



Meeting Summary

Downtown Tomball Advisory Committee (DTAC) Meeting #1

Date: March 3, 2011

Location: City of Tomball, Public Works Training Room

Handouts: Agenda, Working Paper #1

Participants: Bill Barton, Rick Davis, Vincent Falbo, John Ford, Karen Foxworthy, Sandy Glowski, Charles Hall, Mary Harvey, Mitchell Holderrieth, Dr. Rodney Hutson, Curtis Morris, Chris Nash, Mike Ott, Cindy Vincik, Jarmon Wolfe

DTAC members not attending: Cindy Jaeger, Aleta Oeser

Other participants: Mayor Gretchen Fagan, Larry Huggins, Peggy Huggins, Field Huggins

Staff and consulting team participants: George Shackelford, Kelly Violette, Rodney Schmidt, Lori Lakatos, and Brandy Pate, City of Tomball; Peggy Fiandaca, Partners for Strategic Action, Inc.; Anita Hollmann, Kimley-Horn & Associates

Meeting convened at 6:05 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Kelly Violette, Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) Project Manager introduced herself and the members of the Project Management Team in attendance. She thanked everyone for attending and said that she looked forward to their participation. She mentioned that there were a couple of committee members that still needed to take their oath of office. Kelly also noted that because the DTAC is an appointed committee, a chair and vice chair will need to be elected. She said that it will be on the next DTAC meeting agenda.

Kelly introduced Peggy Fiandaca, Partners for Strategic Action, Inc. (PSA), consultant team project manager. She also introduced Anita Holloman with Kimley-Horn and Associates, sub-consultant on the project.

Peggy Fiandaca gave an overview of PSA and the role that she will play on the project. She asked everyone to introduce themselves and provide a comment about what they think about the downtown area.

- Bill Barton: He expressed that there is no plan for what needs to be done in the downtown area. He said he would like to see more development (i.e. restaurants and entertainment).
- Rodney Hudson: He has been in the area for over 30 years and owns a lot of buildings and land. He is developing a restaurant and wine bar near the depot plaza. He mentioned that it has been difficult to develop the project with the current regulations in place particularly the requirement for on-site detention.
- Vincent Falbo: He owns a lot on Clarence Street and moved in May 2005 to Tomball. Traffic improvements on FM 2920 and James Street are important because that is where he lives.
- Karen Foxworthy: She has lived in Tomball since 2001 and owns a business. She is concerned about the mix-match of development and believes there needs to be better direction for future development.
- John Ford: He is a 13-year resident of Tomball and expressed the need for downtown to become a destination and a place for kids to have things to do. He would like to see more than just the festivals.
- Mitchell Holderrieth: He is a 5th generation Tomball resident and would like to preserve the heritage and history of the downtown area. He would like to see new growth as well as preserve what already exists.
- Sandy Glowski: She is an 11-year resident and wants to ensure that Tomball does not look like other towns. She felt that the main problem in downtown is traffic and the need for safe crossings.
- Charles Hall: He is president of the Museum Center and would like to see the presence of the Museum better promoted. He noted that Tomball itself needs a marketing campaign.
- Cindy Vincik: She owns tea shop and was born and raised in Tomball but lives just outside of Tomball city limits in Rosehill. She would like to preserve Tomball's history but also promote a contemporary feel (not unlike Fredericksburg). Additionally, Cindy noted the need to develop more pedestrian crossings on Main Street, improve parking, and beautify the area. She noted the importance of zoning enforcement, façade improvements, landscaping, etc.
- Curtis Morris: He owns a restaurant on Main Street and said that pedestrian crossings are problematic. He would like to see more businesses added that compliment existing development and activity.
- Mayor Fagan: The Mayor welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating on this important committee.
- Mike Ott: He came to Tomball in 1987 and his wife has a store on Main Street. He believes design standards need to be implemented and noted some difficulties when remodeling his wife's store.
- Rick Davis: He is chairman of the organization that owns "Main Street Crossing" on Main Street which has been around for eight years, but this is the first time

he has been involved in any community outreach. He would like to see downtown Tomball become a music destination.

