

**MINUTES OF THE MINT HILL PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
JULY 18, 2022**

The Mint Hill Planning Board met in regular session on Monday, July 18, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in the John M. McEwen Assembly Room, Mint Hill Town Hall.

**ATTENDANCE**

Chairman: Tom Gatz

Members: Kenny Draffen, Scott Fandel, Roger Hendrix, Chip Todd, and Eric Tyson

Planning Director: John Hoard

Clerk to the Board: Savanna Ocasio

Absent: Jennifer Manchester

**CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION**

Chairman Gatz called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., declared a quorum present and the meeting duly constituted to carry on business. Mr. Fandel gave the invocation.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**Approval of Minutes for the April 18, 2022 Regular Meeting:** Chairman Gatz deferred approval for the April 18, 2022 regular meeting minutes to next month's meeting as they did not make it into the agenda packet.

**Additions or Deletions of Agenda Items:** None.

**Reports of Committees, Members and Staff:** None.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:**

**A. Discussion and Recommendation on the 2022 Land Use Plan:**

Planning Director Hoard stated Ian Anderson, Merrick & Company, would provide the Board with the Land Use background and how the plan got to where it currently was. Chairman Gatz asked if the subarea plans were going to be shown. Planning Director Hoard said yes, they were included in Mr. Anderson's presentation.

Ian Anderson, Landscape Architect and Planner with Merrick & Company, introduced himself and thanked the Board for having him. He stated this process had been great so far and he was excited to present the results of the Land Use Plan. Mr. Anderson provided a brief overview of the project's timeline. He stated this was a three-phase project:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Phase (Discovery): Began in February, 2021 – June 2021. This phase included stakeholder engagement, interviews, outreach, and data collection.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase (Plan Development): Began in June 2021 – January 2022. This phase included robust community engagement consisting of in person and virtual meetings, online surveys, and stakeholder outreach to work on the comp plan.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase (Plan Documentation): Began in January 2022 – July 2022. This phase included planning and creating a toolbox to implement the recommendations they made to the best of their ability.

He explained often comp plans would be planned and left sitting on a shelf for Staff to figure out how to execute that, whereas the consultant’s goal was to provide a road map and break ideas into manageable projects that could be worked through to deliver this plan. Mr. Anderson stated he was pleased to say the Town had a great and engaged community. He provided a community engagement summary to the Board stating through their online engagement as well as their in-person meetings, over 400 people participated, providing over 2,000 responses, 500 comments, and almost 200 subscribers. With the community’s engagement, the consultants were able to narrow down what types of ideas and Land Uses were most appropriate for Mint Hill. This process provided the consultants with the following five community preferences where they developed planning responses:

- Sense of Community: This included maintaining the Towns “small Town feel”, encouraging opportunities for community interaction at entertainment, recreation, and civic facilities, and celebrating Town history by telling the story of Mint Hill.
- Preference for “Things to Do”: This included develop mixed-use activity centers that offer a range of entertainment, shopping, dining, and civic uses.
- Growth and Changing Demographics: This included concentrate development in key areas, providing more housing and employment options for a changing demographic.
- Open Space Matters: This included preserving natural resources and other green spaces that contribute to the Towns character, connect those areas to recreation facilities, activity centers, and neighborhoods with a combination of greenways, trails, and urban bike/ped facilities.
- Infrastructure to Guide and Support Development: This included planning for infrastructure to serve areas of concentrated development and leverage opportunities for shared funding with local, State, and federal partnerships.

Mr. Anderson presented the future Land Use Plan to the Board. He stated the biggest takeaway of what had changed from the previous Comprehensive Plan was expanding the list of land uses, particularly under the residential category. The current Comp Plan had only one residential land use category across Mint Hill. As not all developments fit into one category, the consultants looked specifically at lot sizes, densities, and did their best to assign correct land uses to reflect what had been built out. The Land Use Plan being presented showed four different residential designations ranging from very rural residential to a mixed residential, similar to the existing Brighton Park community. He explained while wanting to allow those uses, they had to be specific with location, so it became about concentrating those activity centers. Mr. Anderson stated the next step was to figure out how to start dividing the categories off into manageable projects. He stated there were a few tools in a toolbox that would help, number one being development standards: the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The UDO had to be reviewed so the consultants could see how the requirements supported this plan. He stated next in the toolbox was public investments of identifying areas of funding, or for instance, infrastructure; trying to drive water and sewer into those development areas that would support the new plan and were of interest to the development community. He stated there were also programs the Town could implement to start activating these areas, whether it was bringing the farmer's market into downtown, doing more programming in the parks, or working with

