

Meeting Minutes
Marshall Service District Planning Committee
Comprehensive Plan Update

Tri-County Feeds, Etc. 7408 John Marshall Highway, Marshall, VA
March 11, 2008
7:00 P.M.

I. Summary of Residential Preference Discussion from February 26, 2008 meeting – Susan Eddy

Susan Eddy, Fauquier County Chief of Planning, opened the meeting. She noted that all background materials were available online and that all, including newcomers, should sign in, providing their e-mail and contact information to ensure they receive meeting information in the future. Participants could also sign up for the County’s e-alert system to receive notification of future meetings.

Mrs. Eddy recapped the major discussion points regarding residential unit preferences by the group from the February 26, 2008 meeting. The results of the group survey have been included in the meeting minutes from February 26, 2008. Mrs. Eddy noted that there seemed to be group consensus about having a traditional neighborhood design throughout the residential neighborhoods. However, there was not an agreement about architectural review of buildings. This may need to be discussed further. The Form Based Code would bring much higher residential and commercial densities to Marshall. Staff will prepare build-out scenarios according to the variety of density options and present these to the group for feedback. The group appeared to re-confirm the previous vision that Marshall at build-out should be around 6,000 residents.

Milt Herd, Fauquier County planning consultant, stated that the number of residential units above and behind retail will be difficult to predict, so it is best for the group to agree on a population capacity and then work within that limit. Mr. Herd confirmed with the group that the ideal style for a residential unit would be one that was considered friendly, such as having a front porch, rather than a car garage facing the street; the group agreed.

II. Gateway Overview

Mrs. Eddy introduced the main topic of the evening, which was Marshall’s entrance starting at Route 17 and I-66. A gateway can be defined as the first aesthetic experience for someone walking or driving into town. It is the way a community says “Hello”. It can also help route traffic appropriately to destinations. To help define this, the group was asked:

- Where should the gateway start and end?
- What should the experience be for someone entering Marshall?
- What types of development should make up the gateway and what should it look like?
- Are there multiple gateways to Marshall?

Mrs. Eddy then reviewed photographs she took of the entrances to Marshall, which show a variety of existing conditions, both attractive and needing improvement. While the group indicated the town should be walkable, the current entrances are not pedestrian friendly. Committee members agreed and said that they currently see many pedestrians in Marshall, despite unsafe conditions. One person said that the group's plan should prioritize sidewalks along roadways, but not wait for development to make this a reality. Members agreed that sidewalks are needed today. Members commended citizen efforts to have an attractive, wooded and stone sign erected at one of the town's entrances. Several members positively commented on the photographs of classic, older structures and would like to see the gateway retain this authentic look. Others said they disliked the appearance of the commercial buildings and strip shopping complexes that line Winchester Street, as this represents "anywhere USA"—something that many do not wish Marshall to become.

The staff shared photographs of Warrenton's gateway on Route 29 Business and Alexandria Pike. In their opinion, the large brick buildings set-back from the road created a non-human scale that is automobile dependent and not pedestrian friendly. Moreover, the width of the four-lane Blackwell Road encourages high speeds and makes it dangerous for a pedestrian to cross. The gateway also has a look and feel to it that is indistinguishable from other areas. Staff noted that Warrenton's Main Street and old town do have very positive qualities that are inviting and worth emulating.

Mr. Herd mentioned that the Form Based Code working committee envisions the gateway to start at the entrance to the district and continue until the fork in the road with Old Stockyard Road. Characteristically, the gateway should have a traffic calming effect; parking should be behind or to the side of buildings and have a mixture of uses. While parking will not be as strict in this gateway corridor, it needs to be pedestrian friendly. This represents a very different development pattern than the strip-commercial and drive-thru buildings on the east-side of Winchester Street. Mr. Herd asked the group to think about characteristics of the gateway. Should road be for fast or slow speeds? Mrs. Eddy agreed that it would be best for the group to think of Likes and Dislikes about a gateway, along with defining basic characteristics of the street and land uses; many of the details can be ironed out after the Comprehensive Planning process is finished.

III. Gateway Discussion: Entrance to Marshall from Route 17 & Interstate 66

Extending the gateway all the way to Main Street was discussed. However, if the gateway extends to Main Street, what is considered the heart of Marshall? If the gateway could talk, it should clearly state: "You are now in Marshall!" The group agreed that the gateway entrance needs to look and feel different than suburbia, be inviting to tourists, feel like home to residents and make a statement that is in keeping with its established character. The adopted plan states that *Marshall is the Town that Works*.

An alternate view was that Old Stockyard Road is the beginning of the gateway. Whether this is the gateway or not, it is important for the plan to stress the aesthetic qualities of and around Old Stockyard Road because this land is developing faster than

Route 17, which is more historic and established in character. Supervisor Holder Trumbo stated that the gateway should be Winchester Street, where an established historic pattern of development exists; this option will invite visitors to the Main Street corridor, where businesses reside and welcome patrons. Mr. Trumbo does not want Old Stockyard Road to be the gateway because this implies that the town wishes traffic to be diverted around Main Street, rather than have direct access to the old part of town, a place for which many are proud.

Supervisor Peter Schwartz stated he would like to have the gateway start immediately off of the highway and create a fabric for what the rest of Marshall is like. It should feel like one is entering the front door of someone's home, or in other words it should feel like Marshall. Where the gateway ends is not so important as having an established character up-front on Winchester Street, as one crosses the threshold into Marshall. Likewise, the gateway entrances to Marshall on Route 55 from the east and west should establish the town's overall pattern and be recognizable.

Milt Herd suggested that the group design Old Stockyard Road and Route 17 with sketches and also the gateway so that when development proposals come into the county, staff are equipped with the right tools. County ordinances will need to be updated to ensure the gateway vision is realized.

