

IDM notes from 1/9/2010 RP Charrette break-out session

In attendance:

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Before the breakout session began, I received input from community members to include Bridges (only a few in the community) and the service side of electrical distribution (i.e., power outages) in our scope of Infrastructure. I also discussed with Phil and others about having the Livability group take charge of postal and fire service issues, while we would take charge of the built structures. Also, before the breakout session began, I was told by Kathy Manson, a resident who was previously involved in Eddies-area improvements, that landscaping other than trees is not good because it is not part of the original RP design concept and, from a practical standpoint, such landscaping impairs sight lines for drivers.

Related, but after the breakout session finished, another community member noted that we should also include the Library. Logic: although the Library has had its own attention for years, it should be covered somewhere in the Master Plan (MP.) [I concur & believe Infrastructure is as good a place as any, and I am not aware of its inclusion in any other MP group; need to discuss this with co-leads, Addison & Bill, and check with Al so he can run this up the Steering Committee flagpole.]

On the Infrastructure Vision presented the night before, John commented that we should include the idea that infrastructure should foster neighborliness. [Ian to look at how we could rework the Vision statement.]

Much of the meeting was used to define and discuss the various elements of infrastructure under our MP scope, and a potpourri of issues associated with maintenance or improvement of each. We then went through the fundamental issue of which types of infrastructure need maintenance as a first priority (e.g., sewers, roads), and which types might be candidates for development or improvement (e.g., street lights). A distinctive quality about all infrastructure in that it is owned, maintained, and controlled by others outside of the RP community, usually government.

Infrastructure items were grouped into four main categories. Within each category, there are some commonalities between media/type of infrastructure, owning or maintaining parties, and/or maintenance & upgrade concerns.

1. **Streetscapes**, including roads, alleys, curbs, gutters, bridges, sidewalks (note that RP paths are NOT part of our scope, as earlier defined by the Steering Committee), street lights, benches, stormwater inlets, retaining walls within the road right-of-way, and street trees (but not shrubbery), and handrails within the “verge.”
2. **Wet Utilities**, including water distribution and hydrants, sewers, and stormwater systems.
3. **Dry Utilities**, both above and below ground, including electric, telecommunications, and gas; future telecommunications a particular concern.
4. **Government Structures**, including the Fire Station and Post Office. [Library contingent upon discussion & approval.]

An important point is that the MP should cover both the infrastructure asset itself (and its possible improvement or development) as well as the service needed to maintain that asset (such as roads and curbs) or for that existing asset to provide reliable service (such as sewage drainage and electrical service) Many assets may not be proposed for changing, but most need community interaction for maintenance.

The categorical grouping above will help facilitate working group assignments and eventual MP plan document outlining.

So, each of these four categories will be developed to assess current conditions to the degree we can in the planning time frame, maintenance needs of the current assets, and improvements or alterations to some of those assets. For the latter category, improvements or alterations, degree of plan development in the MP timeframe remaining could take form in the MP as a simple exposition of an idea with feasibility considerations, or further taking that concept to a firmer policy or objective statement, and in the most developed form, to a detailed plan with basic design criteria outlined.

Another main category, not along the line of infrastructure type, but focused on process, was defined as **Infrastructure Assessment, Prioritization & Owner/Maintainer Interaction**. With so many individual assets across several neighborhoods in greater RP, the community at large, ideally, needs a way to assess infrastructure maintenance & service problems, put them in some kind of priority, and communicate that information to the infrastructure asset owners, largely discrete departments and bureaus in the City. Assessment techniques executable by lay-citizens could be developed to allow an objective evaluation of conditions periodically (for instance, every year or two.) Coordination and communication processes between the various greater RP communities needs to be designed and established. Prioritization considerations should be developed to work across asset types among the various neighborhoods. Finally, communications channels need to be established for routine interaction between RP on each asset group owner/maintainer. For assets where our own assessments will not provide sufficient data

to enable community prioritization (e.g., patterns of sewer breaks or electrical losses), routine reporting from the asset owner to the community should be established. One idea to facilitate the asset assessment portion of this challenge is to engage local engineering students (e.g., Johns Hopkins) to help develop the methodology, perhaps transferable to other communities with similar aging infrastructure challenges.

[Note, the issue of cross-neighborhood communication and coordination (RP, Tuxedo/Wyndhurst, Cross Keys, etc.) is undoubtedly a larger issue than just Infrastructure, and we recommend that it should be considered by the Steering Committee.]

The 5 main categories (four by asset type, one on process) were divvied up between the three group co-leaders, for the purpose of leading those subjects areas through to the MP document. Addison is taking on **Streetscapes** (that category has by far the greatest number of assets and ideas for improvement), Bill will take on **Dry Utilities and Government Buildings**, and I will take on **Wet Utilities and Infrastructure Assessment, Prioritization & Owner/Maintainer Interaction**.

The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to further developing the action plan by asset for the **Streetscape** category.

Roads- an assessment/maintenance issue; note, mapping of springs might be useful to prioritize road conditions assessments & advocacy for repair due to the detrimental effect of springs on road surfaces.

Curbs & Gutters- assessment/maintenance issue plus need to develop policy and plan, perhaps by neighborhood, on preferred style; choices include conventional City standard concrete, granite curb (perhaps prioritized for commercial areas), and the historically-correct butcher-block gutter (no/rolled curb) piloted on the 100 block of St Johns. Controversy on the latter regarding tradeoff between safety, access & convenience and aesthetics & historical correctness.

Alleys- maintenance issue partially complicated by alley homeowner ownership, plus an idea to pursue green alleys using pervious pavement. Likely complications due to buried utilities. Try to develop plan at least through feasibility discussion, perhaps to pilot in one neighborhood & look for grant money.

Bridges- define locations, but condition assessment should be left to experts (just need to make sure proper assessment is happening.)

Sidewalks- maintenance issues. Consensus was not to propose widening. Need to assess wheelchair ramp compliance.

Inlets (stormwater)- maintenance & assess bicycle-friendliness (strain grate orientation).

Street Lights- develop a plan to change over to historically correct and energy efficient acorn lighting.

Street Trees- assess areas where tree coverage lacking in median, coordinate with other groups, like Green, to develop policy & plans for development and future City interaction.

Benches- assess placement to make sure there is ample opportunity for 'neighborliness.'

Walls- locate retaining walls in City right-of-way, and assess condition.

Handrails in 'verge' - understand current RPR&M policy as well as other neighborhood policies; assessment & unified policy perhaps.

Session attendants volunteered to travel through the community looking for various infrastructure features (e.g., bridges, walls).

With no time remaining to discuss in detail specific issues and potential plans for the other Infrastructure categories, the group agreed to continue our work at a future, preferably weekend, session.