

Planning Commission Staff Report

October 15th, 2020



Case No: 20-AREA-0001
Project Name: James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan
Applicant: Louisville Metro
Jurisdiction: Louisville Metro
Council Districts: Scott Reed (16)
Case Manager: Michael King, Planning Manager

REQUEST

- Approval of the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan
- Adoption of the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan Executive Summary as an Amendment to Plan 2040

CASE SUMMARY

Background

The James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan was initiated by the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Association and administered by the Center for Neighborhoods, with collaboration from various Louisville Metro Government agencies. The study area comprises the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood, a historically African American community, which is bordered by River Road to the south, Jacob School Road to the west, the Ohio River and the waterfront homes of Beechland Beech to the north, and the city of Prospect to the east. The study area lies entirely within Metro Council District 16.

The planning process began in February 2017 and wrapped up in November 2017. The goal of the process was to engage the residents of the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood and proactively articulate a vision for the area. This vision is one that preserves the historic character of the area while improving existing infrastructure and quality of life for residents. This represents the first neighborhood planning process for the neighborhood, and the resulting planning document offers a roadmap for future decision-making.

The planning process brought together residents of the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood to discuss the existing assets of the community and their desires for the future. Primary topics of discussion were preserving the historic character and culture of the neighborhood, addressing issues of drainage and flooding caused by proximity to the Ohio River, and improving connectivity and access to multiple modes of transportation.

Though the planning process was administered by the Center for Neighborhoods, many Louisville Metro Government agencies collaborated throughout, including Advanced Planning and Sustainability, Planning and Design Services, Metro Public Works, Metro Parks, and the Metropolitan Sewer District.

Advisory Group/Community Engagement Process

In accordance with Chapter 161 of the Louisville Metro Code of Ordinances (Neighborhood Development Plans), an advisory group was established to help guide the planning team throughout the planning process. Members of the advisory group were selected by the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Association in collaboration with Kelly Downard, the previous Metro Councilperson for District 16. The 16-person advisory group was comprised mainly of residents of the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood, with representation from both historic families and new, non-indigenous families. Representatives of local institutions River Fields and the historic Jacob School were also included on the Advisory Group. The group officially convened during each phase of the planning process, for a total of four meetings, and advised the planning team during the planning process and beyond. Meetings were held at various locations within the study area.

In addition to the advisory group participation, a robust public engagement strategy was utilized to gather input and feedback from the community. A total of four community workshops were held at various locations within the neighborhood over the course of 2017, and a final public meeting was held for residents to review the final draft of the plan in November 2017.

The first community workshop was on March 18, 2017 at the Harrods Creek Baptist Church within the neighborhood. This workshop encouraged residents to assess the existing assets and needs of the neighborhood and then create a vision for the future. Residents participated in various exercises like writing out the values of the neighborhood, describing the neighborhood in “Past, Present and Future,” and a PARK analysis. Input from the first community workshop was used by planning staff to draft a vision statement as well as goals for the Land Use and Community Form and Mobility plan components.

A second community workshop was held on June 17, 2017 at the Harrods Creek Fire Station within the neighborhood. This workshop was a detailed participatory process on the Land Use and Community Form and Mobility plan components, based on the input received at the first community workshop, and introduced the ideas for the two unique plan components of Historic Preservation and Natural Resources.

A third community workshop was held on August 24, 2017 and a fourth community workshop was held on September 7, 2017. Both workshops focused on the plan components of Historic Preservation and Natural Resources, with collaboration from the historic preservation staff of Planning and Design Services. These workshops also helped finalize the plan recommendations for each of the four plan components.

A final public meeting was held on November 11, 2017 for residents and community members to review the final draft of the plan document.

Vision Statement

The initial vision statement was created from the input gathered at the first community workshop, with refinement from the Advisory Group. The vision statement reads as follows:

The James Taylor - Jacob School Neighborhood is a family friendly, unified, residential community that retains the character of the historic Jacob School Road community, beginning in 1912, and the African American subdivision founded by James Taylor in 1922.

Now known as the combined historic James Taylor - Jacob School Neighborhood, it is a neighborhood that preserves and promotes its cultural, environmental, and physical assets, while embracing diversity and appropriate growth.

All residents of the James Taylor - Jacob School Neighborhood will have clean air, water, and soil; infrastructure that provides adequate drainage; and safe access to all modes of transportation.

Plan Components

In accordance with Chapter 161 of the Louisville Metro Code of Ordinances (Neighborhood Development Plans), a neighborhood plan must contain two mandatory components: Land Use/Community Form and Mobility. Other optional plan components may also be included in a neighborhood plan. The James Taylor – Jacobs School Neighborhood Plan contains four plan components: Land Use/Community Form, Mobility, Historic Preservation, and Natural Resources.

Land Use & Community Form Recommendations

The Land Use & Community Form plan component is focused on evaluating land uses and promoting policies that will preserve the character of the area and enhance quality of life. Land Use & Community Form recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Land Use & Community Form recommendations are as follows:

- LU1 Preserve single-family residential zoning and use inside the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.
- LU2 Limit the zoning of parcels to R-4 or lower intensity inside the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.
- LU3 Consider an optional area-wide rezoning to R-2 inside the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood in order to provide appropriate zoning to support large historic parcel seizures.
- LU4 Preserve and enhance Hays Kennedy Park as an open, accessible, public green space with public amenities.
- LU5 Preserve the Garvin Brown Nature Preserve as publicly accessible for conservation of the natural floodplain, wetlands, and landscape.
- LU6 Preserve the Scenic Byway.
- LU7 Discourage non-residential zoning and use along River Road.
- LU8 Encourage commercial development to occur in established or potentially new shopping centers along US-42.
- LU9 Change the existing Traditional Neighborhood Form District on Rest Way to a Village Form District, in order to remain consistent with the rest of the neighborhood.

- LU10 Create a committee within the neighborhood association to focus on implementation, consistent review, and possible funding sources for the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan.
- LU11 Enhance resident participation in the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Association and its initiatives through increased communication and resident engagement.
- LU12 Grow membership and leadership capacity for the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Association.
- LU13 Create and implement regular social gatherings for the neighborhood residents, such as barbecues, picnics, etc. to build social cohesion.
- LU14 Create and implement regularly meeting block watches.
- LU15 Support and enhance the maintenance and improvements to Hays Kennedy Park, retaining accessible open space and recreational use for neighborhood residents.
- LU16 Hold annual neighborhood cleanups for common areas such as Hays Kennedy Park, the Garvin Brown Preserve, and along roadways.
- LU17 Develop and implement a marketing campaign to promote James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood’s neighborhood identity/brand and attract target homeowners to live in the area.
- LU18 Identify housing units in need of exterior improvements and develop a referral system for connecting residents to existing housing improvement programs.
- LU19 Develop and implement a volunteer program to assist elderly home owners with home and lawn maintenance and repair.
- LU20 Partner with the Masonic Lodge to reinvigorate community gardens or other programming at the Jefferson Jacob School.

Mobility Recommendations

The James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan seeks strategies to improve mobility within the area by evaluating existing transportation patterns and general connectivity. Final recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Mobility recommendations are as follows:

- M1 Support the continued implementation of Public Works projects that connect to the neighborhood such as the River Road Shoulder Project and the River Road Scenic Byway Management Plan.
- M2 Coordinate efforts by Metro Park, Public Works, and MSD for roadway improvements on Bass Road, in order to leverage funding opportunities and design possibilities, as well as mitigate inconvenience to neighborhood traffic flows and park access.

- M3 Work with Public Works to install speed humps on Bass Road and Shirley Avenue in order to calm speeds, particularly near the entrance to Hays Kennedy Park.
- M4 Install green infrastructure in the median on Bass Road near the River's Edge Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and the entrance to Hays Kennedy Park, utilizing materials that reflect the existing natural landscape and enhance stormwater drainage. (Retain speed humps as appropriate).
- M5 Post speed limit signage on Riverway Drive, Shirley Avenue, and Bass Road near the Hays Kennedy Park entrance, and elsewhere as appropriate inside the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.
- M6 Install intermittent “Dark Sky” lighting wherever appropriate.
- M7 Install a turn around at the end of Jacob School Road, with appropriate signage, to limit the usage of private drives for garbage trucks, other service vehicles, and individual cars to turn around.
- M8 Work with Public Works to install paved walking paths along all roadways inside James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood, with a priority of Bass Road and Shirley Avenue. Urban sidewalks with curbs and gutters are inconsistent with the historic rural character of the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.
- M9 Create paved walking paths to provide connection from Jacob School Road to Rest Way, and subsequently to Hays Kennedy Park.
- M10 Utilize crime prevention landscaping as appropriate.
- M11 Install benches along walkways as appropriate.
- M12 Work with Public Works to install a paved walking path along Bass Road through the entrance to Hays Kennedy Park to provide increased multi-modal accessibility and visibility through the park entrance.
- M13 Explore sidewalks along River Road and US-42 from River Road to Del Haven Lane to allow safe pedestrian connections between the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood and outlying commercial areas.
- M14 Create a pedestrian connection at the intersection of River Road and US-42 to allow for safe pedestrian connection from the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood to access the shopping center.
- M15 Create a pedestrian connection on River Road and Timber Ridge to allow safe access from the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood to the shopping center.
- M16 Improve the bridge on River Road between Jacob School Road and Shirley Avenue to allow for safe pedestrian use alongside traffic.

- M17 Limit the increased traffic on Bass Road and parking at Hays Kennedy Park, and its subsequent impact on the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood as a result of the Louisville Loop multi-use path connection between the Lewis and Clark Bridge/East End Crossing and Hays Kennedy Park. This plan recommends that the necessary trail head and parking lot be installed in a location outside of the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.
- M18 Work with Louisville Metro Parks and Public Works to ensure that James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood residents have proper representations in decisions related to Louisville Loop planning and improvements.
- M19 Create natural walking paths to mimic traditional cut-through paths between Jacob School and Shirley Avenue, between Bass Road and Duroc Avenue.
- M20 Explore the creation of a TARC stop on River Road across from Shirley Avenue.
- M21 Install crosswalk and caution light, or other infrastructure, to ensure safer pedestrian crossing on River Road at the Lewis and Clark Bride/East End Crossing, and explore acquiring adjacent property for parking needs.

Historic Preservation Recommendations

The Historic Preservation plan component is focused on promoting policies and actions that will preserve the historic character of the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood. These recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Historic Preservation recommendations are as follows:

- HP1 Consider a local historic preservation district with design guidelines to preserve and enhance the character and aesthetic of the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.
- HP2 Pursue the current draft nomination and obtain National Register of Historic Places designation for the eligible James Taylor Historic District.
- HP3 Pursue the current draft nomination and obtain National Register of Historic Places designation for the eligible Jacob School Road Historic District.
- HP4 Promote the voluntary nomination of historic structures to the National Register of Historic Places.
- HP5 Partner with the Masonic Lodge to ensure the Jefferson Jacob School building is a preserved, renewed, vibrant community asset, which is accessible to the residents of the community through the use of the space and programming.
- HP6 Utilize existing resources and conduct additional research to compile a comprehensive list of all historic structures and sites.
- HP7 Host annual community event(s) to celebrate significant dates.

- HP8 Create a photo archive, which catalogues images of the families and significant events in the neighborhood, along with the associated stories.
- HP9 Create an oral history archive, which catalogues the oral history and stories of those who lived in the neighborhood.
- HP10 Develop a fundraising strategy to support the implementation of historic preservation strategies and programs.
- HP11 Share existing historical documents, cultural asset inventories (2006, 2010), and interpretive plans (2013) with all residents and partners.
- HP12 Create a website for the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood, that includes images, stories, and external links about the history of the area.
- HP13 Install an additional historical marker and other interpretive signage to draw attention to Jefferson Jacob School.
- HP14 Leverage tax credits and other grant funding to rehabilitate historic buildings.

Natural Resources Recommendations

The James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan seeks strategies to improve its relationship with the natural environment within the area by evaluating existing infrastructure and natural resources. Final recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Natural Resources recommendations are as follows:

- NR1 Restrict the use of fill or artificial elevation in new non-critical development or additions to existing structures per ordinance.
- NR2 New development, including additions to existing structures, must provide evidence of and adhere to a 100-foot buffer from all streams and creek beds, per ordinance.
- NR3 New construction or additions that are greater than 400 square feet of structural blueprint or greater than 20% of the size of the structural blueprint (whatever is greater) should provide an environmental assessment that evaluates A) the potential effects of stormwater runoff from its site, and B) how it plans to infiltrate stormwater and mitigates pre- and post-construction runoff conditions.
- NR4 Expedite the installation of a 100-year pipe with appropriate catch basins and other infrastructure on Bass Road, as proposed in the Prospect Area Flooding Analysis and Planning Alternative Development Report, part of the Critical Repair and Reinvestment Plan (MSD 20-year Comprehensive Facility Plan).
- NR5 Provide improved drainage outlets for localized flooding near 6501-6512 Shirley Ave, and Lazy Creek Court/Turtle Run Court, and where appropriate.

- NR6 Assess effects of the retention basin at adjoining neighborhoods through an independent peer review process, with the potential of additional infrastructure to redirect overflows before it hits James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.
- NR7 Improve the drainage outlet(s) at the western end of Rest Way and Riverway Drive as they meet Jacob School Road and the Water Company property.
- NR8 Increase drainage pipe size and containment of overflow from culvert at River Road and Carslaw Court.
- NR9 Increase drainage pipe size and containment of overflow at River Road and Jacob School Road.
- NR10 Partner to obtain easements from private property owners, and assess existing easements, in order to install additional or larger drainage pipes along waterways and creek beds throughout the neighborhood, where appropriate.
- NR11 Encourage the use of green infrastructure and other mitigating materials wherever possible.
- NR12 Assess adjacent and surrounding areas for impacts and potential systemic solutions for consistent flooding and drainage issues.
- NR13 Partner with MSD to create waterproofing program for individual homes, including education and potential funding.
- NR14 Partner with MSD to sponsor educational workshops on what to do during rain events, flooding mitigation on personal property, and how to file with MSD.
- NR15 Create an educational program, and potentially a neighborhood-wide collaboration, for obtaining flood insurance on individual properties.
- NR16 Create a system to track drainage maintenance calls and response, and utilize the electronic MSD system to enhance this tracking.
- NR17 Create a voluntary rain garden program, encouraging residents to plant rain gardens on their property.
- NR18 Create or connect to a voluntary tree planting program, in order to encourage tree replacement and new plantings.
- NR19 Map and assess existing creek and wetlands areas in order to determine which areas are eligible for clearing of brush and natural debris. Explore the possibility of compensating the improvement of some of these areas with other wetlands mitigation/credits.
- NR20 Host a tree health education event or program.
- NR21 Use the tree canopy study to assess and establish priority planting areas inside the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood.

NR22 Obtain scenic/conservation easements on private property for trees planting and open vernacular landscape preservation.

Interested Party Comments

The final public meeting on November 11, 2017 was an opportunity for residents and community members to comment on the final draft of the plan. 32 people attended the meeting and participated in a gallery-style walkthrough of the final draft, providing 26 written comments. Most of the comments were positive and supportive, focused mainly on mobility, maintaining residential uses, and programmatic elements such as creating a database of historic narratives. An online survey was also created and distributed through the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Association email list, but no feedback was received. Most recently, six members of the Advisory Group and Neighborhood Association met virtually with Metro Councilman Scott Reed to discuss comments on the plan and create the final plan document that is being presented today.

Planning Committee

The James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan went before the Planning Committee on Friday, September 11th, 2020. Members of the committee expressed support for the neighborhood plan and the Planning Committee deemed the James Taylor – Jacob School neighborhood plan ready for public hearing at the Planning Commission.

Staff Findings – Plan 2040

The James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan is in conformance with Plan 2040. More specifically, the recommendations support the following goals of the comprehensive plan:

Community Form Goal 1

The proposed recommendations guide the form and design of development to be responsive to the distinctive physical, historic and cultural qualities of the James Taylor – Jacob School area.

Community Form Goal 2

The proposed recommendations encourage sustainable growth and density around corridors.

Community Form Goal 3

The proposed recommendations enhance the James Taylor – Jacob School area by protecting and integrating open space, watersheds and other natural resources.

Community Form Goal 4

The proposed recommendations promote the historic resources that contribute to the James Taylor – Jacob School area's authenticity.

Mobility Goal 1

The proposed recommendations promote an accessible system of alternative transportation modes.

Mobility Goal 2

The proposed recommendations promote a safe, accessible and efficient transportation system.

Mobility Goal 3

The proposed recommendations encourage land use and transportation patterns that connect the James Taylor – Jacob School area and support future growth.

Community Facilities Goal 1

The proposed recommendations ensure community facilities are accessible.

Community Facilities Goal 2

The proposed recommendations support community facilities to improve quality of life.

Livability Goal 1

The proposed recommendations encourage the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and integration with the built environment as development occurs.

Livability Goal 2

The proposed recommendations promote equitable health and safety outcomes for all.

Livability Goal 3

The proposed recommendations promote equitable access to land use planning and policy-making resources.

Livability Goal 4

The proposed recommendations integrate sustainability and resilience in the community planning process.

STAFF CONCLUSIONS AND REQUIRED ACTIONS

Staff finds that the proposed goals, objectives, and recommendations contained in the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan and Executive Summary are in conformance with the Neighborhood Plan Ordinance (Chapter 161) and Plan 2040. Based upon the information in this staff report, the testimony and evidence provided at the public hearing, the Planning Commission must determine if the proposal is in conformance with Plan 2040.

ATTACHMENTS

1. James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan
2. Executive Summary of the James Taylor – Jacob School Neighborhood Plan