

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ZONING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2002

Present: Ald. Yates (Chairman), Ald. Baker and Sangiolo

Absent: Ald. Lennon, Johnson, Gentile, Mansfield, and Lappin

Also present: Ald. Parker

City officials present: Director of Planning and Development Michael Kruse,  
Commissioner of Public Works Robert Rooney

#106-00      ALD. MANSFIELD & PARKER on behalf of petition signed by 70 residents, requesting that the Planning and Development Department undertake a study of the impacts of the potential build-out of the Bowen-Thompsonville area as it is currently zoned, including affects upon traffic, utilities, schools, and other infrastructure.

NOTE: Mr. Kruse presented all planning aspects of the attached report. He said that in determining the number of additional corridors that could be built in the Multi-Residence Corridor along Langley Road, he made assumptions that would lead to the largest possible number of units. For example, all lots in an Multi-Residence District with single-family homes and more than 6,000 square feet were assumed to be suitable for development with a two-family house. Lots of 15,000 square feet or more were considered to have multi-family development potential of 4,000 square feet per unit by special permit. All lots were assumed to have been created before 1953 and thus only subject to the less strict standards for lots of that vintage. A total of 121 additional units could be built by right under current zoning. The Terraces and possible special permit sites would add enough units to bring the total of potential new units in the area to 212.

Mr. Rooney then presented the potential impacts on the infrastructure of such new development. He assumed that all new development would comply with city policy to hold all storm drainage on site (this is by policy not ordinance and has been challenged). As a result, there would be no impact on the storm drainage system. The water supply meets the standard of 1,500 gallons per minute for fires. He did not know how to assess the poor water pressure reported by residents, but speculated that it might be caused by tuberculation of the water steel pipes in which the pipe narrows and it can deliver less water. The sewer service in the area can accommodate the sanitary sewage from thousands more housing units than are possible. No calculation was made of the impact of inflow and infiltration of storm water and ground water into the sewage pipes. The impact of the 2,024 trips per day (and concentrated in the commuting and shopping times) might in fact have somewhat more of an impact than the report indicated. He was

unable to determine if this new traffic might downgrade service at any of the "gates" to the area from one level of service to another. His overall comment was that any infrastructure problem could be built out of except for traffic. In other words, newer larger pipes could be put in the street to meet any needs that might develop but that street widening would have a major permanent impact.

The Committee members pointed out that the 30-15 Task Force was considering recommending re-zoning like the Oakmont Section of the area which is uniformly Single Residence in use while Multi-Residence in zoning to make the zoning match the current use and thus eliminate any possible new units in this section. It was also pointed out Alderman Yates' item would require special permits to demolish existing one family homes on older smaller lots and replace them with two-family homes.

Lynne and Jim Sullivan, the just retired Co-Presidents of the Bowen-Thompsonville Association urged the Committee to reject the report and to recommend that a new study be done. The old report was flawed by numerous assumptions that underestimated the number of units that had been or would be developed, particularly on combined lots (Mr. Kruse said he had no way to analyze such potential). It also failed because the DPW assumptions failed to take into the realities that new storm drainage would not likely long stay on the lots that generated it and that the storm drainage and sewage systems would both bear further impact. Numerous instances of low water pressure had been found by neighborhood survey. (Neither Mr. Kruse nor Mr. Rooney knew how such determinations had been made for Community Development Block Grant areas. Mr. Rooney said that all pipes in the city had been rated for replacement several years ago but that he was unable to say where the Langley pipes rated.

Committee members were puzzled that the Sullivans wanted a new study when the old one had taken so long and been so unsatisfactory in its conclusions. They replied that a portion of the mitigation money set aside, as part of recent special permits should be used for a neighborhood-guided study. No one was certain how to access this money.

Alderman Baker finally moved that the original study item be voted No Action Necessary but that the Committee should docket a further study item to reflect the concerns about the corridor that seem to have larger ramifications. He also urged that the Neighborhood decide about issues like re-zoning of specific areas like that done in West Newton and urged them to contact the neighborhood leaders involved in that effort.

The Committee then voted 3-0 to recommend No Action Necessary on the first item, hold on the second item and to docket a new item with the exact text to be prepared by the Chair. A draft item follows:

The Zoning and Planning Committee asking that further studies be done by the Planning Department and Public Works Department to answer questions raised about how to reduce the possibility of further overdevelopment in Thompsonville and ways to measure its impact. The following questions should be answered by the Planning Department or

consultant hired with mitigation money and with maximum feasible participation by the neighborhood.

1. Should any section of the corridor be rezoned from multi-residence to single residence?
2. Should any other zoning changes be made in the corridor or any changes made to the Zoning Ordinance that would reduce the development potential of the area?
3. What is the development potential of the business area and what zoning changes would be needed to restrict uses that would overburden the area and to encourage neighborhood-based uses?
4. Can any measures be taken to restrict the consolidation of lots for the purposes of making more dense development possible?

The following questions should be answered by the Department of Public Works or a consultant:

1. Can area sewers withstand the Department of Environmental Protection design standard of a six-hour storm at a maximum time of infiltration and inflow? And if not, what improvements are necessary?
2. How extensive is the problem of low water pressure in the area and what can be done to fix it?
3. Would any of the intersections leading in and out of the area be reduced one or more level of traffic service if a significant portion of the possible new development occurs? Are any of these intersections are Level of Service F? What can be done to prevent or fix these conditions?

Committee Action: Recommend to docket new item 3-0

Respectfully submitted,

Ald. Brian Yates, Chairman