



MEMORANDUM

TO: Wright County Northeast Quadrant Task Force

FROM: Dan Jochum

DATE: July 10, 2006

RE: Wright County Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan
Task Force Meeting #5 Summary
SEH No. A-WRIGH0601.00

The following document summarizes the fifth Task Force meeting for the Wright County Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan.

Date of Event: Monday July 10, 2006, 9:00am – 12:00pm

Location: Wright County Government Center
Community Room

Attendees:

Donald Schmidt (Task Force member)
Ken Felger (Task Force member)
Greg Eckblad (Task Force member)
Jeff O'neill (Task Force member)
Marc Weigle (Task Force member)
Tom Salkowski (Task Force member)
Shannon Bye (Task Force member)
Nancy Carswell (Task Force member)
Ralph Douglas
Scott Deckert
Tom Zins

Joe Jacobs
Stacy Arp
Kimberly Holien
Tom Perrault
Karl Hammers
Mary Wetter
Steve Grittman
Mark Nolan, SEH
Dan Jochum, SEH
Lindberg Ekola, Ekola & Associates

Introductions

- Mark Nolan kicked off the meeting with an introduction of the consultants present and asked each meeting attendee to introduce themselves (see above).
- Mr. Nolan also gave an overview of the role of the task force.
- Mr. Nolan discussed the purpose of the meeting, which is to obtain input regarding land use issues. The first part of the meeting consisted of each City in the Northeast Quadrant giving a review of their land use plans. The next portion of the meeting consisted of Dan Jochum of SEH presenting an overview of land use definitions. The rest of the meeting was dedicated to a small group activity in which meeting participants broke down into small groups and discussed where in the Northeast Quadrant specific land uses should be located.

Review of Land Use Planning in NE Quadrant Cities

- Marc Weigle gave a review of land use planning in St. Michael. The following list summarizes land use planning activities in St. Michael.

- Mr. Weigle stated St. Michael wants to focus on growing efficiently and coordinate with water and sewer system planning.
 - St. Michael merged with Frankfurt Township in 1996.
 - In the late 1990s major growth started in St. Michael and the City developed a phasing plan for growth.
 - Most of the growth occurring in St. Michael is residential in nature.
 - The City determined they would open up a determined amount of land every 5 years and this land would facilitate approximately 300 new homes per year.
 - Mr. Weigle also indicated that the school district is small and they can't handle too much growth and the City wants to grow at a manageable pace for the school district.
 - The City also is interested in preserving open space corridors and developing trails in these areas.
- Jeff O'neill gave a review of land use planning in Monticello. The following list summarizes land use planning activities in Monticello.
 - Monticello has had a Comprehensive Plan since the mid-1970s.
 - There is a strong planning ethic in Monticello.
 - A major Comprehensive Planning effort took place in mid to late 1990s.
 - There was an agreement between the City and Township for a 7,000 acre planning area. The City is starting to plan into the annexation area in the Township.
 - A new Comprehensive Planning process is starting in July 2006. A consultant has been selected to assist with the Comprehensive Plan.
 - The City would like to coordinate with the County regarding this new Comprehensive Planning project.
 - Monticello wants to capitalize on the natural amenities in the area such as, Pelican Lake and the Mississippi River.
 - Monticello is also interested in preserving the YMCA property.
 - They would like to manage traffic.
 - Capitalize on access.
 - Encourage more upscale housing.
 - Downtown redevelopment is needed.
 - Monticello has been developing land in 60 acre increments.
 - There is a joint planning board that governs land that is in the Township.
- Nancy Carswell gave a review of land use planning in Rockford. The following list summarizes land use planning activities in Rockford.
 - Rockford has had a Comprehensive Plan since the 1970s.
 - The most recent plan was adopted one month ago.
 - The land use plan encompasses a portion of Rockford Township and the Town board had input on the development of Rockford's plan.
 - There is an environmental component of the comprehensive plan that focuses on wetland buffers and tree preservation.

- The City is currently mainly residential and will likely remain that way.
 - Commercial and industrial uses will be along the highway.
 - Rockford builds approximately 40 new homes per year.
 - The wastewater plant is currently at approximately 50% capacity.
 - Developers are paying for the majority of new infrastructure.
 - Transportation corridors are planned for the future.
 - Parks and trails were studied as part of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Rockford has a park dedication ordinance.
 - The City approved 570 residential lots in 2004 and 2005.
 - A staging plan has been completed as well.
 - Plans are in the works to expand the sewer and water capacities in the future.
 - The treatment plan has capacity for approximately 300 homes before it will be full.
 - The City is stressing slow growth.
 - Downtown redevelopment is needed.
- Steve Gritman of NAC gave a review of land use planning in Buffalo. The following list summarizes land use planning activities in Buffalo.
 - Buffalo is in the midst of a Comprehensive Plan update.
 - Buffalo has been building approximately 250 housing units per year.
 - Buffalo would like to continue this pace (250 units per year) into the future.
 - An annexation area has not been identified in Buffalo.
 - The City has annexed land in three townships surrounding Buffalo.
 - Transportation is an issue.
 - There is no constraint on the water and sewer capacities.
 - The City is looking at developing a new transportation corridor on the east side of the City.
 - A potential ring road concept for Buffalo is being explored.
 - The railroad is an issue.

