

AREA 12 PLAN Advisory Committee

March 6, 2017 Meeting Notes

Collegedale City Hall

Present: from RPA, John Bridger, Pam Glaser, Travis Kazmierzak, Cassidy Campbell, and Karen Hundt with Commissioner Sabrena Smedley, Darrin Ledford, Scottie Neil, Rick Roberts, Bob Kincaid, Kristy Smedley, Shaleigh Cronan, Andy Hodes, Dean Moorhouse, Tom Lamb, Kelly Martin, R.C. Hoff, and Sterling Jetton

Welcome and overview of agenda by planner, Pam Glaser.

Review of Field Visits

Ms. Glaser, from the Regional Planning Agency, reported that the staff observed all types of communities from the rural country to the busier commercial centers... made it to all parts of area. Since the group was usually there in the afternoon, they were able to experience rush hour traffic and traveled to and from each community. The staff made it to the county and state lines, along the freeway and throughout the entire area. Staff visited the parks and ridge sides. There was just about every type of suburban housing. There are some areas still to photograph, such as Lee Hwy and the commercial strip, but the staff now have over 800 images and were able to photograph a wide range of uses and places. Thank you again to the Advisory Committee members who joined us. Here are a few staff observations:

Field Visit Observations

- This area is distinctly different from other areas of Hamilton County. It is defined by its slopes and ridges.
- For White Oak Valley area and "Owl Holler," staff noticed it was very secluded and had retained its rural character.
- The Southern Adventist University (when compared to other campuses) features a lot of open space and is very green, has great buildings and a post office/center. Having a university in a town is a great asset.
- In Old Apison, the staff saw a lot of potential, there is a post office and a grid of streets. It seems like a good place to start a rural town or village.
- For Apison, out beyond the newer subdivisions, it had rural characteristics and many farms, especially near Red Clay State Park area where you get a sense of culture and the history.
- In East Brainerd, the staff visited the schools and the node at East Hamilton High School and Food City which seemed like an area that could accommodate more mixed-use development. They observed a lot of residential to the north, mostly single-family residential and subdivisions. Where are opportunities for greenways and green connections? Where do the East Brainerd community members go for grocery shopping, etc.... to Hamilton Place or Collegedale/Ooltewah?

- In Summit, after visiting Couch’s BBQ, the staff learned more about the history of the area. Summit has a prime location near the freeway and multiple ways in and out. With the new Apison Pike roadway and intersection improvements, it has the possibility to become the small town center envisioned. Some of the elevations in Summit, although not as high as Lookout Mountain, were equivalent to Missionary Ridge and had nice views.
- Newer apartments and multi-family units were found along Little Debbie Parkway and near the Collegedale gateway. Collegedale sets the bar extremely high when it comes to parks, especially the greenway and the Imagination Station. Collegedale appeared to be a destination.
- Old Ooltewah had a lot of charm with the Main Street buildings and Old James County Courthouse as well as churches and residences in place. Much of it was within a walkable grid and it had the compact feeling of a small town. Wired Coffee was a great stop and even busy on a Sunday.
- Cambridge Square is the new hotspot, almost urban in its appeal. It’s a place one could envision both tourists and locals coming to shop or visit a restaurant. In Ooltewah, the Mountain Lake Road area featured a subdivision that still imparts a rural countryside feel as well as some of the large lot subdivisions to the south towards Lee Highway. Most residential developments are in close proximity to businesses via Ooltewah-Georgetown Road.
- Many roads connect all the way through (noted in purple on field visit map.) One question for the community is, do the newer residents know how to use the alternative routes when traffic is heavy?
- The staff have learned a lot about the community after spending several days and different times driving it. The field visits were a great way for the team to get to know the area, and the staff really appreciates the committee’s involvement.

Community Map

Staff: The staff are trying to map the various sub-communities in Area 12 (Apison, Collegedale, East Brainerd, East Hamilton, Ooltewah and understand general boundaries between these communities. Still need to check some sources, such as zip codes and school zones, so what you see is still a draft. A few questions for the committee:

- Where does Apison start, at the ridge gap or London Town Road at the sign?
- What about Summit’s southern boundary?
- What is “East Hamilton” vs. “East Brainerd”? Part of East Brainerd is Hurricane Creek and Morris Hill to the west – where does one begin and the other end?

Committee Responses/Questions:

- To the west of Banks Road is East Brainerd and East Hamilton is everything else.
- Haven’t heard of East Hamilton, it’s always been referred to as East Brainerd.
- Horizons is part of Ooltewah and Apison - look at the post office zip codes and mailing addresses.
- East Hamilton is the larger umbrella name, but most think of the large area as East Brainerd.
- Use of “East Hamilton” was when the county built the park, and then came the school.