- Mary Harvey: She owns “Granny’s Corner” on Market Street and would like to see the attractiveness of Main Street return.
- Jarmon Wolfe: He lives in downtown Tomball and is concerned with the number of dilapidated buildings that do not currently meet code. He would also like to see the Museum Center expanded.
- Chris Nash: He is a 10-year resident and wants to make Tomball a great place for kids.
- Larry Huggins: He was born and raised in Tomball and came back to retire. Larry expressed his concern with FM 2920 and noted TxDOT as a major inhibitor.
- Peggy Huggins: she and her husband retired and moved to Tomball to be closer to their kids and grandkids. Peggy’s main concern is code enforcement.
- Field Huggins (son of Peggy Huggins): He is a Zoning Commissioner and City Council candidate. He thought downtown needs to be kid friendly. However, he also noted that downtown needs to be a place where “we as parents” have something to do (with or without children).

Expectations

Participants discussed what their expectations were for the DSP:

- Create a downtown where everyone wants to be
- Develop the unique potential of downtown
- Make traffic improvements particularly on FM 2920 and James Street
- Eliminate the “mish-mash” development that has occurred in downtown
- Ensure that downtown can live up to its potential
- Create a downtown destination which is home to a variety of activities
- Create a downtown that is pedestrian friendly; need better connections across Main Street
- Preserve the heritage and history of Tomball while new growth is accommodated; ensure that new development is compatible and that the historic and contemporary design both can shine through
- Create Tomball’s “own flavor”
- Beautify downtown; spruce it up
- Polish the “diamond in the rough” that is downtown Tomball
- Promote the Museum Center so people know that it is part of downtown
- Develop an architectural standard and acceptable look for development downtown
- Become the destination for Texas music
- More code enforcement
- Downtown should be kid-friendly

Approach and Schedule

Peggy reviewed the four-phased DPS process: Existing Conditions, DSP Framework, Draft DSP, and Final DSP. Peggy noted that the DSP will be adopted by City Council in November 2011 and that the DTAC will meet three more times during the process:

- DTAC Meeting #2 – April 11, 7 – 9 p.m.
- DTAC Meeting #3 – July 19, 3 – 5 p.m.
- DTAC Meeting #4 – September 6, 9 a.m. – Noon

DTAC members were also encouraged to participate in the other DSP events.

Roles and Responsibilities

Peggy reviewed DSP roles and responsibilities.

DTAC:

- Actively participate in the process
- Come prepared to participate in meetings
- Study materials prior to the meetings
- Encourage participation of others
- Ensure project success

Staff/Consultants:

- Provide technical assistance
- Guide and facilitate the process
- Produce summary reports and final DSP
- Solicit public input
- Ensure project success

Existing Conditions and Downtown Research

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Peggy gave an overview of the DSP and research completed to date contained within Working Paper #1.

Peggy noted that the DSP is a regulatory document that will outline the steps for improving downtown Tomball. Peggy mentioned that the DSP will be adopted via a public hearing process and that the area will be rezoned accordingly.

Peggy noted that there have been many studies completed in and around downtown that will be used as input to the DSP. This process is not intended to duplicate these planning efforts but to build upon them and translate the concepts into regulatory language so that they can be implemented.

Specific studies that will provide valuable input to the DSP include:

- Tomball Comprehensive Plan: provided a long term vision for the development of the entire community. It identified Old Town Tomball as an important asset

- and identified specific planning concepts and policies for the area that will be explored in the specific plan.
- Livable Centers Downtown Plan: Primary purpose to evaluate transportation. Public improvements were the emphasis of this plan. It did not address standards for how to develop and where to develop in terms of private and commercial ownership. The study area was much smaller than the DSP project area.
 - FM 2920 Access Management Study: This was the starting point for the Livable Centers Downtown Plan. One of the main recommendations was to remove on-street parking from Main Street.
 - Tomball Major Thoroughfare Plan: This plan identifies a classification system for designating major transportation routes in and around the community and serves as a planning tool to identify new roadway connections and infrastructure.
 - Infrastructure Master Plan: The Master Plan covers a 10-year period and it is intended to identify infrastructure, related improvements, and funding to execute improvements.
 - Zoning Ordinance: On February 4, 2008, the City of Tomball adopted its first zoning ordinance and land use map. The majority of the DSP area has been designated as Old Town and Mixed Use to honor the diverse land uses that exist.
 - Old Town Tomball Master Plan: The Master Plan addressed the downtown area and developed design and streetscape concepts. However, it did not address implementation of these improvements. The plan does offer ideas that can be used during this process.

