

NOTES FROM THE ASHEVILLE AREA RIVERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION ANNUAL RETREAT held July 13 and 14, 2012 at the Artery in Pink Dog Collective 346 Depot Street.

Compiled by S. Capezzali and S. Monson

THE RETREAT AGENDA:

Friday the 13th

- 1:00 pm meet at the Artery –Troup Activity: Bus Fare
- 1:15 Mobile tour of the RADTIP/Between the Bridges area-self guided by members and staff
- **2:15 at Artery: SWOT Analysis- RADTIP**
- Water and snack provided at break
- 3:00 Consideration to Approve June Minutes
- **Where are we now? exercise**
 - Individual Task
 - Small groups: George, Joe and Pam; Karl, Ben and Terry; Dan, Jan and Ricky; Cindy, Carol, Robert and Pattiy.
 - Report Back
- 4:00 Moving to Action Discussion/Wrap Up
- 4:30 Break, Socializing at Junction begins
- 5 pm Dinner provided by City of Asheville

Saturday the 14th

- 8:30 am meet at the Artery -Pastries and coffee provided by the Chamber of Commerce/EDC
- 8:40 Introduction of Ron Payne, Introduction of Technical Assistance Team
- 8:45 RECAP- what were items of consensus from day 1?
- 8:50 Agree on an Agenda
- 9:00 (What Parking lot questions are still out there, can TA team assist)
- Reality Check:
 - Greenway Funding in our Community
 - French Broad River MPO and the TIP
- 9:30-11:30 Moving to Action (Action Plan) 10.30 am restroom break
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- 2nd part of RADTIP/BTB session, facilitated by Ron Payne
Technical resource team includes MPO coordinator, RADTIP project director, County Greenways Planner and City of Asheville Riverfront Redevelopment Coordinator
- 10:30 am - Short break for restroom and email use
- Continue/Wrap up session , next steps 10:45 am-11:15 am
- Adjourn by 11.30 am

Day One: RADTIP FOCUS

Facilitated by Steph Monson with support from Shannon Capezzali and Dan Baechtold

RADTIP/Between the Bridges Study Area Tour

Commission members kicked off the retreat by engaging in a “get to know you” scavenger hunt that served as their bus ticket for the tour of the RADTIP study area. Members then lined up in order of their birthdays, grabbed some water and snacks, and started thinking about the future.

The tour started at Southern States, 464 Riverside Drive. This location, and more specifically the intersection of Hill Street and Riverside Drive, serves as the northern terminus of the RADTIP project. The southern terminus is the Amboy Road Bridge on Lyman Street. Along the way members and staff discussed : physical constraints to completing the road project; impacts to businesses in the area; a proposed redevelopment at 233 Riverside Drive; the condition of the historic Norfolk Southern Bridge; stormwater problems on Riverside Drive; potential redevelopment of Queens Street area; historic and current vision for redevelopment of area, including Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan; open space development along Riverside Drive; use of RiverLink property for festivals (and City property for parking to support the festival); location of CIBO member’s property along the proposed route; optimal placement of street trees; potential improvements to Jean Webb Park and other areas to provide direct access to French Broad River; location of power lines along route; interplay between desire for developable sites and for open space; proper zoning as an incentive; potential transformational project at 14 Riverside Drive/12 Bones/Curve with proposed realignment; condition of buildings off Lyman Street; arts district/culture; redevelopment potential on historic Hans Rees Tannery site; bike/ped issue with Amboy Road Bridge; DOT or FBRMPO plans or lack of plans to replace current bridge; New Belgium Brewing.

Parking lot questions for the RADTIP Project stemming from the tour:

1. Are there currently plans addressing how to direct stormwater? Riverside in particular is a problem.
2. Can we tag team with MSD to address the issue of clean stormwater?
3. Is there a way stormwater can be filtered before it goes into the streams and rivers? Is it in the plan?
4. Has a bridge inspection ever been done before? Does Norfolk Southern inspect the bridge for themselves or does a third party do the inspections?
 - a. -Check with NCDOT rail. When was the last inspection done?
5. Concerning the widening of the road near CURVE, can any road widening projects take from the other side of the road and not from the developable property?
6. What needs to be done to get the Asheville Waste Paper warehouse demolished?
7. Could a bond issue pay for the road (RADTIP)? Who would we need to include if there was a bond issue?
8. How does the current map (supplied by consultants) of the project alternatives reflect the commissions past decisions and advice? Is the Commissions advice being heard or taken seriously?