CATS to do transportation mobility studies. Last in the toolbox was looking at follow up plans, studies, and recommendations. He stated when it came down to selecting the strategies and recommendations provided, it was about aligning Town goals with programs that were already in place. The consultants worked with Staff on said recommendations to figure out what aligned best with Mint Hill and would support the plan. The consultants then looked at the potential impact of those programs, speculating funding, and what those impacts would be by looking at how other communities had launched similar programs, and what the results were there. Most of the recommendations listed had ideas in each toolbox, some may not; it was not a one size fits all kind of deal. Mr. Anderson explained the ideas presented had been worked on with Staff to figure out what was right for Mint Hill, what was scalable, what was manageable for the size of community, for the size of Staff, and for funding. He thought they had a pretty good plan here that would get Mint Hill to the end goal as quickly as possible without getting bogged down in too much analysis or heavy, long-term studies; it came down to how could they create these manageable projects so Staff could complete this project in the next three to five years. With that being said, the Board or Staff would go through to determine the lead Staff person, or possibly hiring a consultant. The consultants then looked at potential cost, where the funding would derive from, and what the next steps would be. The Mint Hill Implementation checklist provided Staff and the Board with a roadmap for how to implement each of the recommendations given. He stated if the plan were to be adopted, the consultants could look at what the recommendation required, how the resources could be secured, and determine which team (Staff, consultant, stakeholder group, etc.) would launch this initiative. To keep organized throughout this process all projects would be tracked to ensure all steps were being followed and a point of contact to lead the team was assigned to reach the end goal. As the consultants got into the details of the Comp Plan, there were a couple of sub areas Staff wanted the consultants to take the closer look at, one of those being the downtown core area. Mr. Anderson presented the downtown small area plan to the Board; their idea was to rebuild the downtown grid. He stated this was not the downtown overlay district, this was essentially a boundary that was determined as it was what was left of the less than optimally developed parcels. As shown, it was being developed from all sides. One study they did look at was the structure value versus land value to see what was undervalued in terms of what could be there. Mr. Anderson explained fortunately, the Town controlled a lot of land within this boundary which put the Town in a very good position to get a project like this off the ground as land assembly was a big hurdle.

Chairman Gatz asked if Mr. Anderson could keep the Board oriented as to where Mr. Anderson was referring to on the plan. Mr. Anderson agreed and pointed using the computer mouse to the area he was referring to, Matthews-Mint Hill (Highway 51) and Lawyers Road intersection near the Mint Hill Police Department.

Mr. Anderson pointed to the water feature located near Town Hall which was an expanded pond. He stated this pond had huge potential there with the idea being the water level was down low compared to the development around it which meant a downtown Town Park could be built and expand the pond to be a district retention pond. When it came down to developers inquiring about land in urban environments, there would be underground detention in large pipes that were expensive which developers did not like, they would rather send the water to a pond that was in the back of the development. Currently in urban areas, there was a trend where parks and open spaces were being leaned on to manage stormwater. He explained essentially, those areas were sponges so they could take stormwater and then slowly release it per flood requirements, which took that burden of stormwater off. With that being said, not only would the downtown Town Park be an amenity, it would also be a multifunctional infrastructure, becoming the

