CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

May 20, 2014

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a study session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Council Chambers on the 20th day of May, 2014, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:	Councilmembers Castleberry, Heiple, Holman, Kovach, Miller, Williams, Mayor Rosenthal
ABSENT:	Councilmembers Griffith and Jungman

Item 1, being:

UPDATE OF THE CENTER CITY VISIONING PROJECT.

Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development, highlighted the motive for holding a Visioning Charrette as follows:

1. Current zoning regulations cannot handle the growing, modern demand for infill development in Norman's Center City area;
2. Significant community disagreement about market-driven proposals for infill development in the past;
3. Professional charrette process is the best technique available to articulate community-supported vision; and
4. Building community support for a vision followed closely by development of land use regulations that allows achievement of vision will provide both community and investors' confidence and certainty.

Ms. Connors said the Center City Visioning Committee's goal was to host several public meetings over a six-month period and use diverse, hands-on techniques to gather community input on a vision for the future of Norman's Center City area. She said another objective was to host a week-long visioning charrette to maximize hands-on participation, opinion polling, and relationship building around the future of the Center City. Ms. Connors said any and all community input was considered to be the foundation for an illustrated, well-articulated, community-supported vision for the future of the Center City area and the vision would lay the groundwork to develop land use regulations that allows the vision to be built.

Ms. Connors said the City's consultants include the National Charrette Institute, Opticos Design, and Ferrell-Madden and a Vision Kick-Off meeting was held on March 26, 2014, where over 140 people participated. She said there were over 225 participants in Visioning Charrette events held from May 12–16, 2014, and more than 40 drop-in visitors. The Visioning Charrette developed a community-supported vision for the future of Norman's Center City that defined community centers; improves and prioritizes the public realm; repairs and stabilizes existing neighborhoods; provides housing choices; and integrates a holistic transportation strategy.

Define Centers
The Visioning Charrette first defined two primary centers reinforcing "places to go" and focusing on larger development. The two primary centers defined are Campus Corner, University-focused Center and Downtown, Larger Community-focused Center.

Campus Corner, University-focused Center
Network of mid-block pedestrian spaces as area evolves. Ms. Connors highlighted proposed cross section for Boyd Street to include sidewalks, parking, bike lanes, travel and turning lanes. She highlighted photos for existing conditions as well as an illustrative vision for Boyd Street at Asp Avenue.

Downtown, Larger Community-focused Center
Ms. Connors highlighted the Downtown Center at University Boulevard and Main Street and said one objective will be to break down large buildings to look like smaller ones.

Transform Main and Gray: Make it a Two-Way Street
Ms. Connors said there was a lot of support to transform and make Main Street and Gray Street into two-way streets, which will help generate economic development through placemaking. Ms. Connors highlighted photos of existing cross sections for Main Street reflecting existing sidewalks, parking, and travel for one-way and the same on two-way but also included turning lanes and bike lanes. She presented illustrations for both existing conditions and a potential vision, highlighting Gray Street at Santa Fe Avenue where a new walkable neighborhood could be created.

Ms. Connors provided an example from West Palm Beach, Florida, of the economic benefits from the removal of a one-way street. The benefits included:

- Property values increased: $10-$40/square foot (sf) to $50-$100/sf;
- Commercial rents increased: $6/sf to $30/sf;
- Rents increased: $6/sf to $30/sf;
- Occupancy increased: 80% vacancy to 20% vacancy; and
- Attracted $350 million in private investment to the area.

Provide Housing Choices
The third goal would diversify and stabilize the area by encouraging creative density within developments because they can be a characteristic of the neighborhood. Ms. Connors said characteristics of missing middle housing include: smaller, well-designed units; off-street parking does not drive the site plan; lower perceived densities; small footprint buildings; simple construction; create community; and marketability. She said some types of missing middle housing in Norman include bungalows, duplexes, fourplexes, and mansion apartments. Ms. Connors said appropriate form and scale are most important for missing middle housing, not density.

Improve the Public Realm
Improving connectivity and social space by reinforcing a hierarchy of street connections was the next objective. The Visioning Charrette said the idea is to plant trees to reinforce the public/civic realm. Ms. Connors provided renderings depicting a street with and without trees. She said University Boulevard is a prominent address in Norman and the vision is to ensure active frontage along its edges. Councilmember Holman said one example of a good buffer between a parking structure and single-family structures is the parking garage on Elm Avenue across from Catlett Center. Ms. Connors said the Farmer's Market at Symmes Street and James Garner Avenue is another vision of connectivity and social space.

Repair and Stabilize the Neighborhoods
The next goal of the Visioning Charrette is to not let the parking dominate the perception of place. She said the long-term strategy is to activate edges and capture value.

Incubating Local Business
Ms. Connors said the sixth goal is to provide smaller, incubator spaces for local business. She provided a photo example of an existing condition as well as an illustrative vision of incubating local businesses at Main Street and Santa Fe Avenue.

