



Memorandum

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Bob Morgan, Interim City Manager

DATE: July 2, 2009

SUBJECT: IFYI

IFYI HIGHLIGHTS:

- Urban Loop GIS Interface on City Website
- Land Development Ordinance (LDO)
- Status of the Downtown Design Overlay (DDO) and Manual
- Update on Noise Barriers for Urban Loop
- Seeking Public Input on “Green” Strategies
- Update on E-Billing and Web Payments for Utility Bills

Urban Loop GIS Interface on City Website

The GIS interface designed to show citizens where the urban loop will be constructed in relation to specific properties is scheduled to go live on July 9th on the city’s website: <http://www.greensboro-nc.gov/>. The interface will allow citizens to enter a street address and the GIS system will zoom to that street address and show where the Urban Loop is in relation to that address via an aerial map. The proposed interface was recently presented to the Metropolitan Planning Organization to solicit their feedback in preparation for the final version.

Land Development Ordinance (LDO)

The full draft of the LDO is scheduled to be released about July 21. Planning staff will brief individual City Council members prior to distributing the document. Questions about the LDO should be directed to Dick Hails, Planning Department at 373-2922.

Status of the Downtown Design Overlay (DDO) and Manual

The draft of the DDO Manual was released on March 31, 2009. Since then, city staff has conducted a variety of stakeholder input meetings (community meeting in April, a public hearing at Planning Board in May and scheduled hearing in June for the Zoning Commission). At the June Zoning Commission Meeting, Henry Isaacson, on behalf of several Downtown property owners, asked for a 30-day continuance to allow for more review and discussion on the proposed guidelines. Since then, the Planning staff has had an increased level of concern expressed and more serious changes to the guidelines suggested.

As a result, staff plans to request the Zoning Commission (at their July 13 meeting) continue this matter for another 60 days (until their September meeting), to allow for further discussion and review on DDO. The DDO Manual and the list of proposed changes are posted on the Planning Department’s website and hard copies are available in the Planning Department upon request.

Update on Noise Barriers for Urban Loop

A public hearing on the noise barriers, also known as “highway noise mitigation standards” text amendment, is scheduled for the July 21st City Council Meeting. The amendment includes provisions to encourage the provision of noise barriers and require public notification when residential development is located adjacent to the Urban Loop highway.

City staff has worked through several revisions to the amendment to address the numerous concerns raised by Triad Real Estate and Business Industry Coalition members in recent months. Last week, however, staff received a negative recommendation on the proposed changes from the Planning Board. (See attached “Background Information on Noise Barrier for Urban Loop”). Concerns expressed by the Planning Board will be shared with the Council at the July 21 public hearing.

Seeking Public Input on “Green” Strategies

The City of Greensboro is committed to being “green” and is asking the community for its input at two public meetings. The meetings will be held **Monday, July 13, from 11:30 am to 1 pm and 6:30-8:30 pm in the Nussbaum Room of the Central Library, 219 N. Church St.**

The Community Sustainability Council is hosting the sessions to get residents’ feedback on what priorities and strategies should be included in the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy report, which will serve as the City’s energy plan. The City will submit the report to the US Department of Energy, as part of its application for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, to be considered for funding from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. (See attached Press Release).

Update on E-Billing and Web Payments for Utility Bills

The City of Greensboro has initiated the next phase of our e-commerce strategy, which will expand customer choice in payment options for utility bills, and make billing information available to customers twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Specific plans include contracting with Systems & Software, Inc. to implement the Web-Connect software to provide customers with secure on-line access to utility billing and account information. City staff projects the new system will be released in late-December 2009. For more information about Web-Connect, please contact Jeff Kimel, Water Resources at 373-2639. (See attached “Fact Sheet”)

Background Information: Noise Barrier for Urban Loop

Last year, a number of citizens registered their displeasure with the effects of noise from the newly constructed portion of the Urban Loop. Those complaints prompted the Planning Department, as instructed by City Council, to formulate a set of standards to be employed in future residential developments (or other noise-sensitive uses) along the Urban Loop in an effort to reduce the negative effects of noise on those uses.

Noise-sensitive uses are considered to be multi-family residential developments, elementary and secondary schools, places of worship, and single-family or two-family dwelling subdivisions.

The issues involved in lessening the impacts of noise in close proximity to the highway and addressed in the text amendment are changes related to the vertical separation of the site from the highway, the horizontal separation of occupied buildings from the highway, and the placement of barriers between the occupied buildings and the highway. The intent of these standards is not to prohibit those types of uses along the Urban Loop, but to lessen the impacts of noise. To further that intent, additional provisions are proposed for the Development Ordinance which will offer several options and criteria to lessen the impacts of noise, and are as follows:

1. Principal Building Location: Shift noise-sensitive principal buildings 50 feet away from the SCOD buffer (not to exceed 20 percent of the site) while allowing that area to be used for vertical mixed use buildings, non-residential buildings, accessory buildings, uninhabited portions of buildings, off-street parking, and stormwater devices.
2. Barrier Installation: Install a six-foot-high berm, an accessory building, or a 20-foot-wide double staggered row of evergreen trees and shrubs as a barrier (utilizing topography and existing vegetation) behind the SCOD buffer, or by using building insulation features.

The text amendment would also require single-family subdivisions to be designed as cluster developments with the open space located along the highway, the SCOD buffer as common elements and barriers installed as described above.

