

City of Fayetteville Staff Review Form

2019-0792

Legistar File ID

12/3/2019

City Council Meeting Date - Agenda Item Only
N/A for Non-Agenda Item

Garner Stoll

11/16/2019

CITY PLANNING (630)

Submitted By

Submitted Date

Division / Department

Action Recommendation:

ADM 19-6652 Administrative Item (71B CORRIDOR PLAN) Submitted by the CITY PLANNING DIVISION. City staff presents the 71B Corridor Plan to the City Council and recommends a work program to implement the plan.

Budget Impact:

Account Number		Fund	
Project Number		Project Title	
Budgeted Item?	NA	Current Budget	\$ -
		Funds Obligated	\$ -
		Current Balance	\$ -
Does item have a cost?	No	Item Cost	
Budget Adjustment Attached?	NA	Budget Adjustment	
		Remaining Budget	\$ -

V20180321

Purchase Order Number: _____

Previous Ordinance or Resolution # _____

Change Order Number: _____

Approval Date: _____

Original Contract Number: _____

Comments:



MEETING OF DECEMBER 3, 2019

TO: Mayor; Fayetteville City Council

THRU: Don Marr, Chief of Staff
Garner Stoll, Development Services Director

FROM: Andrew Garner, City Planning Director

DATE: November 13, 2019

SUBJECT: **ADM 19-6652 Administrative Item (71B CORRIDOR PLAN)** Submitted by the CITY PLANNING DIVISION. City staff presents the 71B Corridor Plan to the City Council and recommends a work program to implement the plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff and the Planning Commission recommend that the council adopt a resolution for a work program to implement the 71B Corridor Plan.

BACKGROUND:

On November 27, 2017, the Planning Commission reviewed and recommended in favor of the work program for the update to the comprehensive land use plan of the city. Part of the approved work program was to complete a detailed corridor study of state highway 71B. On February 6, 2018, City Council passed Resolution 50-18. This resolution approved the work program as recommended by the Planning Commission. The 71B Corridor element was further authorized by city council on June 19, 2018 with the passing of Resolution 136-18 which included the scope of work and contract for the 71B Corridor project.

A critical goal of the 71B Corridor Plan was to engage the community to develop strategies to improve the corridor's economic vitality, increase affordable housing, make it safe and convenient for all modes of travel, encourage active and healthy living, and create an attractive front door to Fayetteville's downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

The 71B Corridor Final Master Plan Document, Illustrative Plan, Transportation Framework, and Regulating Plan represent the project's major work products. These documents and illustrations are the result of an extensive citizen participation process which involved a detailed citizen survey (online and in person), focus group discussions, five highly interactive public workshops/design studios, monthly 71B Steering Committee meetings, and input from Planning Commission and City Council at multiple work sessions and attendance at the public workshops. The consultant team completed a detailed parcel-by-parcel analysis of the entire corridor, which is summarized in the Master Plan Document and depicted on the Illustrative plan. The public engagement process began in July 2018 and concluded in fall 2019.

Recent Project Update: The preliminary draft 71B Corridor Plan was discussed and tabled at the

May 13th and May 28th Planning Commission meetings of 2019. Over the last several months the consultant has been preparing the final document incorporating comments from the Planning Commission, City Council members, staff, and numerous other stakeholders. Revisions to the plan over the last few months include many items. Primary new work products include a detailed Regulating Plan that provides the framework for the land development regulations to implement the plan. The Regulating Plan also provides a guide for future zoning, site development, and future policy decisions that correspond directly with the Illustrative plan and Transportation Framework Plan. Another new work product is the Implementation chapter outlining short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals and action steps.

Additionally, the scope of the project was expanded to include a more detailed land use and urban design concept for portions of the South School Avenue segment of the corridor. On September 17, 2019 the City Council voted to accept ownership and maintenance responsibilities for highway 71B from the Arkansas Department of Transportation between the Fulbright Expressways, subject to conditions. This transfer will allow the city approval authority for future improvements to this portion of 71B.

The final draft plan document is posted on the project website:

<http://www.fayetteville-ar.gov/3444/71B-Corridor-Plan>

Editorial comments and other minor changes will be incorporated into the final version by the consultant as part of the final review.

DISCUSSION:

The final plan was presented to the Planning Commission on October 28, 2019 where it was discussed and tabled to allow more time for review and discussion. At the November 12, 2019 Planning Commission meeting, this item was discussed and unanimously forwarded with a recommendation for approval of a work program to implement the plan including:

- Construction of improvements shown in the plan; and
- Rezoning and associated regulating plan to be initiated by the Planning Commission.

