

Ladue Advisory Committee Meeting

(virtual meeting via Zoom)

May 14, 2020- 4:00 to 5:30pm

Meeting Notes

ATTENDEES

Laure Hullverson
Ray Stranghoener
Nick Chicoine
Susan Ryan
Jane Epstein Lavey
Joe Gazzoli
Donn Lux
Frank Blair
Chris Cedergreen
Nancy Ylvisaker
Mark Schnuck
Susan Gausnell
Tim Kaufmann

H3 Studio: Tim Breihan, Julia Pancoast, and John Hoal
Shockey Consulting: Beth Quindry, Tyler Waldorf, and Molly Saunders
City of Ladue: Andrea Sukanek, Nancy Spewak, Anne Lamitola, and Sam Zes

MEETING NOTES

I. Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves and shared how they have been spending time during the pandemic. Beth went over basic functions in Zoom to prepare attendees for participation.

II. Planning Update

Beth Quindry provided an update on planning activities; Mayor Spewak provided an overview of city finances in response to questions from the public at the public meeting (see slides for full details).

Vision, goals, and strategies for the Plan had been shared with the committee prior to the meeting. Beth reminded the Committee that they are encouraged to provide comments to her.

III. Q&A, Planning Update

Q: How does Ladue's tax compare to other cities? As Ladue thinks about taking on new projects, is there tax capacity?

Answer (Mayor Nancy Spewak):

- Ladue's share of property tax is less than ten percent

- We have one of the lowest [property] tax rates in the county. Our valuations are high, so that allows us to have the low rate.
- Comparing Ladue’s overall tax picture to other cities is a challenge because there are a lot of overlapping taxing districts (schools, fire districts in some areas, business improvement districts) – which means that even a single municipality can have taxes that vary from location to location.

Question (Advisory Committee Member): I have more financial concern now given the current economic fallout from the Covid-19 situation. **Are we promising more than we can deliver?**

Answer (Mayor Spewak): I think it’s important to clarify that the plan is not promising something. We are creating a vision that we would like to see over the next 15-20 years.

You may have to say “this is our vision. This is what we want the city to look like, but we can’t necessarily accomplish this right now.” We can accomplish this maybe in five years or ten years but I think you have to look and see what you want your city to be. I don’t want to see us say ‘we don’t think we can afford this so let’s not even think about it.’ So much can change over time – federal funding sources could open up, public-private partnerships may be possible, etc.

Question (Advisory Committee Member): How do you get from the nine goals to prioritizing how you’re going to tackle them?

Answer (Beth/Julia): The comprehensive plan will have an implementation section that will define action items as short, medium or long term – so that will be the first prioritization. When the comprehensive planning process is almost complete, the city staff and elected officials will work on a strategic plan that further defines the first three to five years of implementation.

Comment (Sam): You have to look at the comprehensive plan as a guide. It’s not something that is set in stone. We have to be very innovative in a lot of ways to think about what the city will look like in five, fifteen, twenty years so that we may grow the revenues and continue to provide the great services we do and continue to have the great community that we have.

Comment, clarifying: (Mayor Spewak): It’s not so much that we have declining revenues, we have some declining utility tax revenues. What we really have are increasing expenses in the area of personnel and we do not have a way to increase our revenues at the same rate as personnel expenses are increasing.

IV. Focus Area Discussion

John Hoal provided an overview of two focus areas: Ladue Road @ I-170 and the Clayton Road Business District.

V. Small Group Discussions

Attendees were divided into two groups to answer questions about the focus areas.

Breakout Group: Clayton Road Business District

Facilitators: John Hoal, Julia Pancoast

Notes/Report Out: Tyler Waldorf

Group Consensus:

- The group is in support of forming a Business Development Organization per the recommendation, with property and business owners, to start the conversation – with no commitment of taxing at this time – which can evolve to a legal structure (CID or BID type structure) if agreed upon.
- Interested in what the design of the Right-of-Way could be to improve district parking, pedestrian safety, and property values.