heart of the downtown. He stated they would like as much inline storefront and mixed-use retail as possible in that area. Mr. Anderson shifted the focus to Town View Drive, stating it was currently stubbed off. The consultants thought it would be a great opportunity to extend this road to the Mint Hill Historical Society, calling it the new “main street”; essentially, linking the Historic Village with the new downtown center and park. Mr. Anderson pointed at an area on the plan located near the Mint Hill Police Department and stated the area he was referring to would be a parking garage, serving as a key component of downtown with at least five spaces per thousand square feet. This parking garage would be a mobility hub, not solely to support private development, but to create a mobility hub in downtown Mint Hill providing a range of options such as bringing in buses, Ubers, or micro transits, serving both Mint Hill commuters and the private development community. Mr. Anderson made note of a few other items to mention. He stated the Mint Hill Police Department would no longer be located where it currently stood. The consultants thought the Police Department had premium real estate on the frontage, which was a desirable area to be, so they moved the Police Department to the back of the development and added a new community library as this was something CMS library expressed interest in. He stated they did not think the public uses being added needed to be front and center at the premium real estate, so they put those to the back of the development against a greenway, giving people a reason to come back into the development as the Police Department and Library were more destination based. Mr. Anderson pointed out that NCDOT did not like doing full signalized intersections within seven-eight hundred feet of an intersection like this but being they would reach the distance right before the Gatsby development, they thought this would be an important intersection to focus on and start working with NCDOT to be sure this could be done. Without the proposed traffic signal, downtown would become right in, right out only, so they had a strong argument for why the intersection should be signalized. The downtown area plan showed the future widened condition which went along the length of Matthews-Mint Hill Road and crept up Lawyers Road eating halfway through those retailers’ parking lots, leaving those current businesses very challenged in the future widening condition. Mr. Anderson asked if there were any questions so far before he presented the Highway 218 area plan.

Chairman Gatz asked what the reasoning was behind staying on the North side of Matthews-Mint Hill Road. Mr. Anderson stated they thought the North side was the most logical downtown core representing the most undeveloped, Town controlled land. Chairman Gatz stated Matthews-Mint Hill Road becoming a four-lane highway would be handicapped. Mr. Anderson agreed. He stated getting all the pedestrian improvements at those intersections was going to be key as well as multi-use trails and corridors.

Mr. Anderson continued with his presentation presenting the Highway 218 Interchange small area plan to the Board. This plan went along Highway 218, back to Highway 51. The consultants studied this area due to the possibility of sewer access under the Goose Creek sewer extension which was currently being planned. Once the sewer line was extended into the Veterans Park area, there would be a bigger basin that would drain making the surrounding properties more optimal for development. The presented Highway 218 area plan envisioned exclusively retail, some vertically mixed, and a strong office component that would feed off the retail for lunch hours and things of that nature. He stated the consultants tried to internalize parking by putting all the retail out on the street. On the other side of the highway, there was Veterans Park, one of the largest parks in Town. He stated the park was split between the North half being active recreation, and the South half potentially being more passive recreation. Mr. Anderson went into further detail explaining possible park additions, transitioning into residential South of the Park.

Mr. Anderson explained going along Fairview Road towards the Highway 51 area was a good retail corridor with it being high volume and located between a highway and an interstate. One of the things the consultants noted was the depth and configuration of the parcels in this area which provided an opportunity for road frontage. Mr. Anderson explained this would be a new road constructed to allow the parcels on the North side of Fairview Road to be the autofocused retail along the corridor, transitioning on the South side to a residential product. Mr. Anderson pointed to the corner of Matthews-Mint Hill Road and Highway 218 and said this was a high-profile corner; it was an optimal corner that would support a good amount of development. He stated this corner could be redeveloped, bringing in a new road to tie it in making that intersection right in, right out which ideally would get rid of all the curb cuts and aprons. As Mr. Anderson's Highway 218 presentation came to an end, he stated the plan focused primarily along the length of Highway 218, beginning at Highway 51 to just East of Highway 485 and how this plan could develop as the Goose Creek extension was realized. He stated this plan would give residents places to go, things to do, and assist with employment and taxes.

Mr. Hendrix asked how they had allotted for the expansion, or lack thereof, Highway 218 from Highway 485, into Highway 51. He stated the last he heard that road improvement plan was off the books with NCDOT. Mr. Anderson stated he had not seen any plans for expansion. He noted the Highway 218 plan being presented did not assume an expanded road corridor like the downtown area plan. Mr. Hendrix asked was this why the consultants added the road for access. Mr. Anderson stated yes as it was nice to have parallel movement to eliminate traffic. Mr. Hendrix asked if the location of the parking garage would be where the woods sat currently behind the Mint Hill Police Department. Mr. Anderson said yes. Mr. Hendrix asked if there would be parking adjacent to the parking garage. Mr. Anderson said yes, a lot of parking options. Mr. Hendrix asked how this transition would affect the current downtown square, Matthews-Mint Hill and Lawyers Road intersection. Mr. Anderson explained signage and restaurant courtyards would be located along the square. Mr. Hendrix clarified the road outside of Town Hall would be extended to the Historical Society. Mr. Anderson said yes, Town View Drive.

