May 19, 2017

Memorandum

to: City Council
cc: City Manager’s Office
from: PLACE Design Task Force

As requested by City Council at the Council meeting of May 1, 2017, PLACE herein clarifies its recommendations from their Winter 2017 Annual Report.

A. LONG RANGE PLANNING AND DESIGN POSITION:

The PLACE Design Task Force recommends that the newly formed position be tasked with the care and oversight of the future vision for the built environment, including long range planning, place making and design for the City of Charlottesville. In order to have the intended effect, we find that this position should be situated with important standing. PLACE members think a new or revised Assistant City Manager slot might be the right path. Others have put forth that this is best resolved via an additional assistant director within NDS. However the City moves forward, we urge that the new position has the necessary support, financial backing, and authority to implement the vision.

In addition we recommend:
1. The new position be supported by staff additions dedicated to this effort as budgeting permits and demand grows with time.
2. The new position coordinates with ongoing Community Engagement practices for all of its efforts.
3. Council forms a committee comprised of key staff with representatives from PLACE, the Planning Commission and the community to determine criteria and interview/select the initial hire.
4. The new position have coordination responsibility with, and adequate license regarding, the work of:
   - NDS
   - Parks and Recreation
   - Economic Development
   - Utilities
   - Tree Commission
   - PLACE
   - Public Works
   - BAR
   - Small Area Plans
   - Streets That Work
   - Other groups and efforts as deemed fit by Council

References:
4. Charlottesville Operating and Capital Improvement Budget Fiscal Year 2017/2018, Goal 3.1
B. DOWNTOWN MALL HISTORIC LANDSCAPE STUDY AND MANAGEMENT PLAN:

The PLACE Design Task Force recommends the City conduct an Historic Landscape Study of the Downtown Mall, allocating up to $50,000 per the following:

The downtown mall is an eight block long pedestrian street designed by one of the country’s preeminent landscape architecture firms, Lawrence Halprin & Associates (1949-2009), as part of a Charlottesville downtown revitalization project in the 1970s. Charlottesville’s mall reflects Halprin’s modern approach to urbanism, the local values expressed during a series of community design workshops in the early 1970s, and the influence of Halprin’s key partners: Dean Abbot, project manager and designer, and Anna Halprin, post-modern dancer and collaborative performer.

Stretching from Water Street to Old Preston Avenue to 6th Street NE, the downtown mall is now a part of the Charlottesville/Albemarle County Courthouse National Register Historic District and the Downtown Architectural Design Control District (ADC). Managed by several city departments, the mall also receives design and preservation oversight from the local Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The city of Charlottesville undertook a major renovation of the mall in 2008-2009. Today the mall is thriving—although many other downtown pedestrian malls around the country have foundered. Significant as a work of modern landscape architecture and for its innovative design process, the mall today is a bustling public space. Filled with street musicians, business people, diners, joggers, and shoppers, the mall is characterized by distinctive fountains, outdoor furnishings, lighting, paving, tree bosques, and adjacent 19th and 20th century buildings.

The intent of the Historic Landscape Study (HLS) is to create guidelines for the long-term management this modern, urban, and vibrant historic landscape. While the mall does not have individually-listed status on the National Register of Historic Places at this time, it is likely that the property is eligible for listing due to its design significance. Research, documentation, and analysis undertaken according to national preservation standards—and accompanied by coordinated input from local entities—will provide a foundation for the long-term management and protection of the mall. Appropriate management will not attempt to freeze the landscape in one “historic” condition; rather, the guidelines for this landscape will help the city achieve sensitively-designed repairs and updates that support the mall’s current use while also protecting its distinctive historic character and features.

UVA Center for Cultural Landscapes
The Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL) produces research and creates new models of innovative cultural landscape stewardship in the region, the nation and around the globe. The center is an interdisciplinary group of anthropologists, historians, landscape architects, architects, and planners who are connected to, and collaborating with, a larger group of associated professionals and organizations to achieve this mission. The Center’s work focuses on increasing awareness of the historical and ecological value of cultural landscapes through innovative scholarly research, site documentation and fieldwork, planning, preservation, management and design. CCL staff, fellows, and affiliate members will contribute to the downtown mall HLS.
Managing Departments, Boards and Associations
Several city entities currently maintain, manage, and influence the condition of the mall. These include the Charlottesville Departments of Parks and Recreation and Neighborhood Development Services, as well as the Board of Architectural Review, the Tree Commission, the Historic Resources Commission, the North Downtown Neighborhood Association, and the Downtown Business Association of Charlottesville, among others. The HLS team will consult these downtown mall stakeholders during the study process. The HLS team assumes that Mary Joy Scala will be the main point of contact for the city.

National Preservation Standards
Federal agencies such as the National Park Service have established landscape preservation standards that will guide the appropriate content and organization for the HLS. These include:

- Director’s Order 28: Cultural Resource Management Guideline, Chapter 7-Management of Cultural Landscapes
- The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes
- National Register Bulletin 18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes

Other city guidance, such as the Charlottesville Architectural Design Control Districts Design Guidelines (2012) will inform the plan.

Background Studies and Other Data
Primary and secondary source information about the history of the mall’s design and development will inform the HLS. Important primary sources include the mall construction documents and other notes, memos, and meeting records from the 1970s.

Project Area
The project area for the HLS will include the public pedestrian mall space between Water Street on the west and the Downtown Visitors Center on the east; and side streets in this area between East Market Street on the north, and Water Street on the south (including 2nd Street on the west through 5th Street on the east). The project will not address privately owned land or buildings.

