



Easton East End

Summary of Neighborhood Walkaround on October 12, 2024, 9:00 to 11:30 am

Summary Prepared: October 15, 2024

The Town of Easton Planning and Zoning Department sponsored a “Neighborhood Walkaround” of portions of the Easton East End Study Area on October 12, 2024. The walk was in support of a planning initiative by the Town called the East End Small Area Plan and the upcoming charrette to be held October 24-28, 2024.

The walk was attended by about 35 citizens, planning staff, planning consultants, Planning Commission Chair Philip Toussaint and Mayor Megan J. MacLennan Cook. Miguel Salinas (MS), Director of Planning and Zoning, led the walkaround and provided participants with an overview of each site as well as the challenges and opportunities that each site offers. The following is a summary of comments heard during the walkaround.

Stop 1-A: Dover Street/Aurora Street Intersection.

- MS: Location of several businesses; busy intersection. This intersection is a gateway in and out of the district. Strong intersections should have architectural interest and building entrances at the corners, efficient for vehicles making turns, comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists. Average speed for crossing is 3.5 feet per second. For older adults, the crossing time should be higher.

Community Comments:

- Current traffic lights encourage cars to speed (trying to beat the light before it turns red).
- Provide left turn lane from Dover to Aurora. Traffic backs up waiting for left turn.
- Southbound traffic turning left onto Dover also has back up due to wait for left-turning vehicles.
- Provide pedestrian priority signalization at intersection. No right on red movements.
- Provide timed crossings for pedestrians that reflect crossing timing for children and elderly.
- Provide crosswalk countdown signals, timed crossings.
- Modify design of crosswalk to zebra striping to provide better visual cues to motorists and make wider.
- Could be a destination intersection but currently vehicle movements are prioritized. Aurora has a lot of through traffic and Dover provides access to and from US Route 50.
- Curb cuts facing middle of intersection (at 45 degrees) make crossign with a stroller scary.
- Consider pulling crosswalks back away from intersection and having curb cuts pulled back at 90 degrees.
- Activate all four corners with retail. NW quadrant currently vacant. Parking lot in SE corner.
- Revise delivery truck loading/unloading zones and time of operation.
- Revise traffic lights, possibly remove traffic lights and provide 4-way stop signs.
- Provide colorful/artistic crosswalks.
- Research pedestrian scramble.
- Timing of traffic light at this intersection and next intersection to north on Aurora promotes speeding and vehicular movement over pedestrian.
- Provide logo/branding/signage at intersection and throughout area to promote/identify East End
- AI smart traffic lights/timing?

Stop 1-B. Dover Street between Aurora Street and Locust Lane.

- MS: The Heart of the traditional retail corridor. MS described what makes a vibrant retail corridor, including the design elements of a well-proportioned pedestrian retail street (i.e. width to height proportions, edge zone, furnishing zone, pedestrian through zone, etc.). MS noted that this is part of the Historic District.

Community Comments:

- Some buildings too low to provide enclosure.
- Not enough enforcement of architectural standards, inconsistent, not inviting.
- Vacant buildings should be maintained by owners.
- Also, existing buildings which have tenants are not kept up.
- Should the Town provide a mid-block crosswalk to promote pedestrian activity between the shops?
- Differentiate walking zone from furnishing zone / shy zone with material, color, or texture?
- Sidewalks are in bad shape. Need repairs.
- It was noted that in residential zones, the repair and upkeep of sidewalks is borne 50-50 between the Town and the residential owner. It wasn't clear what the commercial owner's responsibility is.
- Provide planters and landscaping?
- It was stated that Dover Street is a State Road and improvements are subject to SHA approval.
- Crossing is a major issue here, especially coming from Locust.
- Upgrade lighting.
- Some attendees questioned whether parking should be allowed on both sides of the street?
- Some noted that parking on both sides helps to cue drivers to slow down.
- It was noted that traffic speeds were too high for pedestrian comfort and safety, and that strategies should be employed to slow traffic.
- Some suggested branding to reflect Hispanic heritage and Arts District.
- Parking needs to be added to support retail.
- Add residential to support retail, create a destination, create a place where people want to come and spend money.
- Add space for artwork to support/brand Arts District. Artists will revitalize.
- It was noted that Arts District provides tax-deferred incentives.
- Truck traffic on Dover is significant. Are there alternative routes for trucks?