The motion to forward was accompanied by a note that the Planning Commission chair would coordinate final comments from the commission for distribution to the council. These comments are provided separately from the staff memorandum.

BUDGET/STAFF IMPACT:

N/A

Attachments:

- 71B Corridor Plan Website
<http://www.fayetteville-ar.gov/3444/71B-Corridor-Plan>

City of Fayetteville Planning Commission

TO: Fayetteville City Council

CC: Mayor Lioneld Jordan

FROM: Matthew Hoffman AIA, Planning Commission Chairman

DATE: November 15, 2019

SUBJECT: PC comments on the 71b Plan

First, I want to express Planning Commission's genuine appreciation to City Staff and the project consultant for their quality work, and their efforts to include the voice of commissioners in this process. Through multiple input sessions, both formal and informal, we enjoyed the opportunity to interact at a detailed level on many aspects of the plan. I know I speak for the entire commission when I say that we are excited to begin working with staff to plan the next generation of development on 71b, which will focus on livability, equitable transportation, and sustainable development along one of Fayetteville's most critical corridors.

This memo is not meant to provide an exhaustive catalog of all the comments commissioners offered in regards to this plan. Instead, the following items are an attempt to characterize general sentiments and ideas that were met with broad consensus among commissioners.

Action Items

Commissioners expressed broad support for action items outlined in the Regulating Plan. We have long felt that right-of-way reconstruction and rezoning are two critical components to the future of the corridor. Through its long history, 71b has been subjected to a wide spectrum of land-use regulation and transportation philosophies, many of which have been counter-productive. The plan offers a reasonable pathway to righting many of those wrongs.

Planning Commission is particularly excited about the opportunity to rezone the corridor. For several years now, commissioners have lamented in public meetings that current C-2 and similar **conventional zoning designations along the corridor are inadequate to address our need for both higher quality and quantities of housing.**

City Plan 2030 Goal #1: We will make appropriate infill our highest priority.

Commissioners are very familiar with the difficulties that sometimes arise when rezonings are requested within existing neighborhoods. While new development within existing neighborhoods may be entirely appropriate and needed, neighbors who speak at our public meetings often disagree. As common as resistance to change is within existing neighborhoods, it is almost entirely absent on 71b where the vast majority seem to agree that change is vital. For this reason, rezoning 71b represents a rare opportunity to accommodate appropriate infill without the typical friction that comes from infill implementation in more permanently established areas.

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Commissioners are also supportive of proposals for more connectivity and right-of-way improvements along the corridor. The plan to provide parallel N/S connections, particularly along the middle and northern sections of the corridor would be a profound improvement over existing conditions. **If 71b is going to become a destination for infill development, it must first be transformed into a more humane environment.** Providing alternative pathways for automobile traffic, along with shifting priorities to include bicycle and pedestrian mobility options should be understood to be foundational to the corridor's success as a new *neighborhood*.

