

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board Meeting January 27, 2010

Attending

CPAB Members

Assemblyman Joe Blanchard
Bob Hensey
Deb Horner
Melissa Kellner
Jennifer Peterson
Sharron Hunter
Matt Reckard
Bernardo Hernandez

Public in Attendance

Charles Knight
Natalie Howard
Joanne Kuykendall
George Hitz
Ash Dowdy
Margery Kniffen
Mark Mussman

Staff and Consultants

Doug Braddock
Chris Beck
Kelley Hegarty

Citizen Comments

NRCS – already have soils information; is this project reinventing the wheel? (*Response:* the development capability mapping portion of this project takes full advantage of NRCS data, and adds in other variables – flooding, wildfire, aspect, etc. – to create a new, more comprehensive overlay system of public information.)

Coaching Session for Map Groundtruthing/Outstanding GIS Mapping Issues

- “Groundtruthing” is the process of checking synthesis map results, taking advantage of residents’ existing knowledge of different parts of the borough. The word is presented in quotes as the process will not require actual walking (much less digging) out in the landscape; the notion is to take advantage of existing knowledge of the land.
- Consulting team has provided “shape files” (GIS vs. PDF) copies of all the base maps as well as the synthesis map, which makes the groundtruthing process easier
- Using these shape files Doug has done some initial groundtruthing and has found the maps hold up well – they generally seem accurate and useful in the areas he’s been reviewing. He did find one topic that needs more review – apparently ponds are ranked neutral, instead of negative, which skews results in those areas.
- Doug is coordinating the ongoing groundtruthing process (thanks much Doug!)
 - Doug “trained” planning department staff so they could assist in groundtruthing process
 - See more below about specific steps in groundtruthing process
- Bob: Do we know have access to all the data layers? Response: yes. Bob just found out about a new data layer in the Tanana Flats area. The map in this area needs to be clear that this area doesn’t have the same soils information as available in other parts of the Borough. The map must be labeled in more detail so it doesn’t give the false impression that this area has good physical suitability for development.

- Bob noted that for CPAB and public review, it is possible to use arc-explorer to view shape files and arc-explorer is free and easily downloaded.
- Several basic questions were asked about the capability maps by members of the public in attendance: What layers went into the synthesis maps? What is the definition of “development capability”? How will the maps be used? Chris Beck responded by sharing text from the background material that will accompany the maps:

The Development Capability map overlays separate layers of environmental data to create a single, summary map, revealing areas with greater and lesser constraints for construction. This map provides a summary of the relative degree of physical constraints for construction at a regional scale. This is only one of the important, environmental-data driven perspectives to be considered for regional land use and infrastructure issues. The intended purpose of a Development Capability map could be confusing, so it is important to understand what the map is not intended to do:

- This map does not consider issues like access, land ownership, or conflicts with other land uses; it merely looks at the physical “buildability” of any given location.
 - This map does not integrate every factor affecting the physical capability of the land to support development; doing so would produce a complex model that would be hard to understand and explain.
 - Instead the intent is to provide – in a single map – a helpful synthesis of a few key variables, such as areas that are poorly drained, steep or prone to flooding.
 - This map is not intended to determine where development should go. For example:
 - some places with favorable building characteristics are inappropriate for development (e.g. certain parks);
 - likewise there are places with poor building conditions where development may be appropriate, even if physical constraints increase costs (e.g., a steep area with great views, or a poorly drained area in the middle of a city).
 - Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this is regional, “big picture” data; this information should never be used for site planning or assessment of individual properties.
- Do maps respond to the possibility of dikes opening or failing? (*Response:* good question. Development suitability maps need to be dynamic, and to change as new information is developed. The process is set up to make revisions and updates clear and easy. As Bernardo said, this is the beginning of an ongoing process. If new information becomes available regarding the vulnerability of the area below the dams, this should be reflected in the next generation of development capability maps.

