

## CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

September 1, 2009

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in study session at 5:35 p.m. in the Municipal Building Multi Purpose Room on the 1st day of September, 2009, 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 Atkins, Butler, Dillingham,  
Griffith, Kovach, Quinn, Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT: Councilmembers Cubberley and Ezzell

### PRESENTATION OF THE PORTER AVENUE CORRIDOR STUDY PREPARED BY OCHSNER HARE AND HARE.

City Manager Steve Lewis said the Porter Avenue Corridor Study has been an important and comprehensive process, which he compared to a comprehensive plan process refined to a specific area. As the Plan is being presented, he asked Council to consider three things; the boundaries of the Plan area, whether the Plan relates to the area residents and users of the Plan, and whether the area will work well with adopted land uses across the City.

Mayor Rosenthal recognized the Citizens Stakeholder Committee who worked with the consultants and staff to develop the proposed Plan, the Charrette workshop conducted by the consultant and stakeholder group, and the efforts of Councilmember Dillingham for shepherding the process.

Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development, said the consulting firm hired to prepare the Plan was Ochsner Hare & Hare and she introduced Mr. Ralph Ochsner, President of Ochsner Hare & Hare, who performed the market analysis and land use information and Ms. Diane Binckley who conducted the Charrette and worked with both Stakeholder Committee and staff throughout the process. She said it has been an incredible community effort that has created a great vision for this corridor, which will certainly improve the corridor and move this area of the City forward.

The Porter Avenue Corridor Plan consists of multiple layers, which addresses all the concerns outlined by the City and the public during this process. Ms. Binckley provided the boundaries of the Porter Avenue Corridor Study area which is centered along Porter Avenue further described as the area south of Haddock Street, north of Castro Street, west of Findlay Street, and east of Crawford Street. The area is crossed by the east/west high traffic corridors of Robinson Street, Gray Street, Main Street, and Alameda Street. She provided an overview of the assets and liabilities within the corridor identified by the Stakeholder Committee and said Council challenged the Committee and the consultants to develop a Plan to address both. The Stakeholder Committee prioritized the assets and liabilities as follows:

- Aesthetics – nothing inviting
- Width of Porter – lanes too narrow
- Area not a destination place
- Lack of sidewalks and connections
- Traffic and parking
- Pedestrian and school children - safety
- Hospital shift – possible doctor shift
- Competing business/residential interest
- Nothing to attract the young
- Drainage swale – within the paved area
- Reuse of older buildings
- Ordinances
- Truck traffic – dairy through neighborhoods

Ms. Binckley said the first step included a walking tour of the corridor to identify existing uses, needs, and concerns within the corridor followed by a four day charrette workshop. The vision for the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan was established on the first day of the charrette as:

"Porter Avenue will be a core area destination that brings new economic and social vitality to the City of Norman. Porter Avenue will be a gateway to the community and will be recognized for its uniqueness and visual appeal, from streetscape to storefronts. The corridor will offer a balance of commercial, residential and institutional uses that complement the adjacent neighborhoods. Porter Avenue will be recognized as a corridor that connects the community, utilizing all forms of transportation, with a commitment to safety and pedestrian uses."

Using the key factors developed in the vision statement, goals were developed to breakdown the specific areas identified as aesthetics; neighborhoods; transportation and safety; and economic development; and land use.

Ms. Binckley said the Porter Avenue Corridor has the potential to become a destination area that would attract visitors. She said due to the number of art deco and automotive history and buildings that remain along the corridor a classic car theme could be developed to "brand" the area. She presented renderings of possible façade improvements or enhancements that could be done within the area as well as project logo concepts with the classic car theme that could be adopted and transferred to signage, corridor entry columns, bus stops, etc., to identify the area. The existing conditions of the corridor were reviewed to identify what is currently in place including the physical environment; existing land use and zoning; public streets and pedestrian ways; existing housing stock; and commercial uses. It was determined transportation and accessibility issues would need to be addressed to improve the district. Ms. Binckley said the corridor needs wide sidewalks, landscaping and attractive architectural features to improve its walkability.

Mr. Ochsner summarized the market analysis of the Porter Avenue Corridor Study area conducted by Canyon Research Southwest and said based on population and income growth projections from 2008 through 2025 the City of Norman is forecast to absorb approximately 658,000 square feet of retail space. At capture rates of three to five percent, through 2025 the corridor would garner new retail sales of approximately \$5.5 million to \$9.2 million annually, supporting approximately 20,000 to 33,000 square feet of retail space. The analysis indicates the block at the southeast corner of Porter Avenue and Main Street is an ideal redevelopment site suitable for mixed use development including ground floor retail space. The three prospective redevelopment sites are capable of supporting an estimated 57,000 square feet of retail space.