The Technical Review Committee (TRC), to help achieve highway noise mitigation, may approve modifications to:

1. Reduce required minimum street setbacks for streets other than the highway or ramp.
2. Change the standards if equal or better performance measures are proposed.
3. Change the standards which are impractical for the site.

As requested by City Council, the proposed text amendment was forwarded to Greg Smith, a noise expert with the NCDOT, for review. In response to his comments, staff made the following changes:

Background Information: Noise Barrier for Urban Loop

1. Exemptions: According to Greg Smith, there may be situations where the site is not 15 feet below the highway, but the existing topography functions as a sound barrier. The "Exemption" language has been revised to reflect his comment.
2. Building Insulation Features: According to Greg Smith, light building construction with double glazed windows (shut) will reduce the exterior noise levels by 25 decibels. The required noise reduction level has been increased from 10 decibels to "greater than 25 decibels."

The proposed text amendment also contains provisions, as requested by City Council, which will require the developer to record information with the Guildford County Register of Deeds office to notify potential occupants of the highway noise. The developer would be required to record two types of documents:

1. Declaration: A document specifying that the lot is subject to highway noise - prior to the issuance of a building permit.
2. Plat: A plat displaying a note specifying that the lot is subject to highway noise - prior to the issuance of a certificate of compliance.

The Planning Board held a public hearing on this text amendment at their June 17, 2009 meeting. Staff made a presentation on the proposed amendment; including the direction City Council had provided staff in drafting highway noise mitigation standards for future residential development along the Urban Loop highway.

At that meeting, the Planning Board discussed the amendment at length. They passed a motion that did not support the staff recommendations and asked staff to convey additional comments to the City Council on this matter. These comments are being compiled to share with the Council at the July 21, 2009 Public Hearing.

The major features of the proposed amendment on highway noise mitigation presented by staff were:

1. Establish a 50 foot noise buffer area behind the SCOD buffer on sites near the Urban Loop and proposed for residential development.
2. Try to keep residences out of the noise buffer by arranging development on the site, including locating parking, amenities, garages and landscape, berms and other facilities in this buffer area.
3. Try to also place barriers to highway noise within that noise buffer and blocking direct noise travel, by using natural topography, site grading, extra landscaping, orientation of windows in residences and placement of accessory or other buildings.



CITY OF GREENSBORO
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sue Schwartz
Phone: 336-373-2149

City Invites Public to Give Input on Strategies to make Greensboro more 'Green'

GREENSBORO, NC -- (July 1, 2009) – The City of Greensboro is committed to being “green” and is asking the community for its input at two public meetings. The meetings will be held Monday, July 13, from 11:30 am to 1 pm and 6:30-8:30 pm in the Nussbaum Room of the Central Library, 219 N. Church St.

The Community Sustainability Council is hosting the sessions to get residents' feedback on what priorities and strategies should be included in the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy report, which will serve as the City's energy plan. The City will submit the report to the US Department of Energy, as part of its application for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, to be considered for funding from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program.

Those who are unable to attend the sessions can give their feedback via an online survey at www.greensboro-nc.gov/citygovernment/sustainability. The survey will be available July 10 through July 31.

For more information, call Sue Schwartz, the City's Neighborhood Planning manager, at 336-373-2149.

The City of Greensboro works in partnership with the community to build an increased quality of life for all residents by fostering an environment where inclusion, diversity, and trust are valued. As the seventh largest employer in Greensboro, the City has a dedicated professional staff of 2700 employees who maintain four core values of honesty, integrity, stewardship, and respect. The City of Greensboro is governed by a council-manager form of government where a mayor and eight council members act as the legislative body. For more information on the City of Greensboro, please visit us online at www.greensboro-nc.gov.

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Fact Sheet: E-Billing and Web Payments for Utility Bills

In an effort to expand customer choice in payment options for utility bills, and make pertinent billing information available to customers twenty-four hours a day seven days a week, the City of Greensboro is beginning to move into the next phase of our e-commerce strategy. Within the next couple of months we are planning on signing a contract with Systems & Software to implement their Web-Connect software product to provide on-line utility billing and customer account information and access through a secure process. Our goal is to have this system released around the end of the 2009 calendar year.

Systems & Software currently provides the City of Greensboro with its enQuesta customer information and utility billing solution. Their Web-Connect product is an add-on feature to this solution which would be fully integrated with existing interfaces and business processes. Web-Connect is customer friendly in its use and navigation. Some of the customer information that would become available during a 24/7 timeframe would be:

- Specific Billing Details/Bill Retrieval
- Payment History
- Consumption History/Usage Analysis
- Service Request History

In addition, customers will have the opportunity to sign up for "EBILL" and receive their utility bills on-line over the World Wide Web. Once an account is established, the customer will receive an email each month containing their bill information. The email will also supply a link to our website where they can access their account and view an image of the bill. All customers who sign up on Web-Connect will have a user name and password and will have payment flexibility to pay multiple accounts at once in various ways.

The total cost to implement the Web-Connect solution will be in the range of \$200,000 dollars. However, these costs will be offset in the long-run through significant savings in postage as more customers sign up for "EBILL." If roughly 10% of the customer base signs up for "EBILL" then the annual cost savings would be over \$55,000 dollars. Potential efficiencies may also be gained in fewer phone calls to the City Contact Center, less staff time spent with bill processing and mail issues and more timely payments from customers. These savings, along with providing greater customer choice flexibility to our residents make this a wise investment for the City of Greensboro.

Please contact Jeff Kimel at 373-2639 concerning any questions or concerns about Web-Connect.