



COMMUNITY MEETING SERIES: Downtown Apex Stakeholders

Downtown business owners and other stakeholders gather occasionally to receive updates from town staff, and discuss their concerns. The following is a running summary of topics discussed, along with follow up information provided by town staff.

May 2022 Summary

Staff Presentations

Parklets & Sidewalk Dining Extension

Presented by: Colleen Merays

Summary: After completing extensive research from other communities that have engaged in similar scenarios, a proposal was prepared for management to consider. Based on the research, the survey results from Downtown stakeholders on two previous occasions with almost identical results, and other feedback obtained, the decision was made by Administration not to pursue the initiative further at this time.

Follow-up Action: When the decision was made in early spring, the Town hoped the Saunders Street parking redesign would begin by the end of the summer. With that timeline now delayed, the Town will reevaluate the parking-to-dining options and can review and engage the Downtown stakeholders at the next meeting to be held later in the summer of 2022.

All Way Stop Study

Presented by: Russell Dalton

Summary: As part of the Apex Downtown Master Plan & Parking Study, one project is the Salem Streetscape design, with a goal to improve the appearance of Salem Street while also making it more pedestrian friendly. Options are being explored for the redesign of the Salem St. and Chatham St. intersection. NCDOT recommends testing the intersection as an "all-way stop." The test will begin June 7th and run for approximately 30 days. This will give NCDOT and the Town the opportunity to evaluate the operation, as well as drivers a chance to experience and provide feedback. Once complete, the Town will give feedback to NCDOT to either: endorse a plan for a permanent all-way stop and remove the traffic signal, or request that NCDOT continue to maintain a traffic signal.

Follow-up Action: Visit [project page](#) for more information and to provide feedback after the study beings.

NOTE: The start date for this study has been delayed until early July.

Downtown Festival District

Presented by: Amanda Bunce

Summary: The Town Council recently adopted several ordinance changes that apply both within and outside of the newly created Downtown Festival District. These changes provide clarification for the standards and frequency of promotional events that require a Temporary Use Permit, amend standards for commercial and public principal use parking, revise how alcohol related uses are defined and allowed, and create separation

standards for outdoor operations areas from certain residential areas. For more information, please see the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Go Apex Route 1

Presented by: Shannon Cox

Summary: This free local bus route will begin operating Summer 2022. The bus will run Monday through Saturday from 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM. Encourage visitors to ride the bus to reach downtown! There will be a stop in front of Apex Depot, at East Moore Street, and near East Williams Street.

Follow-up Action: Find details and the latest information at: www.apexnc.org/GoApex. Questions? Reach out to Katie Schwing, Senior Planner - Long Range Transit at katie.schwing@apexnc.org or 919-249-1043.

Issues Raised by Downtown Stakeholders

Downtown Plan

Summary: Concern that there does not seem to be much going on with implementation of the Plan, since Council adopted it.

Staff Input: The Downtown Plan provides recommendations for action between 2020-2030. Substantial progress has been made. In response to feedback from downtown stakeholders, staff will work to communicate progress across all 58 recommendations in the plan more clearly and more frequently. Regarding the three major public projects referred to as the "Downtown Design Projects" (the Saunders Lot, alleyways, and Salem Streetscape), the latest information is available at www.publicinput.com/downtowndesign. Concepts for all three projects have been approved and final design documents are near completion. The Saunders Lot will be phased for construction first, to minimize impacts to the downtown area during construction. Private property must be acquired to move that project forward and discussions are underway. The upcoming budget includes \$2.8 million to begin these three projects.

Wayfinding Signage

Summary: A concern was raised that this has not been implemented yet.

Staff Input: A town-wide Wayfinding Signage Program was completed in 2021-2022. This was a substantial effort that included public outreach and NCDOT review. The program includes designs, messages, locations, and specifications for wayfinding signs throughout Apex and in downtown. Phase I installation is anticipated in 2023. Contract negotiations are underway now and fabrication and installation is expected to require eight months. Pedestrian kiosks with maps to parking and wayfinding signage to parking in downtown church lots will not be included in Phase I due to ongoing conversations with Apex Baptist Church and Apex Methodist Church regarding shared parking agreements.

Parking Deck

Summary: The potential of a parking deck at the Saunders Street lot and adjacent gravel lot was questioned.

Staff Input: The potential of a future parking deck at the Saunders Lot was explored as part of the Downtown Master Plan and Parking Study, but was ultimately not recommended to serve downtown parking needs.

Instead, other parking solutions were identified including expanding and redesigning the Saunders Lot to maximize available surface parking, which is in final design at this time pending property acquisition. Longer term, a parking deck could be considered in/near Downtown Apex among other funding priorities if that need arises, but a definite location has not been identified. An updated parking inventory is underway as of May 2022, which will help staff to continue to monitor parking utilization.

Parking

Summary: A question was raised about any other parking options being explored.

Staff Input: Striped parking has already been added along Chatham Street, Saunders Street, North Salem Street, and is under review for Center Street. The Town has reached out to the Apex Baptist Church and Apex Methodist Church for potential short term and longer-term parking agreements. Those discussions are ongoing. We are also exploring an extensive list of strategies including support by public transit serving further offsite designated parking and other multi-modal connections to downtown.

Impact of Festivals on Downtown Businesses

Summary: A complaint was raised that the businesses are not being asked to give their feedback on how downtown festivals affect their business.