Scope of Work
The Historic Landscape Study and Management Plan for the Downtown Mall will include three parts:

- Part 1, Summary Historic Context and Design Evolution. A brief history of the mall’s development and context, focusing on the Halprin & Associates design and its change over time. (Other aspects of Charlottesville’s downtown area history including the creation of the courthouse, Vinegar Hill, and other urban parks and development areas will not be a focus of study for this HLS.)
- Part 2, Summary Landscape Documentation. A description of the landscape as it exists today and an analysis of its historic integrity.
- Part 3, Treatment. Treatment is the work carried out to achieve preservation goals for a historic landscape, guided by local input and national rehabilitation standards.
Task 1. HLS kickoff / stakeholder meetings
The project will begin with a series of meetings to introduce HLS team members and stakeholders; discuss scope, schedule, and goals; and undertake a brief site walkover. The HLS team will meet with stakeholder groups one at a time to hear their particular concerns and interests for the mall.

Task 2. Research and document review
The city and CCL each have a collection of documents related to the history, evolution, and maintenance of the mall. This project includes time to review these documents, record and scan the relevant information, and collect additional information as necessary. No additional archival research is anticipated. The HLS team will record a list of all sources in a bibliography.

Task 3. Historic context and landscape evolution
The HLS team will assemble summary information about the historic context and evolution of the designed landscape, focusing on the mall’s relationship to other Halprin-designed parks; the design process that created it; its expression of modernism and urbanism; and its use and change over time. Historic images, maps, and plans will illustrate the narrative. (The HLS team will identify and list other possible topics for future study as part of this process, including the evolution and demolition of the Vinegar Hill neighborhood, the effects of the City Beautiful movement on Charlottesville, and other aspects of the downtown area’s history and significance).

Task 4. Statement of significance
The HLS will recommend a preliminary evaluation of significance for the Downtown Mall, based on National Register of Historic Places criteria. The evaluation will include a preliminary recommendation for a period of significance.

Task 5. Field visit and site documentation
The HLS team will conduct fieldwork within the project area to document the landscape’s representative features, systems, uses, and general character. The documented features and systems will include topography, vegetation, water features, small-scale features, structures, paving and other aspects of the circulation systems, and spatial organization. Photographs and an updated site plan will accompany the summary narrative description of the landscape.

Task 6. Landscape analysis and integrity assessment
The HLS will compare the mall’s historic and existing conditions as part of the integrity assessment. This analysis reveals the extent to which the landscape today resembles its historic condition during the period of significance and will help identify the landscape’s key contributing and character-defining features.

Task 7. Stakeholder meetings / treatment workshop
A series of meetings between the HLS team and local stakeholders will provide a forum for sharing information about the project findings and discussing treatment challenges, such as tree maintenance and replacement; lighting updates; mall crossings; the location of site furnishings; new designed landscapes such as the proposed Vinegar Hill Park; and other topics.
Task 8. Treatment
Treatment information will recommend a proposed management framework that is compatible with national standards for the preservation of historic landscapes and that reflects current needs and design issues. Treatment information identifies the appropriate approach, concept, guidelines, and recommendations for the mall. The work of previous studies—such as tree studies, mall crossing studies, and other documents—will inform the treatment plan as appropriate.

Task 9. Draft Historic Landscape Study and Management Plan
The HLS team will collect and refine the information developed for tasks 1-8 as a draft report for review, using the 3-part structure identified above. The draft report will contain a title page, table of contents, text and graphics, a bibliography, and appendices as necessary.

Task 10. Final Historic Landscape Study and Management Plan
The HLS team will edit and revise the draft report to create the final report, containing all of the information described above. The report will be approximately 100-130 pages (8.5 x 11 size) plus appendices and maps (printed 11 x 17)

Schedule
The completion of the HLS will likely require 9 months, including work for tasks 1-10.

Costs
CCL proposes to accomplish the work described in the scope for a fee between $30,000 and $50,000 depending on final project requirements.

Questions and Assumptions
- What kind of base mapping is available for the mall study area?
- What city entities/stakeholders will review the report?
- Will city council have a participation or review role?
- Do review documents need to be printed as hard copies? If so, how many?
- Can research and project information be archived online?
- No professional land surveys, construction documents, or measured drawings are included in this project.
- Cost estimating for implementation of treatment recommendations will not be undertaken as part of the project.
- Maps will be developed to a planning level using existing base information, and will be provided as graphics, typically as illustrations on base aerial photography.
- All draft and final HLS submittals will be delivered as digital documents (editable Word files and PDFs).
- Existing site management and planning decisions will provide parameters for the HLS recommendations and treatment approach.
- The HLS document will be produced using a simple, professional template.
C. CHARACTER BASED CODES:

The PLACE Design Task Force endorses the application of Form Based Codes within the SIA. We recommend Council conduct on on-going assessment of this effort so as to consider applying character based codes elsewhere.

Additional areas where character based codes should be considered include:
- Small Area Plans- beginning with the next one.
- Entry Corridors.
- Neighborhood nodes as identified by area residents though community engagement exercises.
  And places such as;
- High Street
- Preston Avenue
- Cherry Avenue
- Other areas as identified by Council.

D. THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODELING:

The PLACE Design Task Force endorses the 3D modeling effort currently underway for the SIA and other areas of the City. We recommend Council explore the application of this effort City wide. PLACE has requested a demonstration of the current modeling at their regular meeting planned for July 13, 2017.

Initial areas where the next round of 3D modeling might be best suited include:
- Small Area Plans- beginning with the next one.
- Entry Corridors.
- Design Control and Conservation Districts
- Neighborhood nodes as identified by area residents though community engagement exercises.
  And places such as;
- High Street
- Preston Avenue
- Cherry Avenue
- Other areas as identified by Council: