

## Land Use Workgroup Meeting Notes

**DATE**                **March 14, 2012**

**TIME**                **10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

**LOCATION**            **Land-of-Sky Regional Council Offices, Asheville, NC**

Attendance – Paul Black, Leigh DeForth, Jeri DeYoung, Chris Eller, Andy Euston, DJ Gerken, Ryan Griffith, Alex Mawhinney, Barber Melton, Reuben Moore, Nancy Nehls Nelson, Rachel Russell, Eddie Shook, Mark Tooley, Shannon Tuch, Jackie Whitmire, Rachel Russell

Consultants - Don Bryson and Miller Cochran (MAB), Meg Nealon and Kate Pearson (LandDesign)

LOS staff – Linda Giltz, Erica Anderson, Carrie Runser-Turner, Natalie Murdock

### **Workgroup composition with keypad polling (Carrie)**

Carrie conducted a survey using keypad polling devices to measure the composition of the workgroup in terms of geographic distribution, urban/rural, age groups, races, economic sectors and more. The purpose of this survey was to see how we are doing so far in terms of diversity and which groups are and are not represented on the workgroups. Results will be shared for all the workgroups. A brief look at the results for this workgroup, based on those in attendance, show:

- About half of the members live in Buncombe County; there are members from every county except Haywood.
- Local government is strongly represented (43%) but after that small businesses are non-profits make up 19% each, followed by smaller numbers of state and federal government reps.
- A fairly even spread across all the age groups and for the length of time people have lived in WNC.
- Everyone identified themselves as White/Caucasian.

### **Purpose of the Work Session #1 / Goals of the Meeting**

Kate Pearce, of Land Design, articulated the main goals of the meeting: (1) to come to a common understanding/agreement of the regional goals and objectives for land use; and (2) to select a chair and steering committee nominees.

Kate reviewed the process of refining the goals – using input from the existing plans and plan review and from our workgroup discussions; the draft goals will go into the public events (Reality Checks); the goals and objectives will be refined after the public events by the Steering Committee and at the June combined workgroup meetings.



## Presentation of Initial Findings

Kate reviewed the summary of goals and issues found in the plans and studies:

- Preservation of natural resources
- Preservation of agricultural lands
- Preservation of critical viewsheds and ridgelines
- More housing choices, near employment centers
- Multi-modal transportation options
- Walkable neighborhoods and communities
- Water and air quality
- More higher wage jobs and economic diversification

These goals are similar to the ones that the group has discussed in the past two meetings. Linda reviewed these goals:

- Preservation of scenic beauty and rural areas
  - Preservation of critical ridgelines and viewsheds
  - Sensitive/limited development on steep slopes
  - Keep rural rural
- Housing choices for all and less segregation by income levels
  - More affordable housing
  - Lack of a variety of housing styles for all income levels
  - Link housing (especially affordable housing) with transportation options
- Walkable, mixed-use urban areas and towns
  - Connect residential development/areas to business/commercial development and community/public gathering places
  - “Make the healthy choice the easy choice”
  - Focus denser development in existing neighborhoods, downtown areas and rural nodes/hubs, **while protecting the character and quality of life of existing neighborhoods and towns**
- Preservation of character and quality of life of existing neighborhoods and towns
- Recognition of the importance of urban design and form
  - High quality built environment, including environmental quality and performance
  - Urban design and form – recognition that design of the built environment is important for many reasons (functionality, character, others?)
  - Understand and incorporate community values in new development
- Planning for development that is integrated with infrastructure planning and availability
  - Plan for future water quantity and availability
  - Tie density to availability of infrastructure
  - Increase/enhance transportation options and parking



The context for the plan and the goals and objectives is a 20-year planning horizon.

NOTES – the order of the goals is important in presenting them to the public. We should consider changing the first bullet or lead with clean water and air – e.g., “Preservation and stewardship of our water and watersheds and open land.” It is important to frame things in terms that rural people can relate to. The first bullet should be kept because it speaks to different things that are important to a lot of people and to tourism and economic development. “Beauty” is subjective and means different things to different people – find other ways to say this (e.g., preservation and restoration of unspoiled/natural/agricultural areas; preserve, restore and expand natural ecosystems and rural lands; support of rural lands for rural purposes (forestry, agriculture, etc.)).