AARRC 2012 RADTIP (River Arts District Transportation Improvement Project) SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths are assets/features that can help support a future action

Weaknesses define challenges or barriers that must be compensated for in order to make progress

Opportunities identify features of your contextual environment that can be used to your advantage

Threats are potential features that could undermine efforts to move ahead

Strengths

- Major North to South Artery
- New Belgium = Eyes on the river
- The river itself
- Riverfront Commission
- Feasible, good cost/benefit ratio
- Existing relationships
- The area is relatively flat
- Greenway Master plan
- Less Expensive building types is the norm
- Flexible ordinances
- Shift has occurred within local government to support the RADTIP
- Local culture
- Floodplain
- Concerns many types of groups/people
- Urbanism meets Greenway
- Local community support for improving River road
- Limits to how big trucks can be to enter
- Proximity to downtown and to West Asheville

Weaknesses

- Funding
- The railroad and the rail company
- Floodplain / stormwater
- Land speculation
- Product / real estate availability

- Parking
- Physically constrained by geography
- Opportunity cost

Opportunity

- Strengthening relationships
- Provides redevelopment potential / certainty
- Opportunity to clean up the environment
- Development talent attracted to this type of area
- Entrepreneurial area / individual, organic development style / creative, independent commerce
- Ability to attract unique investment
- Underdeveloped land
- Develop a marketing package
- Owner occupation as a protection

Threats

- Cranky neighbors / private property owners
- Duke power / relocating lines
- Expensive to fix problem vs. starting new
- Potentially conflicting constituency
- Gentrification
- Jurisdictional issues
- Keeping the authenticity of the place

AARRC- where are we now? What is our connection to the RADTIP Project?

Members first took a look at the following problem statement and question as individuals. Then they broke up in groups of three to discuss this question, and to use the "Where are we" handout to discuss what level or stage of development the Commission was currently in. Lastly they reported back to the larger group and reacted to each other's ideas and answers.

Problem Statement

What is the Commission's role, formal and informal, in the implementation of the RADTIP and its associated public elements, eg. greenway connections, 14 Riverside Drive rehab, stormwater improvements, etc.?

Q: In the future the AARRC members could have the most effect if they:

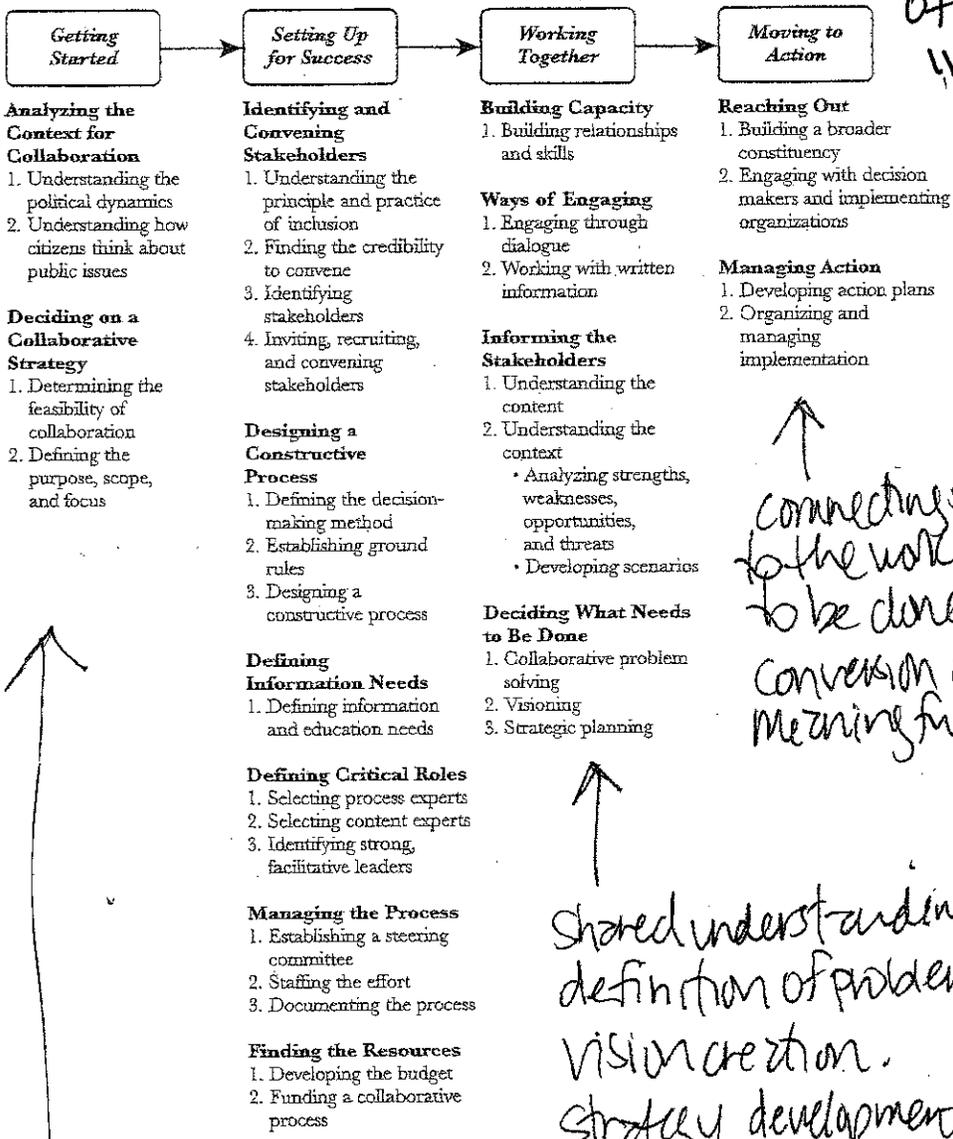
- A) Found money to fund the RADTIP*
- B) Used soft powers like having private conversations with key individuals who are good at getting stuff to happen*
- C) Made presentations to groups like the Sports Commission and Civitan to build wide support and knowledge of the project*
- D) Designed policies for the City and County that would prioritize the RADTIP implementation and further economic development*

Problem Statement Discussion:

- Most groups loved the idea of A because it would have the biggest impact but also thought it wasn't likely for the AARRC to tackle.
- There was support and understanding for B
- There was more support and interest in C
- Most groups thought D (with some attention to B and C) was the most appropriate place for AARRC work to be effective.
- Comments regarding where we are right now:
- Not sure County will contribute as much as City for funding, or any. Do other folks in Buncombe care about this area?
- We need to build consensus, we aren't currently doing it, have no idea how general citizens feel about this project.
- Need to make sure right partners are involved in implementation
- Most members felt that individual they were in "Moving to action" stage, but that as a Commission they were in between "Setting up for Success" and "Working Together"
- RADTIP is a clear organized area of work we can dig into
- Even though we are shepherding RADTIP we don't know exactly where it is in process, staff knows more and maybe should be sharing more with us

- Maybe things need to be brought to the Commission for advisement, what other things are going on that need our input?
- Maybe we should be supporting an updated master plan for the riverfront
- Need to publicize something that the Commission has done/been a part of. No one knows who the AARRC is, why it exists, what is its value.
- Are we moving away from our original designation as a commission/what we were supposed to do?
- Much of what we have done is soft collaborations, like individual members and staff helping market the riverfront as an asset to New Belgium, how do you explain that kind of informal involvement?
- We did Between the Bridges, got the fence down. Want to do small area plans ,this could be on website.
- We are a filter between the city and the general public
- We don't have any money, what can we do with no money? Can't really do a marketing program or a proper website without money.

