

**January 9, 2017**  
**Special Joint Meeting of the City Council**  
**with the Seventh Avenue Advisory Committee**  
**Assembly Room – Operations Center**  
**6:00 p.m.**

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

SAAC: Carson Calton, Matthew Hickman, Ron Kauffman, Sheryl Fortune, Chris Cormier

**1. Call to Order:** Mayor Volk called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Mr. Connet welcomed those in attendance. He stated the City has been working extensively over the past number of years to create an overall vision for the Seventh Avenue area. He asked Mr. Hunter Marks and Brooke Johnson with Watermark Landscape Architecture to introduce a potential street scape design for the corridor from Highway 64 to the greenway along Seventh Avenue and other special locations to give a potential vision for the area. Mr. Connet stated the SAAC will discuss and may tweak the design at a future meeting.

Mr. Connet explained the UNC School of Government will then provide a presentation on the statutes regarding Urban Redevelopment Areas (URA), the benefits and special statutory authority of URAs, etc. that may be used as tools to accomplish a vision for the Seventh Avenue area.

**2. Presentation of Preliminary Streetscape Design for Seventh Avenue MSD:** Mr. Hunter Marks and Brooke Johnson presented a conceptual plan for Seventh Avenue. He stated they met with staff to discuss concepts for this “Place” from Seventh Avenue at Grove Street to Seventh Avenue at the Oklawaha Greenway or Mud Creek. Highlights of the conceptual design include:

- Primary entrances: identified as Seventh/Grove and at Mud Creek/Oklawaha Greenway. A possible secondary entrance is Seventh/Ashe Street. Area connections include: Seventh Avenue to Main Street, Seventh Avenue to Fourth Avenue (a logical pedestrian connection to the potential hotel project and Jackson Park, the Oklawaha Greenway and possible future connection to the Ecusta Trail).
- At primary intersections: brick pavement patterns giving the impression of roundabout. At secondary intersections, brick and pavers.
- A median within Seventh Avenue with curb cuts that allows green space without losing any parking.
- Possibly bury utilities.
- A small pedestrian plaza in front of Kilpatrick’s business.

Discussion followed on the design proposal. Mr. Connet stated it may possibly be done in phases beginning with the two major intersections. Council Member Smith suggested an official crossing for the Oklawaha Greenway at Seventh Avenue. Discussion followed on expanding the design at Maple Street. After discussion, Mr. Connet stated staff will continue to work with the Council and the SAAC to fine-tune the proposal. He reiterated it will take time and resources to accomplish this. Comments from the Council and SAAC included this is a good first effort. There was some discussion of utility lines. **No action was taken.**

**3. Urban Redevelopment Area (URA) Presentation by the UNC School of Government:** Mr. Connet introduced Ms. Marcia Perritt, Project Manager with the Development Finance Initiative (DFI) with the UNC School of Government. He stated DFI completed the initial work associated with the Seventh Avenue area. An URA was considered but it was not appropriate at that time. After follow-up discussion, staff believes it may now be appropriate to look in-depth at the possibility of an URA and the required process.

Ms. Perritt defined an Urban Redevelopment Area as an area that is blighted or is in danger of becoming blighted. She reviewed the steps necessary to create it pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes 160A, Article 22, case studies of other cities who have implemented URAs, the roles of the bodies involved, and the plan itself. URAs makes available some tools that otherwise would be unavailable to local governments.

Mr. Connet emphasized the required Urban Redevelopment Plan has to align with the goals and desires set forth by the community -- with input and involvement of the community which determines the powers that may be exercised. Ms. Perritt explained URAs build community consensus around a vision and goals for a particular area. She said it also sends a signal to the private market that a local government is serious about redevelopment in an area.

**Steps for a URA:** Ms. Perritt explained the steps necessary including the formation of a Redevelopment Commission (which may be the City Council or a diverse group) to interface with the community and create the plan. The Redevelopment Commission tentatively defines the area boundaries, collects the data, etc. and the Planning Board qualifies the URA. The Council, upon agreements, passes a resolution confirming Planning Board’s findings and Urban Redevelopment Area boundaries.

The Redevelopment Commission creates a Redevelopment Plan that goes through a series of approvals: public presentation, Planning Board review and again to the public and then to the City Council for approval before implementation may begin.

Planning activities associated with the Redevelopment Plan include: data collection to certify if the area qualifies and serves as a base line for establishing goals, where efforts should be focused, GIS mapping, market analyses, conceptual renderings, and a financial feasibility analysis necessary to implement the goals.

Ms. Perritt reviewed the roles of each of the bodies.

Ms. Perritt reviewed some of the special statutory powers made available by URAs:

- it builds community consensus
- the Redevelopment Commission may acquire parcels (including the use of eminent domain for blighted parcels but is rarely used)
- may clear areas by demolition or building removal
- make site improvements, site preparation and
- may enter into contracts for demolition, repairs, and loan and grant programs.
- may engage in programs of assistance and financing irrespective of job creation,
- may encumber property with covenants to uphold redevelopment goals
- may also put time limitations on redevelopment.

Ms. Perritt explained the Urban Redevelopment Area does not guarantee any state or federal funding, nor does it allow for private sale with non-monetary consideration, etc. Any tools must be used in alignment with the goals set forth in the Urban Redevelopment Area plan.

Ms. Perritt reviewed case studies from Kinston, West Greenville, Rocky Mount, Mooresville and Sanford.

Ms. Perritt recommended investing in planning and engaging the community and the community at-large for however long is necessary. She stated a third party could play a key role in moving the plan forward. Other recommendations include dedicating and maintain a website/social media presence to the community plan, action steps, progress and opportunities, establish site control, coordinating with other City redevelopment projects.

Ms. Perritt reviewed the required elements of a URA Plan by North Carolina General Statutes.

**Next steps:** Ms. Perritt recommended:

- identifying who is the "community",
- determining what is the degree of their involvement,
- determining which stakeholders should be included at the outset,
- determining who will facilitate their involvement,
- determining how the general public will be engaged and informed,
- identifying challenges,
- determining what data has been collected and remains to be collected,
- determining what role the stakeholders will play,
- deciding if the Council will serve as the redevelopment commission or an independent body,
- arranging for training the Planning Board in order to qualify the area, and
- identifying who will write the plan.

There was discussion from those present about providing training for the redevelopment commission, possible boundaries, and who may serve on the redevelopment commission. **No action was taken.**

**5. Other Items:** There was none.

**6. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:20 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