“Scenic quality” should show up somewhere. Talking about ridgelines triggers backlash, especially from developers. Scenic quality is accepted more positively (DJ has done some polling on this) – people care about viewsheds. Scenic quality appeals to many different groups of people.

Farms and large tracts typically transfer generationally. A small number of people have the power to control the future of these lands and they also are concerned about maintaining the value of these lands. Need to educate key stakeholders and share/provide incentives – use incentive-type words in the “preservation” talking points. There are different values around farmland than around steep slope development, for example a respect for cultural heritage.

Jackie has a farm with a conservation easement and they have tried to talk to other farmers about conservation easements. Farmers are typically older. It is hard to interest young people in farming. Everyone likes to eat but not a lot of people like to farm. Nancy mentioned a Vermont program that SAHC is adapting to work here – linking farmers to farmland (more details?). A farmer’s land is his investment – and he/she is leary of anything that would lessen the value of this investment.

NOTE – need to find different venues to reach out to farmers and get their input – they won’t come to typical public meetings.

NOTE – use more action-oriented or enabling words in the goal statements

Additional goals:

- Multi-modal transportation
- Eco-civics – environmental awareness and urban ecological design
- Developing effective incentives for both urban and rural areas is an important goal. People are often driven by getting the highest return for the least amount of investment.
  - Education component needed to address incentives, conservation easements. Nancy mentioned a presentation that the Buncombe County Land Conservation Advisory Board (LCAB) just put together to take to neighbors, farmers, community meetings to inform them about the benefits and options for conservation and about conservation easements.



- Safe environment (i.e., lands – resilience to hazards; sustainability (e.g., landslides, responsible development on steep slopes, flood hazard areas)
- Preserving prime agricultural lands
- Preservation of character of neighborhoods – compatible with walkable, mixed use? How much do we want to preserve the auto-dependent neighborhoods and roadways that have become unsafe and less desirable. Also have to respect different viewpoints in different areas. Need to look at each project and area on its own merit. Implementing preservation of character will take communities coming together to define what that means. Preservation of community (rather than community character); or preservation and cultivation/support. Higher density development needs to be designed and presented thoughtfully and in context with the existing area
- Environmental performance of built environment – stormwater management, low impact development
- Planning for land use that accommodates a diverse set of businesses and employers
- Add walkable “rural” areas too (to third bullet); walkable looks different in different area, depending on context

DJ noted that at the scale of generality of the listed goals, they should not raise a lot of conflict.

### **Explanation of Reality Check # 1**

Kate Pearce described the open-house style meetings to be held in each county, with discussions hopefully led by work group members. At our next meeting, we need to think about how to articulate these goals for different communities for the Reality Check events.

### **Preview of Workgroup Work Session #2**

Consultants will be here with members from all the work groups and it will be set up so members of different groups can share ideas with each other across a variety of topics. The date planned for this workgroup meeting is June 5<sup>th</sup>.

### **Select Workgroup Chair**

Chris Eller was nominated but he declined. Paul Black was nominated and the group supported this nomination. Paul represents the French Broad MPO and there were some concerns from staff because Paul is also an employee of Land-of-Sky. No one else volunteered to serve as chair. We will move forward with this decision and can discuss it at a future meeting if the group would like to.

The following people were nominated to be considered as a representative from this workgroup to the Steering Committee:

- Andrew Euston
- Alex Mawhinney
- DJ Gerken
- Shannon Tuch (checked with Shannon – she will be the City of Asheville’s representative)



- Sue Anderson (checked with Sue and she would be willing to serve)
- Dave Nutter (checked with Dave and he would be willing to serve)
- Chad Lloyd (checked with Chad and he is not willing to serve)
- Ryan Griffith

Ballots were distributed (and collected) and will be emailed to workgroup members who are not present.

**Next steps –**

1. Linda will get the meeting notes to all shortly and tally the votes for Steering Committee nominees.
2. Linda will send out an email poll/notice to schedule the next workgroup meeting for some time in mid-April.
3. Linda will develop a list of draft goals and objectives based on this meeting's discussion and distribute these to the group prior to the next meeting.
4. At the next meeting, we will review the goals and detail some objectives as well as discuss how to present information to the public prior to and at the Reality Check events.