



Meeting Summary

Joint Downtown Tomball Advisory Committee (DTAC Meeting #2), City Council, and Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting

Date: April 11, 2011

Location: Community Center, Room A

Handouts: Agenda, DSP (Draft) Land Use Classifications Table, Visual Preference Survey, Street Hierarchy Map, Street Hierarchy

Participants: *DTAC:* Bill Barton, Rick Davis, Vincent Falbo, John Ford, Sandy Glowski, Charles Hall, Mary Harvey, Dr. Rodney Hutson, Cindy Jaeger, Curtis Morris, Chris Nash, Mike Ott, and Jarmon Wolfe

City Council: Mayor Gretchen Fagan and Council Members Rick Brown, Preston Dodson, Mark Stoll, and Derek Townsend

Planning & Zoning: Vice Chair Tom Crofoot and Commissioners Field Hudgens, John Mottershaw, and Barbara Tague

City Staff and Consulting Team: George Shackelford, Rodney Schmidt, Lori Lakatos, Brandy Pate, Scott Bounds, Loren Smith, and Doris Speer, City of Tomball; Peggy Fiandaca and Audra Koester Thomas, Partners for Strategic Action, Inc.; Anita Hollmann, Kimley-Horn & Associates

Others Present: Jennifer Bell, Patsy Morris, Dahlia Garza, Elaine Hancock, Marie Heffernan, Bryan Hutson, Joshua Munn, John Dillon, Peggy Hugdnin, Larry Hugdnin, and Kelly Violette

Meeting convened at 7:05 p.m.

Selection of DTAC Chair

Dr. Rodney Hutson was selected as Chair and Cindy Jaeger as Vice Chair.

Project Update

Peggy Fiandaca welcomed participants. She began her presentation with outlining characteristics shared by great downtowns, including that they are shaped over time by local traditions and culture, provide a variety of day and night activity, provide something for everyone, are comfortable for the pedestrian, have a variety of public gathering places, and are distinguishable and well-designed.

Peggy then introduced six distinct and unique areas within the DSP: Historic Main Street, Old Town Plaza Area, Commercial, Mixed Use Transition, Old Town Residential, and Museum Center. She noted that the intent would be for the DSP to outline regulations specific to each character area.

Peggy noted that these six character areas were presented throughout the Charrette with comments and feedback received on each area using a visual preference survey; Peggy encouraged participants to fill out a survey if they hadn't already.

Before moving on, Peggy asked for general feedback on the character areas and questions:

- *Why didn't the DSP area go one block further south or east across the railroad tracks?* Peggy responded that the study area was set by the City of Tomball and follows the Old Town Mixed Use land use designation outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- *How can Tomball fix all of the problems that exist in the DSP? Is it really even feasible?* Peggy responded that over time, landowners will respond to new requirements as development and redevelopment occurs.
- What people see when they come into town should be the priorities of this project.
- *Is this a 10 year plan? Considering the financial conditions, we can't afford to make these kinds of investments right now.* There is no timeline for the DSP and implementation will occur as development and redevelopment occurs.

Design Charrette Results and Discussion

Peggy reported great attendance and feedback received at the four Charrette events: Public Workshop #1 and 2nd Saturday at the Depot held on April 9th, and the Focus Group and Design Studio on April 11th. For each character area, Peggy reported on the feedback received during the Charrette and then asked for participant comments and reaction.

Historic Main Street:

- Outdoor seating is OK, but the junk has got to go! Merchandise on sidewalks is what is making Tomball look bad.
- It's hard to regulate or determine what is "junk". I also would not like to see tables in the right-of-way—setback is needed.
- I'm worried about safety; many accidents occur at Main and Cherry.

Old Town Plaza Area

No comments offered.

Commercial

- I'm worried about the variety of regulations—I think you'd want to keep some continuity amongst these character areas. Trying to regulate a 100 year old community is difficult.
- We need to look farther down the road! Imagine what this community would look like had we done this 50 years ago. I want to protect what we love.
- I want to keep the small town, hometown feel. Regulations need to be practical and not overbearing.

Mixed Use Transition

- *What does "compatible with neighborhood" mean?* Peggy responded that the questions in the visual preference survey asked if residential-like setbacks, rooflines, and other characteristics were important to keep when homes in this area transition to commercial or retail purposes.
- *Why should we allow a transition if commercial and retail negatively impact residential home values?* Peggy noted that Tomball already permits this sort of transition, and if a community wants to stop further transitional activity then they must define exactly what they'd like to prohibit.
- South, on Florence Street, there is a salon in the middle of residential—this is a terrible circumstance.
- Perhaps an effort to transition these "outlier" uses back to residential should occur.
- I don't think commercial uses should occur south of Fannin Street, north of Houston, or north of Texas Street.
- I think breaking character areas along lot lines, instead of taking whole blocks, could be problematic. Lots are only 100' deep and uses need to be more distinct, using the streets as boundaries.
- Compatibility should be determined based on whether the existing property value will be increased or decreased by proposed use.
- *Can you down-value property?* Peggy responded that it is difficult to tell someone who bought "commercial" land use prices that they can no longer put "commercial" uses on it.
- *Would this conversation change if a light rail station was in play?* Peggy responded that indeed, the placement of a light rail station would impact surrounding property, including some within the DSP.

Old Town Residential

- I would like to see gutters on homes and sidewalks within residential neighborhoods.
- I disagree—those of us who bought old homes don't want sidewalks.
- We don't see kids out in our neighborhoods because we don't have places for people to gather or connect. We need to provide places for people to safely move.

- I like the idea of “Hollywood” driveways, those with strips of paving for tires to use and grass in the middle. This would reduce the cost of paving driveways as folks wouldn’t have to pay to pour a whole slab. It has a nice ‘historic’ feel.

Museum Center

- The Museum Center is too far out; it fits better with the Depot area. Out of sight, out of mind.
- The Museum is disconnected from the rest of the “activity”—there are no sidewalks in the area.
- We need to support the Museum; they are a great asset to our community.
- We need more activity in the Museum area, especially during our other big events (German Fest, etc.)

Next Steps

Peggy asked participants to review the draft DSP land use characteristics table, street hierarchy plan, and building concepts developed during the Charrette.

Peggy acknowledged that several had mentioned an expansion of the DSP area, specifically further east. Peggy noted that while the current budget does not provide the resources to expand the study area, the City could amend the existing project contract or initiate a subsequent project for the area to the east. She noted that she’d be following-up with the City to address this request.

Peggy noted the next joint City Council/Planning & Zoning Commission meeting is July 18 at 5 p.m., and the DTAC Meeting #3 is July 19 at 3 p.m. with Public Workshop #2 following at 9 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:06 p.m.