Mr. Fandel asked how the current Highway 218 infrastructure was versus what would be required once sewer was available. Mr. Anderson stated the presented plan was predicated on the Goose Creek sewer extension happening; this development would not support itself without sewer connectivity.

Mr. Todd asked how the downtown plan would be marketed as currently, there was not a lot of infrastructure in Mint Hill. Mr. Anderson stated the consultants were still in the process of developing 3D images of the presented plan for marketing graphics. When looking at these plans, it may be hard to see the potential if one did not know how to read comp plans, so they planned to create a vision and brand it to inspire the community, with that came websites and other forms of advertisement to get the concept out to the public and developers.

Chairman Gatz asked Mr. Anderson to define the densities shown on the plan. Mr. Anderson said rural residential was large, 1+ acre lots, similar to the developments on the East side of Mint Hill. He explained low density residential was ½ acre lots, colored yellow on the old comp plan. Medium density residential was ¼ to ½ acre lots and mixed residential comprised of predominantly single family detached homes as well as attached single family units, such as townhomes. He stated the consultants thought of looking into a higher category of residential but changed their mind as that use might open the door to multi-family apartments which was not something the community was interested in. If a developer chose to come into Mint Hill and build a multifamily use, it must be integrated with mixed use: entertainment, retail, an

activity center along a corridor or intersection. The consultants were wary of keeping the small town feel in Mint Hill and not letting multifamily run rampant. Chairman Gatz asked Planning Director Hoard if this plan were to be recommended and adopted, where would that leave the consultants, was there a contract? Planning Director Hoard said yes, as far as the contract, their plan was their product. At this point, Staff would take over and begin prioritizing and if needed, the consultants may be rehired. Chairman Gatz stated he liked the plan, it was exciting. His concern was the manpower to complete this project. Planning Director Hoard agreed and explained more than anything, marketing for the downtown plan was needed to generate excitement and motivation from the community. He mentioned the great thing about this plan was that the Town controlled the vast majority of that land, so they were already acting fast by relocating the Public Works facility. Chairman Gatz asked if there was a playback to provide the community with the consultants' product. Planning Director Hoard explained throughout this process, there were public forums, a public hearing, and online meetings to engage the community. He hoped the public would get excited as it was now advertised. Mr. Anderson included the public engagement website was up and running offering the history of the process.

Mr. Todd stated now that the contract between the consultants and the Town of Mint Hill was up, who took the leadership role for the Town? Planning Director Hoard stated the Boards, Staff, and the public, repeating this was on the citizens.

Mr. Hendrix stated he noticed there were five community centers in the previous 2010 Land Use Plan but only two were addressed in the presented plan. Planning Director Hoard stated the 2010 plan was framework that was created by the Boards, community, Staff, and consultants during that time. Mr. Hendrix asked if this new plan would overwrite the 2010 plan. Planning Director Hoard said the 2010 plan had failed as it was not adopted. Mr. Hendrix expressed his interest in the plan.

Mr. Draffen referred to the downtown Mint Hill plan and stated the plan was aggressive. He asked what kind of analysis was done to identify that the demographics would support this much business. Mr. Anderson agreed that the plan was aggressive and stated which was why they had to fight for full signalized movement along Lawyers Road. He said candidly, they did not get a market study done. He explained the area they focused on was the highest and best use of that land. Mr. Draffen stated it was going to require a lot of residents and people from surrounding areas to support this plan. Mr. Anderson explained some folks had the struggle of wanting entertainment and downtown without density of residential. He explained communities similar to Brighton Park were making projects like this more viable.

Mr. Tyson asked Planning Director Hoard if these plans were ever supplemented with a forecast of what the Board could see as far as population growth in Mint Hill. Mr. Anderson explained the only way to get to that number was to look at projections and census data. If this development was realized, the consultants could provide the numbers of dwelling units and square footage of retail which was approximately, ½ million total new square footage of retail and office.

**Mr. Hendrix made a favorable recommendation, seconded by Mr. Fandel, and the Board unanimously agreed to send a favorable recommendation to the Board of Commissioners on the 2022 Land Use Plan as presented.**

Chairman Gatz complemented the consultants and Staff and stated they did a job well done.

**Other Business:** None.

**Adjournment:** Upon the motion of Mr. Fandel, seconded by Mr. Hendrix, and unanimously agreed upon, Chairman Gatz adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

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Savanna Ocasio  
Program Support Assistant