- For many people East Hamilton isn't common – it's been East Brainerd, Ooltewah (which stops at the rail road), Collegedale, and Apison.
- See Standifer Gap for school divisions. Everything south is East Brainerd and past Ooltewah Ringgold Road to the west becomes East Brainerd.
- Can be confusing with "McDonald" to the east. It's the area between Ooltewah and Cleveland – let's not get that specific.
- One important historical land mark is the Old James County Court House.

Name for Area 12 Plan:

Staff: We need more than a number for this Area Plan. How does everyone feel about "White Oak Mountain?" Is there one common name used for this area? The staff suggest using the following consistent set of parameters for naming all the Area Plans throughout the county.

- a) Geographic Landmark or feature
- b) Compass directions like "Southeast," etc.
- c) Commonly Used Name or Title that encompasses the entire area

Committee Responses/Questions:

- White Oak Mountain goes through Ringgold, GA and Bradley County. It gives no one community dominance over the other and is something that every community shares. It is visible and you have to drive through it.
- There is no commonly used name for the entire area; best to go by geographic features.
- Did "Area 12" come from the Board of Realtors?

Staff: Area 12 comes from an internal numbering system the staff uses. The County was simply divided into 12 areas for planning purposes. Area 12 was chosen as the first area to be addressed because it had some of the highest growth in the county.

- Based on consensus, everyone here wants to call it White Oak Mountain Area.
- This is exemplary of the ridge and valley geography of Tennessee.
- One of the best things about our area is that natural character and we should convey those special features.
- What does the green indicate on the land use map? How are these colors/uses decided?

Staff: The planning process is about defining the future for these areas. The maps represent existing land use, a lot of which is currently zoned A-1 Agriculture (green). As this process moves forward, the staff will be asking the community for recommendations about how the community should accommodate new growth in the future. This first public meetings on March 30 and April 1 get that conversation started.

Everyone in attendance prefers "White Oak Mountain Area Plan." The staff will send that recommendation to other Advisory Committee members who could not attend, and unless someone has another suggestion, we will go with "White Oak Mountain Area Plan."

Mapping Update

Staff: The staff is creating maps showing existing conditions , such as:

- The built/manmade structures (roads, buildings)
- Infrastructure and transportation
- Natural resources (slopes, waterways and floodplains, tree cover, wildlife corridors)
- Parks, greenways, and open space
- Parcel lines and land use

The staff will also be researching the demographics of Area 12 and scheduling meetings with the transportation departments, WWTAs(sewers), and the school system to gather data about their future projects.

Committee Responses/Questions:

What information do you have from the County traffic study so far?

Staff: The consultants are still working on the study. They are focusing on East Brainerd Road, Ooltewah-Ringgold Road, and key intersections, mostly south of Lee Hwy and Apison Pike, where there are traffic concerns. The study will provide numbers for traffic volumes, peak hour congestion, capacity, accidents, and intersection capacity. This first phase of the study will help identify problems and solutions. The staff will also do some modeling for future housing projections and the resulting traffic generated. Information from the study should be available mid or late March, hopefully in time to be summarized for the next meeting.

Real Estate Market Study

Staff: Past reports indicated that 32% of Hamilton County's growth is coming to this area, however those figures included all of East Brainerd and Hamilton Place. (The Real Estate Market Study referred to that larger area as Sub-market 6.) More recently, the consultants pulled data for Area 12 only, to give us more specific projections for housing and commercial development for this planning process. Those numbers indicate a 17.5% share of the county-wide housing market for Area 12.

- Staff will be analyzing those numbers to determine yearly housing supply and absorption rates.
- The study includes what's existing, or is approved and in the pipeline, and what might be added in the future.
- The 2016 Real Estate Market Report, which covers all of Hamilton County, can be found on the RPA website (www.chcrpa.org). Keep in mind that the Sub-Market 6 numbers include all of East Brainerd and Hamilton Place, which are outside of this Area 12 Plan boundary.

The Public Input Kick-off Meetings – March 30 and April 1

The purpose of the Area Plan kick-off meetings is introduce the area plan process, give attendees an idea of what to expect from an area plan, and begin to develop a “community vision.” Tonight the staff needs to get your feedback on the survey and to review the meeting format.

For the Thursday, March 30th evening meeting, the first 25 minutes will be set aside for introductions and a presentation from the staff. Then the attendees will have about 10 minutes to complete a brief survey. The remainder of the time will be dedicated to visiting map displays and identifying both assets and challenges throughout Area 12 using sticky notes. The staff will be available to provide information and answer questions.

The survey will include questions about the following:

- Opportunities and challenges
- Favorite places, assets or problem areas.
- Which routes residents use to get around the area
- Where people go for recreation
- Work commute patterns
- Balancing growth and preserving community character
- Potential locations for future parks or trails
- Future commercial uses
- Basic demographic information

For the Saturday, April 1st meeting , the same material will be covered but using more of an open house format from 10 am -2 pm. Staff will repeat their presentation 2-3 times throughout the open house. Staff will be available the entire time for questions.