1. Do you think the formation of a Business Improvement District is appropriate for initiating this effort?

- BID would have special tax levy (legal entity that could take different structures)
- It makes sense – all businesses have same goal of increasing sales, using whole group to advertise together – makes sense – generate more traffic for those businesses (common goal) – branding reasons
- Not sure what sales tax percent would be – businesses would work that out, in addition as property tax, or as sales tax (would require vote within the district).
- Competing with more and more online sales – want to be conscious of increasing sales tax
- Shop owner doesn't want to be penalized for being on this street – this is shop owners' perspective but don't have property owner perspective
- Funding would be combination (shop owners / property owners)
- As shop owner does not want higher sales tax rate – already nearing 10%
- On board to entertain conversation – form business organization, no requirement for taxing, but to start the conversation – then can move to legal formation
- There is already a merchant's association, informal, but no property owners involved
- Property owner comment (not in district) – typically 1% overlay on to sales tax – doesn't impact as owner of property (don't want to overburden tenants).
- Unified plan to implement strategies has to be a part of the City.
- Idea is good – experience in old webster – do have arrangement, pay extra business license tax– generated some extra funding. (had this previously in Ladue, but revote to continue it failed – thought it was a good idea to continue, but did not pass)
- Has to be organization in some way - Bring businesses together
- Can't put responsibility on business owners alone
- Talk to property owners to get their input. Could enhance their worth of their property, but could be a painful process to get there.
- Over a 20-year period, something has to be done!

2. How can redevelopment be incentivized?

- Would make sense to have City come up with proposal for the city-owned rights of way – come up with ideas and put funding into that
- Parking is one of the most difficult issues to tackle along that strip
- Anything you do should be done with expansion of parking in mind
- Park once and then move around district is important for a successful district; resolving parking becomes part of the larger discussion with the district. Trying to solve parking independently is impossible.

- Homeowner in neighborhood directly behind – with 250 homes – public neighborhood, safety is important – kids walking home from school through parking lots – way to protect people (true safety, not just about ADA)
- Clayton is heavily trafficked at all times of day – design street to increase the value of the businesses and increase property values then it is a win-win for everyone

Breakout Group: Ladue Road @ I-170

Facilitator: Tim Breihan

Notetaker, Report Out: Molly Saunders

Group Consensus:

- Support for increased development density and keeping zoning flexible to respond to the market with regard to height and the range and mix of uses (including multi-family). *(one person was opposed to multi-family anywhere in Ladue. The rest of the group thought it could be appropriate in this context).*

1. Does large scale development make sense here considering location and adjacency to Downtown Clayton, the range of adjacent amenities & interstate accessibility?

- Yes, but it is hard to imagine how it will develop after the pandemic. The way we use space will be different. Cannot imagine residential with people living closely together.
- The interstate serves as a dividing line between Clayton and Ladue; it makes sense for more intense development in this area. Oppose multifamily housing anywhere in Ladue, even this area. No multifamily it presents all kinds of problems. Ladue is desirable because it doesn't allow multifamily housing, which leads to radical change in a community.
- We do need density in this area. Multifamily as a gateway to the community is a possibility. Zoning can help (address Joe's concerns). The future of development is denser and that is more sustainable. Need to have spaces that are extended day areas – 18 hours, with retail and residential combined – to be sustainable
- No idea how people will feel about dense living development
- Have to think about the long-term and what people will want in the future - moving toward more density now is smart.
- My small group at the public meeting thought it was time for multifamily housing in Ladue. Need to think about options for retirees and young families multifamily can be well-done. Ladue will never be as dense as New York

2. Should this area allow for flexibility in zoning and look at development from a market perspective?

- This should be a revenue generating area, while the other areas of Ladue should be preserved. This is an opportunity to be more dense and we should get the most out of it as we can. Less concerned about uses in this area.

3. What is the appropriate height? Does it differ from north vs. south parcels? Should height match what's planned for Downtown Clayton?

- We should leave this flexible and not pre-determine anything. Need to look at best potential for revenue with development. This is an area separate from the rest of Ladue.
- Need to consider how height may affect the types of services and equipment Ladue needs. Example: would need a new fire truck for a 30-story building.
- Need to be flexible, but ideally would scale down in height as the buildings move into existing Ladue. 10-15 story range. Don't make a distinction between north and south sides.

4. Is a walkable bikeable connection from Clayton to Ladue (under I-170) important for the residents of the City of Ladue?

- Most participants immediately said yes.
- Going to push back a bit. Not sure it is a priority and will not be as high use as other areas.
- Agree, it will have a limited impact.
- Clayton Rd is more walkable, but this could become a high-use area. It has a lot of potential to connect the community and support the area's businesses.
- The potential for use could increase depending on the type of development

V. Next Steps and Adjourn

Beth described next steps in the process to include adjustments to the engagement plan due to COVID-19 and development of the draft plan.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35pm.