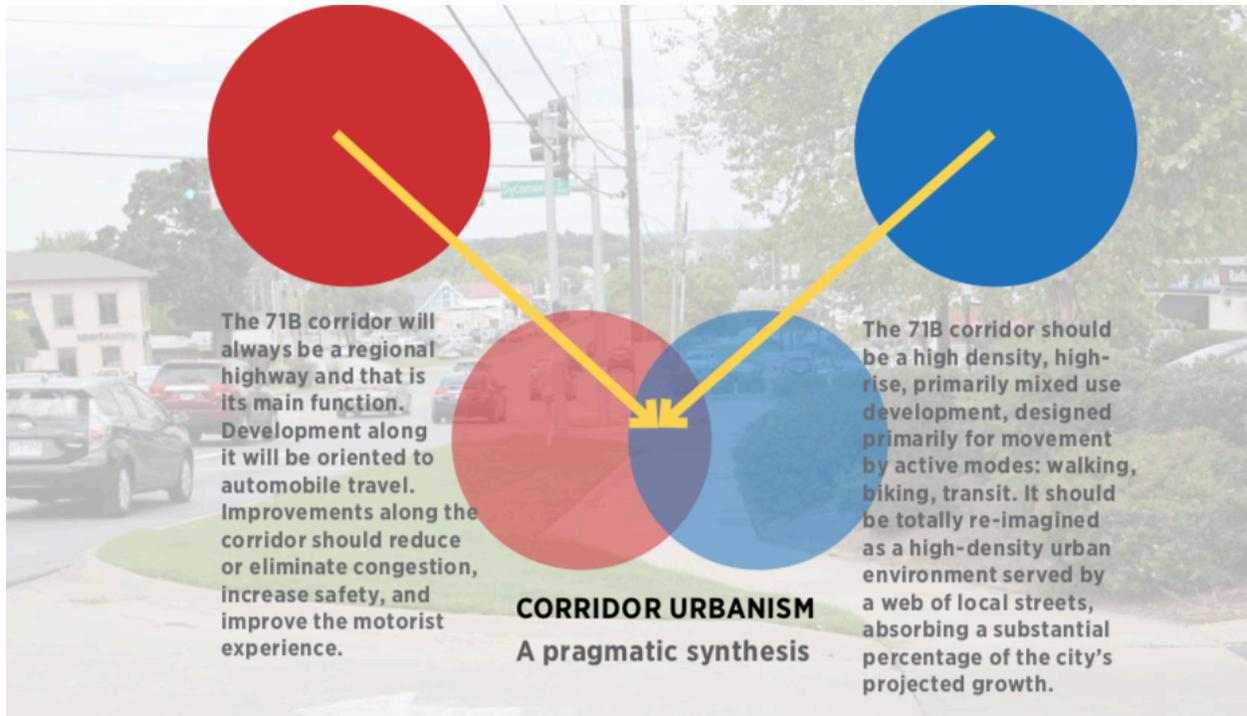
Vision for the corridor

While there was unanimous agreement among commissioners that many of the plan's action items were appropriate, there was noticeably less enthusiasm about the vision outlined by drawings and descriptions from the consultant.

As a point of comparison, commissioners discussed Fayetteville's original Downtown Masterplan (2004). Now 15 years old, the Downtown Masterplan is seen as successful, both for its direct positive impact on our downtown, and also for its inspirational impact on Northwest Arkansas more broadly. Commissioners noted that the vision of our Downtown Masterplan has proved to be so compelling that all of NWA's other major cities have since adopted similar plans for their downtowns. Fayetteville has long enjoyed this position of leadership on matters of community development and planning, both regionally and nationally.

Unfortunately, many commissioners felt that the 71b Plan does not rise to the level of our Downtown Masterplan in terms of providing a clear and catalyzing vision for the future of the corridor in Fayetteville and beyond. Commissioners noted that the plan's core philosophy of "corridor urbanism" seems to be a compromise between the kind of vision outlined by City Plan 2030, and the status quo. Commissioners lamented that compromising our vision to the extent shown in the plan is unnecessary and counterproductive, given that a document like this often serves as the purest source of direction for policy, and further compromise at the stage of implementation is often inevitable. **If the vision outlined in this plan is seen as a starting point for further compromise, it is reasonable to expect that future development resulting from this plan could be indistinguishable from development that may have resulted in the plan's absence.**

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Commissioner's concerns about the plan's vision can be characterized in two broad categories:

Transportation and Land Use

Commissioners expressed broad agreement with the plan's proposals for increased connectivity, and its recommendations that right-of-way be more equitably distributed among transit, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian modalities. While rough diagrams and written descriptions of these recommendations were compelling, pictorial descriptions and detailed drawings of idealized outcomes appear discordant with the spirit of these recommendations.

This incongruity is particularly apparent on page 85, which features a rendering titled "College Avenue Concept". Despite being identified by diagrams in the plan as the site of an important transit oriented urban node, the intersection of Township and College is depicted with the same automobile-oriented pattern of development that exists today. More disturbingly, the images show a street section at the intersection that increases the width of the current street by two lanes. While the notion of adding transit to the area is admirable, adding transit without changing the development pattern, and doing it in a way that makes the street more hostile to pedestrian activity is not a model for success.

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College Avenue Concept.

From left: Sketch of an initial North to Township segment of the street; close-up plan of the Township intersection, illustrating bus and right turn only turnout lanes; and a rendering of the Township intersection.

Page 85.

As an alternative, commissioners preferred to discuss concepts that would reduce crossing distances for pedestrians, and create environments that people actually might like to walk in. There was also agreement that given Fayetteville’s strong growth rate, it would have been prudent to study street cars and light rail in addition to bus service. A few commissioners discussed their preference for the University of Arkansas Community Design Center’s study entitled “Fayetteville 2030: Transit City Scenario Plan”. UACDC’s plan seeks to answer the question “what if 80% of future growth occurred around a new streetcar system along Fayetteville’s main commercial arterial?”.