Staff: The Advisory Committee was asked to help spread the word about the upcoming public meetings. Forward invitations to your contacts and talk it up.

Do you think the activities planned will get people thinking and verbalizing what they want to see, change, or preserve in their communities? Is there anything staff should add?

Committee Responses/Questions:

Feedback is important and if the public shares ideas, they need to know how to actually put them into place.

Staff: What should come from this first public meeting is a “Community Vision” statement (two pages or so) that serves as a general guide for the community’s direction in the future. Later in the process, we will get into more detail, such as where or what type of commercial town centers the community might want, or what else is needed to build their vision. The next public meeting will place more emphasis on establishing community priorities and making choices about preferred alternatives. This first public meeting is just about “Community Vision” – the broader, more general, wish-list phase.

Will there be a given timeline for when all of these changes take place?

Staff: The staff will try to differentiate between long-term and short-term projects, based on the community's preferences, and on what is logical from a cost perspective, but the Plan will not include details for every recommended project or a specific timeline for when individual projects will be implemented. The implementation of public initiatives depends, for instance, on the availability of funding. Elected officials must also balance requests for projects across an entire city or county. This Plan will mainly focus on land use recommendations. It will serve as a guide for both private development and public sector initiatives. Implementation may cover 10 or 20 years of work.

Who pays for all of this? Obviously, all of the communities would like green space and parks and better opportunities, but we really need to focus on traffic and congestion.

Staff: The Plan will address all of those issues and try to establish priorities. The idea is to balance the difficult issues, like traffic, with amenities that make an area desirable to live in, such as parks.

Plans show what types of land uses and development are intended for an area. For instance, if 17.5% of Hamilton County's growth is projected to move into this area, where are new schools needed? When owners make requests to rezone their property, elected officials refer to these land use plans to help inform their decisions, so plans influence how an area develops over time.

It is confusing when a report says here's what's coming and then it seems it is already planned.

Staff: The staff has started assembling information such as current land use maps to understand housing and development trends. The plan will look at future growth, but it is a work in progress and we're just getting started. At the public kick-off meeting, the staff will show images from other communities that may represent ideas and types of development this community would like to see in the future. The public meeting is an opportunity to give feedback on those ideas.

Committee Responses/Questions:

In 2005, the question was asked of the WWTA, "Do you have a long-range plan for sewer extensions?" They said they would go where the development goes. But sewers are not the only infrastructure necessary for an area; roads and schools are needed too. It's going to take everyone working together. The school board, for example, needs to know the growth projections for this area. The TN Department of Transportation also needs to be involved.

Staff: Perhaps at later advisory committee meetings, representatives from these agencies can join us, so they can hear directly from the community. The RPA staff can make those contacts and invite them. To better accommodate growth, everyone must work together and share information.

The plan will help identify where new infrastructure may be needed and, conversely, what areas are less conducive to development. Again, the Plan and the RPA don't dictate these decisions. This plan is a guide; it's not a guarantee.

Committee Responses/Questions:

If the community wants all the parks and infrastructure, where is the property going to come from?
Will this plan restrict an owner's use of his/her property?

Staff: Most parks are on public land, but greenways, for instance, can be on private land with public conservation easements. The conversations happen one property at a time when the opportunity arises. With parks, planners always look for public, government-owned parcels first, then at wetlands or other areas that aren't best suited for development. An agency like the Trust for Public Land (TPL) can work with property owners to establish easements if needed. The process often starts by identifying these places in a plan, then prioritizing need, and guiding improvements towards the most feasible park and greenway sites available.

Elected officials make zoning decisions every month that determines the type of development that can take place on a particular property. Unfortunately, without a plan that outlines where and what type of development is preferred, or appropriate, for an area, those elected officials have to call a meeting at the eleventh hour to get community input. This plan will help change that process from a reactive one to a more proactive approach, so decisions are more thoughtful and based on good information. The plan doesn't change what someone can do with his/her property today; it rather provides a guide for future decision-making.

The dilemma is: if we don't develop infrastructure until the funds are available and new growth is a primary source of funding . . . without a plan, there can be conflict. What do we do about retaining character or quality of life?

Staff: The question is where does it make the most sense to direct new development. Decisions are made every month about new growth, but often those decisions are based on what the elected officials are hearing from the immediate neighbor, rather than a vision agreed upon by the larger community. Proactive planning is better.

What do you want the Advisory Committee role to be in the upcoming community meetings?

Staff: Come and participate. Help spread the word. Tell everyone in the community about the public meetings.

Please send your email contacts list to ccampbell@chattanooga.gov to assist with getting the word out.

Advisory Committee meetings will be held at the Collegedale Town Hall on the 4th Monday of each month at 6:30pm.