Discussion of Next Steps

- Bernardo described the overall structure and purpose of the project
 - This project is Phase 1: Development capability map; Phase 2: Alternative futures
 - Future work (beyond the scope of this project) – Phase 3: update the regional land use plan map, now over 25 years old

- Chris Beck reviewed the attached information, describing the purpose and process for Phase 2. With the exception of discussions about the groundtruthing process, (documented below), there were no questions about the approach outlined in the attached scope of work.
- Public role in the groundtruthing process:
 - CPAB agreed that it would be helpful to give the general public a chance to be involved in the review process.
 - Conclusion was that staff review process to ground-truth and double check accuracy should proceed as planned, with the goal of identifying any notable issues by mid February
 - The option for public review can be available immediately, but the focus should be on soliciting public involvement later in February, after the staff has had a chance to catch any notable data discrepancies
 - Public review will happen at the City Planning Department counter, where staff can do the following:
 - Explain the purpose of the maps and the purpose of the groundtruthing process
 - Help people use the computers to review whichever areas they wish
 - Share a running list of issues that have come up during the groundtruthing process
 - Provide a simple form for reviewers to fill out, to document the person's name, the area they looked at, and any questions that may have come up
 - Kelley offered to prepare this review form (Chris suggests including on the form the information above regarding the purpose of these maps)
- Summary of schedule for groundtruthing and next CPAB meeting:
 - Early Feb – groundtruthing by CPAB
 - Late Feb – option for groundtruthing, assisted by planning department staff, for general public
 - End Feb – planning staff provides summary list of issues identified through groundtruthing process to consulting team
 - Early March – consulting team works out responses to groundtruthing issues, consulting with Planning Department staff. Consulting team documents suggestions re final changes

Meeting Adjourned at 5:00 PM

REVISED “PHASE 2” ALTERNATIVE FUTURES PROCESS

Distributed at the 1.27.10 CPAB meeting; based on CPAB meeting notes Nov 2009

Overall Goal: Provide the background information needed at the outset of a process to prepare a regional land use designation map

A. BASIC ECONOMY: TRENDS BY SECTOR (mining, timber, tourism, etc.)

- For each sector, short written summary of size of sector, trends
- Maps showing existing and potential use areas (e.g. mineral potential areas)

B. LAND SUPPLY

- Land ownership/special designations (e.g. parks, military bases)
- Land use management intent – current plans of major institutional owners with potential to sell property (e.g. DNR, University, Borough, Mental Health Trust)
- Infrastructure – roads, power (new gas line?)
- Supply of vacant, physically suitable, private land (using a combination of Borough land records and the development suitability map from this project)

C. “BUSINESS AS USUAL/HANDS OFF” GROWTH TRENDS

- Amount of growth – 3 scenarios: a. continuation of current trends, b. decline, c. significant expansion (each built around a “shopping cart” of growth-driving elements)
- Location of growth for the high scenario – reflecting judgments about amount of development in three different “growth rings” as well as specific “hot spots”

D. SCENARIO EVALUATION

- Using CommunityViz, the team will develop an analysis of the impacts of the third scenario (*note*: the greatest value of CommunityViz will be realized during Phase 3, comparing impacts of different policy-driven scenarios)
- The consulting team will also conduct a 1-2 day CommunityViz training session

E. INFORMATION SHARING – SET THE STAGE FOR PHASE 3

- Right language & clarity of presentation: ensure, for example, that words associated with capability maps stir up no unnecessary controversy
- Website – post background material, include an overview of project purposes
- Engage more groups in discussion of alternative futures:

Why?

- To share preliminary, factual background information and get feedback
- Create public understanding of the planning process; develop strategies for getting people engaged in planning (e.g. stakeholder mapping)

What?

- Maps and text on economic sectors; maps of land supply
- Growth scenarios - amount, location of growth

Who?

- General public
- Focus group (quarterly or less frequent advisory group to mayor?)
- Chamber – full group or committees
- Assembly and Planning commission
- Interior Issues group

