

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chapel Hill Planning Board

FROM: Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives
Megan Wooley, Housing and Neighborhood Services Planner II

SUBJECT: Central West Small Area Update

DATE: October 1, 2013

Feedback from the Planning Board

Tonight, the Planning Board is being asked to provide feedback about the draft land use concept and recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian amenities that have been developed by the Central West Steering Committee.

If adopted, the Central West Small Area Plan would be an amendment to the Chapel Hill 2020 comprehensive plan. The Planning Board will be asked to review the recommended Central West Small Area Plan and provide a recommendation to Council for their consideration.

Background

During the Chapel Hill 2020 comprehensive planning process, the Central West Focus Area was identified as a “future focus area” due to the known development pressures in the area.

The Central West Focus Area is located near the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Estes Drive and extends from Carrboro to the west, Franklin Street to the east, Homestead Road to the north, and Maple Drive to the south. For a map, please see Attachment 1.

The Chapel Hill 2020 comprehensive plan stated that the area needed continued community conversation about its future and the following:

- Appropriate uses (such as residential, commercial, office, mixed-use, etc.);
- Form (what the area and buildings should look like); and
- Intensity (how many new uses and buildings are comfortable for the area).

Central West Steering Committee

In October of 2012, the Town Council established a Steering Committee to create and deliver a small area plan for the Central West Focus Area. The Steering Committee is comprised of the following stakeholders:

Number of Seats	Seats	Members
1	UNC Chapel Hill liaison	Jeff Kidd
1	Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools liaison	Mia Burroughs
1	Planning Board member	Amy Ryan (co-chair)
1	Transportation Board member	Michael Parker (co-chair)
1	Bicycle and Pedestrian Board member	Keith Billy (December 2012-May 2013) Jared Simmons (June 2013-November 2013)
4	Business owners/Landowners/Non-profit representatives from the area, including one Chamber of Commerce member	Anthony Carey Lucy Carol Davis Bruce Murray Whit Rummel
7	Residents from the Planning and Impact Area*	Eric Hyman David Tuttle Sarah McIntee Firoz Mistry Mickey Jo Sorrell Buffie Webber Julie McClintock
1	Renter from the Planning and Impact Area	Abby Parcell
17	Total	

* One of the residents' seats was originally designated for a Public Housing resident or representative. Since neither a Public Housing resident nor representative applied for a seat, a resident from the Planning and Impact Area was appointed to this seat.

In June of 2013, Councilmember Jim Ward was appointed as a Council liaison to the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee has been meeting since December of 2012, to discuss their vision for the area and to develop a small area plan. Since that time, twenty-seven (27) Steering Committee meetings have been held, and seven (7) community sessions have been held to receive ideas and gather input on the work of the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee's Work to Date

Principles and Objectives: The Steering Committee has developed a set of principles that provide a long-term vision for the area and will guide the development of the small area plan. Objectives have also been developed which complement the principles by detailing specific actions to achieve the principles. For a copy of the principles and objectives, please see Attachment 2.

Draft Land Use Concept: The Steering Committee has developed a draft land use concept which describes the uses and heights for the Central West Focus Area. The Steering Committee is seeking the Planning Board's feedback about the draft land use concept. The draft concept is not attached to this memorandum and will be sent to the Planning Board for their review before the meeting on October 1st.

Recommendation for Bicycle and Pedestrian Amenities: The Steering Committee has also developed recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian amenities and is seeking the Planning Board's feedback on

these recommendations. The recommendations are not attached to this memorandum and will be sent to the Planning Board for their review before the meeting on October 1st.

Next Steps

Tonight, the Planning Board is being asked to review and provide feedback about the Steering Committee's work to date.

Once the Central West Steering Committee has drafted their recommended Central West Small Area Plan, we will return to the Planning Board and ask the Board to review the recommended Small Area Plan and to provide the Council with a recommendation. We anticipate returning to the Planning Board with the recommended plan during their October 15th meeting.

