

MEETING SUMMARY | Housing Subcommittee Committee Meeting 2

January 24, 2019

The following is a summary of the second meeting of the Housing Subcommittee for Tuscaloosa's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code Update process. Attached to this summary are the meeting attendance sheet, agenda, and additional documents.

Welcome

During the welcome, Steven Rumsey, Gerald Ross, and William Blakeney volunteered to serve as the subcommittee's representatives at the City Council's Projects Committee meeting on January 29.

Previous Student Housing Policies

Ms. Crites detailed previous student housing policies for the subcommittee:

1. Student Rental Housing Task Force (2013)
2. UAN Task Force (2014)
3. Student Rental Housing Task Force (2015)
4. UAN Task Force (2016)
5. Bonus Height Provision in UAN (Feb. 2016)

Moratorium Overview

Staff detailed the multifamily moratorium's timeline and future topics for the subcommittee members.

1. January 15 – Definitions
2. January 22 – Infrastructure
3. January 29 – Update from 1/23 Planning Commission meeting and 1/24 Housing Subcommittee meeting.

Possible future topics include, but aren't limited to: Geography, Public Safety, and Density, Design and UAN Regulations.

Staff discussed the Columbia, SC definitions and standards for "private dormitories," noting the distinction between what is marketed to students vs. what developments have students living in them.

FRAMEWORK

Creating a dynamic guide for Tuscaloosa

A subcommittee member expressed a sentiment that the moratorium needs to be left in place until the infrastructure problems are addressed in order to protect life safety and water quality issues.

Infrastructure

Staff detailed infrastructure concerns in the area to the west of Bryant-Denny Stadium, known as sewer sub-basin 10. Concerns include sanitary sewer, water, storm sewer and water quality, vehicular traffic, pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and parking. Staff detailed the existing sewer conditions for many sewer lines in the area, noting peak flows for the current day, then showing what those peak flows would look like with additional bedrooms added on for projects currently under construction, in LDP review, and approved by Planning Commission.

Staff noted that the Planning Commission has, in recent months, approved projects conditioned upon sanitary sewer analysis being performed before the project is underway. The capacity issues have been discussed, but not with the level of data the subcommittee saw at the meeting.

Current service fees were discussed, and the subcommittee was able to see the current service fee schedule and the total revenues collected by council district to date. Subcommittee members asked if capacity issues could be funded by service fees – the answer is yes, but the funds have to be applied back into the area from which they came, typically. The subcommittee members asked questions about other service fees – for roads and public safety specifically. It was also suggested that the City work with Alabama Power, as power grids in the area by the stadium are beginning to be strained.

Possible Build-Outs

Staff created graphics showing possible build-outs around the stadium, shifting some focus to the area east of Bryant-Denny. Showing what existed today that could be consolidated through today's subdivision regulations, there is a possibility for a handful of larger, higher density projects to be constructed, especially if underground parking is utilized.

Committee members expressed concerns about the ability to consolidate property by right to allow large, dense developments where it might be out of character for the area. Staff noted that it would require maximum lot sizes to be created for properties.

Staff also created a graphic showing the existing privately-owned developments being marketed to students. These are not the same developments that were built

FRAMEWORK

Creating a dynamic guide for Tuscaloosa

to be oriented to students. For those being marketed to students, there are 156 developments on 780 total acres with approximately 30,000 bedrooms. In future meetings on student housing, staff will narrow the list down to those that were originally constructed for student rental and could meet the definition of “private dormitory” or similar.

Staff took the graphic of developments being marketed to students and overlaid the crime data from 2011-July 2017. Both violent and property crimes were shown, year to year, for the area as a whole. Staff asked the committee if they were interested in seeing anything further from the crime data – understanding how the crime data could factor into recommendations that are made for student housing is important. Committee members asked that 2-3 outcomes be brought to the committee to stay focused on why crime data is important in the relationship to student housing. Staff explained how the steering committee could consider making recommendations to incorporate student housing security standards into the code update.

Occupancy Discussion

Staff received occupancy numbers from an outside source who was able to share numbers, but not specific locations. Staff presented occupancy information to the subcommittee, showing the percent of vacant bedrooms by distance from Denny Chimes, the percent of vacant beds by the number of bedrooms per unit, the number and percent of vacant beds by the distance from Denny Chimes.

Staff showed a case study example of a previous student-oriented development (Boardwalk at Brittain Landing) that reconfigured its units from all 4-bedrooms to 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units. Many subcommittee members seemed to agree that the conversion concept could be an important piece of solving the workforce housing problem, as we are expecting to need to house an additional 4,000 members of the workforce during the next few years. Preparing for a future discussion about workforce and affordable housing, some committee members suggested incentives or “workforce incentive zones” to encourage similar redevelopment for similar developments.

Next Steps

The subcommittee decided to meet again for two hours at the end of February or the first week of March, to discuss workforce and affordable housing. Staff asked the subcommittee to think about three items for consideration for the next time student housing is discussed:

1. What is "The Box" and what should it be in the future?
2. In the area west of the stadium (or in another area) is there room for commercial zoning, or should it stay multi-family?
3. The UAN plan has not been truly updated since 2004 – we likely need to refresh our thoughts on what the University Area Neighborhood is (boundaries, etc.)