Others stated that there are many nice homes on Route 17 and they will likely be demolished if a higher-intensity land use is placed on the land. The older homes along Winchester Street, while they may need attention, represent Marshall's historic pattern of development. This architectural pattern of development should be retained and continue to Main Street. The concern of whether a building remains residential, turns into an office, or even a mixed-use is not as important as retaining Marshall's pattern of development. Drive-thru establishments and big buildings do not fit Marshall's historic mold. Moreover, if the eastern and western sides of Winchester turn into commercial areas, traffic is likely not to continue to Main Street. A preferable gateway is one that begins with low density residential and gradually increases in density until it reaches the core.

One member stated that the best way to revitalize a Main Street is to place residential above retail and have a mixture of uses around the core, including residential so that people can walk to the downtown. Everyone agreed.

Some members would like to see commercial in the gateway which will supply employment opportunities, while others worry that additional businesses on the fringes will take away business opportunities from Main Street. Jim Carson stated that his business in Warrenton has not suffered from additional restaurant and retail uses outside Old Town because the Main Street attracts a different kind of market.

Bill Clark said that Marshall is a bedroom community and will always be one because of its proximity to Interstate 66, so why not allow small businesses to locate in the gateway, where interstate traffic is likely to stop and shop? A passenger rail station could locate in

Marshall one day and commercial uses in the gateway would make a good fit. He went on to state that especially during these difficult fiscal times for the local government, the County needs commercial revenue to help offset the costs of services for residential growth in the rest of the County, and the service district concept supports this by providing public utilities.

Jim Carson stated that Winchester Street and others need to be pedestrian-oriented because this will help Main Street businesses. He does not think commercial uses in the gateway will deter from Main Street businesses.

Tom Leachman suggested hotels or inns on the existing C-2 zoning along Winchester Street would attract tourists and capture trips from the highway.

Considerable discussion took place over the vision for the “Y” intersection of Winchester Street and Old Stockyard Road. A roundabout or “T” intersections are two options in the current plan. Several members prefer a roundabout to direct and calm traffic. The group members agreed that the triangular piece of land shown in Figures 13 and 14 of the current plan will need to be developed very carefully; the building use and appearance will be paramount, as it will set the stage for the for the rest of the community. Community or institutional uses often work well as anchors in communities. The group will need to further discuss the land use options for this piece of land and even talk about architectural details at some point.

The discussion shifted to the development of land outside the existing service district boundaries and a debate ensued over why parcels should or should not be included. Attorney Jim Downey represented David Dobson at the meeting and stated that Mr. Dobson’s parcels south of Interstate 66 should be included in the service district so that the land may develop to its zoning potential with public sewer and water. In his view, the parcels should be included in the gateway vision for Marshall and possibly offer a hotel, restaurant and other highway-oriented uses that would enhance the gateway and the town. Prohibiting these parcels from being in the service district effectively renders them not developable and over-taxed. Doug Darling agreed and stated the property owner deserves to be compensated for commercial land that will not be included in the service district.

Ann McCarty, Peter Schwartz and Paul Lawrence disagreed and stated that those parcels have never been in the service district, nor are there any intentions on the part of the representatives or community members to include them. The reason for this is because Interstate 66 is a clear, hard-edge boundary to the southern end of the service district, which is critical to keep. The hard-edge concept is one that is tried, tested and a principle of which Fauquier County is committed. If the district boundary bleeds over Interstate 66, then commercial development would likely occur all the way down Winchester Street to Warrenton. Marshall does not want to turn into Manassas, Route 234. Mr. Schwartz stated that it is his goal to make sure Marshall is developed in a way that is appealing, not highway commercial, “anywhere USA”. This type of development robs a community of its individuality and character. Mr. Lawrence suggested that the parcels need to be down-

zoned and the property owners compensated in return. Mr. Schwartz is considering a viable transfer of development rights program that will trade development potential, whether it is residential or commercial from within or outside of the district. Nevertheless, the subject, commercially-zoned parcels, are not located in the service district, as are many other properties in the county.

Getting back to the gateway discussion, Mr. Schwartz stated that he desires a gateway that does not deflect customers away from Main Street businesses. An acceptable form might be more residential that does not look like suburban subdivisions, or perhaps some office space or a mix of uses.

Mr. Joe Alfandra of Maryland shared the concept of live-work units with the group. The community of Kentlands, Maryland in The City of Gaithersburg was developed into a community of around 6,000 residents. Live-work units have created a sense of place and a “main street”, where offices, retail and residential co-mingle. These units have been successful and do not compete with commercial highway nearby. The group may wish to explore the live-work concept further.

Another view was that the gateway could reiterate the types of residential units that exist along Winchester and on Main Street. Small-scale residential that is pedestrian oriented says “small town”. The residences should front Winchester Street and not turn their backs to the street.

Another member stated that pedestrian facilities are a must-have on Winchester Street. Curb cuts onto Winchester Street need to be minimized because this impedes traffic flow and can cause accidents. Others agreed that access management on the gateway is critical.

Several members commented that the plan needs to emphasize tree save areas and have a high expectation for quality landscaping from new development. Trees are important aesthetic features that have numerous benefits for a town.

The Route 17 and Interstate 66 intersection was discussed. Committee members have questions about what that intersection will look like. Will it be a fly-over clover leaf? Or could a different design be entertained, such as directing Interstate 66 underneath Route 17. Members also discussed the option of a large roundabout at the interchange. Illustrative plans of this option were viewed. One member stated that in years past, the committee opposed a fly-over. This will need to be discussed further as the intersection has a direct impact on vision for the gateway.

The meeting adjourned around 9:00 p.m.