

Imagine Nashua – Land Use and Development Focus Discussion
 6/15/21 – 6 pm via Zoom

In attendance:

Staff & Consultants	Steering Committee Members	Public
Sarah Marchant Matt Sullivan Julie Chizmas Kate Poirier Carter Falk Scott McPhie Deb Chisholm Taskina Tareen Will Cohen	Amber Logue-Morgan Gene Porter Peter Schaefer Gloria McCarthy	Paul Hodes Caroline Bob Mack Marcia Carol Sarno Grace Finlay Michael Pedersen, Nashua Planning Board Julie Glosner Rep. Latha Mangipudi Sherry Dutzy, Nashua Con Comm Brian Law

Review Goals and Action Items

2.1 Redevelopment Opportunity:

- DW College

Latha: Still in private hands. How is it going to change if ownership doesn't change?

Latha: Re: Preserving recreational fields, stadium - when would the appropriate time be to bring other proposals to the City?

Gene (chat): Not just public access "points", this should be a pearl in the necklass of the Citys riverfront heritage trail. City alrady owns much of the riverfront and has easements on more. Beazer property shouldn have apublic access easement along its entire length

- Beazer

Latha (chat): EPA clearance is almost done? isn't this is also under private ownership?

Sarah (chat): Yes, this property is also under private ownership. It is currently zoned as Park Industrial so this is the same purpose of the discussion to reframe zoning to be appropriate to the potential redevelopment.

We believe that EPA will sign off on 80 acres for redevelopment in the next 5 to 10 years.

Gene (chat): What about the suggestion that you look into the possibility that an overpass easement exists?

Sarah (chat): Correction its zoned General Industrial not Park Industrial

Gene: The City already owns a substantial fraction of Merrimack River waterfront and has access via easement at Thoreau's Landing. This plan is an opportunity to promote the Riverwalk. It's appropriate to consider full waterfront conservation easement for public access along entire

Beazer property. Problem with at grade crossing is very real. Overpass was in old deed for property.

Latha: Already have an overpass over Nashua River – the Cotton Mill Bridge. Nashua was very walkable and connected in the 90s. Completing the Riverwalk will help keep the city walkable, bikeable and livable. Also, DW College and the housing crisis - how many units between these two plans?

Latha: Access to public transportation – rail and bus. We need a holistic approach.

Sherry: Doesn't like this at all. It's better than a bunch of single family houses on quarter acre lots. Any housing down there is going to totally destroy the neighborhood. These are residential streets. Hills Ferry is thruway to Concord St but these are all truly residential streets. Damon Ave is one of two access points – will destroy neighborhood. Other uses for land? Make a perfect solar farm. In keeping with Merrimack River watershed association's goal of preserving waterfront. Can mix solar with increased wildlife habitat and agricultural activities. If you want to solve housing problem we will have to go to the Rack 'em and Stack 'em design like you see in China. You can't deal with housing problem with a 100 houses here, 50 apartments there. Have to let people know that if they want housing, that's what they get. Nashua is becoming like that and we can't all have single family homes with white picket fences. Does not support this proposal.

Caroline (chat): I like the idea of solar energy for our buildings.

Latha (chat): EPA may be very open to solar farm

Caroline (chat): As the population grows, we will need more rack em and stack em housing also known as urban living.

Amber: A solar farm is interesting idea. Build to rent communities are showing popularity on the west coast. Has the feel of a suburban lifestyle. Do current regulations allow for it?

Latha (chat): How about self sustaining communities.

Caroline (chat): Not everyone wants it, but platforms like this create it.

Latha (chat) Open market option to bring innovative ideas is key here

Peter: Single family homes don't work. As a kid, saw innovative ideas for housing at World's Fair. We need something creative and dense. It would be nice if developers came up with a livable high-rise design.

Julie G (chat): What is the time frame to make this happen/change?

Sarah: We are not proposing high-rise buildings. And developers aren't asking to build them. Construction over 5 stories is completely unviable right now.

Peter: Aren't newer developments requiring sprinklers?

Sherry: What is happening with the dreadful tannery (?) property?

Sarah: What is it specifically you don't like about this plan? The access or the housing?

Sherry: The latter. Can't see how you can build housing there without devastating all the streets. Not that many thru streets and they are narrow. Would be increasing density of neighborhood by about a third. Most people will have two cars so a lot of traffic. Plus issue with railroad. This would be another area where everyone will be in a car. Should have housing on bus line, rail trails – where people can walk and bike. Do something in that area where people have access to downtown and jobs. This is better than SFR and likes the density. Is there a way to develop this area for the whole community?

Gene (chat): It would be helpful if the staff would estimate the difference in income the Beazer property could generate between housing and a solar farm, such that people could understand that the public would likely have to pony up the difference if the very desirable solar farm/wconservation land option were to be pursued

Taskina (chat): That's a great suggestion Gene - similar to the industrial vs housing option on DWC

Sarah: It's currently zoned industrial and the only other offers have been for warehousing, which would generate truck traffic. The current property owners need to recoup clean-up costs. Redevelopment of the site will have to have enough value to absorb the costs put in for clean-up.

Gene (chat): So the Master Plan should consider recommending rezoning the Beazer property now.

Latha: EPA isn't ready to approve housing at this point. How many years away are we? Can we use it for a solar farm that would also benefit City, master plan goals of sustainable energy? Also, 141 Burke St property – the City sold it, is there any development proposal for housing?

Sarah: No proposal for housing on Burke St. Industrial issues around it. Re: Beazer – we don't own it and don't plan on owning it. Nobody wants industrial use that it's currently zoned for. Outcome of this discussion will be rezoning to say what should be allowed.

Gene (chat) The EPA has turned over the oversight of the Beazer clean up to the NH DES whose criteria for permitting development are close to being met.

Bob (chat): maybe a combo residential and recreation area (similar to DWC site but a smaller scale). Accessing the river to move people via ferry boat or some type of water taxi could enhance utilizing the river.

Brian (chat): As beneficial as it sounds, I don't believe solar will have returns comparable enough to other development opportunities (such as housing or a distribution center) to make solar viable.

Sherry: What zoning options do we have to modify how land is used?

Sarah: The issues are access, traffic patterns, cost. A public park is not economically viable. Housing with density would make sense. Medium density with limited access points. Talked mixed use but not enough access to support retail, commercial.

Peter: Main interest is access to River. Varying interpretations of what City has access to – Thoreau's Landing example.

Gene (chat): Exactly; if a less lucrative application is chosen, the Public will have to compensate the seller

Caroline (chat): Do you think that solar is not feasible?

Latha (chat): Solar technology has come very far and large developments can be beneficial in NH

2.9 Carbon-free Transportation and Building Design

No comments (covered lots of things under 2.10)

2.10 Mitigation of Climate Change Impacts

Latha (chat): Where is city with PACE ordinance?

Gene (chat): Agree; very feasible. See the current project near the Pennichuck school. But would have to acknowledge that the seller would need to be compensated

Latha (chat): EV corridor in Nashua is important isn't it?

Sarah: Yes! (to Latha's chat question)

Sherry: Want to underscore that we need to put EV charging stations into zoning. We are encouraging Nashua Landing (CostCo) to install EV stations and if it's in zoning, they have to do it. ConComm is working on a number of issues but like pushing a string up a mountain you're your nose. How do we scale these things up?

Gene (chat): The Climate Change section should explicitly advocate the radical reduction in the use of fossil fuels by the Nashua government - cars, schoolbuses etc.. The Master Plan is exactly the correct vehicle for advocating a sharply reduced carbon footprint in Nashua,

Will: It's too onerous for all developments to install EV stations but they could put in all the necessary underground infrastructure. Right-to-Charge ordinance. Trying to remove burdens to scaling up.

Latha: Re - EV Corridor. We have a lot of car dealerships in Nashua. They aren't selling a lot of EVs because the charging infrastructure isn't there. Adding a couple of stations to new parking lots or high density apartments will attract younger people. We are a big donut hole in New England. We have a dormant ordinance in Nashua.

Brian (chat): Q: Who pays for the electricity for these "required public" ev charging stations?

Will (chat): Generally, the consumer. The developer would be able to charge a premium per kWh to help recoup the cost, but it would need to be market-appropriate along with the cost of public charging in other locations

Caroline (chat): I agree with Latha that sustainable infrastructure such as ev stations will stack young people with a sustainability mindset.

3.1 Development Balance

Sherry: What is infill development?

3.2 Livability and Public Realm

Shery (chat): I really like these ideas. Commercial on ground fl. housing above.

3.3 Design Process and Transparency

Gene (chat): It is important that the Plan have sufficient authority to significantly influence developers and the PB/BZA

Gene (chat): An example of potential Plan authority, it could say that every new gas pump should be paired with a new EV charger.

Will(chat): Understood. We'll try to get this as detailed as we can, given the herding of cats we still have to accomplish!

Latha: Housing bills and legislations at state level have impacts. Many bills have not been passed. How do we advocate for local control? What can Nashua do at the local control level?

Brian: When folks are looking to develop a parcel for residential housing, the numbers come in at around \$250K per unit. \$100M to build 400 units. Upfront costs only recouped when sold or units filled. There are ramifications of impacting that cost. Wants a community that is vibrant. Was just flabbergasted by costs – the numbers are just staggering.

Latha: Development costs investors. Need an open mind set in 21st Century. If you aren't born in Nashua or NH, you are an outsider. How do we embrace diversity, include diversity in our development. This is a critical point.

Caroline (chat): Exactly Latha. I can relate being a new resident of New Hampshire.

Peter (chat): I see you as a Nashuan

Latha (chat): Thank you Peter and Caroline

Sherry (to Brian): One thing we don't have are buildings with condos on top and rentals below. Would something like that help defray costs?

Brian: Doesn't think so. Typically, developers just build them – that's their expertise, not owning or leasing. Don't want to deal with management of both condos vs rentals. Looked at commercial below and residential above but it was seen as "Boston" and not viable for here. Amherst St doesn't have a Commonwealth Ave feel.

Will: Brian brings up good point. If the Nashua Real Estate market wanted to support that kind of development, it would. While perhaps mixed-use doesn't apparently make sense, the best way is to make it work is for the City to embrace the vision in the Master Plan and change zoning and ordinances. These are the signals developers need to hear.

Latha (chat): Thank you to staff and this team for working on this so diligently

Julie G (chat): I agree that mixed use doesn't make sense here. I can see all residential. Due to traffic patterns.

Gloria: Agrees with Will as far as "try that out". British Columbia example (?) – had mixed-use with commercial below, condos above. If there's a place in Nashua to start something like that, it can't hurt. Doesn't have to be a whole neighborhood, just a new development somewhere.

Problem in Nashua with density is that some of the surrounding communities have 5 acre zoning so we have to make up for that. Puts pressure on Nashua.

Peter: Downtown is like that. Change is slow and we aren't there yet.

Sherry: Underscore what Gloria says. Two demographics that would use mixed-use. Young workers and seniors. No options for those wanting to downsize and not be auto-dependent. Would be nice to have a restaurant on the first floor. Developers are building duplexes because they can't afford to build SFRs – priced out.

Will: Younger people waiting to have families and empty nesters/seniors are dominant. Nashua doesn't have what it needs the most.

Latha (chat): multi generational is key

Caroline (chat): Thank you for bringing other points up in regards to housing for young people and seniors

Gene (chat): If the Powers that Be want to ensure that some parcel of land is developed primarily for some public interest other than the most profitable for the owner, then it should be so rezoned NOW. EG Beazer could be rezoned as parkland, with the owner subject to suitable compensation for loss of potential income

Latha: Need multi-generational housing. Gone are the times of 55+, 65+ segregated housing communities. Little India, Little Italy – we need to look at multi-generational, multi-cultural group living.

Caroline (chat): Yes to multigenerational and multicultural communities

Peter: Current development down by Hudson Bridge is pretty much auto-dependent. There isn't much within a mile for restaurants, etc.

Latha (chat): bus and train will help

Sarah: Great point – there's a chicken and egg issue. Parts of town are seeing redevelopment for the first time in years.