

**August 11, 2014**  
**Special Joint Meeting of the City Council**  
**and the Seventh Avenue Advisory Committee (SAAC)**  
**Assembly Room – Operations Center**  
**6:30 p.m.**

Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, Mayor Pro Tem Ron Stephens and Council Members: Steve Caraker, Jerry Smith and Jeff Miller

SAAC Members present: Chairman Carson Calton, Dennis Dunlap, Terry Ketcham, Chris Cormier, Farrell Beam, Mark Ray, Jim Kastetter

Staff Present: City Manager John F. Connet, City Clerk Tammie Drake, Public Information Officer Tara Ledbetter, Budget Analyst Brian Pahle

**1. Call to Order:** Mayor Volk and SAAC Chairman Carson Calton called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. A quorum was established with all five Council members in attendance.

**2. Purpose of the Meeting and Introduction of Liollo Architecture:** The purpose of the meeting was to hold a joint meeting with the Seventh Avenue Advisory Committee to hear the results of the design charrette held July 29, 2014. Mr. Connet welcomed all those in attendance and reviewed the agenda. He introduced Cherie Liollo. He asked for feedback from the audience, business and property owners and all interested parties.

Ms. Liollo began with a review of the original PowerPoint presentation that was given at the charrette including a history of the area. The session was split into three groups for discussion of the three main areas: 1) streetscape (external aspects), 2) building design and improvement and 3) zoning and regulatory items (what could make the ideas happen).

**Visioning:** Ms. Liollo reviewed the study area and explained how they visually walked through the area and identified the positives: colored awnings, in-tact historic structures/features, and the diversity. Many structures are eligible for Federal and/or State historic preservation grants and are worthy of protection and historic tax credits. Other positives include tree plantings, curb appeal to attract new businesses and interest from developers and tourists.

Ms. Liollo summarized the ideas that came out of the charrette:

- residential living on second floors over shops and businesses should be promoted
- restaurants should be encouraged to locate in area
- digital access should be improved to encourage entrepreneurs and tech businesses
- incentives should be provided to jump-start awning/signage improvements
- the arts/crafts community should be encouraged to participate
- quality affordable housing options should be introduced
- a mix of businesses should be encouraged including considering selective “large chain” businesses
- “incubator” retail concepts should be investigated
- a proper mix of service-oriented and destination-type businesses should be created
- “good behavior” by developers/businesses should be incentivized by the City.

Discussion and Questions: Mr. Connet asked for feedback and discussion on what kind of incentives the City should think about to incentivize redevelopment of the vacant structures or to get property owners to take advantage of façade grants. Suggestions included:

- a friendlier approach by City staff, or a concierge position, to make starting a business (or renovating) a positive experience, help them understand what it will cost, required permitting, etc., and connecting with the small business center at Blue Ridge Community College and the SCORE association so they learn how to keep the business running
- possibly a tax reduction for a limited amount of time or keeping tax rate at original value for a period of time (i.e., five years)
- implementing a requirement to improve the façade on vacant buildings
- Police protection and perception of police protection, i.e., an officer on the street
- Streetscape: putting parking and trees in middle of the street to expose the buildings, “painting” a trial on the new pavement, bump-outs to accentuate the greenway crossing and depot/street intersections, making it pedestrian-oriented
- look at Maple Street as a major connector to downtown, the nearby community, Jackson Park and the existing greenway to attract a younger demographic who want to live near greenways
- consider rebranding as “Depot District” instead of Seventh Avenue and
- include a component to provide affordable housing, investigate HOPE 6 monies to provide safe, affordable housing.

Ms. Diane Caldwell commented that visioning should be inclusive of those on both sides of Seventh Avenue. There was discussion of the makeup of the committee and publicizing openings, etc.

**Zoning and Regulatory Presentation:** Ms. Liollo reviewed the suggestions from the charrette:

- Improving City communications including a well-designed, dedicated Historic Seventh Avenue District website
- Create stronger outreach to the development community
- Develop partnerships with the county, hospitals, colleges and school districts
- Create new standards for housing and retail
- Consider a special overlay district for Seventh Avenue that provides protection while encouraging new development or redevelopment
- Remove development regulatory impediments
- Develop ordinances with “teeth” and give power to the Urban Renewal Area to address blight issue, etc.
- Re-examine C-2 zoning by defining desired business mix, i.e., office, retail and a streamlined approach to amend ordinances if needed

Topics of discussion included: the King Hardware property that has tremendous potential, the issue of loitering and the homeless population, possibly locating a Police substation at the historic Depot, the Blue Ridge Rail, on-street parking, partnering with landowners to convert empty lots into parking and working with property owners to rent out office space on short-term leases.

The group agreed to experiment with the parking suggestions. Council Member Caraker commented on outside developers that have seen the area and appear to be impressed with what is happening in Hendersonville.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. upon unanimous assent of the Council.

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Barbara G. Volk, Mayor

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Tammie K. Drake, City Clerk