

Neighborhood Code Joint Committee Meeting

Tuesday, December 5, 2023, 6:30 P.M.

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom and in the Bushor Conference Room

Draft Minutes

Members Present	A. Montroll, E. Malone, J. Randall
City Council Present	S. Carpenter, B. Traverse, Z. Hightower
Staff Present	M. Tuttle, C. Dillard, S. Morgan, C. Domiani (Planner – GMT)
Public Attendance	Colin Larsen, Robert Guthrie, Sharon Bushor, Tim, Evan Gould, Joe Giallanella, Jake Twarog, Jak Tiano

I. Agenda

Call to Order	Time: 6:30pm
Agenda	No changes.

II. Neighborhood Code: Committee Discussion on Staff Recommendations

2.1. Continued Discussion on Proposed Residential Corridors

E. Malone:

- North Street & North Winooski are not discussed
- Why N & S on Willard not included in the map

M. Tuttle:

- In the framework of the comprehensive plan, the major corridors were those linkages into the downtown core. Willard is kind of adjacent to the downtown core, but all of these thoroughfares have their terminus in the downtown core. It's the same reason why the East West route along North St. wasn't identified either.

J. Randall:

- Can North Union be considered because it does have a terminus in downtown

M. Tuttle:

- Other streets that were not identified as major corridors. The full scope of the neighborhood code is helping us consider new housing opportunities for all of our residential areas, even if they're not on one of these corridors specifically. Now that the conversation about the corridors has evolved to one where we're talking about a different sort of potential building typology than when we started this conversation. I think it's important for us to think about whether we want to extend those to other places that were not identified in our comprehensive plan as being those kinds of forwards. I think it will relate also to the conversation about how and to what degree commercial uses are allowed within these corridors. Some of these conversations we can also come back to as part of future discussions about how we continue to evolve our zoning. Especially for places that aren't specifically within our comprehensive plan today as one of these corridors or one of these growth areas that we think about whether additional kind of community planning should happen before we make designations like the neighborhood code corridor designation in this discussion.

C. Domiani:

- Looking at different factors to see how Bus #5 will be rerouted.

M. Gaughan:

- What's your recommendation on the corridor part that feels like a recommendation on the RL versus RM, but did staff have a recommendation on that?

M. Tuttle:

- Ultimately our initial recommendation was the corridor designation before the sort of evolution of what the corridors would have looked like. I think something like option three could be a good option if you would like to maintain the opportunity for some evolution of the properties along that segment of pine.

S. Carpenter:

- How can you accommodate maybe the potential for growth, heavier growth on the east side of Pines, particularly in that block where S Meadow and the Howard Fair buildings are and not do it across the street which really is more contiguous to the other straight behind it to Shelburne Rd?

M. Tuttle:

- It's actually on our list for the whenever we get to our next like set of discussion topics to talk about our planned unit development standards because I think that will be the potential here. Those standards allow for larger sites to be developed more intensively than what the underlying zoning would allow for small sites. I would suspect that the way that S Meadow got developed originally was by utilizing our PUD standards.

A. Friend:

- The different between RH and Corridor
- Option 3 looks good - keep in mind what we're doing here is opening up the possibility for future development not based on what it looks like today, but what it could be in the future. However well-intentioned this neighborhood code project is likely going to be incremental.

M. Tuttle:

- They're similar in their sort of overall scale. RH does not have some of the same limits on building sizes in particular just because the sites that are in RH are pretty small. they're pretty similar knowing that we haven't had the conversation yet about commercial uses.

Z. Hightower:

- Why option 2 is not recommended?

M. Tuttle:

- This set of maps here when we look at things like lot coverage and the extent to which existing parcels might be non-conforming, we have been primarily focused on making the recommendation about the transition between RL and RM in places where RM will help alleviate some of the non-conforming conditions. But because of the changes that we've already made for RL in the neighborhood code discussions, we actually don't think that that's necessary in this area in order to deal with those non conformities.

A. Montroll:

- One of the things that we are doing with the RL with all of the districts is we're not saying we want it to stay the same as what it is. We're just saying that districts may or may not stay the same, but what we're allowing in the districts are significantly changing. We're allowing so much more development in each of the different districts. Even though something's being left in the same zone, it's not being left with the same rules within that zone.

E. Malone:

- Option #2 is more compelling than option 3 because if we look at the map, the proposed map of the full city, I think this is the only area that would be like street by St. RM as opposed to like the neighborhood. The consistency across that whole square, it makes more sense than choosing you know the minor arterial that used to be important or whatever it is.

J. Randall:

- Thinks option #2 is the most compelling. Probably presents the most potential for overall housing opportunities.