Stop 2: Town Parking Lot on Dover Street between Locust and Higgins.

- MS: Adjacent to Chesapeake Cultural Resource Center; within a multi-cultural neighborhood; parking lot breaks up retail street continuity.

Community Comments:

- Parking lot is public but not marked as such, needs a sign.
- Redevelop and build a parking garage in the area.
- Could this area be a food truck court or farmers market on occasion?
- Area needs cleanup and a sign that it is a public parking area.
- Limit time that one can park here to promote use and turnover.

Stop 3: The Shopping Mall, Parking Lot, and Triangular Park.

- MS: Challenging intersection between Dover Road and Dover Street. The bend in Dover Road does not provide a good sight line to the retail corridor for vehicles traveling west. Opportunity

to provide new development. Major location within the Study Area. Existing stormwater management facilities in the park limits usable park/civic space.

Community Comments:

- Maintain the Christmas Tree.
- Make this area the focus of the corridor.
- Maintain visibility at the Dover Street/Dover Road intersection.
- Could this be a location for visitor center? Trolley stop?
- Add visual cues that one is entering the shopping district.
- Make this area more arts focused.
- This is a part of the Arts District. This seems like an opportunity for artwork pedestals for 'rotating artwork' opportunity. Work with the Art Academy.
- Area should be an art focus and a music venue. Add a pavilion. Would street noise be an issue?
- Deck of the stormwater retention areas?
- Sculptures among the retention areas?
- Not enough spaces in this area for public to just 'be'.
- Opportunity for Third Place for teens and others that don't want to spend money in a restaurant.
- Opportunity for grocer.
- Make Dover Street useable. Is E Dover St necessary? If eliminated the area becomes more pedestrian friendly.
- Make this a multi-use space.
- Promote affordable restaurants.
- Dover Road is very loud. How can we reduce noise from traffic?

Stop 4: Railroad Depo.

- MS: Quieter area between the two major road connections between downtown and US Route 50. The depot is historic. Currently used as Town office space for Parks and Recreation and Code Enforcement.

Community Comments:

- Street noise is gone here. Better place for live music.
- Provide public bathrooms.
- The government use of the train depot is a waste / missed opportunity. Remove Town use, maintain town ownership, lease to accelerator use or cafe. Subsidize if necessary.
- Move trash can location.
- Replace overhead lights with pedestrian-scaled lighting.
- Why is the park oriented towards the street and not the trail?
- Stop sign is needed along Pennsylvania at August.
- Current park is great for places to sit
- Current seating is not oriented for conversation.
- Relate sitting to path.
- Water fountain is being added currently.
- Need crosswalk and stop signs on Rail-to-Trails.
- Emphasize Rails-to-Trails traffic to that of cross streets.

Stop 5: Dover Station and Dover Road/Rails-to-Trails Crossing.

- MS: Important street crossing and important redevelopment site. This project is a catalyst for redevelopment of the East End/Dover Road corridor. MS turned the presentation over to Sevan Topjian, property owner/developer, to describe the project.

Community Comments:

- Crossing button is on the wrong side of the trail. Crossing needs better signalization due to vehicle speeds.
- Advanced warning signs leading up the crossing would help.
- The flashing crossing signs have greatly helped. Provide activation buttons on 'right' side of path.
- A pedestrian activated traffic light would help.
- Speed bump? Speed table?
- Reduce the vehicular speed limit in this area.
- Simplify the street, reduce the amount of turns on / off Dover.
- Dover Station (DS) to be "Center" for East End.
- DS to include café bistro, space for local businesses, artisan space, and brewery.
- DS has on-site parking, with 'front' facing the Rails-to-Trails.
- DS will use new technology with single point of purchase for entire complex.
- DS designed synergistically, with respect to historic character of property.
- DS will have soft opening at Waterfowl Festival in November and has started securing tenants.

Stop 6: Rise Up Coffee.

- MS: Change in character of corridor. Doverbrook housing project nearing completion.

