



**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: David Humphreys, Planning Commission Administrator
DATE: January 21, 2009
SUBJECT: Lusby Village Green

Background:

In early October, 2008, a Lusby Town Center Village Green Design workshop was conducted. Design consultants from EDAW, Inc. lead the workshop across two nights at Middleham and St. Peter's Episcopal Parish in Lusby. The consultant's workshop results summary, four (4) conceptual design alternative sketches, and post workshop comments are attached.

This memo is my personal reflection on the results of that workshop.

Discussion:

The workshop sought to answer two questions:

1. What activities/elements should be supported on the Green?
2. What physical design parameters should guide its development?

Alternatives 1 to 3 were developed by EDAW prior to the meeting as discussion concepts based on the existing Town Center Plan, previous public participation at Town Center forums, and staff comment. The 4th alternative was developed between the two meetings as a response the comments of the participants.

Activities/Elements

As indicated by the EDAW memo and attached comments, there seemed to be consensus that the following activities/elements should be accommodated:

- Event pavilion – provides a venue for concerts and other performances.
- Large multi-purpose lawn – provides unstructured play space, place for periodic festivals, provides lawn seating for an event pavilion.
- Plazas and seating areas – provides formal areas for seating, landscape elements, and monument or fountain.
- Playground area – provides a safe play area for children and families

Physical Design Parameters

Less consensus existed about the appropriate physical design for the Green: access, parking, relationship to surrounding development, security, etc.

- Internal Access – Alternatives 1 to 4 all propose direct access through the Green, connecting the existing and proposed mixed use development on either side of the Village Green. Alternatives 1 to 3 also propose access around a significant perimeter of the Green to provide visibility to businesses and access to parallel, on-street parking.
- External Access – All of the alternatives propose access to Lusby Parkway in some form. All alternatives, except #1, propose access to SR 765 (H. G Trueman Road), although all designs could be modified to eliminate SR 765 access with very little change to their overall designs. Initial comments from the State Highway Administration indicate that they will not approve any entrance to the Green from SR 765, as they would be too close to existing intersections at SR 765 (H. G Trueman Rd)/SR 760 (Rousby Hall Rd), and SR 765 and Village Center Dr.
- Parking – Alternatives 1 to 3 propose parallel parking along the vehicular circulation roads around the Green. Alternative 4 provides limited on-street parking adjacent to the buildings proposed at the four corners of the Green.
- Relationship to surrounding development – The existing Lusby Town Center Master Plan indicates that the development of a Village Green is a "Critical Plan Element" (Page 11). The Green is envisioned as one element to implementing the basic concepts of the Lusby Plan:
 - A compact, walkable Town Center
 - A destination with generous sidewalks, landscaping and on-street parking
 - A mix of uses, combining commerce, institutions, housing and recreation.

Specifically, the Plan indicates the Green should:

- Be situated in the core of the Town Center
- Be incorporated into the development of adjoining lands
- The location for civic and recreational activities
- Be surrounded by well-designed and compatible development
- Have a county building, such as a library should be located on the Green

In contrast to some comments received during the workshop process, the Lusby Master Plan has never considered the Green to be separate or isolated from the commercial development surrounding it. Like the New England Town Squares of old, and the lifestyle centers of today, the Village Green is to be an integral part of the adjoining commercial and institutional development. They are inextricably linked to each other. The atmosphere illustrated by the attached brochure for The Green is the type of development envisioned by the Lusby Town Center Master plan, and should be the vision for the development of the Lusby Village Green.

- Security – Significant discussion was had at the workshop meetings concerning security issues. There were differing, opposing opinions about what physical design would best address this issue. Generally, these comments fell into two broad points of view:
 1. That providing balanced pedestrian and vehicular access, and circulation and parking around the Green, enhances the viability and security of both the Green and the surrounding development. Such an arrangement promotes security by providing multiple "eyes on the Green".
 2. That allowing any vehicular access through and circulation around the Green creates an unsafe mix of cars and pedestrians.

Many town squares and village greens, both new and old have circulation and parking within and around them with no safety concerns. These Greens incorporate design elements (paving, physical barriers, landscaping, etc) to create a traffic calming design. If, as some have argued, no vehicular access or parking is provided adjacent to the Green, if the "front" doors of the businesses become the parking lots behind the buildings which face the green, if the civic activities of the Green are not integrated with the business activities of the surrounding development, then it will have insufficient public visibility to keep criminal behavior at bay – both Green and commerce will die.

Recommendation

It is my recommendation that the Lusby Town Center Plan Update not recommend any of the specific physical design Alternatives. Rather, the plan should recommend a set of design parameters that can be used to finalize a design once a specific development plan is proposed for, and approved by Planning Commission, for the surrounding commercial property. At a minimum, those parameters should include the following:

- The Green should incorporate the following design elements and accommodate the following uses:
 - Event pavilion – provides a venue for concerts and other performances.
 - Large multi-purpose lawn – provides unstructured play space, place of periodic festivals, provides lawn seating for an event pavilion.
 - Plazas and seating areas – provides formal areas for seating, landscape elements, and monument or fountain.
 - Playground area – provides a safe play area for children and families
- The Green should have the following physical design:
 - Access through the Green to provide an internal connection between the commercial development on either side, to serve the parking for the Green and businesses facing the Green, and to provide for frequent public and police surveillance of the Green.
 - Commercial buildings facing and having entrances from the Green to encourage strong interaction between activities on the Green and the businesses facing it, and to provide "eyes on the Green" to enhance security of users of both the Green and businesses.
 - Vehicular circulation and parking surrounding the majority of the area of the Green to provide visibility to businesses facing the Green, to provide access to

- parking which will serve both patrons of the businesses and users of the Green, and to provide active "eyes on the Green."
- Vehicular access from both H.G. Trueman Road and the Lusby Parkway. Every effort should be made to convince the State Highway Administration to allow right-in/right-out access to the Green area. This will better distribute traffic through and around the area, increase the viability of both the Green and business, and increase the security visibility.

Of the four design concepts developed by EDAW, I find Alternative #3 comes closest to meeting these design parameters:

- It provides full circulation around the Green for greatest visibility and access.
- The oval circulation pattern provides good traffic calming.
- It provides the largest uninterrupted open lawn space for events.
- It provides good hard plaza surfaces to accommodate a wide variety of festivals and programs (farmers market, arts festival, street theater, etc.).
- It provides the largest amount of on-street parking.

Attachments:

1. Lusby Town Center Village Green Design Workshop Results Memorandum, , EDAW, October 26, 2008
2. Conceptual Design Sketches, Alternatives 1 to 4, EDAW.
3. Comments on the Lusby Village Green Design, various commenters
4. Brochure from The Greene