



Meeting Summary

Downtown Tomball Advisory Committee Meeting #3

Date: July 19, 2011

Location: Public Works Training Room

Handouts: Agenda, Draft Strategic Framework (July 2011), Draft Regulatory Plan (07131), Draft Strategic Framework Input Form

Participants: (See Sign in Sheet)

Meeting convened at 3:10 p.m.

Chairman Dr. Hutson called the meeting to order and turned it over to Peggy Fiandaca, PSA. Peggy gave an update of the process to date. She reported on the presentation at the Joint City Council/Planning & Zoning Commission work session on July 18th as well as the conversation with staff at the Project Management Team meeting that morning.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Peggy provided an overview of the DSP Strategic Framework. Following the presentation, the DTAC discussed key DSP components and the following is a summary of comments.

Historic Main Street

- DTAC discussed the TxDOT requirement that along Main Street/FM 2920 the building setbacks are difficult and awnings cannot hang into the right-of-way. However, they can be installed on private property. It was mentioned that in Fredericksburg, Texas 90% of the awnings are in TxDOT right-of-way or over the public sidewalks.
- It was stated that because the City of Tomball signed the memo of understanding with TxDOT, the City cannot write regulations that are illegal. It was mentioned that many buildings are currently in violation.
- DTAC liked the idea of two building entrances off the alley and along the street.
- The reality of the pedestrian alley was questioned.

Old Town Plaza

- No real discussion about this area

Old Town Commercial

- DTAC discussed the difference between the front yard setback and the build-to-line being used in the DSP.

- Since the street cross section on FM 2920 is the same in the Historic Main Street area and Old Town Commercial, the building placement, massing, and height of the buildings should be the differentiating element.
- DTAC did not have any difficulty in eliminating the on-site parking requirement. However, a concern was raised about an office building locating next to a public parking lot and having employees fill the public parking lot. There was concern about this scenario.

Mixed Use

- DTAC discussed the lot width maximum/minimum and the ability to assemble lots. It was stated that it was important to articulate architecture at least every 50 feet so it appears as several small businesses.

Old Town Residential

- The lot widths were discussed and the need to have 50' wide lots to make it reasonable to develop. It takes two lots to be assembled to build a home.
- No discussion about multi-family allowed in the residential neighborhood.

Museum Center

- DTAC discussed retail as a primary use and residential as a secondary use and Loras explained the thought process.
- The DTAC discussed uses that are allowed by right such as institutional uses (schools, churches, etc.) because they are currently in the surrounding area.
- DTAC agreed if the Museum Center would leave the uses allowed by right could be allowed.

Character Street

- Pine Street was identified as the character street that would be signed and lead visitors to the Museum Center.
- The DTAC identified the following ideas to differentiate the street – different paving pattern, historic markets that tell Tomball's story, flowering trees, pedestrian-level lighting, signature street trees, and wayfinding signage.

Circulation

- Use alleys in residential areas for pedestrian walking rather than developing concrete sidewalks out front.
- A DTAC member raised the safety concern of putting kids on bikes in the alley vs. using the streets they use now.
- Consensus was that the members generally liked the alley/pathway concept in the Old Town Residential area.
- The DTAC discussed the type of material that would be used on the alley/pathways. A concern was raised about crushed granite having a mildew problem over time.

- DTAC discussed ADA compliance requirements with the alley/pathways and the cost difference of paving sidewalks.

Drainage

- It was mentioned how critical addressing the drainage issue is in downtown. If drainage isn't handled, the DSP is never going to be implemented.
- Additional funding is necessary to achieve DSP implementation.
- It was mentioned that sewer and drainage problems are real issues that need to be resolved if the DSP is ever going to happen.
- Peggy mentioned she will express these concerns to the City Council during the annual strategic planning workshop.

Economic Development

- The City needs to address issues if the area is going to capitalize on all of the dollars spent on planning.
- The alcohol ordinance must be addressed. It is important to allow alcohol to be served.

General Questions

- City needs to message the importance of the "bond issue" to address the infrastructure issues. The DSP implementation is important but it cannot move forward without these tough infrastructure issues finally being addressed.
- It was expressed that if the City of Tomball does not have the regulations in the DSP, then this area can end up with undesirable developments cropping up.
- It was stated that staff should use the newspapers to get the word out to citizens about these issues and what the DSP is all about.