- what's the potential for commercial uses could look like with these different designations in these areas?

B. Traverse:

- The thoroughfare as it was previously identified in plan BTV is now really going to be the Champlain Parkway as it moves to Lakeside Ave. and then further north on Pine St. Have a map that reflects that; to also to include the South End Innovation District.
- Leaning towards option #3 South of Home Ave to stay as RL
- Have a good reason in going to other neighbors throughout the city as to why we've designated the entire Five Sisters as RM and why we've designated the neighborhoods down South Union and South Willard as RM as well on this map
- If we were to go with an option #3 in the addition neighborhood down there, now what is it that makes this neighborhood different from all those other areas that we're proposing for RM?
- The issue that's potentially giving me pause around going with an option 2 is not necessarily the expansion in lot coverage that would go along with moving from RL to RM. We discussed earlier on as a committee that RM would move potentially up to 6 units and I suppose in in further expanding RM into neighborhoods that are more used to being single family and duplex. The concern that I have as we continue to move forward here is that in those neighborhoods that are not currently RM like the North Hill section, like Five Sisters and so on, right, there's a part of me that wonders about the extent to which those neighborhoods are currently tuned into the discussion that we're having right now.
- What's creating more housing opportunities? Is it expanding the RM even further and doing so by keeping it at 4 units or is it by sort of keeping areas in RL, others as RM and but keeping that at the six units we discussed previously?

A. Montroll:

- Agrees that South of Flynn should not be the quarter. One of the big reasons is, is that the whole promise and the whole purpose, one of the major purposes of doing the Parkway in the South end there was because the city wanted to turn that area back into neighborhood to have it be more of a neighborhood and less of a capacity. And so if by saying we're going to keep those as a major quarter, I think I see that just going backwards really on what the intent was and hopefully that will happen. Those will become more of neighborhoods in there and less of a pass to for cars.
- Leaving South of Home Ave as is, is fine. Opportunities for larger development could probably be done through the PUD.
- On the part between Flynn and Home Ave. The difference between RL and RF is really just providing for opportunities and there are many places in those neighborhoods where there's just not going to be the opportunity to really take advantage of, you know, the full extent of what RM can do because there are also limits of size, in the structures. These lots in this area by and large aren't that big. But for some lots that might be bigger, why not, Why not provide those opportunities.
- Leaning towards option #2 - because I think part of our goal and here is to provide the flexibility for more opportunities and I don't think RM is going to really have an adverse impact on I'll call it the fabric of the neighborhood.

S. Carpenter:

- What's the difference between RL and RM in the new proposed standards?

M. Tuttle:

- The lot coverage is one of the big differences. The upper limit for lot coverage in RL would be 45% and for RM it would be 60%.
- The difference between a four-unit limit in a building or a six-unit limit in the building.

- Between the two districts, there's a 2 1/2 versus a three-story limit. That's more about just like controlling some of the upper story massing more so than being a major difference between the heights themselves.

M. Gaughan:

- Option #3. The guiding principle should be let's change in this in this particular project, it's scope should be, let's make sure the code reflects what's actually on the ground.

A. Friend:

- Option #2

Z. Hightower:

- Option #2

B. Traverse:

- Option #2

A. Montroll:

- To move forward with option #2. If we need to, we can come back and revisit it as we take a deeper look at some other neighborhoods as well.

S. Carpenter & M. Gaughan - okay to move forward in direction #2

Z. Hightower:

- Does the steep slopes zoning adequately protect the North side of Colchester Ave?
- The awkwardness of having all of the low residential sections next to the corridor and those being low residential as opposed to like the North Hill section.

M. Tuttle:

- while the steep slopes overlay does not prohibit development on slopes that are essentially between 15 and 30%, it does require that if they are that steep that a geotechnical assessment has to be done to determine that the slope is suitable for development. We do have some kind of awareness and understanding of how buildings might look next to older buildings that might be smaller than pre existed those infill developments.

2.2. Areas proposed for change from RL to RM

E. Malone:

- About Upper Hill (East of Willard) – the proximity of this area to the university. By up zoning it and allowing for up to 6 units with that much lot coverage, I think we could see a fast shift in the experience of this neighborhood.

M. Tuttle:

- When we first brought this proposal to you, we brought you a proposal where the primary difference between RL and RM was about lot coverage. And that was one of the things that we felt, combined with the allowance for more flexibility up to 4 units could help offer more opportunities for how these properties could evolve.

Z. Hightower:

- supportive of this being RM and like especially given Megan's explanation that you know that's partially also just to bring current lots to conformity because this is quite especially like between Willard and Prospect is quite a dense housing.