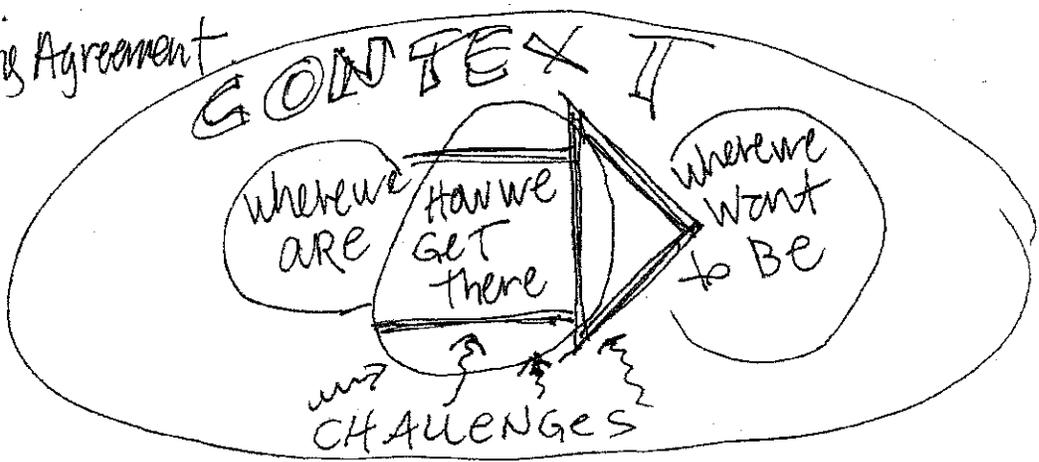
WHERE ARE WE? AS A COMMISSION, USING RADTP SUPPORT AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO



↑
 connecting stakeholders to the work that needs to be done.
 Conversion of agreements into meaningful results.

↑
 shared understanding, definition of problems, vision creation, strategy development

Initiation.
 Building Agreement



Wrap Up/To Do:

Commission had a tentative consensus that their major roles were, **to bring people together to talk about redevelopment topics, and to provide advice to policy makers and “doer” partners.**

As part of that, the Commission needs to **delineate a shared vision for riverfront redevelopment and communicate it loud and clear.**

As an action item the subcommittees need to reevaluate their current action plans and potentially recreate them, focusing on (reevaluating or recreating) the three original goals from the AARRC's 2011 Annual Report, section on “Looking Ahead”. Those goals are stated below:

REMOVING AND MITIGATING BARRIERS TO REDEVELOPMENT: The Riverfront has many unique constraints including a high percentage of brownfield properties, flood hazard areas requiring special attention, and uncertainty regarding the development potential of potentially historic structures.

AARRC Goal: Partner with the community to make sustainable redevelopment easier for potential investors

GREENWAY CONNECTIVITY: Places to walk and bike, whether for recreation or transportation, are essential to making the riverfront a safe and vibrant environment that supports investment.

AARRC Goal: Existing plans and new ideas to create a network of walking and biking trails in the riverfront must be updated, coordinated, and prioritized for implementation.

WILMAN DYKEMAN RIVERWAY MASTER PLAN: Supporting the implementation of the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan is a key duty of the Commission.

AARRC Goal: The RADTIP and the East of the RiverWay projects have kickstarted the design and engineering of the first 2.2 miles of transportation elements that will support the overall plan; momentum must be maintained and strengthened to insure implementation.

End of Day One (Group Adjourned to dinner at the Junction)

Day two: What are we going to do now? *note: day two does not follow the advertised agenda.*

Facilitated by Ron Payne. Capezzali and Monson provided support. The following individuals participated as part of a technical resource team:

Lucy Crown, Buncombe County Parks and Greenways Planner

Dan Baechtold, City of Asheville Transportation Planner, RADTIP Project Manager

Paul Black, French Broad River MPO Coordinator, Land of Sky Regional Council of Governments

RECAP: What is the role of this Commission?

- To function as an Advisory Board
- To help the Council and Commission make decisions
- To develop a vision for the future of the area, such as by creating a Master plan.
- To bring people together
- To communicate a vision and promote the advancement of the riverfront areas
- To be a watchdog for RADTIP

New Activity: 10 year wish-list for things to be completed:

1. The road
2. Greenways
3. Street trees
4. Pedestrian connections / sidewalks
5. Parking
6. Stormwater management
7. Flood remediation / government controls
8. Straightening of Queen Street
9. Attract a small hotel
10. Apartments
11. Affordable and mixed use housing
12. Property acquisition / improve properties
13. Get a riverfront icon / transformational project (is it New Belgian?)
14. Transportation (bus, shuttle, trolley, etc.)