Community Comments:

- Direct trucks to different routes into town. Redirect to Parkway.
- Trucks are not following the max weight signs.
- Rise Up tent is an opportunity.
- Width of sidewalks narrow, very close to traffic. Reduce street shoulder to reduce vehicular speeds, widen sidewalks.
- Opportunity for a community commons. Should add more 'cool stuff'.
- Pedestrian crossing needs signalization.
- Does the crossing meet the width requirements?
- Exposed brick for crosswalk? Add color and texture to crosswalk so it is highly visible. Painted brick?
- Perhaps a pedestrian overpass?
- Use curbs or planters to discourage illegal parking.
- Can the theme or look of this area carry through the commercial district?
- Perhaps a signature artwork 'portal' that announces the beginning of the commercial center.
- This is a transition area from the highway traffic to the downtown. Need to slow traffic down as they enter town.
- There is a need for short-term parking. Street currently has no on-street parking.

Stop 7: South Street Business District/C. Albert Matthews.

- MS: Asked for comments on the area.

Community Comments:

- Strong support for existing businesses, maintain.
- Be supportive of existing businesses.
- Possible location for food truck area outside of business hours?
- Poor sidewalk network, could use improvement and additions, especially those that run parallel to the Rails-to-Trails.
- Need a diagrammatic plan showing all sidewalk connectivity.

Stop 8: Easton Crossing Project.

- MS: Mentioned that this is very important project and redevelopment of former Purdue industrial sites. MS turned the presentation over to Ross Benincasa of Chesapeake Development Corporation who described the project as 2 parcels, 6.5 acres in size, as a mixed-use phased redevelopment (2025-2030+) with reference to former 1922 furniture factory. Buildings will front on Brookletts Avenue and Rails-to-Trails. 1 st building will be along Kemp, 2027. Top floor will be artist lofts. Parking is generally to the rear of buildings and there will be a central open space that connects to the Rails-to-Trails. Commercial development will include a restaurant in a latter phase. Project takes advantage of the tax incentives of the Arts District and will include housing/lofts for artisans. One silo and the overhead conveyor will be retained in the final design. During construction fences will be taken down, becomes public park space for the interim. Will have 198 parking spaces (one for each dwelling unit). Considering building a parking garage.

Community Comments:

- Most important infill site in Easton.
- Important to front on Rails-to-Trails.
- Attendees supportive of project.

Stop 9: Brookletts Place.

- MS: What should be done with this building?

Community Comments:

- One attendee said knock it down and start over. Others voiced support for adaptive reuse.
- Currently has some unofficial artist studios. People want it to stay arts focused.
- It was noted that this building is outside the historic district and that several 'cool' uses are already in the building such as the Theater Costume Lending Library.
- Could be an arts incubator and be run by non-profit.
- Could be leased for events.
- Brooklets has surprisingly light vehicular traffic considering width / connectivity.

Stop 10: South Street Habitat Infill/Hill District.

- MS: MS noted incremental infill by Habitat and the Town of Easton; neighborhood transitioning. MS asked about gentrification and how to maintain housing for existing residents and avoid displacement. It was also noted that there are several Town programs to assist income-qualified residents such as the Housing on the Hill program and the Affordable Housing Fund.

Community Comments:

- Continue to assist existing homeowners in helping to improve homes.
- It was noted that Historic District requirements put a cost burden on improvements - costly to upkeep, Historic District adds unnecessary pressure.
- Add historical markers and informational signage about The Hill.
- Require fees and higher property taxes for unoccupied homes and rentals. Use fees to support renovations.
- Remove barriers to development/improvement.
- Allow infill, allow densifying existing properties.
- Allow Accessory Dwelling Units and Duplexes
- Include The Hill in cultural tourism walking tours.
- Provide public lectures about The Hill and its residents.
- Gentrification a big issue. Attendees asked Town staff to define.

- Need census data for the Hill for the Charette.

Stop 11: Health Dept. Site.

- MS: Outside study area. This site is controlled by Talbot County. It is currently vacant. Was former high school site.

Community Comments:

- Relocate town offices to this site.
- Grocery store opportunity.
- Overparked for existing space.
- Possible museum location.
- Provide more housing. Provide more affordable housing.
- Redevelop as a relatively dense, multi-use space with restaurants, apartments above and internalized parking.
- The town of Easton should buy the site.
- County is currently doing an analysis of all of their properties, including this one.
- Greg Zimmerman offered survey he performed about the potential use of this site. 200+ respondents. GZimmerman@WatsonBlack.com.

Respectfully Submitted,



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