Integrate a Holistic Transportation Strategy
Ms. Connors provided choices to include proposed projects and policies as follows:

- Two-way Main Street
- Road diet Boyd Street (add bike lanes)
- Enhance bicycle connectivity
- Policy initiative: enhance transit service
- Locate shared parking garage locations at centers
- Develop Asp Avenue as a Festival Street
- Policy initiative: reduce/right-size parking requirements
- Adopt complete streets policies

Ms. Connors said this process would take time and felt patience would be needed but more importantly the vision cannot be compromised. She said the next steps to implementing the vision are not "one size fits all" and highlighted the steps of the process as follows:

Norman City Center Diverse Sub-Areas:

- Existing Character: Maintain, revitalize, evolve, and transform.
- Future Character: What new standards will be needed? Require, enable/encourage, allow, and prohibit. Building form/frontage: Where on the lot? Windows and doors? Intensity/range of uses? Parking?

Survey Results

Ms. Connors said the consultants prepared a survey at the final Center City Visioning Charrette workshop for the audience to complete and highlighted the results to Council as follows:

- *What is your age*? 26% 59-69 years; 21% 50-59 years; 21% 39-49 years; 14% 29-39 years; 12% 70 years or more; 7% 20-29 years;
- *Did you attend any events this week?* 36% attended three; 24% attended four or more; 24% attended two; and 16% attended one;
- *Did your parents walk to school?* 88% yes and 12% no;
- *Did you walk to school?* 72% yes and 28% no;
- *Do your kids walk to school?* 63% no; and 37% yes;
- *What features most affect your desire to walk or bike? (Pick two):* 31% places to go/destinations; 20% interesting/attractive route; 19% calmer traffic; 17% street trees/shaded sidewalk; 10% wider sidewalks; and 4% no blank walls/parking lots;
- *Transform Boyd Street into three lanes?* 74% yes; 18% probably yes; 5% no; and 3% probably not;
- *Transform Main Street and Gray Street into two-way streets?* 88% yes; 10% probably yes; and 1% probably not;
- *Is the "missing middle" housing an appropriate strategy to stabilize the neighborhoods?* 56% yes; 35% probably yes; and 8% probably not;
- *Is this an appropriate way for the Campus Corner to evolve?* 62% yes, 26% probably yes; 8% probably not; and 5% no;
- *Is Symmes Street and James Garner Avenue a good place for a farmer's market?* 59% yes; 32% probably yes; 7% probably not; and 2% no;
- *Should the City encourage live/work and small business incubator spaces in focused locations?* 86% yes; 10% probably yes; 2% probably not; and 2% no;
- *Downtown (Pick two):* 47% two-way Main Street and Gray Street; 31% mixed-use buildings; 19% sidewalks designed for dining; and 3% more housing;
- *Neighborhoods (Pick two):* 37% walkable/bikeable connections to centers; 32% appropriately scaled infill housing; 19% tree-lined streets; 7% neighborhood parks; and 5% opportunities for home ownership;
- *Campus Corner (Pick two):* 31% three-lane Boyd Street; 31% parking garage; 19% pedestrian places; 11% mixed-use buildings; and 8% sidewalks designed for dining; and
- *Are we on the right track?* 77% yes; 21% probably yes; and 2% probably not.

Form-Based Code

Ms. Connors said a form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form, rather than separation of uses, as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law. A form-based code offers a powerful alternative to conventional zoning regulation.

Ms. Connors said form-based codes address the following:

- The relationship between building facades and the public realm;
- The form and mass of buildings in relation to one another;

- The scale and types of streets and blocks;
- The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words and clearly drawn diagrams and other visuals; and
- They are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development, rather than only distinctions in land-use types.

Councilmember Heiple said the form-based code provides a great opportunity for the City.

Mr. Richard McKown, Center Visioning Committee Co-Chair, said the current proposal does not include the type of projects previously proposed by the Elsey Brothers. He said the 30 year plan provides tremendous opportunity for local developers to do some amazing things. Mr. McKown said the Festival Streets will allow weekend activity at night but the streets should be opened back up during the day.

Councilmember Kovach said reducing lanes to two-way may cause issues on east/west travel. Ms. Joy Hampton, The Norman Transcript, asked if bike lanes being added behind parking spaces would be problematic. Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Public Works Director, said the City would have to work through the details. Ms. Hampton said she hoped her article reflected the enthusiasm of those who participated, but 300 people does not represent the entire community and felt the City will need community buy-in. She wondered how the City would gain the public's trust that they will not be over sold.

Ms. Ellen Frank, 211 E. Daws Street, said she would love to see form-based codes incorporated in other neighborhoods in core Norman and wondered if we needed more infrastructure and/or staff to accomplish this.

Father Dwight Helt, Center City Visioning Committee Member, said this is a very participatory process by the people in the area and can be a 50 year plan for the City. He said the form-based code solidifies the process as we move forward and lets property owners as well as potential investors know what to expect as the area develops.

Mr. Jonathan Fowler, Center City Visioning Committee Member, said he is very happy to participate in the Visioning Charrette process and is very supportive. He said 300 is the largest crowd seen by facilitators and views this as positive opportunities for the City. Mr. Park said walkable neighborhoods are very big right now and felt they will not occur without Council's leadership.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Norman Center City Vision - Visioning Charrette," dated May 12-16, 2014"

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

ATTEST:

Brenda Hall
City Clerk

Cindy Rosenthal
Mayor

CITY OF NORMAN CORPORATE SEAL OKLAHOMA