

**Branchville TOD  
Report of Meeting  
Task Force Meeting #9  
9/14/16**

**Attending**

Rudy Marconi (First Selectman), Jon Chew (WestCOG), Francisco Gomes (FHI), Dave Goldenberg (Resident), Julia Pemberton (Redding), Alex Karsanidi (Ridgefield EDC), Joanne Meder (Town Planner), Roxanne Fromson (CTDOT), Joseph Chelednik (Property Owner), Joe Ancona (Property Owner), Adam Schnell (Planning)

**Discussion**

Francisco Gomes of FHI led the discussion and provided an overview of the agenda. Francisco reviewed the project schedule and progress to date. He noted that the goal was to deliver a draft plan by the end of October and to conduct the final task force meeting to review the plan in early November, concluding with a public presentation of the plan in early December.

Francisco presented the draft build-out analysis. The analysis explored three concepts for development with the preferred concept being carried forward into the TOD plan and used to guide the recommended zoning and design guidelines. In total, the preferred concept would accommodate 68,000 sf of commercial, 189 apartment units and 260 townhouse units. Francisco said that this represents a full build-out of the site, which would require a sewer connection to a wastewater treatment facility. Assuming a full build-out, the preferred concept would generate an additional \$3.3 million in property tax revenue per year. An analysis of potential ridership increase at the station suggested an additional 71 riders per day under the full build-out scenario.

Mr. Goldenberg asked if the ridership estimate accounted for increased/improved rail service, Francisco responded that the estimate is based upon existing service and could be expected to increase if service was enhanced.

Ms. Pemberton asked whether revenue estimate was inclusive of the cost of providing additional services to the study area. Francisco said that it did not account for the cost of additional services, but that there would still be a significant increase in revenue even when additional services such as roadway maintenance, emergency services, and infrastructure expansion are accounted for. With a greater population in Branchville, the cost of services per capita would likely decrease.

A number of task force members inquired about what level of development would be possible without the provision of a sewer main in Branchville. Francisco responded that the area does have a limited capacity for on-site disposal of wastewater through the use of the baseball field and other areas for septic fields via a community system approach. FHI identified a potential early phase of development that could accommodate up to 100 townhouse units, 55 apartment units, and 10,000 sf of retail/commercial space. Joe Ancona noted that his engineer's analysis suggested that the ball field would only accommodate 28 units. Francisco agreed to follow up with Tighe & Bond regarding their estimates for that site. Francisco also noted that percolation testing would need to be conducted at each potential septic field site to determine suitability. Joe Ancona emphasized the need for a connection to a wastewater treatment plant. Mr. Marconi asked Ms. Pemberton about the status of the

Georgetown plant. She responded that it continues to be fully allocated towards the proposed development and that the Town of Redding is moving to taking the site as a means of expediting development. Ms. Pemberton said that there is a possibility that the plant could accommodate additional flow and was unsure as to whether or not the plant had capacity for expansion. The Georgetown plant was discussed by the Task Force as the most viable wastewater disposal option for Branchville and Mr. Ancona emphasized the need to strike a deal with Redding to allow connection to the plant. Mr. Marconi responded that he had on multiple occasions inquired and was told “no”.

Mr. Schnell noted that the preferred concept would disturb the landscape and generate additional stormwater runoff and inquired whether those issues were considered. Francisco responded that Tighe & Bond had recently completed a stormwater analysis finding that the concept is feasible and will not be constrained by the discharge. The analysis recommends multiple measures that should be used to minimize runoff and maximize local infiltration. Francisco said that these measures would be included in the design guidelines. Mr. Schnell also inquired as to whether structured parking had been considered as a means of reducing surface parking. Francisco responded that the market analysis and local economics suggest that structured parking would not be feasible given the cost of constructing that parking. Joe Ancona emphasized this point saying that even basement parking in an apartment structure may not be feasible due to additional construction costs. Francisco said that the surface parking presented in the preferred concept would be accommodated via small landscaped lots with potential for stormwater infiltration using landscaped islands. This would minimize the visual impact of surface parking.

Francisco reviewed the recommended zoning for the Branchville area as written by the Cecil Group. The recommendations include creating a new village district for the development area which would include five sub-districts: medium density residential, high density residential, and mixed use. Dave Goldenberg asked about whether or not an IHZ would be considered. This led to much discussion about the value of an IHZ and how it could be used with new zoning. The primary value of the IHZ was identified as providing an incentive for affordable units and controlling the development of housing under 830(g). At the time of the discussion, it was unclear as to whether or not affordable housing built as part of an IHZ would contribute towards the Town’s requirements for affordable housing as specified under 830(g). It was noted that because of concerns over 830(g) and the lack of the Town’s ability to control development under that program, that members of the planning and zoning commission and others are concerned that the provision of a sewer main would allow for uncontrolled development under 830(g). The establishment of an IHZ in Branchville could alleviate those concerns while still providing affordable housing.

There was also discussion as to whether or not it made sense to revised zoning to allow for higher densities if those densities are currently constrained by the lack of wastewater infrastructure. Francisco responded that the zoning should be changed now regardless of whether the infrastructure is in place so as to act as an incentive to provide the infrastructure. Mr. Schnell inquired about the building heights that would be permitted under the proposed zoning. Francisco responded that it would be three stories or 40 feet in the mixed use and high density subzones and 2.5 stories or 30 feet in the medium density sub zones. Ms. Fromson noted that this was an issue in Stamford during the TOD planning for the Glenbrook/Springdale area – residents were concerned about building heights, but developers insisted that they needed to build four stories for development to be feasible. Ms. Fromson also asked if the draft plan could be shared with the DOT for comment, Francisco agreed and Mr. Chew asked that DOT comments and responses to those comment be included in the appendix of the report.

Francisco briefly reviewed the architectural design guidelines noting that they would be incorporated into overall design guidelines which would provide site design guidance as well. The guidelines could be used as an advisory tool or elements could be incorporated as requirements into the zoning.

Francisco reviewed next steps and a date for the next task force meeting was discussed. Mr. Karsanidi recommended that members of the P&Z and EDC commissions be invited to review the draft plan prior to presentation to the public. Francisco agreed it was a good idea. Mr. Marconi recommended that we present at a regular P&Z commission meeting. Ms. Meder agreed that it would be a good idea and agreed to inquire with P&Z about adding a presentation of the draft plan to P&Z's November 1<sup>st</sup> agenda. Francisco said that he could circulate a draft copy of the plan prior to that meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

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