Who needs to be on board / Partners

- Funders
- Financial institutions
- Artists
- Bike community

RECAP: Things to think about from Group discussion/comments:

- Determine how much the County is willing to contribute and how much the City is willing to contribute.
 - Ensure that all the right players are present.
 - Establish that there is consensus among existing occupants.
 - Determine whether the consensus of renters is necessary, or if targeting owners is all that is required.
 - Understand how citizens think about the area and future redevelopment options.
 - The Commission needs to define its critical roles.
 - The Commission is more organized around the RADTIP than it is around other projects
 - The Commission feels that it is not fully informed concerning the RADTIP project. The map shown during the meeting seems to convey a greater level of completion than the Commission was aware of.
 - Concerning funding for RADTIP, use the Biltmore Village tax base change as an example of how investment could benefit the City and County for funding.
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*****FOR FOLLOW UP***:**

1. Organize, Evaluate, Assign Action Items

(this list will inform the facilitated session at the August AARRC meeting)

- Get the DOT to replace the Amboy Road bridge should be one task to focus on.
- Develop a unified voice/ collective vision and message: 'We have all of this great stuff happening in the riverfront such as industry, tubing, parks, art...and we are County-wide!'
- Show financial institutions that this is a viable area for investment
- Ensure that zoning is tolerant on the front end so that developers do not need to get special permits to do things.
- Develop a marketing package for the area that describes what is already in the area, what is available for future development, who supporters are, etc.
- Get something publicized showing what the Commission has done or things that have happened as a result of Commission advising or involvement.
- The Commission will continue to focus on the three original goals laid out previously, with Subcommittees creating their own action plans based on those goals.
- Work on obtaining buy-in from stakeholders
- Reach out to residential neighborhoods
- Create a small film to show on the County channel. It should include all areas of the riverfront. The first commercial should focus on the work of the AARRC. (Development Subcommittee)
- Each Commission member should talk to their constituency every month about what the AARRC is doing. Present information in pairs when possible.
- Develop a bi-weekly update, 'What's new on the river'

- Post information to the ADL Riverfront Facebook page
- Tour the non-RAD riverfront areas that are a part of the Commissions scope
- Obtain a stipend for a design competition in order to attract the design community. The Commission will need to create a written proposal in order to obtain funding.
- Connect with RADBA and Asheville on Bikes to include them in future discussions
- Develop a website for the Commission. It should include information from the annual report, and a history and portfolio. Create a funding plan for this (Development Subcommittee)
- Decide how to obtain and organize funding from constituency groups (Bylaws subcommittee)
- The Commission member representing Buncombe County will provide a quarterly report to the Commission of County activities that affect or relate to the riverfront
- Bring a checklist to every monthly meeting with the top three priorities listed

2. Identifying group mindsets and interest in AARRC / Riverfront that can serve as a shared vision

(this list is for the "Getting the word out" discussion at the August meeting)

- Riverlink: AARRC affects Riverlink's properties. RADTIP and stormwater treatment is important, as is bringing more people to the river.
- CIBO: 'Don't tread on us' mentality. Expects AARRC to advocate and be a partner for development, not a hindrance. Ensure that Woodfin and Black Mountain are included.
- City of Asheville: Return on investment, local opportunities. Partnerships. Enlarging the board to include Black Mountain.
- Buncombe County: Economic and regional development. Return on investment.
- River District Design: Good design matters. Authenticity of design. Wants the Commission to be an advisor, not a ruler.
- Chamber of Commerce: Jobs, commerce, capital investment. Wants to see a plan for how things will be achieved.
- Local Residents / Business Owners (Pattiy): Authenticity / Maintaining the vibe. Do not include RADTIP in the message, talk about AARRC.

3. Administrative Items

(These are items that City staff liaison Monson has suggested or agreed she will attend to)

- Send out a new outlook invite to all Commission members regarding their subcommittee meeting dates
- Provide an overview of available funding at the next meeting
- Provide a quarterly report to the Commission of the City of Asheville's activities, starting next meeting.
- Follow up with Commission for a reschedule date to go on a float trip of the French Broad River.

End of Day Two
