



Old Town Character

Saturday, September 13, 2011, 10 am

Focus Topic Meeting

Goals: Help articulate the vision for Ranson, and define its character. What is it that we like about our city, so that when some building changes, it can be built back within character?

Roundtable Exercise with Participants and Jennifer Hurley

In small groups, people discussed places in Old Town they really love are noted them on maps with green dots. A sampling of things noted include:

- Like changes with the parks, civic center, city hall
- Love Lancaster Circle
- Orchard Street Town Houses
- Old structures such as AmeriGas
- One story homes
- Downtown medical center

They also noted places with issues or need to improve are noted with yellow dots, such as:

- Traffic on Mildred, especially challenging for pedestrians and cyclists
- Would like a nicer grocery store so don't have to drive to WalMart
- Would like a bike route, so it's easier to get around
- Crossings for school and railroad tracks
- Robinson Cold Storage, AmeriGas, Miller Chemical, Powhatan, AB&C Building, Dixie, APU Building
- Appletree Apartments, Turf Lane, Ranson Square by Ranson post office are ideal to re-develop into a more



Presentation by Susan Henderson about Form-Based Zoning

Main difference between the new zoning code and what Ranson has right now is that the new one is based on character. The 1983 zoning code didn't look at context as much as it looked at uses.

Now, looking at historic patterns of development, and looking at how different character occurs and is appropriate in different parts of town. The new code first controls for character, and secondly controls for use.

Environmentalists first used the Transect for studying the different habitats are preferred by certain plants and animals. Planners now use the Transect in the same way, since different people thrive in different environments, some in rural areas, some in urban areas, and some in between. Different types of retail and civic uses also thrive in certain Transect zones.

Transect Zones. T1: natural wilderness. T2: rural farmland. T3: single family detached on larger lots, with the occasional corner store. T4: things get more diverse, with apartments, town homes, and more stores. T5: Washington Street is a classic T5, a main street shopping district. T6: downtown DC, and not a part of Ranson's form-based code.

T3: Sub-urban. Least dense, most residential. Mostly single-family detached houses. Some yards are fenced, some aren't. Large setbacks. Home businesses allowed. Office and retail allowed on a limited basis. Open space, highways, civic space are more rural in character.

T4: General Urban. Mixed use, but mostly residential. Front setbacks are smaller, bringing buildings closer to the street, on smaller lots. More housing diversity.

T5: Urban Center. Main street, with offices or apartments on 2nd and 3rd stories. May also be 1 story.

This effort isn't about changing you into something that you aren't, but to empower what you are. More information on the Transect may be found at transect.org.

Discussion with Sean Garrigan on Brownfields

Almost every table referred to the brownfield sites. Six of those are being planned in detail this week. In particular today, we're interested in discussing the appropriate character for their re-development, and how to stitch the former industrial sites into their surrounding neighborhoods. We're going to be taking the information that we receive from you, and come up with the zoning parameters.

The application of different pieces of the transect will be applied quite differently on different sites, depending on the character. For instance, Miller Chemical and Powhatan will likely be quite different characters, as they relate to their surroundings and context. We're meeting 1:1



with the various developers and landowners, to ensure that it's all knitted together in both a cohesive and feasible manner.

Roundtable Exercise with Participants and Jennifer Hurley

Under the map that you've been working on, there's another map that's exactly the same – a clean slate. Now using blue dots, identify the places on the map that you think are appropriate for T3 character – mostly a single-family, detached neighborhood.

Use red dots to say where you'd like to see T5. Most office or commercial on the first floor, that may have residential or office above. It may be only one story, but it may also be 2 or 3 stories. Mostly attached buildings.

Was there anything that was tough to agree on?

- ABC Building / Dixie Narco / Maytag – the two warehouses that currently cutoff the neighborhood from downtown – not clear if it's T5 or T4
- Getting caught in the middle of respecting the landowner's current property rights, and putting T5 on someone's house. It is personal, so it's a challenge. Zoning doesn't make someone change what they're doing today. It changes what they're allowed to do in the future, if they do something different. So if put T5 on someone's house, it may stay exactly like it is today for 30 years. Zoning isn't a magic wand that if we paint colors on the map, it'll be like that in 2 years.

Questions / Considerations

Consider incentivizing existing businesses and homeowners to retrofit properties that are currently out of Ranson character. We're also in the process of updating Ranson's Comprehensive Plan, with economic development strategies and finance sources, so please share ideas on that at ransonrenewed.com. We think this idea is fabulous, so hats off to everyone in Ranson for doing something so progressive.



Participants

Anthony Grant, Ranson Planning Commission President

Barb Wolf, Resident

Becky Briggs, Resident

Bill Strider, Clay Hill Farm

Chris Bontoft, Finance Director Ranson

Dan Rowzie, Good Shepherd Caregivers

Dave Mills, Ranson Economic & Community Development

David Hamill, Ranson Mayor

Debbie McClure, Ranson Council

Don Clendening, Charles Town City Council

Hazel Borys, PlaceMakers, LLC

Jennifer Hurley, Hurley-Franks & Associates

John Ruddman, KCI Technologies

Judy Ashelman, Ranson Resident

Laurence Bailey, Jefferson Co Coalition for Neighborhood Empowerment

Liz McDonald Uible, Blackwell Property Management

Margaret Stafford, Resident

Nathan Norris, PlaceMakers

Nicholas Baran, Stromberg and Garrigan

Penny Nougland, Business Leader

Peter Ashelman, Ranson Resident

Sarah Klecker, Ranson Planning Director

Sean Garrigan, Stromberg & Garrigan

Susan Henderson, PlaceMakers

Tim Stromberg, Stromberg and Garrigan

Tylisa Beveridge, Resident

William F. Lancaster, Resident