According to the market analysis over the same period of time, Norman is forecast to generate net demand for 664,000 square feet of professional office space and 87,333 square feet of medical office space. At a capture rate of two to three percent of city-wide professional office space absorption, through the year 2025 the corridor would absorb approximately 13,000 to 20,000 square feet of space.

The analysis also states Norman is forecast to absorb a total of 6,500 new housing units. Owner occupied housing units are forecast to account for 65% of the new housing demand or 4,225 dwelling units and rental housing will account for the remaining 35% or 2,275 units. Given the existing housing stock and land constraints, multi-family housing is the most suitable housing type for future development within the Porter Avenue Corridor Study area. At conservative capture rates of eight to ten percent of Norman's forecast multi-family housing absorption, from 2008 to 2025 the corridor would absorb approximately 180 to 230 dwelling units.

The absorption rates identified in the market analysis are net of any demolition of existing commercial space and residential dwelling units necessary to facilitate redevelopment efforts.

Mr. Ochsner discussed future development of the corridor and "the line" separating commercial from residential. He said disagreement about the location of the line is what created the need for the current study. He said

quality retail needs a minimum depth of 230 feet but since Porter Avenue only has 60 feet of right-of-way, 250 feet is needed. He said if all the commercial properties are fully built out, 37 units would be taken. To manage the "edge" or "line" between the two land uses the following recommendations were made:

- No blanket rezoning to commercial
- Appropriate buffering
- Standards for parking lot design and landscaping
- No "leapfrog" development
- Site plan submitted and review for development with the corridor
- Design guidelines that require four sided architecture

Key transportation issues are related to access management techniques to improve safety, mobility and efficiency while preserving any capital investment made in the corridor. Mr. Ochsner said year 2025 traffic demands include a two percent annual growth where a three-lane design works. He said access management techniques should be applied and some turning movement restrictions may need to be applied. Traffic roundabouts have been proposed at Acres Street and Alameda Street. He said Porter Avenue lanes are two feet narrower than the 12-foot national standard for traffic lanes and conversion to three-lane traffic would widen the lanes and improve the street's appearance.

Ms. Binckley said Council needs to set design standards for future developments in the area to help with conversion to a more attractive corridor. Zoning regulations will need to be addressed for mixed use development and a demonstration block is recommended to act as a catalyst project to begin redevelopment in the area. The successful completion of a demonstration block shows the reality of the future of the corridor.

The study identifies nine key steps to address the Implementation Plan:

- Initiate project start-up
- Development appropriate policy
- Identify market niche and business mix
- Develop marketing and communication strategies
- Undertake planning and design for Plan recommendations
- Initiate demonstration projects
- Initiate demonstration block
- Develop economic incentives and funding
- Identify funding for transportation and demonstration block

Councilmember Kovach asked how the Plan will be solidified and Ms. Susan Atkinson, Project Manager, said she met with the four flanking neighborhoods to discuss "the line." Councilmember Dillingham felt it was important that "the line" be clearly identified. Ms. Connors said if the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan is adopted, staff will enforce the line as represented in the Plan.

Mayor Rosenthal asked that the policies related to transitional areas and parking lot guidelines be identified prior to the public hearing at the Planning Commission meeting on September 10, 2009.

Councilmember Dillingham asked that careful consideration be given to traffic flow around the buildings abutting residential use.

Councilmember Kovach asked how the infrastructure improvements would be financed and Mayor Rosenthal said funding options include grants, Capital Fund, a bond issue, or tax increment financing district.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated August 26, 2009, from Susan F. Connors, Director, Planning and Community Development, to the Honorable Mayor Cindy Rosenthal and Councilmembers
2. Porter Avenue Corridor Study dated August, 2009, prepared by Ochsner Hare & Hare
3. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "*The New Porter Avenue, Our Vision, Our Choices*" presented by Diane Binckley, Ochsner Hare & Hare

Participants in discussion

1. Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager
2. Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development
3. Ms. Diane Binckley, Consultant, Ochsner Hare & Hare
4. Mr. Ralph Ochsner, President, Ochsner Hare & Hare
5. Ms. Susan Atkinson, Project Manager

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

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City Clerk

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Mayor