

Memorandum

To: Albemarle County Planning Commission
From: Sandy Shackelford, Director of Planning & Transportation, TJPDC
Date: December 1, 2021
Reference: Urban Rivanna River Corridor Plan

Purpose:

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission is in the final stages of the second phase of a joint Charlottesville and Albemarle Rivanna River Corridor planning process. Phase I involved an inventory of existing conditions and was completed in 2018. This current phase involves the development of a joint area plan to guide the future development and environmental preservation of the urban portion of the Rivanna River.

Background:

The Phase II project boundary was defined as starting at Pen Park to the north and ending at I-64 to the south, including property on both the east and west sides of the river. Phase II began in July 2019 with the first tasks being a review and update of the mapping materials largely completed in Phase I. An initial round of public engagement was held at the Flow River Fest in September 2019 and this public input was used to inform the initial drafts of the Vision Statement, Guiding Principles, and Recommendations.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the original plans for public engagement in the spring of 2020, but TJPDC staff worked with the locality staff on the technical committee to develop alternative outreach opportunities to engage the public. Signs were developed and placed along the Rivanna River Corridor in late summer/early fall of 2020 to direct the public to a project website and allow the public to submit questions and comments, and to find information related to draft materials and scheduled meetings.

TJPDC staff also completed a benchmarking process by reviewing other river corridor plans produced by other localities, including plans from Greenville, SC and Richmond, VA.

TJPDC staff met with the project Steering Committee in September of 2020, and then held two public webinars in October of 2020 to get input on the draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, and to receive any other input or thoughts from members of the public.

Steering committee feedback indicated that environmental protection of the river was the highest priority in considering the preferred future for the urban river corridor, and this same sentiment was

confirmed during the public webinars. The other opportunities for future use/development of the urban river corridor were considered to be of equal importance and the goal of the plan was to strike the right balance in supporting recreational use; development/redevelopment; multi-purpose trails and bridges; public health, safety, and welfare measures; and historic and cultural considerations.

TJPDC staff then coordinated a series of stakeholder group discussions to develop the recommendations sections. The stakeholder groups consisted of members of the technical committee as well as others that had expertise in specific content areas. Albemarle County stakeholder groups included the Pantops CAC, Historic Preservation Committee, and Natural Heritage Committee.

TJPDC staff completed an initial draft of the plan in December of 2020, which went through a series of reviews by Albemarle County and Charlottesville City staff.

A revised draft of the plan was provided to the project Steering Committee in April 2021, and a Steering Committee meeting was held on April 26th to receive feedback from the Steering Committee on the revised Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, review the recommendations, and provide additional feedback on the draft plan content.

A draft of the plan incorporating the feedback of the project Steering Committee was presented to the Charlottesville Planning Commission for review and discussion on August 10th. This feedback has also been incorporated into the plan as drafted.

TJPDC staff has also worked on the formatting of the plan document and the lay-out for the recommendations section, as well as developing a final section indicating next and future steps to move towards project implementation.

Next Steps:

TJPDC staff is in the process of presenting the final draft of the plan to Albemarle and Charlottesville Planning Commissions and governing bodies for feedback and consideration based on the following schedule:

December 14, 2021: Albemarle County Planning Commission

January 11, 2022: Charlottesville City Council/Planning Commission Joint Hearing

January 16, 2022: Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

February 7, 2022: Charlottesville City Council

For Albemarle County, it is the Community Development staff's recommendation for the Planning Commission to review this draft at its December 14th meeting and provide comments and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The Board will then review and accept the Plan and refer it to staff for consideration and adoption as part of the upcoming review and update of the Comprehensive Plan. The intent for City is to adopt the Plan as an amendment to the recently adopted update of its Comprehensive Plan.

Project information, including the most current draft of the Rivanna River Corridor Plan, can be found at <https://tjpd.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Environment/Rivanna-River/Urban-Rivanna-River-Corridor/Draft-Urban-Rivanna-River-Plan-12-3-2021.pdf>

If there are any questions or comments, please contact Sandy Shackelford at sshackelford@tjpd.org.