Staff Input: As conversation around this topic continued, the concern seemed to be more with festivals that are multi-day in length. The Town is looking into what events can be moved to Town Hall campus. In addition, if necessary, this item can be discussed in further detail at a future stakeholder meeting.

Communication

Summary: A concern was expressed with the level of communication between the Town and downtown stakeholders.

Staff Input: The Town suggests several avenues for current and future communication efforts: 1) The Town of Apex [website](#) has all the latest information, dates, updates and other pertinent information as to what is going on at and within the Town. 2) The [Downtown Design Projects page](#) has the latest information about the three major public projects moving forward from the Downtown Plan. More frequent updates about these projects will be sent to those who have signed up for email updates. 3) The Town plans to continue holding Downtown Stakeholders meetings on a regular basis. These meetings will be specific to current projects, initiatives, and concerns regarding the downtown area. 4) The Town will use the implementation matrix from the Downtown Plan to provide regular progress reports across all 58 plan recommendations. This will be updated and shared on an annual basis. 5) A newsletter specific to items downtown will be created and shared on a quarterly basis.

October 2021 Summary

Topic: Upkeep and Aesthetics

Overhanging Wires in Alleys

Assigned to: Administration

Summary: There is a perception that the overhead lines are dangerous.

Follow-up Action: Lines in question do not belong to the Town of Apex. The Town has reached out to the owners of the lines several times in the past but to no avail. The Town will continue to work with the owners of the lines to address abandoned lines.

Scheduled Maintenance

Assigned to: Public Works

Summary: There were concerns with general maintenance of weeds, trash, dumpsters, etc.

Follow-up Action:

- **Trash cans on Salem:** Picked up Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, a pick up on Saturday afternoons was added. Leaves: Blown before major downtown events.
- **Drains:** Adding a reoccurring work order for a quarterly basis inspection.
- **Street sweeping:** Every other week.
- **Street maintenance:** As needed.*
- **Brick/sidewalk maintenance:** As needed.
- **Parking areas maintenance:** As needed.
- **Hanging baskets/planter maintenance:** As needed.

**Note: The base of light on Salem has been filled.*

GFL Trash / Recycling Service

Assigned to: Public Works

Summary: Questions were asked about the types of items allowed in trash and recycling bins. Some businesses have more recycling materials than will fit in the bins for weekly collection.

Follow-up Action: Town of Apex reached out again to GFL to discuss improvement options, waiting for response.*

**Note: Not all businesses have Town services in regards to GFL.*

Topic: Downtown Plan

Anticipated Timeline

Assigned to: Engineering, Planning, Economic

Development

Summary: A timeline for major milestones of the plan was requested.*

Follow-up Action: Initial projects - Designs proceed to Technical Review Committee in early 2022. Property acquisition/ROW and costs must be budgeted by Council. Proposed project timelines are below. All projects are proposed/not yet funded.

- Saunders Lot - 2022-2023;
- Commerce Street Alley - 2022-2024;
- Seaboard St. and The Peak on Salem alleys - 2022-2024;
- Salem Streetscape and Saunders Gathering space - 2022-2025.

**NOTE: There are other public project recommendations included in the Downtown Plan that are to be considered through the Town's annual update of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and budget process.*

Disruption During Construction

Assigned to: Streets, Police

Summary: Concern was expressed that construction projects will make it difficult for people to access Salem Street during the streetscape renovations.

Follow-up Action: The Town will seek to minimize disruption to businesses through the approved plans and construction contracts.

Topic: Promoting Downtown

Downtown as a Destination

Assigned to: Economic Development,

Communications

Summary: Staff was asked to advertise downtown at the state and national level, as well as at RDU airport.

Follow-up Action: The Town currently advertises in several state publications and will investigate future opportunities. Advertising at RDU is not financially feasible.

Arts as an Economic Driver

Assigned to: Economic Development, Parks

Details: A request was made for support from the town for arts as a business.

Follow-up Action: Coordinate with Public Arts Committee and Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources on opportunities; potential for Town support of this initiative similar to that of Transit Committee.

Promoting More of Salem Street

Assigned to: Economic Development,

Communications

Summary: A request was made to extend the focus of downtown promotion outside of the main blocks, all the way to Hwy 55.

Follow-up Action: Staff will investigate opportunities to incorporate extended geographic area for events and promotions.

Topic: Miscellaneous

Traffic Control

Assigned to: Transportation, Police

Details: Concerns were raised regarding crosswalk safety, speeders, large trucks driving through downtown, and loading zone enforcement.

Follow-up Action: Investigating options to address lighting at crosswalks. The Police Department noted that a decreased speed limit would not necessarily deter speeders. Signage is in place to redirect trucks. However, many trucks are actually delivery trucks to downtown businesses, as well as light duty trucks.

Public Restrooms

Assigned to: Planning

Details: The possibility of adding public restrooms somewhere along Salem Street was discussed.

Follow-up Action: The upcoming installation of new wayfinding signage, including kiosks with interactive maps, should assist in finding current public restroom options.

Communication with Businesses

Assigned to: Communications, Economic

Development

Details: Some stakeholders asked to receive information on events and festivals well in advance.

Follow-up Action: Strategies will be suggested and implemented to ensure communication and transparency is improved and effective between the downtown stakeholders and the Town. Special Event coordination process is being reviewed by the Town for improved practices.