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Fayetteville 2030: Transit City Scenario Plan, UACDC, uacdc.uark.edu

Discussion of micro-mobility also appears absent from the plan. Given the mixed experiences of other communities, and the state's mandate that we allow e-scooters, it seems imperative to explore new best practices for 71b. Detailed plans will allow us to take full advantage of the numerous benefits offered by these new technologies, while mitigating some of the disruptive tendencies that have caused issues in other cities. Ultimately, these technologies could pair well with our transit investments, offering quick and efficient transportation between transit stops and destinations.

Energy Action Plan Transportation Goal: Achieve 25% bike/walk/transit mode share by 2030

Commissioners also expressed mild concern that images depicting major redevelopment along the corridor were not compelling given the challenges we face, and our goal to achieve 25% bike/walk/transit mode share by 2030 (see Fayetteville's Energy Action Plan). Either out of skepticism over the efficacy of proposed transit systems, or a belief that private car ownership will remain prevalent long after other experts suggest it will, development proposals for major

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sites in the plan retain a vast amount of area devoted to surface parking. While the commission certainly recognizes the current importance of automobiles to our daily lives, we look to plans like this to offer credible alternatives that decision makers can point to in the future.

Public Comment

Outside of facilitated groups and surveys, Public Comment on these sorts of plans is surprisingly rare. Planning Commission was fortunate in this case to receive detailed public input from a significant stakeholder: the Fayetteville Housing Authority.

As part of the Executive Director's presentation, commissioners were provided with a written list of comments, which we then discussed at length. We were able to find consensus on many of FHA's points, which are provided here:

- While the plan mentions housing 55 times, it should take the opportunity to reference the comprehensive plan's principle goal of creating opportunities for attainable housing.
- Page 104 should mention the Fayetteville Housing Authority in #2. Suggested language:
 - *Former Hi-Way Inn. Redevelopment of mid-century motel for affordable housing for veterans by Fayetteville Housing Authority*
- Density along the corridor should be opportunistic, respecting scale of existing neighborhoods where applicable, but becoming more intense in areas with city owned property, and areas without existing residential context such as the East side of Walker Park between the creek and the corridor.
- Build-to zones should be applied consistently along the corridor.
- In the Implementation section under Attainable Housing, the plan recommends creating a 71b specific housing development corporation. Given FHA's current work in the area, it may be more appropriate to develop partnerships with the FHA to create opportunities for additional housing units, as is recommended in our comprehensive plan update (City Plan 2040, Goal 6, Objective 3.6.3, Page 46)
 - Include tables provided by FHA / HUD that describe Low-Moderate Income in concrete terms.
 - Suggested language for Attainable Housing Short Term Implementation section:
 - Partner with the Fayetteville Housing Authority (FHA) to increase capacity with staff and capitalization capable of building both ownership and rental housing designed for affordability to households with incomes in the 60%-100% of median household income range. Ensure the FHA also has the ability to partner with developers to incorporate affordable housing into mixed income developments.
 - Explore methods to implement NWA Housing Report Action Item #4: Use publicly owned land for housing production.
- Verify accuracy of diagrams and descriptions concerning transitional housing projects.
- The difference between Permanent Supported Housing and Transitional Housing was discussed. FHA strongly believes that the former should be prioritized over the latter.

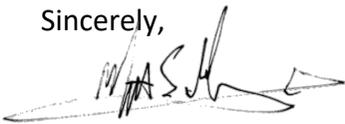
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Commission was not able to discuss this in enough detail to gain consensus. However, this is clearly an important issue that deserves more thought.

- Suggested language for Attainable Housing Medium term:
 - Continued development activities by the ~~71B Development Corporation~~ Fayetteville Housing Authority with possible focuses on the “Sunbridge” site north of Township Street on the east side of College and proposed medium density residential sites in the South School corridor.
 - Encourage eligible non-profits to apply for state and federal grants to increase supportive housing assistance.
 - Explore Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) financing as an additional strategy for housing creation
 - Implement NWA Housing Report Action Item #4: Use publicly owned land for housing production
 - Fayetteville specific housing recommendations from NWA Housing Report:
 - Create a local funding source for new homes.
 - Establish anti-displacement measures.
 - Develop local tenants’ rights policies [the assistant city attorney advised commissioners that this item may be more appropriate in other policy documents]
 - Create a local housing preservation policy and align tools for implementation.
 - Development of homes on underused, publicly owned property
 - Closer partnerships with large-scale employers and anchor institutions to promote affordability

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these issues, and look forward to working with City Staff to implement the plan at Council’s direction.

Sincerely,



Matthew Hoffman AIA
Chairman, City of Fayetteville Planning Commission