soon. Matt Clark is contact.
- Have their been sidewalk projects submitted for funding? No, not in 3 rounds.
- Priorities
- 301 / Access Management and sidewalk project is a RPO priority.
- In STI to Booker Dairy Rd
- P4, widening buffalo road was a priority.
- 301/96 Widen to multi-lanes
- MTS: Grifols may allow 3-4 miles of trail on property
- SEAS: Visualization of Market St. 4 lanes
- Change in JCC entryway
- Commuter rail: To Garner phase I. To Clayton phase II. To Selma phase III.
- Census: When 2022 new numbers come up, the Town may have an opportunity to be included in MPO
- What will the urbanized area be? Likely to include Wilsons Mills next census
- Wilsons Mills is part of the Smithfield/Selma/Kenly urbanized cluster.
- Trails
 - Mountains to Sea Trail (MTS) or East Coast Greenway (ECG). Needs to be decided which alignment is priority. MTS goes along the neuse. ECG goes through Wilsons Mills.
- 70/95 feasibility study should be complete.
- JCATS
 - 31 vehicles, paratransit, prescheduled
 - Collaborating partner in Downeast Express, goes to Morehead City.
 - First mile/last mile service, from Amtrak, bus, JOCO airport in planning phase
 - Fixed route was tried. It was too early. Did not work well.
 - Johnston county mitigation service. Park and ride service from clayton. Only had 6-8 riders, petition had a lot more support.
 - Long range plan has BRT coming to Clayton. On shoulder. 70 business. Cary, Raleigh, Garner, Clayton. \$257m. Scores behind DOLRT
- Intersection improvements and retimings, pre-emption.

- This plan could recommend a transit connection to the west. Could be a neighborhood circulator.
- JCATS has looked at Clayton, Smithfield, Benson. Could be deviated fixed route. Funding will be the issue. Current model would be difficult to use.
- I95 improvements could have impacts.
- Multimodal connections across I95 are a need.
- Spot 6 or 7 submittal. How can I95 be an asset instead of a burden or a barrier.
- Need to get master plan for airport.
 - CAMPO got Franklin Co Airport \$20m in projects.
 - Now branded as Triangle Executive Jet.
- Supporting industries and facilities to RTP, not competition
- The Transportation plan needs to define what the Town wants to do. Funding may be decided later, may be STI, may be SPOT, may be STPDA, etc.