

Draft Proposal for a Southern Area Focus Group

(Draft, 5-2-19)

Purpose

The Council has expressed an interest in convening a focus group of stakeholders to review information and give high-level input about Town plans and facilities, as well as other timely issues, in the area near the Southern Village Park and Ride Lot to help inform future decisions regarding land use and infrastructure in this area (see map attached).

In addition, a group of Chapel Hill residents submitted a petition to the Council in the fall of 2018 asking the Town to look at a broader context when considering proposed projects in this area.

To address these overlapping interests, this proposal suggests the formation of a Southern Area focus group which would allow for a concentrated effort to consider the following:

Town plans and facilities:

- The design and implementation of the southern portion of the North-South Bus Rapid Transit corridor;
- The future of the Southern Village (SV) Park and Ride property;
- The Chapel Hill Mobility and Connectivity Plan for the US 15-501 Corridor;
- Affordable and mid-priced housing;
- Input to the Future Land Use Map and Land Use Management Ordinance re-write projects.

Timely issues:

- Community interests put forward in the Obey Creek Compass Committee Report;
- Christ United Methodist Church's request to acquire the Park & Ride bus turn-around through land swap or sale;
- The integration of a future children's museum (Kidzu) in the area;
- Other pressures or changes that may come in the near future (e.g. Obey Creek, development proposals).

To meet this interest, the Council could authorize the Town Manager to convene a focus group to have high-level conversations about these issues and develop advisory input to the Council to help inform future decision-making in this area.

Draft Focus Group Membership List

1. Council Liaison – Allen Buansi
2. Members of the Compass Committee (who have institutional knowledge and specific expertise)
 - a. Alan Rimer – Former Council member, SV resident, Environmental expertise
 - b. Susana Dancy – SV resident/HOA President, CDC member, Development, Planning expertise
3. Planning Commission -- Dogwood Acres resident
4. Area Resident -- Julie Richardson – Mt. Carmel Church/Bennett Road
5. Development community representative -- D. R. Bryan – Southern Village Developer, Kidzu Building Committee member
6. Local Business person -- Dave Smithwick (Southern Village Pharmacy)

7. Local institutional representative -- Christ United Methodist Church
8. Local schools representative -- Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Facilities
9. Parks & Greenways Commission representative
10. Resident at Large

Draft Charge of Focus Group

The focus group will review existing information regarding Town plans and facilities, as well as other timely issues in the area, and provide high-level input to the Council to help inform future decisions regarding land use, infrastructure and connectivity in this area. The Group will focus specifically on the question of how the topics listed under the “Purpose” section above relate to each other and fit into the broader context of the study area. Recommendations should be high level, similar to the general level of the Aspirations and Principles provided in the Obey Creek Compass Committee Report, and would be advisory in nature.

Proposed Schedule and Resources

The group will meet up to six times between June 2019 and November 2019 and bring recommendations to the Council in January of 2020. The initial meeting will include a high level overview of current conditions and pending interests. Subsequent meetings could include presentations by members of staff on specific topic areas.

All meetings should be open to the public and structured to include a defined public comment period, with meeting materials and information posted on the Town’s website. The process should also include an Open House with additional opportunity for public comment. Given the number of current projects and limited staff resources, staff responsibilities would include:

Staff Liaison:

- Coordinating meeting logistics (scheduling, invitations, advertising meetings, helping draft agendas, taking minutes, circulating minutes to the Council Liaison and Focus Group members)
- Meeting facilitation
- Assisting with documenting the findings and high-level recommendations of the Focus Group.

Technical Staff:

- Gathering and presenting existing information to the Focus Group
- Attending the Focus Group meetings as necessary to answer questions

Given the interest in having a useful discussion and making respectful use of stakeholders’ time, Focus Group member responsibilities would include:

- Attending Focus Group meetings and reviewing relevant information
- Developing high-level recommendations to the Council that meet the charge