

Study Group Meeting
Big Woods EDA-owned assemblage North Side of Victory Blvd
830 Poquoson Avenue – October 25, 2016 – 5:30 pm until 7:30 pm

Attendance:

Donald Booth, EDA Chairman, Alan Meetze, EDA Vice Chairman, Kris Webber, EDA Director, Angela Ward-Costello, EDA Director, Henry Freeman, EDA Director, Walter Apelt, EDA Director, Rick Weddle, CEO HREDA, Cary Freeman, Vice Mayor, Debbie Vest, Director Community Development, Dannon O'Connell, Community Development, Dave Callis, Director ED, Charity Gavaza, ED Coordinator

Chairman Booth opened the meeting explaining the purpose and intent of the group and stating that the goal was to be proactive on this important piece of the Big Woods utilizing the guiding principles outlined by City Council.

Director Apelt requested information on the total acreage and value of remaining developable Big Woods property. Debbie Vest responded that there are approximately 200 acres and 100 are being developed as the Legacy plan. Much of this property is held in smaller parcels by private owners and the city does not have delineations on these properties.

Director Ward-Costello, concerned about public opinion of development, offered suggestions during the meeting regarding communications to the public to increase awareness and understanding. At this time it was mentioned that the public needed to be aware of the amount of wetlands in the Big Woods which would limit development.

The discussion circled around the zoning for the six parcel assemblage and the fact that five of the parcels are zoned for commercial development, while the end parcel is zoned R&D. The merits and shortfalls of this were discussed.

Director Ward-Costello mentioned that if the property doesn't sell right away, it should at least be increasing in value as Legacy begins buildout.

Debbie Vest brought up the land that would be committed to the road mirroring City Hall Avenue would eat up a couple acres of the EDA assemblage if buildout to current plans. This also led to discussion about where a traffic signal and/or traffic circle should be built on/between the two developments and future traffic flow patterns.

Dave Callis stated that this parcel has been seriously looked at three times over more than ten years by developers and every time a commercial use focusing on a grocery store was being considered. This is how the development community view this parcel.

Rick Weddle mentioned that his experience with the Research Triangle in NC expedited development with generous zoning leading to buy right purchases going directly to the permitting stage. The speed and certainty enabled them to set prices that were accepted without negotiating due to the embedded value.

The ARB will be a resource in setting high standards for the entrance to the city including parking placement, landscape and general vision.

Rick Weddle suggested a flexible design standard that could be renovated if an owner were to leave a beautiful empty box so as not to inhibit a new owner taking the building. He also discussed pricing and incentivizing development. He suggested that a market study would help monetize targets.

Chairman Booth brought up the need to clear obstacles regarding issues such as utilities. He mentioned that some homework should be done regarding a deeper review of the issues and refining the guiding principles.

Debbie Vest will bring architectural renderings from the Legacy project to the next meeting, an overview of improved Victory Boulevard plan and the traffic count data for Legacy to the next meeting.

Chairman Booth suggested the next meeting date of November 29 at 5:30 – 7 pm at 830 Poquoson Avenue and heard no opposition.