Peggy also discussed information about the existing infrastructure within downtown. She highlighted that there was no outfall system to address drainage and this is why on-site detention is needed. She said this is just one example of the challenge of identifying where infrastructure improvements are needed and how improvements will be funded.

Rodney Hudson commented that the requirement for on-site detention is a primary issue and obstacle for landowners developing in the downtown today. Addressing this issue will be important for future development in downtown.

As part of the discussion, a question was asked as to what role light rail will play in this study? Kelly responded that the State of Texas is preparing a statewide rail plan and rail studies have been completed by the Houston Galveston Area Council which indicates that the SH 249 corridor is a viable line. From a City perspective, Kelly noted that a viable rail station site is currently being researched as well as the types of transit-oriented development that should be established around the proposed site.

Peggy continued to review the research contained in Working Paper #1, including an introduction to three case studies of communities that have successfully revitalized their

downtowns. She played a video that discussed the efforts of one of the case studies, downtown Bryan. Following the video, participants discussed how efforts in Bryan might relate to Tomball. Some of the comments mentioned include:

- Bryan developed strict design guidelines of how new buildings would be developed, similar to what is often required in home owners associations. This approach would allow the downtown to determine how new buildings should be developed to fit in with the surrounding buildings.
- Bryan successfully invested in infrastructure and that is something Tomball needs to do.
- I could relate to the comments from Bryan residents and visitors that they “didn’t know this was down here”; it is a common comment I hear in my tea shop.
- The City of Bryan and its residents had to make a major investment in infrastructure. They successfully implement public/private partnerships and made long-term investments to accomplish their vision.

Interactive Design Workshop

The PowerPoint presentation included a series of photos of development in downtown. Participants were asked to write down comments of what they “liked” or “did not like” about the photos. The intent of the exercise was to understand acceptable design components and what Tomball might want to continue to allow. The following discussion ensued:

- **Main Street Commercial, Slide 16:** Overall participants did not think the designs depicted were acceptable going forward.
 - **Signage:**
 - Difficult to identify what business you are driving past. Is there a way to identify a shop with out having to turn out head?
 - Problem – older buildings do not have the needed setbacks.
 - **Awnings:** There should not be corrugated steel awnings on Main Street.
 - **Financing:**
 - New developments versus expansion of existing developments should be planned for separately. The cost of doing a building like “Main Street Crossing” is much more expensive compared to a smaller retail building.
 - It was mentioned that with regulations today even a building like “Main Street Crossing” would not be able to be built because of the requirement for on-site detention and parking.
 - How do you get property owners to improve their façades? Potential options mentioned included public investment via improvement districts and TIRZs.
- **Variety of Commercial, Slide 17:** Participants noted that these photos did not depict what they wanted to see in the future. Participants noted the area in The

Woodlands behind the Mall (Market Street) is a good example of destination retail. Participants noted that they'd like downtown to be a "destination".

- **Transitional Areas, Slide 18 (where residential is turning to business/retail)**
 - Along Main Street and one block north or south of should be residential with some mixed use commercial.
 - Gruene, Texas and Old Town Spring were mentioned as good examples towns exhibiting transition zones.
 - These lots are small making it difficult to meet current parking requirements.
- **Residential, Slides 19-21**
 - Lots of empty lots. The presence of oil wells and pipelines is a problem; not sure if all lots can even be developed.
 - There are empty lots within residential areas that could be developed and the concern for compatibility was mentioned.
 - Allowing metal accessory buildings was mentioned as a problem.

Next Steps

The DTAC will finish reviewing slides 18-31 of the PowerPoint presentation and provide input/comments prior to the next meeting. Staff will distribute the information and an input form to DTAC members to complete the task.

DTAC members were invited to participate in the special Walk Tomball on Saturday, March 5, where groups will be taking pictures of downtown and discussing their observations at a breakfast following the walk.

The next public event is "Eyes on Downtown Tomball Charrette" scheduled for April 9-11. The event includes a public workshop, Second Saturday DSP booth, downtown design studio, focus group, and joint meeting of the DTAC, Planning & Zoning Commission, and City Council.

The next DTAC Meeting is scheduled for April 11 from 7 to 9 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:10 p.m.