

Upstate Professional Planners Group Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

At the Nov. 30th meeting, we reviewed Woods & Poole projections to 2040; the 2015 baseline development status map prepared by City Explained; the draft scenario concepts; and proposed planning themes and performance measures for the growth alternatives analysis. Many of you asked important questions and provided useful observations that have been acknowledged and will be addressed by the working group and consultant team. For those unable to attend the meeting, see below for details on points raised:

- Matt Noonkester – lead consultant for the analysis – shared that the Steering Committee had asked some questions suggesting a need to reduce the number of themes we were planning to explore – and metrics we were planning to evaluate – at a region-wide scale. Doing so could allow us to focus our regional modeling on impacts that can be forecasted most credibly at a regional scale (given our data inventory and project scope/budget), thus ensuring a more defensible set of results in the end. The technical advisory committee seemed to agree. Specifically it was noted that of our proposed 10 themes, “quality of life” and “community character” were especially subjective and difficult to quantify.
- We discussed at length our plan to utilize Woods & Poole population and employment projections. It was noted that the employment projections seemed much more aggressive than the population projections for the same time frames. The consultant team/working group intends to look into the methodologies of each set of projections (to ensure we can address that question effectively should it arise again). However, in the absence of a better, fully defensible alternative, we will plan to use those projections for the project.
- There was discussion regarding how farmland is defined. According to the consultant team, farmland presented for the scenario concepts was identified using the National Land Cover Database (NLCD - 2011) and a survey of aerial photography (2014). Areas in the NLCD identified as “pasture/hay” and “cultivated crops” were first identified. The consultant team then looked at aerial photography for 2014 to determine if or where farms had been lost to new development between 2011 and 2014. To date, this represented a ‘best practices’ approach for a 6,000-square mile region. Following the TAC meeting, the consultants were made aware of several available sub-region data sets (available either through Clemson Extension or private consultants) and will verify farmland assignments for modeling the scenarios in CommunityViz.
- A question was posed as to how sewer capacity limitations and resulting sewer upgrade costs would be estimated in the compact scenario. Matt explained that the consultant team is planning to schedule a series of meetings with water and sewer providers in the region (as a follow up to our focus group meeting with utility providers) to assess impacts associated with the different development scenarios. These meetings will include a discussion of aging infrastructure and/or under-sized infrastructure concerns to support the compact growth scenario. The consultant team will use this information to help approximate cost-to-serve for the scenario comparisons.
- A question was posed as to why the Compact Scenario does not have any “Mixed-Use, Walkable Activity Centers”. The compact scenario concept is the most dense and walkable future (including a mix of uses) contemplated for the region. It consumes the least amount of land for future development

because buildings are much taller and packed into much smaller footprints (represented in the “high-density, mixed-use, walkable centers” category on the scenario concept comparison page). The consultant team understands the confusion this creates with the phrasing for the “mixed-use, walkable activity centers” category (similar principles to the previous category, but much less dense and larger development footprints) and will make adjustments to reinforce the difference in future project deliverables.