M. Tuttle:

- we come back to the discussion about how is RL changing just on its own, we're offering a bit more flexibility for lot coverage and I think most notably we're offering the flexibility for the number of units within buildings.

B. Traverse:

- My thought on this is that based on these maps, based on existing nonconformities, based on existing lot coverage, it only makes sense from a sort of lot coverage standpoint that we would shift this from RL to RM.

- Should focus on the number of maximum units – moving to 6 units vs 4 units
- Moving other neighborhoods to RM – around E Avenue, Chase St, and off of Colchester Ave. Maybe even the neighborhoods east of S Prospect St. Around the university are areas that could be moved to RM as well.

A. Montroll:

- Have different unit # in RM depending on the lot
- If a major distinction between RM and RL should be the number of units as opposed to lot. Or maybe combine the two.

M. Tuttle:

- Using the unit count as your primary decision will especially if it causes us to reconsider certain changes between RL and RMI, think may not resolve some of the challenges that some of these areas have, which led us to recommend RM in the 1st place. For example, in this neighborhood like while units are the driving factor, I think if we only make a decision about RM based on that, it will limit any future potential that could happen in this area given the other physical characteristics.
- if we talk about the other areas that we proposed for RM and there seems to be a kind of consensus that that is how we feel about other locations too, that that might point us back in the direction of revisiting the issue of the unit number. If we remain mixed, if we feel like RM in its dimensions and in the number of units at six makes sense in some locations, then we might need to think about a different strategy to recommend to you.

Ben Traverse:

- I think the line to be drawn in in the way that you've laid out, the issue is those areas that are currently zoned as RM and those areas that are being proposed to be up zoned RL to RM. Those areas that are currently zoned as RM that we would be in approval of making the changes as we've laid it out to RM and moving those neighborhoods up to 6 units. I think that it's in these new neighborhoods that we flagged as RM where the question is whether or not that should similarly move from 4 to 6 units.
- Additional opportunities – RM2

III. Public Forum

Colin Larsen	• functionally every neighborhood that isn't up zoned, the proportion that it's not up zoned is the proportion of socio-economic exclusion that you will find in that neighborhood based on land prices. • the discussion around legalizing what's on the ground verse preparing for development in the future • the housing around the Medical Center and college in the old North End
Robert Guthrie	• Glad about the discussion on the South End
Sharon Bushor	• Thanking Meagan and the Joint Committee for discussing Colchester Ave corridor • Not all corridors are the same – the difference about height of structures, sidewalk and street • Drifted from the initial proposal - to create additional housing choices in buildings that are similar to nearby single-family homes and that are in keeping with the neighborhoods today • Changing criteria from RL to RM – double whammy. The neighborhoods around the university are incredibly in a very precarious situation because these properties aren't going to go when they sell.
Tim	• Advocate for the up zoning to accommodate as much new housing and growth in these neighborhoods as possible. • S Union St area – lots of properties are currently preserved
Evan Gould	• Pleased to hear leaning to option #2

	• The corridor on Colchester – fits the transit-oriented development paradigm very well. Maintaining as a corridor is the right move • Support for maintaining the 6 units
Joe Giallanella	• Agrees with Sharon Bushor that the intent of the PC has drifted • Adding new information to the map about the South End Connector • The burden of increasing the increasing from residential low already increasing lot size coverage and now moving to medium.
Jake Twarog	• build more housing, to generate more economic activity and property taxes, and to attract more workers. • Up Zoning and changing as many places as possible, and ideally the entire city from RL to a six-unit RM citywide would be a great way to simplify the code, be unilateral and impartial, and show that we're serious about dressing the housing crisis.
Jak Tiano	• every part of the city needs some amount of up zoning in some in some capacity • echo Evan's point about the 6 and the 4 for RM. The differentiation between RL and RM should be the 6th 4 • mobility oriented development – the most responsive solution would be to define what a multimodal mobility access point is and then designate any property within a certain distance of one of those access points as a corridor. Useful transit influence is development around it, which then further bolsters the usefulness of that transit in transit that doesn't drive density calls itself over time. Anything within easy walking distance of a bus stop or along a protected bike facility should obviously have a mobility-oriented development zoning bonus regardless of what is currently on the ground.

IV. Minutes

Action: Review and approve the 11/28 Neighborhood Code Meeting Minutes		
Motion by: J. Randall	Second by: E. Malone	Approved: unanimous

V. Communications

Action: Review and accept Written Communications		
Motion by: J. Randall	Second by: E. Malone	Approved: unanimous

VI. Adjournment

Action: Adjourn		Time: 8:44 p.m.
Motion: S. Carpenter	Second: J. Randall	Vote: unanimous