

MINUTES
MAY 31, 2016

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members in Attendance: Chris Fahl, Chair
Jeff Risner, Vice-Chair
Patrick McGee, Member

Other Council Members: Jennifer Cochran
Peter Kotses
Michele Papai

Administrators and/or
Other Elected Officials: President Pro Tem Butler
Acting Mayor Knisely
Service-Safety Director Horan Moseley

Items Discussed:

- West Union Street (enhancement modifications)
 - Risner – referred to the Mayor for explanation (see attached diagram)

 - Mayor – a recent public forum was held to review 3 options for this area on West Union Street between Court and Congress to rethink the streetscape, keeping one lane of traffic and one side of parking to create a 26' width public gathering space – in reviewing written comments, many supported a streetscape project, but with varying ideas due to impact on traffic flow and parking availability – a scaled down version, option 4, is being presented this evening – a broad sidewalk with some enhanced amenities, with two sides of parking, as well as two lanes of eastbound traffic – the lanes will be reduced to 10' in width, which will create an additional 4' to 6' north sidewalk depth – a storm drain line will need to be added – estimates: new curb and demolition, \$15,000 and replacement of sidewalk and repaving of the street, \$10,000 – as part of a phased-in project, new lampposts, a parking kiosk, bike racks, park benches and trees/planters are being considered – currently, on the north side of the street there are 13 parking spaces – the proposed change would include 15 parking spaces that will allow for some compact parking – he pointed out that this is a major compromise from the initial 3 options – he does feel this is a suitable compromise to revision the retail corridors in the uptown area – also on the diagram at the corner intersection of Court and Union there is a 2' to 3' bump-out that will shorten the crosswalk distance from Whit's to Follett's, a safety feature

-Fahl – agrees that this is a major compromise, and is pleased that a more thorough review was done

-Papai – the compromise is important – it will beautify the area – she appreciates giving the public an opportunity for review

-Cochran – looks like a good happy medium with less impact to the area, and also a lower price tag – appreciates the addition of bike racks, and suggested this one could be the first, uniquely, Athens-branded

-Kotses – it's great that we are looking at our streets in a different way, however, he does not see this plan as being bicycle friendly, conceding that it is only one block and maybe not necessary – would really like additional time to study the area – suggested taking time to rope off areas to give a better indication of traffic/parking needs – pointed out that there are two types of traffic: one is “to” traffic frequenting businesses, and the other is “through” traffic that is moving from one location to another, and he believes this area is generally “through” traffic – questioned whether traffic could be encouraged to take a different route, and additional time spent on this project could allow thought being given to such a study

-McGee – applauded the Mayor on this effort – large sidewalk areas will enhance the uptown area

-Butler – acknowledged the importance of the dialogue with the public – this is a good compromise – he is aware that business owners are fearful of losing parking spaces – the bump-out on the sidewalk will make the crosswalk easier to traverse – consideration of a covered bike rack would be nice

-Mayor – appreciates the comments of Council Member Kotses, however, he believes the Union Street corridor between Congress and Court has offered enough time, almost a year and a half, to study it – exploring Court, Carpenter, Washington, Congress traffic corridors is an excellent idea, but time is of the essence with this Union Street project, largely in terms of infrastructure, in order to keep pace with the reconstruction of several of these buildings coming back on line after the fire

Risner – asked if any other lines aside from the storm water will be replaced or added

-Mayor – City engineer will assess and consider other needed line improvements/enhancements – during the curb retrenching, conduit for fiber optics is a possibility – an economic development enhancement tool

-Guy Philips, North Congress resident and business owner of property on West Union – is supportive of the new plan

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. West Union