At the time that the Steering Committee was established by the Town Council, the Council requested that a draft small area plan be submitted for their possible endorsement by November 2013. The following are the next steps to meet this schedule:

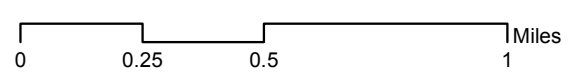
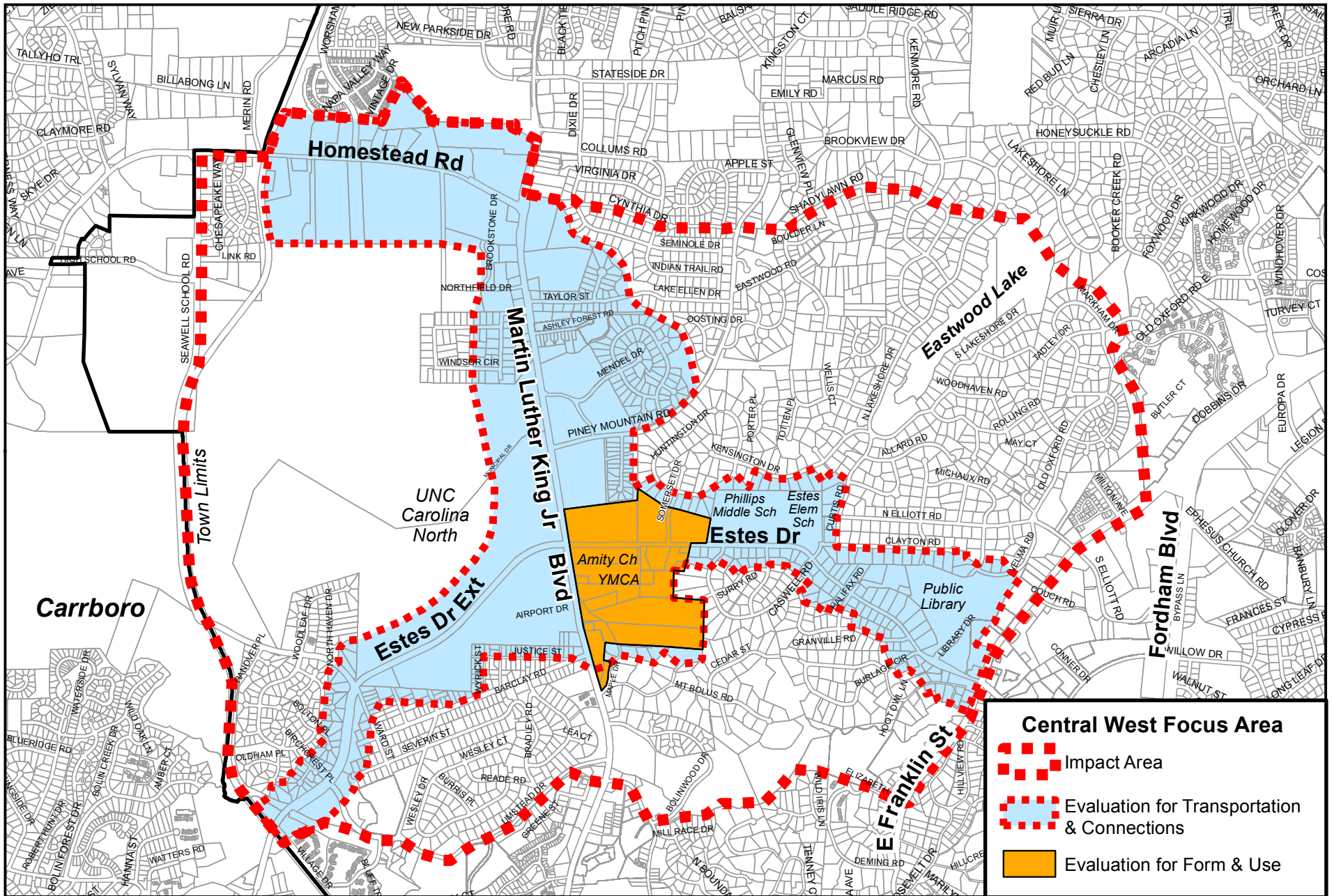
- **Council Public Hearing** – Monday, October 21st at 7:00pm. Location: Southern Human Services Center Complex, 2501 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill
- **Town Council meeting** – Monday, November 25th at 7:00pm. Location: Southern Human Services Center Complex, 2501 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill

For a complete schedule of the upcoming Steering Committee meetings, please see Attachment 3.



Central West Focus Area Boundaries

Adopted by Town Council on October 24, 2012



Approved Principles and Objectives
Central West Focus Area
Approved During the August 19th Steering Committee Meeting

PRINCIPLE 1: Create a Strong Sense of Place

The Central West Focus Area plan will promote the creation of a vibrant sense of place, respecting its character as a comfortable, tree-lined residential community, home to important Chapel Hill institutions, and a major gateway to Carolina North.