Preliminary NE Quadrant Land Use Definitions

Dan Jochum of SEH provided an overview of draft land use definitions that have been developed for the project. Draft definitions were developed for the following land uses: Agricultural, Agricultural/Residential, Residential Large Lot, Residential, Commercial, Limited Industrial, Major Growth Areas, and Open Space/Resource Land.

Tom Salkowski indicated that the definitions should speak to density rather than lot size. The land use definition matrix provided as a handout was incorrect in that it stated lot sizes rather than density. It was also noted that the minimum size for commercial and industrial land was one acre.

Mr. Salkowski also noted that it is sometimes dangerous identifying private property as open space/resource land. He suggested potentially including open space/resource land in with Agriculture. The specifics of the definition, as well as title of the land use will have to be further studied.

Land Use Planning Workshop: Part 2

- Mark Nolan introduced and explained the exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to map where land uses should be located in the NE Quadrant. Participants were asked to break up into three groups of 5 to 6 people. Each table was given maps to assist them with the exercise. Each table had a consultant facilitate the discussion and take notes.
- Some of the main issues discussed in **group one** included the following:
 - Preserving and continuing the agricultural/open space landscape that is evident in many portions of the NE Quadrant. The density in these areas could vary from 1 unit per 10 acres to 1 unit per 40 acres. It was noted that the majority of the agricultural/open space land should be at 1 unit per 40 acre density. Specific areas where this was discussed include the area West of Monticello and North of Buffalo, the area near Pelican Lake, the area in between Buffalo and St. Michael, and the area South and Southeast of Buffalo.
 - Other ideas discussed included planning for a limited amount of commercial and industrial areas in the Townships. These sites would be for low water using businesses such as trucking companies, landscaping contractors, building contractors, etc. Two areas were specifically mentioned for this type of use and included the current limited industrial area between Rockford and Buffalo adjacent to Highway 55 and another potential site north of Buffalo near the intersection of Highway 25 and 50th Street NE.
 - Gravel mining was also discussed and it was determined that gravel mining was an issue. It was noted that there is a significant amount of gravel located North of Buffalo and South of Monticello that would likely be mined in the future.
 - Lastly, the group discussed a transportation corridor that would be located on the East side of Buffalo and run north and south. Several members of the group felt that the alignment of the corridor should run as close to Buffalo as possible and not encroach too far into the Township.
- Issues discussed in **group two** included the following:
 - The discussion primarily focused on two themes. The first theme dealt with annexation policies and township boundaries. Monticello's annexation agreement with the Township was discussed at length as a potential example of how other cities in the Northeast Quadrant may handle annexation issues. Additionally, consolidation of townships was also discussed.
 - The remaining theme centered on setting the framework for land use planning around natural and open space features. This included maintaining the identity of individual places using connecting transportation corridors as open space view sheds, and using natural features such as wetlands and big woods as important delineating characteristics.
- Issues discussed in **group three** included the following:

- The group suggested one primary question that should be considered is, “how big should cities get? What should be the ultimate population? Land area?”
- The group concurred that the inventory maps and the mapping exercises should help be the basis for deciding on areas of agriculture and open space that should be protected. This information should be developed to help explain or provide justification for the protection areas.
- The group also discussed a range of optional implementation tools including ghost platting, transfer of development rights, and public land acquisition. No one tool will fit each circumstance or situation. The group suggested that optional tools be developed to provide choice to landowners and local officials.
- It was also noted that in the four cities in which land use plans and policies were presented at the meeting, four different approaches to addressing major growth areas have been used.
 - St. Michael – very large annexation (approximately 15,000 – 20,000 acres). The City annexed the entire Franklin Township.
 - Monticello – large annexation (approximately 2,000 – 3,000 acres)
 - Rockford – moderate sized annexation (approximately 500 – 1,000 acres)
 - Buffalo – small incremental annexations (approximately 20 – 160 acres)
- The group also discussed the benefits of approaching the land use planning exercise where all municipal boundaries are ignored and the focus placed on the entire NE quadrant considered as one planning area (a blank slate approach). This approach might help reduce the political tensions and help focus on the natural resource features as a foundation for developing the land use plan. The approach could help in considering existing development patterns and preferences by landowners.
- Each group reported back with the ideas that were discussed in the small group exercises. Groups also marked up maps that depicted potential land use scenarios. It was noted that the consultant needs to get the latest land use information from Hanover, as well as show all publicly owned land on the NE Quadrant map. Other things discussed included creating goals and policies for commercial and industrial development in the Townships and obtaining information regarding sewer capacities for Rockford and Hanover.

Next Steps

Mark Nolan identified the next steps in the project including the next task force meeting on August 7, 2006 in the Wright County Board room and the next public meeting which will be held August 16, 2006 at the Monticello Community Center.