Objectives for Principle 1

- A. Recognize MLK as a primary gateway into town and provide a plan that develops it into an attractive, tree-lined, boulevard with a median, where the pedestrian and cyclist realms are protected by bollards, islands, and cycle-track curbing.
- B. Establish different characters for the Estes and MLK street frontages. In order to enhance the unique character of each of these streets, create cohesive and distinct street profiles.
- C. Establish a local architectural vernacular appropriate to Chapel Hill that relates to the architecture proposed at Carolina North. Encourage the use of materials and plants native to North Carolina.
- D. Recognize and enhance the distinctive zones along Estes Drive: Estes Drive Extension, Estes on the east side of MLK, the school area, the single-family neighborhoods in the area, and lower Estes between the library and Franklin.
- E. Encourage locally based businesses in the commercial area that provide services to the surrounding community.
- F. Develop building and road/streetscape design standards that extend north and south on MLK through the Impact Area
- G. Place buildings along MLK, especially near to Estes Drive, that architecturally enhance the entranceway to the Carolina North campus. Connect the Carolina North pedestrian mall to a complementary, tree-lined lane on the east side of MLK.
- H. Plant trees at street edges and in medians.
- I. Enhance community space with colorful, attractive features, such as sculpture, tile-work, fountains, awnings, flower plantings, and trees.
- J. Minimize the visual impact of parked motor vehicles with, for example, structured parking, screening, and location.

PRINCIPLE 2: Ensure Community Compatibility

Development will provide a graceful transition between the existing residential and institutional uses and the new uses evolving around the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd./Estes Drive intersection near the Carolina North campus.

Objectives for Principle 2

- A. New development will minimize negative aesthetic and environmental impacts to neighborhoods
- B. Build variable heights and densities that respond to existing land uses and natural features such as site specific terrain, tree height, and tree stands.
- C. Design gradual height and density transitions between new development and existing residential and institutional uses.

As of August 19, 2013, the following objectives will be reviewed by a subcommittee and provided to the Steering Committee for their review and possible adoption:

- D. Integrate new development seamlessly with the existing neighborhoods. Match existing single family character, where it exists, by making multi-family duplexes, quad-plexes, etc., resemble single-family homes.*
- E. The existing neighborhoods, especially near the new development, may consider ancillary apartment/cottage development on existing properties to increase density, for complete visual integration, while preserving single family character.*
- F. The first line in every new development, adjacent to old neighborhood buildings will match the character of the old neighborhood edge before transitioning to different style or housing type.*

PRINCIPLE 3: Create Social Connections

Development should create places that foster a strong sense of community and allow people to meet, both formally and informally.

Objectives for Principle 3

- A. Encourage new retail and/or civic spaces and uses in the area that will promote social connections.
- B. Include a variety of public spaces for all ages (indoor or outdoor) at a variety of scales, with trees/vegetation, shade, and places for sitting.
- C. Locate retail and mixed use developments around public gathering spaces.
- D. Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections that encourage interpersonal connections to public gathering places and throughout the area.

PRINCIPLE 4: Improve Physical Connections

Multiple means of moving within and through the planning area should be incorporated into new development; explore improving physical connections between the impact area and the Town as whole.

Objectives for Principle 4

- A. Ensure interconnectivity among all modes of transportation (e.g., bike to bus transfers).
- B. Within the Impact Area create improvements to the pedestrian realm, to the extent possible, such as narrow vehicular lanes in contrast to wide greenways, bike tracks/lanes, and sidewalks/footpaths. The pedestrian realm is to be more connected, permeable, and dominant than the car realm.
- C. Create public spaces and buildings that are visible and easily accessible from streets, paths, and sidewalks.
- D. Provide a clear and coordinated place, speed, and way-finding communication system.
- E. Establish a connected street and trail network within new development.
- F. Provide vehicular access to Carolina North from Homestead Road to relieve traffic on MLK and Estes.
- G. Make bicycle and pedestrian movement between Carolina North across MLK and Estes to its eastern and southern neighbors easier and safer.
- H. Tie new paths and greenways into the Carolina North and town greenway systems and the Campus to Campus Connector.

PRINCIPLE 5: Minimize Vehicular Traffic Impacts

Recognize the limited capacity of the existing road network and favor developments that minimize negative impacts on vehicular traffic and quality of life in the area.

Objectives for Principle 5

- A. Calm traffic using a variety of means such as streetscape design, additional crosswalks, and landscaping, especially in the school walk zone.
- B. Improve Estes Drive to ensure safe orderly flow around stopped buses, utility trucks, and delivery vehicles.
- C. Plan significant improvements along Estes Drive to improve traffic flow and safety along its length, recognizing that different solutions will be needed for different segments of the road.
- D. Synchronize traffic signals to maximize vehicle flow at reduced speeds .
- E. Develop neighborhood retail (pharmacy, coffee shop, dry cleaner, etc.) in the area to capture neighborhood business, encourage walking, and reduce car use.

- F. Explore regional solutions for preventing Estes Drive from becoming a major commuting route for Carolina North.
- G. Where new streets are built, they should accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles and transit, recognizing that different streets will accomplish this in different ways.
- H. Encourage developers to mitigate the traffic that new development will cause.
- I. Consider reducing the speed limit along Estes Drive.

PRINCIPLE 6: Enhance the Pedestrian/Bicycle Experience

Build a high quality bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway system that ensures safe, comfortable, and convenient access to school, residences, and other destinations for those of all ages and abilities.

Objectives for Principle 6

- A. Create local destinations that make biking and walking in the area desirable, safe, attractive, and convenient.
- B. Ensure access to local destinations by creating (in the Planning Area) ADA-compliant public byways that, where necessary, are protected by barriers or landscaped buffers.
- C. Provide a network of bike and pedestrian paths, with a variety of types and surfaces, from paved trails near major roads to nature trails through wooded stretches.
- D. Create a network of off-road, downlit multiuse paths through the area to connect residences, institutions, and other uses. Use solar lighting when possible.
- E. Pursue Safe Routes to School strategies and funding and work with the schools to minimize car trips to school within the walk zone.
- F. Ensure that all pedestrian crossings in the impact area are safe and well marked.
- G. Provide a paved sidewalk on at least one side of Estes Drive from Franklin Street to Carrboro.
- H. Provide paved sidewalks along both sides of MLK throughout the Impact Area.
- I. For new development and as streets are retrofitted, provide a planting median between sidewalks and the road and physically segregate bicycle lanes from automobile traffic.
- J. Ensure adequate widths for pedestrians and cyclists on sidewalks and bike paths.
- K. Over time, enhance bike and pedestrian safety of existing neighborhood streets.

PRINCIPLE 7: Improve the Transit System

Encourage uses and densities that will support improvements in transit service such as increased frequency, duration, and access.

Objectives for Principle 7

- A. Support new development in the Central West area with expanded hours and frequency, convenient bus stops, and destinations as density warrants, and explore expanded cross-Town service and service to locations with jobs and retail.

- B. Support sufficient transit ridership by putting high density land uses nearest bus stops.
- C. Increase housing and mixed use density along existing bus routes, especially along MLK.
- D. Create useful destinations (such as retail community activities) that are accessible to and integrated with the transit system.
- E. Promote types of development that encourage and provide incentives for the use of public transportation and limited parking.
- F. Provide bus stops every quarter of a mile, preferably, fully furnished with benches, shade/shelter, and bicycle racks.
- G. Place crosswalks and traffic calming devices at all bus stops. Use devices such as pedestrian activated stop lights if there is not a traffic light to stop traffic. Put an island, or bollard refuge mid-street if crossing more than two lanes.

PRINCIPLE 8: Encourage a Diverse Mix of Uses

Create a new mix of land uses that encourages walkable destinations.

Objectives for Principle 8

- A. Encourage retail uses that meet the needs of the local community.
- B. Foster a blend of services that promotes day-night uses.
- C. Encourage the design of buildings with flexible floor plans suitable for a variety of purposes.

PRINCIPLE 9: A Diverse Population

The area shall serve a broad socio-demographic range of Chapel Hill residents, students, workers, and visitors.

Objectives for Principle 9

- A. Ensure flexible plans that will recognize and address the needs of future generations of Chapel Hillians as they develop.
- B. Encourage residential and other uses that will accommodate the affordable, workforce, and market rate populations.
- C. Provide housing and amenities to attract a variety of ages, income levels, multigenerational family options, and ability groups.
- D. Provide a range of housing types (e.g., apartments, condominiums, townhomes, single family homes, retirement/senior housing, workforce and affordable housing, and rental and for sale) in the planning and impact areas.

PRINCIPLE 10: Respect Existing Neighborhoods

Development patterns will respect the integrity of the well-established neighborhoods and enhance their character and quality of life.

Objectives for Principle 10

- A. Require graceful transitions between new development and existing neighborhoods including green/landscaped buffers between different building types.
- B. Locate greatest densities and heights in the areas towards to MLK transitioning to lower densities and heights near existing single-family neighborhoods.
- C. Favor development that does not increase vehicular traffic through existing single-family neighborhoods. Maintain safety for foot and bicycle traffic.
- D. Encourage multifamily housing to be designed in a manner that is compatible with adjacent residences.

PRINCIPLE 11: Employ Environmentally Sound Practices

Development will emphasize environmentally conscious design, maintenance, and operation of buildings and sites.

Objectives for Principle 11

- A. Maintain (or reestablish if needed) riparian buffers along streams with sufficient allowance for wildlife corridors.
- B. Minimize light, noise, air, and water pollution from development.
- C. Require new development to capture additional run-off on site and have landscape designs that use low-impact techniques for controlling stormwater and site water, such as rain gardens.
- D. Plan for maintaining a tree canopy cover in the CWFA area. Plant new trees where necessary, especially to shade parking lots and paved areas, conserve soil, and provide other environmental services.
- E. Promote green building and construction standards. Encourage alternative low-carbon technologies, pervious pavement, and consider solar orientation and shading in all building design.
- F. Bury utility and power lines in new developments.
- G. Encourage the removal of invasive species and replant with native and non-invasive plant species and replanting unstable banks with native species.
- H. Minimize the “heat island” effect by avoiding dark, unshaded surfaces and employing such techniques as reflective roofs.

PRINCIPLE 12: Feature, Repair, and Enhance Natural Resources

Development will protect and relate to the area's significant and character-contributing natural features.

Objectives for Principle 12

- A. Enhance environmental assets by protecting steep slopes and waterways.
- B. Provide open space amenities, such as walks and trails, through the natural areas to connect the developed areas and provide recreational experience. Where necessary, build boardwalks and bridges for access across environmentally sensitive areas such as eroded, sloped, denuded, wet marshy areas, and clay soils.
- C. Use best management practices for handling and treating stormwater to maintain water quality and keep it on site to reduce erosion into creeks.
- D. In ecologically sensitive areas, encourage dense, clustered development, minimizing building footprints to preserve existing natural features.

PRINCIPLE 13: Consider Economic Impacts in Development Decisions

As part of the planning process, consider the fiscal impact and economic viability of proposed development in the area.

Objectives for Principle 13

- A. Design for commercial success. Cluster retail development to create enough critical mass for the shops to succeed.
- B. In making land use recommendations, recognize the importance of economic viability for those who will build.
- C. Assess the impact of the plan on the town's fiscal health.
- D. Assess the impact that development in the area will have on the Chapel Hill–Carrboro school system.

Revised Work Plan for August – November 2013

Central West Steering Committee

Approved by the Central West Steering Committee on August 19, 2013

Meeting Date	Topic	Outcome
Planning Board - Tuesday, October 1st at 7:00pm Location: Training Room 131, Public Works Building 1, 6850 Millhouse Road	Planning Board Meeting	Feedback from the Planning Board about the Steering Committee’s work to date
Thursday, October 3 rd 6:00-9:00pm Location: Transit Training Room	Integrate Feedback Plan Refinement 1. Review Planning Board/advisory Board comments 2. Make refinements to the Plan	1. Refine small area plan
Tuesday, October 8 th 6:00-9:00pm Location: Transit Training Room	Prepare Plan Presentation 1. Review final small area plan to be presented at Public Hearing 2. Make revisions if necessary	1. Approve small area plan 2. Approve edits
Planning Board - Tuesday, October 15th at 7:00pm	Tentative: Planning Board Meeting	Feedback from the Planning Board about the Small Area Plan
Council Public Hearing - Monday, October 21st at 7:00pm	Public Hearing for the Central West Small Area Plan	Feedback from the public about the Small Area Plan
Thursday, November 7 th 6:00-9:00pm Location: Meeting Room B, Public Library	Integrate Feedback Plan Refinement 1. Discuss any revisions in response to the Public Hearing comments (if needed)	1. Approve small area plan
Council Meeting - Monday, November 25th at 7:00pm	Council meeting for possible adoption of the Central West Small Area Plan	Possible Adoption